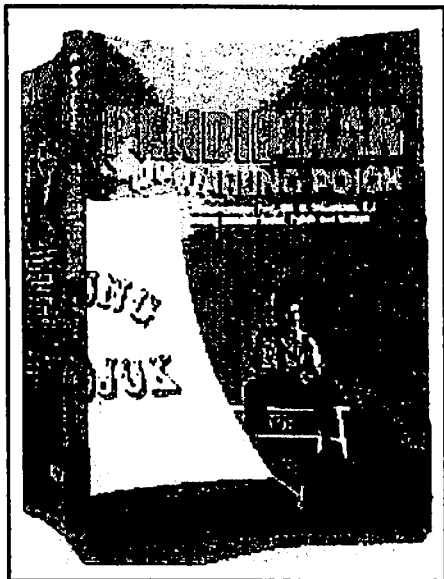


**WARUNG POJOK:  
WORDPLAY, WIT AND WISDOM**



**PENDIDIKAN ALA  
WARUNG POJOK:  
CATATAN-CATATAN PROF.  
DR. N. DRIYARKARA, S. J.  
TENTANG MASALAH SOSIAL,  
POLITIK DAN BUDAYA**

**G. Budi Subanar  
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**Those who deny their inexperience are indeed inexperienced,  
whereas others who admit their inexperience are the truly  
experienced ones.**

These words of wisdom are among the many gems that fall out of the mouth of Pak Nala, the sole character in “Warung Pojok” – a column which appeared regularly in the Javanese language magazine *Praba* during the period between 1952 and 1956. Pak Nala is a shorten form of Nalajaya, the

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name often for the children of Semar in the wayang world such as Nala Gareng, Nala Petruk, Nala Bagong – all servants and advisors to the Pandawa Knights. Nala, which also means ‘heart’ in Javanese, was so chosen by its creator, Prof. Dr. N. Driyarkara, S. J. to enable him to speak from the heart and to reflect upon various social and political problems then surfaced in Indonesia.

A professor, philosopher and priest all rolled into one, Driyarkara wrote like an ordinary person with extraordinary modesty. In so doing, he made use of the figure Pak Nala whose wit, plays of words and wisdom were all sources of anticipated enjoyment for the readers of the biweekly magazine *Praba* run under the patronage of the Apostolic Vicarage of Semarang. The most important expose is that although written in the 1950s, topics such as the hooliganism of football fans and the so-called ‘beggar’s mentality’ toward foreign aids procurement, just to mention only two, are still resonant today.

I am grateful for this recent publication of *Pendidikan ala Warung Pojok: Catatan-catatan Prof. Dr. N. Driyarkara, S. J. tentang Masalah Sosial, Politik dan Budaya* which means, Education ala Corner-of-the-Street Stall: Notes from Prof. Dr. N. Driyarkara, S. J. on Social, Political and Cultural Issues. Thanks to a fine translation from Javanese into Indonesia and editing by the Javanese Jesuit Scholar G. Budi Subanar, what would have then been forgotten documents of Driyarkara gathering dust in a library is now more widely accessible.

As a collection of his various works, *Pendidikan ala Warung Pojok* presents “the writings of Driyarkara in *Praba* so that this thinker and educator is introduced to us as being different from the one already known Prof. Dr. N. Driyarkara” (p.ii). The Chairman of the Driyarkara Foundation, F. X. Danuwinata, S. J., worked closely with Driyarkara and knew him very well. He states in his introduction to the book that it always was a passion for Driyarkara to encourage people to undertake philosophical thinking and try to think philosophically in dealing with day-to-day experiences. Known as *Djenth* (Javanese for ‘chubby’), Driyarkara (1913 – 1967) was born in Purworejo (Central Java). He was remembered as a humble, compassionate character with exceptional intelligence. As a recipient of the 1967 National Award from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Driyarkara was a fervent nationalist who, together with Prof. Muhammad Yamin, Prof. Notonegoro

and H. Ruslan Abdulgani, gave invaluable contribution to Indonesia's determination to uphold the Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the country.

Prior to the appearance of Pak Nala, Driyarkara had begun to introduce philosophy to society through his writings published in *Basis*, another Yogyakarta based magazine featuring philosophy, literature and culture. Accordingly, there is a Driyarkaraesque emphasis in the way with which Pak Nala speaks. As it is, *Pendidikan ala Warung Pojok* can be seen as a handy, less demanding accompaniment to Driyarkara's 'more heavy' works such as *Percikan Filsafat* [Flares of Philosophy] (1962), *Filsafat Manusia* [Philosophy of Humanity] (1969) and *Driyarkara tentang Pendidikan, Driyarkara tentang Manusia, Driyarkara tentang Negara dan Bangsa* [Driyarkara on Education, Driyarkara on Humanity and Driyarkara on State and Nation] (1980).

*Pendidikan ala Warung Pojok* consists of two introductory chapters and 5 chapters containing 152 columns. This book is illustrated with 37 evocative cartoons that sometimes speak louder than Pak Nala. Page after page of wit, anecdotes and commentaries on everything from childish behaviour of the parliament members to the shocking incident of female students possessed by a spirit make it a page-turner. According to Subanar, the strength of Pak Nala's article partly lies on the play on words alongside the down-to-earth approach of the character himself. Pak Nala (a.k.a Driyarkara) is always low key in his views about subjects he knows very well. He has this to say, for example, "*Pak Nala ora akeh olehe mambu pilsapat, mung kerep mambu pilsapi*", meaning that Pak Nala knows nothing of philosophy but he is familiar with the stench of cow dung (p.ix.,n.8). Here, the witticism works in Javanese, i.e. "*pilsapat*" vis-à-vis "*pilsapi*". But Subanar is such a good translator that we can grasp Pak Nala's puns and parodies with ease. What is politics? It is none other than, Pak Nala explains, *pol* for *jempol* (thumb), *wit* for *awit* (because of), *tik* for *nggitik* (to attack), hence "thumbs up for daring to attack" (p. 177).

It would seem that by 'education', the editor means some kind of comprehension and shrewdness of human affairs rather than homespun philosophy, and such is passed on to us via an unassuming person like Pak Nala. However, should the reader look for issues on (Indonesian) education,

the kiosk has a lot to offer. Pak Nala is concerned about the huge teaching load of university lecturers so that this actually impedes the educational process. His comment about the Indonesians' fetish for certification below is not dated.

Pity those who hold diplomas in high esteem as if they were their life and death. Pity more the authorities who, likewise, hold the same view! Worse still, pity those diploma holders! They think that they are perfectly capable of everything so that they do not need to learn anything more, believing that they have sufficient knowledge for life! This is just Pak Nala's opinion. Because he himself had no diploma, he was thus eligible to only teach at a non-subsidised primary school. (p. 75).

Like all owners of corner-of-the-street stalls, Pak Nala is aware of the need of the customers. Thus, available in his *Warung Pojok*, in more than one entry at that, are subjects people never seem to get enough of – the polygamy controversy (pp. 8, 15), emancipation (pp. 63, 64, 66), Hydrogen Bomb (pp. 113, 114, 115), abstinence during Lent (pp. 163, 165, 166), politics (pp. 177, 178, 179), language (pp. 180, 182, 184), and many others.

All this is done very cleverly, with sharpness often disguises itself as humour, sometimes as jolt. For example, Pak Nala became infuriated by a Surabaya publication that claimed that the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola, was a lying, slick fraud. When Pak Nala referred to the editor as "*Si Kacung Surabaya*" [Flunky from Surabaya], he was warning the publisher to be more erudite and sensible in the future (p. 69).

The book's rather boring subheads are in fact signposts to the thrills in store. They include *Warung Pojok 1952*, *Warung Pojok 1953*, *Warung Pojok 1954*, *Warung Pojok 1955*, *Campur Bawur [Miscellanies] 1956*. But, regrettably, nowhere in the book is there a reference to this annual categorization and its significance except that the years indicate the date of publication of the articles in *Praba*.

The reader would have been better assisted had the columns been presented in accordance to the eight themes pointed earlier by the editor, i.e. social issues, politics, culture, education, religious issues, gender equity and international relations. In addition, more footnotes would have been helpful in the absence of the otherwise effective introduction to each thematic classification.

Some inconsistency is also evident in the italicization of the non-Indonesian words, some of which are left untranslated. But these are minor flaws. They are only a cause for concern because today's readers may not be familiar with the cultural, historical or political contexts alluded to by Pak Nala.

In the end, if local wisdom is to be appreciated, *Pendidikan ala Warung Pojok* is a good start. Hopefully, there are more to come to help cultivate Indonesian philosophical minds.