

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS

In order to understand what *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto is, the writer wants to, first, explain the procedures of the ritual itself, and second, to find out the reasons why some people in some areas in central Java still practice this ritual. Analysis is based on the information obtained from interviews, observations, and relevant published journals.

The interviewees in my research are Djoko Setyo Sandjaya, Rini Andayani, Dewi Sundari, Soekarno, and Satiman. The writer also interviewed some *Kungkum* practitioners, namely, Wiwik Setyarini, Dyah Mukri, Ragil Tri Pamungkas, Sriyanto, Nugroho, Subari, Yulianto, Gus Ibah Gunawan, and Mathius Shandy.

There are two questions in my research: 1) What is the procedure in performing *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto, 2) why do some people in some areas in central Java still participate in the ritual? The first question is answered in section 4.1 while for the second one in section 4.2. In section one, the writer also briefly talks about the meaning of the name *Kungkum*, the history of Tugu Soeharto, and then the steps taken, those are, before, during, and after the *Kungkum* ritual.

#### **4.1 *Kungkum* Ritual in Tugu Soeharto**

In Javanese term, *Kungkum* ritual is called *tapa Kungkum*, which literally means “meditating while immersing oneself in water.” The naming itself makes sense for this spiritual deed is done by soaking one’s body in water (Sundari, 2019).

Djoko Setyo Sandjaya explains that, the act of *Kungkum* is a way of getting closer to God. It is one of the ways of approaching God, such as, fasting and meditating. For Rini

Andayani, *Kungkum* is immersing yourself in water for hours at night time. *Kungkum* includes night vigil (*tirakatan*) and it is identical with self-purification. Water serves its functions to clean and cool down, and the element of water is closely related to the character of nature. Mbah Satiman argues that the ritual is done because the doer has particular intentions. If the intentions are good, it is most likely that they will be approved; if the intentions are bad then it is most unlikely they will be accommodated.

For the writer herself, *Kungkum* refers to the act of immersing oneself in water at night. This act is filled with saying prayers and begging something from God. *Kungkum* is identical with purifying oneself from negative sides or sins.

Many people perform *Kungkum*, the self-purification ritual, in their life. In Central Java alone, there are some places where people can perform the ritual, such as, in Umbul Sungsang Pengging Boyolali, Gunung Khayangan, Tugu Soeharto Semarang, Banyu Urip Salatiga, Gua Maria Kerep Ambarawa, Senjaya Salatiga, and Pegunungan Ungaran.

At *malam Satu Suro* (the first day of the Javanese calendar year in the month of Sura, corresponding with the Islamic month of Muharram), many *Kungkum* performers participate in the self-purification ritual in Tugu Soeharto. Tugu Soeharto is located in Jalan Tugu Soeharto RT 6, RW 4 Kelurahan Bendan Duwur, Kecamatan Gajahmungkur, Kota Semarang. Most of them come from the areas in the outskirts of Semarang city, like from Demak, Kudus, Pekalongan, Mranggen, and Salatiga. The performers could come from all ages. However, based on the writer's observation on September 10, 2018 most *Kungkum* performers are adult people, then followed by few old age people, teenagers, and children. This implies that *Kungkum* ritual is maintained by certain people.

Tugu Soeharto is believed to be the right place to perform the self-purification ritual and say prayers. Historically, Tugu Soeharto (literally means Soeharto Monument) was built on September 30, 1965 on Jumat Legi (Legi Friday). Here is Pak Sukarno's story about the existence of the monument.

“It was not there in the past. At the beginning, it was just a common stream of water. It is a combat river, and it was not well-known as it is now. The river is still there, and it is nicknamed combat river since it is the place where people perform the ritual. At the time of war... I don't really know what war it is, Soeharto [the second president of Indonesia] was in war with the enemies and he got trapped there. The enemies got into the water and were about to ambush Soeharto and his men. Soeharto's soldiers ran for their life but Soeharto himself could not for he was already in middle, deep water. He managed to escape from the ambush by hiding behind a boulder in the middle of the river. So, the place is memorable for Soeharto got trapped in this places, but finally managed to save his own life. I don't know what time it happened. It is not Soeharto who makes this a special place, but the people here. It is true that there was an order from Soeharto to the major to build a monument there. The ministers provided financial supports. The monument was inaugurated in 1973 on Legi Friday.”

Another version of the Tugu Soeharto story is provided by Pak Wagimin. Here is his story. “It was told when major Soeharto, who then became the second president of Indonesia, was assigned to fight against the colonial Dutch in Semarang. He escaped to the south part of the Semarang city, which was still a thick forest at that time. He jumped into the water where two river currents met. He stuck his swagger stick there and immersed himself in the water. Then in

this spot, a monument was built during his presidency, and named Tugu Soeharto. As the story goes, Soeharto was in war with the Dutch. He hid at the river bank of Kali Garang river, and was safe from the enemies. As a sign of gratitude, Soeharto build the monument. It now becomes the main destination to visit for the people of Semarang before entering the *Suro month* or *Muharram*.” (Fajaranak, 2017).

Pak Wagimin goes on with his story. One day he met a man from Bandung. The man spend his holidays in Semarang saw some people who were performing the *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto. He was puzzled by this activity and then ask Pak Wagimin questions on the benefits or purposes of the ritual act. Pak Wagimin gave an answer based on the myth the people believed. People performed the ritual in Tugu Soeharto for getting easy life, or easy (*enteng*) in getting partner (*jodoh*), getting life necessities (*rejeki*), keeping someone young (*awet muda*). Pak Wagimin said that the man himself then join the ritual in Tugu Soeharto.

The *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto covers some important process: before, during, and after the ritual. Fasting is necessary before the ritual. It is required before performing the ritual. Etymologically, the word *puasa* (Ind. fasting) is derived from the Arabian words *soma-yasumu-siyaman*, meaning keeping, being quiet, restraining oneself from saying or doing something. Fadlul Munir points out that fasting is restraining oneself from opening something for one full day: from dawn to dusk. It is done with intentions: educating oneself in terms of self-restraint, controlling one’s worldly lust, and training oneself to be faithful to God. Fasting is a right way of purifying the soul and achieving spiritual intelligence.

For Thobieb Al-Asyhar,

“Ash Shiyam (fasting) is preventing (al-imsak). Biologically, someone fasting restrain himself from eating, drinking, or having sexual contact. Mentally, someone fasting is not

allowed to do something harming his good characters as a moslem, like lying, making false accusations, gossiping, being arrogant. Those being used to restrain themselves from worldly lust during fasting trains themselves to purify their soul and control their deeds continuously.” Both Muhammadiyah Ja’far and Sulaiman Rasyid also define fasting as self-restraint in order to become someone who surrenders to God’s will. (Munir, 2017, pp. 16–18). In brief, fasting is a way of restraining someone from satisfying his needs for food, drink, and sexuality. It is an exercise of controlling the use of senses. It is a ritual of purifying one’s self and guiding someone to be faithful to God.

Before participating in *Kungkum* ritual, the performer needs to fast 3-7 days. The following are the kinds of fasting:

1. *Puasa mutih* (white fasting): only consuming “white” rice and “white water” water.
2. *Puasa ngrowot* (*ngrowot* fasting): only consuming roots/tubers or all kinds of vegetables that vine and “white” water.
3. *Puasa ngebleng* (*ngebleng* fasting): consuming nothing at all.
4. *Puasa patigeni* (*patigeni* fasting): consuming nothing at all and staying in a dark room. Room ventilation should be covered with covered to block sunlight. Those performing this kind of fasting is allowed to leave their dark room only for going to the toilet.

Those performing *Kungkum* ritual do not have to go through those kinds of fasting. They could select only one out of those kinds of fasting. Their choice of course is based on their consideration of their realistic ability to perform it. For *mutih* and *ngrowot* fastings, there are no exact rules about how many times a day someone can eat or drink. When feeling hungry or thirsty, someone may eat and drink. For *ngebleng* fasting, it is advisable to perform it for 6

consecutive days, which are then concluded with *patigeni* fasting in the 7<sup>th</sup> day. *Patigeni* fasting usually takes place for 3 days.

Rini Andayani points out that before performing *Kungkum* ritual, the doer should fast for 3 to 11 days. The fasting done is like the one performed by Moslem people during the month of Ramadhan.

The purpose of participating in the ritual, for Djoko Setyo Sandjaya, is to cleanse the spiritual sides, while for physical cleansing, the participants should take a bath (*adus keramas*) in advance at home with water mixed with 7 kinds of flower (*bunga 7 rupa*). In the same vein, Rini Andayani insists that fasting before *Kungkum* trains someone to be sincere and focused on saying his prayer to God. It means that fasting encourages someone to get closer to God, train someone for obtaining the ability for self-restraints for anger and greed. It also betters someone's behaviors and characters.

*Kungkum* ritual is a unique way to nurture spiritual sensation. It is commonly carried out in the middle of the night, and the performer could conduct this ritual based on his physical and spiritual abilities. Here are the guidelines for those who want to perform the ritual as explained by an expert of *Kejawen*, Dewi Sundari.

1. Before meditating, clean your body by taking a bath at home;
2. It is much better to perform this ritual (*tirakat*) in water in a sitting pose and the water is on the level of your neck. The location is more preferable when the position of meditation is on the point where two weak currents meet. In this circumstance, the performer could conduct the *Kungkum* ritual in a more relax way.
3. The spot for meditation should not be in water with strong currents. Avoid muddy river bed.

4. The spot should be quiet.
5. Before entering the water, recite the following mantra: “*Putih-putih mripatku Sayyidina Kilir, ireng-ireng mripatku Sunan Kalijaga, telenging mripatku Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad*”. The meaning of this mantra is the white part of the eye is referred to the Prophet Khidir. The black part of the eye is referred to Sunan Kalijaga, the temple is referred to the Prophet Muhammad. The purpose of reciting the mantra is for self-purification.
6. The doer enters the water naked, and sits cross-legged on the river bed. This way of meditating was once practiced by the adherents of *Kejawen*. For now, most *Kungkum* performers still wear clothes when they are having the ritual, though few still carry out it like the *Kejawen* people did. While few still practice this with or without clothes now is a matter of preference.
7. Close the eyes, and cross arms in front of the chest. This pose helps someone to concentrate in performing the ritual. It also helps someone to deal with the coldness of water.
8. Breathe regularly.
9. The *Kungkum* meditation should start at midnight and take place for at least 3 hours.
10. During the *Kungkum* performance, the performer may not fall into sleep and avoid making unnecessary movements.
11. In general, *Kungkum* ritual is performed for 7 consecutive nights.
12. During the period of the ritual, the performer is forbidden to have sexual activities and do immoral things (Sundari, 2019).

After performing the ritual, the performer should pay attention to the followings:

1. Do not use a towel to dry your body. The reason is that the water (the energy) of Tugu Soeharto should be absorbed by the doer's body.
2. When those participating in the ritual have problems in their life such as criminal cases, they need to throw away their clothes into the river as a sign of throwing away bad luck. This action of throwing away the clothes onto the river is called *sebel sial*.
3. Bathing *keris* (Javanese daggers) or other cult objects should be accompanied by fasting. Sukarno insists that "bathing cult objects (*benda pusaka*) will be done after someone has had fasting. Bathing is done to clean the cult object and should be done once a year at the time of *Suro*. One needs to bathe his cult object like a human being should take a bath for cleanliness. If it is not bathed or treated well, it could get mad, just like humans.

Thus, fasting after performing *Kungkum*, taking place 2-7 days, is necessary when someone plans to bathe their cultural objects at home. The purpose of fasting is to avoid the harm potentially caused by the cult objects. The harms can be in forms of stomachache or fever. Bathing cultural objects is only a way to prevent the objects from *ngamuk* (getting mad). Bathed cult objects could function as a fortress (*benteng*).

#### **4.2 The Reasons for Performing *Kungkum* Ritual**

This section is dedicated to answer the question on the informants' reasons for performing the *Kungkum* ritual. In their life, people do something for some reasons and the researcher believes that the same case also applies to *Kungkum* performers. Here are their reasons the researcher finds out by interviewing the informants.

#### 4.2.1 Establishing Brotherhood

Ragil Tri Pamungkas, a man from Purwodadi, states that *Kungkum* ritual is a means of establishing and maintaining brotherhood. *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) defines brotherhood as an intimate friendship, just like brother, or a tie of friendship which is like that of brother (KBBI, 2019b). In *Kungkum* ritual, a performer is most likely to meet someone has never met before. This event allows them to get to know each other and make a friendship. Friendship can be built on different factors, such, commonality or blood relationship. Participating in this ritual, thus having commonality, enable the *Kungkum* performers to establish and maintain brotherhood.

#### 4.2.2 Requesting Blessing for Success (*mencari berkah*)

The phrase *mencari berkah* or *ngalap berkah* refers to an act to request prayers and blessing for success or to request one's fortune. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), *berkah* is defined “*karunia Tuhan yang mendatangkan kebaikan bagi kehidupan manusia*” (the gift from God which brings goodness in the life of the people) (KBBI, 2019a). In addition to allow brotherhood, the *Kungkum* performers also believe that this ritual act is a prayer to God. Doing the ritual also means asking for God's blessings. In brief, the ritual is like a prayer. For Wiwik Setyarini and Dyah Mukri, doing the ritual enables them to obtain what they desire for, especially fortunes, in their life.

While for Yanto, he participates in the ritual for three reasons: to stay young, to get a partner in life (wife), and to be successful in his business. Yanto wants to keep young and healthy, and despite his milled or old age later, he will not have wrinkles. Right now, he is still single and has been looking for his desired woman for a long time. On the business issue: now he

makes his living as an entrepreneur. He provides services for fixing broken television. Therefore, he expects that performing *Kungkum* ritual will provide him better luck in his future life.

Subari, who is 71 years of age, has a different story. He does hope that the ritual will give a kind of revelation (*wahyu*). He wants to become a culture specialist, and he needs a revelation for this calling. He says, “I once asked that God trusts me to be a cultural expert, and if I should be one, he would let me know what I could contribute in culture.” Subari said his prayer while performing the *Kungkum* ritual in Khayangan mountain in 2000. He admitted that his prayer was responded in 2002 when his self-confidence grew stronger to be on the stage. He continues, “starting from 2002, I have had the courage to wear *beskap, jarik, belangkonan, and selop* (wayang performer outfits). Up to this time, though I am getting old feeling embarrassed, I still sometime perform”.

On the reasons for performing *Kungkum* ritual, Nugroho, 28 years old, expects for good health. Water is soft and cool, and it is able to cool down or neutralize the heat of human body. Mathius Shandy, 33 years old, also wishes that his mother will get recovered from her illness.

#### 4.2.3 Purifying One's Self

Dewi Sundari, a *Kejawen* expert, insists that the common goal of performing *Kungkum* ritual is for self-purification. The performer wants to purify his body and soul, especially from greed and lust in the world. Someone fails to apply his spiritual power because his soul is not purified yet. Gus Isbah Gunawan argues that *Kungkum* ritual needs to be maintained. He fully believes that this ritual act is a way of self-purification (Sundari, 2019).

Mathius Shandy points out that purifying one's self meaning spiritual cleansing from evil things, while Yulianto believes that *Kungkum* allows someone to be united with water, and water

neutralizes disturbing conditions, provides serenity, and calm down restless thoughts. Purification means staying away from all forbidden things, especially during the *Suro* month. Rini Andayani emphasizes that the goals of performing *Kungkum* ritual are to achieve spiritual peace, enhance concentration in doing religious rituals, and to prevent someone from committing sins.

#### **4.2.4 Living the Tradition**

Tradition refers to cultural aspects handed down from the older to younger generations. *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) defines tradition as inherited tradition (from the ancestors) practiced by a particular group of people (KBBI, 2019c). For Ragil Tri Pamungkas, *Kungkum* is an inherited tradition, something originating from a village in Purwodadi. Ragil has performed the ritual with his own family since his childhood. He becomes an active bearer of this tradition when saying that he is planning to hand this ritual down to his children and grandchildren later on.

