

# Representation of Changes in Human Character in *Serat Kaweritan*

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**Abstract.** *Serat Kaweritan* contains a description of God's eternal nature, which is used as a basis for acting vigilantly for the safety of body and soul. This study aims to analyze and describe the representation of changes in human character in *Serat Kaweritan*. The method used is descriptive, with a modern philological study approach. The data source for this research is the values in the *Serat Kaweritan* text. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is determined by semantic validity and intrarater reliability. The results of the research show that in *Serat Kaweritan* there are 13 changes in human character that need to be watched out for in order to maintain the safety of body and soul. Meanwhile, outward vigilance must also be balanced with inner practice to strive for perfect body and soul safety.

**Keywords:** human character, Javanese manuscript, representation of changes in human character, *Serat Kaweritan*, vigilance

## 1 Introduction

One form of culture is literature, or what are commonly called literary works. Literary work is a type of art that uses language as a medium to express ideas [1]. Literary works that have developed in Indonesia are very diverse, in line with the development of Indonesian culture. Javanese people, for example, have Javanese literary works. Judging from the period of its development, in general, Javanese literary works can be divided into two categories: ancient Javanese literary works and modern Javanese literary works. One of the ancient Javanese literary works whose existence needs to be preserved, both physically and in terms of content, is the manuscript.

Manuscripts can be interpreted as human compositions in the form of writings that contain the cultural values of their creators. The values contained in the text can be used as a guide to create a harmonious, balanced, and normal social life [2], [3]. On this basis, the manuscript becomes one of the cultural heritages that contains various teachings, such as customs, history, religion, teachings of life, morals, ethics, education, science, and others [4], [5]. Even though manuscripts

were written in the ancient past, the values contained in them are still very much needed and relevant to the current state of society. One form of manuscript whose value and content are still relevant today is the *Serat Kaweritan*.

*Serat Kaweritan* (hereinafter written SK) is an ancient Javanese manuscript written by Sang Mangungsed Dwistha in 1855 (Javanese year) and published by Boekhandel M. Tanojo Solo in 1926 AD. The SK text contains the eternal nature of God that underlies humans to be vigilant as an effort to save their souls and bodies. Based on the results of the inventory of manuscripts, SK can be found in several storage places such as the University of Indonesia Library, Sastra Lestari Foundation, the Yogyakarta Language Center Library, and the Universiteit Leiden Library. This text uses Javanese language ethic code (*krama*) and is written in Javanese script with a total of 28 pages. SK is written in prose and is a type of *piwulang* script. In this case, the research will refer to the decree kept at the Sastra Lestari Foundation with code number 266.

*Serat Kaweritan* needs to be studied because there has been no previous research that examines this text. Apart from that, SK also contains several things that represent changes in human nature. Research on human character has previously been carried out by Restinaningsih, Darsa, and Ma'mun (2016) [6], which examines human characteristics or character based on the birthday contained in the Raspatikalpa text, and these results can help determine the life cycle of society. Ahmad (2018) [7] conducted research on how to know a person's character from his face (Imam Syafii's physiognomy) in the Wirasat Sapii manuscript. Meanwhile, Faturahman and Sucahya (2022) [8] have also conducted a study on the representation of human character on the 10 faces of Ravana in the Indonesian and Indian versions. However, based on some of these studies, no one has examined human character in the *Serat Kaweritan* text.

Changes in human character must always be watched out for in order to create outer safety. Not a few conflicts in society, both related to oneself and others, arise due to factors related to different interests and human nature [9]. Therefore, the researcher intends to explore the forms of changes in human character in the *Serat Kaweritan* so that they can be applied in everyday life as a precautionary measure to maintain the safety of body and soul.

## **2 Research Methods**

This study uses a descriptive research method with a modern philological study approach. This study focuses on analyzing and describing the changes in human character contained in the object of research. The data source for this research is the values contained in *Serat Kaweritan*. This research data collection technique uses modern philological study methods. The philological study steps used include manuscript inventory, manuscript description, text transcription, text transliteration, text editing, text translation, and text analysis [5]. Data analysis was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions [10]. The data validity technique is used in conjunction with semantic validity, which is the process of determining the meaning of words and sentences based on their context. Meanwhile, the data reliability technique is carried out with intrarater reliability, namely reading the text repeatedly to obtain data that is fixed and consistent.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Description of *Serat Kaweritan* manuscript

The results and discussion in this article are focused on the contents of the manuscript, namely several forms of changes in human character that need to be watched out for. Meanwhile, the results of philological research on the *Serat Kaweritan* are only described briefly due to page limitations. These results can be seen in the following table.

**Table 1.** Description of *Serat Kaweritan* Manuscript

No.	Manuscript Part	<i>Serat Kaweritan</i> Manuscript
1	Title	<i>Serat Kaweritan</i>
2	Repository	Sastra Lestari Foundation
3	Collection Number	266
4	Author	Sang Mangungsed Dwistha
5	Writing year	1855 (Javanese year)
6	Publisher	Solo Boekhandel M. Tanojo
7	Script appearance	The condition of the manuscript is still good and intact, the text pages are complete, the writing can be read clearly.

The SK manuscript is a type of Javanese teachings (*piwulang*) script written in printed Javanese script on HVS paper. The manuscript is written in black ink and is still legible. The condition of the manuscript is still intact. The language used is the new Javanese language ethic code. The manuscript is written in prose (28 pages with 418 lines). The SK manuscript contains the science of perfection, which describes the eternal nature of God while creatures are always changing. Therefore, by adhering to these guidelines, humans are expected to always act vigilantly in order to achieve mental and physical safety.

#### 3.2 Representation of Changes in Human Character in *Serat Kaweritan*

Humans are God's perfect creatures because they are equipped with lust and reason to think. Meanwhile, human nature is very diverse. In this case, "character" can be interpreted as a personal trait or condition possessed by a person that involves knowledge, feelings, love, and action [11]. Because of the involvement of these aspects, characters can experience changes, both positive and negative. Changes in character must be watched out for, which means that humans must try to refrain from temptations, behaviors, and passions that can cause humans to behave deviantly [12]. For the Javanese people, vigilance is indeed one thing that is highly valued in dealing with various life problems [13]. *Serat Kaweritan* contains 13 human characteristics and the causes of their changes. The thirteen changes in human nature that must be watched out for in *Serat Kaweritan* can be described as follows:

##### 3.2.1 Being Loyal becomes Lying, Lying becomes Loyal to the Truth

A person who is loyal to the true path may turn out to be a liar. Generally, humans who harbor jealousy over other people's possessions in their hearts will feel restless and look for ways to easily have the same things. This is also caused by factors such as the

assumption that something that is obtained by lying will be easier than by real action. This statement can be seen in the following quotation:

*.... sarta gadhah pangintên paédahipun doracara ngungkuli pakantuking têtên, punapa déné nganggêp gampil nindakakên doracara tinimbang kaliyan nindakakên têtên. (SK: 9-10)*

Translation:

‘.... and have the assumption that the benefits of lying exceed those obtained from sincerity, or think that it is easier to lie than to be sincere.’ (SK: 9-10)

In essence, someone who acts a lie is someone who does not know that actually acting a lie is more miserable because it is against the mind. Besides that, lying also does not necessarily guarantee that you will get what you want. However, under certain conditions, people who lie can also turn into real ones. This condition is when humans are aware of the glory of acting in earnest, know that there is sin and torment in lying, and believe that all actions are always supervised by God. Thus, this value encourages people to be aware of mental illnesses that encourage them to lie by remembering the disadvantages of lying.

### **3.2.2 Like to Hate, Hate to Like**

Humans who initially like can turn into hate if there are things that they desire cannot be achieved. For example, a person has good wishes but is hindered by difficult things so that they feel dislike or hate. This can be seen in the following quotation.

*.... sarta dipunalang alangi ngantos pakéwêd, botên sagêd nindakakên sêdya kalayan gampil, punapa déné tansah botên kacondhangan. (SK: 11)*

Translation:

‘.... as well as being hindered to the point of difficulty, neither being able to carry out desires easily, nor being constantly undefeated.’ (SK: 11)

Hatred is closely related to negative feelings such as anger, envy, and jealousy, which are accompanied by a feeling of wanting to destroy the hated person [14]. Every human heart, of course, can feel these negative feelings. However, a person can determine the response that must be given when facing difficult things in life so that feelings of hatred do not grow. If all the bad actions that occur are responded to with acceptance or broad-mindedness, it will certainly lead to compatibility or a state of liking. This value can be exemplified in the fact that every bad thing does not have to be reciprocated with bad, but humans can choose to accept it gracefully so as not to lead to feelings of hatred.

### **3.2.3 Harmonious Becomes Hostile, Hostile Becomes Harmonious**

As a social being, an individual will always be in contact with other individuals. This relationship is synonymous with harmony in order to create a harmonious, calm, and peaceful community life free of conflicts [15]. Harmony can occur because every member of society has a sense of mutual affection. However, sometimes humans are unable to understand other people's forms of affection [16]. This, of course, can lead to harmonious relationships in society, which frequently devolve into conflict. In addition, conflict can also be caused by several things, such as seizing property rights over something that is outwardly selfish, wanting to win alone, and prioritizing lust over

harmony with other people. People like this usually think that it doesn't matter if the relationship has to be cut off. This can be strengthened by the following quote.

.... *awit gadhah panganggêp: kancuh dadi mungsuh, pisaha botên gumun, pêdhota botên gêtun.* (SK: 12)

Translation:

'...because they have the notion that friends become enemies; even though they are separated, they are not surprised, and even though they are broken up, they will not regret it.' (SK: 12)

Meanwhile, people who are at war can also become harmonious for several reasons. This includes the similarity of acceptance or broad-mindedness, remembering words that can hurt feelings, and doing good things such as helping each other. This character shows that if humans want to maintain good relations with other people, they should do things that can foster harmony, such as keeping their mouths shut and helping each other.

### 3.2.4 Steadfast Becomes Tracherous, Tracherous Becomes Steadfast

A man of firm / steadfast character can turn treacherous. This can occur as a result of envy for other people's possessions or the belief that betrayal (treacherous) is more profitable than acting firmly. This can be demonstrated by the following quote.

*punapa déné ngicalakên pakantuk ingkang sampun mêlok dados mélik utawi nganggêp dayaning kacidran ngungkuli katêtêpan.* (SK: 12-13)

Translation:

'nor throw away the obvious results of becoming jealous (of the possessions of others) or ascribing the power of betrayal to firmness. (SK: 12-13)

On the other hand, someone who is aware of and understands the ugliness of betrayal will certainly choose to be a firm person. The consequences of such treacherous acts are severe; one is not respected and valued, friendly relationships are strained, trust in others is lost, and one is despised by society. Thus, this value teaches humans to remain firm and careful with treacherous dispositions.

### 3.2.5 Fond of Food Become Ordinary and Vice Versa

This section describes the human nature of food as a primary need. Passionate and usually related to human lust. Someone who is initially very fond of a food may experience a decrease in appetite. This can be caused by circumstances from within and from outside. Circumstances from within, for example, a natural change in appetite or an unfavorable stomach health condition. While external conditions, for example, are caused by the taste of food that is not liked by someone or a food menu that does not change or vary. Conversely, this situation can also change as the following quote.

.... *sarta gathuk kaliyan kawontênanipun hawa tuwin mangsa, andadosakên kapéngin nêdha têtêdhan ingkang sampun naté dipundoyani, ....* (SK: 14)

Translation:

'.... In addition to being appropriate for the weather and time of day, it makes you want to eat food that you already like (eating), ....' (SK: 14)

The above quote shows that an ordinary appetite for food can also turn into a craving or gorging. This change can be caused by an improved stomach condition along with a change in circumstances, compatibility between the tongue and the taste of food, increased appetite, and supportive circumstances. An example of a supportive situation is when it's raining and someone usually wants to eat warm food or drink hot beverages. Basically, this craving behavior must be limited by the fact that the food you are about to eat will not cause illness for you.

### 3.2.6 Remember Becomes Forgetful, Forgetful Becomes Remember

Humans are very likely to experience this change in disposition. For example, someone who is grieving can forget about the grief. Things that can cause humans to forget the sadness they feel are using their time to do positive activities and remembering things that can make them happy. These positive activities can be carried out with simple activities, such as discussing with other people, studying knowledge that is beneficial for life, staying in touch, and so on. On the contrary, as the following quote suggests, in a state of forgetfulness, humans can turn into memories by considering the good and bad of something.

*nanging sarêng kabingahan wau botên lèstari, tur ambêkta rubéda ingkang botên nyakécakakên manah, wêkasan manungsa sagêd nimbang.* (SK: 15)

Translation:

‘However, because this happiness is not eternal, it also brings things that are not pleasing to the heart, in the end, humans can weigh these things.’ (SK: 15)

One of the proverb that developed in Javanese society is *sak begja-begjane wong lali, isih begja wong eling lan waspada*.

This term teaches humans to always remember God and good and bad actions as the basis for making decisions in action [16]. Remember, in this case, means that humans recognize that pleasure exhausts them to the point where they forget about themselves; it is no better than doing good deeds. Humans must also remember that pleasure is transitory, meaning that it does not last long and can change into other feelings such as sadness.

### 3.2.7 Generous Becomes Stingy, Stingy Becomes Generous

Giving charity means doing something with full sincerity, without expecting anything in return from others, and only intending it for God [17]. The nature of one's giving can turn into a miser if the charity expects something in return from others. This is as stated in the following quotation.

*botên wontên ingkang amblabani gêntos, dados tiyang blaba rumaos lêpat, sabab botên angsal ulih ulih ing lair.* (SK: 16)

Translation:

‘there is no one to give alms (to him), so the donor feels wrong, because he does not get a physical reward.’ (SK: 16)

The quote above explains that the change from giving to being stingy can also be caused by the condition that the donation is not accepted by other people, so that it offends the person who gives. Because of that, a person will feel that having a charitable disposition

is wrong and so decide to be a curmudgeon. On the other hand, someone who is stingy can also turn out to be generous. This change can be caused by three factors. First, a person will become a benefactor if he feels that he is not lacking in any way. Second, a growing sense of compassion encourages him to always share with others. Third, there is an awareness that a stingy character can loosen friendship bonds and cause one to not have many friends.

### **3.2.8 Fierce Becomes Patient, Patient Becomes Fierce**

Fierce is a form of negative character that is different from firm. Fierce people are more likely to be selfish, emotional, and angry. A fierce temper can change into patience. Patience means following good rules to achieve something [18]. Patience can also be interpreted as the attitude of someone who refrains from expressing anger at other people or gives a positive response when facing life's trials [19], [20]. This can happen when a person realizes that this character has no benefit in life and can actually create new problems that make it more difficult for oneself. Meanwhile, a patient character can also turn into one who is fierce if such patience makes you complacent and careless in carrying out your obligations. For example, someone who is patient will be used by others to do bad things. The patient person seems to obey other people's wishes so that he cannot carry out his work professionally.

### **3.2.9 Stupid Becomes Smart, Smart Becomes Stupid**

Stupidity and intelligence are not absolutes. In essence, God gave intelligence to every human being. Humans who feel they are stupid and want to try to study diligently and earnestly, of course, will become smart. This is expressed in the following quotation:

*manawi purun sinau samubarang kasagêdan, sarta tabêri ngimpu sêsêrêpan,  
punapa déné nglandhêpakên panggrahita, (SK: 17-18)*

Translation:

'If you want to learn everything until you are proficient, diligently collect knowledge, and sharpen your intuition,' (SK: 17-18)

The quote above explains that stupid humans can become smart if these humans are willing to learn everything that can increase their knowledge. However, the learning in question is not limited to knowledge but also to skills such as sharpening intuition or managing one's mind. Of course, humans must be able to manage feelings of anxiety and sadness while studying [21]. Conversely, humans who think they are smart can also be stupid. If a person feels that he has mastered a lot of knowledge about good and bad, as well as things at a higher level, a feeling will grow that he already has sufficient or qualified knowledge. This can actually cause the person to stop learning or to be inconsistent, making him stupid.

### **3.2.10 Poor Becomes Rich, Rich Becomes Poor**

It is not impossible for people who are poor to want to be rich. If one wants to be rich, one must be willing to do three things. First and foremost, be conscientious and serious about your work. Second, you can save some of the results of your work. Third, minimize spending by being frugal, thorough, and careful. Someone who wants to do these three things consistently, of course, can change his destiny and become rich. Conversely, people who are initially rich can also become poor if they take actions that end in waste.

For example, being too extravagant or spree-like, doing activities that are wasteful, and forgetting the source of their wealth. This can be strengthened by the following quote:

*punapa déné botên engêt witing kasugihan, ingkang wontên namung aji pupung.*  
(SK: 19)

Translation:

‘especially if you don’t remember the cause of wealth, there is only the assumption that while (wealthy).’ (SK: 19)

The quote above describes that humans who have wealth sometimes forget the source of this wealth. Humans who feel they are already rich are very vulnerable to greed. Because of these characteristics, humans use their wealth for the happiness of the mortal world without paying attention to the limitations, so that they will eventually experience poverty.

### **3.2.11 Wanting Becomes Unwanting, Unwanting Becomes Wanting**

Wanting and not wanting are also related to lust. Someone who initially wants to change will no longer want something if influenced by three things. First, if something you want turns out to be disappointing, Second, if something desired turns out to be a source of poverty (wastage in this case), Third, if something you want can cause a dangerous disease for yourself, Aversion, on the other hand, can be converted into desire if something actually improves the health of the body or if something is truly good enough to foster heart harmony.

### **3.2.12 Willing Becomes Unwilling, Unwilling Becomes Willing**

Unlike the previous section, willing or not willing is related to an action. A person who is initially willing can become unwilling to take an action if the action is not beneficial, can cause disappointment, or is an action that must be done with really hard effort, as the following quote suggests.

*sarta kathah saénipun, punapa déné nuwuhakên kabingahan, tur botên andadosakên bilahi.* (SK: 20)

Translation:

‘serta banyak kebajikannya, apalagi menumbuhkan kebahagiaan, juga tidak menyebabkan celaka.’ (SK: 20)

On the other hand, someone who initially doesn't want to change will become willing if he gets enlightenment on what to do. In addition, someone will want to do something if the action will provide benefits and goodness, bring happiness, and not cause bad things to happen.

### **3.2.13 Addicted Becomes Deterrent, Deterrent Becomes Addicted**

Someone who is addicted can become a deterrent if the thing that makes him addicted has many obstacles and makes life difficult. Another cause is the feeling of worry when you want to repeat something that has become an addiction. Conversely, someone who is initially deterred can also become addicted if the things that caused the deterrent are no longer an obstacle to re-doing certain actions, as the following quote illustrates:



*kapok éwah dados tuman, manawi ingkang murugakên kapok sampun botên dados alanganing sêdya. (SK: 21)*

Translation:

'deterrent turns into addiction, if what causes deterrence is no longer a barrier to intention (desire).' (SK: 21)

Another reason is that no one has been able to match the benefits of something, which makes it addictive. Both deterrent and addictive traits must be placed in their respective portions appropriately. Humans must be wary of things that are bad or will bring danger. Meanwhile, humans must be addicted to things that are good and bring benefits if done repeatedly.

## 4 Conclusion

*Serat Kaweritan* is a type of Javanese teaching script (*piwulang*) which contains teachings about vigilance towards changes in human nature. One of the contents in *Serat Kaweritan* is in the form of thirteen changes in human character that must be watched out for in order to maintain external or physical safety. These changes include: 1) being loyal becomes lying, lying becomes loyal to the truth; 2) like to hate, hate to like; 3) harmonious becomes hostile, hostile becomes harmonious; 4) steadfast becomes tracherous, tracherous becomes steadfast; 5) fond of food become ordinary and vice versa; 6) remember becomes forgetful, forgetful becomes remember; 7) generous becomes stingy, stingy becomes generous; 8) fierce becomes patient, patient becomes fierce; 9) stupid becomes smart, smart becomes stupid; 10) poor becomes rich, rich becomes poor; 11) wanting becomes unwanting, unwanting becomes wanting; 12) willing becomes unwilling, unwilling becomes willing; and 13) addicted becomes deterrent, deterrent becomes addicted. Of course, this change in character has a causal relationship, both positive and negative. Humans are expected to be able to weigh the good and bad of each character in order to avoid things that endanger themselves. Not only that, outwardly vigilant practices must also be balanced with inner practices, namely, believing in God to strive for perfect mental and physical safety.

Representations of human character can indeed be found in various types of Javanese literary works, such as *geguritan* (Javanese poetry), *macapat* songs (traditional Javanese songs), wayang stories, novels, *cerkak* (short stories), plays, as well as ancient texts. This research is limited to efforts to analyze the representation of changes in human character contained in the *Serat Kaweritan*. Therefore, there is a need for further research regarding the content of other *Serat Kaweritan*, such as studies on evidence of God's eternal nature. Other researchers can also study changes in human character contained in other literary works so that they can contribute to society. Not only that, but the study of Javanese literary works is also a form of preserving values through scientific activities.

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