



Analysis of the Philosophical and Spiritual Meaning of Sidakarya Mask Dance

Ida Bagus Gede Putra Kinandana

ABSTRACT

The Sidakarya mask is particularly important, symbolizing the descent of Wisnu Murti (Lord Vishnu) to conclude ceremonies. It belongs to the wali dance category and is typically performed close to the ceremony location, serving as a ceremonial conduit alongside the Ida Pedanda leads the prayer. This dance signifies the culmination of the offering ritual preceding the communal worship led by the Sulinggih. Consequently, the Sidakarya mask holds various theological, aesthetic, and philosophical meanings. The Sidakarya mask dance symbolizes the bestowal of prosperity, the elimination of all impurities and illnesses in oneself and nature (Bhuana Alit and Bhuana Agung). The Sidakarya mask dance is a figure of a Brahmana who has rendered service and is capable of creating prosperity for the Hindu community in Bali through the stories performed, which contain meanings and symbols of communication believed by Hindus as a sacred dance used to facilitate the conduct of yadnya ceremonies. The ngayab movement in the Sidakarya mask dance is a symbol of communication that ensures that the yadnya ceremony proceeds smoothly without any disturbances at the niskala level. The movement of scattering yellow rice symbolizes communication, containing the meaning of offering sesajen to evil spirits to prevent them from disturbing humans. The Sidakarya mask dance movement is supported by the properties carried by the Sidakarya mask dancers while dancing, which contain meanings and symbols of communication believed by Hindus as facilitators of the yadnya ceremony.

Keywords: Sidakarya mask, Bali, Hindu, spiritual.

Cite This Article: Kinandana, I.B.G.P. 2024. Analysis of the Philosophical and Spiritual Meaning of Sidakarya Mask Dance. *Bali Tourism Journal* 8(1): 10-14. DOI: 10.36675/btj.v8i1.102

*STT Ayuana Dharma Sari
gkinandana@gmail.com

Received: 2023-10-22
Accepted: 2023-12-30
Published: 2024-01-20

BACKGROUND

As commonly understood, the artistic traditions in Bali are rooted from Hinduism, which is upheld through local customs as a form of reverence to the Supreme Being, incorporating religious teachings into every performance.¹ Bali's Hindu community engages in diverse cultural activities that are intertwined with different aspects of their lives, serving as expressions of their inner selves in response to both the natural environment and life experiences. Consequently, each region in Bali exhibits unique cultural traits based on its specific natural and human resources. Among the various cultural activities practiced by Bali's Hindu community, artistic endeavours encompassing dance, visual arts, painting, vocal arts, music, literature, and more are prominent.²

Practically, artistic activities associated with ceremonies are categorized into three types: wali art, bebal art, and balih-balihan art. Wali art refers to integral artistic elements within ceremonies, considered

indispensable components of the rituals. *Bebali* art, on the other hand, complements the ceremonies, but its inclusion is often discretionary. Meanwhile, *balih-balihan* art serves as entertainment or spectacle and is considered optional. Topeng dance, for instance, falls under the *bebal* art category, supporting the ceremonial proceedings.³

Masks, or topeng, are facial coverings worn primarily during regional artistic performances, accompanied by traditional music. These masks are typically used to pay homage to deities or to portray specific characters, ranging from expressions of anger to gentleness and even wisdom traits.⁴ Masks have significant historical significance in regional art, symbolizing magical and sacred values, and have pivotal roles in rituals and esteemed traditional activities. In contemporary society, masks are revered as high art forms, appreciated for their aesthetic appeal and the enigmatic mystery they represent.

The Sidakarya mask is particularly important, symbolizing the descent of Wisnu Murti (Lord Vishnu) to conclude

ceremonies. It belongs to the wali dance category and is typically performed close to the ceremony location, serving as a ceremonial conduit alongside the Ida Pedanda leads the prayer. This dance signifies the culmination of the offering ritual preceding the communal worship led by the Sulinggih. Consequently, the Sidakarya mask holds various theological, aesthetic, and philosophical meanings, all of which are further explored in this study.

Mask Dance in Hindu Rituals

Masks have been present in Indonesia since prehistoric times. Generally, mask dances are employed in various customary and religious ceremonies or storytelling regarding myth. It is believed that masks are closely related to ancestral spirits, considered interpretations of deities. In some tribes, masks still adorn various daily artistic and customary activities. Some Indonesian mask arts include the Hudog dance of the Dayak tribe, the Balinese Mask Dance, and the Cirebonese Mask Dance.⁶ The function of masks and mask performances is the fulfilment of



Figure 1.⁵ Topeng Pajegan consists of various masks with Sidakarya masks as one of its well-known objects of the Dewa Yadnya ceremony.

artistic expression needs; many artists or artisans nowadays create masks not based on religious elements, but as an effort to depict the typology of specific character traits. In today's modern lifestyle, masks have undergone shifts and developments in form, including patterns, sizes, styles, and functions. Therefore, the creation of masks is not limited to traditional (classic) forms only but also involves the development of various new forms and functions as new creations.⁷

Mask dances in Bali are dramatic dances in which all performers wear masks or face coverings. There are two types of mask dance performances: *Topeng Pajegan* and *Panca* masks. *Topeng Pajegan* consists of various masks with Sidakarya masks as one of its well-known objects of the *Dewa Yadnya* ceremony. The performance of the Sidakarya mask dance coincides with the ceremony's climax. *Topeng Pajegan* is performed by a dancer who embodies approximately fifteen masks. Among these fifteen masks, the Sidakarya mask is considered the most important, as it symbolizes the descent of Wisnu Murti (God) to complete the ceremony.

Before digging into the history of Dalem Sidakarya masks, it is vital to understand the meaning of masks. Masks

have several interpretations; they serve as facial coverings. Here, "cover" refers to covering the human face. Zoete and Walter Spies, in their book entitled *Dance and Drama in Bali*, explain that:

"..., for topeng simply means something pressed against the face, is a mask."

Similarly, some interpret that masks originate from the word "*tup*," meaning cover. The word "*tup*" underwent linguistic changes, adding "*eng*" to become "*tupeng*." For the Balinese, the word "*topeng*" means face cover; thus, mask dance is where performers wear face coverings (masks). Various types of masks are used, including deities, animals, humans, giants, and others. The history of masks in Bali is somewhat vague. Mask artists and dancers themselves need more knowledge about the history of masks. Since it is challenging to explain the presence of mask art in Bali based on data, whether in the form of inscriptions or manuscripts explaining mask art. In Central Java, the Jaha inscription (840 AD) mentions mask performances. The inscription was issued by Sri Lokapala, the ruler of the Kuti region, and it mentions several performing arts: 1) *Juru Jalir*, meaning officials who organize performances; 2. *Dagang*, meaning officials in charge of clowns, 3.

Atapukan, meaning mask performance art, 4. *Arinngit*, meaning puppet theatre, 5. *Abanwan*, meaning comedy, 6. *Haluwarak*, referring to noble families leading puppet and mask performances, 7. *Winingle*, meaning percussionists, 8. *Pawindu*, meaning puppeteer or dancer wearing a *wawankata*. Based on this description, it is clear that the term "*Atapukan*" refers to mask performance art.^{9,10}

Apart from this inscription, another inscription mentioning mask performances was found, namely the Balitung inscription (907 AD). The inscription reads:

"..., *Sanghyang Tangkil Hyang* (to meet), *si Nalu macarita* (narrates) *Bhima Kumara Mangigel* (dances) are characters from the Ramayana story, impersonating and entertaining, while *galigi mawayang* (puppetry) is used for ancestors, with Maya Kumara's story. The nobles prepare to gamble, while two people prepare to wear *Atapukan* or masks."

Meanwhile, an inscription mentioning mask performances was found in Bali, namely the Bebetin inscription. The inscription mentions "*Partapukan*," meaning mask or face covering. In addition to these inscriptions, a manuscript that explains mask performances was found, namely the Ularan Prasraya manuscript. The manuscript narrates the reign of Dalem Waturenggong (1460-1550) in Gelgel. It is recounted that during his reign, he aimed to conquer Blambangan. Forces were sent under the leadership of Ki Patih Ularan and accompanied by Ki Gusti Jelantik Pesimpangan. During the siege, Sri Dalem Juru's head was severed, and Blambangan was conquered. Various items were seized as evidence of the conquest. Among these items were one box of masks and one *Gambuh* puppet. It can be estimated that mask performances in Bali existed before the pre-Gelgel period and continued during the Gelgel period and subsequent kings.¹¹

Meaning of Dalem Sidakarya Mask in General

The presence of the Dalem Sidakarya mask dance in the Dewa Yadnya ceremony itself has long been established, with its implementation usually taking place after



Figure 2.¹² The presence of the Sidakarya mask also serves as a means of Hindu religious education.

the series of ceremonies has concluded. Although the existence of the Sidakarya mask has been longstanding, many people still need to understand the presence of this mask art. This lack of understanding may affect the existence of the Sidakarya mask dance itself, as the community's limited knowledge regarding the function and meaning of masks may result in insufficient preservation of Balinese art, especially considering that the Sidakarya mask dance is not a primary art but rather a supporting one in the *bebali* arts, serving only to complement the ceremonies. When considering the importance of the Sidakarya mask dance performance in the ceremony, it is crucial, as the presence of the mask itself serves as a means of communication-related to the ongoing ceremony. Through the enacted play, the function of the Sidakarya mask serves as an educational medium for the community, aimed at enhancing their understanding of the ongoing ceremony.

Every sacred dance in Bali cannot be separated from the concepts of Yantra, Tantra, and Mudra. Notably, the movements of the Sidakarya mask dance include symbolic mudras with profound meanings. Before discussing into interpreting the hand postures of the Sidakarya mask dance, which are essentially *Mudras*, then it is important



Figure 3.¹⁸ The ceremony is the realization of *yadnya*, or sacred sacrifice, most visibly realized in society.

to understand about *mudras*. *Mudra Wignana* is the science of *Mudras*, the secret of the human body's extraordinary power. This power is seldom understood, even by masked art performers who may need to be made aware of the secrets behind hand movements (*Mudras*). According to Tantra practitioners, various electrical waves flow through the body to the fingertips. Moving the fingers with *Mudra* postures will awaken dormant nerve cells, leading to optimum health. Tantra Sastra explains how *Mudra*'s work. When performing hand positions (*Mudras*), the sacred energy moves to the fingertips, emitting powerful vibrations that can channel divine power or *saktipat* energy. *Mudra* is a science of Yoga, awakening cosmic energy to cleanse the body, mind, and soul. *Mudra* indirectly serves as a healing medium, addressing physical and mental ailments. *Mudra* is believed an act to awaken natural or cosmic energy since the universe, according to Hinduism is formed by five elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether. Indeed, all fingers are connected to these five elements, and these elements can mysteriously heal because *Mudra* can awaken Atom energy within the body.^{13,14,15}

The five elements in each finger are as follows: 1) The Thumb represents the element of *akasha* or space, 2) The Index

Finger represents the element of *vayu* or air, 3) The Middle Finger represents the element of *Agni* or fire, 4) The Ring Finger represents the element of *Prithvi* or earth, 5) The Little Finger represents the element of *jala* or water. These elements will function well if each element is united, and in *Mudra*, these elements are united by linking one finger to another. Hand movements, head, eye, and other body part movements can convey wordless drama, expressing daily human experiences and the lives of gods and the universe. Moreover, the hand gestures in the Sidakarya mask dance hold parallel meanings with *Mudras* as a medium for building natural energy to purify *Bhuwana Alit* (microcosmos) and *Bhuwana Agung* (macrocosms).

Function and Value of Sidakarya Mask

Belief systems continually undergo changes and developments in line with an individual's cognitive level. Religion is not merely a matter of spirit but also involves an intense relationship between religions as a source of values and religion as a source of cognition. Firstly, religion serves as a pattern for human actions. In this regard, religion acts as a guide for human actions. Secondly, religion constitutes a pattern of human actions. Religion results from human knowledge and experience, often institutionalized as a mystical force. In this context, the performance of the Sidakarya Mask in a *Dewa Yadnya* ceremony in religious life instills religious values that its audience can glean to improve the quality of life or enhance life's quality. A profound understanding of religious teachings will undoubtedly strengthen the Hindu religious spirit.

Traditional arts such as the Sidakarya Mask dance are forms of art that also embody divine or spiritual values. However, the message is not delivered directly; traditional art can be interpreted as sacred art. Sacred art is the heart of traditional art and is directly related to divine revelations emanating from a tradition's core. The relationship between the two is evident in worship rituals, where sacred art is involved in rituals and worship practices directed towards the Supreme God. On the other hand, traditional art is involved in the practical

aspects of these worship rituals, referring to ancient traditions. The foundation of traditional art lies in *Scientia sacra*, which views the highest reality as absolute and unlimited, reflecting perfection and harmony with nature. Therefore, in Hinduism, traditional art cannot be interpreted merely as an ancient heritage. It is understood as a principle that teaches about the metaphysical aspects to guide humans back to their original purpose, namely, as creatures of God assigned only to worship Him.

The presence of the Sidakarya mask in the Dewa Yadnya ceremony is also part of conveying meaning in ceremonies and is a transformative process of knowledge to mature society. This function highlights that the presence of the Sidakarya mask also serves as a means of Hindu religious education. Hinduism is highly complex, and each teaching contains essential life lessons. There are three fundamental frameworks to obtain a comprehensive and profound knowledge of Hinduism: *Tattwa* (philosophy), *Susila* (ethics), and *Upacara* (rituals). These three cannot be separated from each other because they constitute the framework of life in society. Similarly, Hindu religious teachings are encapsulated in the performance of the Sidakarya mask in the Dewa Yadnya ceremony.¹⁷

Values of Tattwa (Philosophy)

The term "*tattwa*" originates from the Sanskrit language, which can be translated as truth and reality. In Balinese manuscripts, the word "*tattwa*" denotes truth itself. Generally, *tattwa* refers to a human perspective on the world, encompassing human perspectives and the essence of divinity. All creatures in the universe have a source of birth, and God is the original cause of the universe and its contents, and it is to Him that everything returns. The performance of the Sidakarya mask dance reflects the essence of life, and the social structure undoubtedly plays a role, each of which cannot be ignored, as a single system error can disrupt the order of life. Increasing awareness of maintaining unity begins within oneself, enabling us to preserve purity.

Ethical Values (Susila)

The term "*susila*" originates from the Sanskrit language, consisting of two syllables: "*su*," meaning good or noble, while "*sila*" means behaviour or attitude and norms, which include notions of propriety, politeness, norms, commands, and standards. Therefore, "*susila*" encompasses norms, whether they demonstrate attitudes towards fellow norms or religious commandments originating from the revelation or word of *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*. Ethics or moral education is the education of reasonable and proper behaviour that guides human life. Considering that humans are creatures of God, they are primarily responsible because only humans possess the *Tri pramana*, namely *sabda*, *bayu*, *idep*, among other living beings, and can implement the *Tri Kaya Parisudha* doctrine, namely *Kayika parisuda* (doing good), *Wacika parisudha* (speaking well), *manachika parisudha* (thinking well). Therefore, humans can always analyse what is good and bad for themselves. Therefore, in life, humans must be able to regulate their behaviour.

Educational ethics is knowledge in the form of a condition that contains prohibitions and commands to do something. Humans will not escape from good or bad thoughts, but it is hoped that humans will be able to think appropriately according to Hindu religious teachings. The presence of the Sidakarya mask represents the essence of life order in terms of characterization, and the stories conveyed. It is richly packed with ethical teachings in society. In characterization, for example, the ethics of servants with kings and priests (holy people) are clearly evident, indirectly reflecting to the audience the teachings of ethics or *susila*.

Ritual Value (Ceremony)

A ceremony is a teaching concerning the procedure for performing religious ceremonies. In Balinese society, the most prominent aspect is the implementation of ceremonies in the form of *yadnya*. "*yadnya*" originates from the Sanskrit language, meaning sacred sacrifice or worship. Therefore, "*yadnya*" means sacred worship or anything related to sacrifice or offerings based on pure and

sincere hearts. The performance of *yadnya* always characterizes a solid testimony to the Hindu community in its daily life. This *yadnya* is performed by Hindus with complete devotion. However, this devotion is complete with offerings in the form of *banten* as a means of the ceremony. Based on the description above, the ceremony is the realization of *yadnya*, or sacred sacrifice, most visibly realized in society. Equipment, known as *upakara* or *banten*, is needed to support the ceremony itself. A learning or educational process is required to know the offerings used, their making, and how the ceremony is performed. Therefore, in carrying out a ceremony, education always accompanies the *yadnya* being performed, regardless of its magnitude.

The use of ceremonial means before starting the Sidakarya mask performance undoubtedly guides the community to increase their religious sense and is an educational medium. The mask performance involves a high level of complexity, so it would be beneficial for the community to study the offerings so that the values contained in them can be conveyed correctly.

CONCLUSION

Art in Bali originates from Hinduism, which is based on local customs, thus representing devotion to the Supreme God, containing religious teachings in every performance, one of which is the Sidakarya mask dance. The Sidakarya mask plays an essential role in every *yadnya* ceremony for Hindus in Bali. The Yadnya ceremony is only considered complete once the Sidakarya mask dance is performed. Sidakarya means work that is complete or finished. In the performance of the Sidakarya mask dance, there are three concepts: the concept of beauty, the concept of ritual value, and the concept of spiritual value; where these three concepts have a unified meaning of *Sad Rasa*, becoming *Sad Guna*, resulting in *Sadining Lango* or *Kelangoan*. In the Sidakarya mask dance, many philosophical meanings can be reflected upon. For example, the white mask symbolizes purity, the narrow eyes symbolize self-awareness, the protruding teeth symbolize simplicity, and the symbol of strength as a balance, the half-human

face or demonic symbolizes balance or *Rwa Bhineda*, long hair signifies being unbound, and there are many more philosophical meanings contained in the Sidakarya mask dance, including the hand gestures or *Mudras* used during the performance.

In conclusion, the Sidakarya mask dance symbolizes the bestowal of prosperity, the elimination of all impurities and illnesses in oneself and nature (*Bhuana Alit* and *Bhuana Agung*). The Sidakarya mask dance is a figure of a Brahmana who has rendered service and is capable of creating prosperity for the Hindu community in Bali through the stories performed, which contain meanings and symbols of communication believed by Hindus as a sacred dance used to facilitate the conduct of *yadnya* ceremonies. The *ngayab* movement in the Sidakarya mask dance is a symbol of communication that ensures that the *yadnya* ceremony proceeds smoothly without any disturbances at the *niskala* level. The movement of scattering yellow rice symbolizes communication, containing the meaning of offering *sesajen* to evil spirits to prevent them from disturbing humans. The Sidakarya mask dance movement is supported by the properties carried by the Sidakarya mask dancers while dancing, which contain

meanings and symbols of communication believed by Hindus as facilitators of the *yadnya* ceremony.

REFERENCES

1. Rianta, I. M., Santosa, H., & Sariada, I. K. (2019). Estetika Gerak Tari Rejang Sakral Lanang Di Desa Mayong, Seririt, Buleleng, Bali. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 34(3), 285-393.
2. Wirawan, K. I. (2019). Liturgi sakralisasi Barong-Rangda: Eksplorasi teo-filosofis estetik mistik Bali. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 34(3), 417-427.
3. Januar, R. (2020). Topeng Sidakarya Dance; A Man who made it a success. *Bali Tourism Journal*, 4(1), 6-9.
4. Suhardana, K. M. (2006). Pengantar Etika dan Moralitas Hindu: Bahan Kajian Untuk Memperbaiki Tingkah Laku. Surabaya: Paramita.
5. Image of Topeng Pajegan masks by Cultureartwork tattoo studio. (2023). Pinterest. Available from URL: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/800233427521176025/>
6. Dibia, I.W. (2014). Pragina. Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar. Denpasar: Sava Media.
7. Martono, M., Iswahyudi, I., & Handoko, A. (2017). Topeng Etnik Nusantara Dalam Perkembangan Budaya Global. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 32(1).
8. Bandem, I. M. (1983). Ensiklopedi Tari Bali. Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia.
9. Zoete, B. D., & Spies, W. (1938). Dance and drama in Bali. New York: Thomas Yoseloff.
10. Artiningsih, N. W. J. (2020). Estetika Hindu Pada Pementasan Topeng Sidakarya Dalam Upacara Dewa Yadnya. Genta Hredaya: Media Informasi Ilmiah Jurusan Brahma Widya STAHN Mpu Kuturan Singaraja, 3(2).
11. Soekanto, S. (1986). Sosiologi: suatu pengantar.
12. Image of Dalem Sidakarya at Pura Dalem Mimba. (2024). Private Collection
13. Wirawan, K. I. (2021). Teo-Estetika-Filosofis Topeng Sidakarya Dalam Praktik Keberagamaan Hindu Di Bali. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 36(2), 230-236.
14. Swathy, I. D. A. I., Joni, I. D. A. S., & Suryawati, I. G. A. A. (2020). Makna Simbol Komunikasi Dalam Tari Topeng Sidakarya. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Ilmu Komunikasi Medium*, 1(1), 38-45.
15. Dewi, P. M. C., & Wardana, I. P. P. (2018). Mengenal Sejarah dan Perkembangan Topeng Sidakarya. *Acarya Pustaka: Jurnal Ilmiah Perpustakaan Dan Informasi*, 5(1), 16-21.
16. Putra, N. P. A., Suparman, I. N., & Mudita, I. W. (2023). PEMAHAMAN MASYARAKAT HINDU TENTANG PEMENTASAN TARI TOPENG SIDAKARYA DALAM UPACARA PUJAWALI DI PURA TRI KHAYANGAN KECAMATAN BOLANO KABUPATEN PARIGI MOUTONG. *Widya Genitri: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan, Agama dan Kebudayaan Hindu*, 14(2), 181-198.
17. Suteja, I. K. (2005). Tari Sunya: Transformasi Konsep Dan Filosofi Dari Tari Topeng Sidakarya. *Mudra (Jurnal Seni Budaya)*, 16(1), 72-92.
18. Image of Pedanda Mungguh. (2024). Private Collection

