

## THE LOCAL WISDOM OF SAMIN TRIBE IN MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT AS A FORM OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

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### Abstract

The environment is an important factor that provides supports for human life. The environment can be managed to meet human needs. In managing the environment, human have many different procedures as done by the Samin tribe with its local wisdom. Local wisdom is one of materials to instill the characters. Character education can be performed by utilizing local wisdom. The objective of this research is to describe the Samin's local wisdom regarding the environmental management that can be used as an example in performing character education. This research uses qualitative method which FGD and literature studies were carried out. The FGD was conducted with the head of Samin tribe and the Samin community in Sukolilo, Pati. Literature study becomes a secondary source for data collection where the researchers study and analyze the results of previous research about the Samin tribe. The research findings show that the local wisdom of the Samin tribe regarding the environmental management as a form of character education is manifested in a concept called "ibu bumi (motherland)" which shows the character of caring for the environment, and "sedekah bumi (a post-harvest thanksgiving)" which shows religious character. The local wisdom of the Samin tribe regarding the environmental management also shows some noble characters such as diligent, tenacious, independent, hard work and honest.

**Keywords:** local wisdom, Samin tribe, environmental management, character education

### INTRODUCTION

The environment becomes a very important factor to consider in order to provide adequate support for living things. Human in particular, have a dependency on nature in running their lives. In order

to be prosperous, they can manage the environment to preserve the resources. The availability of resources that can be used as a source to fulfill human needs in the present and the future depends on the human's ability to manage the environment.

The environment includes all external factors that affect the organism; these factors can be living organisms (biotic factors) or non-living variables (abiotic factors). Among 10 of these factors, there are two main components of the environment, namely: a) biotic: living organisms; and b) abiotic: energy, chemicals, etc. (Soegianto, 2010: 1).

Barry (Puspita, Ibrahim & Hartono, 2016: 250) states that one of the relationships between environment and human (social) quality degradation is that most of the decline in environmental quality is due to human actions or behavior. Destructive human behavior will have an impact on the environmental degradation. Therefore, human must manage the environment in a good manner. To realize the sustainable environmental management, the policy and the establishment of environmental management programs that involve community and intend to achieve the welfare of the community is needed (Sriyanto, 2007: 108).

Every human or a group of human called the community has their own strategy in managing the environment, for instance the Samin tribe. The Samin tribe or known as *Sedulur Sikep* are people who live in the area of Central and East Java. The emergence of Samin's teachings began with the teachings of Samin Surosentiko, a figure who performed an anti-government attitude. His anti-government teachings and attitudes were handed down to the Samin's community which form a structure or customs which are somewhat different from most Javanese people in general (Mumfangati et al., 2004).

The Samin or *Sedulur Sikep* tribe has a unique tradition and local wisdom. In relation to the environment management or preservation, the Samin community prefers to be a farmer. They consider that becoming farmer is a noble occupation. They have a high dependence on natural biological resources and the environment (Jumari, et al, 2012: 71). The local wisdom of the Samin tribe regarding the environmental management is elaborated in the next section.

### Local Wisdom

Local wisdom or “local genius” is a term introduced by Wales in Ayatrohaedi (1986: 30) which refers to the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of a people have in common as a result of their experiences in early life. Local wisdom as stated by Rahmawati, Rusli, Yahiji (2018: 330) is a term that sticks to the surface by adopting the principles, advice, order, norms and behavior of our ancestors in the past that are still very urgent to be applied in managing various phenomena that arise. Local wisdom is part of cultural construction. Another view is expressed by Wagiran (2012). He says that local wisdom is the important aspects for the development of noble character. Wagiran explicitly mentions that local wisdom is a source of character building. Character becomes an important element for a nation so it needs to be developed and built to realize a better-quality nation.

In addition, Rahyono (2009: 11) explains that local wisdom is human intelligence possessed by certain ethnic groups obtained through experience. Rahyono's views further emphasize that local wisdom is owned by certain ethnic groups. This is similar to the Samin ethnic groups in Central Java and East Java that are discussed in this paper. The Samin tribe as an ethnic group has certain intelligence resulted from their interaction with nature which is still maintained and preserved until now.

Ruslan says that the substance of local wisdom is the values and norms that are valid and believed to be a reference in acting on a community group (Rahmawati, Rusli, Yahiji, 2018: 331). Another view is expressed by Abubakar (2010) who defines local wisdom as a policy that relies on philosophies, values, ethics, and traditionally institutionalized behavior to manage resources (natural, human, and cultural) continuously. Based on this view, local wisdom contains traditional values like the Samin tribe. This ethnic group has traditional values that are different from other communities regarding resource management.

Sibarani concludes that local wisdom is indigenous knowledge or local genius of a society derived from the noble value of cultural traditions to regulate the order of people's lives in order to achieve community advancement both in the creation of peace and the improvement of people's welfare. Local wisdom is intended to improve

the community welfare and prosperity which is based on the value of cultural traditions that exist in the community. The Samin tribe has indigenous knowledge and local genius that is also intended to improve the community's advancement and prosperity by managing the environment and all existing resources.

### **Management of the environment**

Drakel (2010: 94) says that the environment is a unity of space with all objects, power, conditions and living things including human and their behavior that affect the continuity of life and welfare of human and other living things. Human must perform good behavior in using, managing and preserving the environment in order for it provides good supports for human life. What human do to the environment may give impact to human? If human maintain and preserve the environment, human will be able to feel the benefits provided by nature to meet their needs. On the contrary, if human damage the nature, they will get the negative effects such as disasters which occurs due to the environmental damage.

Bernard (Danusaputra 1985: 201) divides the environment into 4 (four) major parts, namely: a. Physical or inorganic environment, an environment that consists of cosmic and physio-geographic forces such as land, air, sea, radiation, rim pull, waves, and so on. b. Biological or organic environment, everything that is biotic in the form of microorganisms, parasites, animals, plants, including the prenatal environment, and biological processes such as reproduction, growth, and the like. c. Social environment, which is divided into three parts, namely: 1) Physio-social environment, which includes material culture (tools), such as weapons, machines, buildings, etc. 2) Biosocial environment, namely human and their interactions with others and plants and animals domestic and all materials used by human originating from organic sources; and 3) Psychosocial environment, which is related to the inner nature of human beings such as attitudes, views, desires, and beliefs. This is viewed through habits, religion, ideology, language, and others.

Environmental management (Purnaweni, 2014: 55) is an effort to utilize resources which is characterized by an integrated action to preserve the functions of the environment which includes policies on the management, utilization, development, preservation, recovery,

supervision, and environmental control. The management of environment not only includes taking natural products, but also the development and preservation of the environment itself. This definition contains the concept of environmental preservation.

In line with the view of Purnaweni, Drakel (2010: 94) explains that environmental management is an integrated effort to preserve environmental functions which include policies, management, utilization, development, preservation, recovery, supervision and control of the environment. Environmental management with its preservation program has parameters to maintain environmental functions including terrestrial and marine ecosystems, biodiversity, environmental supporting capacity, self-recovery capacity and environmental capacity.

Otto Sumarwoto, (1997) says that environmental management to obtain optimum conditions is based on the consideration of profit and loss. Environmental management behaviour is influenced by environmental knowledge. This view is supported by Hutagalung stating that there is a connection, although not strong, between the knowledge of the environment and the environmental management behaviour (2010: 12). Human who have good environmental knowledge will be able to manage the environment well. Therefore, human should keep improving their knowledge regarding the environment so that they can manage the existing resources optimally and hold the principle of sustainability.

Purnaweni (2014: 59) states that environmental management aims to create sustainable development by implementing the principle of cohesiveness among various stakeholders. To carry out environmental control and management policies by performing natural resource management, it requires the application of environmentally friendly technology, community participation, awareness of the government apparatus, the private business world, increased supervision, application of law and improvement of legal systems or instruments for environmental management and preservation (Dracel 2010: 91)

### **Character Education**

Character education becomes a popular issue due to many actions that show moral decline as stated by Lee in Maxwell (2009: 3): *"Current*

*issues regarding violence in schools, the decline of family value structure, and moral turpitude have ignited the recent increase in character education popularity.*" Templeton (2000: 137) states that Martin Luther King Jr. explains "intelligence plus character is the goal of true education". Character education is the effort to teach basic values and moral reasoning to primary and secondary school students (Easterbrooks & Scheetz, 2004: 255).

As stated by Lickona (2018: 49) that developing good character, virtually everyone would agree, should be seen as the shared responsibility of families, schools, faith communities, youth groups, sports, the workplace, the wider community, universities, government at all levels-indeed, all institutions and spheres of influence that impact the values and character of our children. Character building requires the support of various parties including the family, educational institutions, the community, and the government. All parties should jointly build character starting from the scope of individuals and extends within the social sphere of society.

Lickona (1992: 50) explains that: "*Character observe contemporary philosopher Michael Novak, is a compatible mix of all those virtues identified by religious traditions, literary stories, the sages and persons of common sense down through history.*" Another view is explained by Marshall et.al in Jakubowski (2013: 1): "*character as an acquired human quality derived from learned practices that achieves intrinsic outcome, devoid of external rewards*".

Wilhelm & Firmin (2008: 182) say that Character is defined broadly by leading authorities, including concepts such as practicing apt behaviour and teaching right from wrong". Character education aims to educate students to be good as stated by (Schwartz, 2008): "*Character education, teaching students to be good, is one way in which society has and will continue to combat these behaviors*" (Francom, 2013: 1).

Iyer (2011: 1) says that there is a growing need for implementing character education programs that are effective in public schools. Schools need to implement character education in order to develop the character of their students. The characters that are instilled at school are expected to be implemented by the students in the school, family and community environment. Human in daily life are always faced with choices. How individuals make good decisions for themselves and



others is influenced by their character. Schools have a high responsibility in instilling the character of students. With regard to this, Maguire (2016: 6) states that these examples of a lack of character, or misstep in making moral choices, are from the world of education. Although character education is not solely the responsibility of the school but the school has a high responsibility when individuals make mistakes in making moral choices. Therefore, the schools must create a conducive climate in order to develop the character of students so that students can make decisions and make moral choices appropriately both for themselves and for people around them.

Rusydiyah (2014: 227) say that character education is a long-term educational project because it is appropriate to the meaning of his origin; character is the process to carve the values. Character education is not an instant but a long-term process, therefore the impacts of character education cannot be immediately seen in a short time because developing characters requires a process of instilling values

Berkowitz & Bier (2007: 30) say that character education includes educational initiatives intended to promote such development, and effective character education relies on strategies empirically demonstrated to effectively promote such development. Instilling characters requires the right strategy so that the objectives of character education can be achieved.

According to Nuraini, character education is a system of instilling character values to school communities which includes the components of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions to implement those values in the relationship with The One and Only God, self, colleagues, environment and nation so that later on, people are able to be perfect human beings (2012: 86). Another view is stated by Timothy Wibowo (2011: 2) that character education planning is intended to answer the various problems of the nation that are currently seen, heard and perceived.

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative method and literature study. This research utilizes two sources for data collection, namely primary sources (primary data) and secondary sources (secondary data). Primary data refer to the data obtained directly from the field. Meanwhile, secondary data are data that are not obtained directly by

the researchers, but through other parties who have reported the results of data collection. The primary data were gathered from FGD (Focus Group Discussion) which directly involve respondents such as the Head of Samin tribe and members of Samin community in Sukolilo, Pati in March 2019. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained from a literature study on the results of previous research on the Samin community. This research uses a lot of secondary data in the form of literature studies regarding the local wisdom of the Samin tribe in managing the environment. The results obtained from the FGD by the researchers were compiled with the results of the literature review collected by the researchers from the existing sources.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Samin tribe upholds the values of managing the environment where they preserve everything that is natural in order not to damage the nature. Environmental management is carried out using traditional methods, such as using plows and hoes to loosen the soil, using manure and compost to fertilize the soil, and avoiding to use pesticides. According to them, chemical fertilizers and pesticides can damage the natural elements of the soil which can then reduce the quality of the soil itself.

Based on the view of the Samin community, diligence or tenacity is required to manage the land for agriculture. They believe that there is no infertile land, it requires diligence and perseverance in managing the land. Infertile soil which is continuously hoed, routinely fertilized and well cared will surely give good crops although it takes a long time.

This is in line with the results of research conducted by Jumari et al., stating that the Samin Tribe has its own view of the earth. The earth comes from the word *ibu sing dimimi, dipundi-pundi*, (mother who is highly respected). This illustrates that the Samin community highly respects the earth and what is in it, because they get food and clothing for their daily needs from the earth. The earth is like a mother, providing shelter, affection for her child throughout her life. Their respect for the earth is carried out by cultivating the land, providing fertilizer, caring for, maintaining and giving attention every day. It is like caring for a mother who has given love and raised them (Jumari, et al, 2012: 72-73).



The Samin tribe has a concept called "*ibu bumi*". *Ibu bumi* or motherland needs to be treated well in order to provide good crops for human. If the motherland is preserved, it will produce abundant crops, but if it is damaged, it will cause natural disasters which show its wrath due to human activities that are destructive. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Puspitasari which states that the understanding of the Samin Tribe on nature is the representation of a mother in which earth is illustrated as mother, water as blood and bones as soil and hair as forests (2016: 12).

Till the present time, traditional rituals for maintaining good relations with the nature are still preserved as a form of thanks giving called *sedekah bumi* (a post-harvest thanksgiving). As stated by Suharko (2013: 173), the rituals of *sedekah bumi* is an annual event held as an expression of gratitude for the gifts given by God. This implies a religious character showing grateful for what has been obtained. Although the Samin tribe does not want to be claimed to follow a certain religion, but they believe in the existence of God. There is a figure who gives life, and we must be grateful. The natural environment has produced harvest for human, so the gratitude is carried out through *sedekah bumi* rituals.

The Samin tribe performs farming by employing an organic farming methods where they only use non-chemical materials such as manure, compost, and other non-pesticides materials for their crops. Today's modern society has recognized that organic agricultural produce has better quality than non-organic crops. This organic agricultural product also has a high selling price. This is in line with Pratama's statement (2018: 6) that there is a progressive farmer organization called the Pati Farmers Union where these progressive farmers have carried out the organic farming process.

The Samin tribe holds a doctrine that it is not necessary to follow the development of other regions that have turned into industrial regions. The Samin community will continue to be an agrarian area by managing the land in order to to become food barns for the surrounding community. This is also stated by Suharko that the Sedulur Sikep who had traditionally adhered to the living in harmony with nature, firmly refused any form of industrial intervention on the preservation of natural resources (Suharko, 2013: 168). This implies that they possess the character of independence and self-confidence.

The Samin Tribe wants to be an independent community in terms of food and decisions making where they have self-confidence not to follow the development of other regions. Although other regions developed due to industry, the Samin tribe did not necessarily do it especially when the industrialization cause environmental damage.

Another teaching of the Samin tribe is that life does not always depend on other parties, never feel less with what they have obtained, and feeling grateful since they believe that human will never feel satisfied with what they have. People must not be jealous of others, do not take something that does not belong to him, do not steal, do not take if they find something. Likewise, in environmental management, the Samin tribe always feels satisfied with the agricultural crops they obtain, no matter how much their crops are and there is no need to compare with the crops obtained by others. They are not allowed to steal or take agricultural products obtained by others. The nature has provided what human need. This is in line with Jumari's research findings which show that Samin's teachings foster people to perform good actions not only to human beings but also with other creatures and the surrounding nature. Some of teachings or life principles that influence the Samin community in managing the biological resources include (Jumari, et al, 2012: 76):

1. The principle of working hard to fulfill the needs of food and clothing
2. The principle of using one's own staffs in which the Samin community only use goods that are clearly their own and do not use other people's goods without permission.
3. The principle of unity with wife / husband, children, parents, neighbors and other creatures including plants, animals and the environment
4. The principle of performing good behavior: *Ojo drengki srei, dahwen, kemberen, tukar padu, bedog, colong, begal kecu ojo dilakoni, opo maneh kutil juput, nemu wae emoh* (don't misbehave, don't have desire to possess other people's staffs, don't be jealous, don't perform a verbal fight, don't rob, don't steal, don't take a staff that doesn't belong to us.)

Based on the descriptions above, we can conclude that local wisdom that is still held firmly by the Samin Tribe can be a model for character education. The character values include care for the environment, tenacious, persevering, and hard work. They show noble characters such as loving the environment, caring for the environment, preserving the environment with all their capabilities, being persistent, persevering, and believing that nature will provide the best for human if human do not damage the environment. In addition, they are honest, are not jealous, are not envious, and do not steal.

Everything that is performed by the Samin tribe can be an example for other communities in which human must be able to manage the environment properly and must preserve the environment. Human must not damage the environment because it will have a negative impact on human themselves. A well-managed environment will provide a positive impact for human life.

The local wisdom of the Samin tribe above can be taught to students at schools as a model of character education. Children and adolescents who currently give little care to the environment need to be taught the principles of life and the teachings of the Samin tribe regarding their love and closeness to nature so that they can be autonomous in terms of fulfilling food needs. We do need to greatly rely on the industrial sector to survive because the agricultural sector is also promising. As we know, Indonesia is a fertile country whose environment is also potential to be managed and developed for agriculture. In addition, this is relevant to the concept that we often hear today namely "back to nature". This concept teaches us to live back to nature, which means being close to nature.

## CONCLUSION

The local wisdom of the Samin tribe in managing the environment is realized in a variety of behaviors, namely upholding the concept of "*ibu bumi* (motherland)" where the earth must be cared for, utilized and managed properly which can be a form of character education. High environmental concern will lead to environmental preservation behavior and give attention to sustainable development which is very relevant to be carried out to support Indonesia's current development. The thanks to God who has given the earth's prosperity in the "*Sedekah Bumi*" ceremony implies the religious character namely a feeling of

gratitude. Gratitude is one form of religious character that all human beings need to have. The hard work and honesty are also part of the teachings of the Samin tribe. Hard work in managing the environment yielded positive impacts, namely adequate agricultural crops which make the Samin tribe as community which ensure food security. These characters need to be instilled as character education for students in schools and for public by showing positive behavior of the Samin tribe in managing and preserving the environment.

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