

Ngenger Culture and The Concept of Ethics Education: Javanese Tradition in Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi*

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Abstract

Umar Kayam's novel *Para Priyayi* explores ethics education by *ngenger* ways in Javanese tradition. The *ngenger* culture is an effort by the poor to gain the greatest and most equitable access to education. This novel show that the *ngenger* culture is used to gain access to formal education and get informal education in the Javanese tradition. *Ngenger* ways that to do by the actors would instill ethical educational values that help people achieve life goals and achieve success. The *ngenger* culture emphasizes ethics education, which is internalized through habituation, teaching, behavior, and outward and inner experiences.

Keywords: *Ethics, Ngenger, Culture, Tradition, Javanese.*

INTRODUCTION

Ethics education is a formal and informal effort to educate, maintain, and provide training on ethics and intelligence thinking (Izzati 2017). Ethics education is critical for all people in order to instill positive attitudes and behaviors while also benefiting others. The goal of ethics education is to create a perfect human being. The use of cultural and religious traditions of a specific social environment that shape individuals' moral consciousness can form the foundation of ethics education (Krausová and Šrajer 2015). Thus, ethics education can be derived from values of local wisdom that apply to specific cultures in society.

The value of Javanese culture as a source of ethics education cannot be overstated. Javanese culture is rich in local wisdom, which serves as the foundation for ethics education. Javanese culture includes life values known as Javanese ethics. Ethics education derived from Javanese culture can serve as a foundation for national character education. Today, ethics education is a critical component of character education because it demonstrates the advancement of a nation's civilization that is superior, intelligent, and dignified. The *ngenger* culture is a source of ethics education in Javanese culture. The *ngenger* culture is a Javanese effort to educate their children by entrusting them to other families who are thought to be more capable, experienced, and wiser (H. Geertz 1983; Mulder 1996). The recipient's family will pay for school and daily needs in the *ngenger* culture. As a reward and expression of gratitude, the child will perform some type of household chore (Koentjaraningrat 1984; Kutaneegara 2017).

Ngenger culture is an elegant way for farmers in Java to align themselves with the social structure above them. The *ngenger* culture provides a means for the community to achieve vertical mobility via informal academic channels. Wicaksono (2011) emphasizes that the *ngenger* culture is a means of learning and the formation of attitudes and behavior in the informal education path. This culture is associated with efforts to mentally prepare a person

for a specific social position. Education produces people who are truly prepared to face real-world problems in society. *Ngenger* is closely related to character education in Javanese culture, particularly in relation to the cultivation of ethical educational values. These educational values eventually drive a person to strive for a specific social position in society. Historically, *ngenger* culture has served as a form of child protection as well as an alternative method of instilling ethical values for character development in children. In Javanese society, *ngenger* culture is used as one of the channels of informal education to instill ethical educational values.

Historically, the *ngenger* culture is still alive and well in Indonesia's major cities. The issue is that the community is unaware of the existence of this *ngenger* culture. Only a few people comprehend the nature and values of *ngenger*. In today's modern era, where globalization has influenced every aspect of people's lives, *ngenger* culture is a point of contention. *Ngenger* culture is a form of child protection as well as an alternative to instilling ethical values in children for character development. The researcher intends to investigate how the nature of *ngenger* culture actually occurs in Javanese society as one of the informal channels of education to instill ethical educational values.

Umar Kayam's novel *Para Priyayi* depicts how the Javanese people practice *ngenger* culture. Umar Kayam expresses his thoughts and reflections on the nature of *ngenger* culture and its role in instilling ethical educational values within the context of informal education. This novel tells the story of a farmer's son's long journey to become a *priyayi*. In this novel, Umar Kayam defines *priyayi* as a professional achievement obtained through a process of achievement rather than through the principle of heredity. Through patron-client relations, a small farmer named Atmokasan was able to baptize his son Soedarsono to become Sastrodarsono, encourage him to get an education, and become a *priyayi* in the village. Sastrodarsono's tenacity and persistence in building his aristocracy propelled him to the status of respected *priyayi* in his society. Similarly, her children have gone on to become teachers, PETA (an Indonesian volunteer army established by the occupying Japanese) officers, and *wedana* (district leader) assistant wives. His family's dream of becoming a *priyayi* family has come true. However, Sastrodarsono's grandchildren, who grew up in their time, became middle-class children of bureaucrats who is spoiled, left idealists who were involved in leftist political movement, and were unable to become good *priyayi* as Sastrodarsono had hoped.

Lantip, Sastrodarsono's distant nephew, was an illegitimate child from a poor family who later do *ngenger* to the Sastrodarsono family and became a good, obedient, intelligent, and dexterous child. Lantip not only became a *priyayi* in holding bureaucratic positions and as a lecturer at a reputable university in Indonesia, but he also demonstrated the meaning of *priyayi* in his own way.

Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* tells stories about Javanese culture, specifically the *ngenger* culture, which is one of the paths to aristocratic ideals. The *ngenger* culture depicted is not limited to the story setting, but also includes ethical educational values that shape the true character of a *priyayi*.

The paper conduct by literary research to describe how *ngenger* culture occurs in society. Literary works as socio-cultural documents, according to Singewood, are created as a medium to open people's eyes to various social phenomena around them (Wahyudi 2013). People are given an overview of a social reality through literary works in the hope that they will be able to learn lessons, make changes, and improve the social conditions of those around

them. By the sociology of literature analysis, how *ngenger* culture done and the values of ethical education contained in the *ngenger* culture would be described in this paper. According to Laurenson and Singewood, literary works as social documents that reflect the situation at the time the literature was created, reveals literature as a mirror of its authors' social situation, and as a manifestation of historical events and socio-cultural conditions (Endraswara 2012).

THE CONCEPT OF *NGENGER* CULTURE

There is a class in Javanese society known as *priyayi*, which consists of people who work in local government offices, government agencies, and civil service positions. as well as intellectuals (Koentjaraningrat; Suseno). *Priyayi* belong to the highest class, are regarded as elites, and are held in high regard due to their significant influence in politics, economics, culture, and education. *Priyayi* came from an aristocratic group during the kingdom era in Indonesia, which was taken over as a civil servant who was appointed and paid during the Dutch East Indies period. This is a white-collar elite who upholds palace etiquette, namely the sophisticated arts of dance, drama, and music (C. Geertz 2014). However, with the introduction of Dutch East Indies education, the educated *priyayi* group emerged, namely the *priyayi* group from the countryside or the *tiyang alit* group in the city who were able to obtain civil servant positions due to their education (Koentjaraningrat 1984).

The *priyayi* is regarded as the ideal way of life in Javanese society. Being a *priyayi* is something Javanese parents expect from their children. The Javanese used a variety of methods, including *ngenger* culture, to raise their offspring to the *priyayi* level (Moertono 1985; Soeratman 1989). The community uses the *ngenger* culture to gain access to formal and informal education. Formal education provides knowledge and expertise that allows a child to pursue a specific profession. Informal education teaches ethical and character values that help a person carry out his or her role and status in society.

Umar Kayam describes the *ngenger* culture in his novel *Para Priyayi* as follows:

“As a result, even though I am an only child, as is Dik Ngaisah, we never felt lonely at home because we always had distant relatives living with us. Similarly, our home is now in Wanagalih. Ngadiman, the son of my cousin who became my uncle's grandson, was entrusted to me by his parents to attend HIS. Similarly, their parents entrusted us with several other nieces and nephews, both from my side and Dik Ngaisah's side, including Soenandar, Sri, and Darmin. What do you want our children to do, Don't worry, they said, whatever you want our children to do, we'll just do it. Most importantly, they usually say, please educate them to be people. They are gratefully accepted by my wife and me”

The community uses the *ngenger* culture to gain access to education. The education in question is HIS, a Dutch East Indies primary school for natives that is only accessible through *priyayi* due to its high cost. In addition to access to education, *ngenger* culture is used in to educate children to become successful people, *dadi wong*. However, for the Javanese, success is measured not only by a person's position, power, and prosperity, but also by his or her ability to adjust to his or her status and position in society (Mulder 1996). To become such a person, a person must adhere to a set of values and norms in order to succeed in living his or her life in society. Suseno (1981) refers to this set of values and norms as Javanese ethics. The *ngenger* culture is said to be ethical education here.

The Values of Ethics Education in the *Ngenger* Culture

Ngenger culture is used as an informal educational institution to instill ethical values that support character development in children. The following are examples of ethical values:

- Patience

According to Suseno (1981), patience is the hallmark of a good leader, he advanced cautiously, "stepping with trial and error, like stepping on a board whose strength is unknown". Patience entails taking a deep breath and knowing that good fortune will come in due course.

The following quote about the value of patience in *ngenger* culture can be found in the novel *Para Priyayi* :

"New child, new child, new child, they said, immediately they knew that I was (*Ndoro Guru's*) teacher's servant.

Oh, he is a teacher's housemaid, they whispered. I heard their whispers clearly because it seemed they were meant to be heard clearly. I keep quiet because that's how it is. Why deny it.

Besides, *Embok* had warned me to be patient, not to be easily offended by what friends said or even ridiculed. Furthermore, no fighting or fist fighting at school."

Lantip was mocked by his friends because of his position as a *batur*, Sastodarsono's housemaid. His friends attempted to challenge him to a fight. Lantip faced all of this with patience and was not easily offended. There is a teaching in the *ngenger* culture that people require a fairly long process to achieve their goals. A process is not without its difficulties. This is where we must exercise patience.

- *Rila*/'willingness' and sincerity

Rila has a sincere heart and a joyful feeling of surrendering all his possessions, rights, and the fruits of his labor to God. *Rila* means remembering that everything is in God's power, there must be nothing left in the heart (De Jong 1976). Sincerity entails being willing to let go of one's own uniqueness in order to fit into the grand harmony of the universe as it has been determined (Suseno). *Rila* is also derived from sincerity.

The following quote expresses the values of *rila*/'willingness' and sincerity in the culture of *ngenger* in the novel *Para Priyayi* :

"My teacher is Kang Lantip. Not because he taught me much, but because of his humility, sincerity, and heartfelt sincerity. I fell in love with him the first time I met him in Wanagalih and Wanalawas. His origins' destitution and poverty, as well as his status as an adopted child, did not discourage, humble, or inferior him. Its humble, simple, straightforward, and ordinary nature caused me to panic. How can a person who, from a class standpoint, should be angry at his oppression fight his fate with sincerity and sincerity without feeling inferior?"

Lantip has a *rila* and sincerity in *ngenger*. He is not oppressed, but fights his fate with sincerity. He is still serving selflessly. Lantip's sincerity drew sympathy and affection from the Sastodarsono family, and he was recognized as the most *priyayi* figure due to his enormous service. *Ngenger* teaches people to do good by having a sincere and willing attitude, namely surrendering everything to God. Sincere people will always receive God's assistance.

- *Nerima*

Nerima means to accept everything that comes our way without complaint or rebellion. People in a state of disappointment and difficulty, according to *nerima*, react rationally, do not collapse, and do not fight for nothing. *Nerima* demands the strength to accept what he receives without being destroyed by it. *Nerima* provides fortitude in the face of adversity (Suseno 1981). The value of acceptance must always be applied by the perpetrator of *ngenger* in order to achieve inner peace and avoid anxiety, which interferes with concentration in carrying out their duties. It is easier for *ngenger* perpetrators to achieve their goals if they maintain inner calm and concentration.

“Oh, he is a teacher’s housemaid, they whispered. I heard their whispers clearly because it seemed they were meant to be heard clearly. I keep quiet because that’s how it is. Why deny it.”

Lantip accepted his position as *batur*. Lantip felt no inferiority, shame, or humiliation. When Lantip’s classmates make fun of him at school, he acts normally and does not deny it. Lantip felt calm, happy, and excited to carry out his roles and duties to the best of his ability after accepting it.

Ngenger contains the teaching that in order to achieve goals, everyone should accept anything and not feel humiliated, ashamed, or inferior. *Nerima* means to be unafraid in the face of adversity. With an acceptance attitude, a person becomes calmer, more confident, excited, and happy, and remains highly focused in order to achieve his goals. *Nerima* means to focus on the process rather than the outcome when working.

- *Temen* (honesty)

Temen means honest. To be honest, people must be able to rely on their promises. Whoever is honest will be fair; he grows in courage and peace of mind. Keeping promises is a requirement for meeting God (Suseno 1981). Honesty is the foundation of any attempt to develop moral strength. Without honesty, virtue values are meaningless. Good actions carried out dishonestly will inevitably result in hypocrisy. Likewise, commendable attitudes such as being lonely and being busy with gawe will only be a means of cunning and deception if they are not rooted in true honesty.

The importance of *temen* is emphasized in *ngenger* because it involves trust. *Ngenger* perpetrators who always speak and act honestly, keep their promises, and are serious about carrying out their responsibilities will receive a lot of sympathy, affection, and trust from the *ngenger* recipients. This is the key to *ngenger* success. He will be able to gain the way of the *ngenger* receiver if he is able to gain great trust. It is even possible to gain access to the recipients of *ngenger* in a variety of ways, including business, networking, kinship, and marriage.

The value of *temen* is expressed in the following quote from the novel *Para Priyayi*:

“I was unsure how to explain this to Marie while we were driving. What will they think if I report Maridjan’s landlord? But must I lie in order to make up another story in order to avoid a major shock? But won’t it be discovered one day? And once discovered, the situation will undoubtedly worsen and drag on. My head is spinning. Finally, I resolved to explain everything to the entire family calmly and diplomatically.”

Lantip is honest in serving, regardless of the risk, according to this quote. For Lantip, dishonesty will bring even more serious problems. On the other hand, honesty will make the problem immediately resolved. The value of *temen* exists in *ngenger*. The value of *temen* is significant because it entails trust. The community will like and trust people who are *temen*. This

will assist a person in achieving success in life. *Ngenger* also teaches that if he is given a position, he will work hard, not abuse his authority, and maintain the trust of those he leads.

- *Prasaja* (being simple)

Prasaja is being simple (Suseno). So, *prasaja* is being simple, reasonable, and not exaggerating both in speech, appearance, and behavior.

Being *prasaja* is formed in *ngenger* as a result of the demands placed on *ngenger* perpetrators to adjust to the families of *ngenger* recipients. For example, even if there are no written demands and rules in the families of the *ngenger* recipients, the perpetrator of *ngenger* knows himself and cannot do as he pleases by applying *prasaja* and *sakmadya*, which is simple and adequate. Thus, to be modest, the perpetrators of *ngenger* must live a frugal lifestyle, avoid being extravagant, and dress appropriately. Similarly, in speech and behavior, one must be reasonable, not arrogantly displaying one's own superiority. The value of *prasaja* is expressed in the following quote from the novel *Para Priyayi*:

"We were nearing the end of our studies at the time, and in the not-too-distant future, we will become social and political science scholars. I am not artistic and want to finish college as soon as possible because I don't want to burden father and mother with the burden of college, but I don't have much hope with Gus Hari and Sunaryo and their friends."

Ngenger is a humble exercise, *prasaja* guide a people not to be extravagant or consumerism. People who are not extravagant find it easier to achieve their goals. *Ngenger* also teaches a people who has power not to misuse an agency's or state's assets for personal gain or corruption.

- *Andhap asor* (humility)

Andhap asor is formed in *ngenger* as a result of self-awareness of its position as the perpetrator of *ngenger*. That his goal in the *ngenger* recipient's family environment is to learn everything so that the *ngenger*'s perpetrator does not deserve to be proud. Science does not enter the mind of the proud. As a result, the perpetrator of *ngenger* must be humble, willing to be taught, and open to suggestions and criticism. The following quote expresses the value of *andhap asor* in the *ngenger* culture in the novel *Para Priyayi*:

"...Try it, Tip; I'll see if you can still sing after living in Solo."

Lantip appeared to be nervous, which I noticed.

"Well, Grandma, what should I sing?"

"Have you forgotten about Tripama? Tripama was born in the same place where your father Hardojo works."

"Perhaps still, Grandma. Please straighten it out if you forget."

Lantip was ordered to sing by Sastrodarsono. Lantip did not forget to apologize first and beg to be corrected if he was mistaken. Lantip does not believe he is the most correct person, preferring to be open to criticism and suggestions from others. *Ngenger* culture teaches a person not to brag about his position, not to feel the most correct, and to be open to suggestions, ideas, and criticism from others. If *ngenger* is successful in gaining a position, he will teach someone; he is not dictatorial, but rather flexible and willing to embrace people from all walks of life.

- *Tepa Salira*

Tepa salira is an attitude that is always aware of its own limitations as well as the larger context in which it moves. *Tepa salira* means putting yourself in someone else's situation in order to understand why other people can do certain things in their situation (Hardjowirogo 1995). *Tepa salira* is formed in *ngenger* because the perpetrators of *ngenger* are used to being in a lower position, used to living simply, and concerned. The perpetrators of *ngenger* are accustomed to suffering. As a result, *ngenger* perpetrators typically have a soul that is more sensitive to the suffering of others. People who have *ngenger* are more likely to empathize with other people's feelings, are less likely to underestimate the position of others, and are more difficult to blame. People who have *ngenger* will always use it in their lives.

“In the car at the time, i was thinking about Suminten more. Perhaps I recall the fate of my mother and my own fate as a child. Suminten is still in better shape than my mother. My mother's husband abandoned her. Even though Maridjan has a rogue streak, he still wants to divorce his wife amicably. What about his son, though? Will it be as good as my fortune to have a generous grandma and foster father? Who will care for him and educate him? That reminds me of how fortunate I am.” (Kayam 2012, 275).

Lantip has a *tepa salira* attitude toward others, as evidenced by the quote. Lantip did not treat Sumintern, Maridjan's ex-wife, arbitrarily. Lantip thought to himself that he had been in the same situation as Suminten and his son. Lantip was grateful because his fate was far better than theirs. Lantip finds a good host family while they try to figure out their fate. As a result, when they solve Marie and Maridjan's problems, they also consider Suminten and her child's fate. Lantip proposed that Suminten be given a living allowance and that his son be allowed to visit his father at any time. This demonstrates that *ngenger* can be used to instill *tepa salira*'s ethical values in children. The *ngenger* culture teaches a person to be *tepa salira*, which means to be sensitive to the suffering of others, to empathize with the feelings of others, to not underestimate the position of others, and to not easily blame others. If *ngenger* is in a high social position, he should not be arbitrary to those who are lower in the social hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

Umar Kayam's *Para Priyayi* is a literary work that is rich in Javanese culture, particularly the *ngenger* culture. *Ngenger* culture is an attempt to educate children by entrusting them to serve other families in higher positions. The *ngenger* culture is an effort by the poor to gain the greatest and most equitable access to education. The *ngenger* culture does not involve child exploitation, but instead emphasizes efforts to gain access to formal and informal education. In terms of formal education, the *ngenger* tradition is used as an alternative for people who have difficulty gaining access to school education, particularly those experiencing economic difficulties and those living in areas that have not received adequate and equitable educational facilities. In terms of informal education, the *ngenger* culture emphasizes ethics education, which is internalized through example, habituation, teaching, behavior, and outward and inner experiences. Patience, *rila* (‘willingness’) and sincerity, *nerima* (acceptance of everything), *temen* (honest), *prasaja* (being simple), *andhap asor* (humility), and *tepa salira* are among the ethics education values instilled. The values of ethics education obtained through *ngenger* culture have a significant impact on the character formation of a person who has lived it. People who have *ngenger* will have a more patient, sincere, honest, humble, and tolerable personality. People with such personalities will find it easier to interact with others and achieve their life goals.

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