



## *Tapa* in Ronggowarsito's *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* (1802-1873): The Convergence of Javanese Mysticism and Islamic Spirituality

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**Abstract:** *Tapa*, a form of Javanese asceticism, constitutes a longstanding tradition and a central element of spiritual life in Javanese society. This practice is frequently documented in Javanese literary works and is regarded as a significant cultural legacy. The present study analyses the concept of *tapa* in Raden Ngabchi Ronggowarsito's *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, focusing on its relationship to Sufi teachings and its role as a process of spiritual discipline and moral transformation. The data were collected through documentation techniques and analysed using a descriptive-interpretive approach through content analysis. The results revealed that *tapa* is depicted as a systematic approach to self-discipline and moral refinement, with the objectives of attaining *sastra cetha* (manifest knowledge) and achieving *manunggaling kawula Gusti* (union of the servant with God). The text demonstrates parallels with Sufi teachings, including purification of the self (*takhalli*), cultivation of virtuous character (*taḥalli*), and the unveiling of veils for divine inspiration (*tajalli*), ultimately culminating in spiritual union with God, as represented by the concepts of *ittiḥād* and *ḥulūl*.

**Contribution:** This study highlights the convergence of Javanese spiritual practices and Sufi teachings through *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, revealing how *tapa* cultivates self-discipline, moral refinement, and spiritual awareness, corresponding to Sufi concepts such as *takhalli*, *taḥalli*, and *tajalli*.

**Keywords:** *tapa*; *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*; Javanese Mysticism; Raden Ngabchi Ronggowarsito

## Introduction

Within Javanese mysticism, *tapa* is a spiritual practice that plays a central role in spiritual development. This tradition has been passed down through generations in Javanese society. Its continuity is evident in literary works and *wayang* (shadow puppet theatre) performances, both of which depict *tapa* as a means of cultivating wisdom and preserving (*nguri-uri*) the noble values of Javanese culture.<sup>1</sup> Javanese society recognises several forms of *tapa*, such as *tapa brata* (withdrawing from worldly crowds), *tapa ngrame* (practising self-restraint amid social life), *tapa kungkum* (partially immersing the body in a river as a form of spiritual discipline), and *poso mutih* (fasting while consuming only white foods). Despite differences in practice, these forms share a common spiritual objective: the purification of the inner self and the attainment of spiritual knowledge through *mukāshafa* (spiritual unveiling).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, *tapa* is regarded as a practice of self-purification that underpins the spiritual journey toward inner perfection.

Within the Sufi tradition, the spiritual journey is conceptualised as a process of self-purification that guides the *salik* (spiritual traveller) toward closeness to Allah. This purification, termed *tazkiyat al-nafs*, involves the discipline of avoiding blameworthy traits and cultivating righteous deeds and virtuous character.<sup>3</sup> This process occurs through *riyāḍa*, or spiritual discipline, and *mujāhada*, the struggle against the lower self, which together constitute the path to self-purification. Through these practices, the *salik* attains knowledge of God through direct spiritual experience. This knowledge is not acquired through rational inquiry or textual understanding; instead, it arises from the inner experience achieved through self-purification.<sup>4</sup>

The convergence of Javanese mysticism and Sufism is evident in Javanese Islamic literary works, such as Ronggowarsito's *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kasidi Hadiprayitno, "Estetika Wayang," *Jurnal Budaya Nusantara* 1, no. 1 (2014): 31–39, <https://doi.org/10.36456/b.nusantara.vol1.no1.a282>.

<sup>2</sup> Helfi and Abdur Rohman, "Laku Batin," *Jurnal Ilmiah Spiritualis: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Tasawuf* 5, no. 2 (2020): 208–24, <https://doi.org/10.53429/spiritualis.v5i2.69>.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Thohri and Prosmala Hadisaputra, "Urban Sufism of the Kopiah Community in Jayapura," *Ulumuna* 26, no. 1 (2022): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i1.475>.

<sup>4</sup> Yusrin Yusrin, "Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri's Contribution to Islamic Education," *International Journal of Islamicate Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 112–20, <https://doi.org/10.62039/ijiss.v1i2.26>.

<sup>5</sup> Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Narasi-Pustaka Prometheus, 2018), 288.

A distinctive aspect of this *serat* is its articulation of the spiritual journey using terminology specific to Javanese mysticism. In *Pupuh Dhandhanggula*, Ronggowarsito introduces the ultimate objective of the spiritual journey through the concepts of *sastra cetha* and *manunggaling kawula Gusti*. Subsequently, in *Pupuh Megatruh*, he delineates the seven stages of *tapa*—*tapaning djasad*, *tapaning budi*, *tapaning hawa napsu*, *tapaning suksma*, *tapaning rasa sejati*, *tapaning tjahja umantjur*, and *tapaning urip*—as the sequential path toward achieving this goal.<sup>6</sup> The organisation of spiritual goals and stages of *tapa* in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* establishes a coherent, integrated system of spiritual progression. This framework serves as the analytical basis for demonstrating how Javanese mystical terminology conveys Sufi concepts while preserving the unique features of each tradition.

Research on the relationship between Javanese mysticism and Sufism has evolved from theological, cosmological, and cultural perspectives. Nur Ahmad asserts that the concept of *manunggaling kawula Gusti* in Javanese mysticism is rooted in Sufi teachings, particularly *wahdat al-wujud*, and highlights the *pesantren* tradition's role in disseminating these ideas.<sup>7</sup> Waryani Fajar Riyanto demonstrates the correspondence between Javanese mysticism and Sufism through a comparative analysis of their spiritual cosmologies.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Onok Y. Pamungkas and colleagues contend that the Islamization of Java occurred through the adaptation of local language, symbols, and cultural traditions, which allowed the essential teachings of Islam to be accepted while preserving Javanese cultural identity.<sup>9</sup> Although these studies have explored the relationship between Javanese mysticism and Sufism from multiple perspectives, none has addressed how Sufi concepts are represented through the structure of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between the spiritual goals articulated in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* and the seven

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<sup>6</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, trans. Poerwadhic Atmodihardjo (Surabaya: Trimurti, 1958), 13–40.

<sup>7</sup> Nur Ahmad, “Shedding New Lights on Javanese Mysticism: Pegon Manuscripts in the Javanese World,” *Ulumuna* 23, no. 2 (2020): 221–41, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v23i2.370>.

<sup>8</sup> Waryani Fajar Riyanto, “Revealing the Sanctity of the Eternal Cosmic Hierarchy: A Comparative Analysis of Javanese Mysticism and Islamic Sufism,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 13, no. 2 (2023): 232–60, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2023.13.2.232-260>.

<sup>9</sup> Onok Y. Pamungkas et al., “The Spirit of Islam in Javanese Mantra: Syncretism and Education,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8407>.

stages of *tapa* in *Pupuh Megatruh* to clarify how Sufi concepts are represented through Javanese mystical terminology while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of each tradition.

Building on the preceding discussion, this study analyses the representation of Sufi concepts in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* through the lens of Javanese mysticism. The analysis specifically examines the structure of the spiritual journey as depicted in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* and *Pupuh Megatruh*. By investigating the articulation of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, this study advances scholarship on the relationship between Javanese mysticism and Sufism.

## Literature Review

### *Tapa* in the Javanese Spiritual Tradition

*Tapa* is a key aspect of spiritual practice in the Javanese tradition, encompassing diverse physical and mental disciplines aimed at cultivating qualities such as steadfastness, wisdom, and spiritual closeness. Mulder notes that *tapa* can include practices such as fasting, meditation, controlling desires, limiting sleep, immersing in rivers, and retreating to spiritually significant locations.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Suseno explains that *tapa* involves reducing food intake and sleep (*cegah dhahar lawan guling*), as well as restraining sexual desire, as a form of self-discipline.<sup>11</sup> *Tapa* can be conceptualised as a form of *laku batin*, or inner spiritual discipline, that seeks to cultivate the individual's moral and spiritual qualities.

The essence of *tapa* is rooted in the practice of self-restraint, which cultivates inner steadfastness and wisdom for navigating life. This self-restraint is achieved through spiritual discipline that curbs worldly desires, restricts attachment to material pursuits, and promotes a life marked by mindfulness, patience, and inner clarity. Consequently, *tapa* is regarded as a path of character formation that nurtures the attitudes of *eling lan waspada* (mindfulness and vigilance), *nrima* (wholehearted acceptance), and the capacity to maintain harmony amid diverse life circumstances.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, *tapa brata* is considered a

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<sup>10</sup> Niels Mulder, *Kebatinan Dan Hidup Schari-Hari Orang Jawa: Kelangsungan Dan Perubahan Kultural* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1983), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi Tentang Kebijakanaksanaan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), 139–40.

<sup>12</sup> Yuminati Rahayu and Zuminati Rahayu, “Javanese Asceticism in Serat Kalatidha,” *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 5, no. 1 (2018): 9–17, <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v5i1.101>.

form of *laku batin* that cultivates self-control over desires, fostering calmness, wisdom, and resilience amid continual life changes.<sup>13</sup>

*Tapa* cultivates personal qualities and guides individuals in establishing harmonious relationships with other people, nature, and God. Within the Javanese tradition, this orientation is articulated through the concept of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which refers to the pursuit of safety, well-being, and harmony in life through self-cultivation and the maintenance of balance between the *jagad alit* (microcosmos) and the *jagad ageng* (macrocosmos).<sup>14</sup> The principle of *karyenak tyasing sesama* embodies this ideal by emphasising the prioritisation of the common good, actions free of self-interest, and the promotion of peace and happiness for others as manifestations of social responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, *tapa* serves as an ethical foundation that guides individuals in cultivating harmonious relationships with others.

In addition to promoting harmonious relationships with others, *tapa* guides individuals toward a deeper exploration of life's meaning. This orientation is embodied in the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi*, which denotes an awareness of the origin and ultimate destiny of human existence.<sup>16</sup> This idea is closely associated with *manunggaling kawula Gusti*, namely the union between the servant (*kawula*) and God (*Gusti*).<sup>17</sup> However, this concept should not be interpreted as the ontological fusion of human essence and Divine Essence. Instead, it refers to the alignment of human will with God's will, achieved through the practice of virtuous values and obedience to God. This unity is realised when individuals renounce destructive passions and live in accordance

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<sup>13</sup> John Abraham Ziswan Suryosumunar, "Study of Religious Philosophy on Tapa Brata (Javanese Asceticism Practice) to Overcome the Social Anxiety During COVID-19 Pandemic Era," *FIKRAH* 9, no. 2 (2021): 385–402, <https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v9i2.9854>.

<sup>14</sup> Fuad Noorzeha and Lasiyo, "Memayu Hayuning Bawana: Memahami Esensi Gotong Royong Dalam Nilai Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Jawa," *Sanjiwani: Jurnal Filsafat* 14, no. 2 (2023): 109–22, <https://doi.org/10.25078/sjf.v14i2.2986>.

<sup>15</sup> Arifah Pujiyanti, Ahman Ahman, and Syamsu Yusuf, "Revitalizing the Family Education Environment: Integrating the Values of Memayu Hayuning Bawana in Saparan Culture," in *BIO Web of Conferences*, ed. J. Surif et al., vol. 79, 2023, 06006, <https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/20237906006>.

<sup>16</sup> Wawan Susetya, *Dharmaning Satriya: Nilai-Nilai Kepribadian Dan Kepemimpinan Jawa* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2019), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Samsul Ariyadi, *Resepsi Al-Qur'an Dan Bentuk Spiritualitas Jawa Modern: Kajian Praktik Mujahadah Dan Semaan Al-Qur'an Mantab Purbojati Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* (Serang: A-Empat, 2021), 65.

with the Divine will.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, *tapa* is conceptualised as a spiritual path that guides individuals from self-discipline to a deeper awareness of God. This perspective indicates that *tapa* is directed not only toward self-cultivation and social harmony but also toward fostering closeness to God by aligning human will with Divine will.

### ***Maqāmāt* and *Aḥwāl* in Sufism**

In the Sufi tradition, the journey toward God is understood as a gradual spiritual process undertaken by a *sālik* through the spiritual path (*ṭarīqah*).<sup>19</sup> This journey does not occur spontaneously but unfolds through a series of *maqāmāt* that reflect the stages of a *sālik's* spiritual development. Each *maqām* requires the completion of spiritual discipline and moral cultivation before the *sālik* can advance to the next stage.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, *maqāmāt* demonstrate that the spiritual journey in Sufism is a progressive process of self-cultivation leading toward closeness to God.

The essence of *maqāmāt* lies in the process of spiritual cultivation carried out through *riyāḍa* and *mujāhada*. *Riyāḍa* refers to spiritual discipline practised through both physical and inward exercises as a means of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Through these disciplines, a *sālik* gradually develops spiritual qualities, enabling the heart to become increasingly purified and prepared for the journey toward God.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, *mujāhada* denotes the continual inner struggle to subdue the lower self and purify the soul from blameworthy traits as a path toward closeness to God.<sup>22</sup> Regarding the sequence of *maqāmāt*, Sufi scholars have proposed different formulations. Al-Sarrāj identifies the *maqāmāt* as *tawba* (repentance), *warā* (religious scrupulousness), *zuhd* (asceticism), *faqr* (spiritual need), *ṣabr* (patient), *tawakkal* (rely on God), and *riḍā* (contentment), while al-Kalābadhī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Qushayrī propose different sequences, including *qanā'a* (satisfaction), *murāqabah* (mindful vigilance before Allah), and even

<sup>18</sup> Sri Wintala Achmad, *Etika Jawa: Pedoman Luhur Dan Prinsip Hidup Orang Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Araska, 2018), 208.

<sup>19</sup> Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2003), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 100.

<sup>21</sup> Agus Samsul Bassar and Aan Hasanah, "Riyadhah: The Model of the Character Education Based on Sufistic Counseling," *Journal of Advanced Guidance and Counseling* 1, no. 1 (2020): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jagc.2020.1.1.5763>.

<sup>22</sup> Naan Naan and Siti Aisyah, "Sufistic Meditation as a Form of Happiness Transformation," *El Harakah: Jurnal Budaya Islam* 25, no. 1 (2023): 137–55, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ch.v25i1.18767>.

*maḥabba* (love). Nevertheless, these variations do not alter the essential nature of *maqāmāt* as successive stages through which a *sālik* advances by means of *riyāḍa* and *mujāhada* toward closeness to God.<sup>23</sup> According to Hasyim Muhammad, these *maqāmāt* may be understood through two interrelated processes of spiritual formation. The *maqāmāt* of *tawba*, *warā'*, *zuhd*, and *faqr* represent the process of *takhallī*, namely the purification of the soul from blameworthy qualities. Meanwhile, the *maqāmāt* of *ṣabr*, *tawakkal*, and *riḍā* represent the process of *taḥallī*, namely the cultivation of virtuous character. Thus, *takhallī* and *taḥallī* should be understood as processes that occur throughout the progression of *maqāmāt*, rather than as independent *maqāmāt*.<sup>24</sup>

After the processes of *takhallī* and *taḥallī* have unfolded through the progression of *maqāmāt*, a *sālik* may attain *tajallī*, the unveiling of Divine light as a gift from God. Unlike *maqāmāt*, which are attained through spiritual effort, *tajallī* belongs to the realm of *aḥwāl*, namely spiritual states bestowed by God upon those whose hearts have attained spiritual readiness. Accordingly, the concepts of *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī* explain the process of spiritual transformation that takes place as a *sālik* traverses the *maqāmāt* until ultimately experiencing *tajallī* as one of the *aḥwāl*.<sup>25</sup>

The discussion of *tapa* in the Javanese spiritual tradition and *maqāmāt* in Sufism demonstrates that both share a comparable spiritual orientation. However, they are expressed through different languages, symbols, and conceptual systems. These differences do not indicate opposition but rather reflect the adaptation of Sufi values within the cultural horizon of Java.<sup>26</sup> Within this framework, the concepts of *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī* serve as analytical tools for explaining the processes of self-purification, moral cultivation, and spiritual realization embodied in the seven stages of *tapa* presented in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*. Accordingly, this study argues that the *serat* represents fundamental Sufi concepts through the terminology of Javanese spirituality without diminishing the distinctive characteristics of either tradition. This conceptual framework provides the basis for analysing how *Serat Pamoring*

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<sup>23</sup> Asep Usman Ismail, *Kuliah Akhlak Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2023), 277.

<sup>24</sup> Hasyim Muhammad, *Dialog Antara Tasawuf Dan Psikologi: Telaah Pemikiran Psikologi Humanistik Abraham Maslow* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset, 2002), 29.

<sup>25</sup> Naan and Aisyah, "Sufistic Meditation as a Form of Happiness Transformation."

<sup>26</sup> Ahmad, "Shedding New Lights on Javanese Mysticism: Pegon Manuscripts in the Javanese World"; Riyanto, "Revealing the Sanctity of the Eternal Cosmic Hierarchy: A Comparative Analysis of Javanese Mysticism and Islamic Sufism"; Pamungkas et al., "The Spirit of Islam in Javanese Mantra: Syncretism and Education."

*Kawula Gusti* represents the Sufi spiritual journey through the concept of *tapa* in the Javanese spiritual tradition, thereby demonstrating the text as a representation of Javanese Sufism.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach using library research. The unit of analysis is the structure of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, particularly the relationship between the spiritual goals presented in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* and the seven stages of *tapa* described in *Pupuh Megatruh*. Primary data were obtained from *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*. In contrast, secondary data were drawn from books and scholarly articles discussing *tapa* in the Javanese spiritual tradition through *maqāmāt* in Sufism. The data were collected through documentation techniques and analysed using a descriptive-interpretive approach through content analysis. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the interpretation was informed by repeated close readings of the text. It was verified against relevant literature to establish consistency among the textual data, the conceptual framework, and the analytical findings.

## Results and Discussion

### Ronggowarsito and *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*

Raden Ngabehi Ronggowarsito (1802–1873) was the last court poet of the Surakarta Palace and played a significant role in the development of Javanese literature and spirituality during the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> This position made his works an important medium through which Javanese intellectual traditions encountered Islamic teachings. His background as a descendant of the Surakarta court poets shaped his mastery of the Javanese literary tradition. At the same time, his education at the Tegalsari Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren Tegalsari*) in Ponorogo under the guidance of Kiai Imam Besari deepened his understanding of Islamic teachings, particularly Sufism.<sup>28</sup> The integration of these two traditions is evident throughout Ronggowarsito's works, including *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, which incorporates ethical teachings, Javanese mysticism, and Sufism.

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<sup>27</sup> Deni Hermawan, Elis Nawati Fazrin, and Reka Tri Harum Darma, *Ilmu Tasawuf: Tuntunan Hidup Kitab Basah Di Zaman Edan* (Pekalongan: NEM, 2021), 115–16.

<sup>28</sup> Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa*, 219.

Etymologically, the title *Pamoring Kawula Gusti* signifies the union between *kawula* (the servant) and *Gusti* (God). The title represents the spiritual goal that Ronggowarsito sought to articulate throughout the *serat*. The meaning of *Pamoring Kawula Gusti* as the union of the servant and God indicates that, from the very title, Ronggowarsito introduces the spiritual orientation that constitutes the central theme of the entire work. According to Susetya, *kawula* refers to the physical body, whereas *Gusti* refers to the spiritual dimension. Accordingly, the relationship between the servant and God is understood as *loro-loroning atunggal* or *dwi tunggal* (two becoming one).<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the expression *Pamoring Kawula Gusti* functions as the central concept that frames the spiritual journey presented in this *serat*. Thus, in its very title, Ronggowarsito employs Javanese mystical terminology as a medium for representing Sufi concepts without diminishing the distinctive identity of Javanese culture.

The author's identity and the date of composition are stated in the opening stanza of *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* as follows:

**Ra**-saning tyas sinawung hartati, **Den**-irarsa amedar sarkara, **Nga**-jawara puwarané, **Be**-rawaning madangkung, **I**-nukara ri Sukra-Kasih, **Rong**-puluh wulan Radjab, **Ga**-ti kanemipun, **War**-sa Djimakir Santjaja, **Si**-nengkalan: nembah muluk ngésti adji, **Ta**-ta wedaring kata."<sup>30</sup>

The date of composition is encoded in the *candrasengkala* phrase *Nembah Muluk Ngésti Adji* (*nembah* = 2, *muluk* = 0, *ngésti* = 8, *adji* = 1), indicating that the manuscript was written in the Javanese year 1802, corresponding to 1873 CE, and that the writing commenced on the twentieth day of Rajab. The author's name is likewise concealed in the form of a *sandi asma*, embedded in the initial syllables highlighted in the opening stanza above, which spell out the name Raden Ngabehi Ronggowarsito. The manuscript is composed as Javanese poetic songs (*tembang macapat*) and consists of two *pupuh*: *Dhandhanggula*, comprising fourteen stanzas, and *Megatruh*, comprising twenty-seven stanzas. *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* is therefore structured into two *pupuh*: *Dhandhanggula*, which presents the ultimate orientation of the spiritual journey, and *Megatruh*, which explains the stages of *tapa* required to attain that goal.<sup>31</sup> This structure forms the basis of the present analysis. Accordingly, the following discussion focuses on the relationship between the spiritual goals articulated in *Pupuh*

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<sup>29</sup> Wawan Susetya, *Cakramanggilingan: Siklus Kehidupan Dalam Pandangan Manusia Jawa* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2019), 272–73.

<sup>30</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa*, 279–80.

*Dhandhanggula* and the stages of *tapa* presented in *Pupuh Megatruh*, which represent Sufi concepts.

### The Spiritual Goals in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula*

*Pupuh Dhandhanggula* serves as the opening section, presenting the ultimate orientation of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*. In this section, Ronggowarsito first establishes the spiritual goal, then explains the stages of *tapa* in *Pupuh Megatruh*. This goal is expressed through the concept of *sastra cetha*, as articulated in the third stanza of *Pupuh Dhandhanggula*:

“Supadiné ing tyas datan pangling, lukitané ingkang sastra tjeta, ingkang mangka darsanané, wong kang berbudi tjukup, anjukupi sapati-urip, uripé aneng donja, prapteng djanjinipun, sajekti datan kéwran, denira mrih prasta pulasta pinusti, estiné kena-kana.”<sup>32</sup>

Strive to ensure that the heart never loses sight of the true meaning of *sastra cetha*, which serves as a guide for those endowed with wisdom. Such wisdom enables one to face both life and death with sufficient understanding. Living in this world until the end of one's earthly existence, one will not lose the right path, provided that one continually prepares oneself for both death and life.

Ronggowarsito positions *sastra cetha* as the primary objective of the spiritual journey. This objective indicates that *tapa* is directed toward attaining spiritual knowledge of the true nature of existence. Within the Javanese mystical tradition, *sastra cetha* is also known as *Sastra Jendra Hayuningrat* or *Sastra Cetha Wadiningrat Pangruwating Dyu*. *Sastra Jendra Hayuningrat* refers to knowledge of the nature of the universe and all its mysteries, often expressed through the Javanese aphorism *papan tanpa tulisan, tulisan tanpa papan* (a writing board without writing, and writing without a board).<sup>33</sup> Endraswara interprets *Sastra Jendra* as a concept closely related to the Qur'anic command *iqra'* in Q. 96 (*al-'Alaq*): *Iqra' wa Rabbuka al-Akram* ("Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous"). According to this interpretation, the concept carries a distinctly Sufi nuance by associating *sastra* with *iqra'*, both of which relate to reading and knowledge.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Susetya explains *sastra cetha* by referring to the experience of the Prophet Muḥammad when he received the first Qur'anic

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<sup>32</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Wawan Susetya, *Cermin Hati: Perjalanan Rohani Menuju Ilahi* (Solo: Tiga Serangkai, 2006), 219.

<sup>34</sup> Suwardi Endraswara, *Mistik Kejawaen: Sinkretisme, Simbolisme, Dan Sufisme Dalam Budaya Spiritual Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2016), 162.

revelation in the Cave of Hirā' through the Angel Jibrīl. The Prophet did not receive the revelation as one would receive a physical book; rather, it was attained through profound concentration, a state described in Javanese mysticism as *heneng* and *hening*.<sup>35</sup> Although these interpretations employ different illustrations, both emphasise that *sastra cetha* is a form of knowledge acquired through spiritual experience rather than through rational inquiry alone. Accordingly, *sastra cetha* constitutes the spiritual goal that directs every stage of *tapa* in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*.

Based on the foregoing discussion, *sastra cetha* may be understood as spiritual knowledge attained through the process of inner purification, enabling a person to comprehend the true nature of existence more profoundly. This understanding corresponds closely to the concept of *tajallī* in Sufism, namely the unveiling of Divine light and knowledge to a *sālik* after completing the process of self-purification.<sup>36</sup> This correspondence demonstrates that *sastra cetha* is not understood as knowledge acquired solely through intellectual inquiry, but rather as knowledge born of spiritual experience. This characteristic indicates that the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* is directed toward inner transformation, through which a person attains a deeper understanding of the true nature of existence.

Beyond *sastra cetha*, Ronggowarsito further emphasises that the highest goal of the spiritual journey is the attainment of *manunggaling kawula Gusti*. This idea is expressed through the phrase *den kumpul Gusti kalawan kawula* in the fourth stanza of *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* as follows:

“Sakamantyan dènira angudi, widadaning ingkang saniskara, karana tan kena mléséd, surasaning kang ngélmü, nora kena madajeng djangdji, djangdjiné mung sapisan, purihen dén kumpul, Gusti kalawan kawula, dumadiné dinadak bisa umandjing, satu mungging rimbagan.”<sup>37</sup>

Persevere in your spiritual quest and strive for the well-being of all. The true meaning of spiritual knowledge must never be misinterpreted or distorted, for its essence is one alone. Therefore, endeavour to unite the servant with the Lord, so that such unity may be realised whenever it is truly required.

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<sup>35</sup> Wawan Susetya, *Kontroversi Ajaran Kebatinan: Dari Serat Darmogandhul, Suluk Gatolotjo, Serat Centhini Sampai Sastra Jendra Hayuningrat* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 2002), 126.

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Basyrul Muvid, *Pendidikan Tasawuf: Sebuah Kerangka Proses Pembelajaran Sufistik Ideal Di Era Milenial* (Surabaya: Pustaka Idea, 2019), 90.

<sup>37</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, 15.

The expression *den kumpul Gusti kalawan kawula* affirms that the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey is the attainment of *manunggaling kawula Gusti*, namely the harmony between the servant and God as understood in the Javanese spiritual tradition.<sup>38</sup> In *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, this concept functions not only as the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey but also as the principle that unifies all stages of *tapa* into a coherent process of inner transformation.<sup>39</sup> According to Wintala Achmad, however, this union should not be understood as the ontological fusion of the human being with God, but rather as the harmonisation of the human will with the Divine will. Accordingly, *manunggaling kawula Gusti* requires human beings to align their thoughts, attitudes, and conduct with the Divine will through obedience to God.<sup>40</sup> The expression *den kumpul Gusti kalawan kawula* therefore indicates that all stages of *tapa* ultimately culminate in the harmonisation of the human will with the Divine will. In this way, Ronggowarsito represents the ultimate goal of Sufism through the terminology of Javanese mysticism. His choice to employ the term *manunggaling kawula Gusti* demonstrates that the representation of Sufism in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* is not achieved by directly adopting Arabic terminology. Rather, Sufi concepts are translated into the cultural horizon of Java through terms that were already familiar within the local mystical tradition. This strategy enables the essential teachings of Sufism to be preserved without diminishing the distinctive identity of Javanese culture. Consequently, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* rearticulates Sufi concepts within a Javanese spiritual framework while preserving the defining characteristics of both traditions.

### **The Seven Stages of *Tapa* in *Pupuh Megatruh***

After explaining the spiritual goals through the concepts of *sastra cetha* and *manunggaling kawula Gusti* in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula*, Ronggowarsito continues his spiritual teaching in *Pupuh Megatruh* by outlining the seven stages of *tapa* as the path that must be traversed to attain those goals. These seven stages are not arranged arbitrarily; rather, they constitute a systematic process of spiritual cultivation that progresses from the discipline of outward aspects of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ariyadi, *Resepsi Al-Qur'an Dan Bentuk Spiritualitas Jawa Modern: Kajian Praktik Mujahadah Dan Semaan Al-Qur'an Mantab Purbojati Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> Purwadi Purwadi et al., "Character Education in Serat Sabdajati the Last R.Ng. Ranggawarsita's Work," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan* 41, no. 3 (2022): 848–62, <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v41i3.48760>.

<sup>40</sup> Achmad, *Etika Jawa: Pedoman Luhur Dan Prinsip Hidup Orang Jawa*, 208.

self toward the perfection of the inner dimension. The description of these seven stages of *tapa* is presented in stanzas 9 through 15.

The first stage is *tapaning djasad*, which consists of cultivating self-control by overcoming resentment, hatred, and vindictiveness while developing a sincere attitude of acceptance. Ronggowarsito states:

"Panggonane tapa brata pitung wektu, déné tapa kang sawidj, tapaning djasad puniku, ajwa darbé asak serik, nerima terusing batos."<sup>41</sup>

The practice of *tapa* consists of seven kinds. The first is *tapaning djasad* (the discipline of the body), which teaches one not to harbour resentment or hatred, but to accept everything with a sincere heart.

The second stage is *tapaning budi*, which emphasises cultivating moral character by abandoning disgraceful conduct, futile actions, and deceit.

"Kaping kalih ja tapa satuhu, lah ija tapaning budi, amung tapa temenipun, njepana nista lan nistip, ngitjalana ati goroh."<sup>42</sup>

The second is the true practice of *tapa*, namely *tapaning budi*, which requires one to eliminate disgraceful and worthless conduct and to remove deceitfulness from the heart.

The third stage is *tapaning hawa napsu*, which teaches the discipline of desires through patience, piety, forgiveness toward others, and complete surrender to God.

"Kaping tiga ja tapaning hawa napsu, nglakokna sabar lan alim, ngaksama sasamanipun, nadyan sira pinisakit, tuwakupa mring Hyang Manon."<sup>43</sup>

The third is *tapaning hawa napsu*, which is practised by cultivating patience and piety, forgiving others even when one has been wronged, and entrusting everything to the Almighty.

The fourth stage is *tapaning rasa sejati*, an inner spiritual discipline practised through meditation to attain tranquillity and clarity of heart (*heneng-hening*).

"Ingkang kotjap tapa brata kang kaping tjatur, ja tapaning sang rasa sedjati, eneng-eningena kalbu, mesuwa pudja semédi, eneng-ening memesti dados."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ronggowarsito, 36–37.

<sup>43</sup> Ronggowarsito, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Ronggowarsito, 38..

The fourth is *tapaning rasa sejati*, the discipline of the true inner self. It calls for the heart to become calm and serene through constant prayer and meditation upon God. In such stillness and inner clarity, what is truly intended will inevitably come to pass.

The fifth stage is *tapaning suksma*, which emphasises cultivating generosity, refraining from harming others, and nurturing the ability to care for and protect the feelings of fellow human beings.

"Kaping lima tapaning suksma puniku, gelara marta martani, lega-  
legawaning kalbu, ajwa munasikéng djanmi, amomonga atining wong."<sup>45</sup>

The fifth is *tapaning suksma*, which is expressed through generosity of heart, refraining from hurting others, and nurturing the hearts of fellow human beings with compassion and care.

The sixth stage is *tapaning tjahja umantjur*, which portrays the attainment of inner clarity through vigilance, spiritual awareness, and the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood.

"Kaping nenem tapaning tjahja umantjur, waskita kalawan éling, datan samar ing pandulu, éling panuntun basuki, kadarman ati mantjorong."<sup>46</sup>

The sixth is *tapaning tjahja umantjur*, the radiance of inner illumination, characterised by vigilance and constant remembrance of God. Such awareness removes obscurity from one's perception and continually guides one toward goodness and well-being.

The final stage is *tapaning urip*, which calls upon a person to live with steadfastness, prudence, and complete trust in God, free from anxiety and fear.

"Kaping pitu ja tapaning uripipun, santosa dén ngatiati, akantija teguh timbul, ajwa was sumelang galih, ngandela maring Hjang Manon."<sup>47</sup>

The seventh is *tapaning urip*, the discipline of life itself. It requires steadfastness, carefulness, firmness of heart, freedom from anxiety, and complete trust in the Almighty.

These seven stages of *tapa* demonstrate that the spiritual journey presented in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* unfolds progressively, beginning with the discipline of the self's bodily and psychological aspects and advancing toward the cultivation of inner qualities that culminate in spiritual perfection. Accordingly,

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<sup>45</sup> Ronggowarsito, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Ronggowarsito, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Ronggowarsito, 40.

the seven stages of *tapa* should not be understood merely as a sequence of spiritual practices, but as a comprehensive system of spiritual cultivation. This characteristic forms the basis for the following analysis, which employs the concept of *maqāmāt* in Sufism—particularly *takhallī* and *taḥallī*—to examine the correspondence between the Javanese spiritual teachings in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* and the Sufi tradition.

### **Representation of Javanese Sufism in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti***

The structure of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* demonstrates that Ronggowarsito represents Sufi concepts through the language and terminology of Javanese mysticism. This representation is evident in the relationship between the spiritual goals articulated in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula* and the seven stages of *tapa* presented in *Pupuh Megatruh*, which together constitute a gradual process of spiritual transformation. In this study, the concept of *maqāmāt*, particularly *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī*, serves as the analytical framework for understanding this spiritual structure. The framework is adopted because both *tapa* in the Javanese tradition and *maqāmāt* in Sufism share a common spiritual orientation: they emphasise self-discipline, purification of the soul, moral cultivation, and closeness to God as the essence of the spiritual journey. Accordingly, the analysis of the seven stages of *tapa* seeks to explain how Sufi concepts are represented through the spiritual system constructed by Ronggowarsito. From this perspective, each stage of *tapa* may be understood as an integral part of a process of spiritual transformation that progresses from self-purification toward spiritual perfection and intimacy with God.<sup>48</sup>

The initial stage of the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* represents self-purification, which in the Sufi tradition is known as *takhallī*. This representation is manifested in *tapaning djasad* and *tapaning budi*, both of which emphasise the removal of blameworthy qualities as a prerequisite for the subsequent cultivation of inner virtues. In *tapaning djasad*, Ronggowarsito teaches that one should abandon *serik* (resentment) and cultivate an attitude of *nrima* (sincere acceptance). The placement of this teaching at the very beginning of the spiritual journey indicates that emotional discipline constitutes its essential foundation.<sup>49</sup> Such a path is in line with *tauba* in Sufi *maqāmāt*. The subsequent stage, *tapaning budi*, emphasises the discipline of conduct through the avoidance of reprehensible behaviours, including *nista*,

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<sup>48</sup> Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa*, 288.

<sup>49</sup> Ronggowarsito, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*, 35.

*nistip*, and *goroh* (falsehood), which is called *warā'* and *zuhd* in Sufism. Whereas *tapaning djasad* focuses primarily on purifying one's inner disposition, *tapaning budi* extends this process to everyday moral conduct.<sup>50</sup> Together, these two stages demonstrate that Ronggowarsito regards purification of the soul as the indispensable foundation of the spiritual journey. This process is accomplished through self-discipline and the elimination of *madhmūma* (blameworthy traits) before one proceeds to cultivate virtuous character. Accordingly, *tapaning djasad* and *tapaning budi* may be understood as representations of the concept of *takhallī* within the spiritual structure formulated by Ronggowarsito. His decision to begin the spiritual journey with the discipline of emotions and conduct reflects the view that inner transformation begins with character formation. This pattern closely corresponds to the Sufi tradition, in which *takhallī* constitutes the initial stage before a *sālīk* adorns the soul with virtuous qualities through *taḥallī* and ultimately attains Divine unveiling (*tajallī*).

After the process of self-purification (*takhallī*), the spiritual journey in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* proceeds to the cultivation of inner virtues, which represents the concept of *taḥallī*. This representation is manifested in the remaining five stages: *tapaning hawa napsu*, *tapaning rasa sejati*, *tapaning suksma*, *tapaning tjahja umantjur*, and *tapaning urip*. Together, these stages demonstrate that, after purifying oneself from blameworthy qualities, a spiritual seeker must cultivate the inner virtues that lead to closeness with God. In *tapaning hawa napsu*, Ronggowarsito begins this process of spiritual formation by cultivating patience, piety, forgiveness, and complete surrender to God. This transition indicates that the spiritual journey has entered the stage of cultivating virtuous character, which constitutes the essence of *taḥallī* that Sufi called it as *qanā'a* and *tawakkal*. In *tapaning rasa sejati*, this moral cultivation is deepened through *pudja semedi*, a contemplative practice that disciplines one's consciousness and directs it toward God. This stage demonstrates that the formation of virtuous character also requires cultivating inner awareness, which represents *maqam tawakkal* and *taqwā* in Sufism. Subsequently, *tapaning suksma* extends this inner transformation into the realm of social relationships through generosity, refraining from harming others, and safeguarding the feelings of fellow human beings. This stage represents the *maqām maḥabba* in Sufism, demonstrating that closeness to God must be reflected in one's relationships with others. The process of transformation is then further refined in *tapaning tjahja*

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<sup>50</sup> Ronggowarsito, 36–37.

*umantjur*, which emphasises the qualities of *eling* (constant remembrance of God) and *waskita* (spiritual discernment). Together, these qualities represent a higher level of spiritual awareness through which a person remains continually conscious of God's presence in every aspect of life, which is called *muraqaba* in Sufism.<sup>51</sup>

The final stage, *tapaning urip*, signifies spiritual maturity through steadfastness, prudence, and complete trust in God. At this stage, the inner qualities cultivated throughout the preceding stages have become fully integrated into one's daily life and character. Collectively, these stages demonstrate that the spiritual journey does not end with self-purification but continues through the cultivation of moral excellence and inner virtues, thereby representing the concept of *taḥallī* in Sufism, which is *riḍā*.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike the representations of *takhallī* and *taḥallī*, which are embodied in the stages of *tapa* presented in *Pupuh Megatruh*, the representation of *tajallī* is articulated through the spiritual goals outlined in *Pupuh Dhandhanggula*. Ronggowarsito expresses this culmination through the concept of *sastra cetha*, understood as the spiritual knowledge attained after completing all stages of *tapa*. From the perspective of Sufism, this condition corresponds to *tajallī*, namely the unveiling of Divine knowledge that results from the purification of the soul and the cultivation of virtuous character, or so-called *mushāhada* in Sufistic framework.<sup>53</sup> The culmination of the spiritual journey is then realised through *manunggaling kawula Gusti*, a state in which the human will is brought into harmony with the Divine will, which is called *ittiḥād* in Sufism.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* does not merely adopt Sufi concepts; rather, it represents them through the distinctive terminology, symbolism, and spiritual structure of the Javanese tradition. In doing so, Ronggowarsito constructs a distinctive form of Javanese Sufism that preserves the essential characteristics of both the Sufi and Javanese spiritual traditions.

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<sup>51</sup> Ronggowarsito, 37–40.

<sup>52</sup> Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, *Tasawuf Sosial KH. MA. Sahal Mahfudh* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2019), 44.

<sup>53</sup> Lalu Muhammad Nurul Wathoni, *Akhlaq Tasawuf: Menyelami Kesucian Diri* (Lombok Tengah: Forum Pemuda Aswaja, 2020), 125.

<sup>54</sup> Achmad, *Etika Jawa: Pedoman Luhur Dan Prinsip Hidup Orang Jawa*, 208.

**Table 1.** Representation of Sufi Concepts in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti*.

| Spiritual Structure in <i>Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti</i> | Javanese Spiritual Concept                                       | Sufi Analytical Framework                  | Representation                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Sastra cetha</i>                                       | Spiritual Goal of <i>tapa</i>                                    | <i>Tajallī</i> ( <i>mushāhada</i> )        | Spiritual illumination attained after the completion of self-purification and moral cultivation. |
| <i>Manunggaling kawula Gusti</i>                          | Ultimate Goal of <i>tapa</i>                                     | <i>Tajallī</i> ( <i>ittihād</i> )          | Harmonisation of the human will with the Divine will as the highest spiritual realisation.       |
| <i>Tapaning djasad</i>                                    | Purification of resentment and cultivation of sincere acceptance | <i>Takhallī</i> ( <i>tauba</i> )           | Purification from blameworthy qualities ( <i>madhmūma</i> ).                                     |
| <i>Tapaning budi</i>                                      | Elimination of disgraceful conduct and deceit                    | <i>Takhallī</i> ( <i>warāʿ, zuhd</i> )     | Moral purification through ethical self-discipline.                                              |
| <i>Tapaning hawa napsu</i>                                | Patience, piety, forgiveness, and surrender to God               | <i>Taḥallī</i> ( <i>qanaʿa, tawakkal</i> ) | Cultivation of virtuous character ( <i>maḥmūda</i> ).                                            |
| <i>Tapaning rasa sejati</i>                               | Inner contemplation ( <i>heneng–hening</i> )                     | <i>Taḥallī</i> ( <i>tawakkal, taqwa</i> )  | Development of inner awareness and spiritual concentration.                                      |
| <i>Tapaning suksma</i>                                    | Compassion and concern for others                                | <i>Taḥallī</i> ( <i>maḥabba</i> )          | Cultivation of social ethics and benevolence.                                                    |
| <i>Tapaning cahya umancur</i>                             | Spiritual vigilance and constant remembrance of God              | <i>Taḥallī</i> ( <i>murāqaba</i> )         | Attainment of higher spiritual awareness and discernment.                                        |
| <i>Tapaning urip</i>                                      | Steadfastness, prudence, and complete trust in God               | <i>Taḥallī</i> ( <i>riḍā</i> )             | Integration of spiritual virtues into daily life.                                                |

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* represents Sufi concepts through Javanese mystical terminology without diminishing the distinctive characteristics of either tradition. This representation is constructed through a systematic spiritual framework comprising Pupuh Dhandhanggula, which articulates the spiritual goals of *sastra cetha* and *manunggaling kawula Gusti*, and Pupuh Megatruh, which outlines the seven stages of *tapa* as the path to attaining those goals. This structure demonstrates that the spiritual journey presented in the *serat* is not merely a collection of independent teachings but a coherent process of inner transformation that unfolds progressively.

The analysis based on the concept of *maqāmāt* reveals a clear correspondence between the stages of *tapa* and the process of spiritual transformation in Sufism. *Tapaning djasad* and *tapaning budi* represent the process of *takhallī* through the purification of the self from blameworthy qualities, whereas *tapaning hawa napsu*, *tapaning rasa sejati*, *tapaning suksma*, *tapaning tjahja umantjur*, and *tapaning urip* represent *taḥallī* through the cultivation of moral and spiritual virtues. Meanwhile, *sastra cetha*, as the spiritual goal of the journey, corresponds to *tajalli*, namely the unveiling of spiritual knowledge attained through the process of self-purification, which ultimately culminates in *manunggaling kawula Gusti*, the harmonisation of the human will with the Divine will.

This study further demonstrates that the relationship between Javanese mysticism and Sufism in *Serat Pamoring Kawula Gusti* is manifested not only in the similarity of their spiritual teachings but also in the structure of the spiritual journey formulated by Ronggowarsito. Accordingly, this study contributes to the scholarship on Javanese Sufism by showing that the representation of Sufi concepts is achieved through the reinterpretation of spiritual ideas within the language and symbolic framework of Javanese culture, thereby producing a form of spirituality that reflects a synthesis between the Islamic and Javanese traditions. Future research may extend this discussion by comparing the representation of Sufi concepts in other works of Ronggowarsito or in different texts of Javanese mysticism.

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