

THE CONCEPT OF GOOD AND BAD IN JAVANESE SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN THE “DOLANAN SONG”

DARU WINARTI
Gadjab Mada University

daruwinti@hotmail.com

Introduction

As people are going through their social life, they are naturally supposed to deal with any physical and mental experiences. Some of those natural experiences may well make them pleased, happy, and comfortable; or, otherwise, those could bring sad, disappointed, suffering, and even tortured feelings to them. For the former, those are usually called good experiences, while for the latter the bad ones. Then, learning from such experiences those people are certainly supposed to either keep doing something good, as for the former or, else, taking action for overcoming those regarded bad, for the latter. All of these are, particularly, reflected in *dolanan* song, which is a part of the *dolanan driji*.

According to the dictionary of *Bausastra Jawa-Indonesia* (Prawiroatmojo, 1980: 95-96), *dolanan* means “to play or to have fun”, while *driji* means “fingers” (therefore, *dolanan driji* can be defined as a fingers-play. In Javanese culture, fingers (*driji*) are identified to consist of thumb (*jempol*), index finger (*panuduh*), middle finger (*panunggul*), ring finger (*jenthik manis*), and little finger (*jenthik*). From their figures, the little finger (*jenthik*) is the smallest one, while the thumb (*jempol*) is, in size, shorter than the little finger, but it is bigger; besides, both of the index finger (*panuduh*) and the ring finger (*jenthik manis*) are approximately equal in height, whereas the middle finger (*panunggul*) is the tallest of all the five fingers.

Seeing these fingers in upside-down position, the little finger (*jenthik*) is at the very right side of the right hand; next to its left side is the ring finger (*jenthik manis*); the middle finger (*panunggul*) is at the very middle position of all the five fingers and next to its left side is the index finger (*panuduh*), and at the very left side of all is the thumb (*jempol*). In Javanese culture, fingers are helpful not only for their physical services, such as *muluk* (to eat food by using fingers), scratching, pinching, etc., but also they are supposedly to be useful in relation to a number of noteworthy ways of life of the entire social life of Javanese people; among other can be seen through the Javanese children-play well-known as *dolanan driji* (fingers-play).

As far as the writer knows, studies on the *dolanan driji* are restricted simply to a kind of song inventory, those of which are attributed to Overback (1938) in the book *Javaansche Mesjesspelen En Kinderliedje* and Katno (1940) in the collection of songs “*Taman Suka*”. This song inventory is obviously very useful as a whole in the preservation of tradition, especially the oral tradition, in consideration that the effort might be unhelpful if any related studies are by no means to carry on. In this case, the writer is supposed to participate in a more scientific observation, for the sake of persistent study, from a different approach, i.e., from a standpoint of structural anthropology.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this writing applies structural hermeneutic approach. However, since its emphasis of analysis is restricted to the interpretive aspect only, structural anthropology is also used. From this cultural approaches, culture or its elements in questions is considered as a “text”. These elements of culture are to be “read”, interpreted or signified, and the culture itself would be perceived as a set of symbols acquired through the process of learning in social life, and is functional for its adaptability (Ahimsa-Putra a, 2006: 6)

The approaches are preferred here, because the *dolanan driji* will specifically be analyzed through into its smallest units. This cultural strategy of analysis, of course, leads an access more to find out the concepts *good* and *bad* in the *dolanan driji*, rather than to use any others approaches, hence finding out more units. Each of the units can reveal particular appreciations. In

this case, the units to be analyzed may well constitute both mytheme, that is any sentence that represents particular relations (L»vi-Strauss, 1963 in Ahimsa-Putra a, 2006:7), and *ceriteme*, namely a sequence of sentences or paragraphs that indicate particular concepts (Ahimsa-Putra a, 2006).

The acquired mythemes or ceritemes are, subsequently, interpreted so that all the direct and indirect concepts of *good* and *bad* could be identified. In Javanese, the word *good* is especially equivalent to both Javanese words “apik” and “becik”, while *bad* is specifically equivalent to “elek” and “ala”. “Apik” could particularly mean as *a good and refined related to a product*, whereas “becik” could especially refer to *good personality, attitude, and any others characters that look comfortable* (Poerwadarminto, 1939).

On the contrary, “elek” is supposed to mean *rotten, ugly, and evil* (Prawiroatmodjo, 1980). In other words, “apik” is used to mean *a good look* for the *outer* appearance of things, while “becik” is used to indicate the *inner* goodness. “Elek” is used to mean something bad from the surface look, while “ala” is used to mean something bad from the *inner* look (Ahimsa, b 2006: VII).

Dolanan Driji

Dolanan driji is one of the types of Javanese children play. This play is usually used by parents for comforting and entertaining children; but, it is sometimes played by any other people as well, that is the older child in a family who is taking care of the younger sister or brother for the same purpose as the parents’ role, namely for comforting and entertaining the younger sister/brother (the baby). *Dolanan driji* is a play descended orally from one generation to another generation after. Therefore, as an orally descended play, *dolanan driji* varies both in the way of playing it and in the way of how the relevant song is to be sung.

This play is basically performed by means of moving over the fingers while at the same time the player is singing out the song *enthik* (the little finger). How to move over the fingers is of several ways; one of which is, among others, by opening wide the two palms of the hands in face-to-face position and the same fingers of the two hands are shut tight to cling one another (little finger against little finger, ring finger against ring finger, middle

finger with middle finger, index finger against index finger, and thumb against thumb). Further, each of the clinging fingers is moved over as to follow the lyric of the song at the same time.

However, the way of playing it must be accompanied with the singing of the *dolanan driji* or often called *enthik* (little finger). Just in the way of playing it, the song *enthik* (little finger) consists of several variations as well. In the analysis below, one of the complete variations will be accommodated. The following presents the lyric *enthik* (the little finger) together with an explanation of how the fingers are to be moved over.

***Entsik* (Little Finger)**

| Fingers | Songs |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Jenthik manis</i> (ring finger) | <i>Entsik-entsik, patenana si panunggul</i> Little, little finger, kill the middle finger' |
| <i>Panuduh</i> (index finger) | <i>Aja dhi aja dhi tak kandhani</i> "Oh, no sista', no sista' listen to my words' <i>Sedulur tuwa malati</i> ' Older, older sister makes suffer |
| <i>Jempol</i> (thumb) | <i>Bener bener aja mbeler ndak keblinger</i> Strongly...don't confront, or you be ruined' |
| <i>Jenthik</i> (little finger) | <i>Sayuk-sayuk soyang-soyang</i> Alright, alright... the mind becomes uneasy |
| <i>Panuduh</i> (index finger) | <i>Rukunena dimen rosa</i> 'Be in harmony, so you tough' <i>Ra dha congkrah dadi bubrah</i> 'Don't dispute, or you be wretched to pieces' |

The lyric of the song constitutes a personification about a familial conflict between an older sister and her younger sister. This familial sisterhood conflict is triggered by the *jenthik manis*' (ring finger) jealousy against her older sister, *temunggul* (middle finger). Then, the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) gives a command for her younger sister, *jenthik* (little finger) to kill their own older sister. However, one of the other older sisters, the *panuduh* (index finger) prevents this and she gets a support from the *jempol* (thumb). Through the analysis of mytheme and ceriteme the concepts of good and bad of a conflict in Javanese culture could finally be revealed.

The Mytheme or Ceriteme of the Lyric *Enthik* (Little Finger)

In this writing, the first step to take is to explore and determine the mytheme of the lyric *enthik* (little finger). However, in case there is not any meaningful mytheme to be found in the lyric, the search will be turned into the ceriteme, then.

The mytheme or ceriteme of the lyric *enthik* (little finger)

1. *Enthik-enthik patenana si temunggul* ‘Little, little finger, kill the middle finger’

This mytheme may well be interpreted as the way the *jenthik manis*’ (ring finger) is giving command to the *jenthik* (little finger). The indicator of the command is obviously reflected by the affix *-ana* in the word *patenana* (kill), since this affix functions as one of the command indicators in Javanese language. This command constitutes a performative act in that the command has to be performed by the *jenthik* (little finger), i.e., to kill the *temunggul* (middle finger).

From the point of view of the type of salutation *enthik* and the command *patenana*, it can be seen that the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) is an older sister to the *enthik* (little finger). The fact is indicated by the form *njangkar*, which means “to avoid using a form of familial salutation” when addressing *enthik*. In general, a salutation in Javanese society is based on a familial relationship, such *pakdhe*, *budhe*, *paklik*, *bulik*, *kangmas*, *mbak*, *dhik*, etc. These are equivalent to uncle, aunt, older brother, older sister, and younger [either brother or sister), respectively.

In Javanese social life, the familial salutation is significantly so important that the people call *njangkar* for the ones who avoid using familial salutation and this tends to mean negative. Yet, *njangkar* is still allowed to use in case that the addressed one is younger (Suseno 2003: 49). This fact confirms that the salutation *enthik*, which is a short form of *jenthik*, is a salutation used by an older people when addressing a younger one.

Concerning that the *jenthik* (little finger) is younger than the *enthik*, it can obviously be seen from the *jenthik manis*’ (ring finger) way of making salutation when she is addressing the *jenthik* (little finger), i.e. by using a short

form of salutation *enthik* (little finger). In Javanese society, changing a type of salutation is typically normal for parents to do when they are addressing their own children, through which salutation they imitate the child's incomplete way of talking (*nyedhal*) (Koentjaraningrat, 1994: 110).

The type of command that the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) is using in Javanese society, can lead to the way of how the older and younger relationship is to consider between the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) and the *enthik* (little finger), because, in general, the ones who have authority to give command is the parents or the older person to the younger one. This is basically in accordance with Koentjaraningrat (1994: 111) had put forward that, in Javanese culture, the older people is the man of authority for giving command to the younger ones.

This type of giving command may well be interpreted as a kind of request to cooperate in doing certain things. Thus, such a request for cooperation could mean either an appeal to a support or to find out the addressee's responses toward any action that is going to do. In Javanese culture, it is considered important that any action should be based on agreement or on a mutual compromise among the people in order to avoid breaking the prevailed norms.

2. *Aja dhi aja dhi sedulur tuwa malati* (No sister, no sister, the older makes suffer)

This mytheme may be interpreted both as a type of prohibition and of an older person's advice to the younger one. The way of how the type of prohibition is directed by the older person to the younger one, can be seen from the salutation *dhi* (young sister) which at the same time the *panuduh* (index finger) is directing to both of her sisters, the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) and the *jenthik* (little finger). This prohibition also implies an advice of a "threatening" kind or warning for all the consequences. In this case, the mytheme *sedulur tuwa malati* (the older makes suffer) means that the younger might be *kualat* (damned or cursed).

Such punishment as a threatening warning in the mytheme can also mean that the parent in Javanese culture does not actually get accustomed to give a threat of to give a physical punishment. Mulder (1996:88), Geertz (1982: 108), and Koentjaraningrat (1994: 122, 254) explain that the physical punishment as a corrective action is rarely given. If a child is big and mature enough to use

his/her logic, he/she would be given a threat or punished by using any mystical threats or any other supernatural powers, such as ghost, nymph, and mischievous spirit, and together with any *kualat* threatening in that the supernatural power would punish those who are ill-behaved to the older persons.

This kind of *ceriteme* may well be interpreted as the older person's effort to deaden the syndrome of violence the younger person has brought about so that it would not invoke an exposed and extended conflict and, thus, the familial harmony is hopefully to continue. Suseno (1984: 41) explained that Javanese society develops behavioral norms that are supposed to prevent any harmful conducts to inducing particular kinds of conflict potentials or, at least, to prevent from a more exposed and extended conflict.

The type of command *patenana* (kill) in the first mytheme can be interpreted as an expression which is consciously chosen by the singer in order to provide an instance of a potentially exposed conflict that has to be prevented. This is true because the singer does not use the command *satru* or *jothakan*, which is usually conducted to avoid any kinds of physical confrontation in Javanese society, i.e. not talking to one another for a temporary or, even, for so long as the life time.

Geertz (1982:122) and Suseno (1994: 56) explained that *satru* or *jothakan* is a typical means to resolute conflict or to overcome any possibly open conflict in the social life of Javanese society. For the sake of such kind of means, however, the violence can be prevented and this is an honest and true expression of feeling because, by expressing *satru* or *jothakan*, any physical confrontation could be avoided. Meanwhile, the expression of resentment is not at all blocked. And, typically, the *satru* or *jothakan* can be open to a negotiation by means of particular compromises or it would dissolve itself in case one party initiates to apologize, or it is due to particular situation.

3. *Bener bener aja mbeler ndak keblinger* 'Strongly don't confront, or you be ruined'

This mytheme indicates that *jempol* (thumb), in this case is as an older sister, agrees or approves the advice the *panuduh* (index finger) has given her when giving an advice to both the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) and *jenthik* (little

finger). The interpretation that the older people's blessing is very important, is principally in accordance with Koentjaraningrat (1994: 441-442) has put forward, that is the ordinary people of the Java villages are engaged in a vertically-oriented cultural values. Those ordinary people depend much on the supports, opinions, and blessings given by the man of important authority, of highly-ranked, governmental bureaucrats, and the elders in their village.

“Restu” (blessing) which in Javanese is *pangestu*, is also to be expected to be given by the ancestors for them by paying a pilgrimage visit to the ancestors' resting place in order to appeal for a benediction, for a help to make a difficult decision, for a promotion in rank, for money to pay debts. Even more, most of the villages also possess *punden*, to be a site for worshipping the ancestors (the founding fathers) of the village (Suseno, 1994: 87). The elders' blessing is typically given altogether with any speech of wisdom and any warnings about the consequences they must be given in case they do not obey the advice, the consequence which is to be ruined, in this case.

4. *Sayuk-sayuk soyang-soyang* (Alright, alright...but the mind becomes uneasy)

This mytheme can be interpreted to mean that the *jenthik* (little finger) as a younger sister would listen to and obey her older sister because the obedience toward the older is a good behavior and make the feeling lighten up. Koentjaraningrat (1994: 254) explains that the ordinary villagers usually consider that *manut* (obedient) is one of the good deeds of man. The obedient folks are praiseworthy. Also, in *priyayi* family (the upper-class in the Javanese social strata), a praiseworthy child is destined to be successful and, someday when grown up, he/she would become a civil servant on condition that the child is obedient due to its usefulness. Yet, likewise the obedience toward his/her superior in the work place as a civil servant, to be good and obedient to any strange people whom he/she does not know yet, is likely to constructive and helpful in later years on.

This mytheme may also mean that given the frequent threatening of any supernatural power or ghostly power, which influences the mental such in the lyric *sedulur tuwa malati* (the older makes suffer), affect the Javanese people to do

two things if they are faced with supernatural power, i.e. to avoid the situation by edging away, and do nothing and let the thing pass by. In contrary, the Javanese people can be progressive in that for a moment they pretend to agree to any strangers' will, but after that, they decide whether they have negative or positive feeling to that strangers or not (Koentjaraningrat, 1994: 254).

5. *Rukunena dimen rosa* (Be harmonious, so you be strong)

Padha Congkrah dadi Bubrah (Don't Dispute or You be Wretched to Pieces)

This mytheme can be interpreted as an advice to live in harmony and avoid disputing. Just like the explanation above, the elders' speech of wisdom is typically accompanied with a warning of any consequences to be taken, namely that living in harmony makes people strong; otherwise, the dispute must bring about disorder for all. For Javanese people, "*rukun*" (harmonious) is very essential, in which through being harmonious the social relationship can definitely be taken away from any conflict in order to achieve a peaceful life, i.e. peace in the mind (Ahimsa, 2006: 24). In contrast, any dispute should be completely prevented in a social life since this attitude may well bring the social relationship into disharmony and could make peaceful situation unaffordable.

Good and Bad in the Dolanan Driji Song

Some people may argue that *dolanan driji* is merely a play intended to comforting the small child, or just to wasting the time, or even to spending time with children. However, apart from these opinions, much noteworthy to ponder is things beyond the lyric, especially to see what is good and what is bad in Javanese culture, in which they are still so valuable, now, that we aim to actualize them.

"Seniority"

The concept of seniority is very of great consequence in Javanese culture. This means that any Javanese people who could position him-/herself in the society whether as senior or junior is regarded as a good people. This kind of

disposition is taking the form of using the proper familial salutation, such as *dhi* (young sister/brother), the salutation of *njangkar*, such as *enthik* (little finger), and the using of command and advisory sentences.

This signification correlates inherently with the rights and duties of every people. The older people have rights to giving order, making prohibition, to be being respected, not to be despised, not to be ridiculously, and even not to be disgraced. The elder's position is *nuwasi-malati*. In other words, the young people have to appreciate and pay respect to the older ones; otherwise, those disrespectful might be *kualat* (ruined) and their life would ruin.

Despite, the elders should not treat the other young people thoughtlessly and egoistically, such as way the *penunggul's* (middle finger) *jarwo dosok* attitude, namely *ngungkul-ungkuli* or *ngunggul-unguli* (arrogant). *Ngungkul-ungkuli* (arrogant) can be regarded as very self-interested, self-initiative, unsociable, opportunistic without ever caring for other people with whom he/she is living. Every individual should go hand in hand with the neighbor, to share, law-abiding, and cooperative (Suseno, 1984: 40; Mulder, 1996: 72). Furthermore, the elders are certainly obliged to advice, to warn, and to encourage the young to do good things, and to lead the young people into a right way. All of this is intended for the young to live well, in self-control and equability. Meanwhile, the younger people are obliged to follow any advice, to appreciate, to pay respect to the elders.

The using of familial salutation to designate the relationship between the young and the older people seems still relevant today in that, through this way, they could remind each other about their position in concern with their rights and duties. However, they also have to be very critical in all situations in that the younger people not only have to do what they are obliged to, but they also deserve to question and confront all the things which is unable to get along with their consciences.

Togetherhness

Togetherhness is a noteworthy fundamental foundation in social life. A failure to build togetherhness certainly could bring social life into *congkrah* (disharmony). In other words, a *congkrah* could make social order ruined.

On this case, such *congkrah* attitude is reflected in the way the *temunggul* (middle finger) acts *ngungkul-ungkuli* (arrogantly). This arrogance, consequently, cause the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) to dislike the *temunggul* (middle finger). So, the *jenthik manis* (ring finger) command the *jenthik* (little finger), to kill the *temunggul* (middle finger). That the lack of togetherness could lead to disharmony is revealed by the *jempol* (thumb) as well, as seen in the lyric *padha congkrah dadi bubrah* (if you dispute, you be wretched to pieces).

Just like the concept of seniority, the significance of togetherness is still relevant today. It encourages, among others, to keep being cooperative with someone else and not behave individualistically, because human being principally cannot live all alone and always needs other people to live with. To build a high-quality of togetherness, everyone must pay respect to other people. By paying other people respect the harmony can be sustained and there would be no conflict.

Harmony

For Javanese people, the concept of harmony means any effort to prevent conflict. To prevent conflict or to protect harmony Javanese people effort several things, among others: to avoid any open dispute or physical quarrel, such as *mateni* (to kill), but they still may express the annoyance through *persatruan* or *jothakan*, by which the annoyance would settle down in case a peaceful communication is to be build again; to develop any kinds of familial salutation. By intensifying to use the familial salutation, so each of relatives would certainly remind and be concerned with their rights and duties.

Anyone should be cooperative and build togetherness within their own group, to share, and obedient. Anyone should avoid any *ngungkul-ungkuli* (arrogant) attitude, very self-interested, egoistic, unsociable, opportunistic without ever caring for other people with whom he/she is living, because those kinds of things can cause disputes, which means that the social order would not ever be achieved; the younger people should respect any advice given by the elders, or elder-regarded, who remind any consequences to come, which does not take the form of threat in a physical punishment.

The significance of harmony in Javanese culture could become a reference for any other society, today. In principle, the kind of harmony in Javanese culture has more emphasis to attempt to prevent conflict. This should hopefully be actualized for the reasons explained above.

The Significance of “*Restu*” (Blessing)

The parents’ or the ancestors’ blessing is very important in Javanese culture. The significance of blessing is that if anyone wants to get hold of successfulness, prosperousness, feeling of safety, self-control, and happiness, he/she has to have the blessing from the parents, the elders, or even the ancestors. The blessing is not only affordable by way of asking for the elders’ prayers, or by way of cleaning up the grave and studding flowers onto it, or by means of praying for the ancestors in certain times as well as appeal for them so that it is easier to achieve our expectation, but also by means of following the elders’ advice and prohibition. Through these ways, it is believed that all the duties have been done and, so they could pray for a help to be given and all the hope would certainly be easier to achieve.

The significance of blessing that is still relevant until now is that, in addition to keeping reminding the young generation about all that has been done and told to in the past years, so that they keep respecting and obeying their parent, the parents or the elders also must, in case the young generation ask for a blessing, give advice and remind the young generation anything that allows them able to protect themselves.

Conclusion

Analysis on the lyric *enthik* (little finger) in the *dolanan driji* (fingers-play) above indicates that one of the Javanese cultures is expressed in the *enthik* (little finger) of the *dolanan driji* (fingers-play). This song expresses a number of culturally local-wisdom values which are expected to be helpful for overcoming any recent social problems, such as violence, disorder, and conflict.

Bibliography

- Ahimsa-Putra.a 2006. "Dari *Mytheme* ke *ceriteme*: Pengembangan Konsep dan Metode analisis Struktural" dalam *Esei-esei Antropologi: Teori, Metodologi dan Etnografi*. H.S. Ahimsa-Putra (ed.) Yogyakarta: Keperl Press.
- Ahimsa-Putra.b 2006. "'Baik' dan 'Buruk' dalam Budaya Jawa" Artikel Ilmiah Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Geertz, Hildred. 1982. *Keluarga Jawa*. Jakarta: PT Temprint.
- Overback, H. 1935. *Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes*. Jogjakarta: Java-Instituut.
- Katno. 1940."Taman Suka". Mataram. Dikopi kembali oleh Ki Mudjijono.1975.Yogyakarta: Taman Kesenian Ibu Pawiyatan Tamansiswa
- Koentjaraningrat. 1994. *Kebudayaan Jawa*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- Mulder. 1996. *Kepribadian Jawa dan Pembangunan Nasional*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Poerwadarminta, W.J.S. 1939. *Baoesastra Djawa*. Batavia: J.B. Wolters Uitgevers Maatschappij N.V.
- Prawioatmojo, S. 1980. *Bausastra Jawa-Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT Toko Gunung Agung.
- Suseno, Franz Magnis. 1984. *Etika Jawa*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
