

***Da'wah bil hikmah* in Macapat Serat Wulangreh Songs: Analysis of *da'wah* messages in javanese cultural expressions**

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to explore Da'wah bil hikmah in the macapat poems of Serat Wulangreh by Pakubuwana IV, focusing on four pupuh, namely Dhandhanggula, Gambuh, Asmarandana, and Kinanthi. This study examines how the message of Da'wah is manifested in the form of Javanese cultural expressions that are rich in moral, ethical, and spiritual values.

Method - This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis. The research population consists of all verses in Serat Wulangreh, totaling 13 pupuh. The research sample is limited to four pupuh that are the focus of this study. The analysis is conducted textually and contextually to interpret the messages of da'wah contained therein.

Result – Research shows that Serat Wulangreh contains messages of preaching with wisdom. Pupuh Dhandhanggula advises that the knowledge received should always be based on sharia principles and taught with wisdom. Pupuh Gambuh emphasizes the importance of honesty and the need to choose the right role models. Asmarandana emphasizes the importance of self-control and humility, while Kinanthi conveys a message about living humbly and choosing good company.

Implication – This study indicates the importance of the Da'wah bil hikmah approach in conveying the message of Da'wah through local cultural media. This approach allows the message of Da'wah to be conveyed politely, relevantly, and accepted by a community that upholds symbolic expressions and Javanese traditional values

Originality/Value - This study provides a new interpretation of Serat Wulangreh from the perspective of Da'wah bil hikmah, which has rarely been specifically examined in Da'wah studies based on classical literary texts.



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Kata kunci:

Da'wah bil hikmah,
tembang macapat,
serat wulangreh,
budaya jawa.

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Abstrak

Tujuan – Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi Da'wah bil hikmah dalam tembang macapat Serat Wulangreh karya Pakubuwana IV, dengan fokus pada empat pupuh, yaitu Dhandhanggula, Gambuh, Asmarandana dan Kinanthi. Penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana pesan Da'wah diwujudkan dalam bentuk ekspresi budaya Jawa yang sarat nilai moral, etika, dan spiritual.

Metode - Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan analisis isi (content analysis). Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh bait dalam Serat Wulangreh yang berjumlah 13 pupuh. Sampel penelitian dibatasi empat pupuh yang menjadi fokus. Analisis dilakukan secara tekstual dan kontekstual untuk menafsirkan pesan Da'wah yang terkandung di dalamnya.

Hasil – Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Serat Wulangreh memuat pesan-pesan Da'wah bil hikmah. Pupuh Dhandhanggula memberikan anjuran agar ilmu yang diterima selalu berlandaskan pada dalil syariat serta diajarkan dengan kebijaksanaan. Pupuh Gambuh menegaskan keutamaan kejujuran dan perlunya memilih teladan yang benar. Asmarandana menekankan pentingnya pengendalian diri dan kerendahan hati. Kinanthi memberikan pesan tentang hidup rendah hati dan memilih pergaulan yang baik.

Implikasi – Penelitian ini mengindikasikan pentingnya pendekatan Da'wah bil hikmah dalam menyampaikan pesan Da'wah melalui media budaya lokal. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan pesan Da'wah tersampaikan secara santun, relevan, dan diterima oleh masyarakat yang menjunjung tinggi ekspresi simbolik dan nilai-nilai adat Jawa.

Orisinalitas/Nilai - Penelitian ini memberikan pembacaan baru terhadap Serat Wulangreh dari perspektif Da'wah bil hikmah, yang masih jarang dikaji secara khusus dalam studi Da'wah berbasis teks sastra klasik.

Introduction

Da'wah is a religious activity that is normatively one of the essential elements in Islamic teachings (David, 2024) functioning as the delivery of Islamic teachings, moral guidance, and the process of guiding individuals and communities to always draw closer to Allah (Hasbullah et al., 2022). In the context of Indonesia, which has a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and traditions, Da'wah strategies cannot be implemented uniformly but need to be adapted to the social and cultural conditions of the local community (Mohammed Turki A. Al-Sudairi, 2017; Putra et al., 2023).

In the study of Da'wah, Da'wah bil Hikmah is understood as a socio-cultural practice that operates in the symbolic space of society, not merely as a normative-theological activity (Hjarvard, 2016). A number of studies show that the success of Da'wah is largely determined by its ability to adapt to the local cultural context and utilise the mediums of cultural expression that are alive within the community (Khan et al., 2020). However, studies of Da'wah that specifically link the Da'wah bil hikmah approach with the analysis of traditional Javanese literature, especially macapat songs in Serat Wulangreh, are still relatively limited. So far, Serat Wulangreh has been studied more from the perspectives of Javanese literature, history, or ethics (Peristiano et al., 2025).

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One relevant approach in responding to diversity in society is Da'wah bil hikmah, which emphasizes the wise, persuasive, and adaptive delivery of teachings to the social and cultural context of the target audience (Bastomi, 2016; Ginting et al., 2024). Da'wah bil hikmah is not merely a method of delivering messages, but also a contextual strategy that allows Islamic messages to be better accepted by communities with diverse cultural backgrounds (Riyadi & Karim, 2023). The theological basis for this approach is found in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl verse 125, which emphasizes the importance of inviting people to the path of Allah in a wise manner, with good advice and polite dialogue.

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Call (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and debate with them in a way that is better. Indeed, your Lord is the most knowing of those who have strayed from His path, and He is the most knowing of those who are guided. (QS 16: 125).

This verse provides practical guidance for preachers to convey Islamic teachings in a wise, polite, and context-appropriate manner (Bastomi, 2016). Inviting people to return to the truth and their true nature cannot be done rigidly, but requires an approach that takes into account the socio-cultural conditions and environment of the community (Sari & Pratama, 2023; Yunita & Ahmad, 2023). Da'wah bil hikmah is not only a normative theological concept, but also a cultural approach to preaching that is alive in the local traditions of Javanese society. Previous studies show that the effectiveness of da'wah is greatly influenced by its ability to adapt to the cultural context and local symbols that are deeply rooted in the social life of the community (Hjarvard, 2016; Putra et al., 2023). Contextually, the macapat songs in the Serat Wulangreh transmit moral and religious values that are in line with the principles of dakwah bil hikmah (Sugiarto & Suparno, 2024).

For the Javanese community, values and moral teachings are often conveyed through traditional literary forms (Putri, 2020). One cultural heritage that has ethical and religious content is tembang macapat, a form of Javanese poetry sung with specific meter rules (I. Santosa & Noorwatha, 2025; S. Santosa, 2016). More than just a work of art, tembang macapat contains philosophical meanings

that reflect the journey of human life from birth to death (Raj & Prihartanti, 2022; Wangsa et al., 2019). Each type of pupuh in macapat has a moral message and reflection on life that is tailored to the stages of human existence, so that it functions not only as entertainment, but also as a means of moral and spiritual education (Abbas et al., 2025)

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The cultural conditions of Javanese society are also very rich and complex (Nafisha & Firmandhani, 2024). Oral culture, linguistic aesthetics, and closeness to the symbolic world are key elements in the daily lives of Javanese people (Heniy Astiyanto, 2016). Therefore, da'wah that is delivered through a cultural approach is not only more easily accepted, but also more likely to endure and be passed down from generation to generation. On the one hand, preaching with wisdom as manifested through literary works in Serat Wulangreh is a form of preaching that is not only adaptive but also dialogical. It opens up a space for encounter between Islamic values and local cultural identities without causing conflict (Ginting et al., 2024). On the other hand, Da'wah bil hikmah also shows the high cultural sensitivity of the da'i. By choosing Javanese songs as a medium for Da'wah, a da'i not only inserts religious values into the realm of literature, but also conveys messages in a subtle and respectful manner towards the cultural identity of his community (Setiasih et al., 2024).

This principle is reflected in the classical Javanese literary work Serat Wulangreh (Nugroho & Suratno, 2022), which conveys Islamic values through macapat songs in a symbolic and aesthetic manner (Rafiatun, 2018; Wibawa et al., 2022; N. S. Wiratama et al., 2014). This shows that da'wah bil hikmah can be present not only in normative religious discourse, but also through local cultural expressions that are rich in moral and spiritual meaning (Al Fazzatil A'la & Al Farahil A'la, 2023). Previous studies have examined Serat Wulangreh from various perspectives, such as philological studies, classical Javanese literature, moral values, and Javanese leadership ethics (Nugroho & Suratno, 2022; Rafiatun, 2018; Wibawa et al., 2022; R. Wiratama, 2021). These studies position Serat Wulangreh as a pedagogical text rich in moral teachings and life wisdom in the Javanese tradition, while other studies highlight the function of macapat songs as an aesthetic medium that represents the local cultural value system (Muslih, 2024). These studies still view Serat Wulangreh within the general framework of literature and culture, without explicitly discussing the practice of dakwah bil hikmah, which functions as a culture-based religious communication strategy.

This study focuses on the messages contained in macapat songs, particularly the pupuh Dhandhanggula, Gambuh, Asmarandana, and Kinanti. These pupuh were selected based on the consideration that they represent variations in the form of macapat songs with different rhythms and verse structures and contain moral teachings, ethics, and spiritual values relevant to everyday life. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to integrate the study of da'wah with Javanese cultural and literary analysis, particularly through the reading of Serat Wulangreh as a systematic and meaningful medium of da'wah bil hikmah. Unlike previous studies that tended to place macapat songs as mere cultural products (Sutarjo, 2023), this study emphasises the function of songs as a medium of cultural dakwah that bridges Islamic teachings with the Javanese cultural symbol system in a dialogical manner.

Based on this framework, this study interprets da'wah not only as a social activity, but also as a cultural-textual practice that is deeply rooted in Javanese intellectual and literary traditions. This study contributes to enriching contemporary perspectives on dakwah by showing that dakwah bil

hikmah can be understood as a practice of religious communication that is integrated with literary traditions, aesthetics, and local wisdom, while also broadening the horizon of dakwah studies so that they are not trapped in a purely normative approach, but are also sensitive to the cultural and historical dimensions of society (Ginting et al., 2024; Setiasih et al., 2024).

This study is important considering the need for a more contextual, communicative approach to Da'wah that is in harmony with local culture. In a multicultural society such as Indonesia, a Da'wah approach based on local wisdom has proven to be more effective in reaching the religious consciousness of the community without causing cultural resistance (Hamzah et al., 2023; Harahap et al., 2024). The novelty of this research lies in mapping the message of Da'wah in the form of classical Javanese literature, which shows the integration between Islamic values and local cultural expressions, thus offering a new perspective in developing Da'wah strategies that are relevant to multicultural societies.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis to examine the verses of macapat songs in Serat Wulangreh. In Javanese village life, macapat songs are often expressed in informal family conversations as a means of internalization moral values (Andriyanto et al., 2022; Zustiyanoro & Sakhiyya, 2025) ; for example, when parents advise their children by quoting stanza 2 of the Gambuh poem, "Eling, Le, aja nganti kebanjur, sabarang polah kang nora jujur. If you are overwhelmed, you will be confused and will not be good," to emphasise the importance of honesty and caution in one's actions. This illustration shows that macapat functions as a living cultural symbol (Noroko Ishida, 2010) as well as a medium for conveying wisdom that can foster moral awareness through a process of self-reflection (Muslih, 2024) .

The object of this study is the macapat verses in Serat Wulangreh by Pakubuwana IV, specifically in the pupuh Dhandhanggula, Gambuh, Asmarandana, and Kinanthi. The analysis focuses on identifying and examining the messages of Da'wah bil hikmah contained therein, whether in the form of moral, ethical, or spiritual teachings conveyed through Javanese cultural symbols. The primary data for this study consists of the text of Serat Wulangreh in Latin transliteration and its translation, while the secondary data includes scientific journals, books on literature and culture, and articles related to cultural da'wah. Data collection was carried out through documentation and literature study, followed by the process of identification, sorting, and thematic classification of verses containing da'wah. For example, Pupuh Dhandhanggula stanza 5, 'Lamun ana wong micoreng ngelmi / tan mupakat ing patang prakara' (Hadiningrat, 1994), was identified as a warning against scientific deviation, sorted into the theme of critical attitude in accepting religious teachings, and classified as a form of da'wah bil hikmah because it emphasises the assessment of truth based on arguments, hadith, ijma', and qiyas in a persuasive manner (Harsono, 2005) .

The analysis was conducted through several stages of content analysis based on an interpretative approach to text and cultural studies. Content analysis in this study was based on Krippendorff's (2013) view of content analysis as a method for interpreting the symbolic meaning of texts. The stages of analysis were carried out sequentially and interrelatedly (Schreier, 2012). The first stage was data reduction, which was the process of filtering the verses of the Serat Wulangreh macapat songs that represented the principles of dakwah bil hikmah. The second stage is categorisation, which is

the grouping of selected verses into analytical themes that reflect the values of dakwah bil hikmah, such as wisdom, social ethics, self-control, and spirituality, which are conveyed through Javanese cultural symbols. The third stage is interpretation, where each verse is analysed by considering more than one possible interpretation before determining the dominant meaning.

JID | 44 **Results and Discussion**

Serat Wulangreh as a Medium of Da'wah Bil Hikmah



Figure 1. The Serat Wulangreh book

Figure 1 above is the cover of the book *Serat Wulangreh* by His Majesty Pakubuwana IV of Surakarta Hadiningrat. *Serat Wulangreh* is one of the most popular literary works in Javanese culture. It was written by Pakubuwono IV, the 18th-century king of the Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace, known by the title Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV (Wangsa et al., 2019). Pakubuwana IV was known among the Javanese people as a king who embraced Islam and was passionate about teaching Islam to the wider community (Darusuprpta, 1986; Purwadi & Waryanti, 2015; R. Wiratama, 2021a).

Figure 1 above is the cover of the book *Serat Wulangreh* by Kanjeng Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV Surakarta Hadiningrat. *Serat Wulangreh* is one of the most popular literary works in Javanese culture. This work was written by Pakubuwono IV, the 18th-century king of the Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace, who was known by the title Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV (Wangsa et al., 2019). Pakubuwana IV is known among the Javanese people as a king who embraced Islam and was very enthusiastic in teaching Islam to the wider community (Darusuprpta, 1986; Purwadi & Waryanti, 2015; R. Wiratama, 2021a).

As both a king and a spiritual leader, Pakubuwono IV used literature as a means of moral and spiritual education (Said et al., 2025). The values conveyed were diverse, such as controlling one's desires (*laku prihatin*), wisdom in living life (Sukadari, 2020), manners (*unggah-ungguh*), philosophy of life (Widiyono, 2010), the importance of knowledge and morals, and awareness of social responsibility (Yulita & Panani, 2019). All of these teachings are packaged in poetic symbolic language, allowing readers or listeners to understand the message gradually, according to the depth of their understanding (Nugroho & Suratno, 2022). Each stanza in this work features Islamic terms

and symbols, so that the substance of the teachings is largely in line with the basic principles of Islam (Damairia et al., 2022; Utorowati et al., 2022).

Etymologically, the term wulangreh comes from the words wulang (advice, teaching, or lesson) and reh (order or rule), which can be interpreted as guidance for organizing life wisely (Harsono, 2005). These teachings contain noble moral values aimed at the younger generation, the nobility, and the wider community (Nugroho & Suratno, 2022; Shobron & Setiawan, 2022).

The Wulangreh manuscript is composed in the form of macapat poetry, consisting of 13 pupuh, namely: Dhandhanggula, Kinanthi, Gambuh, Pangkur, Maskumambang, Megatruh, Durma, Wirangrong, Pucung, Mijil, Asmarandana, Sinom, and Girisa (Harsono, 2005). Macapat poetry is classical poetry in Javanese literature (Khoiriyah & Syarif, 2019) that is sung based on specific metrical patterns such as Dhandhanggula, Kinanthi, Pangkur, and others. The choice of this form is not merely an aesthetic aspect, but also an effective cultural communication strategy (Hasan et al., 2025; Santoso, 2016). The composition of Serat Wulangreh in the form of tembang illustrates the author's carefulness in choosing the right medium to convey the message (Widiyono, 2010).

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The Wulangreh text combines Islamic teachings with Javanese culture without losing the essence of Islamic teachings (Ismawati & Warsito, 2021). The use of the Javanese language and macapat poetry makes moral and religious messages easier to accept because they are in harmony with local traditions (Siregar et al., 2023). This acculturation strategy allows Islamic values to thrive in a pluralistic and dynamic society (Muslih, 2024), while also fostering harmonious dialogue between Islam and Javanese culture as a form of da'wah that is rooted, ethical, and transformative (Andayani et al., 2025). This approach is in line with Surah An-Nahl verse 125, which emphasizes the call to follow Allah's path with wisdom and good lessons (Bastomi, 2016).

In Javanese culture, songs are not merely a form of art, but also a medium for conveying noble values that are easily accepted and internalized (Purwadi, 2009). The teachings in Serat Wulangreh are also conveyed subtly, touching the heart, and full of symbolism (Pariska et al., 2025). This method is in line with Da'wah bil hikmah, which emphasizes wisdom, gentleness, and cultural appropriateness (Ginting et al., 2024), as exemplified by the practice of the Wali Sanga, who used macapat songs to spread Islam in Java (Anto & Anita, 2019; Haidar, 2018).

From the perspective of da'wah science, da'wah bil hikmah is a cultural communication strategy that considers the social, symbolic, and historical context of the audience (Hjarvard, 2011). In this context, Serat Wulangreh is a concrete example of da'wah that uses culture as a space for negotiating meaning between Islamic teachings and local value systems (Nugroho & Suratno, 2022). The aspect of wisdom in Serat Wulangreh is also reflected through the use of symbolic language and the aesthetics of song as a means of internalising values (Geertz, 1973; Sutarto, n.d.). The conveyance of Islamic values such as honesty, self-control, and obedience to sharia is implicitly packaged through metaphors and rhythm (Nicholas et al., 2023).

Pola ini sejalan dengan temuan Hady et al. (2025) yang menegaskan bahwa teks-teks klasik Islam berfungsi sebagai sumber normatif ajaran dan media kultural yang bersifat dinamis dalam memfasilitasi adaptasi kontekstual nilai-nilai Islam pada beragam budaya lokal (James M Day, 2021). Dari sudut pandang etika sosial (O'Connor, 2016), da'wah bil hikmah dalam Serat Wulangreh dilaksanakan melalui penguatan nilai-nilai moral yang selaras dengan etos budaya

Jawa, seperti unggah-ungguh, andhap asor, dan keselarasan sosial. Nilai-nilai tersebut selaras ajaran Islam secara kontekstual (Asrori et al., 2025; Yani et al., 2025).

JID | 46 This pattern is in line with the findings of Hady et al. (2025) which confirm that classical Islamic texts serve as normative sources of teachings and dynamic cultural media in facilitating the contextual adaptation of Islamic values to various local cultures (James M Day, 2021). From a social ethics perspective (O'Connor, 2016), da'wah bil hikmah in Serat Wulangreh is carried out through the strengthening of moral values that are in harmony with Javanese cultural ethos, such as unggah-ungguh, andhap asor, and social harmony. These values are in line with Islamic teachings in a contextual manner (Asrori et al., 2025; Yani et al., 2025).

Content Analysis of Preaching Messages in Serat Wulangreh

Content analysis of Da'wah Bil Hikmah Serat wulangreh can be described as follows,
Dhandhanggula Verse 5 and 6

Bait 5: *Lamun ana wong micoreng ngelmi / tan mupakat ing patang prakara / aja sira age-age / anganggep nyatanipun / Saringana dipun baresih / limbengen lan kang / patang prakara rumuhun: dalil, qiyas, ijma', hadis / papat iku salah siji ana / kang mupakat, antepena* (Hadiningrat, 1994).

Bait 6: *Ana uga kena lan antepi / yen ucul saking patang prakara / nora enak lagetane / tan wurung ninggal wektu / Panganggepe wus angengkoki / aja kudu sembayang / wus salat kateng sun / banjure mbuwang syariat / batal karam nora nganggo den-rawat / bubrah saka tata* (Hadiningrat, 1994).

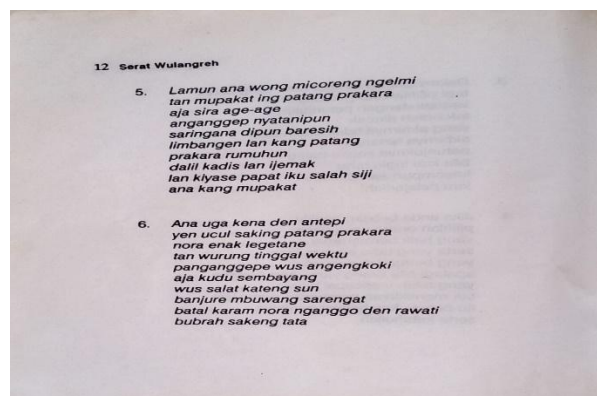


Figure 2. Pupuh Dhandhanggula nait 5 dan 6.

Figure 2 is the text of Pupuh Dhandhanggula verses 5 and 6 in Serat Wulangreh, which contains teachings on the importance of caution, wisdom, and self-control in attitude and action. In verses 5 and 6 of Pupuh Dhandhanggula, Pakubuwana IV emphasizes the importance of a critical and wise attitude in responding to knowledge, namely not to rush into believing teachings that are not based on scientific authority such as arguments, hadiths, ijma', and qiyas (Wangsa et al., 2019; R. Wiratama, 2021a).

This cautious attitude is a form of da'wah bil hikmah (preaching with wisdom) because it invites people to weigh and filter the truth in a persuasive manner, rather than judging (Saadah, 2010). Furthermore, he provides an argumentative warning that abandoning these four basic authorities

will lead to deviations in worship, such as neglecting prayer or even rejecting sharia, which in turn can damage the religious order (Daryono et al., 2020).

This method of delivery reinforces a style of preaching that is full of rational and contextual reasoning, making it relevant to the current situation of society, including the younger generation, so that they are not easily influenced by religious discourse that cannot be accounted for (Nurrohmatillah et al., 2024). Da'wah bil hikmah in this pupuh is reflected through an intellectual call to build filters within the community so that they can avoid deviations in religious understanding and practice (Nashrillah & Marzuki, 2021).

Gambuh Verse 2 and 3

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Bait 2: Aja nganti kebanjur / barang polah / ingkang nora jujur / yen kebanjur / kojur sayekti tan becik / becik ngupayaa iku / pitutur ingkang sayektos (Hadiningrat, 1994).

Bait 3 : Pitutur bener iku / sayektine kang iku tiniru / nadyan metu saking wong sudra papeki / lamun becik wurukipun / iku pantes sira anggo (Hadiningrat, 1994).

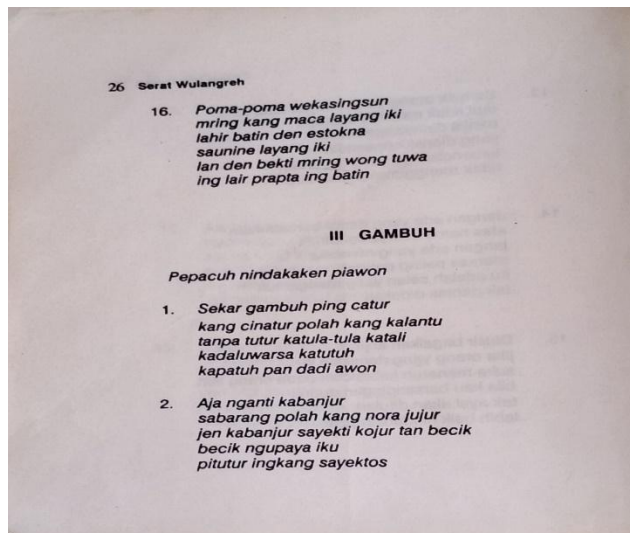


Figure 3. Pupuh Gambuh Serat Wulangreh

Figure 3. Stanzas 2 and 3 of Pupuh Gambuh explain the importance of honesty and thoroughness in one's actions, as well as a selective attitude in accepting teachings. Stanza 2 reminds people not to rush into dishonest behaviour, as the consequences can be detrimental to oneself and others (Wibawa et al., 2022). The prohibition against dishonest behaviour demonstrates preventive moral awareness, which is an effort to prevent damage before it occurs. This message is conveyed not in the form of normative threats or theological punishment, but through ethical reasoning that emphasises the social and personal consequences of dishonesty (Setiasih et al., 2024). This message is a form of Da'wah bil hikmah, because it is conveyed persuasively, emphasising moral awareness without coercion (Riyadi & Karim, 2023; Yunita & Ahmad, 2023).

Furthermore, stanza 3 emphasises that true teachings should be emulated, even if they come from people who are socially considered lowly, as long as the teachings are good and beneficial. Pupuh Gambuh verse 3 complements the previous message by emphasising the principle of

egalitarianism in the acceptance of true teachings (Kasper Lippert, 2015). The statement that true teachings should be emulated even if they come from people who are socially considered lowly (wong sudra papeki), as long as the teachings are good and beneficial. This shows criticism of the social hierarchy that often influences the authority of knowledge. In the context of da'wah bil hikmah, this attitude reflects wisdom in viewing truth as an objective value that does not depend on social status (Axelsen & Bedadunure, 2019). This message directs people to judge teachings based on their substance and benefits, not based on the position or background of the teacher (Haron, 2005).

Overall, Pupuh Gambuh verses 2 and 3 represent a message of da'wah for moral guidance on honesty, prudence, and openness to truth, positioned as the foundation of social and religious ethics (Ronald W Morrist, 2021). This is the concrete manifestation of da'wah bil hikmah, which is conveyed through subtle and meaningful songs. The material contains teachings on morals and social wisdom, so that religious teachings can be easily accepted (Harsono, 2005; Wangsa et al., 2019).

Pupuh Asmarandana Verse 1 and 2

Bait 1: Padha netepana ugi / kabeh parentahing syara / terusna lair batine / salat limang wektu uga / tan kena tininggala / sapa tinggal dadi kupur / yen misih remen neng praja (Hadiningrat, 1994).

Translation: Also, follow all religious commands in body and soul, You must not neglect the five daily prayers, Whoever neglects prayer will become an infidel, That is, if you still love life (Harsono, 2005).

Bait 2: Wiwitane badan iki / iya saking ing sarengat / anane Manusa kiya / rukune Islam lelima / tan kerja tininggala / pan iku parabot agung / mungguh uripe neng donya (Hadiningrat, 1994).

Translation: This body also originates from Sharia law, as do human beings, You must not abandon the five pillars of Islam, are they not all noble tools for human life in this world (Harsono, 2005).

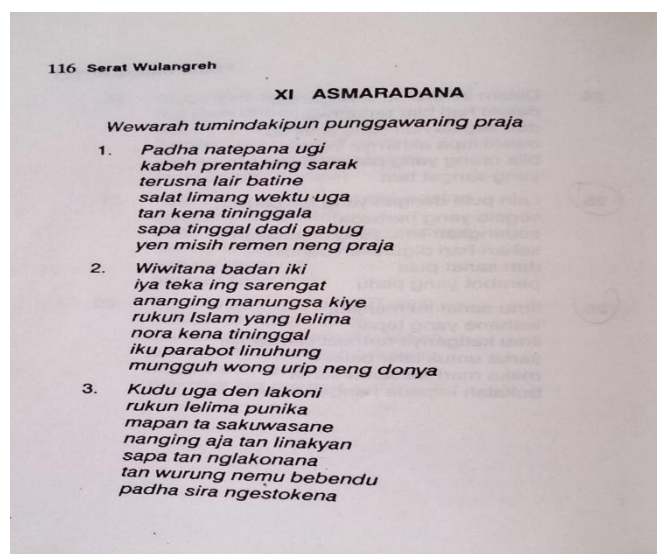


Figure 4. Pupuh Asmarandhana Serat Wukangreh

Figure 4 Pupuh Asmarandana verses 1 and 2 explain the importance of obedience to Sharia law and the pillars of Islam as the foundation of physical and spiritual life. In the first stanza, the phrase 'padha netepana ugi kabeh parentahing syara terusna lair batine' emphasises the importance of comprehensive implementation of Islamic law, covering both physical and spiritual dimensions (Hadiningrat, 1994). This message is conveyed through a collective invitation (padha), which reflects communal values in Javanese culture. This approach shows that da'wah is not directed in an individualistic and coercive manner, but rather through the cultivation of collective awareness. The emphasis on physical and spiritual balance is also in line with Javanese cosmology (Iswahyudi, 2022), which views the ideal life as a state of harmony between the body, soul, and social order (I. Santosa & Noorwatha, 2025).

The affirmation of the obligation to perform the five daily prayers, 'salat limang wektu uga tan kena tininggala' (the five daily prayers must not be neglected), shows that the normative aspects of Islam are still firmly upheld. However, the theological consequences for those who abandon prayer, 'sapa tinggal dadi kupur' (those who abandon prayer will become dust), are not conveyed in the form of direct threats, but are linked to existential reflections, 'yen misih remen neng praja' (if you still love the world) (Harsono, 2005). This phrase contains a cultural critique of a lifestyle that is too worldly, a theme that is also strong in Javanese ethics regarding the control of desires (ngendhaleni hawa nepsu) (Sutarto, n.d.). Thus, dakwah bil hikmah in this verse works through the mechanisms of moral awareness and self-reflection, not solely through normative pressure.

The second verse reinforces the message of dakwah with an ontological and symbolic approach. The expression 'wiwitane badan iki iya saking ing sarengat' reflects the view that human existence is rooted in divine law, so that sharia is not positioned as an external rule, but as the foundation of human existence itself (Damai et al., 2023; Harsono, 2005). The mention of the pillars of Islam as 'parabot agung' is a significant cultural metaphor. In Javanese tradition, parabot refers to important tools that support daily life (Damai et al., 2023; Harsono, 2005), so that the pillars of Islam are understood as the main means that enable humans to live a meaningful and orderly life in the world. The use of this metaphor demonstrates the contextual and communicative nature of dakwah bil hikmah (Devawinata, 2025).

Pupuh Kinanthi Verse 1 and 2

Bait 1: Yen wus tinitah wong agung / aja sira gumunggung dhiri / aja raket lan wong ala / kang ala lakunireku / nora wurung ngajak-ajak / satemah anenulari.

Bait 2: Nadyan asor wijilipun / yen kelakuane becik / utawa sugih carita / carita kang dadi misil / iku pantes raketana / darapon mundhak kang budi.

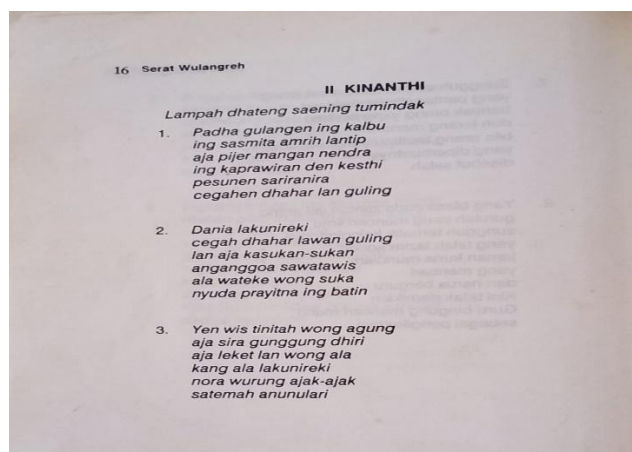


Figure 5: Pupuh Kiannti Bait 1 dan 2

Figure 5. Verse 1 menjelaskan tentang reminds officials not to be arrogant and to avoid associating with people of bad character, because bad behavior can be contagious and influence oneself (Damairia et al., 2022). Verse 2 emphasizes that social status or origin does not determine a person's value; what is important is their behavior and wisdom. Conveying these messages through macapat songs allows moral and religious messages to be received in a contextual, persuasive, and aesthetic manner, in line with the goal of Da'wah bil hikmah, which is to convey Islamic teachings through local cultural media in a wise and easily accepted manner (Riyadi & Karim, 2023).

Based on previous studies, these results are consistent with the findings of Hasan et al (2025) which emphasizes the effectiveness of cultural media in religious communication, as well as research by Shobron & Setiawan (2022) which highlights the role of Serat Wulangreh as a moral teaching for Javanese society. However, this study adds a new dimension by interpreting the transmission of values through the perspective of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the importance of subjective meaning in the process of receiving messages.

Verses 1–2 of Pupuh Kinanthi in Figure 5 explain the importance of being humble and choosing good company. This message is usually conveyed in the context of family or religious gatherings through macapat songs, in which parents subtly guide their children through listening (Pusch, 2024) and singing the verses repeatedly. Linguistically, the diction, metaphors, and structure of the verses allow the moral message to be conveyed implicitly and persuasively, stimulating verbal-linguistic intelligence (Tzouriadou & Manapoulos, 1995). Interpersonally, delivery in intimate social relationships such as family or majelis taklim facilitates intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence because listeners internalise messages through experience and social interaction (Akyol, 2018).

The results of this study emphasize the importance of understanding culturally-based preaching that not only emphasizes the content of the message, but also pays attention to the manner and medium of delivery. A study of Serat Wulangreh shows that the principle of preaching with wisdom is deeply rooted in Javanese tradition. The limitations of this study lie in its focus, which only covers four pupuh and eight verses, so that any generalization of the entire contents of the Serat Wulangreh must be done carefully and proportionally. In addition, other methods of da'wah such as mau'izhah

hasanah and mujadalah were not analyzed because they were outside the scope of the study, while the scope of the text study was limited to the da'wah messages in the Serat Wulangreh.

Further research can expand the study by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as cultural anthropology, developmental psychology, and character education, so that the analysis becomes more comprehensive. In addition, empirical research through direct observation or case studies in the community is needed so that the values of da'wah in classical texts do not stop at the conceptual level but can be tested in everyday practice. Thus, future research is expected to contribute more broadly to the development of da'wah based on local wisdom and the strengthening of cultural values in the face of ever-evolving social dynamics.

The results of this study emphasise the importance of understanding culture-based da'wah, which not only emphasises the content of the message but also pays attention to the manner and medium of delivery. Further research can expand the study by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as cultural anthropology, developmental psychology, and character education, so that the analysis becomes more comprehensive. In addition, empirical research through direct observation or case studies in the community is needed so that the values of da'wah in classical texts do not stop at the conceptual level but can be tested in everyday practice. In compiling this interpretation, the researcher reflectively realised that academic background, research experience, and cultural understanding influence how the moral and spiritual messages in Serat Wulangreh are understood and analysed.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Pakubuwana IV's *Serat Wulangreh* embodies the values of *da'wah bil hikmah* as reflected in the four analyzed pupuh—Asmarandana, Dhandhanggula, Gambuh, and Kinanthi—represented through eight selected stanzas, each conveying moral and religious messages in a persuasive, symbolic, and contextual manner through the aesthetic form of *tembang macapat*. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of *da'wah bil hikmah* lies not only in the content of the message but also in the manner and medium of its delivery, where poetic structure, melody, and symbolic language enable moral teachings to be internalized gradually through everyday social interactions within familial and communal settings.

In developing this interpretation, the researcher reflexively acknowledges that academic background, research experience, and cultural understanding shape the reading and analysis of moral and spiritual meanings in *Serat Wulangreh*, and by first examining Javanese social practices, the resonant dimensions of macapat songs, and their broader moral relevance, symbolic interactionism emerges logically as an analytical perspective that highlights how meanings are negotiated and reinforced through symbols and social interaction, thereby supporting the persuasive and contextual character of *da'wah bil hikmah*. Moreover, the moral themes articulated in *Serat Wulangreh*—such as humility, self-control, honesty, justice, and compassion—demonstrate relevance beyond the Javanese cultural context, resonating with universal ethical values across religious and cultural traditions without diminishing the text's cultural uniqueness; although this study is limited to four pupuh and eight stanzas, it suggests that *Serat Wulangreh* offers a significant model of culturally based da'wah that integrates moral teaching, aesthetic

expression, and social dynamics, and thus invites further interdisciplinary and empirical research to examine the practical enactment of these values in contemporary society.

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