TRADITIONAL BALINESE DANCE CREATIVITY AS MEDIA OF WORSHIPPING GOD IN HINDU RELIGIOUS PRACTICES By:

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Abstract

This research aims to study the creativity of Balinese dance which is used as a medium of worshipping God in Hindu practice. This research is designed in an interpretive descriptive type in order to provide an in-depth description of the research focus. There are three findings in this study, namely art as art as an expression of the soul, art as the cultivation of religious values, and art as a means of worshipping God in Hindu life. *First*, art as an expression of the soul is closely related to the outpouring of feelings through the appearance of works of art that can improve the quality of life. *Second*, arts as the inculcation of religious values are related to the use of Hindu religious symbols. *Third*, art as a means of worship is indicated by artistic creativity that is actualized by dance artists as an appreciation of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) with his various *prabhavas* (manifestation of God) in the implementation of Hindu religious rituals. The movements displayed are representations of the *mudra sulinggih* (gestures of the priest's while performing worship) which are also rhythmic movements that have an association with cosmic dances.

Keywords: creativity, Balinese dance, worshipping media, Hindu religious

I. INTRODUCTION

Balinese dance art created by artists has two orientations, namely as a medium for living up to religious teachings and as a medium for educational entertainment. The art of Balinese dance which is used as a medium to appreciate Hinduism in practice is an act that aims to make an offering to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) and His manifestations. In this regard, the creativity of dance is closely related to symbols related to Hinduism. The symbols used in the creativity of Balinese dance as a representation of the core teachings of Hinduism which have sacred-religious values which are believed to be part of the offering in worship of the greatness of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) and His manifestations.

The creativity of dance arts which is categorized as a form of offerings through hand movements is categorized as part of art as a form of extension of the *mudra*, namely the gestures of the priest's in performing *puja*. In several literary sources of Hinduism, it is also stated that Śiwa Naṭarāja is God who is the king of art. This is in line with the expressions of Sudarsana and Juliawan (2020:7) who state that Śiwa Naṭarāja is conceptually a real manifestation of the implementation of Hinduism in Bali which flows into art forms. The movements of the dancer's hand are called *mudra* in the next development into limb movements.

In dance creativity also has a reference to the source of Hindu teachings that there is the power of God who becomes the spirit in carrying out artistic activities, namely Śiwa Naṭarāja. The symbol Śiwa Naṭarāja represents Śiwa in the position of king of dance. Referring to Armayani (2021:103), Śiwa Naṭarāja has become a spirit in artistic creativity, especially in Balinese dance. Referring to

Semadi (2021:114) that Lord Śiwa was also described as Sang Hyang Acintya in creating this cosmos through a cosmic dance in the form of Śiwa Naṭarāja. Śiwa as a cosmic dancer as a creator and at the same time dissolving the eternal rhythm of the universe through His dance.

Balinese dance performances which are categorized as educational entertainment media are displayed in certain places that evoke a sense of joy and at the same time contain values that can be used as life guidelines for the connoisseurs. The performance of this dance is also closely related to the practice of Hindu religious values. This phenomenon can be seen from the involvement of Hindu religious symbols in the creativity of this dance. Although the art of dance in many kinds, which is a medium of entertainment, is not categorized as a sacred art, its performances also have certain rules relating to the appreciation of Hinduism.

The creativity of Balinese dance that is categorized as a medium of entertainment is often identified as the art of *balih-balihan* dance. The use of the word *balih-balihan* means that in the performance of the dance it is intended to be used as a viewing medium so that the audience can enjoy the entertainment that is presented and at the same time can take an important meaning for this life. The important values that are implied in the performance of this dance are closely related to the teachings of Hinduism. The representation of Balinese dance performance in this context has a very important meaning for improving the quality of life towards the goals taught in Hinduism, in the form of *Jagadhita* (happiness in the world) and *Moksa* (happiness in the hereafter) which can unite with the Creator. The performance of dance also has benefits to create harmony, as expressed by Wirawan (2019:96-97) that the works of art that are staged in a place can be enjoyed by the audience as a vehicle to build social harmony.

The creativity of Balinese dance related to the teachings of Hinduism is inspired by the symbol of Śiwa Naṭarāja , which is a representation of God Almighty as a soul in a dancing position. Śiwa Naṭarāja in a number of literatures, especially in South India, is believed to be the one and only God in controlling the universe and its contents. The Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol which has a connection with the creation, maintenance and fusion of the universe in the life of Balinese people is made the Supreme God who controls the universe and everything in it. The symbol of Śiwa Naṭarāja in the creativity of Balinese dance is the soul of the creation and appearance of the dance art.

With regard to the representation of the God Almighty power symbol above, the movements displayed in Balinese dance art expressions have a close relationship with the rhythmic pattern of the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol. Based on this phenomenon, the expression of Balinese dance that is staged is related to the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies in addition to having a function to enliven the implementation of the ceremony also has important values related to aesthetics and religion. The dimension of religious aesthetics in the expression of Balinese dance art is an element capable of embodying the beauty of the dancer's body movements related to the effort to liberate. The concept of liberation in this context is the detachment of Balinese dance artists towards the results of their creativity. The Balinese people in presenting their artwork recognize the concept of *ngayah*. The concept of *ngayah* is an activity that is carried out without expecting a result, but they carry out activities that are intended as an offering. The concept of ngayah is a form of liberation for a dance artist in expressing his works of art. In

this regard, art is the application of the *karma marga* teachings. The teachings of *karma marga* are very important for appreciation of the teachings of Hinduism. Refer to the Tim Penyusun (2006:87) that *karma marga* is a way to get closer to God by using a sincere way of working that does not tie yourself to the result.

Based on the above background, in this study, a study was conducted on three important aspects of Balinese dance art expression in Hindu practice. *First*, what is the basis for the creativity of Balinese dance in relation to Hindu practice? *Second*, the Hindu religious values involved in Balinese dance? *Third*, what is the driving factor for Balinese artists in expressing their works of art in Hindu practice? The three focus of the study were analyzed to find answers in order to make recommendations to the public.

II. METHODS

The design of this research is interpretive qualitative in order to analyze in depth the studies related to the creative representation of Balinese dance as worship in the implementation of Hinduism. Referring to Merriam (1964:266) that there is a link between art and aesthetics. In this connection it does not imply that art and beauty are the same thing. In the Western aesthetic is the attribution of beauty to the art product or process

Based on the description above, the creativity of Balinese dance as a representation of the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol which is full of religious aesthetic values as a form of presentation from the artist to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty). The data collected was then analyzed using predetermined analysis techniques which were then presented in descriptive form through text, words, expressions, opinions, and ideas from data sources in accordance with the focus of this study.

This research applies a descriptive case study strategy. According to Yin (2004:4), case studies provide opportunities for researchers to maintain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Starting from this phenomenon, the implementation of this research seeks to reveal the events that have emerged as a part that is closely related to the creativity of Balinese dance that is staged in the implementation of Hindu religious rituals in Lombok.

Most of the data in this study were taken by researchers who were supported by interview guides with a number of dance artists and also Balinese dance lovers. Based on this technique, the main instrument in this study is the researcher is assisted by an interview guide which contains a number of open questions. The researchers themselves took to the field to explore data and at the same time the researchers carried out the processing process, which included data reduction, data classification, and data interpretation. Observations are imposed on the creativity of Balinese dance that is staged in the implementation of Hindu religious rituals.

This study uses interpretive descriptive analysis to provide a clear picture of the research focus. Data analysis was carried out by organizing the data into patterns, categories and units to make it easier to draw conclusions. The descriptive data analysis process in this study was carried out in three stages, namely classification, reduction, and interpretation of the data. Classification is data grouping based on the need for analysis, reduction is a process of selecting data in accordance with the focus of the research, and interpretation is the interpretation of

the data to obtain the implied meaning in the activity under study. Dance creativity is related to culture, therefore a number of important meanings can be built in it.

III. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 Balinese Dance Creativity as an Expression of the Spirit in Hindu Life

The art of Balinese dance is a part that is closely related to the expressions of artists in creating a harmonious life, both with themselves and with entities that exist outside of themselves. Balinese dance artists in creating and demonstrating their artwork cannot be separated from activities to refine *budhi* so that they can create self-calmness and inner happiness. This condition provides opportunities for efforts to create harmony with oneself as part of self-climbing towards a better life. Balinese dance artists who produce works of art and at the same time perform their works of art can also create a happy life for other people who enjoy these works of art. In this regard, the works of Balinese dance artists can provide opportunities to create a better life for the community at large. Referring to Suamba (2007:28) argues that performing artistic activities is essentially a way to realize the ideals of achieving life goals, as taught in Hinduism. The energy and imagination power of art will not be in vain if each of them directs everything to the goal of art as liberation.

The Balinese dance artists who produce their artistic works cannot be separated from their activities in spiritual climbing. This phenomenon is indicated by a tendency in producing creative dance works and Balinese dance performances that implement the teachings of Hinduism. The creators of Balinese dance have a spirit associated with sacred symbols of Hinduism, namely using the symbol Śiwa Naṭarāja as a God who is believed to provide guidance in producing works of art and at the same time as a guide in living life towards the final goal. In accordance with what is taught in Hinduism. The Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol is a representation of supernatural powers which in the teachings of Śiwa Tattwa is believed to be the one and only God as the creator of the universe and its contents. In line with that, Widiantari (2018:6-7) reveals that Śiwa Naṭarāja is at the same time as "Nrtyamurti" who shows a collaboration of two aspects of strength, namely the power of dancing and the power of arranging a dance in one figure.

The Hindu community in Bali who uses the teachings of Śiwa Tattwa as a guide in implementing Hindu religious teachings provides an opportunity for the creation of synergy between religious teachings and Balinese cultural practices so as to produce a very beautiful blend. Referring to Wirawan, et al (2020) that the teachings of Śiwa Tattwa serve as guidelines in implementing Hinduism in Bali. In this regard, art as a result of artistic creativity in the Hindu community in Bali can grow and develop as part of the implementation of Hinduism which has been integrated with Balinese culture.

With regard to the above, the results of artistic creativity in the life of the Hindu community in Bali tend to be associated with devotional service or offerings before God that they adore. This is very clearly seen in the creativity of Balinese dance which produces works as a manifestation of the offerings made before God called Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa along with his various manifestations. Balinese dance performances are often associated with *ngayah*, which is a form of offering made through body work and feeling in performing dances aimed at the God whom they adores.

The movements and rhythms displayed in Balinese dance performances are very rich in attitudes that represent worship in front of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa or His manifestations that are presented at the time of the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies. According to Dibia (2003:105); Dewi and Satria (2020:44) there three parts of the body are grouped into three, namely the utamaning angga, madyaning angga, and nistaning angga. Based on this division in dancing activities there are things that need to be considered regarding the level of body purity. The movements of the body starting from the utamaning angga (part of the head, such as the eyes), madyaning angga (the midsection of the body, such as the hands), and nistninga angga (the lower part of the body, such as the legs) have a certain rhythm related to the form of offerings the dance activities to the God. The movements displayed in Balinese dance are closely related to the symbols used in the practice of Hinduism. One of the easiest movements to witness is the dancer's hand movements when performing the dance which has movements that are similar to sacred movements, in the form of *mudra* performed by Hindu priests in performing worship.

Based on the description above, the body movements performed by the dancer when performing the dance are related to symbolic aspects in pain with Hinduism. In Hinduism, it has a herirarchic level. *Utamaning angga* as the most sacred part so it is not treated carelessly. The middle part of the stick is the interface between the *utamaning angga* and the *nistaning angga*. This part of the level of holiness is more in the middle. *Nistaning angga* is the lowest level so that the level of purity is also categorized as the lowest. Although hierarchically there is a division based on the level of holiness, Hinduism teaches that this body should be properly cared for because it is a container for the soul which is called *atman*.

According to the teachings of Hinduism, the soul or *atman* in the human body is the connoisseur of everything that is done by humans. In the Katha Upaniṣad 1.3.3-4 it is revealed that the *jiva* or *atman* that is in the human body is analogous to a passenger in a chariot of the material body. The sloka above is argued by Singh (2007:43-44) that based on Vedanta's teachings, human activities are carried out through the will of conscious life particles (called *spiriton*), which are then translated through intelligence and mind into the human body. the mind interacts with the body through the brain The analogy implies that the journey in this life provides an opportunity for passengers to feel pleasure or also experience suffering during the trip. In the journey of life in this world, there are two events that have binary oppositions, namely between pleasure and suffering experienced as the influence of conditions experienced by humans alone.

The soul, which is analogized as a connoisseur in life, is associated with artistic creativity carried out by humans as having a position as a subject. In this regard, humans can build an assessment of the events they experience. In this regard, artistic creativity can embed religiosity values in its work. This is shown in the creativity of dance works that use Hindu religious symbols. In this connection, the religious values attached to dance works of art provide an opportunity to build awareness to strengthen belief in Hindu religious teachings, both among the artists and the audience. The use of Hindu religious symbols builds a religious mood when performed in a dance performance.

3.2 Balinese dance creativity as the cultivation of aesthetic values of Hinduism

The practice of Balinese dance which is used as a medium for worshiping Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) and all of His manifestations is part of spiritual ascent through the cultivation and development of religious ethical values. In this regard, the artists who express the creativity of the dance art dedicate themselves to increasing spiritual ascent by holding the foundation of aesthetic values as a vehicle to reach the highest awareness. Aesthetic values in this connection serve as guidelines that guide artists in realizing religious awareness by evoking aspects of feeling in conducting ritual communication. Aspects of taste in the context of dance expression can be raised through awareness to release worldly ties in displaying artistic creativity. In this regard, the artists have been able to let go of worldly ties, especially those related to the results of the spiritual *sadhana* that they do have the opportunity to realize union with the Creator, namely Śiwa as taught in Śiwa Siddhanta's teachings. Dance creativity has a philosophical and religious foundation that flows from the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol.

The representation of the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol associated with the teachings of Śiwa Siddhanta refers to Suamba (2007) that the concept of the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol is a tangible manifestation of the Śiwa Siddhanta philosophy that has been applied in religious activities in Bali which then flows into art forms. *Sulinggih* (Hindu priest) in his activity in *muput yadnya* (leading Hindu religious ceremonies) is the embodiment of Śiwa. He is a teacher who teaches knowledge (*shastra*) to Hindus. *Sulinggih* in the process of the *yadnya* ceremony uses certain hand movements called *mudra* (gestures) which are believed to contain high aesthetic, philosophical and mystical values. These hand movements then develop into movements of the dancers' limbs in performing a dance.

In the Hindu practice carried out by the Balinese Hindu followers which involves the participation of Balinese dance art at the same time represents movements that originate from the Śiwa Naṭarāja symbol. The movements performed by dance artists have a number of types, such as hand movements (mudra), leg movements, body movements, neck movements, head movements, eye movements, lip movements, and various other body movements. The movements in Balinese dance performances refer to Suamba (2007) and was reinforced by the expression conveyed by Ketut Kodi (an informant) that there are certain terms used in Balinese dance movements, such as foot movements called *dedengkleng*. When seen in the Śiwa Natarāja symbol, this foot movement is similar to the foot movement displayed in the Śiwa Natarāja symbol. If you pay close attention to the movements performed by dancers in artistic activities, they represent Siwa as Nataraja. The soul contained in Balinese dance movements is actually a symbol of Śiwa Natarāja which is awakened in the dancer through certain rhythms that show aesthetic values which in their accumulation follow cosmic dance movements. In this regard, the dancer positions himself to be able to realize the harmony of the accompanying instrument in the form of music. The synergy between the dancers' movements and the accompanying music is closely related to the cosmic dance inspired by Śiwa Nataraja. Śiwa is believed to be able to give gifts to dance artists who express their dances based on sincerity and a sense of devotion which frees the bonds of their work.

Referring to Suamba (2007), the *nada Brahman* (tone of God) is the sound of the universe. He thrills the soul, fills the universe. The process of the evolution

of the universe is a process of *ngebek* while the involution of the self towards Śiwa is a process of *ningkes*. In this regard, in the process of performing Balinese dance art can purify oneself, others, and the environment. A more than that goal is to bring the self together with Śiwa. The performance of Balinese art is a purification process (*pengeruwatan*) as shown in the *wayang sapuleger*. Every dancer implanted in him that Śiwa was dancing and he danced with Him in an atmosphere of holy, devotional and ecstasy.

The performance of the Śiwa Naṭarāja dance which involves mutualistic communication between the dancer and the audience that can evoke religious values, from an educational perspective, is closely related to the cultivation of character values. This is indicated by the introduction, appreciation, and practice of religious values which are included through the use of the symbol of God Śiwa as the center of the dance orientation. Referring to Tantra (2015: 227) character is self-competence. These competencies include cognitive self-recognition, affective appreciation of values, and conative value practice. The inculcation of character education values in dance performances is also in line with Wirawan's (2019:74) expression that noble traditions as a result of past civilizations have a very important role in building character education.

Based on the description above, there is a close relationship between the performance of Balinese dance and appreciation of the teachings of Hinduism. Art as a vehicle for purifying itself can be seen in several types of art that are used as a vehicle to purify oneself spiritually. In Balinese community life, there are a number of dances that are used as a complement to the implementation of purification ceremonies. This is closely related to Śiwa as the king of the dance who is believed to be able to purify through his cosmic dance. The performance of the Śiwa Naṭarāja dance provides an opportunity to instill values of religiosity as well as values of character education through nonverbal mutualistic communication that occurs between the audience and the dancer in the dance performance.

3.3 Performance of Balinese Dance as a Service in Living the Teachings of Hinduism

Balinese people who embrace Hinduism live the teachings of religion by involving cultural elements, especially in relation to art. The implementation of Hinduism uses art as a medium to carry out religious teachings so that it becomes more vibrant. There are various kinds of arts that are used as a vehicle to create a solemn mood in the practice of Hinduism, such as dance, sound art, percussion art, and various other types of arts. With regard to the involvement of dance in the implementation of religious ceremonies in Balinese Hindus, it can be categorized into two, namely sacred dance and dance which enliven the atmosphere of religious ceremonies. The art of sacred dance is a type of dance that is displayed as an accompaniment to the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies only. This sacred dance art cannot be performed in any place because it is closely related to the stages of carrying out Hindu religious ceremonies. Sacred dance arts that are staged as accompaniment to Hindu religious ceremonies, such as the rejang Dewa dance, the wayang lemah, the topeng dalem sidhakarya dance, the sang hyang dance and a number of other sacred dance arts. The performance of this sacred dance is only in the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies and is not used as a dance for entertainment.

There are also relatively many dances that are used to enliven the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies. The art of dance which is categorized in this dance group is the art of dance which is not only performed in connection with Hindu religious ceremonies, but is performed as a vehicle to enliven the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies. The dance groups are categorized in the art of enlivening the atmosphere, such as the *legong* dance, *baris* dance, topeng dance, and a number of other dances that can be performed to enliven the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies. The dance, which is categorized as a celebration for the implementation of religious ceremonies, does not have a specific place, but can take place in a temple environment that is appropriate for performing these dances. Balinese dance performances associated with the implementation of Hinduism are generally staged in the implementation of the panca yadnya ceremony. In Hindu life in Lombok, the panca yadnya are implemented in the implementation of the *Dewa Yadnya* ceremony, namely the implementation of the ceremony aimed at Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) and His various manifestations in the symbols of Gods and Goddesses. The rsi yadnya ceremony is a ceremony aimed at honoring holy people who have given awareness through the cultivation of Hindu religious teachings. The manusa yadnya ceremony is a ceremony given to humans in order to improve the quality of life in order to achieve the goal of moksartham (attaining eternal liberation) and jagadhita (obtaining happiness in this world). Bhuta yadnya is a ceremony given to beings who are below human level so as not to interfere with human life or it is also termed nyomia (neutralizing negative forces). Pitra yadnya, which is a ceremony given to those who have passed away so that the panca maha bhuta elements (the five elements that make up the body) can be returned to their original world and the spirit that has left the body can go to a place that is in accordance with karma (deeds) performed during his lifetime.

The five types of ceremonies called panca yadnya as described above require complementary forms of dance in order to create a sense of atmanastuti (inner satisfaction) when carrying out the ceremony. The appearance of dance in the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies in relation to *sraddha* (belief) and bhakti (worship) is a practice of worship performed by artists. The creativity of dance that is displayed in the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies is part of worship which is based on a sense of *lascarya* (sincerity) in living the existence of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty), the gods, and other supernatural powers. Artists who display their artistic creativity embody a spiritual discipline known as sadhana. Referring to Suamba (2007:42) argues that dance performance has a close link with the teachings of Siwa Siddhanta, which represents the existence of Siwa as a power which has four aspects, namely chairya, kriya, yoga, and *jnana*. These four aspects are the path or spiritual discipline that is recommended if you want to unite with Siwa. In this regard, dance offerings are one of the sadhana which concerns these four aspects. Building temples, cleaning holy places, offering flowers, water, milk, fire, cloth for decoration of pelinggih (sacred buildings) are classified as charya. Yoga is an activity to do puja and arcana. Yoga is the control of the senses and the mind in order to get a calm and concentrated mind. *Jnana* understood the significance of pati, pasu, and pasa and became one with Siwa through constant meditation in order to get rid of mala.

The Balinese dance art that is displayed in relation to the implementation of Hindu religious ceremonies is a spiritual discipline inspired by the power of God given the identity of Śiwa Naṭarāja The practice of Balinese dance does have a close link with maintaining concentration as well as an effort to spiritual climb in living the existence of Śiwa as the ruler of the universe according to the teachings of Śiwa Siddhanta. The representation of Balinese dance which in its accumulation to realize spiritual discipline through self-awareness leads to cosmic awareness as an entity related to the path of devotion through dance creativity.

Synergize with the phenomena above, Balinese dance, which is featured in Hindu religious activities, has a very important role in complementing the spirituality that is carried out. *First*, Balinese dance which is categorized as sacred dance is a type of dance that is used as a complement to support the implementation of the core rituals of Hinduism. This dance in several places where Hindu religious ceremonies are generally performed must be performed. Sacred dances such as *rejang Dewa, topeng siddha karya, wayang lemah*, and the like. *Second*, Balinese dance, which is not classified as a sacred dance, is performed in connection with Hindu religious rituals which enliven religious ceremonies. This dance that is not sacred is not obligatory, that is, it may or may not be held. This type of Balinese dance such as *legong* dance, *arja* dance, *sendratari* dance and the like.

The dancers who present works of art in Hindu ritual activities as a form of devotion, namely the offering of body movements that have aesthetic value as a form of offering before God. In this regard, those who display works of art use these works as worship, which is offered through body movements. Those who have been able to realize their work and do not give priority to the results of their creativity, but rather as an activity of ngayah, that is, they do not tie the results of their actions. The implementation of worship by using actions or activities is a type of karma marga. Referring to the Tim Penyusun (2006:85) the concept of karma marga is an effort or a way to get closer to God Almighty through sincere effort or action (work), likewise karma yoga has the same meaning as an effort to connect oneself with God Almighty.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, we can conclude three conclusions as research findings. *First*, art as an expression of the soul is closely related to the outpouring of feelings through the appearance of works of art that can improve the quality of life. *Second*, arts as the inculturation of religious values are related to the use of Hindu religious symbols. *Third*, art as a means of worship is indicated by artistic creativity that is actualized by dance artists as an appreciation of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa (God Almighty) with his various *prabhavas* (all of God manifestation) in the implementation of Hindu religious rituals. The movements displayed are representations of the *mudra sulinggih* (gestures of the priest's while performing worship) which are also rhythmic movements that have an association with cosmic dances.

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