

Macapat from the Kraton Yogyakarta: Classic Poems for a Contemporary Catastrophe

by Wedana Susilomadyo, translated by Nyi MJ. Reninawangmataya

The Kraton Yogyakarta created classical poetry to confront a contemporary crisis. Prince KPH Notonegoro wanted to “educate and entertain people during this hard time,” so he asked Mas Wedana Susilomadyo, a member of his staff (an *abdidaem*), to compose macapat addressing the challenges of the coronavirus, to help people “face this difficult situation with a cool head and a calm heart.” These new macapat, written in the enduring traditional forms, apply the wisdom of Javanese philosophy to the challenge of an unexpected and unimaginable crisis. Videos with explanations and recitations were posted online as a weekly series. The eleven macapat forms reflect the journey a person takes through life, from birth, through worldly endeavors, and finally to the release of the soul in a final breath.

Sekar Macapat Mijil. *Mijil* means come out or be born. In macapat philosophy, Sekar Mijil represents a baby that has just been born from the mother’s womb, about to start life in the world. It represents compassion, self-awareness, affection, openness, and good wishes.

Sekar Macapat Kinanthi. *Kinanthi* comes from the word *kanthi*, which means “holding hands.” Sekar Kinanthi depicts childhood, which always warms our hearts. Wherever they go, children are accompanied by their parents, or *kakanthi*, who always take care of them. The spirit of Sekar Kinanthi includes sharing wisdom, compassion, happiness, setting a good example, closeness, and a parent’s love for their children.

Sekar Macapat Sinom. The word *sinom* comes from *nom*, which means young. Sekar Sinom represents people from adolescence through adulthood, and is characterized by happiness, friendship, and companionship.

Sekar Macapat Asmarandana. Asmarandana comes from the words *asmara* (love) and *dana* (giving). Sekar Asmarandana represents young people who have entered adulthood, and fallen in love, representing the characteristics of curiosity, happiness, love, and also uncertainty.

Sekar Macapat Gambuh. The word *gambuh* means becoming familiar, fitting in, and being suitable. Sekar Gambuh

represents a man and a woman who feel compatible in love, and decide to live together; it represents the qualities of being sincere, open, helpful, gracious, and intimate.

Sekar Macapat Dhandhanggula. The word *dhandhang* means prayer, while the word *gula* means sweet. Sekar Dhandhanggula depicts a married life, full of good and pleasant wishes, with a nature that is flexible or multi-purpose, supple, deep, happy, and beautiful.

Sekar Macapat Durma. The word *durma* can be interpreted as “brave.” In the life of a family, many obstacles and challenges must be faced. Sekar Durma depicts human character brave enough to face all the tests of life, with a character that is *greget* (spirited), strong, confident, angry, and overflowing with emotion.

Sekar Macapat Pangkur. *Pangkur* is a combination of the words *nyimpang* (to avoid) and *nyingkur* (to refrain from/abandon). Sekar Pangkur represents elderly people, who must stay away from bad ideas, and resist worldly desires; it conveys characteristics of happiness, anger, emotions, strength, love, flexibility, and equality.

Sekar Macapat Megatruh depicts the time when the soul is separated from the body. It is the will of nature that all life must pass. It depicts feeling concerned, sad, disappointed, hopeless, hurt, and intense crying.

Sekar Macapat Pocung represents the end of the human life cycle. In Islam, someone who has passed away is shrouded with a white cloth before being buried (*pocung/pocong*). It invokes those who are careless, humorous, flexible, and sometimes wise.

Sekar Macapat Maskumambang combines the words *emas* (gold), meaning something precious, and *kumambang* (floating), which represents uncertainty, the unknown of the after life, when our sins and good deeds will be accounted for, and where we will end up. Sekar Maskumambang can make us feel misery, sadness, suspense, dread, and doubt. On the other hand, there are those who might put Sekar Maskumambang at the beginning, before Sekar Mijil, to represent a baby floating in the mother’s womb, and the mystery of what lies ahead. ▀

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Videos of the recitations are on the Kraton Yogya YouTube channel on the playlist [Macapat](#).



Mijil. MP. Cermo Warsito, MB. Sapartitala.

Sekar Macapat Mijil Raramanglung, Pelog Enem

*Singgah-singgah suminggah sumisih,
Sumisih kang adoh,
Suminggaha mring mula asale,
Sumisiha saka praja mami,
Sun caraka balik,
Paringing Hyang Agung.*

Sekar Macapat Kinanthi Mangu, Slendro Manyura

*Yen lagya kataman bendu,
Sumendheya marang Gusti,
Sabar tulus lan tawakal,
Ikhtiyar datanpa keru,
Tansah eling lan waspada,
Muji ndonga siyang ratri.*



Kinanthi. M.Ry. Dwija Supadma, MJ. Gurisomengreng.

Sekar Macapat Sinom Kentar, Slendro Manyura

*Tekane tanpa kanyana,
Memala kang mbilaheni,
Rasa was-was tidha-tidha,
Pan kudu wani ngadhepi,
Tansah resesik dhiri,
Ngati-ati datan kantun,
Mugi sirna memala,
Sirna larut katut angin,
Ing pacoban mesthi ana kaberkahan.*

Sekar Macapat Asmarandana Slobog, Pelog Barang

*Wong sabar jembar rejeki,
Sapa ngalah urip berkah,
Linambaran prihatine,
Datan serik yen kataman,
Tan susah yen kelangan,
Gusti paring dalan tuhu,
Mring sapa kang gelem ndalan.*



Sinom. Nyi MB. Kusumastuti.

Sekar Gambuh Maos, Pelog Enem

*Aja nganti ksluru,
Kabar kabur ingkang durung temtu,
Ngupayoa pawarta ingkang sejati,
Iku supaya rahayu,
Murih padhang pindha obor.*

Sekar Dhandhanggula Padhasih, Slendro Sanga

*Tan kanyana memala nekani,
Tan kinira nanging iku nyata,
Kudu wani ngadhepake,
Kanthi lambaran manut,
Manut marang wewarah yekti,
Datan nggugu priyongga,
Mrih yuwananipun,
Jaga dhiri kulawarga,
Muga-muga enggal sirna suker sakit,
Pulih dadi raharja.*

(Mijil)

A prayer to get rid of bad things, so they disappear soon,
Go away,
Go back to where you came from,
Go away from my country,
I send a message in return
A bestowal from the Almighty.

(Kinanthi)

When you are stricken by disaster,
lean on God,
be patient, sincere, and have faith,
never stop trying,
always be mindful and alert,
pray day and night.

(Sinom)

The arrival was unexpected
The disaster of dangerous disease
Worry and doubt
We must strive to fight
Always cleanse ourselves
Never cease to be careful
May this disaster disappear soon
Disappear completely, carried away by the wind
In every calamity, there must be a blessing.

(Asmarandana)

People with patience will have a lot of luck,
Whoever surrenders will get life's blessings,
Anchor yourself in spiritual discipline,
Never regret the disaster,
Never get upset when losing things,
God will show the right way,
To anyone who wants to follow the rules.

(Gambuh)

Don't get lost,
Rumors are not necessarily true,
We must gather the right information,
So everything becomes clear,
Illuminated by the light of a torch

(Dhandhanggula)

Disaster came unexpectedly,
Unthinkable but real,
One must be face it bravely,
Relying on discipline by adhering to the rules,
Following the right advice,
Don't act outside the rules, [don't do whatever you want]
For the sake of our safety,
[We] Always take care of ourselves and our family,
Hopefully, this plague will disappear soon,
And prosperity will return to our lives.



Asmarandana. MB. Lokasari, MJ. Sri Kawuryan.



Gambuh. Nyi MB. Penilaras.



Dhandhanggula. MJ. Madubrongto, MB. Brongtomadyo.



Durma. MB. Madukumolo, MJ. Megarsemu.

Sekar Durma Kakawin, Pelog Barang

*Wewangsone Sultan Agung Ngeksigonda,
Ngasah mingising budi,
Kebak tepa slira,
Dimen hayu bawaana,
Memasuh malaning bumi,
Sirna memala,
Mala trimala kalis.*

Sekar Pangkur Dhudhakasmaran, Pelog Enem

*Eling sabar lan narima,
Tri prakawis pitutur luhur yekti,
Pituturing para sepuh,
Woh eling kawaspadan,
Wohing sabar sarwa becik kang kaundhuh,
Dene woh saka narima,
Rasa tentrem jroning ati.*



Pangkur. MJ. Brongtomardiko.

Sekar Megatruh Dudukwuluh, Pelog Barang

*Datan pegat nyuwun ngarsaning Hyang Agung,
Memala kang mbilaheni,
Mugi enggal sirna larut,
Pulih kadya duking uni,
Krana karsaning Hyang Manon.*

Sekar Pocung Maos, Slendro Manyura

*Kang tuwajuh nindakake keh pituduh,
Ngadhepi Korona,
Manut dhawuhing pangarsi,
Aja kendhat dhedhepe marang Hyang Suksma.*

Sekar Maskumambang Buminata, Slendro Sanga

*Kunembeng luh nggenira samya memuji,
Sakehing memala,
Tumuli enggal sumingkir,
Pra kawula manggih mulya.*



Megatruh. Hendy Prasetya.

(Durma)

Teachings from the mighty King of Mataram,
Sharpens the mind,
Harness tolerance for each other,
Nurture the life of the universe,
Cleanse the earth,
All kinds of disasters shall disappear,
Even if they come, we shall be immune to them.

(Pangkur)

Always be mindful, be patient and sincere,
The three noble attributes
Advice from our ancestors
Being mindful shall make one alert
Being patient cultivates good outcomes
And acceptance brings
Tranquility to your heart.

(Megatruh)

Never cease to ask God for help,
With the pandemic that endangers life,
Hopefully this disaster will disappear soon,
And we will recover completely,
All by the will of God the Almighty.

(Pocung)

Follow the instructions earnestly,
To combat the coronavirus outbreak,
Follow all of the orders from the leader (government),
Never stop relying on God.

(Maskumambang)

Tears well up in our eyes while praying,
May all kinds of disasters,
Soon disappear,
And prosperity will return to those who serve God.



Pocung. MB. Jatipurno, MJ. Condropurnomo.



Maskumambang. Nyi ML. Sariningsih.

