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### Psychosufistic Dimensions of *Serat Sastra Gendhing*: A Hermeneutic Study of Javanese Spiritual Psychology

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#### Abstract

*Serat Sastra Gendhing*, a didactic Javanese literary source written by Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma, combines Sufi Islamic and indigenous Javanese spiritual thought. This research wishes to expose the psycho-sufistic values found in *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, and discuss their relation with transpersonal psychology. The research employs a qualitative method with an interpretive-hermeneutic approach through library research on three main manuscript versions. The analysis was conducted thematically on eight *macapat* poetic forms supported by psychological and Sufi theories. The results show that *Serat Sastra Gendhing* contains three central psycho-sufistic values: (1) existential awareness through *sangkan paraning dumadi*, which reflects the origin and purpose of human life; (2) self-control through *aja dume* and *eling lan waspada*; and (3) cosmic awareness through *memayu hayuning bawana*, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and God. These three values represent the stages of spiritual consciousness development aligned with the concepts of self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence in transpersonal psychology. The study concludes that *Serat Sastra Gendhing* is a psycho-sufistic work that integratively unites Islamic spirituality, psychology, and Javanese culture.

**Keywords:** *serat sastra gendhing*; sufism; transpersonal psychology; psychosufistic

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#### INTRODUCTION

Studies on spiritual consciousness in classical literature have gained increasing attention in cultural and psychological research, particularly in relation to inner transformation. However, scholarly examinations of Javanese classical texts that embody Sufi teachings and psychological insights remain limited. Several

studies indicate that Javanese spiritual traditions hold great potential for enriching self-awareness and human development, yet few have systematically connected these traditions to the framework of transpersonal psychology (Sunarto, 2020).

One of the most significant Javanese classical works is *Serat Sastra Gendhing* by

Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma. This *sastra piwulang* (didactic text) integrates Islamic moral and spiritual teachings with Javanese philosophical wisdom. It contains profound concepts such as *eling lan waspada* (awareness and vigilance), *sangkan paraning dumadi* (the origin and purpose of existence), and *memayu hayuning bawana* (preserving the harmony of the universe), all of which reflect the structure of human spiritual awareness. Despite its philosophical depth, few studies have explored this text through a psycho-Sufi lens. This indicates a clear research gap in understanding Javanese classical literature from a transpersonal psychology perspective (Yardan et al., 2023).

In psychology, transpersonal psychology positions spiritual development as an essential dimension of holistic human growth. Recent evidence has shown that interventions based on a transpersonal approach are effective in improving the spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being of individuals (Haryanto & Muslih, 2023). However, the utilization of transpersonal theories in traditional Javanese cultural texts is still weak, and the relationship between Javanese classical literature and transpersonal psychology has not been well described (Putri et al., 2023; Ryandi, 2023; Abbas, 2024).

Previous studies on Javanese-Islamic mysticism have analyzed texts such as *Serat Nitistruti* and *Serat Kalatidha* using Sufi and cultural approaches (Ansori & Taufiq, 2024; Amalia et al., 2024). However, most of these studies focus on theological, symbolic, or ethical dimensions rather than the individual's

psycho-spiritual development. A deeper understanding of the internal structure of consciousness, as represented in these texts, could significantly contribute to the theoretical development of human self-awareness and transformation.

The Javanese concept of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and God, has also garnered scholarly attention (Yardan et al., 2023; Ainia, 2024). These studies demonstrate that this value promotes ecological awareness and fosters a harmonious relationship with the cosmos. However, the concept has not been sufficiently examined through the framework of transpersonal psychology, which highlights the inner processes of spiritual awareness and the transformation of human consciousness.

In the context of Indonesian cultural psychology, various studies emphasize that a spiritual approach grounded in local wisdom plays a vital role in therapy and personal development (Novitasari, 2023). These findings suggest that traditional Javanese texts, such as *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, can provide a theoretical and practical foundation for developing a psycho-spiritual model grounded in Javanese cultural values. The absence of comprehensive studies linking classical Javanese literature with a psycho-Sufi perspective underscores the urgency and relevance of this research.

The psycho-Sufi interpretation of the *Serat Sastra Gendhing* has academic and cultural significance, as it addresses significant research gaps by integrating three intellectual domains: classical Javanese literary studies, Islamic

Sufism, and transpersonal psychology. The novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, interpreting a Javanese classical text as a representation of the structure of spiritual consciousness in human experience.

This study employs a hermeneutic approach to uncover the deeper meanings of the text and to explore the relationships among symbols, historical contexts, and readers' experiences (Palmer, 1969; Bleicher, 2017). This method is suitable for revealing the layered meanings of *Serat Sastra Gendhing* while maintaining its cultural and Sufi contexts. The analysis focuses on eight *macapat* poetic compositions that convey teachings on self-awareness, self-regulation, and unity with the Divine. Through hermeneutic interpretation, Javanese spiritual values can be contextualized in modern psychological theories reflectively and scientifically.

This research is expected to yield a conceptual framework that can be applied in spiritual education programs, counseling, psychotherapy, and character development, grounded in Javanese cultural values. Furthermore, these findings are expected to enrich interdisciplinary discourse across psychology, Sufi studies, and cultural studies and reaffirm the relevance of classical Javanese literature in addressing the crisis of modern spiritual depth.

Based on this argument, this study aims to answer two main questions: (1) What psycho-Sufi values are embedded in *Serat Sastra Gendhing*? and (2) How are these values relevant to the concepts of *self-awareness*, *self-regulation*, and *self-transcendence* in transpersonal

psychology? Accordingly, this research focuses on identifying and analyzing the psycho-Sufi structures and values within *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, and on explaining their relevance to transpersonal psychology as a framework for understanding the holistic dimensions of human spirituality.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach within an interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm, as the object of inquiry consists of a classical Javanese literary text imbued with spiritual and symbolic meanings. The hermeneutic approach, as articulated by Gadamer (1975), was used to interpret the underlying meanings of the text through a dialogical process between the interpreter, the historical context, and the cultural values embedded within it. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding *Serat Sastra Gendhing* as a representation of the psychosufistic structure of human spiritual consciousness.

This research was designed as a library study, relying entirely on textual and documentary sources. The study was conducted from January to June 2025 in Semarang, Indonesia. The primary data sources consisted of three manuscript versions of *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, the Pakualaman, Mangkunegaran, and the National Library editions (Zaenuddin, 2014). Secondary data included books, journal articles, and scholarly works on Sufism, transpersonal psychology, and Javanese classical literature.

The target of this research was to uncover psychosufistic values embedded in

*Serat Sastra Gendhing*, particularly those reflecting the structure of human spiritual awareness in relation to God, the self, and the universe. The text itself served as the main subject of analysis, situated within its cultural and religious contexts. The researcher functioned as the principal instrument, interpreting the text through reflective engagement and critical sensitivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The research procedure consisted of four systematic stages: (1) identifying and cataloguing relevant manuscripts and literature, (2) reading and transliterating the Javanese text, (3) identifying verses containing psycho-sufistic teachings such as *sangkan paraning dumadi* and *eling lan waspada*, and (4) interpreting the symbolic meanings through the hermeneutic circle, moving back and forth between parts and the whole to achieve a comprehensive understanding (Gadamer, 1975). Each stage was intended to reveal the inner spiritual structure underlying the text's moral and mystical teachings.

Data were collected through documentation and textual analysis. The study examined eight *macapat* verses to identify symbols, metaphors, and thematic expressions related to psycho-sufistic values. Data were analyzed through a combination of hermeneutic and thematic analysis. The hermeneutic analysis aimed to interpret symbolic meanings and spiritual messages, while the thematic analysis organized the data into major themes, including self-awareness, self-control, purification of desire, and union with the Divine (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The validity of the findings was ensured through theoretical, source, and interpreter triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Theoretical triangulation compared interpretive results with humanistic psychology theories (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1980) and classical Sufi psychology (Al-Ghazali, 1998). Source triangulation was achieved by examining three manuscript versions of the text, while interpreter triangulation involved discussions with experts in Javanese literature and Sufism. Researcher reflexivity was also applied to maintain transparency and minimize interpretive bias throughout the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This methodological design allows the study to interpret *Serat Sastra Gendhing* not merely as a literary artifact but as a psycho-sufistic text representing stages of human spiritual transformation. By integrating hermeneutic interpretation with thematic analysis, this research aims to provide an in-depth and contextually grounded understanding that contributes to the development of spiritual psychology rooted in Javanese cultural wisdom.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

The study revealed that *Serat Sastra Gendhing* is a Javanese didactic text that contains profound moral, spiritual, and Sufi teachings. Its messages guide individuals to understand the essence of their being and to attain unity with the Divine through purified consciousness. Central values such as *eling lan waspada* (mindfulness and vigilance) and *sangkan paraning dumadi* (awareness of origin and

purpose) reflect the spiritual journey from ego-centered awareness to divine consciousness. These ideas correspond to the concepts of self-actualization and self-transcendence in transpersonal psychology, where human growth involves transcending the boundaries of the ego to experience unity with higher existence (Maslow, 1968; Grof, 2008; Vaughan, 1980).

The psycho-sufistic values in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* are expressed through symbols and metaphors that illustrate the purification of the soul, the control of desire, and the discipline of spiritual life. These teachings are consistent with the classical Sufi concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* described by Al-Ghazali (1998), which emphasizes the cleansing of the heart as a path to divine closeness. In modern psychology, this process is closely tied to the concept of self-regulation and emotional balance, which form the foundation of psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Frager (1999) explains that in Sufi psychology, the purification of the heart and the mastery of desire are essential steps in spiritual growth because the heart is regarded as the center of self-awareness and divine connection.

The hermeneutic analysis of the eight *macapat* sections reveals that each verse represents a stage of spiritual consciousness. *Pangkur* illustrates the struggle against worldly temptation, *Dhandhanggula* portrays inner peace that follows self-control, and *Asmaradana* symbolizes divine love as the highest state of awareness. This developmental sequence aligns with Wilber's (2000) theory of the stages of consciousness, which describes the evolution of

human understanding from the egocentric level to the cosmic level. The concept also parallels Tart's (1975) idea of altered states of consciousness as pathways to expanded spiritual awareness and Maslow's (1968) description of peak experiences that bring individuals to deeper self-integration.

Another key finding highlights the value of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which represents the responsibility to maintain harmony among the self, society, nature, and the divine. This principle resonates with Roszak's (2001) theory of ecopsychology, which emphasizes the spiritual relationship between human beings and the natural world. In the puppet performance *Semar Mbangun Kayangan*, the concept of human harmony with nature and the environment is also reinforced (Widagdo, 2025). This also echoes the Sufi doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* formulated by Ibn 'Arabi, which teaches the unity of all existence with the Creator (Nasr, 1987). The inclusion of this value suggests that Javanese spirituality extends beyond personal awareness, evolving towards a holistic and cosmic understanding that encompasses ecological and social harmony.

This study found a conceptual relationship between *Serat Sastra Gendhing* and Western transpersonal psychology theory. Wilber (2000) emphasizes the integration of the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of consciousness. *Serat Sastra Gendhing* emphasizes the unity between human and divine aspects through an ethical and theocentric process. Tart (1975) and Walsh and Vaughan (1993) argue that true spiritual

consciousness is achieved through moral self-transformation guided by love and compassion, rather than merely through transcendental experiences. This understanding is supported by Frager (1999), who describes the heart as the spiritual center where divine love and psychological balance meet.

The model of spiritual consciousness in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* aligns with Grof's (2008) concept of holotropic. The mystical process depicted by Sultan Agung reflects the transformative movement of the soul through purification, surrender, and union with divine reality. These findings suggest that Javanese spirituality, as expressed in *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, is not only symbolic but also existential, offering a path to harmonize human consciousness with the divine order and nature.

Overall, the *Serat Sastra Gendhing* contains a comprehensive psycho-sufistic value structure, as seen in the following excerpt from verse 13 of *Serat Sastra Gendhing Pupuh Durma*.

*"Ing adina tan pegat raket ing suksma; Tan kewran liring pamrih; Pangestining cipta; Kaya rapaling kitab; Fayakun fida raini; Muratding makna; Urip neng desa kalih."*

These values emphasize self-awareness, purification of the soul, and the unity of human and divine consciousness as essential aspects of human development. Through hermeneutic analysis and a transpersonal psychology framework, this text emerges as both a spiritual and psychological model that successfully bridges Eastern mysticism and modern psychological theory. This synthesis provides a strong foundation for

the development of an integrative, culturally grounded spiritual psychology model (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 2000).

The *Serat Sastra Gendhing* depicts the inner dynamics that align with the theory of peak experiences and mystical consciousness. William James (1902) describes mystical experiences in his work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, as states characterized by unity, inner peace, and the dissolution of personal boundaries, which lead individuals toward a sense of divine awareness. This pattern of experience is reflected in the *Asmaradana* and *Dhandhanggula* sections of the text, which portray tranquility, surrender, and holy love. Thus, this text not only conveys moral and ethical teachings but also presents the structure of spiritual experience that can be analyzed within the framework of the psychology of consciousness.

The study further indicates that the psycho-sufistic values in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* correspond to the concept of spiritual intelligence as developed by Zohar and Marshall (2000). Spiritual intelligence reflects an individual's ability to find meaning in life, face suffering, and adapt to changes with high awareness. Javanese values such as *eling lan waspada* (mindfulness and vigilance) and *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu* (self-control) reflect this intelligence. These values guide individuals toward reflection, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. As illustrated in the following excerpt from *Serat Sastra Gendhing Pupuh Sinom*, stanza 11.

*"Pramila gendhing yen bubrah, Gugur sembahe mring gusti, Batal wisasaning salat,*

*Tanpa gawe ulah gendhing, Tukireng swara linulung, Amuji amaning dzat, Swara saking osik wadi, Osik mulya wentaring cipta surasa”.*

These findings reinforce the idea that Javanese spirituality has a solid psychological foundation and can be contextualized within the framework of contemporary positive psychology.

Furthermore, the spiritual principles of *Serat Sastra Gendhing* have the potential to be developed into culturally-based psychological interventions. The values of self-awareness and heart purification can serve as a foundation for reflective therapy or spiritual counseling aimed at achieving inner balance and divine awareness. This finding aligns with the research of Lukoff, Lu, and Turner (1998), which suggests that integrating spirituality into psychotherapy enhances clients' emotional and existential well-being. Thus, the psycho-Sufi values of Javanese culture can serve as both a theoretical and practical foundation for developing a contextual spiritual psychology model in Indonesia.

The findings show that *Serat Sastra Gendhing* presents a comprehensive psychosufistic framework of human consciousness through moral, spiritual, and transpersonal dimensions. This text highlights spiritual awareness as the foundation of human existence, expressed through teachings such as *eling lan waspada* and *sangkan paraning dumadi*. These principles illustrate the transition from an ego-centered consciousness to a state of divine realization. This process reflects the concept of self-transcendence in transpersonal

psychology, where individuals evolve beyond the limitations of the ego and experience unity with the Divine (Maslow, 1968; Vaughan, 1980; Wilber, 2000). Thus, *Serat Sastra Gendhing* functions not only as a moral guide but also as a map of consciousness depicting the inner journey toward spiritual perfection.

The teaching of *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu* emphasizes the importance of mastering one's impulses for spiritual maturity. This value aligns with the principles of Sufi psychology and contemporary theories of self-regulation. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali (1998) describes *tazkiyatun nafs*, or the purification of the soul, as a process of cleansing the heart from selfish tendencies to achieve closeness to God. Similar processes in modern transpersonal psychology are considered vital for attaining psychological balance and inner harmony (Frager, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Through this teaching, *Serat Sastra Gendhing* presents a culturally grounded framework that views self-discipline as a transformative practice leading to spiritual integrity and psychological well-being.

The teaching of *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu* emphasizes the importance of mastering one's desires as an essential step toward spiritual maturity. This value corresponds with the principles of Sufi psychology and contemporary theories of self-regulation. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali (1998) describes *tazkiyatun nafs*, or purification of the soul, as the process of cleansing the heart from selfish tendencies to reach divine closeness. In modern transpersonal psychology, a similar process is considered vital for achieving psychological

balance and inner harmony (Frager, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Through this teaching, *Serat Sastra Gendhing* offers a culturally grounded framework that views self-discipline as a transformative practice leading to spiritual integrity and psychological well-being.

Based on a hermeneutic analysis, Sultan Agung deliberately embedded spiritual symbolism in every stanza of *macapat*. Each part of the poem represents a particular stage of consciousness, ranging from inner struggle and self-purification to serenity and divine love. The sequence of these stages aligns with Wilber's (2000) spectrum of consciousness theory, which explains that human consciousness evolves from the personal level to the transpersonal level in an effort to achieve unity with the Absolute. Tart (1975) also argues that altered states of consciousness can serve as a legitimate means to develop human potential. Thus, the structure of the poetry in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* can be considered an original model of spiritual development that parallels modern transpersonal psychological growth theory.

The next important insight is the value of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which promotes harmony among the self, society, nature, and God. This value places spirituality within the framework of ethical and ecological awareness. This aligns with Roszak's (2001) ecopsychology principle, which emphasizes the close connection between the human soul and nature. In Sufi metaphysics, this concept resonates with Ibn 'Arabi's idea of *wahdat al-wujud*, or the oneness of all existence (Nasr, 1987). The integration of spiritual, moral, and ecological awareness enriches the

transpersonal paradigm by highlighting the collective and environmental dimensions of spiritual growth, which are often overlooked in Western models of spirituality.

The strength of this study lies in the interdisciplinary hermeneutic integration of *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, mysticism, and transpersonal psychology. This approach demonstrates that classical Javanese literature is a valuable source for understanding the evolution of human consciousness. In Indonesia, very few studies combine indigenous spirituality with modern psychological theories. The application of transpersonal concepts from Wilber (2000), Grof (2008), and Frager (1999) validates the universality of these values, while also showing that local wisdom can make a significant contribution to global psychological discourse (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993).

Nevertheless, the main limitation of this study is its textual analysis and conceptual nature. Hermeneutic interpretation always involves a certain degree of subjectivity because understanding is shaped by the cultural and intellectual horizons of the interpreter (Gadamer, 1975). Furthermore, this study has not explored the practical application of the psycho-sufistic values of *Serat Sastra Gendhing* in therapeutic or educational contexts. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt a phenomenological or mixed-methods approach to investigate how these spiritual principles influence personal transformation and community well-being.

The originality of this research represents a significant contribution as it lies in



the synthesis of Javanese mystical philosophy and Western transpersonal psychology, creating a constructive dialogue between two intellectual traditions. This study interprets *Serat Sastra Gendhing* as a system of spiritual consciousness and introduces a local transpersonal development model that integrates ethical, spiritual, and cultural elements. The developed model presents a new perspective that extends beyond the individualistic focus of Western approaches, emphasizing the relational and communal dimensions of spiritual growth, grounded in compassion and harmony (Wilber, 2000; Frager, 1999). The contribution of this research extends beyond the theoretical to the cultural, as it strongly reaffirms the relevance of Javanese wisdom in the discourse of modern psychology.

Future research must be expanded through applied and experiential studies. Exploration of how Javanese values (*eling lan waspada*, *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu*, and *memayu hayuning bawana*) can inform contemporary transpersonal practices has the potential to lead to the development of culturally sensitive therapeutic methods. To enrich the understanding of spiritual consciousness in both academic and practical realms, collaboration among psychologists, theologians, and literary scholars is essential. Such interdisciplinary dialogue will continue the intellectual legacy of Sultan Agung, who envisioned human perfection as a harmony between knowledge, ethics, and divine realization.

*Serat Sastra Gendhing* portrays inner dynamics in line with the theory of mystical consciousness. William James (1902), in his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, describes mystical experience as a state characterized by unity, inner peace, and the disappearance of self-boundaries, guiding the individual toward divine awareness. This pattern of experience is reflected in the *Asmaradana* and *Dhandhanggula* sections of the text, which depict tranquility, self-surrender, and holy love. As illustrated in the following excerpt from the sixth stanza of the *Dhandhanggula*.

“Dene hakikat gendhing asaling gendhing,  
Wus kabotan ngilmuing Pengeran,  
Munggeng pangrasa tuduhe, Lir rasane  
kamumu, Kang pengrasa amratandhani,  
Tuhu tunggal pinangka, Jimaten punika,  
Pamoring rasa pangrasa, Pilih kang wahana  
ing nganaken yekti, Awimbuh  
kawimbuan.”

Thus, this text not only conveys moral and ethical teachings but also presents a structure of spiritual experience that can be analyzed within the framework of consciousness psychology.

The psychosophistic values of the *Serat Sastra Gendhing* align with Zohar and Marshall's (2000) concept of spiritual intelligence. The concept of spiritual intelligence represents an individual's ability to find meaning in life, face suffering, and adapt to change with heightened awareness and insight. Javanese values such as *eling lan waspada* (awareness and vigilance) and *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu* (self-control) directly

reflect this intelligence. These values guide individuals towards reflection, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. These findings reinforce the idea that Javanese spirituality has a solid psychological foundation and can be contextualized within the framework of contemporary positive psychology.

The spiritual principles in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* have significant potential for the development of culturally based psychological interventions. The values of self-awareness and heart purification can serve as the basis for reflective therapy or spiritual counseling aimed at achieving inner balance and divine consciousness. This aligns with the findings of Lukoff, Lu, and Turner (1998), who assert that integrating spirituality into psychotherapy enhances clients' emotional and existential well-being. Consequently, the psycho-Sufi values of Javanese culture can serve both as theoretical and practical foundations for developing a culturally contextual model of spiritual psychology in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

*Serat Sastra Gendhing* reflects a model of spiritual consciousness structure that guides the transformation of human consciousness from ego to divinity. The values of *eling lan waspada*, *ngendhaleni hawa nafsu*, and *memayu hayuning bawana* illustrate the process of self-purification, self-control, and union with God. These teachings correspond with the concepts of self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence in transpersonal psychology (Maslow, 1968; Wilber, 2000; Frager, 1999). Through a hermeneutic interpretation, the Sufi

wisdom in the text reveals not only religious depth but also psychological and existential insight into the nature of human consciousness.

The study demonstrates that Javanese spirituality in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* possesses universal relevance and can be integrated with Western transpersonal psychology. Its psycho-sufistic values provide a foundation for developing a culturally based model of spiritual psychology that emphasizes balance among awareness, morality, and spirituality. The integration of Sufism and modern psychology opens new possibilities for creating transpersonal approaches to counseling, education, and character formation that are both holistic and culturally grounded.

These findings underscore the significance of preserving and reinterpreting Javanese classical texts as sources of wisdom on consciousness and humanity. The spiritual values in *Serat Sastra Gendhing* can foster emotional balance and social harmony through the processes of education, psychotherapy, and moral development. For this reason, future research can be encouraged to empirically explore psycho-Sufi values for implementation in contemporary psychological practice through the use of applied transpersonal intervention models rooted in local cultural wisdom.

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