

## Values of Struggle in The Novel Bunga Di Hari Lalu by Galih Pranata

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### Abstract

This study examines the values of struggle in Galih Pranata's novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu* through a sociological approach to literature. The novel not only presents the love story of Soediro and Prillie, but also portrays the social realities experienced by indigenous people in the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century. Soediro is depicted as an intellectual who struggles through education, literacy, and social awareness. The findings show values of resistance to discrimination, perseverance, nationalism, education as a means of struggle, and morality. These values remain relevant beyond the colonial context and may inspire the present generation in facing social and educational challenges. *Bunga di Hari Lalu* therefore functions not only as a literary work, but also as a historical reflection and a source of inspiration for intellectual struggle.

### Keywords

values of struggle; education; literary sociology; literacy; *Bunga di Hari Lalu*

### Article History

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
25 September 2025	10 February 2026	17 February 2026	30 April 2026

### How to Cite

Utami, N. A. (2026). Values of struggle in the novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu* by Galih Pranata. *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal*, 10(1), 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.30872/yupa.v10i1.5705>

## Introduction

Literature is an artistic work that uses language to express human thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Salwa et al., 2025). Beyond functioning as entertainment, literary works also carry educational, moral, reflective, and struggle-related values that can broaden readers' horizons and support character formation in learning contexts (Saryono, 2019; Agustina et al., 2025; Iskandar, 2022; Rhohana et al., 2020). Through literature, readers are invited to understand various personal and social issues. In the context of history education, literature is not merely an imaginative text, but also a social and historical representation that records the dynamics of an era, including the values of struggle that develop within society.

Novels, as a form of fictional literature, have a distinctive capacity to depict the realities of life comprehensively (Marlina et al., 2020). Through characters, plot, setting, and conflict, novels portray human life in ways that are closely related to social, cultural, and historical conditions. They are therefore not only imaginative works, but also media for conveying moral values and social reflection. One historically oriented novel that is rich in values of struggle is *Bunga di Hari Lalu* by Galih Pranata (2024). Set in the twentieth century, the novel tells the story of Soediro, an indigenous teacher in the colonial period who functions not only as an educator in the classroom, but also as an intellectual who seeks to raise public awareness through reading and writing. The character of Soediro shows that education and literacy play an important role in the nation's struggle and that resistance to colonialism may also be carried out through intellectual effort.

*Bunga di Hari Lalu* is important to study because the values of struggle it depicts remain relevant to contemporary society. The development of information technology has expanded access to literacy, making the values embodied in Soediro an important source of inspiration for understanding literacy as a means of strengthening intellectual capacity. This relevance is also closely connected to current discussions of historical literacy in history education, which emphasize critical reading, interpretation, and meaningful engagement with the past in classroom learning (Rahman et al., 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2022; Armiyati & Purwanta, 2024). Accordingly, an analysis of the values of struggle in this novel is expected to deepen understanding of the role of literature in building collective awareness and highlighting literacy as a form of intellectual struggle.

This study seeks to answer the question of how the values of struggle are represented in Galih Pranata's novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*. The novel presents Soediro as a figure who struggles through education and literacy. His role as a teacher and writer shows that struggle is not carried out solely through weapons, but also through ideas, writing, and efforts to raise public awareness. For that reason, the novel is not only a literary work, but also a reflection of the spirit of nationalism that is relevant for understanding the role of literacy and education as instruments of national struggle.

Based on this background, the study focuses on identifying and analyzing the values of struggle in Galih Pranata's novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu* through a sociological approach to literature. This approach is appropriate because literary works are closely related to the social realities that underlie them, whether in the form of ideas, messages, or representations of collective experience. Through a literary-sociological analysis, this study is expected to reveal the values of struggle in the novel in a comprehensive manner.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the sociology of literature. This approach was selected because literary works are understood not only as autonomous imaginative texts, but also as reflections of social reality and collective experience (Damono, 2002). Through the sociology of literature, a literary work is viewed as closely connected to the author, the reader, and the society that shapes it. This approach is therefore relevant for examining the values of struggle in Galih Pranata's novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, because the analysis does not stop at intrinsic elements alone, but also explores ideas and representations of struggle related to social and historical conditions. In this way, the novel can be understood not merely as a work of imagination, but also as a cultural document rich in messages about struggle and education.

The object of this study is the novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, particularly the character of Soediro as an indigenous teacher in the colonial period. This character was chosen as the focus of the study because he represents intellectual resistance to colonialism through education and literacy. The novel contains events, social interactions, and ideas that are closely related to the value of struggle, both in the form of criticism of colonial oppression and in the promotion of education as a means of awakening awareness.

The sources of data in this study consist not only of the novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, but also of supporting literature relevant to the topic. In addition, data were obtained through interviews with readers from different backgrounds, including university and high school students. These interviews were intended to capture perceptions, reflections, and the contemporary relevance of the values of struggle contained in the novel. Thus, the study focuses not only on the text itself, but also on readers' interpretations of its content.

Data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method, which involved interpreting the collected material to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the values of struggle in the novel. The stages of analysis included identifying relevant passages, classifying them into categories of struggle values, interpreting them through a sociological-literary perspective, and drawing conclusions that emphasize the role of literacy and education as instruments of national struggle. This analysis was conducted in depth so that the values of struggle in the novel could be understood not only as narrative themes, but also as representations of intellectual struggle relevant to contemporary history education.

To maintain data validity, this study applies source triangulation. Validity was established by comparing the results of the textual analysis of the novel with supporting literature that discusses themes of struggle, colonialism, education, and literacy. Through this triangulation, the findings are expected to be not merely subjective, but also academically accountable. The use of multiple sources also enriches interpretation, enabling this study to contribute more broadly both to historically oriented literary studies and to the perspective of history education.

## Results and Discussion

### Overview of the Novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*

Galih Pranata's *Bunga di Hari Lalu* is a historical romance novel set in the twentieth century during the Dutch East Indies period. Although romance is a major element of the plot, the novel centers on Soediro Dihadja, known as Diro, a young educator who dreams of

becoming a teacher like earlier educational reformers such as Willem Iskander and Satie Nasution, figures whom time has largely forgotten. Diro also has a deep interest in writing, similar to Satie. One of the works mentioned in this context is *Si-Boeloes-Boeloes*, *Si-Roemboek-Roemboek*, *Sada boekoe basaon*, a collection of poems published in Batavia in 1873 and regarded as marking the beginning of Mandailing literary writing. This background encourages Soediro to write actively, and one of the print media outlets he uses as a vehicle for his struggle is *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*.

*De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* was a widely circulated newspaper that regularly published Dutch-language articles in Klaten and the surrounding Vorstenlanden area. Through *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, readers are invited to observe several phenomena recorded in history. One of them is the real news of theft cases that occurred in Klaten and attracted considerable attention at the time. Soediro is portrayed as seeing another side of these thefts, namely that such crimes emerged from the poverty experienced by the indigenous people. This perspective helped elevate his reputation and led to his involvement as a contributor to *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*. In addition, educational issues also became an important concern for Diro, ranging from educational reform to criticism of teachers who were unable to express their ideas through writing.

Soediro understood that his efforts to stimulate intellectual life through writing were also inspired by Willem Iskander's initiative to establish a special school for training indigenous teachers in Tanobato, known as *Kweekschool Tanobato*. In developing its curriculum, Willem Iskander, also known as Satie, was regarded by the Dutch East Indies education administration as a model figure (Pranata et al., 2023). Several important innovations in the *Kweekschool Tanobato* curriculum included, first, the view that education was not merely a transfer of knowledge but that schools were centers of civilization; second, the encouragement for teachers not only to consume ready-made teaching materials but also to write their own and preserve their ideas; and third, the use of simple language in learning alongside the study of foreign languages for national advancement (Pranata, 2021). The relevance of these ideas motivated Diro to actualize his own struggle as a teacher, including his commitment to continue writing in order to preserve his thoughts.

The practical expression of this struggle begins at a school equivalent to a present-day elementary school, namely the *Schakelschool*, also known as the *Ongko Loro* school, in Klaten. An education observer and historian, Jeffry Dwi Kurniawan, wrote a brief review of the novel on his Substack page, *History as Art* (Kurniawan, 2024). He notes that the novel focuses on narrating social phenomena in the Vorstenlanden region, much like its predecessors Umar Kayam's *Sang Priyayi* and Marco Kartodikromo's *Student Hidjo*. In his view, the presence of *Bunga di Hari Lalu* enriches the literary heritage of the region. Seen through Jeffry Dwi Kurniawan's perspective, the novel becomes part of "history as art," combining the appeal of historical knowledge with a romantic narrative that is attractive to many young readers.

Galih Pranata's novel also records World War I and the spread of the Spanish flu in the Dutch East Indies, presenting the chaos and losses caused by those events. In addition, the malaria outbreak that once struck Magelang forms an inseparable part of Soediro's deepest loss, namely the death of his beloved mother. The novel further presents several reports and remedies from the newspaper *Pemberita* concerning herbal medicine, or *djamoe malaria*, said to help

people infected in the Cirebon area. Pranata's careful research and investigation of factual data from colonial sources are reflected throughout *Bunga di Hari Lalu*.

One of the most compelling aspects of the novel is the romantic story that unfolds when Soediro meets a mixed-race woman named Prilie Chrisnade von Deleph. As in many literary works, Galih Pranata employs an elegant narrative style that allows readers to appreciate Soediro's admiration for Prilie, who later becomes his lover. Yet the novel offers more than romance alone. It presents love as inseparable from pain and suffering. Racial discrimination remains a central issue in colonial social life, and indigenous people are portrayed as an inferior race who are considered unworthy of relationships with Dutch women and their descendants.

Soediro's love story is marked by suffering. Again and again, he experiences emotional hardship, a situation that may also resonate with the lives of young people today. Even so, *Bunga di Hari Lalu* offers more than a youthful romance; it also conveys the meaning of struggle embedded within that story. Writing becomes the medium through which Soediro expresses his anxieties and life's hardships. He learns to make peace with suffering and to rise in the face of every storm that confronts him. In the end, his romantic journey leads him to Rohanna, the woman who from the beginning encouraged and appreciated his determination to keep writing in the mass media.

*Bunga di Hari Lalu* also combines moral and religious values. The presence of Soediro's uncle, Nur Cholies, a cleric in the Klaten area, adds an important spiritual dimension to the narrative. The socio-religious views reflected in the stories of Soediro and his uncle lead readers to explore piety as a source of strength when facing obstacles and trials. Sincerity is highlighted as an essential value. In addition, the appearance of Prilie's aunt, Emily Janszoon, presents an image of religious tolerance intertwined with the romantic plot. The nobility of Nur Cholies' love encourages Emily and Prilie to reconsider their views on racial discrimination and religious sentiment. Through these elements, the novel further enriches its portrayal of the values of struggle.

#### Values of Struggle in the Novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu*

At first glance, Galih Pranata's *Bunga di Hari Lalu* appears to be a love story between Soediro and Prillie. Behind that storyline, however, the novel carries a strong historical dimension set in the Dutch East Indies in the twentieth century. The lives of indigenous people, who faced numerous limitations, especially in education, reflect the reality of colonial society at the time. Through the character of Soediro, the author presents a form of struggle expressed not through weapons, but through education, storytelling, and perseverance in everyday life. In this way, the values of struggle are conveyed subtly yet deeply, making the novel not merely a personal story, but also a social and cultural portrait of a nation seeking its identity under colonialism.

The novel presents a number of values of struggle, including resistance to discrimination, perseverance, nationalism, education as a means of struggle, and moral values. These are not offered as abstract concepts alone, but are vividly embodied through events in the story, especially through education, writing in the mass media, and social life.

#### Through Education

Bunga di Hari Lalu presents the figure of a prospective teacher as an important representation of the role of indigenous intellectuals in the colonial period. Education here is not merely an activity of teaching, but a form of struggle that opens opportunities for indigenous people living under severe limitations, especially those who remain illiterate. This can be seen in the following quotation:

“Keberuntungan juga dimiliki kami, para calon guru di HKS. Menjadi orang-orang yang punya asa untuk bisa memberikan kesempatan bagi kebanyakan pribumi yang masih buta huruf. Awal abad ke-20, masih sulit menemukan kaum bumiputra yang mahir membaca, berhitung, apalagi mencipta tulisan. Hanya sinyo-sinyo dengan jas khas Eropanya yang punya kepandaian dan keberuntungan itu” (Pranata, 2024, p. 8).

This quotation shows that access to education during the colonial period was highly limited, with only a small number of indigenous people having the opportunity to study. Europeans, meanwhile, more easily mastered reading, writing, and arithmetic, which strengthened their social position. Another character, Rohanna, is portrayed as opening a school in the interior to teach children to read and count. This confirms that, although simple and limited, education could become a path of liberation from ignorance. Teachers and educational ideals are thus placed as great hopes for helping the nation emerge from colonial suffering. In this context, struggle is no longer understood solely as physical resistance, but also as the effort to educate others. Providing knowledge to fellow indigenous people so that they become aware of their rights is a form of intellectual struggle with great power.

A nation ultimately determines its future through education. Education is an instrument capable of turning a dark history into a brighter future (Samho & Yasunari, 2010; Samho, 2013). Triwiyanto (2019) also explains that education is the key to laying the foundation for positive change. Education functions not only as a transfer of knowledge, but also as an instrument of social transformation that frees society from ignorance and oppression. This view is reinforced by interviews with several readers, one of whom is Naila Hanun, an architecture student at UNS. She argues that Soediro was not a frontline fighter, but a figure who struggled behind the scenes. As a teacher, he sought to instill values of struggle in his students through meaningful stories (interview on September 4, 2025). This is reflected in the following quotation:

“Satir tentang hari-hari di mana bangsa kita, kaum bumiputra masih berjuang untuk makan, padahal di antara bangsa Eropa kebanyakan sudah bergelimang kekayaan. Dedongengan yang menyadarkan anak-anak ini untuk bisa hidup lebih hebat dari sekadar menjadi pesuruh bangsa asing, menjadi baboe, hingga gundik. Pendidikanlah yang akan menyelamatkan mereka” (Pranata, 2024, pp. 82–83).

This quotation describes the moment when Soediro begins his first day as a teacher. In that meeting, he not only introduces himself, but also tells a story intended to awaken his students' awareness. He emphasizes that education is not limited to reading and writing skills, but is also a path out of oppression. In a simple yet meaningful way, he shows that education can save the younger generation from becoming servants of foreign powers and lead them toward a more dignified life.

A similar view was expressed by Devan Chandra Winata, a twelfth-grade student at Al Islam 1 Senior High School in Surakarta who also read the novel. He emphasizes that Soediro's

struggle through literacy is a reminder to the present generation, which often neglects intellectual needs even though access to learning is now much easier. According to him, Soediro was able to transform knowledge into something accessible and meaningful, for example through the use of wayang in teaching. This view underlines that teachers do not merely teach, but also inspire students to keep learning (interview on September 2, 2025). What Soediro did was in fact inspired by the struggle of his role model, Willem Iskander. One of Iskander's educational ideas as a teacher of indigenous teacher candidates at Kweekschool Tanobato was to simplify scientific language by using the mother tongue, Mandailing. For example, when teaching physics, complex concepts were explained in Mandailing to make them easier to understand (Pranata et al., 2023).

The value of education is also reinforced through stories told by Soediro using wayang puppets. He recounts the suffering of coffee farmers who work hard from planting to harvest yet do not receive an adequate return. This is shown in the following quotation:

“Aku memeragakan tentang kisah seorang petani yang dengan susah payahnya menanam hingga memanen kopi di ladang. Kemudian, berselang panen, uang yang diterima mereka tak cukup untuk mencukupi kebutuhan mereka. Kelaparan menjadi-jadi dan tak sedikit yang diterjang wabah penyakit. Orang-orang Belanda mendapat bagian dari penjualan komoditas mereka. Uang mereka menjadi bertumpuk dan membangun kehidupan yang mewah-mewah” (Pranata, 2024, pp. 85–86).

This story reveals the harsh reality of indigenous farmers' lives during the colonial period. Through a wayang performance, Soediro shows how the farmers' hard work was not matched by the results they received. The profits from coffee flowed to the Dutch, while indigenous farmers were trapped in poverty, hunger, and disease. The story therefore functions as a sharp critique of the exploitative colonial economic system and underscores the role of education as a medium for raising social awareness.

The following quotation is also important: “Guru dan cita-cita pendidikan menjadi harapan besar agar bangsa ini bisa keluar dari penderitaan” (Pranata, 2024, p. 86). This statement shows that education is viewed as a path toward liberation from the suffering caused by colonialism. Teachers are positioned not only as educators, but also as agents who awaken students' critical awareness of social injustice. Through education, the younger generation is expected to improve the nation's condition, escape poverty and oppression, and build a more dignified life. In the novel, education is therefore positioned as a pillar of struggle, a means of nurturing national consciousness, and a foundation for change toward a more just and independent life.

#### Through Writing in the Mass Media

The main character, Diro or Soediro, is portrayed as a teacher who does not discriminate among students on the basis of social or cultural background. His role extends beyond the classroom, suggesting that a teacher's responsibility is not limited to formal teaching. In Soediro's view, teachers are not only educators but also intellectual fighters who write actively, voice public concerns, and struggle for social justice. His writings often focus on two main issues: the oppression of indigenous people and the urgency of education as a means of liberation. Through those writings, Soediro not only shares knowledge, but also builds collective awareness amid the limitations imposed on his people. From a sociological

perspective, he can be understood as a representation of indigenous intellectuals who used literacy as a tool of resistance to colonial hegemony. In this way, the novel emphasizes that education and literacy are strategic instruments in the nation's struggle for independence.

This struggle through writing becomes visible when Soediro has the opportunity to become a freelance writer for *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*. From the outset, he is determined to use the mass media to report, inform, and raise the awareness of his people. In a discussion with Atjien, Tedja, and Darma, Atjien encourages him in writing his first piece: “Aku lebih yakin kau akan bisa menulis tentang nasib pendidikan bumiputra, Ro” (Pranata, 2024, p. 27). In addition, Soediro also writes about social divisions and the need for national unity. His nationalism is strong, and the mass media becomes one of his chosen tools because, at the time, it was an important means of disseminating information to a wide network of readers.

Jeffry Dwi Kurniawan, a reader who is also a history teacher at SMAK 3 Penabur Jakarta, points out that romance and nationalism in *Bunga di Hari Lalu* are closely intertwined. Soediro's feelings for Prilie and Rohanna's sympathy for him generate new thoughts and renewed enthusiasm for nationalism. According to Jeffry, the clearest evidence of the growth of Soediro's nationalist consciousness is his decision to write in *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* as a concrete expression of his emotional and intellectual turmoil, including his desire to defend his own people through writing. In Jeffry's view, emotional uncertainty, inner conflict, and the turbulence of love can shape a person's thoughts and lead to a deeper commitment to defending a nation that experiences injustice and oppression (interview on September 13, 2025).

Soediro can be read as the voice of youthful resistance, shaped by experience into the figure he hopes to become. When he becomes a journalist and experiences heartbreak, he faces considerable pressure. This emotional turmoil becomes an outlet that drives him to denounce injustice and advocate resistance in every article he writes. The trials he experiences can be understood as part of a process through which a young person forms ideas and discovers identity. This is comparable to Permata Sari Angie's (2017) discussion of how Pramoedya Ananta Toer's inner turmoil helped him express his ideas in the monumental *Buru Tetralogy*—*Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, *Jejak Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca* (Toer, 2007). That historical novel cycle tells the story of Minke, adapted from Tirto Adhi Soerjo, as a young man with brilliant ideas who initiated *Medan Prijaji* as a vehicle of resistance to colonial policy and boycott propaganda, thereby contributing to the growth of unity and nationalism.

Mass media, or the press, plays an important role as a space in which citizens can express thoughts and opinions. According to Agung Suharyanto (2016), the press has four functions: information, entertainment, education, and social control. In *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, these four functions are embodied in the character of Soediro, who actively writes in the mass media. His writings are not merely expressions of intellectual activity, but also a means of voicing the injustices experienced by indigenous people. He uses the press as a medium of information to expose discriminatory practices and as a medium of education to cultivate awareness of the importance of knowledge. With a simple and accessible style, he also provides enlightening entertainment without losing his critical stance. Moreover, through sharp social criticism, Soediro enacts the function of the press as social control by scrutinizing oppressive colonial policies.

### Through Life Experiences

In Galih Pranata's *Bunga di Hari Lalu*, Soediro's struggle is not portrayed through grand heroism usually associated with war or physical sacrifice, but through simple yet meaningful experiences in everyday life. Soediro, an indigenous youth from Magelang, lives in a period when the Dutch East Indies is marked by sharp social inequality between colonizers and indigenous people. These conditions shape his awareness of struggle. He witnesses how ordinary people live in poverty while colonial power continues to widen the gap. This social reality not only arouses dissatisfaction, but also convinces him that struggle does not have to be carried out with weapons; it can also be realized through education, awareness, and the courage to confront injustice.

An important turning point in Soediro's life occurs when he meets a journalist from *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*. This encounter opens a new horizon for him, because it introduces him to the world of writing, which later becomes part of his life's struggle. The opportunity to become a freelance writer for the newspaper gives him a space to channel his ideas and voice his concern about the people's condition. For Soediro, the mass media is a valuable platform for criticizing the colonial system and raising public awareness. Through writing, he not only records experience, but also builds discourse that encourages indigenous people not to surrender to oppression. Pen and paper thus become weapons of struggle. Yet this path is never easy. Soediro also faces discrimination that wounds his dignity as an indigenous person. One event illustrating this occurs when he meets Prillie's father, the father of the woman he loves. What should have been a joyful meeting turns bitter because Prillie's father belittles Soediro simply because of his status as an indigenous man. This experience shows that colonial discrimination penetrated even personal life, including matters of love. It makes clear that Soediro's struggle is not only for himself, but also for the dignity of a people who are constantly demeaned. He learns that enduring humiliation is part of a long struggle to raise the status of indigenous people.

Soediro's struggle is also tested when the Dutch East Indies is struck by an epidemic (*Yersinia pestis*). This outbreak not only causes widespread suffering, but also reveals the weakness of colonial protection for ordinary people. The population is left to face the disaster without adequate support, while those in power continue to live comfortably. This situation opens Soediro's eyes to the fact that struggle is not only about social discrimination or access to education, but also about caring for the suffering of others. From this experience, he becomes increasingly aware that defending his people also means fighting for their basic right to a decent and protected life. This deepens the social value of his struggle and strengthens his character in the face of painful reality.

From these experiences, it becomes clear that Soediro's values develop in tandem with the struggles he encounters in life. He does not fight with weapons or on the battlefield, but chooses his own path through education, literacy, and social awareness. *Bunga di Hari Lalu* shows that the struggle of an indigenous person in the colonial era can emerge through resistance to discrimination, the courage to write in order to raise awareness, and concern for people's suffering. These values remain relevant today, because they teach that injustice can be resisted in many ways, including through simple but consistent actions. Soediro exemplifies how a teacher, a writer, and a child of the nation can embody a quiet yet meaningful struggle for collective awakening.

In the context of struggle, subtle strategies through education and literacy are often portrayed as more effective than armed resistance, which brings destruction and loss of life. This is illustrated by Soediro, who chooses to become a teacher and to teach students to read, count, and write. Such a struggle is presented as an appropriate way to raise public awareness. In addition to its educational perspective, the novel also portrays colonial social realities, such as when Soediro is treated badly by Prillie's father. This incident reflects how indigenous people occupied an unequal position within the colonial order. Soediro's intellectual struggle can therefore be understood not only as an effort to educate his students, but also as a form of resistance to deeply rooted social discrimination.

Another important story of struggle in the novel concerns the looting that occurred in Klaten. Bunga di Hari Lalu recounts acts of looting in the compound of a plantation official, Meneer Hangroud. The poverty and hardship experienced by the people at that time drove some of them toward crime. This reflects how poverty was produced by long-standing colonial oppression. When indigenous people who worked the land had to surrender their harvests to the sugar factory and received wages that were not commensurate with their labor, disappointment grew and criminal action appeared as one possible outlet. As a writer for *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, Soediro begins to voice the suffering experienced by indigenous people in order to seek justice.

According to Naila Hanun, the values of struggle reflected in the novel remain relevant today, when oppression comes not only from foreign powers in the past, but also from inequalities within one's own society. She points, for example, to economic injustice and the low appreciation given to the teaching profession. Naila adds that the novel's depiction of the exploitation of indigenous people can still be connected to current realities, such as the low wages of honorary teachers, which are often not proportional to the work they do in educating the nation's future generations. As she states, "Mengenai upah yang rendah, saya kira relate dan masih banyak ditemui di lapangan. Tidak jauh jauh yang sedang marak belakangan ini, tentang profesi guru yang mendapatkan upah tak seberapa, bahkan jika itu guru honorer, gaji mereka tidak sampai menyentuh angka UMR" (interview on September 6, 2025). For this reason, Soediro's struggle can be understood as an encouragement to articulate aspirations through writing and to demand justice for ongoing inequality.

Althafunnisa Emiliana Putri, another reader and a tenth-grade student at Klaten 1 Senior High School, also highlights the personal dimension of Soediro's struggle, namely his persistence in rising again despite repeated illness. For her, struggle is directed not only against colonial power, but also against oneself so as not to be defeated by one's own limitations (interview on August 31, 2025). The determination to continue fighting despite physical weakness reflects a spirit of perseverance. This suggests that intellectual struggle requires consistency, patience, and strong conviction. In general, the value of struggle becomes visible when a person faces problems or trials in life. Under difficult circumstances, struggle is manifested as the effort to overcome hardship and strive for a better life. The willingness to rise from adversity turns suffering from a reason to surrender into a starting point for building new strength. From this perspective, the struggle to recover from adversity teaches the importance of endurance and hope, because no matter what obstacles arise, there is always an opportunity to improve one's condition through determination, hard work, and a positive outlook.

Ghina Risandi Medina, a twelfth-grade student at Klaten 1 Senior High School, sees Soediro as a figure comparable to Minke in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Bumi Manusia*. Ghina believes that Soediro's enthusiasm for writing inspires her to become more critical of the social issues encountered in everyday life. In addition, Soediro's experiences—such as being robbed, losing his mother, and being separated from loved ones—suggest that every hardship contains a lesson. This perspective enriches the understanding that intellectual struggle is not only about resistance to colonialism, but also about the ability to make peace with life and learn from every event (interview on September 7, 2025). As Alexander Graham Bell once said, “jika satu pintu tertutup, maka pintu lainnya akan terbuka,” meaning that when one door closes, another opens.

This view is in line with Nur Cholies's advice to Soediro: “Apa pun yang akan terjadi hari ini, hari depan, masa mendatang dan sampai kau senja nanti, semuanya pasti berlalu” (Pranata, 2024, pp. 190–191). This quotation suggests that joy and sorrow are only phases that come and go. A person should therefore not remain trapped in despair, but should instead learn to find renewed strength.

Ultimately, the values of struggle in Galih Pranata's *Bunga di Hari Lalu* can be understood not only as a historical record of the colonial era, but also as a mirror of life that remains relevant across time. Through the character of Soediro, readers are invited to see that struggle does not always have to take the form of war or physical sacrifice, but can also appear in the consistency of educating others, the courage to write, and steadfastness in facing life's difficulties. Resistance to discrimination, the spirit of nationalism, and perseverance in everyday life show that intellectual and moral struggle can exert a major influence on the collective consciousness of a nation. The novel therefore presents not only the personal story of a teacher, but also a universal message that education, literacy, and patience in the face of trial are powerful means of resisting injustice.

## Conclusion

Galih Pranata's novel *Bunga di Hari Lalu* is not merely an entertaining literary work, but also offers a profound reflection on the values of struggle that grew within the realities of colonialism. The character of Soediro is portrayed as a representation of indigenous intellectuals who struggle through education, literacy, and social awareness, and each of his life experiences illustrates the heavy burdens borne by indigenous people. Limited access to education, economic injustice, and social discrimination all show how the struggles of everyday life can hold great significance for a nation. Through this narrative, readers are invited to understand that struggle does not always take the form of armed resistance, but may also consist of small yet consistent efforts that foster awareness, sustain hope, and cultivate courage in the face of oppression. Ultimately, the novel affirms that education and literacy are intellectual weapons capable of confronting colonial power and nurturing national consciousness.

*Bunga di Hari Lalu* also conveys that Soediro's struggle remains relevant today. His perseverance, love of knowledge, and courage to speak the truth are qualities that deserve to be emulated by the younger generation amid the increasingly complex challenges of globalization. In the educational context, the novel offers a portrait of how a teacher can play a strategic role not only as an instructor, but also as an agent of social change who cultivates critical awareness in society. This relevance becomes even stronger when placed alongside discussions of value-

based history learning, historical literacy, and literacy-strengthening strategies in history classrooms (Rohana et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2022; Armiyati & Purwanta, 2024). For that reason, this work is important not only for literary studies, but also as material for reflection in the field of education, especially in reaffirming the role of literacy and historical awareness as foundations of the nation's struggle. The values of struggle embodied in Soediro's life should therefore be understood not merely as part of the past, but also as a living inspiration for building a just, independent, and dignified nation.

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