EXPLORING JAVANESE FEMALE SUFISM IN SERAT MURTASIYAH: A STUDY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS VALUES IN THE DOMESTIC REALM WITHIN MODERN WESTERN CONTEXTS

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Received on: 13-02-23          Accepted on: 18-04-24

https://doi.org/10.57144/hi.v47i2.707

Abstract

Gender discourse is challenged in the study of Sufism because Sufism is not inherently bound by gender identity. However, most Javanese literary works tend to place men as Sufis. Murtasiyah, the main female character in Serat Murtasiyah, is a picture of a Javanese Sufi woman with an extraordinary religious personality as a wife. This article discusses how Murtasiyah practiced Sufism and applied religious values in the domestic sphere of the family. The form of obedience of Javanese wives through the character of Murtasiyah is also compared from Javanese and Islamic perspectives. Through textual and contextual approaches, preceded by a philological method, Serat Murtasiyah was dissected using a hermeneutic and content analysis with a feminist approach. The findings show that Murtasiyah can understand the knowledge of
meaning (ngelmu rasa) through the Sufism levels of tahalli (pure heart), takhalli (soul-filling), and tajalli (inner light). The religious teachings of a Sufi, such as always being grateful, patient, obedient to worship, pleased, remembering, and willing to repent, are also reflected in Murtasiyah’s personality. With these religious values, Murtasiyah can pass through the storms of life to become a Sufi. In addition, the form of obedience of women as wives in the Javanese perspective tends to be more diverse than the interpretation of the obligations of a wife according to Islamic teachings. From this study, modern women can also learn and apply the concept of Sufism Murtasiyah in carrying out their daily dual roles to create a balance in achieving worldly and afterlife affairs.

Keywords: Women, Sufism, Religious Values, Family Sphere, Serat Murtasiyah, Islamic Teachings.

1. Introduction

Generally, women’s social roles are often limited to domestic matters, including caring for the children, cooking, making nutritional decisions, cleaning, washing dishes, and little occasionally shown as successful company owners, managers, or entrepreneurs. In the history of human development, women’s roles always had a relationship with religion and culture. Women do not only act as wives and mothers. More than that, women also have a role in transmitting culture and religiosity. Unfortunately, there were biased views of women appearing in many parts of the world, including in the western countries. In the West, religious women or Muslim women are considered not to have a significant social, political, or religious role, so women are often emphasized not to be allowed to have a spiritual life. It is rare for female spiritual figures, both normatively and administratively, to lead religious traditions in Western society. This view arises from the moderate and normative traditions that occur in Islamic teachings.

The existence of several studies on women challenges the negative view of women. Pamberton suggests that women in the ritual life of the Sufis have meaningful participation that can reflect Islamic, social, and cultural ideals of femininity, authority, spirituality, and gender relations. The involvement of women in the world of the Sufis is, of course, driven by the unmet spiritual needs of women, so they feel they have to be involved to find the missing side of spiritual truth. In a feudalistic economic system that based its value on servitude, women lost their position in religion and religious rituals. Of course, this needs to be realized immediately to dismiss the dogma that has emerged that women are increasingly marginalized, inferior, drowned, and even lost their position from encyclopedias of mysticism or Sufism. Marginalization of women with all roles in religious traditions should be immediately resolved,
and the truth sought so that women can be seen and considered necessary in the ritual life of society. The pattern of equality of women and men in the search for religious identity needs to be developed immediately so that women are no longer underestimated in the life of religious rituals.

Unfortunately, not many literary works describe the existence of female Sufis. The number of women recorded in Sufism texts is much smaller than that of male Sufis. In Hilyat al-Awliya, Abu Nu’aim al-Isfahani recorded 28 women and 649 men; in Nafahat al-Uns, Abdurrahman Jamri noted 35 women and 564 men; in Tabaqat al-Kubra, Abdul Wahab al-Sha’rani recorded 16 women and 412 men and most of the women’s names mentioned in the texts were members of Ḥadrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātam un Nabīyyīn ŚallAllah ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Śallam’s family, companions or female figures in The Holy Qur’ān. The same thing also appears in other Sufism texts: in al-Risalah fi ‘ilm al-Taṣawwuf, Abu Qasim al-Qushayri lists 83 men and does not mention a single female Sufi’s name. In the novel The Moon and the Henna Tree, Toufiq deeply describes the vulnerability of the female characters, Al-Salima and Kima, who suffer in their marriage with Qā’id, the ruler of the tribal area. Both of the women then look for a way out of the cruelty of their husbands in the form of mysticism, folk traditions of talismans, and exorcisms. While in the novel Abu Musa’s Women Neighbours, the pious female character, Shamah, is destined to move from one husband to another until she meets a Sufi named Abu Musa. Both novels are written in Arabic.

The women’s movement often encounters obstacles to developing themselves on the religious and spiritual side. In the era of colonialism, the stigma of women when they became a wife was only as kanca wingking, that a wife is just a person who stands behind and relies on all her body and soul to her husband, who is only a complement to a husband’s household. Kanca wingking is a term in Javanese culture that places the wife only as a complementary friend who supports all the husband’s duties and roles as the head of the family from behind, where the wife’s duties are only limited to domestic affairs or household managers in the kitchen as the back area of the house. The term kanca wingking shows that the wife does not have an important role equal to the husband. Women are only required to be able to macak (dress up), Manak (giving offspring), and masak (cooking). Macak-masak-manak is part of the oral tradition culture passed down from generation to generation, from parents to their children, until it became an unwritten rule and the space limits for the Javanese women’s movement. Macak relates to (i) how Javanese women wear everyday clothes, (ii) taking care of their bodies and putting on make-
up, and (iii) behaving in front of their husbands. The term *masak* is synonymous with the role of women in taking care of the kitchen, serving delicious and nutritious dishes to their husbands and children, and having the ability to process all the information received wisely and not swallow it raw. *Manak* is the ability of a woman to give birth to offspring to continue the family lineage23.

In addition, women’s domestic roles are also seen in terms of *dapur* (kitchen), *pupur* (face powder), *kasur* (mattress), and *sumur* (wells). *Dapur-pupur-kasur-sumur* is a set of basic skills that Javanese women need to have to build a household. While waiting to get married, Javanese girls usually receive tutoring to learn how to cook, do laundry and cleaning, do makeup and dress, and do all the activities related to serving their husbands well24. Women have no other domestic space in the family apart from this ability. Women are confined because their lives are only about caring for the house and being the pleasure of their husbands. There needs to be more space for village women to deepen their knowledge, be it religious knowledge or to receive a proper education. The gap in understanding between men and women can be a gap in the emergence of problems in the household. Especially in today’s modern era, women must be able to balance the mindset of men, especially their husbands. It is the division of gender roles of men and women in a society that becomes the problem of stagnation in the development of a woman’s religiosity and spirituality.

Literary works become a forum for how narratives about women are arranged to show how religious values in women can influence the existence of a tradition in the area. *Serat Murtasiyah* (SM) narrates women as the main characters in the search for self-identity and strengthening religious values and religiosity. Murtasiyah, the main female character, is looking for the spiritual truth lost during her journey to seek forgiveness from *Allah Almighty* and her husband. Initially, Murtasiyah’s lack of religious understanding made her do things her husband saw as hasty. This hasty behaviour creates an opening to do things that are not right, so Murtasiyah is considered an unfilial wife and is expelled from her home. Murtasiyah’s hasty act, which made her unintentionally lie in her words, shows that Murtasiyah does not yet have a good level of religious spirituality. A woman who understands the meaning of spirituality should have a noble inner attitude, as seen by how she can withstand the lust in her life. This behaviour is one of the markers of how a Murtasiyah has moral values that other women can imitate.

Murtasiyah’s text raises the story of Murtasiyah, as the wife of Syeh Ngariip, to represent the image of women in women’s literature in the early 20th century. Murtasiyah’s figure is a woman
who accepts her husband’s decisions. The submissive nature of Murtasiyah and Nyai Rubiyah, the mother of Murtasiyah, to their respective husbands is an illustration of the concept of Javanese patriarchy, which is constantly being discussed to this day. Apart from being closely related to the context of moral leadership, this text is also possible as a Javanese Sufism text, which has never been studied in this regard.

This study aims (1) to describe the Sufism concepts held by Murtasiyah, (2) to explain religious values implemented by Murtasiyah in the family’s domestic sphere, and (3) to compare wife compliance in the domestic sphere from the perspective of Javanese society and Islamic teachings.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Women and Sufism

Sufi is a person who studies Sufism. Sufi can be interpreted as a person who always strives earnestly to follow the path of virtue and glory. Every Sufi has a different spiritual-spiritual experience, does not depend on material things, and is unrelated to something rational.

Women and the practice of spirituality or Sufism have not been much discussed in Sufism literature. Yet, the spiritual practice in The Holy Qur’an is an unforgettable episode in which the soul and body must be fully surrendered only to Allah Almighty alone. Several research papers, including theses, essays, and articles, discuss women’s spirituality in the context of women’s Sufism and are linked to Sufism literature.


The research analyzing the text of SM was indeed quite massive. However, studies on feminism from the religious and spiritual point of view of the Murtasiyah character have been rarely carried out. Kusumaningrum’s thesis just focused on “Serat
Murtasiyah: Editing and Translation, while Triandari’s thesis examined the illustration of Serat Murtasiyah. Wijanarko’s article focuses more on constructing the gender inherent in the Murtasiyah character in terms of the role of women in the domestic space, the identical nature and behaviour of women, and the anatomy of women’s clothing. Meanwhile, Kusumaningrum has just described moral leadership in the SM text with a literary sociology approach, which resulted in Murtasiyah’s findings as a wise figure in dealing with patriarchal domination in Javanese culture.

Several studies about women, gender, religion, and Sufi have been done, but studies about women Sufi in Javanese literature have not been widely done. The choice of this topic was motivated by two reasons. First, there are still few studies on the idea of feminism in literary works, such as Nkechi & Emmanuel, that explore the exploitation of women and the environment in the novel. Chia Longman analyzed women’s circles as a space to celebrate sisterhood and the femininity, and Zubair & Zubair explored the relationship between these women’s secular education and their religious (and secular) social identities as young, urban, middle class working women in a Pakistani higher education context. Moreover, there is little portrayal of Javanese women’s literary works. Oman Fathurahman analyzed two female Indonesian Sufis from Shattariya murids in Java in the 18th and 19th centuries: Kangjen Ratu Kadipaten and Raden Ayu Kilen, together with Ratu Pakubuwana. Kurniati Hastuti Dewi endeavours to demonstrate how many sociocultural factors shaped the religio-cultural identity of Javanese women while highlighting various aspects of the relationship between Javanese women and Islam. In comparison, Saputri & Insani describe the Sufism teaching in the Suluk Daka manuscript and the relevance of Islamic education. Several of the previously mentioned study findings highlight the gap in feminist literary analyses of Indonesian Javanese literature. There have been feminist studies of Indonesian novels, like Sakinah, that analyzed the image of women in The Holy Woman as a feminist study. However, there are still very few feminist studies of Javanese literary works from manuscripts. Fatmawati & Hanifah analyze the image of Javanese women in the Suluk Tenun text. At the same time, Fanesha & Utami describe beauty from women’s ideals since the Surakarta Palace era in Serat Partakrama. In addition, feminist studies of existing Javanese literary works are still seen from the text from a male point of view, like Tony Day explored the main male characters in Serat Centhini, namely Mas Cĕbolang, who is religious and sexually active more than Centhini (woman) as the teller of the manuscript. Therefore, the author intends to find out how the idea of feminism in the form of women’s religious and spiritual values is expressed in a manuscript.
with a female main character, Murtasiyah, as the story’s main character.

Second, this research might contribute as a discussion material on women’s issues that are still relevant and hot for discussion in various contexts. The results of this study can later strengthen the existence of women and their spiritual values in their application as a wife and mothers in the family realm. Women with good spirituality and religiosity can occupy an important place to maintain the integrity of their household.

2.2. Characteristics of Good Women in Islam

Indeed, the thing that stands out the most from a Muslim woman is that she has a strong faith stuck in her heart toward her God. Muslim women are always awake and, under His guidance, able to contemplate the meanings contained in the Holy Quranic verses so that they can face Allah Almighty with obedience, repentance, and complete gratitude. Regarding the character of a Muslim woman in her role as a wife, several characteristics of a Muslim woman appear when she is with her husband. Muslim women have characteristics such as being diligent in worship, being obedient and devoted to their husbands, being devoted to their mother-in-law and glorifying their family, loving their husbands and trying to please them, keeping their husband’s secrets, being faithful to accompany their husbands, attracting their husbands’ hearts, preening for their husbands, welcoming their husbands warmly and longing, loyal in joy and sorrow, tolerant and forgiving, and has a solid and wise personality.

Research on the characteristics of good women in Islam has often been carried out. Tjomsland & Ask book’s “Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations”, Al-Hasyimi’s book, “Personality of Muslim Women”, El-Menouar’s article “The Five Dimensions of Muslim Religiosity: Results of an Empirical Study” have researched about the dimensions and characteristics of Islamic women. However, none of the studies that have been explicitly conducted examine it from the perspective of the life of a Sufi woman.

3. Methodology

A textual and contextual approach dissects prose text in SM discourse, especially to examine linguistic elements. The primary data source for this research is the SM manuscript from the Sonobudoyo Museum Yogyakarta collection. The SM manuscript with code PB A.214 is a manuscript whose condition is still intact, with good readability, and is more complete than the SM manuscript.
from other library collections. Illustrations in almost every part of the manuscript make it easier for researchers to interpret the text. The form of the manuscript was also initially dissected using philological work steps. Philological research methods are needed to examine the object of research in the form of manuscripts and texts. Manuscripts, as the target of philological work, are not just any texts but should be manuscripts that are seen as cultural products in the form of taste creation in the form of classical texts. In this study, the way philology method was carried out in six steps, starting with an inventory of manuscripts, followed by the selection of manuscripts and texts, descriptions of manuscripts and texts, transliteration, editing, and translation of the SM manuscript. The results of this philological process then produce a representative manuscript for further research using content analysis from a feminist approach.

A thorough reading of the text was carried out to obtain data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that describe the religious and spiritual values of women in their position as a wife in a family. Content analysis techniques were used to understand and capture messages related to the portrait of feminism in Serat Murtasiyah. The content analysis step begins with reading the edited and translated Serat Murtasiyah repeatedly carefully and understanding it. The transliterated manuscript was then read to select the data and presented in a table for later verification. Heuristic and hermeneutic methods are used to analyze Serat Murtasiyah, presented as tembang (poetry). An outline of the script’s contents was then made into a synopsis for further analysis of aspects of feminism related to the role of women in the domestic realm for the character Murtasiyah. The results of feminist studies in the Serat Murtasiyah text are then classified according to needs through data cards accompanied by text quotations. The final step of content analysis was carried out by discussing and coming to conclusions regarding the role of women in the domestic sphere, especially regarding the religious values of Sufi women in the character Murtasiyah. Repeated reading of the text from the peer review by a philologist was done to dive into the transliteration and translation of the manuscript and the content of the text, capture the meaning, and interpret it from the feminist point of view. To check the accuracy of the data, the validity of the data was done by using member checking, in which other researchers check the accuracy of the data to be interpreted more deeply to reduce the level of data deviation.

4. Murtasiyah: Javanese Sufi Woman

Murtasiyah can be said to be a religious figure and always bases religion on a foothold in life. Talking about religion is closely related to spirituality and religiosity. Here, spirituality is not seen in terms of asceticism, mysticism, or just prayer, but being spiritual and
religious is more about how one can transcend one's capacity to know Allah Almighty. Spirituality is an inner expression of religion as a spirit to understand divine values. Spirituality in the Sufi concept is believed to reflect the divinity that naturally exists in humans, which is named lahū. A person’s spirituality can be seen in how a person cultivates the feelings that exist in him. The feelings reflected in one’s spiritual actions will show how far one’s awareness is in religion. The better a person’s actions can show, the better his religious awareness and vice versa.

Studying Sufism will be close to learning about peace. Only a few women have mastered this Sufism. The role and spiritual potential of Muslim women in Indonesia, including in Javanese society, tends not to be considered. The tendency of women to use their feelings more often makes it difficult for them to understand more about Sufism. Most women who have not mastered the concepts of Sufism certainly have a new understanding different from the condition of Murtasiyah; they have mastered the art of processing the peaceful (ngelmu rasa). Peaceful, also called ngelmu sejati, is a science that finds the nature of life, human nature, the nature of Allah Almighty, and everything related to metaphysics. The peaceful quest is solely carried out by individuals who want to achieve the perfection of life (Insān-i-Kāmil).

In SM, it is told that Dewi Murtasiyah asked to be taught about the peaceful. Syekh Ngarip, an 'Ulama (cleric) who also acts as her husband, then explained the secret of the peace. In principle, peace is divided into 3: peace of body (cipta), peace of soul (karsa), and peace of mind (rasa). Each part is then divided into three more parts. First, the peace of the body can be made by praying five times as a sign of gratitude for the body, reducing food or clothing or worldliness, and humbling oneself to the Creator or tawādu'. Second, peace of the heart can be achieved by doing dhikr or always remembering Allah Almighty at all times, reducing sleep, and cleaning the heart. Third, the peacefulness of life can be cultivated by bringing one’s life to Allah Almighty, not talking much or being quiet, and being patient.

This knowledge related to peace is in harmony with the three types of soul purification in Sufism: takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli. Takhalli means cleaning or guarding the heart against all bad things, and it can be achieved by maintaining an attitude of not committing immoral acts, such as ria, 'ujub, or expecting something in return. Tahalli is the stage of filling the soul that has been emptied at the takhalli level, which is done by getting used to doing good deeds according to religious rules, such as prayer, fasting, zakāt, hajj, and so on. At the tahalli level, there is a systematic and methodical
process of meditation that combines consciousness and mind in total concentration to reflect on Allah Almighty so that one will achieve the nature of pleasure, *tawāду*’, and *lillah*. A Sufi will do this stage after going through the process of purifying the heart from harmful desires for the world. While *tajalli* means enlightenment or disclosure, which in the concept of Sufism is defined as the incarnation, single embodiment, inner light emanating, Allah Almighty’s revelation, and enlightenment of the heart of a good servant. *Tajalli* is the process of opening the curtain of a supernatural cage, or enlightenment of supernatural light (*karāma*)⁶¹, as a result of meditation, which in the process of Sufism is reflected in the form of Allah Almighty’s grace that appears outside of the human will.

The concept of Sufism and peace that Syeh Ngarip taught gave Murtasiyah the characteristics of the Sufis. Murtasiyah’s character, described as having gone through the level of *takhalli* can be seen in her devotion to her husband. Even though her husband left her when she was pregnant, Murtasiyah did not complain and continued to carry out all the mandates that her husband advised before he left. While pregnant, Murtasiyah routinely gave monthly alms and cared for her husband’s hamlet garden. When her husband came home, Murtasiyah continued to carry out her role as a wife and an excellent mother to her children. Murtasiyah neither complains nor opposes her husband’s wishes. This is the stage of *takhalli* she shows. The level of *takhalli* is manifested in a very high understanding of piety. The value of *taqwa* is described as an awareness that Allah Almighty is always watching over humans and that we only carry out actions according to His will and refrain from actions that are not His will⁶².

The *tahalli* phase strengthened in Murtasiyah after she accidentally lied when answering her husband’s question regarding the number of strands of hair used as a *sumbu diyan* (lighting lamp). The incident where Murtasiyah was expelled by her husband and parents made Murtasiyah more patient and obedient to Allah Almighty. The mistakes she had made brought him closer to Allah Almighty. Murtasiyah applies the science of feeling to the body, which also illustrates the passing of the *tahalli* phase, for his obedient attitude to always keep his prayers even in emergencies.

*Tunggarang datan amangghih warth, Dēwī Murtasiyah andēdungā, amolaring pangérané, Gusti kang luwih agung, mugi tuwan amiringi ēsih, kawulā arak sholat, paring toyā gupuh, mambēt pangsing nyamping ambå, malēbēt kayuhan dening pun bayi, éh Allāh Astaghfirullah. (Extract 3, SM, IV:8)*
'Going here and there, she did not find water. Dewi Murtasiyah prayed to the Prince, the Greatest Lord, may you still give grace, I want to pray, I hope I will get water soon, the smell of urine from my cloth (jarik) is exposed to baby urine, eh Allah Almighty astaghfirullah.' (Extract 3, SM, IV:8)

The context of the quote above occurs when Murtasiyah is aimlessly wandering into the forest after her husband expels her. Murtasiyah wanders and is sad along the way. Murtasiyah realized she had not performed her prayers throughout the journey because a roaring sadness carried her away. Murtasiyah was also confused about how she could perform the prayer if her clothes were dirty after being exposed to the urine of her infant daughter immediately before she left her house. Due to the confusion, she felt, Murtasiyah could only say istighfār repeatedly while asking Allah Almighty’s forgiveness for her mistake of not praying even though the prayer time was running out soon. Murtasiyah’s istighfār sentence is a form of dhikr, marking the side of Murtasiyah’s religiosity with Sufi character.

In the next verse, it is told that this religious figure of Murtasiyah keeps trying to find water so that she can perform her prayers. After going here and there without getting water to purify herself, Murtasiyah finally prayed with all her heart, asking Allah Almighty to help give her water. Murtasiyah’s goal was none other than because she still wanted to worship despite difficulties approaching her. She also repeatedly asked Allah Almighty for forgiveness and hoped she would be forgiven for all her mistakes. This shows that Murtasiyah has practiced the science of feeling towards the heart by doing dhikr, which makes her always remember the existence of Allah Almighty. This dhikr then revives and purifies Murtasiyah’s heart. For Sufis, dhikr is believed to be the door to open awareness, which in religion is called guidance. This dhikr later brings up Allah Almighty’s help in the Murtasiyah’s conditions.

Murtasiyah’s practice of feeling for life is reflected in her patient and sincere attitude. Sincerity is described as a pure attitude in behaving and acting solely to gain the pleasure of Allah Almighty. In the end, after all the trials that came were accepted with complete resignation and sincerity, Allah Almighty also provided help for the sincerity of Murtasiyah’s request for forgiveness and prayer. Karāma can indeed be shown to a holy person in an emergency or permitted by Allah Almighty to strengthen the belief of a servant. With the grace of Allah Almighty, Murtasiyah finally purified her body, and her body even looked more radiant and beautiful. The beauty that
radiates from Murtasiyah shows that Murtasiyah has passed the tajalli stage, which is the culmination of the soul’s purification stages. Whoever can reach this level of tajalli, her life will always be illuminated by the goodness that comes from Allah Almighty.65

Murtasiyah then continued to give thanks, accompanied by prayers and chants of istighfār. Murtasiyah immediately prays after her body is clean and the najis (dirt) attached to her clothes are gone. In the end, Murtasiyah became the chosen servant who received the grace of Allah Almighty, and all her wishes were granted. This phase shows the highest level of Sufism, namely tajalli, where Allah Almighty reveals Himself to His creatures through an inner light that enters the heart.66 The Murtasiyah journey has become a process of galvanizing the soul of a Sufi, and this is in line with the words of Allah Almighty, which means,

“As for those who strive in Our way, We will certainly take them onto Our paths, and indeed Allah is with those who are good in deeds.”67

Murtasiyah’s Sufism journey also aligns with Rābi’ah al-‘Adawiyyah’s Sufism journey. To achieve the title of a Sufi, Rābi’ah al-‘Adawiyyah started her practice by doing repentance, wara’, zuhud, poverty, patience, gratitude, fear, tawhīd, ridā, and finally, her deep longing (tawakkul) for Allah Almighty.68 He conveyed many things about the values of Sufism related to tawādu’, zuhud, sincerity, rectifying deeds, and ridā, not just about maḥabbah (love for Allah Almighty). Murtasiyah also did this in her journey to seek the love of Allah Almighty with her willingness to leave all possessions, including her beloved child, after being expelled by her husband (zuhud). Her journey was full of regret, disappointment, concern, and sadness, but she sincerely and patiently accepted her destiny. The only provision for her journey was strong tawhīd to Allah Almighty accompanied by a sense of ridā and wara’ and deep gratitude for all the help given by Allah Almighty in the process of finding the path of tawakkul to Allah Almighty.

The effort to achieve al-maḥabbah as Murtasiyah’s Sufism experience certainly needs to be understood further so that modern women today can apply the value of spirituality that is built. Although women today are not required to behave like Murtasiyah or Rābi’ah al-‘Adawiyyah, who had such a deep love for their Lord, modern women today still need to be serious in reviving the value of Sufism by relying on the actual teachings of Islam if so far the light of faith has dimmed in the heart.
Murtasiyah was not as extreme as Rābi’ah al-‘Adawiyyah in her Sufism journey, especially regarding zuhud. Rābi’ah had no desire to ask Allah Almighty for material things and chose to live in a state of having nothing to gain and only living enough to feel close to Allah Almighty alone\(^{69}\). At the same time, Murtasiyah eventually lived a lasting married life with her husband. This shows how Murtasiyah, as a Javanese woman, has become a different Sufi figure than Rābi’ah. The other times and environmental conditions in which these two women lived undoubtedly made a difference in their Sufi characters, especially concerning the form of submission of wives to their husbands.

The path of Sufism carried out by Murtasiyah as an embodiment of the figure of a Javanese woman can be a picture to answer the problems of spirituality today. The dual role of women who also have a career today\(^{70-71}\) gives a heavier burden than in previous times, resulting in most modern women prioritizing world affairs to make faith in their hearts arid, even to the point of forgetting the obligations that should be carried out as a wife according to Islamic law. To carry out a balanced dual role, today’s modern woman must return to several spiritual endeavours with different levels. Efforts to approach themselves to Allah Almighty need to be made so that they can have a clean heart that can radiate good morals. In the kaffah teachings of Islam, a woman as a wife must prioritize prudence in the household.

5. Women’s Religious Values in Family Domestic in Serat Murtasiyah

The domestic sphere is constructed as a part of women’s nature and must be appropriately managed by women. Women are often stereotyped as submissive wives, which shapes women to respect and obey their husbands/fathers, look charming, take care of domestic affairs, and educate children\(^{72}\). Educating, caring for children, and cleaning the house are domestic activities that women always identify. Sufi women will base their role in the domestic sphere on a high spiritual foundation. The knowledge of Sufism that the Sufis learn will make them grapple with the behaviour that the Prophets exemplified through the meaning of life, and the message conveyed as a way to Allah Almighty\(^{73}\). According to ‘Ā’ishah, in Al-Muntakhab fi Uṣūl al-Rutab (The Principles of Sufism), there are four main principles of Sufism, namely repentance (Tawba), sincerity (Ikhlās), remembering Allah Almighty (Dhikr), and love (Mahabbah)\(^{74}\). Several forms of women’s religious values in the family domestic sphere that appear in Murtasiyah’s figure as a Sufi woman’s image include the attitude of always being grateful, patient,
obedient to worship, *eling* (remembering), surrendering, and willing to repent.

### 5.1 Being Grateful

Gratitude is a form of gratitude for all the gifts Allah Almighty has given His servants, which must be expressed verbally and in action. This gratitude is one of the markers of the behaviour of a Sufi, which leads to a form of love *(mahabbah)* for *Allah Almighty*. Gratitude is a symbolic language of someone immersed in love for *Allah Almighty*.²⁵ Lovers of *Allah Almighty* will always be lovers of al-Haq so they can feel close to His Lord²⁶. The sentence of *taḥmīd*, *alhamdulillah*, is one of the markers of the expression of gratitude for a servant for the abundance of *Allah Almighty*’s grace. In addition, other spontaneous utterances express gratitude. Murtasiyah, as a cleric’s wife ('*Ulama*') in SM, is described as having an attitude of religiosity and always being grateful. Everything that Murtasiyah got did not forget to be thankful for. This is illustrated in the following quote from Serat Murtasiyah *Pupuh Asmaradana* verse 21.

*Sukur isun ing Yyang Widhi*, kudune duwe manah sabar, *kang becik panarimane*, iya iku wong wanodya, ingkang kawilang utama, tur anetĕpi ing waktu, sarta amanut ing warah. *(Extract 5. SM, I:21)*

‘I am grateful to *Allah Almighty*, must have a patient heart, easy to be grateful, that is a woman who is considered the main, also punctual, and follows what is advised (to Him).’ *(Extract 5. SM, I:21)*

The quote in Extract 5 shows how Murtasiyah realized how to be grateful to *Allah Almighty* by having good behaviour such as being patient, being thankful for all gifts of *Allah Almighty*, being disciplined, and following every advice, her husband gave her. Murtasiyah also verbally expresses her gratitude by saying, ‘I am grateful to *Allah Almighty*. His good actions as a wife also accompanied the gratitude from Murtasiyah’s mouth. The nature of a woman who is good at being grateful is in harmony with *The Šaḥīḫ Al-Bukhārī*, 68:5197 and *The Šaḥīḫ Al-Muslim*, 5:907, which illustrate the consequences of women’s disobedience to their husbands as well as a reminder for women to be careful in their actions by leaving the nature of disobedience and increasing gratitude for the gifts their husbands give. *Allah Almighty*, in the holy Qur’ān, also said, ‘*(Recall the time) when your Lord declared, If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe.*’²⁷
When viewed from the perspective of the holy Qur’ān, gratitude that reflects the religious values of Javanese Sufi women in the family sphere is in line with one of the obligations of a wife to her husband, primarily related to the position of a wife to complement the husband’s shortcomings. Every human being must have their strengths and weaknesses. The presence of women as men’s partners is nothing but a complement to the husband’s shortcomings. The wife is a partner in the household, and both husband and wife support each other in household matters. In a marriage bond, husband and wife have essential roles in building harmony and stability in the household. With her gentleness, women as housewives can counter men in family life whose primary focus is to earn a living. Wives also have an essential role in overcoming various challenges and difficulties in household dynamics. Therefore, a wife needs to maintain the balance of her role in the family, both as a mother and spouse, as well as an individual who complements her husband’s shortcomings.

5.2 Patient

Every human being will be given a test and trial according to the ability of His servant. In facing the trials of life that come, every servant should have a sense of patience and an open heart. The clarity of heart to be spacious and patient in accepting whatever trials Allah Almighty has given His servants has been promised a reward as a reward. This follows the Divine instruction of Allah Almighty in the holy Qur’ān,

“Surely We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger, and loss in wealth and lives and fruits, and give good tidings to the patient.”

Patience must always be put forward in the face of every difficulty. Patience is also always related to a sincere attitude to accept Allah Almighty’s provisions. For Murtasiyah, sincerity is one of the absolute requirements that must be met by every individual who takes the spiritual path to Allah Almighty. Sincerity is an absolute requirement for a Sufi because it is a light that removes the darkness of the heart caused by the temptations of Satan. Sincerity is the character of people who live rightly, guidelines for owners of spiritual knowledge (ma’rifah), and characteristics of people who have experienced union with Allah Almighty. Murtasiyah is described as a female figure, as illustrated in the quote from Serat Murtasiyah Pupuh Asmaradana verse 21 (see Extract 5).

The nature of patience as a form of obedience for Javanese women is also in line with the teachings of the holy Qur’ān regarding
one of the wife’s obligations to her husband, namely, covering her husband’s disgrace. It is undeniable that every human relationship, including marriage, will experience conflicts and problems in various forms and levels. In this case, the role of the wife as the husband’s true partner is needed to build and maintain family harmony. Whatever problems arise, especially those related to the husband’s disgrace, must be able to be suppressed from being told to anyone. The wife must try to cover the husband’s disgrace as hard as possible. This cannot be separated from the rights and obligations of husband and wife, who must protect, nurture, and complement each other in household affairs. Women must be able to behave nicely, patiently, politely, and always carry praying. By prioritizing patience, a wife has the potential to ease tension, create a comfortable family environment, and build effective communication between family members. A woman’s character as a calmer or reducer of anger helps maintain harmony so that husband and wife relationships can run calmly and peacefully without violence or detrimental turmoil. On the other hand, wives also have a role to play in teaching essential values such as sacrifice and tolerance to their families and children so that they can become the foundation of a strong personality. A good understanding of a wife’s obligation to cover her husband’s disgrace based on a high level of patience can certainly be a way to maintain marital harmony and sustainability.

5.3 Pleased (Riḍā)

For the Sufis, the attitude of pleasure is one of the religious behaviours that show acceptance of all decisions Allah Almighty has made for them. Maqâm-i-Riḍâ is based on Allah Almighty’s instruction, “…Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him…” Sufi women will then understand the concept of riḍâ and the nature of women as both wives and mothers. This riḍâ character is also part of the sincere attitude that is a marker of the behaviour of a Sufi. Riḍâ, which is identic to self-acceptance, is a characteristic of a person who has experienced union with Allah Almighty so that he can accept all the provisions that Allah Almighty has given him.

Murtasiyah, as a woman who is so deep in religious teachings, understands the nature of a wife who will get blessings from Allah Almighty for the pleasure of her husband. It was on this deep understanding that Murtasiyah, with her pleasure in her husband’s relationship, went to meditate to guard the house that was assigned to her even when she was pregnant. This can be seen in the text of Serat Murtasiyah, pupuh Asmaradana verse 15 and pupuh Sinom verse 21.
Murtasiyah is also aware of the role of an ascetic wife who must be ready if, at any time, her husband is left imprisoned for a long time. As a mother-to-be, even though she has never had children, Murtasiyah will willingly take care of her child as best as possible, even if she is alone. Murtasiyah did not complain that she had to be left to raise her child without being accompanied by her husband when she was pregnant and gave birth later. Murtasiyah realized that she would get a blessing on the results of her husband’s asceticism if she were happy to accept all the fates assigned to her.

Murtasiyah’s attitude of pleasure towards her destiny was also shown when she willingly had to leave her infant child because her husband had kicked her out of the house. She consciously accepted her husband’s decision, which was irreversible, even though she had begged for forgiveness for the unintentional mistake she had made. Murtasiyah is happy to live a life of languishing in the forest alone to atone for the sins she has committed. Murtasiyah’s pleased nature is in line with the words of Ḥadrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātam un Nabīyyīn Ṣall Allah ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam’s narrated by Ibn ‘Umar RA, which reads, “There is no servant who takes one sip (receives a disaster) that is more important in the sight of Allah Almighty than one heavy sip that is held to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty,”94 This hadith implies that someone pleased when he gets a disaster from Allah Almighty will get a great reward as a way to raise his degree of faith.

Javanese women’s contentment (ridā) also aligns with the wife’s obligation to always obey her husband from the perspective of the kaffah Islamic teachings. Another form of the wife’s contentment in Islamic teachings is also seen when the wife is willing to leave her parents to follow the husband’s residence. However, it takes excellent sincerity for a woman after marriage to part with her parents and follow wherever her husband lives. In addition, a wife’s submission to devote herself to her husband in taking care of her children and maintaining her honour and property when her husband is not at home is also in line with the concept of ridā that a woman needs to have. In essence, all forms of obedience of a wife to her husband in Islamic teachings will always be related to the value of ridā which must be highlighted to be owned by a woman in carrying out her role as a wife.
6. **Wife Compliance in the Family Sphere: from the Perspective of Javanese Society and Islamic Teachings**

In Javanese cultural conventions, women are described as having many ideal traits, such as accepting, delicate, patient, resigned, loyal, devoted, and others. This happens because the Javanese culture is so strong that it influences the emergence of Javanese women’s traits by social institutions in society. Javanese women are seen as having high manners, being soft-spoken, peace-loving, respectful, and harmonious, like gotong royong (cooperating with other people), and always upholding harmony and a sense of family. *Serat Nitimani* explicitly describes the nature and character of the ideal woman, such as having the *exact* nature (affection towards everyone), *kulina* (can consider everything with the proper decision-making), *dana* (likes to give happiness and pleasure to everyone, and *fine* (careful, meticulous, can distinguish and reason excellent and bad problems and place them correctly). These traits of Javanese women are what most men seek in an ideal woman. Women with a character full of wisdom are considered capable of satisfying their husbands when married because they will understand their duties and obligations as good wives.

Regarding wives’ obedience to their husbands, Javanese women have an extreme stereotypical image of the leading role in the household. The primary role that Javanese women have as wives is nothing but *macak, masak,* and *manak*. This role of women certainly illustrates that Javanese women are always under the power of men and must submit to their husbands. An illustration of a woman’s total submission to her husband’s power is also depicted in *Serat Murtasiyah*. Murtasiyah is portrayed as an exemplary and virtuous Javanese wife who submits completely to her husband, accepting his violence and devoting herself entirely to his happiness. However, Murtasiyah’s journey to achieve domestic happiness was accompanied by a powerful spiritual journey. The overwhelming sense of acceptance (*ridâ*) in Murtasiyah for the behaviour she received from her husband ultimately strengthened Murtasiyah’s spiritual journey towards a great sense of tawakkul to *Allah Almighty*. In the end, the inner beauty that appears from Murtasiyah’s behaviour will form a good personality and have implications for women’s visualization, thus making her have inner and outer beauty. Women should have good physical characteristics (for example, a lovely look, kind and appealing habits), as well as spiritual qualities such as love for others, and can be an example for modern women today to be wiser in carrying out dual roles in the domestic sphere of the family.

Another form of Javanese women’s obedience is also illustrated in *Serat Piwulang Estri*, where the ideal Javanese elite...
woman must be able to play the role of a good wife who can perfectly accommodate the husband’s polygamous desires and submit to the husband’s authority. The text _Suluk Tenun_ also depicts the image of a Javanese woman living a household life where women must be willing to learn to behave as if they are dead in life, sleep when awake, be careful when traveling, blind can show the way, mute can break up quarrels solely to maintain her purity and understand the nature of her origin as a human being. A more extreme form of Javanese women’s obedience is seen in _Serat Nitipraja_, where Javanese women are considered to have the advantages of good behaviour and _patibrata_ (pledge loyalty until death), meaning that women are willing to follow their husbands who die first until the afterlife.

The various forms of a wife’s obedience to her husband ultimately create a minor view of the position of women in Javanese society as weak, beautiful, pampered, loved, and required to have children. On the other hand, Javanese women are seen as having high loyalty. Behind the negative stereotypes of Javanese women, the calming or anger-reducing character of Javanese women can balance the husband-wife relationship and help or replace the husband’s role in protecting and saving the family.

From the perspective of Javanese society, the various forms of obedience of a wife to her husband are also in line with the kaffah teachings of Islam, which regulate the obligations of wives when they are married. In Islam, religion is almost always integrated into every aspect of social life. Likewise, in the context of a wife’s obedience to her husband, the provisions have definite rules according to the holy Qur’an and Hadith. The holy Qur’an occupies a central position in the lives and works of Sufis. The holy Qur’an and Hadith are also used as guidelines for Islamic family law. In Islam, a wife is obliged to obey her husband. Wives who do not follow their husbands are considered to have committed _nushūz_ or disobedience. The concept of _nushūz_ symbolizes the submission of women in marriage. This concept is justified by referring to the holy Qur’an:

*Men are caretakers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because of the wealth they have spent. So, the righteous women are obedient, (and) guard (the property and honor of their husbands) in (their) absence with the protection given by Allah. As for women of whom you fear rebellion, convince them, and leave them apart in beds, and beat them. Then, if they obey you, do not seek a way against them. Surely, Allah is the Highest, the Greatest.*
In *Tafsîr Jalalin*, the verse explains that a pious woman is a woman who obeys her husband, keeps herself from her honour when her husband is not at home because *Allah Almighty* has taken care of her by giving her to her husband, and is not allowed to disobey her husband by disobeying his orders. The wife’s obedience to the husband is at least shown by carrying out the husband’s orders as long as they are by Islamic law. Wives must serve their husbands according to their nature as women. Good wives will not refuse any request from their husbands as the head of the household; they must speak politely to their husbands, wives must respect their husbands, and wives are also obliged to take care of the household as much as possible. In addition, according to Imam as-Sadiq (as), the form of obedience wives to their husbands can also be done by always giving happiness to their husbands, being a comforter for husbands, refusing husbands’ sexual offers without clear reasons, not disobeying their husbands except those that are contrary to *Allah Almighty’s* commands, must be able to protect themselves from prohibited acts, guarding husbands’ property at home, and not receiving guests whom the husband does not permit.

Ultimately, women achieve femininity and protect their husbands’ masculinity by emphasizing their obedience and putting their careers and income aside. Wives’ obedience to their husbands enables them to live up to the expectation that being a pious wife can lead to their steps towards the pleasure of their husbands and *Allah Almighty* to enter heaven. However, Islam is diverse and has a local color in every geographical area, including the Javanese perspective. Therefore, although not explicitly describing the form of obedience of wives to husbands from the perspective of Javanese society, it is ultimately the same as what *Allah Almighty* has commanded in the holy Qur’ân. The teachings strengthen the behaviour that *Allah Almighty* has guided according to the *ka’fah* teachings of Islam.

### 7. Conclusion

This study shows that the concept of Sufism implemented by Murtasiyah as a Javanese woman in SM appears in the process of demanding the science of meaning (*ngelmu rasa*) when she tries to find the essence of makhîf. In summary, Murtasiyah’s Sufism practice is divided into three: peace of body (*cîpta*), peace of mind (*rasa*), and peace of soul (*karsa*) by applying the teachings of *tahalli*, *takhalli*, and *tajalli* to reach
the position of \textit{insān-i-kāmil}. Murtasiyah’s religious struggle as a Sufi is also evident from the application of religious values as a form of a wife’s obedience to her husband, such as gratitude, patience, obedience to worship, remembrance (\textit{eling}), pleased (\textit{ridā}), and willingness to repent. From the viewpoint of Javanese society, married Javanese women are positioned as \textit{kanca wingking}, so they must always submit to their husbands. Murtasiyah also experienced mistreatment from her husband. Accepting her destiny and closeness to the worship ultimately made her a Sufi figure. Indeed, Murtasiyah’s various forms of obedience align with the teachings of Islam, which regulate the obligations of wives in households. In Islam, at least, it is explained that a wife is obliged to obey her husband.

This research proposes several significance and relevance. First, theoretically, this study strengthens the foundation of seeking the essence of \textit{tawakkul} to \textit{Allah Almighty}. This study also clarifies the stages of Sufism to reach the highest level of religious understanding, \textit{makrifat}. Secondly, it strengthens the spiritual values of a wife’s obedience to her husband from the perspective of Javanese society. Modern women need to be given an understanding that building femininity from the religious side can protect male masculinity while achieving the pleasure of \textit{Allah Almighty}.

This research has several limitations. First, this study only discusses the main female character, Murtasiyah, from her spiritual journey. Future researchers need to explore women’s roles from other perspectives and compare them with other characters from various literary works. Secondly, this study only describes Javanese women’s religious values from the family sphere and has not dissected the value of women from other spheres. Therefore, further research can be continued by dissecting the characteristics of Javanese Sufi women from new roles. This research maps the religious values of Javanese Sufi women and proposes two recommendations. First, modern women who have lost their balance in the dual role must learn Murtasiyah’s simple and meaningful form of spirituality. Second, a revolution in the form of a wife’s obedience can occur when people have different characteristics due to geographical differences. However, in practice, modern women should not process the looseness of a wife’s obedience from a different perspective separately from the teachings of Islam because, in fact, all actions taken are sourced from the decree of \textit{Allah Almighty}. 
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