

Revisiting Turkmen and Javanese Folktales: Exploring Educational and Character-Building Values

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ABSTRACT

Folktales are a medium rich in educational values and play a vital role in character formation and cultural preservation. This study examines the educational and cultural values found in selected folktales from Turkmenistan and Java, highlighting stories such as *Yartykulak*, *Gorogly*, *Dede Korkut*, *Gul-Bilbil*, *Gul-Senuber* from Turkmenistan and their parallels in Javanese folktales such as *Kancil*, *Rara Jonggrang*, *Ande-Ande Lumut*, *Panji Asmarabangun*, and *Buto Ijo*. The literature and textual analysis show that folktales are not merely a form of entertainment, but also a repository of moral wisdom, conveying values such as bravery, cleverness, loyalty, justice, perseverance, and respect. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study identifies shared and distinct values reflected in the characters, conflicts, and resolutions within each story. The findings indicate that both Turkmen and Javanese folktales carry important lessons on social responsibility, heroism, cultural identity, and ethical behavior. These stories are thus valuable tools for character education, particularly in multicultural and cross-cultural learning settings. Moreover, the study recommends the integration of folktales into character education curricula and the use of digital storytelling platforms to engage younger generations. Preserving and promoting folktales in both traditional and digital formats is crucial to ensuring the transmission of moral and cultural values, fostering an ethical, empathetic, and culturally rooted generation in an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: Folktales, Character Education, Cultural Values, Cross-Cultural Comparison

INTRODUCTION

Folktales contain important educational values for their readers. Amelia and Purwaningsih (2021) explain that folktales are narratives that carry messages about culture, education, ethics, and more. Furthermore, Mustofa, Ma'ruf, and Markhamah (2024) discuss how folktales encompass community wisdom that can be used as educational material when read. Folktales recount past events that can be learned by people from various backgrounds. Rahmawati, Sutrisna, and Nisya (2023) state that folktales contain local wisdom values that can shape students' character, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. Khasanah, Fathurohman, and Setiawan (2022) emphasize that through the folktale Genuk Kemiri, students can understand the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, and environmental awareness, which are all part of character education. Widayati and Astuti (2019) point out that folktales not only provide entertainment but also contain life messages that



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shape the reader's character, such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation.

The educational values found in folktales are very diverse. Byashimova (2023) stresses that stories serve as invaluable resources for educators in shaping a younger generation committed to national traditions and noble morals. Karabayır (2022) states that Turkmen folktales play a key role in developing children's creativity and character, while teaching values like hard work, solidarity, and justice. Charyeva (2023) portrays Yartygulak as a clever and brave little hero, teaching the importance of courage and ingenuity in facing challenges. An article by DeYoung (2018) discusses how patriotic values such as loyalty, honor, and national pride are taught through Turkmen oral tradition and literature. UNESCO (2015) recognizes Gorogly as part of Turkmenistan's intangible cultural heritage, highlighting values such as courage, honesty, and justice conveyed through this epic story.

Turkmen folktales are worth studying. Annaberdiyev (2021) emphasizes that Turkmen folktales, including legends, play a crucial role in character education and cultural preservation, as they contain moral and ethical values passed down through generations. Shisong, Chunhong, and Guichun (2023) reveal that Turkmen proverbs and sayings reflect the collective wisdom of society, which can be used as teaching material to understand values like hard work, ethics, and social norms. UNICEF Turkmenistan (2023) organized a digital storytelling workshop for media professionals aimed at teaching effective and inspiring storytelling techniques that can be applied in education and social communication in Turkmenistan. UNESCO (2023) highlights that Turkmen intangible culture, including folktales, is an integral part of the world's cultural heritage and reflects universal human values, making it essential to study and preserve. Turkmenistan.gov.tm (2025) reports that Turkmen folktales have been translated into various world languages, allowing their cultural and moral values to be shared with international audiences.

Javanese folktales are truly rich sources of moral and educational lessons that resonate across generations. For example, *Ande-Ande Lumut* is celebrated for teaching values like honesty, hard work, curiosity, independence, friendship, and peace—making it a powerful resource for character education in youth development programs (Pusposari et al., 2022). Likewise, the tale of *Timun Mas* imparts critical moral themes such as responsibility, perseverance, creativity, and faith, offering educators a meaningful way to foster moral formation within the framework of character education (Nanda et al., 2022)

Shorter traditional stories like *Kancil and the Crocodile* also play an important role in character-building. A study found that while the cleverness of Kancil is admired, it also raises questions about honesty—making it a nuanced tool for teaching ethical reasoning and empathy in early childhood (Febrina & Herlinda, 2024). Finally, the narrative of *Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan* offers strong moral insights concerning honesty, responsibility, and compassion, proving to be effective educational material across various school levels (Yuliyanti et al., 2022)

Subhani et al. (2024) explain that educational values contain important messages that can be used as learning resources. Furthermore, Budiono, Soepeno, and Puji (2019) assert that educational

values are diverse and include aspects such as religious values, creativity, and patriotism, which can be studied and serve as guiding principles. Nugraheni, Sulistya, and Prahesti (2022) state that educational values embedded in folktales play an important role in the learning process. Susanto and Sutanto (2021) explain that educational values are closely related to learning resources that can take various forms. Atmaja, Sugiarto, and Nisa (2022) describe educational values as highly needed in the learning process. Therefore, educational values play a strategic role as learning materials that can be found through various media.

Stories are a form of narrative used by humans to organize experience and convey meaning. According to Green et al. (2018), narrative is a cognitive tool that helps individuals understand the world, process complex information, and form personal values and beliefs. Effective stories usually consist of narrative elements such as characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. Herman (2019) states that a good narrative structure plays a crucial role in creating emotional engagement and understanding of the messages conveyed. Storytelling has proven to be effective in enhancing learning outcomes. According to Alismail & McGuire (2015), storytelling encourages students to think critically and creatively, and helps them connect theoretical concepts with real-life experiences. In addition, using stories in inclusive education can also increase participation among students with special needs (Sadik, 2020). In the digital era, stories have transformed through platforms such as video, podcasts, and social media. Digital storytelling enables narratives to be delivered in a more visual and interactive way. Robin (2016) states that digital technology expands access, engagement, and self-expression in the storytelling process. Stories also play a key role in shaping social and cultural identity. Narratives are used as tools to build collective meaning within communities. According to Daiute (2017), stories can strengthen individual identity while creating space for intercultural dialogue. Advances in artificial intelligence have opened up new possibilities in storytelling, allowing machines to create, adapt, and interact with narratives dynamically.

Folktales function as a medium for moral and character education, teaching values such as honesty, hard work, courage, and responsibility (Nurhayati, 2017). Through folktales, children can understand social norms and local cultural values, while also enhancing their literacy and imagination skills (Pratiwi & Wulandari, 2019). The integration of folktales into formal education strengthens national identity and patriotism among students (Sari & Putra, 2020). Folktales foster empathy and critical thinking skills in children, as they learn through the experiences of story characters (Santosa, 2018). In addition to being entertainment, folktales also play a role in preserving culture and transmitting traditional values to future generations (Wijaya, 2021). Folktales have important educational value because they can effectively instil social and moral norms in children through stories that are easy to understand and engaging.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the educational values found in folktales. Data were obtained through a literature review, which includes scientific references, journal articles, and digital sources related to folktales. The researcher selected eight folktales: *Yartykulak*, *Gorogly*, *Dede Korkut*, *Gul-Bilbil*, *Gul-Senuber*, *Kancil*, *Raden Panji*, *Ki Ageng Selo*, *Ande-ande Lumut*, and *Roro Mendut*. The analysis was conducted by identifying key narrative elements such as characters, plot, and conflict, to uncover the moral messages and educational values embedded in the stories. The analysis process involved classifying values such as courage, hard work, honesty, loyalty, and wisdom. These values were then compared across stories from both cultures to observe similarities and differences in their educational contexts. Additionally, the study emphasizes the relevance of these values for character education and their potential application in the digital era. The results of the analysis are presented in narrative form and tables to facilitate understanding and interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Folktales serve not only as entertainment but also carry moral messages and educational values that can shape the character of their readers. Through the characters and events portrayed within them, stories such as *Yartykulak*, *The Birth of Gorogly*, *Dede Korkut*, *Gul-Bilbil*, and *Gul-Senuber* introduce noble values such as courage, loyalty, justice, and perseverance. Each tale reflects local wisdom and cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation, making them a rich resource for moral and social learning.

Table 1. List of Activities

Title of the Story	Educational Values
<i>Yartykulak</i>	The character Yartykulak is courageous in fighting against injustice.
<i>The Birth of Gorogly</i>	The character Gorogly is brave and shows strong determination in facing challenges.
<i>Dede Korkut</i>	The story teaches the importance of courage, perseverance, and sacrifice for the greater good.
<i>Gul - Bilbil</i>	The character teaches values of resilience, patience, and a passionate pursuit of goodness.
<i>Gul - Senuber</i>	The character teaches loyalty, persistence in overcoming obstacles, and the importance of wisdom.

Table 1 above shows the identified educational values demonstrated by characters in the stories of *Yartykulak*, *The Birth of Gorogly*, *Dede Korkut*, *Gul-Bilbil*, and *Gul-Senuber*. Other stories, such as *Malin Kundang*, *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*, and *The Legend of Lake Toba*, also reflect complex educational values about the importance of struggle and the spirit to face challenges. Every good deed brings good in return, and vice versa.

Turkmen Folktales: *Yartkulak*, *Gorogly*, *Dede Korkut*, *Gul-Bilbil*, *Gul-Senuber*

***Yartkulak*: Courage to Fight Injustice**

The character Yartkulak relies on intelligence and strategy to defeat a much stronger enemy. “Yartkulak disguised himself as a beggar and managed to enter the enemy fortress without arousing suspicion. At night, he opened the gates from inside, allowing his troops to invade easily.” (Folklore, 2017). This sentence illustrates the clever war strategy of Yartkulak. He disguised himself as a beggar to sneak into the enemy fortress without raising any suspicion. Because of his disguise, the guards did not consider him a threat. Once inside, he opened the gates at night, giving his troops a chance to enter and launch a surprise attack. This story shows that intelligence and careful planning can be the key to victory in war—not just physical strength.

“Yartkulak disguised himself as a beggar and managed to enter the enemy fortress without arousing suspicion.” (Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016, *Turkmenistan Folktales: Yartkulak*). Disguising as a beggar is a symbol of humility as well as self-sacrifice. In many contexts, being a beggar symbolizes disgrace or powerlessness in society’s eyes. However, Yartkulak willingly lowered himself to fight the enemy from within. This action demonstrates that he dared to oppose injustice not through direct confrontation, but by using a clever and risky strategy. He challenged a strong and suspicious enemy system with an unexpected approach—showing that bravery can manifest in various forms, including the willingness to disguise as someone weak to defeat an oppressive power.

Helping the oppressed teaches the importance of standing up for the truth. In the folktale *Yartkulak*, this value is clearly reflected when Yartkulak does not remain silent in the face of injustice inflicted upon the common people by a cruel ruler. A clear example in the story is when Yartkulak devises a strategy to free people who were unjustly imprisoned by the wicked king. As told in the story: “He was not afraid to challenge the tyrannical king in the name of justice for the common people who had long suffered.” (Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016, *Turkmenistan Folktales: Yartkulak*). This sentence emphasizes that Yartkulak’s bravery was not motivated by personal ambition, but by a sincere spirit of defending the truth. His actions teach that the courage to stand up for the oppressed is a reflection of the pursuit of truth and justice. Anyone, even someone small and seemingly weak, can be a defender of truth if they possess pure intentions and smart strategies.

Despite being small, Yartkulak was unafraid of danger, teaching the importance of courage and perseverance. In the *Yartkulak* story, the main character is described as physically small but with a strong spirit. His small size does not make him hesitate or feel inferior when facing powerful and dangerous enemies. This is illustrated in the quote: “Although his body was small, Yartkulak boldly stepped forward to face the challenge and was not afraid to confront the large, heavily armed fortress guards.” (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016, *Turkmenistan*

Folktales: Yartykulak).

Gorogly is a symbol of bravery and unshakable resolve. Gorogly demonstrates extraordinary courage in the face of formidable enemies, teaching the importance of inner strength and perseverance when confronting challenges. One part of the story describes how Gorogly continues to fight despite being severely wounded: “Though his body was covered in wounds, Gorogly stood firm and charged at the enemy with unwavering spirit.” (UNESCO, 2015). This action reflects not only physical bravery but also the resilience required to uphold truth—even when hope seems lost. According to UNESCO (2015), the *Epic of Gorogly* imparts values such as courage, honesty, justice, and loyalty, making it an intangible cultural heritage that embodies moral steadfastness in times of hardship. Gorogly does not fight merely for victory, but for principles, honor, and love for his people—a message deeply relevant in today’s world.

Fighting injustice Gorogly as a defender of social justice. As a people’s hero, Gorogly wages war against injustice and oppression, underscoring the importance of standing up for social justice. The story begins when Gorogly’s father is unjustly blinded by a ruler, sparking his hatred of tyranny. From that moment, Gorogly vows to oppose all forms of oppression. He leads a group of warriors known as *jigits* (fighters for justice) who target those who exploit the powerless. UNESCO highlights that this epic story conveys essential values such as resistance to tyranny, social justice, and solidarity with the people, establishing Gorogly as a moral symbol of resistance in Turkmen and broader Turkic cultures (UNESCO, 2015). An excerpt from the epic emphasizes this message: “Koroghlu fought for the rights of the people, to avenge the injustices committed by rulers who oppressed the weak.” (Wikipedia, 2025). This quote affirms that Gorogly’s struggle was not born of personal revenge, but from a noble commitment to defend the rights of the people.

Preserving Culture Through Song: *Gorogly* as a Guardian of Heritage

This story also highlights the importance of preserving and honoring ancestral culture and traditions. In the tale, Gorogly is portrayed as a bard—a poet and singer—who plays the *dutar*, a traditional Turkmen musical instrument. Through songs and poetry, he conveys moral messages, the spirit of resistance, and the story of his life. This reflects how past generations used oral storytelling and art as powerful tools for transmitting noble values. UNESCO affirms that the *Epic of Gorogly* is part of the intangible cultural heritage, representing identity, history, and local wisdom. It serves as a vital means of intergenerational education (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, this story is not merely entertainment; it is also a medium for preserving the Turkmen language, music, and rich traditions. As noted, “The *Epic of Gorogly* is a prominent expression of cultural identity and social values, passed down by performers through generations using music and oral poetry.” (UNESCO, 2015).

***Dede Korkut*: Epic Tales of Heroism and Sacrifice**

The characters in these stories are depicted as heroes who bravely defend their nation from

enemies. The *Book of Dede Korkut* is a collection of epic tales from the Oghuz Turks, rich with values of heroism, bravery, and the spirit of national defense. Characters such as Bamsi Beyrek, Deli Dumrul, and Kan Turalı are known for their valor in facing enemies to protect their families, homeland, and the honor of their tribe. In one tale, Bamsi Beyrek is portrayed as fighting a powerful enemy to save his beloved and defend his tribe's dignity. Deli Dumrul even dares to challenge the angel of death to save another person's life, an extraordinary act of sacrifice in the name of honor and duty. UNESCO states that the tales of *Dede Korkut* reflect “a high value system including bravery, loyalty, and protection of family and homeland,” and have become an essential part of the cultural and moral education of the Turkic peoples (UNESCO, 2018).

The *Book of Dede Korkut* teaches the importance of courage, resilience, and self-sacrifice for the common good. Its characters are not only skilled warriors but also individuals willing to set aside personal interests for the sake of their family, community, and tribal honor. These values are at the heart of nearly every tale in this epic. One notable example is the story of Deli Dumrul, who challenges the angel of death to escape his fate. When asked to exchange his life with someone else's, none of his relatives agree—except his parents. In the end, Deli Dumrul begs for his own life to be taken, as long as his parents are spared. This decision exemplifies extraordinary sacrifice and moral courage—not just physical bravery. UNESCO notes that the *Dede Korkut* epic instills noble values such as “social solidarity, self-sacrifice, bravery in the face of adversity, and unwavering commitment to honor and community” (UNESCO, 2018).

Although the central focus of the *Book of Dede Korkut* lies on male heroes, several stories also feature intelligent and courageous women. In this epic, women are not merely passive or secondary characters—they are portrayed as wise, brave, and determined figures. Some tales show women making bold life choices, offering wise counsel, and even influencing the course of conflicts. One notable example is Burla Hatun, the mother of Bamsi Beyrek. She is depicted as a strong woman capable of managing her family, offering moral support, and playing a vital role in the continuity of the tribe. Another character, Seljan Hatun, appears in several versions of the epic and is known for her bravery in defending her honor and rejecting forced marriage. Symbolizing autonomy and female courage within traditional society. UNESCO emphasizes that although men are the primary warriors in the epic, women are consistently presented as impactful and strong-willed characters: “*Women in the Book of Dede Korkut, while not the central warriors, are often portrayed as wise, loyal, and capable of taking decisive action.*” (UNESCO, 2018).

This presents a broader understanding of the meaningful roles women hold in society. While the *Book of Dede Korkut* centers on the heroic deeds of Oghuz men, women are also portrayed as influential in decision-making, guardians of family honor, and moral supporters of the main heroes. They are not limited to the roles of wife or mother; instead, they serve as advisers, preservers of values, and symbols of tribal integrity. Burla Hatun is more than just a mother—she is a wise and courageous

matriarch. Another example is the wife of Kan Turalı, who demonstrates strength and determination by rejecting an unworthy suitor, showing that women, too, can have voice and agency over their lives. *“The tales highlight female characters who, while not warriors, play significant roles as symbols of family honor, wise counselors, and individuals with agency.”* (UNESCO, 2018).

Bilbil and Gul: A Timeless Allegory of Selfless Love

Bilbil (the nightingale) loves *Gul* (the rose) with pure devotion, without expecting anything in return. In classical Turkish and Persian literature, the story of the nightingale and the rose serves as an allegory of true love and selfless sacrifice. The nightingale symbolizes a soul full of love and dedication, while the rose represents beauty and perfection—often distant and unreachable. The nightingale sings every night beside the rose—not out of desire to possess it, but from the sincerity of a love that transcends personal longing. Even when the rose ignores or wounds him with its thorns, the nightingale continues to sing—a sign that true love means sacrifice, loyalty, and sincerity.

This tale teaches us the meaning of pure love—giving without expecting, even when it involves pain. In the symbolic tradition of Turkish and Persian literature, the relationship between *Bilbil* and *Gul* reflects a love that seeks nothing in return. The nightingale continues to sing near the rose, even though the rose’s thorns cause pain. He asks for nothing, even when his love is unreciprocated. He accepts the wounds from the rose’s thorns with full sincerity—as part of his devotion. It is a powerful metaphor for sincere and selfless love, where pain is not a barrier, but rather deepens the meaning of love itself. *“To love is to bleed silently at the feet of the beloved, not asking for mercy, but offering the heart.”* (Fuzuli, Divan)

Bilbil and Gul is a song of unrequited love and steadfast devotion. *Bilbil* does not give up easily, even though his love remains unanswered. In the symbolic tales that appear widely in classical Turkish, Persian, and Central Asian poetry, the nightingale (*bilbil*) is portrayed as a creature that loves the rose (*gul*) deeply. Though the rose never returns his affection—and often wounds him with its thorns—the nightingale remains faithful, singing beside it each night. His attitude symbolizes resilience, patience, and emotional strength in the face of heartbreak. He does not surrender to despair; instead, he transforms pain into a source of strength and continues expressing his love. (Fuzuli, Divan)

This story reflects the virtue of perseverance, teaching us that in life, not everything we desire can be easily attained. In the well-known allegory of the nightingale and the rose, popular in Turkish and Persian literary tradition, the nightingale is unwavering—singing of his love despite suffering and rejection. He does not leave. He does not stop. Even when wounded by the rose’s thorns, he remains. He does not ask the rose to change, but continues to sing, as an act of pure devotion. This narrative teaches the importance of loyalty in love, even in the face of obstacles. *Gul u Senuber* is tale of loyalty, sacrifice, and inner strength. In the folktale *Gul u Senuber*, rooted in Turkish and Azerbaijani oral tradition, loyalty emerges as the central theme. The character *Senuber*, though forcibly separated from her beloved *Gul*, never betrays her feelings. She endures suffering, pressure, and threats with

unwavering determination, never abandoning her love. As documented by Azerbaijani oral literature expert Hasanova: “Senuber maintains her loyalty to Gul even after years of exile, hardship, and manipulation, reflecting the unwavering devotion praised in oral traditions.” (Hasanova, S. (2013). *Azerbaijani Folktales and National Identity*, p. 89).

The story illustrates that true love often demands personal sacrifice. Senuber must leave a life of safety and face torment to preserve her bond with Gul. She is imprisoned, threatened with forced marriage, yet never denies her heart. As literary scholar Gozel writes: “Senuber endures social isolation, exile, and psychological suffering—all of which she accepts not out of weakness, but as sacrifices made for true love.” (Gozel, M. (2010). *Aşık Edebiyatı ve Halk Hikâyeleri*, p. 142). This story exemplifies how resilience and determination can help one overcome life’s trials. Senuber confronts forced separation, imprisonment, and coercion—but never loses hope. She remains faithful to her principles and her true love, showing that inner strength can carry someone through the deepest pain. “Senuber’s unwavering determination becomes her greatest strength. She withstands exile, coercion, and loneliness, proving that resilience can overcome oppression.” (Hasanova, S. (2013), p. 102)

***Gul u Senuber*: Wisdom and Courage in the Face of Difficult Choices**

In *Gul u Senuber*, both protagonists must face intense pressure, suffering, and difficult choices that demand wisdom and bravery. For instance, when Senuber refuses to succumb to the demand to marry another man, she chooses dignity and conviction over safety—even at great personal cost. At the same time, Gul is portrayed as someone who refuses to give up on finding Senuber. He faces challenges such as abduction, deception, and exile, and must act wisely and courageously to reunite with her. “The characters’ ability to act wisely under pressure and to make bold choices for love and justice reflects the moral values celebrated in oral narratives.” (Hasanova, S. (2013), p. 112). These tales emphasize the value of wise decision-making, moral courage, and the power of steadfast love—offering timeless lessons about character, resilience, and hope.

Folktales as cultural heritage and educational media. One of the most well-known folktales is the story of the hero Gorogly, widely regarded as a symbol of courage and justice. According to Karimov (2019), the story of Gorogly serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for teaching ethical values and social solidarity. Turkmen folktales play a significant role in preserving cultural identity, especially in the face of modernization and globalization. Atayev (2020) affirms that such folklore contributes to raising awareness of cultural heritage and strengthens social bonds within communities.

The development of technology has further encouraged the adaptation of folktales into modern literature and digital media, ensuring that these stories remain accessible and relevant to younger generations (Nazarov, 2021). Furthermore, Orazov (2018) and Amanova (2017) stress that the collection and preservation of Turkmen folktales are essential efforts to safeguard the nation's cultural uniqueness and promote traditional values to the international community. Turkmen folktales are a rich

and meaningful cultural legacy that reflect the values, history, and traditions of the Turkmen people. These tales often contain elements of myth, legend, and heroism that portray nomadic life and the philosophical outlook of Turkmen society (Beknazarov, 2016).

Javanese Folktales

The Tale of *Kancil* (The Clever Mouse Deer)

The tale of *Kancil* is a well-known Javanese folktale that illustrates the value of intelligence in overcoming power and injustice. Kancil, a small and physically weak creature, is constantly faced with dangerous predators such as tigers, crocodiles, and farmers. However, through wit and clever tactics, Kancil consistently escapes danger and turns the odds in his favor. This narrative reflects a central Javanese cultural belief that intellect and wisdom (*akal*) are more powerful than brute strength, especially when confronting oppressive forces or dealing with hierarchical authority. The story promotes strategic thinking, humor, and moral caution in the use of intelligence.

Kancil's characterization aligns with the values seen in the Turkmen folktale *Yartykulak*, where the physically disadvantaged hero triumphs through intelligence and strategic maneuvering. Both stories emphasize social justice and critique power imbalances in society. In Javanese tradition, *Kancil* is also used in early childhood education as a moral tale to teach honesty, courage, and problem-solving skills (Damono, 2002). The didactic function of this tale reinforces its relevance in shaping children's ethical development while promoting a resilient mindset in the face of adversity.

The Legend of *Raden Panji* and *Dewi Sekartaji*

The tale of *Panji Asmarabangun* and *Dewi Sekartaji* is one of the most refined examples of Javanese romantic epics. Panji, a prince of the Javanese kingdom, embarks on a spiritual and physical journey in search of his beloved, Sekartaji. This folktale is deeply embedded in the courtly culture of Java and often performed in *wayang* (shadow puppet theater), *ketoprak*, and *sendratari*. The story conveys themes of heroism, moral integrity, and unwavering loyalty. Panji's struggle symbolizes the quest for inner perfection (*kasampurnan*)—a key concept in Javanese mysticism. He overcomes separation, political intrigue, and false identities in pursuit of reunion and justice.

The moral alignment between Panji's tale and the Turkmen epic *Gorogly* is clear in their shared portrayal of heroic resistance and love for the people. Both protagonists are defenders of moral order and justice. In Java, the Panji cycle also symbolizes the harmony between nature, society, and cosmic order, reinforcing the values of loyalty, social responsibility, and nobility (Sears, 1996). These narratives provide a cultural blueprint for ethical leadership and emotional resilience, making them relevant for character education today.

The Wisdom of *Ki Ageng Selo* and Javanese Moral Philosophy

Ki Ageng Selo, a revered spiritual figure in Javanese oral tradition, is widely recognized for his

wisdom, piety, and miraculous deeds—such as capturing lightning with his bare hands. He embodies the archetype of the *wong tuwa* (elder sage), whose moral authority derives not from political power but from inner spiritual depth. His story transmits values such as humility, patience, and harmony with nature. In traditional Javanese society, figures like Ki Ageng Selo were seen as cultural anchors, offering guidance in ethical dilemmas and community affairs.

The character of Ki Ageng Selo resonates with the Turkmen figure *Dede Korkut*, a wise elder who acts as both storyteller and moral teacher. Both serve as custodians of ancestral wisdom and function as cultural transmitters. In Javanese literature, the ethical values championed by such figures are codified in texts like *Serat Wulangreh*, which emphasize moderation (*sedang*), self-control, and spiritual refinement (Rassers, 1959). These teachings are crucial for building a society rooted in mutual respect, ethical awareness, and spiritual consciousness.

The Tale of *Ande-Ande Lumut*

Ande-Ande Lumut is a Javanese folktale centered on a disguised prince who tests the moral character of young women to find a suitable wife. The heroine, Kleting Kuning, endures hardship and scorn from her adoptive sisters but ultimately proves her integrity, humility, and kindness. This tale reflects Javanese values of inner beauty, sincerity, and the reward of virtue over superficial qualities. The story's moral lesson emphasizes that true worth lies not in physical appearance or social status but in personal integrity and compassion.

Similar to the Turkmen folktale *Gul-Bilbil*, this narrative centers on a woman's emotional strength and moral purity amid adversity. Both tales celebrate female agency and resilience, challenging patriarchal norms by highlighting a woman's ability to shape her destiny through patience and virtue. In Javanese culture, *Ande-Ande Lumut* is frequently used in traditional dance dramas to educate youth about ethical behavior, gender roles, and the importance of inner character over external glamour (Hatley, 1990).

The Romance of *Roro Mendut* and *Pranacitra*

The story of *Roro Mendut* is a historical-romantic folktale from Java, recounting the resistance of a noblewoman who defies forced marriage to the powerful Tumenggung Wiroguno. Roro Mendut's steadfast love for her partner Pranacitra and her refusal to be silenced by authority figures underscore themes of emotional authenticity, civil resistance, and gender justice. The tale has been interpreted as a proto-feminist narrative that centers on a woman's autonomy and moral courage in asserting her rights.

This closely parallels the Turkmen tale *Gul-Senuber*, which explores similar themes of romantic struggle, personal freedom, and resistance to coercion. In both stories, the heroines defy oppressive social systems to protect their dignity and love. Within the Javanese context, the tale of Roro Mendut has been adapted into novels, films, and stage performances, reaffirming its relevance in contemporary gender discourses (Kartodirdjo, 1984). These folktales collectively affirm the universal value of self-

determination and the right to love freely.

Educational and Cultural Values of Turkmen and Javanese Folktales

Turkmenistan's folktales are an integral part of its cultural tradition, filled with moral, social, and historical values. Likewise, Indonesian folktales are a vital part of the nation's rich and diverse cultural heritage, reflecting the plurality of ethnic groups, languages, and traditions across the archipelago. These stories are not only forms of entertainment but also serve as vehicles for transmitting moral values, social norms, and local wisdom handed down through generations (Effendi, 2018). Indonesian folktales, specifically Javanese often carry lessons about kindness, honesty, hard work, and respect for others and the environment. Examples such as *Kancil*, *Raden Panji*, *Ki Ageng Selo*, *Ande-ande Lumut*, and *Roro Mendut* offer powerful moral messages while representing the unique cultures of their respective regions (Sari & Wijaya, 2020). Table 2 below shows the shared educational and cultural value between Turkmen and Javanese folktales.

Table 2. Educational and Cultural Value of Turkmen and Javanese Folktales

Turkmen Folktale	Javanese Folktale	Shared Values	Description
<i>Yartykulak</i>	<i>Kancil (The Clever Mouse Deer)</i>	Intelligence, Resilience, Anti-oppression	Both tales highlight a physically weaker character who uses wit and cunning to overcome injustice and survive in an unfair world.
<i>Gorogly</i>	<i>Panji Asmarabangun & Sekartaji</i>	Heroism, Justice, Loyalty, Nationalism	Both heroes serve as protectors of moral order and the people, reflecting noble leadership and resistance against corruption or betrayal.
<i>Dede Korkut</i>	<i>Ki Ageng Selo</i>	Wisdom, Eldership, Moral Teaching, Spiritual Depth	Both are elder sages guiding society through storytelling and spiritual knowledge; they represent custodians of cultural and ethical continuity.
<i>Gul-Bilbil</i>	<i>Ande-Ande Lumut</i>	Purity of Heart, Female Virtue, Inner Strength	Both tales portray female protagonists who are virtuous, patient, and resilient in the face of trials, emphasizing inner character over appearance.
<i>Gul-u-Senuber</i>	<i>Roro Mendut & Pranacitra</i>	Autonomy, Love, Resistance, Gender Justice	Both stories highlight women's agency and resistance to forced marriage or domination, affirming the right to love and individual freedom.

Moreover, folktales play a role in strengthening cultural identity and national pride. Through the preservation of folktales, younger generations can gain a deeper understanding of their history and traditions, nurturing a stronger love for their homeland (Hadi, 2019). The use of folktales in both formal and informal education can be an effective medium to instill character values and cultural awareness, while also enhancing children's literacy and creativity (Prasetyo, 2021). With the advancement of technology, Javanese folktales have also begun to be adapted into various modern media formats such as animated films, digital books, and theatrical performances. These innovations help expand their reach

and preserve cultural relevance in the digital era (Rahman, 2022). Javanese folktales contain cultural and moral values that are crucial for shaping character and preserving local traditions amid rapid societal change.

CONCLUSIONS

Folktales possess a wide range of rich educational values. Through narratives embedded with moral lessons and local wisdom, these stories serve as powerful resources for character development. By promoting values such as courage, justice, patriotism, perseverance, and loyalty, folktales can become effective tools for nurturing ethical and culturally rooted future generations. For this reason, the preservation and integration of folktales into education must continue to be encouraged both in traditional forms and through digital platforms, so that these noble values remain alive and relevant across generations. Stories like *Yartykulak* and *Gorogly* highlight themes of bravery, cleverness, and justice, reflecting a spirit of resistance and commitment to truth. Meanwhile, Javanese folktales such as *Kancil*, *Panji Asmarabangun*, and *Ande-Ande Lumut* emphasize moral values such as honesty, respect, and perseverance, often within familial and communal settings.

The common ground between these two cultures lies in the shared purpose of folktales, not just as entertainment, but as means of character education and cultural preservation. Differences arise in their social contexts and symbolism: Turkmen stories often showcase heroism in the context of cultural protection, while Javanese stories tend to focus on family values, mystical wisdom, and social harmony. Ultimately, folktales serve as intergenerational bridges and effective tools for cross-cultural learning.

To maximize their impact, folktales can be integrated into school curricula as part of character education modules, accompanied by creative assignments such as dramatizations, moral discussions, or reflective writing. Additionally, educators and cultural institutions can utilize digital storytelling tools, interactive e-books, or gamified apps to make traditional stories more accessible and engaging for tech-savvy youth. In doing so, folktales can become living traditions that continue to shape the moral compass of future generations in both local and global contexts.

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