



## DRAMATIC DANCE WORK WITH THE TITLE "PUNARBHAVA" AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE MEANING OF THE CAKRA PALAH BATIK MOTIF

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**Abstract:** The dramatic dance work "Punarbhava" is an artistic expression born from deep contemplation of the meaning behind the Cakra Palah batik motif, a cultural symbol of Blitar Regency that holds profound philosophical values about the cycle of human life. The primary inspiration for this work stems from the philosophy of Cakra Manggilingan, which conveys the idea that life continuously turns — from glory to downfall, and then rises again with newfound wisdom. In this piece, the choreographer seeks to express the spiritual message that true fulfillment in life is not defined by luxury or power, but by the awareness of one's limitations as a creation of God.

Using a dramatic dance form with a double-climax structure, Punarbhava presents intense emotional dynamics in each scene. Rather than delivering a linear narrative, it emphasizes moods and inner conflicts through explorations of movement, expression, makeup, costume, and stage patterns that blend into one cohesive whole. The creative process incorporates Jacqueline Smith's Construction Method I — starting from exploration, improvisation, and evaluation, to refinement — to convey the concept fully and aesthetically.

As an expression of love for local cultural heritage, Punarbhava serves not only as a personal form of artistic expression but also as a contribution to introducing the cultural values of Blitar to a broader audience. Through this work, the Cakra Palah batik motif is no longer confined to visual patterns on fabric, but transforms into living, touching, and inspiring body movements. This dance is hoped to open a dialogue between traditional arts, spirituality, and local identity that remains relevant in today's evolving era.

**Keywords:** dance work, punarbhava, batik cakra palah.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cakra Palah is one of the distinctive batik motifs originating from Blitar Regency. Since it was introduced in 2019, this motif has been actively promoted to the wider public through various media and promotional activities.

The "Cakra Palah" motif holds profound philosophical meaning. According to Suhendro, as cited in *Times Indonesia* (2022), the word cakra comes from Sanskrit, meaning "wheel" or "circle." In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), cakra is also defined as a circular, flat, and sharp metal disc, referring to the iconic weapon of the god Vishnu, which in wayang (shadow puppetry) stories is depicted as having extraordinary power—even capable of ending any life it touches.

In Hindu teachings and in the beliefs of many Asian cultures, cakra is known as a center of metaphysical energy within the human body. Furthermore, the concept of Cakra Manggilingan, or the ever-turning wheel, conveys a philosophy about life's continuous



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movement. Just as eras and power or civilizations have their cycles, all things have a beginning and an end.

Understanding the meaning of *Cakra Manggilingan* teaches us not to be carried away in euphoria during times of happiness, nor to be consumed by sorrow when faced with sadness. This philosophy encourages us to remain wise in navigating changing times—whether we find ourselves at the peak as leaders or when that role has ended. Embracing the philosophy of *Cakra Manggilingan* also means having the courage to undergo the process of *Triwikrama*, which is about harmonizing the strengths of our past, present, and future selves. Because life's wheel keeps turning: sometimes we are on top, sometimes below. This awareness serves as an important reminder for society to continue acting wisely, to draw lessons from past experiences, and to use them to navigate the present and prepare for the future.

The unique meaning contained in *Cakra Palah*, or the wheel of life, is an appealing source of inspiration for choreographers in creating dance works. Among the various interpretations and meanings, choreographers are particularly drawn to the philosophy of the human life cycle. This becomes the main foundation in the creative process of developing the dance work.

Moreover, the meaning of *Cakra Palah* can be expressed not only through dance movements but also through costume themes and parade concepts.

The formulation of this work focuses on exploring dynamic movements that convey an initial state of glory, a middle phase of decline due to the turning of circumstances, and a return to glory based on conscience. It is accompanied by orchestral-style music to evoke a sense of grandeur and luxury that supports the creation of a dramatic dance work. The aim of this writing is to describe and analyze the dance work titled *Punarbhava*.

According to Hadi (2012), choreography comprises two main aspects: content and form. Content refers to the meaning or values contained in the dance work, while form is the tangible result seen visually through elements of movement, space, and time, without necessarily considering the underlying meaning.

Choreography itself is the process of arranging and shaping dance movements that requires awareness of space, time, and movement. This process involves three main stages: exploration, improvisation, and composition. Exploration is the initial stage that involves stimulating the senses in response to objects or phenomena. Improvisation is the spontaneous search for free movement. The final stage is composition, in which movements are structured based on aesthetic principles.

In creating a dance work, choreographers are influenced by artistic principles such as unity (the cohesion between content and form), variety (to avoid monotony), repetition (to reinforce ideas),

and contrast (the striking differences between dance elements such as tempo or mood). These principles help maintain the coherence and integrity of a performance.

Furthermore, transitions are needed to connect movements so that the sequence flows harmoniously. The order of movements ensures continuity and expression, while the climax is the emotional peak in choreography that is crucial for leaving an impression on the audience. Climax is often achieved by increasing tempo, movement intensity, or rapid repetition.

Finally, the principles of balance and harmony play a role in the overall stability and unity of the dance work. Continuity relates to body technique and stage direction, while harmony ensures the alignment of all elements. From these principles emerges an aesthetic and meaningful composition. All these principles form the essential foundation for creating choreography.

## 2. METHOD

In general, the method of creation is a structured way to produce a work of art. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), *method* means an orderly way to achieve a goal, while *creation* is the process or act of creating. In the context of dance works, the method of creation used here refers to Construction Method 1, as described by Jacqueline Smith (1985). This method includes the stages of initial stimulus, determination of dance type, presentation model, improvisation, evaluation, and motif.

Initial stimulus is the process of discovering ideas in dance creation, typically starting from an initial provocation or inspiration. This stage is important because it helps the choreographer formulate concepts based on intuition and natural feelings that arise from personal experience. Instinct and emotional engagement form the foundational basis for building a dance composition.

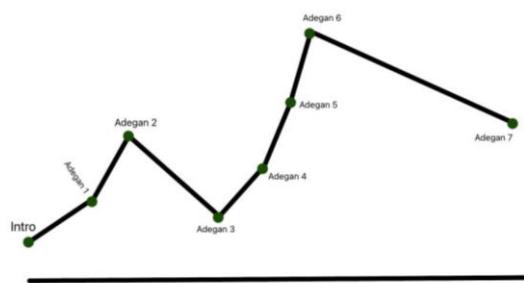
The improvisation stage is fundamentally different from exploration. While exploration involves deeply thinking, feeling, and responding to a stimulus or idea (Hadi, 2003:26), improvisation is more about spontaneous movement. In other words, improvisation is the dancer's direct reaction to a specific idea, space, or mood without extensive pre-planning.

According to Murgiyanto (1983), dance themes can come from what is seen, heard, thought, and felt. They generally relate to God, humans, or the environment. Themes can also emerge from personal experiences, including social conditions and emotional states. In this work, the choreographer is inspired by the meaning of the *Cakra Palah* batik motif, which represents the cycle of human life or rebirth. This serves as the initial stimulus, shaping bodily habits and developing into a creative idea.

The title of this work is "Punarbhava," which describes the cyclical nature of human life / rebirth. This piece explores the body,

soul, and living space through movement. The use of this Javanese title is intended to draw attention and create a distinctive impression. The chosen dance type is dramatic dance, characterized by strong, emotional, and tense ideas without presenting an explicit storyline.

The dramatic design used here is a double-cone structure, consisting of two climactic peaks. This structure starts from a high point, rises slightly higher, drops to a very low point, rises a little again, then builds up to the highest climax before ending in an anti-climax. This design regulates the development of the audience's emotions and delivers a gradual build-up of dramatic intensity.



The mode of presentation in this dance work follows two approaches: representational and symbolic. Representational means the presentation is done clearly so that the message is easy for the audience to understand. Symbolic presentation, on the other hand, uses signs or symbols to convey certain meanings. In this dance work, the choreographer combines both approaches—using movements that depict the cyclical turning of life's wheel, along with symbolic expressions of atmosphere or meaning through movement and accompaniment.

The dance techniques employed cover various aspects, such as body control, managing energy through relaxation and contrast, balance, and *take a break* movements. These techniques help dancers express ideas aesthetically and support the strength of conveying the theme.

The movement style in this dance is influenced by the meanings and symbols of glory, luxury, suffering, revival, and a return to conscience-guided greatness. *Take a break* movements are used as a symbol of pauses in work activities.

This work is performed by seven dancers, consisting of three male and four female performers. This number was chosen to maintain balance and support the choreography while still delivering the intended emotional intensity.

Props used include trapezoidal boxes and the *cakra manggilingan* weapon. These props are employed to enhance the atmosphere created through movement.

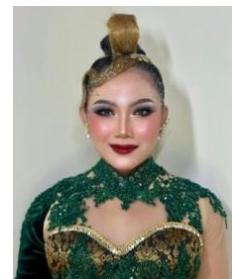
Technically, this work is staged on a proscenium stage, with lighting design adapted to the narrative flow and mood of the piece.

Different scenes use distinct lighting setups to aesthetically build the atmosphere for each segment.

Makeup, hair, and costumes for the performers are also designed to bring the intended mood to life. For female dancers, makeup features a bold and beautiful style to project a luxurious impression under stage lights. Male dancers use handsome makeup with prominent eyeshadow colors to convey a masculine look. This includes dark eyeshadow, silver glitter, and thickened eyebrows for a sharp appearance even from a distance. Female dancers' hair is styled with long blonde braids and a small bun on top of the head to create an impression of luxury. For male dancers, hair is kept clean and neatly lifted to maintain a masculine aesthetic.



Make Up Male



Make Up Female

The dancers' costumes are designed not merely to cover the body but to support the artistic and movement needs of the choreography. Female dancers wear modern kebaya tops accented with handwoven batik, while male dancers wear modernized beskap tops adorned with sequins. All dancers wear Mahabharata-style pants, complemented by traditional elements such as sempong, drefer, sashes, brooches, and *ilatan* accessories. The color palette includes shades of green, gold, black, and light green—symbolizing luxury and togetherness (keguyupan).



Costume Female



Costume Male

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Work Description

*Punarbhava* is a newly choreographed dance work presented in a dramatic dance form, carrying thematic content about the cyclical nature of life—the turning of the wheel or rebirth. The choreographer's interest in choosing the theme for *Punarbhava* originated from an initial stimulus grounded in personal, empirical experience of life's cyclical nature, something they themselves have encountered. This became the starting point for the choreographer's creative idea, generating new concepts to be shaped into a dance performance.

- Title: *Punarbhava*
- Synopsis:  
Humans are created in grandeur, luxury, and glory, rivaling the gods. Blessings meant to bring grace turn into depravity inviting the universe's curse. Thrones turn to dust. Life reverses, swallowed by the darkness of punishment. A shining stone is reborn through the faint whisper of conscience.
- Number of Performers: 7 (consisting of 3 male dancers and 4 female dancers)
- Music: Digital music
- Props: Trapezoidal box, Cakra Palah weapon
- Scenario:

NO	SCENE	MOTIVATION	DURATION	INFORMATION
1.	INTRODUKSI	Showing glory or a position superior to the gods, ego and arrogance covered his glory days, which were visualized through the movements of each dancer. And it gives a little	01.33	Depiction of a group that was born into glory, but behind their glory they have an arrogance and arrogance, and the reason they fell was because of their ego and arrogance

		picture of them entering an upside down life (the period below).		
2.	ADEGAN I	A state of glory wrapped in ego and arrogance, where the dancer will make bold movements, full of luxury.	02.00	The depiction of someone having glory but there is ego and arrogance
3.	ADEGAN II	Because of the nature of ego and arrogance, the universe responded by reversing the conditions that were previously above and now below.	01.00	The depiction of the reason why the position of glory is reversed below is due to the actions of his arrogant and arrogant character
4.	ADEGAN III	The life that has been turned around makes things more miserable,	01.00	A depiction of living conditions that are starting to become miserable and full of pressure

		full of life's stress.		
5.	ADEGAN IV	In conditions below, we are made aware of the need to fight to rise from the adversity we are experiencing	01.30	Depiction of self-introspection / correcting mistakes that have been made in the past, and wanting to start again to rise from the adversity experienced
6.	ADEGAN V	By doing self-introspection, we create a sense of rising from adversity by symbolizing one of the dancers who invites a group to rise from a protracted adversity in a wise manner.	01.30	Depiction of awakening and struggle from adversity for a better life as in the beginning of glory with a wise personality
7.	ENDING	Resurrection ushers in the walls of glory again, being reborn in glorious, wise,	03.00	The depiction of gratitude for their struggle to be able to succeed and return to the point of glory

		nurturing glory		and be reborn as a wise figure in their glory days without being influenced by an arrogant and conceited character, is more mangayomi
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### **The process of creating and exploring**

The process is a creative activity to express ideas, ideas or experiences into the form of works of art. This process includes the stages of planning, exploration, analysis, and delivery of the work. In the Punarbhava dance work, the process of creating the work goes through several stages, namely exploration, improvisation, composition, analysis, finishing and delivery.

The exploration stage was carried out based on the choreographer's empirical experience through appreciation of the Batik Cakra Palah fashion show that was seen, felt and heard. In the context of the work, exploration is carried out by observing the human life cycle of luxury and fall until rebirth. This observation becomes the basis for creating forms of movement on stage.

Exploration is also carried out through observing the nature of humans who have the characteristics of ego, arrogance, surprise, decline, awakening. Not only that, the choreographer also observed how the Cakra Palah batik fashion show models walked. Then invite dancers to experience the process so that the movements are not only technical, but emotional and communicative.

#### **a) Improvisation and composition**

Improvisation is done spontaneously based on body memory during exploration. This opens up the idea of expressive movement. The next stage is composition, composition is the stage of compiling and selecting complete structured choreographic movements, in accordance with the concept and meaning to be conveyed.

b) Analysis, evaluation and finishing

After passing the composition stage, analysis and evaluation is carried out to ensure the accuracy of the movements. Finishing is the final refinement stage. This stage includes movement, expression, costumes, lighting and stage practice. Joint discussions help perfect the work before it is performed.

c) Material delivery techniques: ideas and demonstrations

The choreographer conveys ideas through discussions with the team involved, including dancers, artistic and crew. Demonstration techniques are used to show and imitate movements directly.

d) Evaluation

Evaluation is carried out by appreciating documentation such as videos and photos. Test performances and discussion of criticism and suggestions are part of the final refinement before the work is shown in its entirety.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Alhamdulillah, all praise and gratitude to Allah SWT for enabling the smooth completion of this final project report. I sincerely thank Allah SWT for His blessings that allowed every stage of this dance work—from proposal to defense—to proceed without major obstacles. I am deeply grateful to Dra. Jajuk Dwi Sasanadjati, M.Hum., my supervisor, for her guidance, feedback, and motivation throughout the preparation of this report. I also extend my appreciation to the lecturers of the Performing Arts Education Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, for their invaluable knowledge and support. Special thanks to all my dancers—Kak Romi, Kak Fairuz, Dinda, Rike, Kristian, Galuh, Tasya, and Angel—for their hard work, commitment, and exceptional performance in bringing this work to life. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my family, especially my grandmother, Aunt Santi, my father, and all relatives who have supported and prayed for the success of this work. I am also thankful to my friends in the Performing Arts program who have been like family and added color to my academic journey.

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