KI HAJAR DEWANTARA’S ACTIONS AND THOUGHTS: 
THE NORMS AND VALUES OF 
MODERN INDONESIAN EDUCATION

Adrianus Laurens Gerung Waworuntu
Department of Area Studies, Faculty of Humanities
Universitas Indonesia
adrianus.laurens@ui.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Ki Hadjar Dewantara is synonym with Indonesian education. His thoughts and actions became the foundation of modern Indonesian education system. His famous slogan is Tut Wuri Handayani, which means following from behind by influencing. That is, do not try to pull students from the front. Children who are still learning should be left to find their own way. This slogan reflects his eclectic education philosophy, derives from his understanding and contemplation on Eastern tradition and Western scholarship. This article is an attempt to trace back the origins of the norms and values, by presenting the actions and thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara in its context. The family and cultural backgrounds gave him the foundation of his self-awareness as a subject in a colonial society. The impact of his mixed education, and social and political condition of this colonial period were significant factors that has moulded Ki Hadjar’s political awareness and outlook. By looking into the actions and thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, we might find expositions on how an Indonesian subject interact with his world and ideals in a unique period of the history of Indonesia, and the origins behind the philosophy and ideals that shaped Indonesian education.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of modern Indonesia, Raden Mas Suwardi Suryaningrat (1889-1959), better known by his adopted name Ki Hajar Dewantara, was a respected figure among the colonial Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and modern post-independence Indonesian politicians. As Raden Mas Suwardi Suryaningrat he was revered as Bapak Pergerakan Nasional (Forefather of National Movement), meanwhile as Ki Hajar Dewantara he was identical with Bapak Pendidikan Nasional (Forefather of National Education).

Suwardi’s political career started very young in 1913 when he launched his criticism against the Dutch colonial government through his skillful writings in the Dutch-language newspaper, De Express, published in Bandung, West Java. In fact, he was probably one of the first inlander who dare to publicly criticized the colonial government at that time, written “in vigorous and beautiful Dutch”. (Surjomihardjo, 1964:371 The article entitled “Als Ik eens Nederlander was” was observed as the first sarcastic article written in Dutch that challenged the justification for Dutch overlordship in Indonesia. (Scherer, 1975:57).

On 19 August 1945 the first Republic of Indonesia’s government was created, and Ki
Hajar Dewantara was appointed as the first Minister for Education, Instruction and Culture of the new republic. He held this position until 14 November 1945 when the cabinet was dissolved by the decree of Vice President in order to give way to the party system and democracy. The new cabinet was created and led by Indonesia’s first Prime Minister, Sutan Sjahrir, a socialist. (Ricklefs, 1981: 206 and Bambang Sokawati, 1989:123). In 1947, he became a member of Dewan Penasehat Agung (Supreme Advisory Council), serving as its acting chairman in 1949, and later as deputy chairman. He formally withdrawn from politics in 1954 when he retired from Indonesian parliament in that year due to his ill-health.

Not long after his death in 1959 with a presidential decree, Ki Hajar Dewantara was posthumously bestowed the honor as the republic’s second national hero and entitled as Bapak Pendidikan Nasional (The Father of National Education) by Soekarno, and his birthday, 2nd May was made as Hari Pendidikan Nasional (National Education Day). This title, bapak, is formally given to a person with outstanding contribution to the nation in his capacity. Among his legacies, the most tangible is Taman Siswa, an educational movement based on a program for national and cultural revival, which was regarded as the most influential education institution in giving the foundation of Indonesian educational system. During the early years of the Republic of Indonesia, at least there were five Ministers for Education and Culture who had backgrounds of involvement with Taman Siswa; Ki Hajar Dewantoro, Ali Sastroamijoyo (who was also twice Prime Minister during the 1950s), Ki Sarmidi Mangunsarkoro, Ki Sarino Mangunpranoto, and Ki Mohammad Said Reksohadiprojo (Surjomihardjo, 1986: 194). Soekarno, was a former Taman Siswa teacher. Although Taman Siswa is now ceased to have its influence upon Indonesian national education, its presence is still considered important and relevant.

Family and Education

Ki Hajar Dewantara was born Raden Mas Suwardi Suryaningrat in a Javanese royal family, Paku Alam of Yogyakarta. His father, Prince Suryaningrat, was a son of Paku Alam III, whom with his two wives and eight children were allowed to live within the court zone. Their rank in the court was in the third row, or the lowest in terms of their relation within Javanese court hierarchy who are allowed to have a living quarter in the court area. To be in the third row in a Javanese court means far or probably at the lowest rank in their access to the court’s political and economic privileges.

Prince Suryaningrat himself, was described as a perfect prototype, at least partly, of the Javanese priyayi. According to Geertz’s typology of the priyayi as one of three main cultural types of the Javanese society, that “its ultimate roots in the Hindu-Javanese courts of pre-colonial times, conserved and cultivated a highly refined court etiquette, a very complex art of dance, drama, music, and poetry, and a Hindu-Buddhist mysticism. They stressed neither the animistic element in the over-all Javanese syncretism as did the abangans, nor the Islamic as did the santris, but the Hinduistic.” (Geertz, 1960: 6). The other two are the abangan, a product of cultural syncretism between Hinduism and Islamic tradition; and the santris, referred to the purer Moslems. (Geertz, The Religion of Java, 1960, passim).

Due to his parent’s financial situation, he was sent to Europeesche Lagere School
(European Elementary School) or ELS which situated in a village not far from the court and not to the more prestigious Eerste Klasse (First Class School). This school was for the children of the aristocracy and well-to-do, where the children of the Paku Alam IV were educated. This school was classified under “Occidental Education.” Europeesche Lagere School (European Elementary School) was initially set up for the children of Dutch trekkers (temporary resident) and blijvers (permanent resident), and only later the children of certain Indonesians from the elite class were allowed to attend. This school was classified under “Oriental Education”. (Paul Van der Veur, Education and Social Change in Indonesia, Athens: University of Ohio, 1969 and also Raden Loekman Djajadiningrat, From Illiteracy to University: Educational Development in the Netherlands Indies. New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942).

After graduating from ELS education 1904, Suwardi wanted to further his studies to Kweekschool (Teacher’s Training School, established in 1906), still in Yogyakarta to become a teacher. After one year in teachers’ college, thanks to Dr. Wahidin Sudirohusodo, he was offered a scholarship to study at STOVIA (School tot Opleiding van Indischce Arsten), the only medical school in Batavia. It was here in STOVIA, that Suwardi began to broaden his world outlook, especially when he began to socialize with fellow students from other parts of the country, both in the classes and especially in the dorm. Certain conditions that existed in the school also began to stimulate his dormant self-awareness that had been building up since his primary school years. There was an incident that show his first “political” encounter with his overlords which might leave certain impact in his view on the colonial government (Bambang Dewantara, 1979:32)

Suwardi was also described as non-conformist character to certain Javanese feudal customs. Ever since his boyhood he disliked the customary dodok-sembah, that is the way of paying homage while shuffling along on the ground in squatting position. This custom is still prevalent among certain Javanese today, especially on wedding ceremony and the Moslem’s Idul Fitri celebration where the children pay homage to their parents. Suwardi also against the court’s monopoly of wearing parang rusak, a special batik design then prohibited for the common people (Pranata: 1959: 36)

It was the discriminatory aspects in STOVIA at that time that provoked this self-awareness among these students. At least there were two regulations that strongly triggered this feeling which compelled Suwardi to challenge the school’s authority. Firstly, was the regulation that required non-Christian students from Java and Sumatera to wear their respective traditional costume. Secondly, was the prohibition to celebrate Idul Fitri. They looked at the prohibition to celebrate Idul Fitri as a symbolic measure to denigrate their Islamic religious tradition. Suwardi and his friends protested these regulations which they felt discriminatory and dualistic; regulations that symbolizes the Western superiority against the customs of the natives.

There were maybe similar protests which occurred in other schools recorded at that period, which reflected the mood of change in the colonial society in a small scale. It was in this situation young Suwardi began his political career, as McVey suggested that, young intellectuals such as Suwardi and his friends in STOVIA, represented a new elite who had a new world outlook which were shaped up by several factors, such as European style education, awareness of the European intrusion, and awareness of the decay of the traditional structure. (McVey, 1976: 128-129)
Political Activities

Suwardi started his political activities by chance, not by design, although there are signs of reformist drives inherent in him as has been demonstrated before in his childhood and adolescent years. This non-conformist, or “radical social reformist” character of Suwardi probably derives from the fact that he “belonged to the less privileged group within the aristocracy”, as one study suggested. (Scherer, 1979:69). This line of argument was built upon the assumption that it is obvious for a person like Suwardi to be more sensitive in reacting against the social injustice and discrimination prevalent around him because he was not a member of the immediate family of the reigning Paku Alam.

Unfortunately, according to a study by Abdurrachman Surjomihardjo (“An Analysis of Suwardi Surjaningrat’s Ideals and National-Revolutionary Actions (1913-1922),” MIISI, v. 2, no. 3, pp. 371-406), none of his first articles in those newspapers are available in any archives or library. However, it is presumed that his talent to put forward his thoughts in his writings and his awareness of the issues that were current at that time must be quite impressive to get the attention of two prominent editors and political actors of that period, Douwes Dekker and H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto. It was Douwes Dekker who found out Suwardi’s potential after reading his writings in several newspapers in Central and East Java. He then invited Suwardi to move to Bandung to assist him managing De Expres. Suwardi moved there in 1912 to take up full-time editorship of De Expres. It was in this town Suwardi later became the chairman of local Sarekat Islam.

What brought Suwardi to the limelight of the Indonesian political scene in that period was an article he wrote in protest against the celebration of the Netherland’s centenial independence from Napoleon’s domination over the Dutch in their motherland. Prior to the writing of this article, early in July 1913, Suwardi, Cipto, Abdul Muis, A.H. Wignyadisastra and others in Bandung founded the Inlandsch Comité tot Herdenking van Nederlands Honderdjarige Vijheid (Native Committe for the Commemoration of One Hundred Years of Dutch Liberty), or Comité Boemi Poetra for short. This committee was established to counter the government’s plan to celebrate the Dutch independence. The goal of the committee was to use every available opportunity which could absorb public attention, to exert the criticisms that were hidden amongst the people against government policies by sending deputation to Holland. Among others was to protest the plan of the creation of Koloniale Raad, or Council for the Colony, which was to be established very soon in the second chamber in the Dutch parliament as people’s representative board, mostly because of the “real people” were not represented in this council. Way funds were extracted from the people in order to finance the festivities.

This article, “Als ik een Nederlander was,” was skillfully written in perfect Dutch, at least five thousand copies were printed and distributed, and then sent to all newspapers in Java. Some newspapers quoted the whole article, such as De Expres in Bandung on 19 July 1913, while others only printed its review. At that time Suwardi was serving as the editor of this Indische Partij’s newspaper. In this article, Suwardi ridiculed the intention of the Dutch in celebrating their Independence Day because it was an insensitive act, “particularly the idea that the natives must finance an undertaking in the profits of which they themselves have no part”. The whole thing became absurd to him and he accused that the Dutch, in this case the
Governor General, wanted to show-off, and he warned that this could led to the rise of independence movement among the natives. Because “it reminds us that we are not a free people and that even the ‘Dutch would not give us independence as long as Mr. Idenburg (the Governor General) still rules the country” (Dewantara, 1952: 250-255)

The impact of such writing in the colonial politics was taken seriously; the highest authorities in Batavia were then informed by the Resident of Bandung who saw this as a dangerous act. On August 1913, the Governor-General announced the banishment of all three from Java. Originally, Dekker, Tjipto and Suwardi were sentenced to be exiled, respectively, to Kupang, Banda, and Bangka. This sentence later was being revised, and instead they were being exiled to Holland. On 6 September 1913 they left Java for a life of exile abroad; Dekker lived on exile for five years, Tjipto about one year, and Suwardi for six years.

In his defense of the accusation to incite a rebellion, Suwardi said: “I really believe that a rebellion at present time would bring decades of setbacks for our people. It is not possible for us now to appoint people who are going to steer the government in the future and be able to manage the fate of millions of human beings. Furthermore, if we are really being accused of inciting the people to rebel against the current legitimate authorities - doesn’t it need decades-long preparation for this kind of rebellion? And for that kind of aims we would not do it openly.” (Harahap, 1980: 87-95)

On her critical assessment of Suwardi’s activities, especially on the radical views in 1913, Scherer described Suwardi as a person with no choice. His radical views were asserted when he was in a position to do that without nothing to lose. He was not a member of the Javanese court and also a drop-out from the Dutch-oriented administration. As a journalist he was economically independent of the Dutch administration. “He had nothing to lose by being sharply against any injustice in Dutch colonial policy, and stood to gain prominence as a defender of his people’s rights at a time when radical stands in the defense of the natives’ rights against the interest of colonial rule were at their lowest ebb among the Javanese ruling elite.” (Scherer, 1975: 71).

On Exile: Actions and Ideas

There were not many accounts available on Suwardi’s activities in Holland. Together with Dekker and Tjipto, they became members of Indische Vereeniging (Indies Association), an Indonesian student organisation which was founded in October 1908. While Tjipto and Dekker continued their political campaign against the colonial government in Holland, Suwardi took a different path in conveying his messages. One year later, Tjipto was being sent back to Dutch Indies due to his chronic disease, and Dekker then went to Germany to further his studies where he joined an Asian student movements. Meanwhile Suwardi and his wife who were allowed to accompany him to Holland set up a news bureau, Indonesisch Persbureau. This press bureau was founded in 1913 in The Hague as a center for information and propaganda on the nationalism movement in Indonesia.

While in Holland, he was involved in cultural activities among the Indonesian students.
Surjomihardjo argues that in order to avoid unnecessary problems with Dutch government, Suwardi applied “a cultural approach” in order to conceal his political agenda. (Surjomihardjo, 1964: 383-384). During his six-year stay in the Netherlands, he wrote thirty articles; four in 1913, four in 1914, none in 1915, eleven in 1916, six in 1917 and five in 1918. (Tsuchiya, p. 31). Suwardi also pursued an educational study which made him aware and well-versed with the educational thoughts of prominent Western and Eastern educator such as Montessori, and Tagore, but also as suggested by Plumridge, the ideas of a wide range of European thinkers such as the philosophers of history Dilthey and Spengler; the moral philosopher Eduard Spranger; Georg Kerschensteiner, a pioneer of vocational education; and the psychoanalysts Freud, Adler and Jung. Plumridge further suggested it was Froebel, Steiner, Montessori and Tagore that had influenced him, both morally and intellectually. A trace of Gerhard Jan Lighart’s thoughts, a leading exponent in the Netherlands of ‘progressive’ educational ideas, may also be found in Ki Hajar’s philosophy. (Plumridge, 1992: p. 15). His financial difficulties living as a journalist of a student organization were being eased by donations and help from his Indonesian and Dutch friends. (Pranata, 1959: 49)

The first evident of his political ideas while on exile was stated in an article entitled Stromingen en Partijen in Oost-Indië (Trends and Parties in East Indies), published in Nieuwe Amsterdammer weekly of 2 June, 1917. Here he exposed the people’s movement in Indonesia in order to inform the conservatives in Holland who were not prepared to acknowledge an independent colony. (See Surjomihardjo, 1964: 374-376). Suwardi illustrated and giving an assessment on the reason behind the awakening of two of the earliest nationalist-oriented associations in Dutch Indies, namely Budi Utomo and Sarekat Islam. On the character and the aim of Budi Utomo association, he wrote,

On 20 May 1908, the association Budi Utomo was founded in a classroom of the medical school (STOVIA). Due to the fact that several years before a number of intellectuals had already launched similar movements, most of them illegal for the purpose of awakening the stagnant and apathetic East Indies society ...... one should not wonder that the Budi Utomo association soon met with great acclaim and sympathy from the side of the Javanese population. Javanese, I say, because this association was and is still entirely Javanese in nature. The explanation of this exclusive character is to be found in the fact that the Javanese in general, notwithstanding their national downfall and disorganization, and in spite of their incompetence still dreamed of the restoration of a Javanese kingdom. ..........Furthermore, as often as not Javanese do not put much trust in non-Javanese, and this attitude has been brought about by the fact that since time immemorial they have been surrounded by enemies. Although I disagree with this position, it is easily understood why the Javanese exclude non-Javanese from membership in the Budi Utomo association. As a politically significant organization representing a nation striving for independence for the Javanese in particular, the Budi Utomo could not but adopt independence as its platform. In its constitution which had been drafted in a very oblique way was included the clause, that the association would aim at a reasonable standard of living for the people, through a harmonious national development.
With regard to the shortcomings of Budi Utomo,

.........the Budi Utomo also reveals its real character by the fact that only the small upper crust of the society felt attracted toward the association, whereas the broad mass of the people did not acknowledge it at all. Due to the lack of pushing power, but to a larger extent, owing to its policy of diverting the struggle, a time of depression crept into the association. Its actions were mainly limited to giving support to the government when the latter took measures in the interest of the people. But anyone who is firmly convinced that the curing of the suffering body can only be achieved by destroying the germs, can only be dissatisfied with the work done by the Budi Utomo.

and his assessment and critique on this association, as follows

The great significance of the association for the population lies, in my opinion, all but entirely in the fact that it was founded at all, not in what it accomplished. Once the ideas had been voiced at the first Congress for Javanese in 1908, all was not yet plain sailing, to be sure, but the prison gates had been forced open, and darkness had given way to dawn.

Everybody marched onward through the primeval wilderness; but while people, seeking God’s blessings, and guided by the light of the beacon far ahead, made their way bravely through the inhospitable land, the Budi Utomo put its feet gingerly and slowly on safe spots, so as not to get hurt. Whenever those harmless spots led toward one of the trail blazed by the interpid pioneers, so much better, then the Budi Utomo would also take the same trail, until.....new dangers loomed, e.g., if one had to leap across an abyss, in which case the Budi Utomo chose to wait, until the vanguard had built a bridge.

He then continued his illustration on the reason behind the founding of Sarekat Islam in 1912, while rejecting it as an association against the Chinese merchants, he also attacked the Budi Utomo,

The founders of the Sarekat Islam did not set up the organisation for the special purpose of fighting the Chinese, but in order to make front against all sorts of humiliation toward the indigenous people. The reaction against the plans of the (Christian) missionaries to convert them, the struggle against extortion and oppression from the side of native and European government officials, have, in my opinion, sufficiently borne out that the struggle was in the main directed against any form of domination and racism. The Budi Utomo association was, as said before - and in contrast to the Sarekat Islam - more an organization of government officials and did not reach the lower strata of the society, those strata which had to suffer most. The masses could not put any trust in the association’s meek attitude.

He further summed up Sarekat Islam’s platform as follows,

…stimulation of interest in business; rendering of aid to members who had come into difficulties through no fault of their own; improvement of education and anything else that
might speed up the betterment of the native; opposition against any misconceptions regarding the Muslim religion. ..... The association constantly put up a tough fight for justice and equity, and against oppression and other excesses of subjugation, which action was joined by our courageous journalists. No doubt the SI period was inaugurated by a revolutionary awakening, which means clearly a vigorous action against the system of rulers and serfs.

On the exclusive membership of the association, he wrote

.... Only Muslims were admitted as members, not because the SI was or is a religious party, but because of the conviction that only Islam could serve successfully as the unifying force for the very heterogenous population of the Indies. The excluded part was by nature limited to a small minority. The Indies-nationalist character of the SI is evident in its constitution, which stipulates that foreign Muslims cannot hold any keyposts in the party leadership, whereas only those persons among the foreign Muslims, who by their actions have served the native community, may be admitted to the local committees, and merely as associate members, at that.

This article was regarded as a point of departure for Suwardi’s political thinking and reasoning, and his national-revolutionary actions in nine consecutive years. (Surjomihardjo, 1964: 371). From this article we know Suwardi’s stand on ethnicity, especially as a Javanese viz-a-viz other ethnics in Indonesia. It seems that he believed only the Javanese had the chance to organize a movement for independence, because they have a sense of Javanese nationalism inherited from their past dynasties. Although he didn’t believe in Javanese superiority, at least he didn’t acknowledge that. He supported the Javanese movement because of its platform for independence and its noble and lofty cause, that is aiming for a reasonable standard of living for the people through a harmonious national development.

Other point that he asserted here is that he was more sympathetic to the Sarekat Islam. This is simply because this movement was a genuine people’s movement with a concrete platform such as to improve education and other measures needed to speed up the betterment of the natives. It seems that these two aims, independence and education for the natives, both were denied by the colonial government, that motivated Suwardi to struggle for his people. He believed that through Budi Utomo and Sarekat Islam, the natives in Indonesia had an arena to play against the Dutch. The rallying factors in these two movements were the Javanese nationalism and the Islamic identity, both had millions of adherents in Dutch Indies. And if combined could pose a powerful people’s movement.

In 1917 there was a new development in Holland, when the progressive elements in Dutch parliament began to correct the Dutch East Indies government. In order to avoid Motie van wantrownen (double dissolution) launched by this progressive camp, the new Governor General in Batavia, Graaf van Limburg Stirum, nullified the sentences laid upon Suwardi, Dekker and Tjipto. On 17 August 1917 they were allowed to go back. Due to personal reasons and the unavailability of transportation, Suwardi and his family went back to Indonesia two years later, on 6 September 1919. (Pranata, 1959: 53) Before leaving Holland, he wrote
Kembali ke medan perjuangan (Return to the battlefield), where he stated that he is going back to the motherland in order to resume the fight, and not to taste the triumph of his freedom, because his aims are not yet been attained, that is his nation’s independence. He also wrote in De Niewe Groene Amstedammer on this theme under the same title, and the last part of his article he wrote, “The sentence has been endured, all the pains had been suffered, and they should not be mentioned again. There is only one thing that I would like to mention here, that I have reclaim my freedom, without having to make any promises and statements in order to reach this achievement. Peace is not being dictated to me, it has given me a triumph instead”. (Harahap, 1980: 157).

On his return to Indonesia, Suwardi engaged himself to politics and became the secretary and later the chairman of Nationaal Indische Partij, a new transformation of the defunct Indische Partij. He also resumed his journalistic profession and became the editor or correspondent of De Expres, De Beweging (The Movement) and Persatuan Hindia (United Indies). His writings brought him back to the courtroom for several times by Dutch prosecutor for offences. The charges are: agitation to overthrow the government; arousing feeling of hatred, contempt, and hostility to the government; insulting Queen Wilhelmina; insulting the pangreh praja; and contempt of court. (Surjomihardjo, 1964: 386-387). This kind of offences didn’t confine to Suwardi, but also to other activists such as Tjipto, Dekker, Abdul Muis, Haji Misbach, Tjokroaminoto, Semaun, and others. Anybody who held opposite views on government policies and published them in newspapers would be charged with persdelict (press offence), a new measure taken by the government to curb potential protests or disturbances that might disturb the peace and order. Suwardi was found guilty and jailed in Semarang and then moved to Pekalongan where he was sentenced to hard labor just one year after returning from Holland. After being released, Suwardi resumed his political activities through writing articles and became the secretary of a Committee for Independent Life founded and headed by his brother, Surjopranoto, in Jogja. Other members of this committee were Haji Fachruddin of the Muhammadiyah and Haji Agus Salim of Sarekat Islam. The aim of the committee was “to educate the Indonesian people who for greater part are still living in a state of dependence on the colonial government, in order to become a free and independent people”. (Surjomihardjo, 1964:388)

In 1922 the Nationale Indische Partij was banned by the government. This is also marked the end of Suwardi’s early political career. Since then, he put his energy for the independence of his people through cultural approach in education. He stated that, “Colonial conditions will not disappear, if they are opposed only with political movements. Therefor we must not merely concentrate on outward struggle, but also endeavor to implant the idea of independent life upon our own people by means of teaching, and this must be coupled with national education.” (Surjomihardjo, 1964:388)

The rise of Taman Siswa, 1922-1932

Right after the banning of Nationale Indische Partij, on 3 July 1922 Suwardi Surjaningrat founded a private school which he named Nationaal Onderwijs Instituut Taman
Siswa in Yogyakarta, Central Java, offering a kindergarten and a teacher’s course. In the opening speech, Suwardi summarized his purpose in setting up the school which later became the principle of Taman Siswa,

(1) Education (pendidikan dan pengajaran) in any nation should aim to nurture the seeds passed down from earlier generations so that the nation could grow both spiritually and physically. Just as the individual who should develop the spirit (jiwa) and the body (badan), so the nation should aim to develop its culture and society. The means used to this end must be based on the customs (adat-istiadat) of the people. In this way the people could develop rapidly and smoothly in accordance with natural law (hukum alam);

(2) The education Indonesian had so far received from the West was far from immune from the influences of colonial policy. It was, in short, education for the benefit of the other side (sana); and it had maintained this character since the times of the Dutch East Indies Company, remaining essentially unchanged even under the Ethical policy. Strangely, however, such education was eagerly accepted by the bourgeoisie (the priyayi and the middle classes), who sent their children to schools where education was not conducive to the development of mind and body but merely provided a graduation certificate and allowed them to become laborers;

(3) Education in the colonial spirit had prevented the establishment of a social community and resulted in a life of a dependence on Western nations. This situation was unlikely to be resolved solely through external confrontation by the political movements but required the seeds of an independent lifestyle to be implanted within the people through a national education system;

(4) A new educational system should be established that would benefit native society rather than the colonists, and that was based on the people’s own culture. In earlier times, as an independent people, Indonesians had maintained their own educational system in the asrama, pondok and pesantren;

(5) It was also notable that a new current of education ideas was emerging in Europe and America. Grounded in “Independence” (kemerdekaan) and “idealism”, these ideas were a reaction to educational methods grounded in “compulsion”, which regarded human beings as a machine component and which attached importance to an “intellectualism” that promoted only worldliness and “materialism”. These ideas, expounded by Montessori and Tagore, for example, had gradually come to be regarded as suitable for a national education system; and these ideas also corresponded to the traditional Javanese notion of among, the idea of leading children rather than giving them orders, so that they would grow up sound in mind and body;

(6) Implementation of such a national education system required the greatest possible degree of independence. No assistance should therefore be accepted from anyone if it also meant accepting internal or external restraints. To be able to stand alone, Taman Siswa had to establish a self-supporting system (zelfs bedruipings systeem) that was built upon “thrift”;

(7) Education should be for all, not just the upper stratum of society. If only the upper classes were educated the nation would not grow strong. Education must begin with the lower classes, where its spread was most needed, in order to bring them greater order and greater strength. (Sajoga, “Riwaiat Perdjuangan Taman Siswa, 1922-1952”, Taman Siswa 30 Tahun (Yogyakarta: Madjelis Luhur Taman Siswa, 1922), pp. 203-204. The English translation was
taken from Tsuchiya, pp. 56-57)

It is clear here that Taman Siswa was founded by Suwardi as means to counter Western style education through establishing an education system based on local wisdom and education philosophy of Tagore and Montessori. The existing Dutch education system is the tool of the Dutch colonists to reaffirm their existence in the colony, and therefore a native educational style is needed to educate the colonized people in order to free themselves from their predicament.

In other words, Suwardi founded Taman Siswa at that time because “his interest was particularly drawn by the contemporary ‘rediscovery’ of the Orient, which set against the European view of modern man the philosophy of the East, especially India, and the oriental image of mankind, and therein sought man’s salvation in the modern age.” (Tsuchiya, p. 41).

Taman Siswa was founded as a reaction to the products of Western educational system in Netherlands Indies and also to give the common people the chance to receive education. (McVey, p. 133). There were diverse reactions to Taman Siswa; some were supportive and joined the movement, while others opposed it, mostly those from the government schools and government officials. Criticisms against the movement is met with silence by Suwardi who preferred to consolidate his movement for the first eight years rather than engaged in bitter arguments.

Six months after the founding of Taman Siswa there were requests to set up branches in several areas. After forming a central committee for Taman Siswa on 31 December 1922, branches of Taman Siswa were being set up mostly in Java, and later to the outer islands. The first congress then was held on 22-23 October 1923 where the principles of Taman Siswa were stated and a curriculum was set up. Some of these schools at that time were headed by prominent movement leaders such as Sukarno, then a student in Bandung, and Sadikin in Pacarkeling, East Java. Some schools even proclaimed themselves part of Taman Siswa without having had any contact with Yogyakarta before. (McVey, p 144). Taman Siswa began to attract more attention when its activities were exposed in magazines and newspapers, and especially after a visit to its centre by Tagore in August 1927. By July 1930, eight years after its founding, Taman Siswa had fifty-two schools across Netherlands Indies: Kalimantan (3 schools), Sumatra (3 schools), West Java (9 schools), Central Java (9 schools), East Java (27 schools), and Madura (1 school). (Tsuchiya, pp. 64-77)

Primary thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara

Suwardi never wrote his thoughts systematically in a book. His thoughts were found in many scattered articles he wrote since his return from Holland and established Taman Siswa, until the end of his political career. Most of these articles has been compiled in two volumes, one under educational theme and the other on cultural theme. The main principle of Ki Hajar’s thoughts are expressed in Pancadarma (Five Tasks) of Taman Siswa, namely kodrat alam (nature), kemerdekaan (freedom), kebudayaan (culture), nasionalisme (nationalism) and kemanusiaan (humanism). These five tasks reveal his goal for the national education for his country and his thoughts on the importance of these tasks. While Plumridge asserts in his study that many of Ki Hajar’s educational thoughts were influenced by many foreign thinkers and
educators such as Montessori, Tagore, Froebel and Steiner, it seems that the origin of his thoughts in Pancadharma is based on Javanese kebatinan mysticism, a spiritual movement of the adherents of the Javanese religion of Agami Jawi (Javanese Religion), which is a syncretic variant of Javanese Islam in which pre-Hinduistic, Hinduistic and Islamic elements are blended into one integrated system. The other variant of Javanese Islam is the more puritan Agami Islam Santri (Islam of the religious people).

In a very general description, this syncretic Islam or Agami Jawi has an extensive range of beliefs, concepts, views and values such as, among others, the beliefs of Allah the Almighty and Mohammad the prophet, the cosmological view of nature and the world, eschatology, and the concept of magical power. (Koentjaraningrat, 1989: 324) It would be suggested here that as a member of the Javanese priyayi class, Ki Hajar was brought up in this religion and its practices which could explain the root of his philosophy.

According to Koentjaraningrat, the Javanese kebatinan mysticism movements usually arise on certain conditions when they are searching for a deeper understanding of the essence of life and the spiritual existence of man. There were numerous movements which responded to the demand of many Javanese for a spiritually more meaningful life, have emerged and disappeared again during the history of Javanese culture. The focal point of this Javanese mysticism is placing the human existence in a wide cosmological context and as only a small part of an eternal cosmic life, in search of the ultimate unification of the human (kawula) with the Creator or Gusti. In their attempts to attain this ultimate goal, there are correct attitudes, life-style, ceremonial activities, and exercises that should be followed by the adherents. The main principle here is to distance oneself from the material world which involves the spiritual attitude of rila, the voluntary total surrender of possessions, the thoughts and feeling of possessing, and the need to possess. There are also other spiritual attitudes that are needed to attain the goal, such as sabar (patience), endurance, and the state of being in total harmony with one’s fate. Those who promote these attitudes would assume a very modest and plain life style and also doing certain ceremonial activities and practice meditation (semedi).

Koentjaraningrat then concludes that, “Through these one attempts to change one’s inner self, turning off all bodily functions and physical desires. This may lead to total clarity (hening) and understanding of the essence of life and to the harmony (selaras) between the internal spiritual life and the external physical reality of life. When this release from the burden of worldly life (pamudaran) has been achieved, the individual will, after passing through several more stages, eventually experience unification with God (jumbuhing kawula-Gusti or manunggaling kawula-Gusti).” (Koentjaraningrat, pp. 398-403).

In Javanese mysticism, the phrase manunggaling kawula lan Gusti refers to the supreme mystical goal, “the contemplation of God alone through the subjugation of all desires that lead men astray” (Soebadio, 1975: 48) and the fundamental unity of God with his human creation. It is the summit of spiritual progress which is has more deeper significance than mere knowledge, and that is the union which is the aim of the Javanese mystic. (Magnis-Suseno, 1985: 120)

This principle of the union of the Creator and His subjects that becomes the focus of Javanese mysticism which also influences Ki Hajar’s thoughts on nature, freedom, culture, nationalism and humanism.

On Nature (kodrat alam):
The first principle of the Pancadarma is on Nature (kodrat alam). The concept of kodrat alam has its roots in Javanese mysticism. The definition of this principle is as follows: “The principle of nature signifies that human beings are in reality a part of the natural world. For that reason they are subject to natural laws. It follows that they will experience happiness by cooperating closely with the law of nature of necessity (kodrat alam) which subsumes all laws of progress or evolution (hukum kemajuan).

On this topic Ki Hajar believed, as also in Javanese mysticism, that Nature regulates the life of human beings. He maintained that the fundamental law of Nature (hukum alam) is the law of cause and effect, which he said operates within a universal framework of structural principles. Humanity is a part of Nature and no less a subject than any other part to the law of cause and effect. (Karja IIA: 35)

He added that it is God, working through Nature by means of necessity, the law of cause and effect, who stands as the ultimate arbiter of events. It is useless to resist against necessity; whatever our attempts to do that, eventually we realized “that beyond our desires and restrained by our will, even in spite of our entire subjective existence”. (Karja I: 25). It is necessity which governs every aspect of our lives. However, necessity does not proceed blindly but is directed by evolutionary differentiation towards the achievement of equilibrium. (Karja I: 79) As the goal of evolutionary change, it is equilibrium which reflects divine perfection in the phenomenal world. At the level of human society, it is therefore the achievement of social equilibrium or order and peace which must occupy the principal endeavours of any organization dedicated to the betterment of humanity. Ki Hajar further wrote that, “Order and peace, that is our highest objective. There can be no order, where peace does not reign. But by the same token there can be no peace, so long as the individual is obstructed in the normal expression of his life.” (Karja I: 30)

Ki Hajar’s definition of Nature is also very similar with the notion of fate (takdir) which the Javanese heavily relied on in their existence. For a traditional Javanese, either the peasant or a priyayi “basically, he conceives of life as a continuous series of misfortunes, calamities and to endure readily. On the other hand, in activities relating to agricultural production, economic life, and social and family matters, human beings are supposed to pursue an active life through constant endeavour, called ihtiyar in Javanese. To the peasants, in reality, ihtiyar means physical endeavour, but sometimes it also means all the efforts made to overcome misfortune successfully.” (Koentjaraningrat, 1989:453)

This notion of fate constitutes that every aspect of a person’s life is entirely preordained, therefore everybody has a set of definite tasks to be performed because each of them has a specific place in the order of things which is made clear in the circumstances of birth, social position and geographical location. The individuals who perform those pre-assigned tasks would therefore avoid conflict, achieve peace of mind and help to maintain tranquility in society and throughout the cosmos. (Magnis-Suseno, 1985: 136)

Ki Hajar’s definition of Nature as the first principle of the Taman Siswa’s Pancadarma could be said is basically extracted from the Javanese mysticism’s system of beliefs which aim to the unity of God and His creation as its ultimate goal in order to achieve peace and order in
society and spiritual life.

On Freedom (kemerdekaan):

The second principle of Taman Siswa is as follows, “The Principle of Freedom signifies that freedom is a gift bestowed by Nature upon all human creatures, which gives them ‘the right of self-determination’ (hak swa-wasesa) subject to the necessity for social order and peace. For that reason personal freedom (kemerdekaan diri) must be understood as ‘self-discipline’ (swa-disiplin) based upon lofty personal and social values. Freedom must also be the basis for developing strong and sensible individuals (pribadi yang kuat dan sadar) in an atmosphere of balance and harmony with society.”

It is clear here that Ki Hajar accepts freedom of every human being not as something that comes naturally or an entitlement, but rather a state given by Nature. Furthermore, the exercise of this freedom is bound by a definite rule that is solely to attain social order and peace, the ideal societal condition for the Javanese mystic. Individuals as part of Nature must exercise their freedom in this context, otherwise they are seen as being irresponsible or not discipline in carrying on their personal and social values. Freedom only comes to those who are strong and sensible, and ideally exercised in an atmosphere of balance and harmony with society.

Therefore, freedom is seen as a responsibility, a duty given to individuals to be exercised in maintaining a balanced and harmonious society. What makes human beings given the freedom and scope of action by Nature is the possession of mind in the sense of budi, that is the faculties of thought, emotion and will.

On Culture (kebudayaan):

Culture is the third topic in principle of Taman Siswa which says, “The Principle of Culture signifies the obligation to cherish the values and forms of national culture. By fostering the progress of national culture on the basis of current expertise (kecerdasan zaman), we also advance world culture and the material and spiritual interests of society in every epoch and situation. Ki Hajar once defined that “Culture as the product of mind tended to on the whole to emphasize the individual human mind as the source of culture, and as the motivation of culture, the natural - that is, instinctive - desire of each individual to live safely and happily under social conditions of order and peace”. Ki Hajar made the comparison of national culture with individual personality which further implies that an analogy may be drawn between the nation and the individual.

Plumridge suggests that the idea of culture as ‘organism’ has important corollaries that reflect on other aspects of Ki Hajar thoughts. “Because it is organic, a culture, like a human being, must be able to evolve freely, under conditions of sovereignty and independence, if it is to realize a full and prosperous maturity and to make its proper contribution to the enrichment of human civilization.” The other corollary is that, “a culture cannot flourish if it is allowed simply to generate - for example, as the result of isolation or of excessive ideological restraint - into a set of inflexible, unchanging, mechanistically interpreted and unquestioningly applied rules of behavior.”
(Plumridge, 1992: 270-271).

**On Nationalism (nasionalisme)**

Nationalism as the fourth principle of Taman Siswa is being defined as, “The Principle of Nationalism refers to the feeling of being united with one’s own nation in triumph and adversity and in the desire to realise the spiritual and material warfare of the nation as a whole. The principle may not conflict with humane principles; must be clearly be humane in character, form and application; and therefore contains no implications of hostility towards other nations.” The chief criterion of nationality (kebangsaan) or nationhood for Ki Hajar consists in the possession of a distinct and unifying culture. He argued that having such a culture differentiates a nation (bangsa) on the one hand, and people (rakyat) on the other. (Karja I: 314)

He wrote that sense of nationalism “is part of spiritual senses in us human being. The source of sense of nationalism comes from rasa diri (sense of self), which derives from our life circumstances (peri kehidupan), and then spreads into sense of family (rasa kekeluarga); this consciousness then become sense of togetherness (rasa hidup bersama). This sense of nationalism is part of or has been included in sense of togetherness, and sometimes this sense of nationalism materialised as a strong idealism (angan-angan) and could defeat the other senses. The form of sense of nationalism, in general, is to unite national with personal interests; the fate of the nation is being felt like his own, the national pride is his own, and so forth.”

**On Humanism (kemanusiaan):**

The last principle of Taman Siswa is on Humanism which says, “The Principle of Humanism signifies that the creation of a humane way of life is the task (darma), arising from the superior nature of the human mind, of every human being. That superiority gives rise to love, accompanied by the conviction that the universe is governed by the law of progress, for all human beings and for all creatures throughout the world. In turn, that love must express itself in the decision to struggle, as Nature wills us to do, against everything which stands in the way of progress.”

Humanism in this term here is translated from Indonesian meaning of perikemanusiaan, which indicates an approach to life based on humane (humanitarian) values and does not refer to a specific philosophical system such as the ‘Humanism’ of Sir Julian Huxley and others. (Plumridge, 1992: 196)

**CONCLUSION**

In 1992 Taman Siswa published a book entitled Memahami Makna Kebangkitan Nasional Kedua (An Appreciation of the Significance of the Second National Awakening) which contains speeches by President Suharto, General (ret.) L.B. Moerdani (Minister for Defense and Security) and General Try Sutrisno (then was the Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesian army, and later the Vice President). In the speeches, Taman Siswa was put in historical context and its relevance with contemporary issues. Other than Taman siswa which
deal with education, Ki Hajar Dewantara also left another important legacy, a political imprint in Indonesian politics. His thoughts on democracy with leadership was considered as the core of Sukarno’s principle of guided democracy, which is also adopted in different form by his successor, Suharto, and his Orde Baru (New Order) regime. Ki Hadjar Dewantara was also seen as the populi of a set of political beliefs which he called kekeluargaan, or the family principle. (Reeve, 1985: 312-313, 318-319, and also Tsuchiya, 1987: 211-215)

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