

The Internalization of Prophetic Values in the Poems “Sang Utusan” and “Musim Panen” by Kuntowijoyo

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the internalization of prophetic values in the poems “Sang Utusan” and “Musim Panen” by Kuntowijoyo. The analysis employs a prophetic literary criticism perspective using a descriptive qualitative method. The prophetic values examined in this research include aspects of humanization, liberation, and transcendence. The results of the study indicate that humanization is reflected in the persona’s loving attitude, simplicity, and concern for the suffering of society or the underprivileged. Meanwhile, liberation is expressed as an appeal to break free from the shackles of materialism, hedonism, and the pursuit of power, in favor of a life with moral and spiritual meaning. Transcendence is revealed through the character's spiritual awareness, which enables them to receive and convey the will of God in a profound manner. Through the use of symbolism in the poems, Kuntowijoyo as the author demonstrates that prophetic values have the potential to reach the deepest dimensions of the reader’s self. Therefore, literary works are not merely expressions of aesthetic experience, but also serve as instruments for promoting social and spiritual transformation.

Keywords: *prophetic; Kuntowijoyo; humanization; liberation; transcendence*

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are not merely artistic creations; they can also serve as a medium for conveying expressions of feelings, experiences, or events from the author's life (Wulandari & Sos, 2024). One of the genres of literature is poetry. Poetry is a popular genre in society and serves as a concretization of the author's ideas. It offers expressive freedom to articulate thoughts through the concept of *licentia poetica*. Anyone can use poetry to comment on social, political, cultural, educational, economic, and even religious issues (Mustika & Lestari, 2016).

Among the approaches that can be used to explore the ideas or concepts within a literary work is the perspective of prophetic literature, as developed by Kuntowijoyo.

In the realm of Indonesian literature, the concept of prophetic literature was introduced by Kuntowijoyo in the 1980s. This concept is rooted in prophetic teachings (*nubuwwah*) and emphasizes three main pillars: humanization (the restoration of human values), liberation (freedom from oppression and subjugation), and transcendence (the vertical relationship between human beings and God).

Prophetic Social Science (Ilmu Sosial Profetik/ISP) was first introduced by Kuntowijoyo in the 1980s. He was a historian, sociologist, prolific literary writer, and activist who dedicated himself to the Islamic socio-religious organization Muhammadiyah (I., Rabbani & Hangganararas H., 2025:8). According to Kuntowijoyo, Islam is not an exclusive religion; rather, it is open, as evident in its historical development and its dynamic interactions with other civilizations.

The word “prophetic” is derived from the English term “prophet,” meaning “nabi” in Indonesian. The term “prophetic” refers to having the qualities or characteristics of a prophet, or being predictive and visionary. Therefore, in this context, “prophetic” can be translated as “kenabian” (Ahimsa-Putra, 2019:2). Prophetic literature, accordingly, is dialectical literature—that is, literature that engages with reality, offering assessments and cultural critiques in a civilized manner. Thus, prophetic literature is literature that participates in the course of human history and cannot exist in isolation from social realities (Kuntowijoyo, 2013: 10).

According to Kuntowijoyo, literature produced by writers serves both as a form of worship and as literature in its own right (pure literature). Literature as worship represents the internalization of religious values by the author, while pure literature is the expression of an objective and universal perception of reality. In this regard, divine consciousness and humanism are two major themes in literature that must be balanced, as the struggle for human rights (freedom, democracy, human rights) should also take into account the rights of God. This argument is based on the Qur’anic concept of *ḥablun min Allāh wa ḥablun min al-nās* (Qur’an, 3:112), which emphasizes that in fulfilling human responsibilities, prophetic literature becomes essential in expanding the spiritual depth of individuals and awakening both divine and human awareness (Kuntowijoyo, 2013: 14-16).

The three key concepts in the prophetic literary perspective developed by Kuntowijoyo are: humanization (*amar ma’ruf*), liberation (*nahi munkar*), and transcendence (*īmān billāh*). Humanization is necessary in response to the rise of dehumanization within society, particularly in the context of Indonesia during the New Order era. Dehumanization manifests in various forms: objectification of human beings (theological, cultural, mass, or state-based), aggressiveness (collective, individual, or criminal behavior), loneliness (privatization, individualization), and spiritual alienation. These lead to human behavior being more driven by the subconscious than by conscious awareness. In general, liberation can be understood as freeing individuals from cruelty, poverty, exploitation, the domination of oppressive structures, and the hegemony of false consciousness—all of which can be embedded in systems of knowledge, society, economics, or politics that enslave human beings and prevent them from realizing themselves as free and dignified beings (*ukhrijat li al-nās*).

Transcendence, or divine consciousness—often referred to as “transcendental literature” or “Sufi literature”—is articulated by Kuntowijoyo (2013:31), drawing on Garaudy, through three components: (1) an acknowledgment of humanity’s dependence on God; (2) the recognition of an absolute ontological distinction between God and humankind; and (3) acceptance of the existence of absolute, God-given norms that do not originate from human beings.

Because prophetic ethics is rooted in sacred scriptures, prophetic literature is regarded as a cultural weapon for believers to counteract latent materialism and secularism. This dimension is indispensable amid the current civilizational crisis. In the Islamic tradition, it is embodied in Sufism, whose core elements include fear (*khauf*), profound hope (*rajā*), complete trust (*tawakkal*), contented acceptance of God’s provisions (*qanā’ah*), gratitude, sincerity, and related virtues.

Basing literary works on religious values is a way for an author to express the soul in glorifying their Creator. In this context, Islamic literature serves multiple purposes—not only as a means for expressing the inner self, but also as a medium for conveying transcendental ideals. Literature that focuses on spiritual and divine matters is referred to as transcendental literature within the landscape of Indonesian literary tradition. Faith in the Almighty God, including through literary works such as poetry, is considered one of the only means to address the current humanitarian crisis—thus making transcendental literature highly relevant today (Suraiya, 2017).

For many writers, composing literature—particularly poetry—centered on religious values is a common practice. In the literary domain, prophetic and apostolic poems are considered forms of prophetic literature (Savira & Isnaniah, 2022). Furthermore, as Kuntowijoyo (Kuntowijoyo, 2013:10) states, prophetic literature is literature that participates in the historical narrative of humanity and cannot exist in isolation from reality. Prophetic literature is dialectical in nature—it engages with reality while offering assessments and socially and culturally refined critiques.

This vision is concretely realized in Kuntowijoyo’s own poetic works, such as “*Sang Utusan*” (*The Messenger*) and “*Musim Panen*” (*Harvest Season*), which are included in the poetry anthology *Isyarat* (2000). These two poems not only exhibit aesthetic strength but also convey spiritual and social values that reflect the prophetic vision advocated by Kuntowijoyo. Through these poems, he invites readers to reflect upon humanistic values, reject injustice, and strengthen their transcendental relationship with God. In an era marked by moral crisis, dehumanization, and the hegemony of power, interpreting Kuntowijoyo’s poetry through the lens of prophetic literature becomes highly relevant. Literature is no longer merely a source of entertainment or aesthetic pleasure; it also serves as a medium for social and spiritual transformation.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study aims to address the research question: “How are the values of humanization, liberation, and transcendence internalized within the lyrical subject (*Aku-lirik*) in the poems ‘*Musim Panen*’ and ‘*Sang Utusan*’ by Kuntowijoyo?” Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to explore how the lyrical subject in these poems internalizes the prophetic values of humanization, liberation, and transcendence.

Several studies that are relevant to this research include those conducted by Isnaini (2012), Sarah (2021), and Hasibuan, Simanjuntak, Ritonga, Yuhdi, and Puteri (2024). Isnaini's (2012) study explored various concepts in Sufism—such as *aḥwāl*, *maqām*, *sulūk*, *ikhtiyār*, and others—within the poetry collection *Isyarat* by Kuntowijoyo. Sarah's (2021) study, on the other hand, focused solely on the poem titled "*Isyarat*" from the same collection, emphasizing poetic coherence, particularly in terms of physical and intellectual elements. The study found that the physical features of poetry—such as typography, sound, imagery, rhetorical sharpness, and diction—constitute essential systems in poetic creation. Meanwhile, the study by (Handayani et al., 2024) aimed to analyze the meaning of Kuntowijoyo's poem "*Alam Sedang Berdandan*" by deeply examining its content so that readers could better understand the intended meaning conveyed through the poem.

When compared in terms of both material and formal objects, it can be concluded that this current study differs from the aforementioned research in several aspects—ranging from its focus on Sufi ideas, structural aspects of poetry (both physical and spiritual), to poetic mimesis of reality. This present study specifically focuses on the depiction and process of internalizing prophetic values within the lyrical subject (*Aku-lirik*) in two of Kuntowijoyo's poems: "*Sang Utusan*" and "*Musim Panen*".

METHOD

The method employed in this study is qualitative. A qualitative approach is expected to produce an in-depth analysis of the speech, writings, and/or observable behaviors of individuals, groups, communities, or organizations within a specific contextual setting, examined from a complete, comprehensive, and holistic perspective (S. J. Taylor et al., 2016). The researcher assumes the role of the key instrument.

Broadly speaking, the steps of this research consist of determining the object, collecting data, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. The first step involves identifying the material object and the formal object. The material object refers to the field of study, while the formal object pertains to the perspective through which the material object is examined (Faruk, 2017). The material object in this study is the poem "*Sang Utusan*" and "*Musim Panen*" from the poetry book collection *Isyarat* (2000) by Kuntowijoyo, which also serves as the data source for this research. Meanwhile, the formal object is the foundational prophetic ethics in Kuntowijoyo's prophetic literary thought, encompassing humanization, liberation, and transcendence, as reflected in the voice of the lyrical "I" within the poem "*Sang Utusan*" and "*Musim Panen*".

Subsequently, data collection was carried out through a literature review and a reading-and-note-taking technique. The researcher conducted an intensive reading of the poem "*Sang Utusan*" and "*Musim Panen*" to identify symbols, metaphors, or narratives in the form of lines and stanzas within the text that are relevant to the research objectives. The collected data were then organized into a data table for analysis using content analysis techniques. This involved interpreting the extracted and classified data in alignment with the research questions and objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Humanization in the Poems “*Sang Utusan*” and “*Musim Panen*”

The poem “*Sang Utusan*” by Kuntowijoyo reflects the concept of humanization, one of the key pillars in the prophetic ethics developed by Kuntowijoyo.

Sang Utusan

Dikabarkan
pada tanggal satu bulan Muharam
akan tiba Sang Utusan
dalam perjalanan kembali
menjenguk warganya

Mereka keluar dari rumah-rumah
berdiri di taman
menantikan
Bunga-bunga mawar di tangan
nyanyi kudus
dan detak-detak
harapan

Tidak.
Ia tidak mengikuti angin utara
ia lewat menurut ilhamnya.
Pulang, ia akan mengetuk pintumu.

Mereka saling memandang
barangkali itu benar
lalu kembali ke rumah
menaburkan mawar di ambang
menyimpan nyanyian

Malam tidak tidur
untuk di pagi hari
mereka temukan
jejak Sang Utusan
di halaman.

Humanization, in the context of prophetic literature, refers to efforts to restore the humanity of individuals—uplifting human dignity and worth, and reclaiming the social and moral functions of human beings, which are often diminished by various circumstances. In “*Sang Utusan*”, Kuntowijoyo implicitly and explicitly presents portrayals of humanization within society. In the opening stanza, it is stated: *"It is announced / on the first of Muharram / The Messenger will arrive / on his return journey / to visit his people."*

The aspect of humanization in this stanza is reflected through the themes of hope and compassion. The news of the Messenger's arrival, described as "*visiting his people*," represents an act that acknowledges and respects human existence and condition. This marks the beginning of humanization, where attentiveness and concern for others become a fundamental human trait. This aligns with Kusmiyati et al. (2024), who assert that humanization means restoring humanity—eliminating objectification, dependency, oppression, and hatred toward others. The act of "*visiting*" is, therefore, a manifestation of empathy and care for fellow human beings.

The second stanza reinforces the dimension of humanization through positive and spiritual responses: "*They came out of their homes / stood in the garden / waiting / Roses in hand / sacred songs / and the beats / of hope.*" Humanization in this stanza is illustrated through the community's ability to unite in hope and collectively express noble values. The lines "*Roses in hand / sacred songs*" symbolize humanization through aesthetics and spirituality. "*Roses*" represent beauty, tenderness, and reverence. Holding them symbolizes an effort to offer the best, to beautify the moment, and to honor higher values. Meanwhile, "*sacred songs*" are expressions of spirituality and sanctity conveyed through vocal art. Through song, humans express the deepest parts of their souls, connect with the transcendent, and create a sacred atmosphere. This is evidence that humanization is not only about fulfilling physical needs, but also about addressing aesthetic and spiritual needs that elevate human dignity.

Humans become "more human" when they are able to create and appreciate beauty, as well as express their spiritual beliefs. This is in line with Nurjanah (2018), who states that the essence of religious humanism lies in a concept that humanizes individuals while developing their intellectual and spiritual capacities without abandoning the foundational values.

The phrase "*and the beats / of hope*" serves as a reaffirmation and deepening of the theme of hope. "*Beats*" suggest something living, pulsing, and irrepressible within the human self. It is a form of humanization rooted in the inherent vitality and optimism of humanity. Despite uncertainty, these "beats of hope" reflect resilience and the human capacity to sustain belief in a brighter future. It is this hope that motivates humans to move forward, engage with one another, and strive to create better conditions.

In the third stanza, it is stated: "*No. / He does not follow the northern wind / he follows his own inspiration. / When he returns, he will knock on your door.*" Although this stanza also carries a tone of transcendence, the aspect of humanization remains prominent through its emphasis on personal engagement. The phrase "*he will knock on your door*" suggests that the message or presence of the Messenger arrives personally to each individual. This humanizes the process of receiving guidance, positioning every door (as a symbol of personal life) as a space worthy of being approached.

The fourth stanza illustrates a crucial stage in humanization—namely, the internalization of values and behavioral adaptation. Kuntowijoyo writes: "*They looked at each other / perhaps it was true / then returned home / scattered roses on the threshold / preserved the song.*" The phrase "*returned home*" and the actions "*scattered roses on the*

threshold / preserved the song” do not imply surrendering hope. Rather, they signify a transformation of anticipation into the practice of virtue. Humanization here implies that noble values—symbolized by roses and song—are not merely exhibited in grand celebrations, but are internalized into daily life, becoming integral to one's identity and conduct. This is a concrete manifestation of how prophetic teachings urge individuals to enact goodness within their personal spheres.

The culmination of the humanization process is manifested in the final stanza: *“The night did not sleep / so that in the morning / they found / the footprints of the Messenger in the yard.”* The line *“the footprints of the Messenger”* symbolizes tangible evidence of the Messenger's presence and the internalized impact of goodness within a personal space (the home's yard). This affirms that humanization is achieved when noble values and prophetic inspiration have been deeply embedded and have left a “trace” in everyday life, where individuals can recognize the outcomes of their efforts in practicing goodness. This corresponds with the perspective of humanism in contemporary Islamic thought, which emphasizes that human values must be grounded and reflected in social reality.

Meanwhile, Kuntowijoyo's poem *“Musim Panen”* (*Harvest Season*) serves as a poetic manifestation of the concept of humanization within the framework of prophetic ethics.

Musim Panen

Setelah semusim
tangan-tangan sibuk
memotong pohonan
di kampung halaman
pak tani
mengundang anak-anaknya
memanen kolam
sudah waktu ikan dinaikkan

Segunduk matahari
menyingkirkan sepi
dari danau
mendorong sampan
berlayar dua-dua

Di bukit
batu sudah dipecah
sekejap saja, bagai hanya main-main
rumah-rumah berdiri
melindungi perempuan
melahirkan bayi

Hari itu derita dihapuskan
Keluarlah lelaki-perempuan

memainkan udara dengan selendang
menyulap siang dalam impian
warna-warni dan wewangi

Anak lelaki-perempuan
menabuh genderang
menyebar kenanga
memaksa matahari
berhenti di balik daunan

Malaikat dan bidadari
menonton tarian
senyum mereka
menyentuh pohonan

Semesta berpesta
di tengah hari
pada musim panen abadi.

In this poem, the central focus on humanization is conveyed through the interaction between nature and human activity to create better living conditions and to celebrate abundance. Each line and stanza becomes evidence of the endeavor to rehumanize humanity, where hard work, togetherness, and the celebration of life form the core of a complete human achievement. The poem portrays humanization as a process that culminates in happiness. Here, humanization does not merely refer to the fulfillment of physical needs, but also to joy and harmony with nature.

The first stanza: *"After a season / busy hands / cutting trees / in the farmer's village / inviting his children / to harvest the pond / it is time to lift the fish,"* clearly illustrates humanization through hard work. The phrases *"busy hands"* and *"cutting trees"* reflect a strong work ethic—a human effort to manage nature for the sake of well-being. The involvement of *"the farmer"* who *"invites his children / to harvest the pond"* signifies intergenerational solidarity, an essential value in the building of human civilization. This process is a tangible representation of how humans productively engage with their environment to meet basic needs—a foundational step in humanizing one's existence.

Next, the stanza: *"A pile of sunlight / drives away the silence / from the lake / pushes the boats / to sail in pairs"* depicts humanization through beauty and serenity. The *"sunlight driving away the silence"* symbolizes the arrival of hope and brightness after a period of hard labor. The action of *"pushing the boats / to sail in pairs"* illustrates the harmony and peace that result from collective effort—a moment where people are able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. This represents a form of humanization that touches the psychological aspect, creating space for inner joy, not merely material satisfaction.

Then follows the stanza: *"On the hill / stones have been broken / in an instant, as if it were just play / houses stood / sheltering women / giving birth to babies."* This stanza highlights humanization through the creation of shelter and the continuity of life. The demanding labor described in *"stones have been broken"* is perceived as effortless—*"as if it*

were just play”—because of the noble purpose that follows: *“houses stood.”* The building of houses represents the culmination of physical humanization efforts—providing *“shelter for women / giving birth to babies.”* This image underscores the foundational aim of humanization: to establish a safe and nurturing environment that ensures the continuation and growth of future generations. A house, in this sense, is not merely a physical structure but a symbol of security, family, and the future—a place of return that is essential to human existence.

In the next stanza, it is stated: *“On that day suffering was erased / Out came men and women / playing with the air using scarves / turning the day into a dream / full of color and fragrance.”* After the hardships, *“suffering was erased,”* signifying the attainment of well-being. *“Men and women”* who *“play with the air using scarves”* and *“turn the day into a dream / full of color and fragrance”* symbolize expressions of joy and celebration. Humanization here means that humans are not only able to survive, but also to live meaningfully—to celebrate their labor and to create shared moments of happiness. This illustrates that humanization extends beyond physical and material needs; it includes the capacity to find fulfillment, experience beauty, and rejoice in communal harmony.

The following stanza: *“Boys and girls / beat the drums / scatter ylang-ylang / force the sun / to stop behind the leaves”* describes the act of *“forcing the sun / to stop behind the leaves”* as a metaphor for creating a timeless atmosphere—as if time itself could be paused to fully savor a moment of joy. This represents a form of humanization that unites humanity with the rhythms of nature, where beauty and celebration are found in simplicity, affirming human existence in harmony with the environment.

At its climax, the stanza reads: *“Angels and heavenly maidens / watch the dance / their smiles / touch the trees / The universe celebrates / at midday / in an eternal harvest season.”* Here, humanization reaches a state of universality. The presence of *“angels and heavenly maidens”* who *“watch the dance”* and whose *“smiles touch the trees”* symbolizes divine acknowledgment of human goodness and joy. It indicates that humanity’s acts of humanization resonate transcendentally—recognized even by spiritual beings. The phrase *“The universe celebrates / at midday / in an eternal harvest season”* marks the pinnacle of humanization, in which human labor and happiness culminate in a state of lasting universal harmony. This is not merely a conventional harvest celebration; rather, the *“harvest”* here metaphorically represents the fruits of cultivated human values—transforming it into an *eternal harvest season*.

Overall, this poem progressively illustrates how human beings—through hard work, the creation of a safe environment, and the celebration of life—are able to uplift their dignity, attain happiness, and live in harmony with nature. It presents a comprehensive portrayal of how **humanization**, as part of Kuntowijoyo’s prophetic ethics, is not merely a theoretical concept but a concrete praxis that leads to a meaningful and sustainable life.

Liberation in the Poems “Sang Utusan” and “Musim Panen”

In prophetic literary discourse, **liberation** generally addresses all forms of ignorance, injustice, and oppression. Liberation is understood in two primary contexts: internal liberation, which refers to the shackles or limitations within the self; and external liberation, which involves oppression by power or systemic structures within society. The goal of liberation is to free humanity from structural injustices—political, economic, and cultural (Kuntowijoyo, 2022). The central focus of prophetic liberation lies in the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God), which emphasizes that humans, as created beings, must constantly submit and devote themselves to the Divine.

In Kuntowijoyo’s poem “*Sang Utusan*” (*The Messenger*), the idea of liberation is presented not as something forceful or confrontational, but rather as gentle yet profound. The liberation depicted here is not merely physical, but deeply spiritual. The poem presents *The Messenger* as a figure who brings awareness and is long-awaited by his followers. This Messenger may be interpreted as a prophet or a reformer, considering that Kuntowijoyo frames his prophetic literary ideas within the context of Islamic thought. Furthermore, the *Messenger* in this poem symbolizes a life truth that transcends boundaries—a representation of liberation through spiritual awakening and moral clarity.

In the first stanza, it is stated: “*It is announced / on the first day of the month of Muharram / the Messenger will arrive / on his return journey / to visit his people.*” From a liberation perspective, the phrase “*on the first day of the month of Muharram*” refers to a month esteemed by God in Islamic teaching, a time particularly suited for *hijrah*—self-renewal, the abandonment of wrongdoing, and a movement toward emancipation. The clause “*the Messenger will arrive*” introduces a prophetic symbol that may be understood as a prophet, a moral leader, a bearer of truth, or a spiritual force. He comes “*to visit,*” that is, to awaken consciousness as a form of liberation from worldly entanglements.

The Messenger appears out of concern for a community that may have reached a state of spiritual impasse. This resonates with the human condition in which people, consumed by desire and trapped in worldly ignorance, lose sight of life’s true purpose. Here, liberation is not portrayed as a harsh or confrontational rebellion; rather, it is expressed through empathy and shared awareness. Through this stanza, Kuntowijoyo suggests that genuine change does not occur through violence or coercion. True transformation can only be realized with a sincere readiness of heart and an approach that touches the soul.

In the second stanza, it is written: “*They came out of their houses / stood in the garden / waiting / roses in hand / sacred song / and the pulses / of hope.*” In this stanza, the people are described as “*coming out of their houses,*” which symbolizes the courage to emerge from enclosed, isolated personal spaces or inner emptiness toward a new awareness. The act of “*standing in the garden*” with “*roses in hand*” illustrates a spiritual or inner liberation experienced by individuals, manifested through their anticipation of the arrival of *The Messenger*. This anticipation represents a state of hope—suggesting that liberation is imminent. Here, the act of spiritual waiting is not expressed through protest or force but through quiet hope and openness to transformation. It reflects a desire for inner peace amidst a spiritually barren existence. This demonstrates that humans need guidance or a moral compass to resist worldly temptations that may lead them astray. Liberation, in this sense, is depicted as a soul-deep awakening—an earnest longing for meaning and spiritual clarity.

Next, the stanza reads: *“He does not follow the northern wind / he moves according to his inspiration. / Upon returning, he will knock at your door.”* From a liberation perspective, the *“northern wind”* may be interpreted as a symbol of dominant systems—social, political, or ideological powers that have long governed and influenced people’s lives. The phrase *“he moves according to his inspiration”* suggests that the Messenger does not submit to such systems or worldly interests, but instead follows *inspiration*—divine guidance that governs his actions.

This reflects an inner liberation: a consciousness that frees itself from external, worldly influences that can lead to moral deviation. The Messenger becomes a figure of authentic moral authority—independent from institutional powers, guided solely by spiritual truth—and in doing so, he offers a path to liberation that begins within the individual.

Furthermore, in his various essays and works—especially since introducing the concept of prophetic literature—Kuntowijoyo consistently places liberation as one of the three central pillars, alongside humanization and transcendence (Maskur, 2012; Rifai, 2009). Within this paradigm, literature is not merely a reflection or an aesthetic endeavor, but must function as an agent of social and spiritual transformation. Liberation in Kuntowijoyo’s framework is holistic: it involves freeing individuals from social suffering (such as poverty, alienation, and oppression), from unjust economic-political structures, and even from a hollow or detached spiritual existence.

Kuntowijoyo’s poem *“Musim Panen”* (*Harvest Season*) poetically and profoundly reflects this vision. *“The farmer invites his children / to harvest the pond / the time has come to raise the fish.”* This stanza marks a turning point from hard labor to the moment of harvest—a symbol of liberation for agrarian communities from physical hardship. In the context of Maskur’s (2012) theory, this can be seen as a form of structural liberation: a societal and economic shift from dependence to self-sufficiency.

“Houses stand / protecting women / giving birth to babies.” This line signifies more than physical well-being; it is a symbol of social protection and continuity. Women giving birth under the shelter of a home represents a community that has successfully established a just and supportive social system. In accordance with Rifai’s (2009) thesis, prophetic literature serves to celebrate and advocate for the emergence of a liberating social order.

“Boys and girls / beat the drums / scatter kenanga blossoms / compel the sun / to pause behind the leaves.” Here we witness an attempt to revive collective cultural values. The tradition of drum-beating and scattering kenanga flowers is not merely a nostalgic romanticization of the past, but a symbolic act of liberation from the pressures of modern consumerist and individualistic culture. These acts reaffirm the importance of cultural identity, community, and spiritual richness over material excess.

“Angels and celestial maidens / watch the dance / their smiles / touch the trees”
“The universe celebrates / at midday / during the eternal harvest season.” These lines reflect spiritual liberation, wherein humanity is no longer confined by worldly turmoil, but instead exists in harmony with both nature and the divine. In Kuntowijoyo’s framework, this is referred to as *“liberative transcendence”*—a form of liberation that transcends the socio-political realm and reaches a deeply spiritual dimension (Maskur, 2012; Suraiya, 2017).

The image of the cosmos participating in the celebration symbolizes the ultimate liberation of the human soul, where the material and spiritual worlds converge poetically. According to Rifai (2009), this moment represents the ultimate aim of

prophetic ethics: the unification of faith (iman), righteous action (amal), and spiritual excellence (ihsan).

Transcendence in the Poems “Sang Utusan” and “Musim Panen”

Kuntowijoyo’s poem “*Sang Utusan*” is more than a sequence of poetic expressions; it serves as a medium of reflection that invites readers to contemplate the spiritual meanings hidden beneath its symbolic language. The figure of *Sang Utusan* is not merely a poetic character, but a symbol of a prophetic figure, one who carries a divine mission to awaken humanity’s long-neglected spiritual awareness.

The poem begins with the news of the arrival of *Sang Utusan* on the first day of Muharram, which holds deep spiritual significance in Islam as the beginning of the Hijri year—a moment to embark on an inner migration (hijrah) toward spiritual purification. This signals that the arrival of the Utusan is not merely a worldly occurrence, but rather a divine sign, a celestial call to rekindle spiritual consciousness.

From the perspective of prophetic literary criticism, this work revives the narrative of prophethood, not merely as a story to be told, but as a call to humanity to experience the divine presence that is so often obscured by the indifference of the times. Kuntowijoyo introduces the *Utusan* as one who arrives “according to divine inspiration,” not driven by worldly logic or power, but rather as a symbol of prophecy, a bearer of enlightenment, a beacon of light amidst darkness.

“He passes according to his inspiration / When he returns, he will knock at your door.” From a transcendental perspective (stanza 3), inspiration (*ilham*) is the point of departure. *Ilham* is neither the product of rational thought nor a visible outcome of experience; it is a ray of light from God, perceptible only to a purified heart. In this stanza, the Messenger is portrayed as a prophetic figure whose mandate comes not from human beings but from heaven. He does not arrive according to worldly logic; he comes through inspiration—a multifaceted divine directive.

Within Kuntowijoyo’s (2013) prophetic ethics, transcendence is an invitation to restore and strengthen the relationship between human beings and their Creator. The Messenger’s task is not to coerce, but merely to knock. He knocks not only at the physical door of one’s house, but at the inner door of human consciousness, conveying his message. Readers are thus reminded that the call to truth does not always appear with a loud voice; it often arrives as a gentle knock upon the soul.

“The night did not sleep / so that in the morning / they found / the footprints of the Messenger / in the yard.” This fifth stanza depicts night as a space for spiritual contemplation. In Islam, the night is the most propitious time to draw near to God, as practiced by prophets and the righteous. The Messenger’s footprints are not merely physical markers, but evocative signs of a stirring spiritual presence. This aligns with Rinawati’s (2018) indicator of transcendence: confronting events through a mystical lens, linking all happenings to God’s will.

Kuntowijoyo (2022) emphasizes that cultural transcendence serves as resistance against currents of hedonism and materialism. Accordingly, this poem exemplifies literature as more than an expressive medium—it is a spiritual guide. Transcendence

also appears in the followers' attitude of watchful anticipation; their waiting is not futile but carefully prepared. The Messenger is discovered not "on the stage of power" or in a public square, but in the yard—an ordinary, humble space that belongs to everyone. This affirms that the Messenger manifests within daily human life, in simplicity, and in tangible contexts.

"*They looked at one another / perhaps it was true / then returned to their homes / scattering roses on the threshold / storing away the hymn.*" This fourth stanza portrays faith as an attitude of surrender, patience, and hope. In the context of education, transcendence plays a vital role in guiding students to seek knowledge not merely for the sake of academic degrees, but as an expression of gratitude and a means of drawing closer to Allah SWT (Taufiq & Lasido, 2022). The arrival of the Messenger can also be interpreted as the presence of a *murabbi*—a true educator—who aids the people in reaching self-awareness, spiritual depth, and social consciousness. He does not force; instead, he knocks gently. He does not incite anger; instead, he nurtures hope. As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran (3:110), the ideal human being is one who enjoins what is good (*amar ma'ruf*), forbids what is wrong (*nahi munkar*), and believes in Allah (*tu'minuna billah*). It is at this point that the poem "*The Messenger*" concludes—at the peak of transcendence, that is, divine awareness as the foundation for the human struggle.

Kuntowijoyo's "*The Messenger*" is a literary work that not only showcases the beauty of language but also contains profound spiritual meaning. Through the symbol of the Messenger, Kuntowijoyo invites readers into a reflective space to internalize prophetic messages that stir the heart and awaken inner consciousness. The Messenger, as a transmitter of divine revelation, serves to awaken humanity to the realities of life, the presence of God, and the moral responsibilities they bear.

The spiritual message of the poem is made apparent from the beginning—marked by the arrival of the Messenger on the first day of the month of Muharram, a moment that in Islamic tradition signifies the beginning of the Hijri year. This is a spiritually significant moment, one of reflection and inward transformation, encouraging a spiritual migration (*hijrah*)—from darkness to light, from negligence to awareness, from worldly pleasure to the resilience of divine values.

From the perspective of prophetic literary criticism, particularly in the aspect of transcendence, this poem presents the figure of *The Messenger* as a divine force manifested in the world. He does not appear as a political leader, nor as a proponent of worldly ideologies, but as a bearer of a spiritual mission. The Messenger arrives "*according to his inspiration*", meaning he is not driven by worldly desires or personal ambition, but by an inner voice that originates from God. In this context, inspiration (*ilham*) symbolizes an intimate form of communication between the human soul and the Divine—accessible only to those with purified hearts, open spirits, and awakened consciousness.

This emphasizes that the poem is not concerned with external events, but rather touches the innermost dimension of humanity: the vertical relationship between creation and the Creator.

The subsequent stanzas show that the Messenger does not come with force or domination, but with a gentle and subtle knock, portraying how spirituality often emerges in the quiet spaces of life—*“in the yard”*. The *yard* serves as a symbol of how transcendence can appear in daily life, within the domestic sphere, amidst peaceful routines. Furthermore, expressions such as *“scattering roses on the threshold”* and *“storing away the hymn”* reflect a form of faith that is sincere, tranquil, and full of hope.

Through this poem, Kuntowijoyo urges readers to open the eyes of the heart and the ears of the soul, so they may receive the messages of God that arrive in silence, in simplicity, and in the stillness—like the gentle knock of the Messenger upon the doors of our hearts.

After discussing the first poem, the analysis now turns to the second poem, *“Harvest Season”* (*“Musim Panen”*) by Kuntowijoyo. This poem presents a journey of meaning—from the tangible, everyday world toward a deeper, spiritual dimension. *“Harvest Season”* opens with a grounded narrative of daily life: “After a season / busy hands / cutting down trees...”

In the opening lines, the reader is offered a vivid depiction of agrarian life—highlighting the hard work of farmers and the rituals of harvesting. These images reflect a lived reality that is still deeply rooted in Indonesian society, which to this day continues to be shaped by an agrarian way of life. Gradually, the following stanzas guide the reader into an increasingly symbolic and spiritual atmosphere:

“On that day, suffering was erased”

“Angels and heavenly maidens watched the dance”

“The universe rejoiced / at midday / in the eternal harvest season.”

These lines mark a profound shift—from physical labor and communal effort to metaphysical celebration. The act of harvesting transforms into a sacred ritual, where human activity merges with the divine order. The *“eternal harvest season”* is no longer a temporal event, but a metaphor for spiritual fulfillment and cosmic harmony, suggesting that true abundance arises not only from the soil, but from the alignment between human virtue, collective joy, and the divine presence in the everyday.

The shift from imagery representing everyday life to one imbued with symbolic and sacred nuance is a hallmark of prophetic poetry. Kuntowijoyo (2013) describes prophetic literature as a literary form that opens space for a deeper reality. In this context, the act of harvesting is not merely interpreted as an economic or social process, but rather as a form of “inner harvest”—the culmination of human toil and sacrifice that is welcomed and celebrated by all elements of the cosmos. The presence of “angels, heavenly maidens, and the rejoicing universe” points to the spiritual cosmos, one no longer constrained by ordinary notions of time and space (*the eternal harvest*). The closing lines of the poem read: *“The universe rejoiced / at midday / in the eternal harvest season.”*

Here, the word *eternal* becomes the key to unlocking the poem’s transcendental dimension. In prophetic poetry, the notion of “eternity” consistently gestures toward a

divine realm that transcends temporal and spatial boundaries. Kuntowijoyo is not describing a literal harvest, but instead elevates it as a symbol of spiritual fulfillment—a celebration of the soul’s awakening in harmony with the universe. The phrase *eternal harvest* can be interpreted as a metaphor for the ideal afterlife, a state of eternal peace and spiritual well-being in which humankind and the cosmos are in perfect balance. Within this framework, harvest is no longer viewed as a seasonal event, but as a symbol of abiding spiritual reality. This reading reflects the essence of transcendence: the human effort to surpass the physical world and reach a higher, more enduring spiritual plane.

CONCLUSION

Kuntowijoyo’s poems *Sang Utusan* and *Musim Panen* serve as concrete representations of the three central aspects of prophetic literary criticism: humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Through poetic language rich in symbolism and meaning, Kuntowijoyo does not merely appeal to aesthetic sensibilities but also awakens the spiritual and social awareness of his readers.

Humanization, as reflected in both poems, manifests through empathy, hope, and appreciation for life. Values such as patience, trust in God (*tawakkul*), cooperation, and respect for others form the ethical foundation of Kuntowijoyo’s prophetic vision. Both works affirm that genuine spirituality is inseparable from moral virtue and compassion for fellow human beings. Meanwhile, the aspect of liberation is most clearly articulated in *Musim Panen*. Beginning with depictions of farmers’ hard work and culminating in the celebratory moment of harvest, this poem illustrates a journey from physical struggle to spiritual emancipation. The symbol of an “eternal harvest” signifies the attainment of an ideal state: freedom from structural suffering and inner alienation toward a more complete and meaningful existence. The aspect of transcendence appears most prominently in *Sang Utusan*. The figure of the “Messenger” is portrayed as a prophetic character who does not impose, but instead “knocks on the door” of human consciousness. This poem invites readers to reflect on the vertical relationship between human beings and God, and emphasizes the significance of silence, simplicity, and sincerity in understanding divine messages amidst the distractions of a materialistic world.

Overall, through these two poems, Kuntowijoyo demonstrates that prophetic literature is not merely a vehicle for aesthetic expression, but also a powerful means of spiritual and social transformation. *Sang Utusan* and *Musim Panen* stand as bridges between inner consciousness, humanitarian values, and social struggle, positioning poetry as a profound medium for change in both individual and societal life.

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