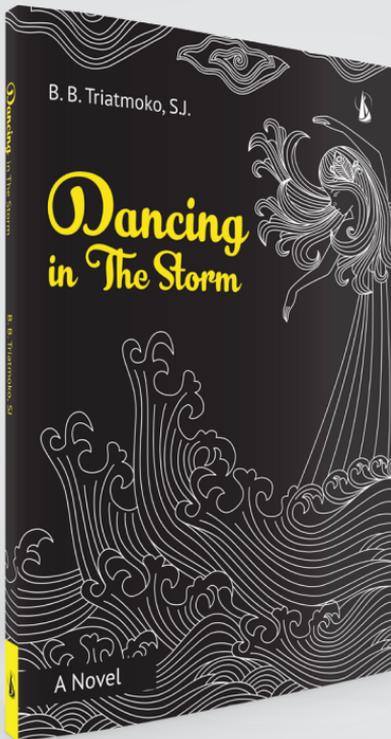




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B. B. Triatmoko, SJ
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REAL EVENT

20 years ago

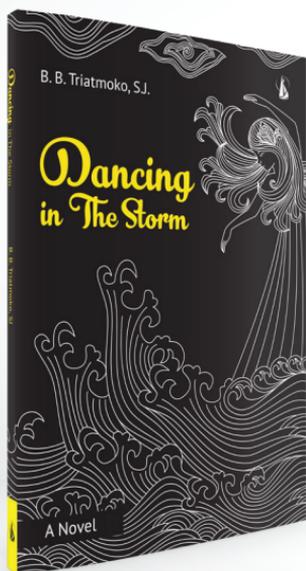
D*ance in the Storm* is a book which consists of various “mixture” that makes it have meaning, selling power, and competitiveness. This includes the author of *Dance in the Storm*, Bambang Triatmoko, who is also the author of the novel *Bisma Dewabrata*. As a pastor working in the field of education and industry, Bambang Triatmoko still maintains - even improves- his writing habits. His writings reflect the depth of general science, as well as special science. This is evident in the excerpt of his latest novel:

Dancing is the way the universe expresses itself when words are limiting. So, dance is the expression of the soul of the universe. Dance is the expression of the human soul. ... Dance is a human effort to perfect the taste so that it can bring to the depths of the heart, not only for the dancers, but also for the people around them.

Dance in the Storm was born after a real event that took place 20 years ago- precisely in 1998- this year was celebrated as the initial milestone of reformation and democracy in Indonesia. The impression of a novel that is heavy and political does not appear in this novel. The storyline that has been arranged and controlled neatly has made this novel as a novel that deserves to be categorized as a novel that is ready for broadcasting. Of course

with a variety of adjustments, this novel can be transferred to digital or film works. Novel of Tarian Dewi Cinta can be classified into three main dimensions, namely, culture, science and technology, and social-economics-politics.

The cultural dimension is described in an extraordinary manner by Triatmoko. His admiration for the Javanese-Solo culture, especially



in the figure of a princess from the Solo Kasunanan Palace, who dared to violate the customs at the time, was successfully combined beautifully. It is not the side of rebellion that is highlighted, but more on the independence of the thinking patterns of the people at that time, especially the women of the nobility who were seen as “different” than women in general. Triatmoko’s knowledge of the complications of characters and dances from Solo Palace makes this novel truly a mixture that inspires and educates readers.

The dance told in this novel is indeed one type of dance that becomes a sacred dance in Kasunanan Solo. So, some parts of this novel discuss Mangkunegaran traditional dance in a more detailed way. It is also accompanied by a brief explanation about the history and the heritage of Mangkunagara VII.

Shifting to the scientific dimension, it seems that the author's expertise in formulation words and information about science need not to be doubted. Triatmoko successfully marries science and literature - more specifically about culture - in a unique frame. Its uniqueness will become clearer as the readers begin to realize the key role of each created character. Astrology that is rarely "touched" by people becomes very alive when they meet culture. The economic management is also a crucial way to connect and liven up the story from the beginning until the last chapter.

The last dimension is socio-economic politics. Presumably when it comes to the 1998 tragedy – better known as Mei '98 - people will not forget these three dimensions. Social is clearly the focus, where one of the struggles of people at that time was equitable social justice. Economy, the overly

steep inequality between the rich and the poor, which is also portrayed in this novel in a very subtle but heart-breaking way, became one of the causes of the monetary crisis at that time. In terms of politics, there is no doubt that May '98 became a milestone in the realm of Indonesian politics. The rise of the activists, as well as the enforcers of democracy aspired by the nation's founders, have become the cogs and modifiers of the Indonesian state system.

This novel is very smart and elegant. At the first glance when reading, people will fall for the assumption that this is a romance novel, with an ordinary perspective, love triangle. This is seen in the initial chapters where Glen and Bram met with Ayuning and begin to grow the seeds of love between them. In the next chapter, triangular love feuds are obscured by conflicts that occur and are experienced by

each character. Furthermore, in some parts, it was clearly shown how Glen and Ayuning's relations continued to a quite serious level. However, the readers will gradually be led into the core of the conflict of this novel.

The novel's climax actually appears because the supporting characters become the key to the storyline. It can be said that these characters were created to refine this story. These characters specifically have contributed to their respective roles, which means that the story will not continue if these characters do not exist. This will be a bland and endless story.

Supporting characters, like Pak Dikun who only appeared in some parts representing small and oppressed people, is actually presented to be the door to the big stage. The thing with the figure of Wiji Thukul - an activist whose presence is still unidentified until

now- is also displayed as a door to the big stage. The picture of Glen's character meeting with the figure of Wiji Thukul was recorded to be very lively. In fact, the aroma and atmosphere of the small stage owned by Wiji Thukul can be imagined by readers. Readers who know Wiji, an activist figure, will certainly be able to immediately imagine the atmosphere at that time.

In addition to the presence of the supporting characters, there also appeared parts of special supporting characters. It is called special because the story in the novel actually has flown very well without the presence of this character. The figure of Michele, a teenager who overcame the problem and met Bram, apparently gave a distinctive impression. Recognized by Triatmoko, indeed part of Bram's meeting with Michele was the most uplifting and

impressive. This is evident from the description of the situation and conditions of localization where the main characters and supporting characters meet. The readers will only realize the importance of these supporting characters when they reach the end of Bram's meeting with Michele.

As a pastor, Triatmoko managed to mix the peculiarities and

specificities of each dimension to enter the main stage, the May '98 tragedy. This tragedy has become one of the records in the history of the life of the nation and state. In fact, this tragedy is an important milestone in the survival of the nation and state. The picture of the activists' struggle of the era was clearly expressed. Other supporting characters, Seto and Dian, who fought against the cruelty of the government regime at the time, became one of the symbols of other activist struggles that were not tracked. Even Seto's sacrifice in the plot of the novel is the last key towards the ending of the novel plot. The readers will be amazed and recall the story at the beginning of the chapter when reading the last chapter of this novel. The politeness of the author's concoction has produced 'dishes' that can be enjoyed by readers.



The implicit message can be clearly seen from the story. It is true that this novel is originated from the historical events of the Indonesian people, but it is undeniable that many generations do not know about this historical event. Of course this is a big concern. Therefore, this novel is formulated and presented in order to help answering and bridging this problem. It becomes a 'special menu' for those who do not know the tragedy of Mei '98, and also became a 'special menu' for those who witnessed the history, perpetrators, victims of the Mei '98 tragedy. Hopefully this message will be captured appropriately, echoed melodiously, and become a 'special menu' for the readers.

The last element of this novel that deserves to be discussed is the setting of the tragedy. In spite of the formulation of Mei '98 tragedy, the novel actually consists of various settings. Temporally and spatially, this novel does not take extreme distances. This is temporarily

formed in the eastern and western world, even spatially. However, a very accurate calculation makes it appear as if both of these worlds are temporally and spatially merged.

About the Author

Benedict B. Triatmoko, SJ was born in Tanjung Balai Karimun in 1965. He entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1984 and was ordained priest in 1994. From 2000 to 2009 he was the director of the Academy of Machinery Industry in Surakarta. In 2009 he was named the head of the Academy of Machinery Industry Foundation. He was trained in Philosophy, Theology in Jakarta and Manila. He took special studies in Manufacturing Technic, Computer Science, and Business Management in Boston, USA.



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