

International Review of Humanities Studies
www.irhs.ui.ac.id, e-ISSN: 2477-6866, p-ISSN: 2527-9416
Vol.4, No.1, January 2019, pp. 192-200

JASMINE FLOWERS IN JAVANESE MYSTICISM

Nanny Sri Lestari

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia
nanny-sl@ui.ac.id and pbintangpagi@gmail.com

Abstract

This study discusses Javanese society's awareness of jasmine flowers (*jasminum sambac*) which are small in shape but have full of cultural meanings and philosophies, thus becoming a symbol of life. The focus of this study is the physical form of jasmine flowers and awareness of a healthy natural environment that can build a healthy mental (soul). The purpose of this study is to explore the unique small flower of jasmine, which has long been a symbol of awareness of environmental health which is not only physical but also mental (soul). This study uses a theoretical framework of health, the natural environment and Javanese mysticism, to see the relationship between humans and their environment. This study uses a qualitative research paradigm procedure. Qualitative research procedures provide opportunities for researchers to provide interpretations of the results of their research. The results showed that, ideologically, Javanese people were indeed aware of the importance of the natural environment. The natural environment is the most important factor in human life. Through daily activities can be seen and interpreted that Javanese humans cannot escape from their natural environment. Jasmine small white flowers and it turns out to save many benefits in physical and mental health. Through the cultural roots that exist in cultural ritual activities can be seen, an effort to preserve small white flowers that have many benefits. With positive benefits can give birth to a philosophy that captures the meaning of the flower in life.

Keywords: flowers, philosophy, meaning, natural environment, society.

Introduction

Indonesia has a wealth of various types of plants. Plants have various types of groups, some are perennials, there are fruit trees, there are flower plants. Various kinds of flowers grow in Indonesia. So many types of flowers in Indonesia, people use these flowers for various interests in life. There are flowers that are used as decorations, some are to be eaten and some are used for certain ritual activities (Joko Ismato 1999:37). Traditional Javanese society in the past, diligently made observations on everything related to life. Events in human life are observed continuously, so as to produce an opinion about certain things. This opinion develops from time to time in accordance with people's experience in living their lives (Drajat Solikhin 1998).

In its development, human knowledge from time to time is increasing. Utilizing the environment to meet the needs of human life is not only limited to the need to eat and drink, but also begins to explore the needs of others. Humans do not only know language and religion, but also begin to know about art. At first it was very simple art knowledge, but gradually the knowledge of this art developed rapidly (Dimas Baskoro, 2003:74). Plants are widely used for various purposes of human life. There are a number of plants that humans use

to fulfill their life's interests. Especially are plants used as human food staples. But people use plants not only to use basic food ingredients, but also for other purposes. The other needs are the needs of socio-cultural activities. There are many cultural ritual activities, one of which is a traditional ceremony. For example a traditional wedding ceremony. (Ahmad Darmanto, 2004).

Traditional ceremonies are part of cultural ritual activities carried out by the community based on their respective environments. In traditional ceremonies there are a lot of equipment that must be prepared. Traditional ceremonies that are generally known to the public are marriage ceremonies. However, there are many traditional ceremonies carried out by the community. Traditional ceremonies are usually carried out by following the cycle of human life (Ali Nurdin M. 2002: 91). At each traditional ceremony there will usually be flowers. The choice of interest is very dependent on the people who choose it. The flowers chosen are of course adapted to the natural environment where the people live. Unique but the existence of flowers at each traditional ceremonial activity is certainly very interesting to listen to, is it possible there is something behind it all?

Methodology

This paper is made on the basis of a study conducted for one year. The research on flowers is focused on people who in their cultural ritual activities use flowers as one of the elements. This research can be categorized as a qualitative research paradigm procedure because it is more dependent on the interpretation of researchers (Strauss & Corbin 2015:67). In qualitative research, all the results of the respondent's answers have meaning related to the meaning of the results of the respondent's answers. From the respondent's answer, there is a certain point of view in dealing with a problem. Community issues, indeed, do not always have to be the same, in how they are disclosed, but the red thread can be seen equally (Moleong, L.J 1997:77).

This research was conducted by conducting a number of observations or observations, as well as interviews with a number of respondents. Our respondents were for two cultural actors, in this case we took bridal grooming and the community who made up the bride's family. Our respondents consisted of 12 bridal makeup artists and 50 makeup brides. Most people reveal that habits are formed because people live in their own groups.

By itself there is created the same collective memory of an event in the community. There is a collective memory that can survive but not often slip or fade according to the conditions of change in their respective communities (Van Peursen, 1988:83). Groups are part of a very broad community. This social group can have the same or different cultural experience with the surrounding community. Through this cultural experience, there is a crossing of opinions or enrichment of opinions which gives birth to a new perspective on one life experience or cultural event (Kuntjaraningrat, 1984: 83). From this condition the researcher, conducts a search to obtain the results of knowledge and understanding from the respondents about what lies behind the symbols, meanings and philosophies of certain flowers, as a means of cultural rituals of the community?

Telon Flowers

Javanese people recognize the term *telon* flower. The word *telon* flower refers to a collection of flowers of three kinds. *Telon* in Javanese comes from *telu* and *-an* to be *teluan* and quickly and the combination of vowels *u* and *a* becomes *telon*. *Telon* flower means a collection of flowers of three kinds of flowers (Poerwadarminta et.al, 1932).

The three types of flowers are *rose* (*rosa*), *jasmine* (*jasminum*), *cananga* (*canangium odoratum*). The use of jasmine, in some places is often replaced by white cempaka (*magnolia champaca*). Actually what is being pursued is the composition of the colors of the three flowers, while for the aroma the three flowers have a distinctive but fragrant aroma. Like the example image below,



Picture 1 and 2:
Telon flower with cempaka and jasmine as a differentiator

In addition to *telon* flowers, the respondents were also familiar with *setaman* flowers. The flower of the literal meaning is all the flowers in the garden. According to the respondents at this time, this set of flowers is well known to the public. The respondents confirmed that not all of the respondents were still familiar with the flower set consisting of any flowers. From a number of respondents, it was obtained information that the ancient flower set consisted of 7 kinds of flowers in the garden. The seven flowers are 1. *Mawar* (*rosa*), 2. *Melati* (*Jasminum sambac*), 3. *Kenanga* (*canangium odoratum*), 4. *Sedap malam* (*polianthes tuberosa*) 5. *Kemuning* (*muraya paniculata*), 6. *Bunga Tanjung* (*mimusops elengi*), 7. *Cempaka* (*Magnolia champaca*). At present, very few people know the whole flower. In ancient times these seven flowers were used for various kinds of traditional ceremonies, because of the aroma of the seven fragrant flowers. At present the use of the seven flowers is no longer like in the past. The community does not really understand how to use it. The community mixes these types of flowers for reasons not knowing and not understanding what they are for, and how they are used and what they are for.

Jasmine Flowers, Symbols, Meanings and Philosophies

Jasmine flowers (*jasminum sambac*), jasmine flowers have physical characteristics as shrubs or creeping plants. This plant lives in a tropical habitat. In Indonesia alone, people know so many variants of jasmine flowers. The flowers are small, generally white, smell nice with flower crowns piled or piled up. According to research records this plant is thought to

originate from South Asia and is spread almost throughout the world including in Indonesia. Each species has a different habitat, but in general jasmine likes tropical temperate habitats in low-lying areas up to 1,600 meters above sea level. But what is widely known and used by the public is jasmine flowers as shown below,



Picture 3:
Melati (jasminum sambac)

Together with three other types of flowers, *bunga melati* (*jasminum sambac*) become Indonesian national flowers, namely *anggrek bulan* (*phalaenopsis amabilis*) and *padma raksasa* (*rafflesia arnoldi*). Jasmine is called the *national puspa*, the moon orchid is known as the *puspa pesona* (puspa of charm) while the giant lotus is known as the *puspa langka* (rare flowers)¹. The function of jasmine flowers is very important because it has penetrated into the lives of people in Indonesia. Jasmine flowers are not only a decoration but also as a mixture of tea drinks. Tea drinks mixed with melati flowers have become a daily drink for people in Indonesia. Indonesian people believe that drinking tea mixed with jasmine flowers can provide physical freshness and health, because jasmine is known as one type of aphrodisiac or a substance that can stimulate sexual arousal, which can also provide a calming effect and reduce stress. Wangi melati itself turns out to work like an anti-depressant drug².

Jasmine flowers are a symbol or symbol of holiness. The sacred meaning is derived from the color of the white flower but is able to provide a soft, fragrant aroma. Fragrant aroma on jasmine, very soft not too strong. That's why jasmine flowers can be used as a mixture for beverage ingredients. In the ritual ceremony the jasmine flower is considered as an illustration of the effort to purify oneself. As stated in fragrant jasmine health can work like an anti-depressant drug, it turns out it is able to cleanse not only physically but also the soul. The physical form of jasmine flowers (*jasminum sambac*) is indeed small, but behind its small form there are very positive things that can be utilized for human life.

With its small condition, jasmine flowers are widely used for decoration, especially during traditional ritual ceremonies. This flower is arranged or arranged into a decoration that can be a decoration that attaches to the human body and the room. In cultural ritual activities such as marriage, before the bride and groom sit side by side at the aisle, usually the siraman ceremony is held, namely the parents give blessing before the wedding. In the blessing prayer, parents hope that in everyday life all steps and work must be carried out by a

1) *Melati Putih (Jasminum sambac)* it was stated as the nation's center, one of Indonesia's three national flowers, based on Presidential Decree Number 4 of 1993.

2) <https://www.dokter.id/berita/manfaat-teh-melati-bagi-kesehatan>

determination of the will of the holy (Indah Daljuri 2004:81). The meaning of this philosophy develops based on the understanding that jasmine flowers are pure white and have a soft scent that is able to provide one good power, which can defeat or repel bad forces that disturb humans. White is considered a symbol of something sacred. Jasmine flowers are considered to be able to provide the aroma of freshness and good spirit, so that it can be a source of goodness in life (Dian Parwata, 2002:77).

In cultural ritual activities, jasmine flowers are often replaced with *cempaka* flowers, but this condition occurs when the situation is urgent. In general, white *cempaka* flowers. *Cempaka* flower or in the Javanese language is called *kembang kanthil*, has two types, namely the white *cempaka* flower (*magnolia alba*) and the yellow *cempaka* flower (*magnolia champaca*).



Picture 4:
Cempaka putih (*magnolia alba*)

The choice is dropped on this white *cempaka* flower because of its clean white color, which is similar to the white color of jasmine flowers. Indeed the scent of white *cempaka* flower is much stronger than jasmine. But because of its authoritative appearance, white *cempaka* flowers are often chosen to replace or even accompany jasmine flowers.

Other flowers, besides Jasmine in *Telon* Flowers

Like jasmine flowers, roses also include shrubs and vines. Roses together with jasmine flowers are part of the *telon* flower. Roses are well known to the public, and have quite a lot of types. But in cultural ritual activities in the Javanese community, the roses that are widely used are local roses which are as below,



Picture 5:
local roses means roses that are often found
in Central Java and East Java in cultural ritual activities

The selected roses that are chosen are many red roses because they provide contrast in their composition with jasmine flowers. This rose has a shape larger than jasmine flowers and has a soft, fragrant aroma like jasmine flowers. This plant also includes shrub plants that propagate, can live in the tropics as well as jasmine. According to public belief, this plant symbolizes something big that is brave. Red is a symbol of courage. The red color in cultural ritual activities is a complement to the white color of jasmine. In addition, it also provides a spirit of strength, courage and admiration for those in power over life. The red color of roses is also an example for the balance of life.

In addition to roses, there are also *Kenanga* flowers. *Kenanga* or *canangium odoratum* has two types, ordinary cananga which in scientific terms is called *canangium odoratum forma macrophylla* and *canangium odoratum forma genuina*. The difference between the two types of flowers is in the size of the flowers. In Indonesia, which is commonly found, widely used for cultural ritual purposes is kenanga with the color of green flowers and a small form or called *canangium odoratum forma macrophylla*. This plant includes shrub plants that are widely planted as home decoration.



Picture 6:
kenanga (*canangium odoratum forma macrophylla*)
which is widely planted as a home page decoration

Cananga flowers are part of a series of telon flower collections. Its main function is to beautify the composition. This cananga flower tree includes tropical plants. This plant can grow in all tropical regions. Cananga flowers have a different physical form than jasmine flowers. Cananga has a rather yellowish green color. Cananga flowers have a distinctive fragrant aroma both with jasmine and rose flowers. The scent of *cananga* flowers is stronger than roses and jasmine.

According to the oral story of the community, opening cananga is a counterweight to the fragrant aroma of roses and jasmine. Inadvertently, the fragrant scent of kenanga flowers has a different aura from jasmine flowers. Cananga flowers have a meaning that depicts the earth where humans live. Yellowish green is considered to represent a green and yellowish rice field. Philosophically, cananga describes prosperity and simplicity. Cananga blooms in a downcast condition, not like roses and jasmine (note figure 4 above). Therefore kenanga flowers are a symbol of the simplicity that every Javanese human must have.

Flowers as a Symbol of the Philosophy of Human Life.

Actually the existence of the three flowers in the telon flower has the same position. It's just that jasmine flowers have more value, namely jasmine flowers are widely used by the community in all aspects of life, not only as decoration but also as a drink. It is not possible

to find roses or cananga. The use of these three types of flowers is interesting because the Javanese people have confidence in odd numbers. This is natural because odd numbers always refer to the number of things. Javanese people believe that the number one in human life can no longer be divided. Number one refers to the Almighty. Therefore the other numbers can be removed but the number one is not biased. *Telon* flower is a metaphor for the life of the masusia. In life on earth humans must protect their environment.

Humans are the highest creatures, two other creatures are animals and plants. Both of these creatures become a buffer for human life on earth (Endrawara S. 2016). By being aware of the human condition on earth, it must be realized that humans are God's creations that must protect the natural environment, family and society. If it is described it will be like this,

Table 1 : *Telon* Flowers

Name of Flower	Color	Symbol	Meaning	Philosophy
<i>Mawar</i> (rosa)	Red	Brave	<i>Describes a bold attitude because it's right</i>	<i>someone, in facing this life, must be brave to be honest, and fair and balanced</i>
<i>Melati</i> (jasminum sambac)	White	Holy	<i>A clean and soft heart according to something that has just appeared / born (compare with tabula rasa)</i>	<i>someone, who has a pure heart, like something that is just starting out, and is based on pure determination, and holy thoughts.</i>
<i>Kenanga</i> (canangium odoratum forma macrophylla)	<i>Yellowish green</i>	Simple	<i>Yellowish green, submissive due to humility.</i>	<i>As rice grains are increasingly filled, they are increasingly bowed down because they bear the weight of the rice content, which is very valuable for human life.</i>

From the table above, it can be seen that the choice of interest is based on very deep thoughts on the meaning of life balance. The balance of life is human hard work to achieve perfection. Just pay attention to the bright red rose, but it has a soft scent (Sri Mulyono 1983: 86). Jasmine Flower, is a metaphor for the perfection of life that becomes someone's dream. Jasmine flowers with white color and soft fragrant aroma are examples of a form of perfection of life that must be achieved by humans.

The last part is *kenanga* flower which has two colors (De Jong 1976: 37). However, it must be realized that the cananga flower has two colors, yellowish green, and a fragrant scent that is stronger than roses and jasmine, but the position when the kenanga flowers bloom, the ylang flowers always face down. Cananga flowers do not highlight the flowers to the top, cananga flowers always face down, as if downcast embarrassed because of its advantages. All of these descriptions illustrate why these three flowers were chosen as a group called telon flowers (Niels Mulder 1980).

Conclusion

The Javanese are indeed very familiar with white jasmine flowers. Jasmine flowers are widely planted in the yard as ornamental plants. But in the reality of life, Javanese people use jasmine flowers not only as ornamental plants but also as a complement to drinking the complementary cultural rituals. As a complement to cultural rituals, jasmine flowers, along with roses and cananga, are known as telon flowers. The point is that jasmine flowers are *the main interest* of the three collections of flowers.

The Javanese community subsequently recognized telon flowers as part of cultural rituals. The selection of flowers elements which are part of the telon flower turns out to have a background that is not simple. There are symbols, meanings and philosophies that accompany it. All of them are Javanese efforts or people in seeking the perfection of life. Battle of life is achieved through attitudes that maintain balance in behavior. This behavior is taken for example in the three flowers that have one thing in common but also have the same difference. Of the three flowers, the advantages and disadvantages are complementary to one another, so that one main perfection can be obtained, namely beauty that is fragile and perfect.

References

- Ahmad Darmanto (2004). *Makna dan Kekayaan Hayati Indonesia*. Bandung: Rosida Karya.
- Ali Nurdin M. (2002). *Keragaman Ritual Budaya di Indonesia*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- Dimas Baskoro (2003). *Antara Ruang Budaya dan Kepercayaan Tradisional*. Semarang: Dunia
- Dian Parwata, (2002). *Tanaman Hias di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Jendela Ilmu.
- Drajat Solikhin. (1998). *Masyarakat Jawa di Pedesaan*. Surakarta: Penyuluh Semangat.
- De Jong, S. (1976), *Salah Satu Sikap Hidup Orang Jawa*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Endraswara S (2016) *Memayu Hayuning Bawana*. Jakarta: PT Buku Seru.
- Indah Daljuri (2004). *Budaya dan Keluarga di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Buku Satu
- Joko Ismato. (1999). *Kesenian dan Budaya Masyarakat*. Suarabaya: Bintang Tiga.
- Koentjaraningrat. (1984). *Kebudayaan Jawa* Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- Moleong, Lexy J. (2011) *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Mulder, Niels. (1980) *Pribadi dan Masyarakat di Jawa*. Jakarta: Sinar Harapan.
- Poerwadarminto, WJS.(1939). *Baoesastra Djawa* Pangetjapan J. B. Wolters.
- Sri Mulyono (1983) *Simbolisme dan Mistikisme dalam Wayang: Sebuah Tinjauan Filosofis*. Jakarta: Gunung Agung.
- Strauss A & Corbin J (2015) *Dasar-dasar Penelitian Kualitatif: Tatalangkah dan Teknik-teknik Teoritisasi* (terjemahan Shodiq M & Muttaqien I), Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- van Peursen C.A.(1988), *Strategi Kebudayaan* Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.