

Personal Blogs on the Net

"I blog, therefore I am." That might well be the sub-text of the thoughtful or friendly personal weblogs written by Indonesians, mostly young. You have to read them through to 'get it,' but the time just flies by. It's a blessing to 'meet' people online who mean what they say, say what they mean, stay meaningful, and seldom are mean.

Techie Intro

Blogging is done by a program which enables easy online publishing of periodic time-stamped posts, often on a common webpage, usually in reverse chronological order, often allowing short public comments left for the blogowner. Unlike a mailing list, the blogs I refer to here are personal digital communities. Indonesian bloggers generally identify themselves by name, shunning the too often deliberate anonymity, pomp, pettiness and clutter of discussion lists.

Few of these personal bloggers are true diarists, much less autobiographers, yet they have collectively produced a uniquely engrossing genre of net literature which, as the blog grows, might fairly be called self-revelation, sometimes progressing to self-discovery. Created in many Indonesian languages, and, surprisingly, often in English (especially by Indonesians in the diaspora), the best exert an awesome humbling effect as the blogger reaches out and grows a loyal network of friends and following who also often email and IM each other. The posts become addictive reads, and fans often resort to bookmarks or RSS readers like Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com>) in order not to miss a new entry or reader's comment.

Here I just provide a guided tour, focusing on a few English clips from select blogs. If you are enticed by the quotes, go to the blog and read on. If you enjoy exploring, you can find most of these blogs -- as I did -- through Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>), Blogwise (<http://www.blogwise.com>), Daypop (<http://www.daypop.com>), and Blogarama (<http://www.blogarama.com>). You can also quickly find most technical terms, blogging programs, and still more blog directories by clicking Wikipedia's excellent succinct hyperlinked article titled 'Weblog' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>). Blog yourself. It's time.

Getting to the Point

Melly's 'A Spy on My Blog' (<http://mellyanacorner.blogspot.com>)

Just found out that somebody (one person or maybe even more) like to see my blog just so he or she has a story to tell to others a.k.a. gossip. I know, when I write things on my blog they became public. But it hurts so badly when I know that somebody read it just to hurt me. I write everything I want. I talk a lot (I really mean it). I decided to write more than talk more. Here, I hope some of my friends out there still know what's goin' on with me. Most of things I write are really personal. I tried to be honest with what I write. What's the point of writing something dishonest, anyway. But I never thought that it will turn out to be a deadly weapon for me. However, I think that's just a part of having a blog.

I Am Not Now, Nor Have I Ever Been ...

Indi's 'How to Change Your Race Legally' (<http://www.indrani.net>)

I have held a blue Singapore Identity Card since mid 2004. But one thing that has not satisfied me was the fact that I have the word 'Malay' written under 'race'. No, I cannot be a Malay. Malay people in the region would be upset and embarrassed if they see me claim my own being as one of their blood-brothers. It's like claiming that you are a Harvard student when you aren't. I requested Immigration and Checkpoint Authority to change my so-called 'race' as Javanese - for obvious and kiasu reasons, of course. I had to speak to two interviewers in two separate rooms. Wow... that was the first time I ever took an oath, kinda cool, indeed. Truly, I never realized that the definition of 'race' is so vital in Singapore. The officer had me write a specific reason why I shall be classified as a Javanese, and not a Malay. I was going to write: "Because Javanese rule the Archipelago!" but then I refrained from doing the politically incorrect and wrote this instead: "Because both of my parents are from Yogyakarta and all of my ancestors are rooted on the same island of Java". Anyways, I was advised by Immigration and Checkpoint Authority to wait and sit tight.

Life Is Very, Very Deep

Mer's 'The Erasure of Memories' (<http://merlyna.blogspot.com/2005/03/erasure-of-memories.html>)

If I could, what memories would I erase? Would it be something from my childhood? An unpleasant set of pictures of myself in a dark corner of my Bandung bedroom? Would it be one friend who betrayed our friendship? Or would it be someone who always give me real laughters yet also sad tears? Our memories store some unpleasant echoes of failure and betrayal. These can make us unhappy; some people want to forget these memories and move with their lives. So, wouldn't it be great if we can have some selective unwanted memories erased? In the movie I just finished watching, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, you can have that option. I'm not gonna tell how the story goes and how it ends. You better watch it by yourself. For me this movie is a reminder that true happiness has no easy answers. It is not merely about a gigantic collection of good and beautiful memories.

Pity the Bule

Savitri's 'Dutch Christians' (http://savitriks.blogspot.com/2005_03_01_savitriks_archive.html):

I have a tip if any of you want to know whether your Dutch Christian friends are Protestant or Catholic. Of course you can always ask them, they are very blunt anyway. But I amused them by saying, 'Based on your vocabulary I can conclude that you were raised in a Protestant family.' I'll start with a historical fact. In the past, in order to have a 'peaceful' community, Dutch society was divided in such a way that Protestants and Catholics do not have any contact at all. There were Protestant cities and Catholic cities. For those who like bridge there were Protestant clubs and Catholic clubs. There were even Protestant television and Catholic television. A Protestant lived in Protestant city, their children attended a Protestant school. The same can be said for Catholics. They were totally unaware of the others that they even developed a different way of saying 'Merry Christmas' or 'Happy Easter'. A Protestant will say 'Vrolijk Kerstdag' and 'Vrolijk Pasen' while a Catholic will say 'Zalig Kerstdag' and 'Zalig Pasen'. The unawareness is as far as if today you ask a Dutch Christian friend, he/she will only tell you one version. They were so unaware of this difference in vocabulary that all

were asking me, "How will people from the other background respond to my question, and moreover, how could I know?"

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