

## Investigating Social Dynamics in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala: A Literary Study of Traditional Cultural Values and Modernity

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### Abstract

A novel possess a high level of complexity, including their portrayal of social dynamics. The complexity of novels is evident in their narrative structures, the characterization of characters with psychological depth and diverse backgrounds, the dynamics presented within the story, and the messages conveyed by the author. Therefore, this study investigates the social dynamics reflected in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, focusing on social change, gender equality, and family conflicts within Indonesian society in the 1930s. The novel provides an in-depth depiction of the development of the kretek industry in Indonesia, a sector that flourished rapidly after Dutch colonization, as well as the struggle of women to find space in a male-dominated business world. The character Jeng Yah, who plays a pivotal role in kretek production, symbolizes the struggles of women confronting social and cultural limitations to prove their capabilities. Using a qualitative approach that emphasizes analysis of characters, plot, and setting, this study uncovers the tension between traditional values and modernity, as well as how changes in the kretek industry reflect significant shifts in social class. The research also explores the impact of social changes on human interactions, particularly in the context of family relationships and individual struggles to preserve their values and identities. Overall, this study provides an in-depth understanding of how the novel reflects the social, economic, and cultural transformations occurring in Indonesian society, as well as its relevance to contemporary social issues that remain significant today.

**Keywords:** Social dynamics; Literature analysis; Traditional cultures; Cultural values; Modernity

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## INTRODUCTION

Literary works can reflect the social conditions of a society by depicting social issues connected to the author and their environment. Elements within a literary work enable it to serve as a social snapshot of a specific period (Huda et al., 2019). Literary works arise from the imagination of authors, who are inherently tied to the social realities and issues surrounding them, as they are bound by specific times and places. In this context, authors often engage with social issues. In the literary world, the primary focus is on the struggle to give voice to marginalized groups, as literature, despite using language as its main medium, also addresses various issues. Literary works are seen as a series of signs reflecting thoughts, opinions, and worldviews. Novels, in particular, often emphasize the socio-cultural backgrounds of the societies they depict (Daud & Bagtayan, 2024).

As a form of literature, novels possess a high level of complexity, including their portrayal of social dynamics (Suaedi, 2021). The complexity of novels is evident in their narrative structures, the characterization of characters with psychological depth and diverse backgrounds, the dynamics presented within the story, and the messages conveyed

by the author (Intan, 2020). This complexity makes novels unique works of literature with meanings that can be interpreted by readers in various ways. Novels depict social dynamics through the unique traditions and cultures they highlight, as well as the social interactions between individuals or groups within society (Aliyyuana et al., 2024), as reflected in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala.

The novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala is a literary work that effectively portrays the social dynamics of Indonesia in the 1930s, particularly regarding the kretek industry and the role of women in society. The novel narrates the development of the kretek cigarette industry after Dutch colonization, intertwined with themes of romance and the struggle for gender equality. The story begins with Soeraja, who, after suffering a stroke, calls out the name Jeng Yah, prompting his family to investigate her identity. Their search uncovers the history of Kretek Djagad Raja and Soeraja's love story with Jeng Yah, the owner of Kretek Gadis. The novel also delves into family dynamics, Javanese culture, and women's struggles, especially through the characters Jeng Yah and Roemaisa. It carries important messages about perseverance, courage in challenging social norms, and honesty in pursuing endeavors (Simanungkalit, 2020).

Research on social dynamics in novels has been conducted by various researchers. For instance, Armanto (2024) examined "Social Conflicts in the Novel *Ma Tabaka Lakum* by Ghassan Kanafi: A Sociological Literature Analysis," which explores social conflicts faced by Palestinians during colonial occupation, including social, economic, and discriminatory issues, as well as resistance against power. Broadly speaking, Armanto's study is similar to this research in addressing social dynamics across various aspects of life. However, the two differ in the types of conflicts examined; *Ma Tabaka Lakum* focuses on social dynamics during wartime, while *Gadis Kretek* emphasizes socio-economic life related to gender and history. This distinction sets the two studies apart, offering insights into social dynamics under different circumstances. A similar contrast can be observed in the study by Maghfiroh & Zawawi (2021), titled "Social Conflicts in the Novel *Aib dan Nasib* by Minanto from George Simmel's Perspective." While their study focuses on social conflicts analyzed solely through Simmel's perspective, this limits the scope to conflict forms, causes, and resolutions without offering a comprehensive view of the social dynamics within the story.

Other research, such as that by Alfindra et al. (2024), titled "Social Aspects in the Novel *Hello* by Tere Liye: A Sociological Literature Approach," explores social dynamics through the lens of romanticism, providing new insights into social realities. This study differs from the present research as it focuses solely on romantic aspects linked to social issues, while this study encompasses various life genres. Similarly, the research by Huda et al. (2019), "Social Dynamics in the Novels *Treasure Seeker* and *Five On A Hike Together*," explores social dynamics through layers of society, types of social change, factors driving change, and the process of change. However, it differs significantly from the present study, especially in its focus on social dynamics.

Studying the social dynamics of the novel *Gadis Kretek* is crucial, as it illustrates how social change, cultural differences, and individual struggles in society shape human life (Rizki et al., 2024). In this story, social dynamics are reflected in the relationships between characters, especially concerning gender equality, women's struggles, and shifting values within Javanese society. The novel also demonstrates how social norms influence individual life decisions, as seen in the character Roemaisa, who challenges customs that harm herself and her family. By understanding the social dynamics in this novel, readers can better appreciate the complexities of human relationships and the ways societal changes impact identity, culture, and social values. Furthermore, the novel underscores the importance of gender equality, courage in challenging unjust norms, and honesty in building endeavors—social issues that remain relevant today.

This study aims to analyze the social dynamics reflected in *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, focusing on aspects of social change in society, such as gender equality, family relationships, and Javanese cultural norms depicted in the story. A deep exploration of the novel is conducted to examine the processes of social change that influence character interactions, the formation of the plot, and how characters confront social conflicts related to value transformation and shifting norms within the storyline. This research offers a novel contribution by framing literary works, particularly the novel *Gadis Kretek*, as dynamic reflections of the socio-cultural and historical fabric of a society. It extends the conventional understanding of literature by emphasizing that novels not only depict imaginative narratives but also encapsulate complex social dynamics. Unlike earlier studies that often isolate aspects of social conflict—whether focusing solely on wartime tensions or romantic narratives—this study integrates multiple dimensions such as gender equality, family relationships, and cultural traditions. It thereby repositions literature as a multifaceted mirror that reveals both overt and subtle shifts in societal norms, particularly in the context of Indonesia's kretek industry during the post-colonial era.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

The study employs a qualitative research design fundamentally anchored in literary analysis, enabling an in-depth exploration of the social dynamics interwoven throughout the novel *Gadis Kretek*. This methodological framework moves beyond surface-level interpretation to engage deeply with the narrative's intricate literary elements—namely characters, plot, and setting—which collectively serve as symbolic representations of broader societal realities. By meticulously analyzing how these elements interact, the research uncovers the subtle ways in which the text reflects the social, cultural, and historical context of its time. In particular, the study scrutinizes the author's imaginative storytelling and distinctive narrative style to reveal the embodiment of social conflicts, evolving values, and complex human interactions within the text.

The approach involves dissecting the interplay of character development and plot progression, while also considering how the setting contributes to the portrayal of cultural tensions and aspirations. This layered analysis highlights literature's dual role as both a reflection of societal norms and a critique of the status quo, offering insights into the transformative power of narrative art. Moreover, the design emphasizes that literary works like *Gadis Kretek* are not merely stories but are dynamic commentaries on the lived experiences of their time. This comprehensive examination of literary elements thus illuminates the intricate relationship between the text and the socio-cultural environment in which it was created, reinforcing literature's enduring relevance as a medium for social critique and cultural exploration (Sitorus et al., 2024; Rahim & Syam, 2024).

### Research Objects

The primary object of this study is the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, a literary work that vividly portrays the social fabric of Indonesian society during the 1930s. This novel was chosen for its rich depiction of socio-cultural phenomena, capturing a time when Indonesia was experiencing significant transformations. *Gadis Kretek* intricately details the evolution of the kretek industry—a symbol of economic and cultural change—while also shedding light on the nuanced gender dynamics that defined social interactions during that era. The narrative delves into the complexities of family relationships, portraying how traditional roles and expectations were both upheld and challenged in a rapidly changing society. Cultural norms, too, are meticulously represented, offering insights into how values were maintained, negotiated, and sometimes contested against the backdrop of modernization and external influences.

Through its layered storytelling, *Gadis Kretek* serves as a critical lens for understanding the complex interplay between historical context and social change in Indonesia. The novel not only reflects the economic and cultural shifts of the period but also highlights the personal and collective struggles of its characters, thereby encapsulating broader societal transformations. By exploring these various dimensions, the study utilizes the novel as a means to analyze how literature can mirror and influence social realities. This comprehensive examination of *Gadis Kretek* allows researchers to uncover the multifaceted dynamics of 1930s Indonesian society, making the novel an invaluable resource for discussions on history, culture, and the evolution of social norms.

### **Research Instruments**

To facilitate the qualitative analysis, the study employs a series of research instruments designed to capture and elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of the text. Central to this process is the reading and note-taking method, where the researcher systematically reads the entire text to identify and record key pieces of information that are directly linked to the research focus (Aditiawan, 2020). Complementing this, data validity techniques are applied to ensure that the collected information is trustworthy and relevant. These instruments work in tandem to support a detailed and context-rich interpretation of the novel.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection is executed through a qualitative descriptive approach that integrates both literature studies and documentation. Initially, the reading and note-taking method allows the researcher to immerse in the text of *Gadis Kretek*, identifying pertinent details related to social conflicts, cultural dynamics, and value shifts. Alongside this, the study engages in an extensive review of related literature—including books, articles, journals, and previous research—addressing themes of social phenomena, gender equality, and cultural dynamics within the novel (Pratiwi, 2024). Furthermore, documentation techniques are utilized to gather supplementary data, such as historical accounts of the kretek industry and evolving Javanese cultural norms, thereby providing a robust contextual framework for analysis (Fadilla & Wulandari, 2023).

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The analytical process in this study is rooted in qualitative descriptive methods that facilitate a comprehensive synthesis of insights derived from both primary and secondary sources. At its core, the analysis begins with an in-depth reading of *Gadis Kretek*, during which the researcher meticulously extracts detailed notes on narrative elements, character developments, and instances of social conflict. These primary observations capture the subtle interplay of themes, values, and cultural norms, serving as a foundation for deeper interpretation. Concurrently, the study incorporates secondary sources—ranging from scholarly articles to historical documents—to enrich this initial data and provide broader context.

Data analysis involves a rigorous process of cross-referencing the detailed notes from the novel with information gathered from the literature and documentation. This triangulation of data is critical, as it not only verifies the consistency of the observed patterns but also uncovers recurring themes and complex interrelations within the text. By comparing insights across multiple sources, the researcher can identify thematic structures that highlight the evolving social dynamics within the narrative. This methodical approach ensures that conclusions are drawn from a robust evidence base, reducing subjective bias and enhancing analytical depth.

Furthermore, by examining the literary elements alongside historical and cultural references, the study constructs a nuanced narrative that mirrors the intricate social



changes and conflicts depicted in the novel. This comprehensive analysis reveals how *Gadis Kretek* reflects broader societal transformations, encapsulating shifts in gender roles, family dynamics, and cultural identity during a pivotal historical period. Ultimately, this rigorous analytical process not only deepens our understanding of the literary work itself but also contributes significantly to broader discussions on the interplay between literature and social reality (Pahlevianur et al., 2022; Hafifah & Urfan, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Social Dynamics in the Novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala

The novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala portrays complex social dynamics, encompassing social change, family relationships, and the struggle to preserve cultural identity. These themes are interwoven with the development of the kretek cigarette industry in Indonesia (Simangkulit, 2020). Through narratives of romance, family intrigue, and business ventures, the novel explores various layers of society involved in the kretek industry's growth, spanning from the Dutch colonial era, the Japanese occupation, Indonesia's independence, and the post-PKI period. A key element highlighted in the novel is the social changes affecting Indonesian society, where characters from diverse social strata become entangled in conflicts that go beyond personal issues to encompass broader social and cultural conditions. The novel also illustrates how intergenerational and intergroup social relationships transform with the changing times (Wati & Niampe, 2019). The social dynamics in the novel can be categorized into several key aspects.

### Social Dynamics and Family Conflict

#### Data 1

*"I'm the one who took care of him while he was ill, yet it's that woman he calls!"* [Page 1]

This narrative moment serves as a potent metaphor for the fragmentation and reformation of identity within a family unit, set against the backdrop of shifting societal norms. Pak Raja's persistent invocation of Jeng Yah's name does not merely indicate a sentimental longing; it signals a rupture in the traditional identities that have long defined the family. His fixation represents a departure from the established patriarchal role—a role that traditionally demanded fidelity, responsibility, and the consolidation of a unified family identity. Instead, his behavior introduces an alternative identity, one that is intertwined with desire, passion, and perhaps even a modern sensibility that challenges conventional expectations.

Pak Raja's actions ignite a cascade of identity conflicts within the family. His wife, whose sense of self and marital identity has been grounded in the assumption of exclusivity and loyalty, finds herself in a state of perpetual frustration and emotional betrayal. Her continual complaints are not solely about the betrayal but also about the shattering of her envisioned role within the family structure. The resulting emotional turmoil forces her and her children to confront the stark reality that the family identity they once knew is in profound crisis. The children—Lebas, Karim, and Tegar—are compelled to reexamine their inherited identities. The discovery of their father's dual existence introduces them to a reality where the sanctity of blood ties and marital bonds is questioned, prompting an internal struggle to reconcile the image of the father they revered with the flawed, conflicted individual he has become.

The climax of this identity crisis is crystallized in Pak Raja's deathbed moment when he calls for Jeng Yah—a final, irrevocable act that underscores the enduring conflict between his fractured self and the family's collective identity. It is in line with Hafifah and Urfan (2024) who inform that the poignant moment brings to the fore the collision between traditional and modern values, revealing a broader societal shift. In this context, the family

conflict mirrors the erosion of rigid, inherited social identities, as individuals begin to navigate a more fluid and contested space of personal identity formation.

Furthermore, the legacy of Kretek Djagad Raja—an emblem of cultural and economic transformation—adds another layer to this intricate identity negotiation. This findings are in accordance with Rahayu (2021) who found that the children's confrontation with their father's actions is also a confrontation with their cultural heritage and the evolving social values that have come to redefine what it means to belong. Thus, the narrative becomes a microcosm of larger societal transformations, where traditional markers of identity, such as loyalty and familial duty, are no longer sufficient to anchor one's self-concept. Instead, identities become multifaceted and dynamic, constantly reshaped by personal choices and external social influences. This critical interpretation highlights how the personal conflicts depicted in the novel transcend the boundaries of individual experience to engage with broader themes of identity formation. Pak Raja's divided self, his wife's ensuing disillusionment, and the children's emerging awareness of a fractured familial legacy collectively reflect the complexities of modern identity—where personal desires, societal expectations, and historical legacies are in a constant state of negotiation and flux.

### Gender Equality and Women's Struggles

#### Data 2

*"Furthermore, Idroes Moeria's tendency to give his daughter freedom shaped her into an independent and outspoken woman."* [Page 147]

This quote highlights Jeng Yah's independence and her choice to live freely. Traditionally, women were expected to serve their husbands and remain confined to the home. However, Jeng Yah's attitude challenges these gender norms. Her determination reflects the ongoing struggle for gender equality, emphasizing that women should be able to voice their aspirations and participate in the workforce. Jeng Yah's character resonates with contemporary women still navigating patriarchal structures. Her courage serves as a reminder that women have the right to work and support their families.

Jeng Yah's resilience is a source of inspiration for modern women who may lack the courage to express their desires. The novel subtly critiques patriarchal norms, advocating for women to assert their rights without direct confrontation. Through Jeng Yah and other characters like Roemaisa, the novel explores how women challenge societal barriers, particularly in male-dominated industries like kretek. The narrative illustrates the evolving perception of women's roles in Indonesian society and their increasing contributions to economic and industrial fields (Rahayu et al., 2021).

One of the central and significant themes in *Gadis Kretek* is gender dynamics and women's struggles, which are vividly illustrated through the character of Jeng Yah. Jeng Yah is portrayed not only as a woman who captures Pak Raja's attention but also as someone with deep skills and knowledge in blending kretek, ultimately contributing to the success of Kretek Gadis. Through this character, the novel depicts women who can overcome various social barriers, particularly in a male-dominated business world. Jeng Yah and other female characters, such as Roemaisa, fight to claim their place in a society that often overlooks their abilities and contributions. This reflects how Indonesian society, despite being steeped in traditional norms, has begun to shift its perspective on the role of women, particularly in the economic and industrial sectors previously considered the domain of men. The novel subtly demonstrates how women's struggles to achieve gender equality are closely tied to the ongoing social changes in society (Rahayu et al., 2021).

## The Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity

### Data 3

*"Mas Tegar was clearly the 'parents' hope,' the firstborn expected to inherit the family's cigarette factory."*  
[Page 6]

The excerpt presents a critical examination of how the preservation of a family business transcends mere economic activity, emerging as a crucial vessel for cultural heritage and identity. In the post-independence era, maintaining a family enterprise was not simply about economic survival but was intimately tied to the transmission of cultural values and historical legacy from one generation to the next. The expectation that successors will uphold the family business serves as a ritualistic reinforcement of cultural continuity. This tradition imbues the business with a symbolic status, transforming it into a living repository of ancestral knowledge, practices, and social norms that define a community's identity.

In the novel, this theme is poignantly explored through the struggles of local kretek factories such as Kretek Gadis. Here, the traditional methods of production and the inherent cultural significance of the kretek industry are confronted by the relentless pressures of modernization and globalization. Larger, modern, and capitalistic cigarette companies challenge the viability of these local enterprises by introducing advanced technological and managerial practices. However, while these innovations promise greater efficiency and market competitiveness, they simultaneously threaten the very cultural heritage embedded in the traditional business models.

Kretek Gadis, as depicted in the narrative, is emblematic of the broader cultural tension between preserving time-honored traditions and adapting to modern economic realities. The factory's struggle is not merely a battle for market share but a symbolic contest over cultural authenticity. It is supported by Rahayu (2021) who found that the modernization demands not only a shift in production techniques but also a transformation in societal attitudes toward local products. As local communities increasingly favor mass-produced goods over traditional, handcrafted ones, there is a corresponding erosion of cultural identity and a loss of connection to historical roots.

This tension reflects a broader societal dilemma in Indonesia—a nation where rapid globalization has often clashed with deep-seated cultural practices. The narrative critically interprets this clash as indicative of a shifting cultural landscape. It suggests that while modernity offers progress and efficiency, it can also lead to the marginalization of local traditions that have historically served as a foundation for community identity. The struggle of Kretek Gadis, therefore, becomes a metaphor for the challenges faced by many traditional industries: the need to reconcile economic imperatives with the preservation of cultural heritage. Moreover, this conflict invites a deeper reflection on what constitutes cultural heritage in a modern context. Is cultural authenticity preserved through unaltered adherence to past methods, or can it evolve and adapt while retaining its core values? The narrative of Kretek Gadis posits that cultural heritage is dynamic—it must navigate the complexities of contemporary society without losing sight of its origins. This critical interpretation encourages a re-evaluation of modernity itself, urging society to find a balance where progress does not come at the expense of cultural identity, but rather, integrates tradition into the evolving narrative of collective identity.

## Social Change and Status

### Data 4

*"He knew well the tight competition between Native Indonesian and Chinese kretek entrepreneurs."* [Page 144]

Across all regions, competition is inevitable, one example being the rivalry among cigarette factories. The story of competition in the novel *Gadis Kretek* also reflects the

business rivalry of the modern era. Employees will work diligently depending on who leads the company. However, if led by an authoritarian leader, employees may feel dehumanized. Such circumstances can lead to social inequality between employees and company leaders. It is not uncommon for misunderstandings about the work environment to arise among them.

This novel demonstrates that *Gadis Kretek* not only delivers a heart-stirring romantic tale but also touches on various social dynamics relevant to the changes in Indonesian society. Through stories of love, family, and business journeys, the novel vividly illustrates how social values like gender equality, family relationships, as well as the tension between tradition and modernity, continue to evolve and compete amidst societal transformations. The work successfully raises broader social issues, inviting readers to reflect on how individuals and groups struggle to maintain their existence in the face of ever-changing social challenges.

Throughout the story, Pak Raja's three children—Lebas, Karim, and Tegar—embark on a journey tracing the history of Indonesia's cigarette industry. They uncover the role of social class structures in the development of this industry. In their quest to find Jeng Yah and understand the history of Kretek Djagad Raja, they discover that the kretek industry is not just about economic profit but also involves deeper struggles of social class. The working class, dependent on local kretek factories, and the entrepreneurial class, who lead the industry, share a close yet unequal relationship due to stark economic disparities. The search for Jeng Yah also serves as a means to explore the interactions between the working class and the entrepreneurial class, as well as the social impact of the cigarette industry's development, which involves hundreds of workers from diverse social and economic backgrounds. This reflects how, within a complex social system, every individual and group plays a role in maintaining the existing social structure, even though they often occupy unequal positions (Salindri et al., 2022).

### **The Importance of Analyzing Social Dynamics in *Gadis Kretek***

The analysis of social dynamics in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala is crucial because the novel reflects various aspects of social change occurring in Indonesian society, particularly during the 1930s. The characters and storyline in *Gadis Kretek* illustrate how tradition, family, gender equality, and the kretek industry interact and transform in line with the progression of time. This analysis enables readers to gain a deeper understanding of how social norms, class structures, and cultural values influence relationships between individuals and groups within society (Putri, 2024).

The social dynamics in *Gadis Kretek* also provide significant insights into the role of women in a male-dominated society and industry, as seen in the character of Jeng Yah, who fights against societal limitations to achieve success in the kretek business. By analyzing the conflicts presented in the story, readers can observe how social changes affect family interactions, personal identities, and individual struggles to achieve justice and equality (Yusuf & Susilo, 2020). Furthermore, this analysis helps readers better understand the tension between tradition and modernity in Indonesian society and its impact on evolving social and cultural values. Thus, analyzing the social dynamics in *Gadis Kretek* offers a richer perspective on how Indonesian society adapts to ongoing social changes while preserving its cultural identity amidst modernization.

The novel *Gadis Kretek* not only presents a story about tradition and the kretek industry but also highlights family conflict, issues of gender equality, and modernity. Family conflict is depicted through the tense relationships among the three siblings in Lebas's family, reflecting generational differences in views on traditional and modern values. Gender equality issues are illustrated through Jeng Yah's struggle against patriarchal challenges in society. The conflicts within the novel *Gadis Kretek* allow readers



to understand how tradition, gender, and family become points of contention in facing the tides of change (Larasati et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala portrays complex social dynamics through family conflicts, gender equality, and the tension between tradition and modernity. The story revolves around the search for Jeng Yah and the struggle to sustain the family's kretek business, unveiling the history and secrets of the Soeraja family. This narrative approach offers a multifaceted exploration of Indonesia's evolving societal values and class structures. One of the central themes of the novel is family conflict, which is vividly depicted through the strained relationships among the Soeraja siblings. Their differing perspectives on tradition and modernity highlight the generational divide in adapting to societal change. The story also delves into unresolved family secrets, particularly the mysterious figure of Jeng Yah, whose past connects deeply to the family's history and the development of the kretek industry. These conflicts provide a window into the broader dynamics of Indonesian families navigating modernization while clinging to cultural traditions.

Another significant theme is gender equality, represented by the character Jeng Yah. As a woman striving to succeed in the male-dominated kretek industry, Jeng Yah embodies resilience against societal limitations and patriarchal norms. Her journey reflects the broader struggle of women in Indonesia, particularly in the early 20th century, as they sought to assert their independence and redefine their roles in society. Jeng Yah's story is not just about personal triumph but also about challenging the systemic barriers that have historically marginalized women. The novel further explores the tension between tradition and modernity, particularly through the depiction of the kretek industry. The local kretek factories symbolize heritage and community, while the emergence of larger, modern corporations represents globalization and economic transformation. This contrast underscores the struggles of small businesses to survive amidst industrialization and the shifting priorities of a modernizing society. It also highlights the impact of these changes on social class structures, where the working class and business elites experience a growing divide. Overall, *Gadis Kretek* is not merely a romantic tale but a nuanced exploration of Indonesia's social and cultural evolution. By intertwining personal narratives with broader societal issues, the novel invites readers to reflect on themes of identity, equality, and adaptation in a rapidly changing world. Its relevance lies in its ability to connect past struggles with contemporary challenges, making it a compelling reflection of Indonesia's ongoing journey through tradition and modernity.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on this study, readers and researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into the social, economic, and political contexts within literary works to better understand the social dynamics depicted in novels, particularly those addressing gender and class inequalities. By analyzing these aspects, a more comprehensive understanding of the issues presented in *Gadis Kretek* can be achieved. Further research could focus on comparing the social realities portrayed in *Gadis Kretek* with the current state of Indonesian society to explore the thematic relevance of the novel in the context of contemporary social development.

Additionally, it is important to examine more deeply the influence of industry and economic factors on social structures, as well as the empowerment of women in Indonesian literature. This approach would provide valuable insights into how literature reflects and critiques societal transformations. For instance, exploring the role of the kretek industry in shaping class dynamics or assessing how female characters like Jeng Yah

challenge patriarchal norms can reveal broader patterns of social change. By engaging with these themes, researchers can uncover the ways in which literary works not only mirror societal conditions but also inspire reflection and dialogue on issues of equity, empowerment, and modernization in Indonesia.

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