



## THE VALUES, LOCAL WISDOM, AND HEROISM OF RADEN DEWI SARTIKA'S THOUGHTS ON WOMEN EMANCIPATION THROUGH EDUCATION

LABIBATUSSOLIHAN, WULAN DWI LESTARI, LIA NURUL AZIZAH,  
HANI FITRIANI, NURDIANI FATHIRAINI, NOUR M. ADRIANI

*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia*

[labibatussolihah@upi.edu](mailto:labibatussolihah@upi.edu)

### Abstract

History learning is in charge of instilling the younger generation values to know and understand their position as the nation's future hope. One of the strategies is using the example of the historical figure's heroism, struggle, and values to follow their steps as an inspiring story. This paper will discuss Raden Dewi Sartika, a Sundanese emancipist that promoting education for women in a patriarchal society at the colonial age. She was able to promote her revolutionary thoughts into a practical one without any friction in society. Through study literature, we can conclude that 1) Dewi Sartika's values of education based on Sundanese local wisdom of cageur, bageur, pinter, wantar, and bener. 2) These values were adapted into her school of Sakola Istri in form of curriculum and ethic study so her emancipation will keep women being responsible as a mother. 3) This approach made society supported her movement as shown from her school existence until now.

**Keywords:** Dewi Sartika, Education values, Local wisdom, Woman emancipation

### INTRODUCTION

The young generation from time to time seems to decline in quality of eastern ethical standards in almost all aspects from the attitude of speech, dressing, to act in the public sphere. As Fauzi (2011) stated, many of our teenagers who will once take the national leadership have unwittingly followed their will without considering the

effect of popular culture that threatens their future and society. Drug abuses, crimes, and low motivation are some of these negative impacts that should be tackled by anyone who considers the future lies in them. One of the main factors causing this degradation is the impact of globalization. This unavoidable development of our world has brought with it the wave of uncertainty, new values, ways of life in the form of popular culture to Indonesia (Susrianto, 2012, p. 34). Teenagers start to idolizing foreign values and forgetting their own identity as a nation. Sometimes some values were previously considered as good but now are considered unfit or too backward for use.

Learning history has an important position to turn this inferiority mindset in the form of values education. The past is our source of wisdom, rich for example, and deep for teaching. From this subject, we learn for victory or defeat, success or failure, as well as our status and position today. This is in line with Wiriaatmadja (2014, p. 8) that history teaches a variety of human events in the past that are rich with heroic performances and insights of the actors who display ethical triumphs and defeat the tendency toward moral decay or depravity. Historical figures who have a lot of services and achievements also become an inspiration and exemplary values as an example for generations of the nation.

The values of heroism, in the study of history, are necessary for dealing with changes that occur in the lives of youths. Heroic values are often rarely found in the practice of life, so to see real examples of heroism is difficult to find. The next generation more often sees conflict, greed, oppression of the weak, mutual responsibility, and so on than the heroic attitudes described above. So it is important to give examples of heroic attitudes taken from historical figures. The advantage of taking hero figures from history is that there is concrete evidence of her heroic attitudes recorded in the nation's history. Their heroic values have proven to affect the history of society, made ideal values in people's lives, inspire and become the pride of the community towards the best examples of the attitude of a citizen or community leader. One of the hero figures that will be examined in this paper is Raden Dewi Sartika, a figure who were struggled to improve women status in the colonial and traditional structure through education.

Pada masa hidup Raden Dewi Sartika, pendidikan untuk kaum perempuan dirasakan tidak perlu dan tidak memberikan manfaat.

Karena meskipun bersekolah, anak perempuan pada akhirnya tidak akan bekerja mereka akan menjadi ibu rumah tangga yang hanya bertugas meladeni suami. Sehingga pendidikan akan terasa sia-sia. Apalagi bagi orang tua dari kalangan masyarakat bawah, jika mereka mempunyai uang mereka lebih memilih untuk menyekolahkan anak laki-laknya dari pada menyekolahkan anak perempuan (Mediana, 2010, hlm 8).

Keadaan sosial tersebut menjadikan perempuan tidak mendapatkan kesempatan untuk mengenyam pendidikan yang layak seperti halnya kaum laki-laki. Kecuali perempuan dari golongan menak atau bangsawan. Sehingga kaum perempuan tidak mampu hidup mandiri, karena mereka tidak mendapatkan ilmu pengetahuan dan keterampilan yang pada akhirnya mereka hanya mengandalkan kaum laki-laki. Dalam keadaan demikian, Raden Dewi Sartika mempunyai pandangan bahwa perempuan harus hidup terhormat dan sejajar dengan laki-laki tanpa melupakan kodratnya sebagai perempuan.

Maka dari itu, dengan bantuan Bupati Bandung R.A.A. Martanegara, akhirnya Raden Dewi Sartika dapat mewujudkan cita-citanya dengan mendirikan sekolah yang khusus diperuntukan bagi kaum perempuan pada tahun 1904 yaitu Sekolah Istri. Pada tahun 1910 sekolah ini berbuah namanya menjadi "Sekolah Kautamaan Istri". Hal yang paling utama diangkat dalam makalah ini adalah nilai-nilai perjuangan Raden Dewi Sartika terutama dalam bidang pendidikan yang dapat kita teladani dan diaplikasikan dalam kehidupan saat ini.

During Raden Dewi Sartika's life, women's education was not a priority or in people's minds even seen as useless. Even though they go to school, in the end, they will become a housewife who should need to serve their husband and raising their children. For parents from the lower classes, if they have money they prefer to send their sons than send their daughters to school (Mediana, 2010, p. 8). These social conditions made women marginalized from social life except women from the noble class or wealthy families who play relatively a higher status in society based on their husband status. Women were not able to live independently. They did not have enough knowledge and skills to compete with man. In such circumstances, Sartika see that women should live better, socially active by their own strength in dignity and equality with men without forgetting their nature as women.

Therefore, with the help of the Bandung Regent, R.A.A. Martanegara, Raden Dewi Sartika was able to realize her ideals by establishing a school specifically intended for women in 1904 known as the Sakola Istri or Women's School. In 1910 the school was renamed the "Sakola Kautamaan Istri" or "Women's Special School". Her views and effort in promoting gender equality among traditionalist patriarchal society during the colonial era was a good example for the nation from two sides. First, it was a pioneering action in education and gender emancipation, and second, it was a success to adapt the reality as we can see from the existence of the school until today. In this study, we will discover the struggle of Raden Dewi Sartika, from the education values perspective based on Sundanese local wisdom.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a literature study, by collecting sources from books, journals and other written works related to the heroic values of Raden Dewi Sartika. The analysis uses an interpretative approach based on data from the study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

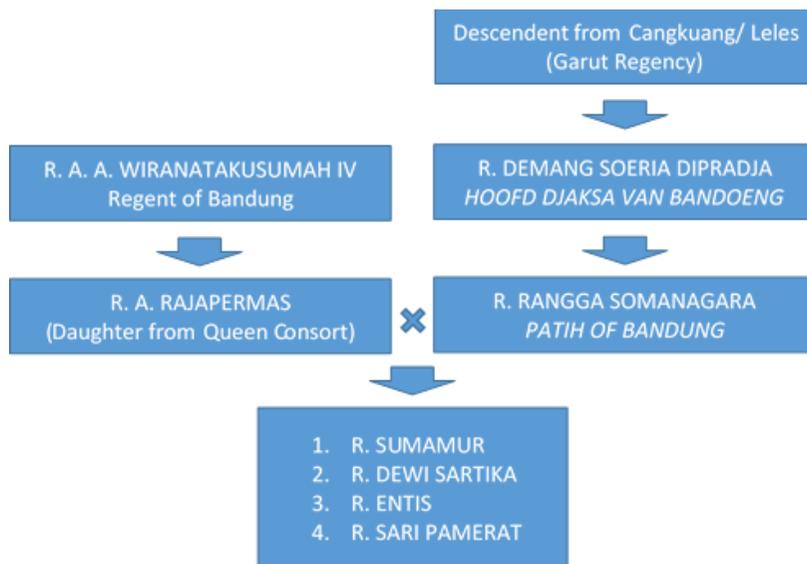
### **Revisiting Dewi Sartika**

Dewi Sartika was born on December 4, 1884, in Bandung from the Sundanese nobles family, where she got the "Raden" title, as the second daughter of five siblings. Her father is Raden Ranga Somanagara, Patih or Assistant Regent of Bandung and her mother is Raden Ayu Rajapermas also from a blue blood background. Raden Dewi Sartika has four siblings, Raden Sumamur (her brother) and three younger siblings each named Raden H. Yunus, Raden Entis, and Raden Sarti Pamerat (Lubis, 2006, p. 92).

Raden Ranga Somanagara is one of the sons of Raden Demang Suriadipraja's marriage to Raden Ayu Komalanagara. The grandfather of the father line is known as the former Hoofd Djaksa (Chief Prosecutor) in Bandung. He is also a descendant of the Dalem Timbanganten family who became the forerunner to the founder of the Bandung district. While his mother, Raden Ayu Rajapermas is one of the daughters of Raden Aria Adipati Wiranatakusumah IV who had served as regent of Bandung from 1846 to 1874 and better known as

Dalem Bintang due to the star Dutch conferred to him as a sign of loyalty (see. Daryono, 1996, p. 28). Here is Sartika’s family tree:

Figure 1. Dewi Sartika’s Family Tree



Source: Wiriaatmadja (1983, p. 20)

In Bandung, Raden Dewi Sartika lived with her parents and siblings in a large and spacious house located on the side of the Trans-Java or known as Postal highway, precisely in Kepatihan Straat. On the veranda or tepas, visible flower pots containing plants neatly arranged. Its large yard was planted by a variety of perennials and beautiful flowers, including red hanjuang flowers that are characteristic of Sundanese people (Daryono, 1996, p. 29). Raden Dewi Sartika was diligent and passionate about something new. From her childhood, she has shown the characteristics of leadership and initiative (Ekadjadi, 1998, p. 84). Although Raden Dewi Sartika was rather a tomboyish, she wears a kebaya and long cloth every day as typically Sundanese women in that era. If she went to school or traveled anywhere, she always transported with a decorated delman. Wearing clothes made from expensive materials and beautiful jewelry, her everyday life was managed and served by loyal, obedient and respectful servants (Daryono, 1996, pp. 29-30).

Although a noble and one of the highest government officials, Sartika's father often spent time with his children. For example, watching horse racing in public square or folk entertainment shows and so on (Meidiana, 2010, p. 2). That happy childhood changed when in 1893, Raden Rangga Somanagara was accused of being involved in an attempted murder of the Bandung Regent, R.A.A. Martanegara, members of Sumedang noble family, and Dutch officials in Bandung (Lubis, 2006, p. 92).

For this accusation, Raden Rangga Somanagara and some other officials most of them are Sartika's relatives were exiled to Ternate on July 22, 1893. Raden Demang Suriadipraja, her grandfather was also exiled to Pontianak (Kosoh, 1994, p. 162). The Dutch then used the situation to replace the position with other nobles from outside Bandung (see. Daryono, 1996, p. 35). All of the accusants assets were confiscated. This situation made Sartika and her siblings should struggle for life as their mother accompanied Somanagara in his exile.

After being abandoned by his father in exile, Raden Dewi Sartika lived with her mother's sibling's in Cicalengka, named Raden Demang Aria Surakarta Adiningrat. In her relative's house, she often treated badly. As Raden Dewi Sartika was considered a rebel's child, anyone who defends or treats her will be considered as rebel too. For this reason, Sartika's uncle, who was also the patih of Cicalengka, treated him as a servant or a maid at his home (Meidiana, 2010, p. 14). It seems like not enough, Sartika was expelled from her school, because the school did not want to accept a rebel child. What distinguishes Sartika from other women in her position during that time is that she can read and write because she had attended the First Class School (Eerste Klasse Inlandsche School) in Bandung, a school specifically for Dutch children and noble's (Meidiana, 2010, p. 16).

It seems that the beauty of Dewi Sartika attracted Raden Kanjun's who was already married, intending to marry her as his second wife. However, Sartika subtly refused the proposal (Meidiana, 2010, p. 18). His rejection was not only because he did not love her, but also because he could not accept polygamy and did not want to ruin other people's affairs (Daryono, 1996, p. 51). After she returned to live with her mother in Bandung, a man, one of Prince Djajadiningrat's children came to marry her. But again she refused it because she could not possibly marry a man she did not know well, and who would not necessarily

understand each other (Daryono, 1996, p. 64). Finally, in 1906 Raden Dewi Sartika married Raden Kanduruan Agah Suriawinata (Meidiana, 2010, p. 24). A dedicated teacher in a Dutch school in Karang Pamulang (Daryono, 1996, p. 66).

### **Education Background**

Dewi Sartika's parents want their children to grow intelligently. As Patih of Bandung, Sartika and her siblings were allowed to attend the school at Eerste Klasse School which is an elementary school. In principle, the school is only for Dutch and Peranakans or non-indigenous Asians such as Chinese, Indians, and Arabs, but as her father position, she can pursue her education there. There they got the opportunity to learn Dutch and English (Daryono, 1996, p. 29). At the school, Sartika was among the brightest students. Unfortunately, she could not finish school (only up to 3rd grade) due to the charged for his father (Ekadjati, 1984, p. 85). During her stay in her relative's house, Sartika continued to study under the fourth wife of Raden Aria Suriakarta, Nyi Raden Eni (Agan Eni) supervision. By her aunt, she was taught with a variety of knowledge that is necessary for women.

Dewi Sartika was proud because at that time she was the only woman in the community who was good at reading and writing (Ekadjati, pp. 85-86). Agan Eni, her aunt, taught Sartika to act as a noblewoman, lowering her voices, choosing the words, good behavior, cooking healthy food, dressing up, and all the things that women should be mastered to please their husbands (Meidiana, 2010, p. 18). At that time, Dewi Sartika had shown an interest to educate others. If there is a chance to play with fellow girls, she often plays schools, where she acts as a teacher. She also often helps her illiterate friends read the letters they received and write what they want to reply to. Perhaps, this will later become a passion for Sartika to provide a wider opportunity for women from ordinary citizens, to have a certain amount of knowledge and skills through the formal education that will open or give them a way for a better life.

### **Dewi Sartika's Thoughts**

During Sartika stay in Cicalengka, she lived as a common people. Many of her friends were commoners. She realized that the condition of her previous lifestyle was a privilege that so many from her class, a

woman, cannot reach (Daryono, 1996, p. 51). At the same time, the implementation of ethical politics by the Dutch colonial government in education does not mean that women get the same course as a man. It was closely related to the customs that have been passed from generation to generation. Girls must obey their parents. Girls who get an education outside the home were considered against the customs. They were not allowed to go to school. Teaching such as reading, writing and arithmetic were kept away from women.

As a victim of political purge, Dewi Sartika observed and to some extent felt the hard life of an exile. She knew her mother condition and struggle to life without anybody care economically. Nobody wants to be blamed for too much caring them. This pushed her more, that a woman should self-sufficiently protect their life independent from her husband (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, hlm 88). To realize her ideals to free women from illiteracy and second class status, Dewi Sartika viewed the only way is education. They should be taught and trained from the fear of social custom and status as ordinary people to improve their dignity among others. They can contribute more for themselves, their families, communities, nations, and countries, in a civilized way as she had experienced in the school. Based on this, Dewi Sartika opened a class in Pendopo Bandung (Regent of Bandung Residences) on 16 January 1904, Sekolah Istri or Women's School, under R.A. Martanegara, Bandung Regent support. To her first twenty students, she said, "Ieuh barudak, ari jadi aweve kudu sagala bisa, ambek bisa hirup!", "My children, as women you should be a multitalented, you will be alive" (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p. 71).

### **Local Wisdom in Dewi Sartika's Education Values**

Dewi Sartika's concept of education was based on Sundanese motto of perfect human's values which are:

- a. "Cageur", this concept means that women must have a high level of health. With a high level of health, it is expected that a woman is able to serve her family well.
- b. "Bageur", this concept implies that a woman must have a good personality. This is very important as she will interact with other women in their neighborhood or public space.
- c. "Pinter", this concept emphasizes that women must be intelligent, knowledgable because they will become mothers

who raise their children. The woman was the first teacher to educate children naturally more than their father. Onderzoek (in Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p. 52) argues that: "An uneducated mother of a girl, shouldn't be blamed if she can't teach her child. The school will provide the education of the mother it needs, alongside wise teaching.

- d. "Wanter", this concept emphasizes that women must be good at getting along, independent, and brave enough to handle the problem as possible as on their own.
- e. "Bener", this concept emphasizes that women must live on the right path.

Dewi Sartika's thoughts that a woman must be able to be independent and not depend on men because she must realize her thoughts in the form of school construction for women. At first, the idea to build a school for women was opposed by some of his family and even reported to the Dutch administration for a bad reason. However, this was changed as the Dutch administrator and Bandung Regent even supported her although at first time he showed a concern on the unusual role of woman if they get educated (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p. 89). This was caused by the persistence of a narrow mindset that girls should only be educated and protected by their families and the mother in this traditional pattern was considered the best teacher.

Sakola Isri focused on practical skills that women usually in charge of house affairs such as cooking, sewing, making batik and others. Besides that, it was also taught how to write, read, storytelling, and foreign language such as Dutch, English, and French. Meanwhile, the curriculum taught at this school was designed to adjust to the curriculum set by the colonial government, by referring to Tweede Klasse School or Second Grade School (Lubis, p. 97). The material used in the school was adapted to the needs of women in their daily lives. But in its development also taught material that refers to knowledge such as history, plant science, natural science, and geography. The weekly lesson plan consists of (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p. 78)

Table 1. The Sekolah Istri's Curriculum

Courses	Study Length
Dutch language: reading, writing, and singing	12 hours
English and French	7 hours
History	4 hours
Geography	2 ½ hours
Storytelling	1 hour
Sports	7 hours
Other Practical Skills Training	16 hours
Total	49 ½ hours

## THE RELEVANCES OF DEWI SARTIKA'S PIONEERING VALUES

### Some Perspectives about Her Struggle

If the terms *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, *pinter*, and *wanter* are related to the present, then the purpose of education in *Sakola Kautamaan Istri* is relevant to today's education. The term *cageur* in example, which is physically and mentally healthy, is a physical aspect of a child, *bageur* is hearted and well-behaved, *bener*, that is, holding fast to the truth, *wanter*, is sociable, independent and the three terms are the emotional/ affective domain, and clever that is smart, clever or capable is cognitive/ intellectual realm. There are also vocational and professionalism value on women's skills lesson given at *Sakola Kautamaan Istri*. Skills have a greater proportion than cognitive and affective domains, because it makes a special space to practice theories on subject matter skills by practicing it directly.

From the educational goals stated by Raden Dewi Sartika above, we can conclude that the aspects that must be achieved by students in *Sakola Kautamaan Istri*, were the same as those aspects that must be present in students today, as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Although Raden Dewi Sartika founded her school in 1904, her thoughts are in line with the present. Thus, Raden Dewi Sartika was a thinker and activist who had a high integrity of personality, and a keen instinct for strategy and balance in the totality of action, reaction, and contemplation. Raden Dewi Sartika reacted when she felt the limitations of her existence as a woman because of the ties of community tradition prevailing at that time, then she contemplated by reading books so that the digestibility of her mind began to work. She argued that women must be independent and not depend on men in

making a living. Therefore, they have to go to school, because in school they will be given extensive knowledge, taught skills, foreign languages as a window to see the wide world, and the right character to strengthen self-expression.

Once Dewi Sartika can formulate her reaction in contemplation, she immediately starts the action by teaching her female relatives with skills and knowledge. How great the ability that he had when she started the action. An 18-year-old teenage girl, daughter of an enemy of the government who died at exile, faced a tradition of harassment against women's rights that still prevailed at the time, lacking facilities and funds, also did not have a teacher's certificate, and had to face daughters or aristocrats. But, Dewi Sartika was able to deal with it, and finally she was able to transform into a public figure that deserve to be taken into account by society.

Dewi Sartika thoughts on women's education, clearly proves that Raden Dewi Sartika has a very sharp sensitivity to social problems, even though she was born in the colonial period. But apparently, her sharp thinking power, which shows a high level of intelligence, Raden Dewi Sartika was able to produce the innovative thoughts and ideas for the people at that time. Rarely thinkers and activists who have the advantage of being able to do something in society and for society with the aim of improving and advancing society, especially women.

Raden Dewi Sartika's idealistic value in facing the future is very relevant to the situation of Indonesian women at this time, that some Indonesians in general, get a good education, it will equal Europeans to achieve success in life through extensive knowledge obtained from the results learn so that Indonesians are not trampled on their honor, they will even be respected and respected. Because only science will lift the dignity of women, not descendants or heirlooms. With the values of Raden Dewi Sartika, it shows that women are the most influential individuals on the nation's life today. Therefore, there is a saying which states that women are the mother of the nation. as quoted by Wiriaatmadja (1983, p. 114).

### **An Analytical Approach on Heroism**

Etymologically, the word 'hero' comes from the Sanskrit word "phala" and "wan", which means people from whom they produce quality phala for the nation, state and religion. So that the hero can be

interpreted as someone who stands out because of his courage and sacrifice in defending the truth, or brave fighters. Sidney Hook in his book "The Hero History", explains that the conception of a hero (Hook, 1963, p. 67) is:

"The hero in history is the individual to profoundly different if he had determining an issue or event whose consequences would have been profoundly between if had not acted as he did .... this bring us to the key distinction. The distinction between the hero as the eventful man in history and the hero as the event-making man in history."

Characteristics of heroes in history can be divided into two, The Eventful Man/ Woman and The Even-Maker Man/ Woman. The eventful man/ woman is someone whose actions have an important influence in an important event in history. The characteristic of a hero in this category is that they emerge because of their important and necessary position in the historical event. Meanwhile, the Even Maker Man/ Woman is a person because of the capacity of intelligence, willingness, and character managed to provide important changes in the course of certain history (Wiriaatmadja, 2015, p. 11).

Dewi Sartika is included in the category of "The Even Making Man/ Woman". This is evident from her actions aimed at wanting to improve the lot of women in his day. Dewi Sartika's action was manifested in her struggle to form an educational institution in the form of a special school for women, a reform that was contrary to traditional values at the time. But for her persistence and great determination to realize her ideals, Dewi Sartika was finally able to establish the school. The establishment of the school had a very broad impact on the position and condition of women at that time until today.

The action of Raden Dewi Sartika is was a manifestation of "human doing". That manifestation encourages the beginning of her efforts towards the process of educating women (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p. 72). Like the words that Dewi Sartika said, "if we have come so far, this change will be just the beginning of changes in our life, where men will respect women more from now" (Wiriaatmadja, 1983, p 115). The Dutch government recognized her services and actions in advancing the education of women in her time. In 1932 she was awarded the Silver Star and in 1939 was awarded again the Golden Star

(Wiriaatmadja, 1983, pp. 119-121). It doesn't necessarily a symbol of colonial power, but more about a respect on her actual efforts for a better society. After the independence, in 1966 Indonesian government proclaimed Raden Dewi Sartika as a national hero.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, this study can conclude that Dewi Sartika was a pioneer of woman emancipation in education. She was not only thinking beyond her time but also tried to implement it during her life. It was clear that Indonesia – back then as Netherland East Indie – during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was not ready for such a campaign, but Dewi Sartika proved that she was able to convince people to adopt her thoughts. We can say that this is closely related to her approach to education's value, which did not straightly attack the custom of "women suppression" under the man, instead, she brought up the local wisdom of Sundanese in promoting education. The value of women as "cageur" (healthy), "bageur" (kind), "pinter" (intelligent), "wanter" (brave), and "bener" are Sundanese jargon of human perfection. It was man dominated motto, but then Dewi Sartika promoted it for the woman as well.

Dewi Sartika's thoughts about women's education also had positive values in terms of education reform. Based on her curriculum, about half of the activity spent on the study of languages, Dutch, French, English, and study of history. She did not see women be perfect in just house matters but should pursue a communication tool to be connected to the modernity. Women must be able to read, write and count as the basic of "pinter" or intellect, to live independently but cannot forget their nature as a woman to be responsible for their duty in the structure of society. Based on this study, Raden Dewi Sartika's values and approach of promoting innovations in society are still relevant and should be emulated by us especially for the young generation today.

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