



E-ISSN 2338-6770

Submitted date : -

Revised date : -

Accepted date : -

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THE SYBOLIC MEANING OF THE DANCE MOVEMENT OF BEDHAYA AMBADYA TIRTA BY ANUGRAH NATALIN NILAWATI THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE DANCE MOVEMENT OF BEDHAYA AMBADYA TIRTA BY ANUGRAH NATALIN NILAWATI

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the movements of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance created by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati and explain the symbolic meanings contained within it. The focus of this study is on the structure of the movements and the cultural and spiritual messages conveyed through the dance. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews with dancers and music arrangers, direct observation of dance performances, as well as relevant visual and written documentation. The results of the study show that the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance has highly structured, gentle, and meaningful movements. These movements represent elegance, harmony, and the connection between humans and nature and the spiritual dimension. Each movement not only reflects aesthetics and traditional values but also serves as a medium for conveying profound messages about purity, peace, and inner balance. The symbolism embedded in this dance depicts the process of uniting the human soul with the universe, making it not only a form of artistic expression but also a means of spiritual contemplation and cultural preservation. Symbolic Meaning of the Movements in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta Dance by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati

Keywords: Dance Movements, Symbolism, Spirituality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dance is a cultural expression that goes beyond just body movements. It combines the harmony of body movement, musical rhythm, and often narrative, into a stunning work of art. More than just a random series of movements, dance is an art form steeped in meaning, history, and deep cultural context. Every movement, every melody, even every costume worn by dancers has its own story that is passed down from generation to generation (Utami & Fitriani, 2021). The function of dance in society is not only entertainment, but also a reflection of cultural diversity that is rich in noble values and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation (Susanto & Asih, 2021). One of the regions in Indonesia that presents the beauty and richness of its traditional arts is Tulungagung. Located in East Java Province, this regency exudes a mesmerizing natural charm and presents an alluring cultural diversity. Tulungagung is not only known for its natural beauty, but also for its traditional arts that captivate the heart (Hesawati & Susilo, 2021). One of the riches of traditional art that Tulungagung is proud of is the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance.

The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is a form of dance that originates from the Bedhaya tradition inherited in the palace environment. With its sacred nature, the Bedhaya dance takes the basis of the story from myths or legends, thematically contains philosophical and socio-religious meanings, and carries ethical, moral, and life values that are relevant to a certain time. This spiritual aspect has been the standard concept that underlies the aesthetic and choreographic concept of Bedhaya dance (Hamengku Buwono X, 2011). The symbolism in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance reflects a deep concept of human life, as taught in the



teachings of theosophy and Sufism. The seven elegant angels dancing in this dance are not just physical representations,

It also represents seven important aspects of human life, ranging from the physical dimension (*rupa*) to the spiritual dimension (*atma*). In the context of the *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* dance, the seven angels are not literally represented by seven different dancers, but by one or several dancers who symbolically perform these roles. The seven aspects are: 1) *rupa* (form), 2) soul (essence of life), 3) *phallia sharira* (*tuh*), 4) *karma rupa* (animal nature that exists in humans), 5) *manas* (humanity), 6) *buddhist* (intellect), and 7) *atma* (conscience). By embodying each of these aspects in elegant and symbolic dance movements, the *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* dance becomes a profound medium to depict the journey and existence of human beings in life, from the material to the spiritual dimension. Philosophically, there are three things that symbolize the meaning of life to achieve perfection in life in the context of this dance. The first is "*Tirta Martani*", which symbolizes the water of life. The second is "*Tirta Kamandanu*", which depicts the seed water of life. And the third is "*Tirta Prawitasari*", which is a combination of the two water elements that melt into one unit in the human body. The perfection of life that is the core of his reflection comes from the understanding of "*Sangkan paraning dumadi*" (Hamengku Buwono X, 2011). From there, one's authority and charisma radiate, giving a deeper dimension to the spiritual experience that is manifested in every movement and nuance of the *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* dance.

The *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* dance is not only an ordinary art performance, but also a form of supplication and meditation to the Creator. In the context of the *Bersih Nagari* ceremony, this dance is not only entertainment or entertainment, but also an important means to control oneself from human desires that must be avoided. Thus, this dance has a very significant role in strengthening spirituality and noble values in the *Tulungagung* community. Through the appreciation and practice of the meaning contained in this dance, the local community is expected to strengthen their spiritual bond with the Creator and enrich noble values in daily life. Previous research by Sari & Asmara (2022) highlighted a study on the *Bedhaya Kirana Ratih* Dance, a type of classical traditional dance that developed in the *Kasunanan* Palace environment of *Surakarta*. This study highlights the fact that although in the view of the general public, *Bedhaya* dance tends to be danced only in the *Kraton* environment, not all types of *Bedhaya* dances are exclusive and sacred. One example is *Bedhaya Kirana Ratih*, which can be danced in the middle of the general public. Although relatively new, this dance holds many symbolic meanings behind its performance, which are embedded in the variety of movements, accompaniments, and narratives. This study aims to reveal the symbolic meaning in the performance of the *Bedhaya Kirana Ratih* Dance by using qualitative descriptive methods and data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. With this research, it is important to broaden the horizon of symbolic meaning in traditional Javanese dance, including in the context of older classical dance works such as the *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* Dance by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati

In an interview with Nila, he explained that the *Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta* dance has a deep symbolic meaning in the *Bersih Nagari* ceremony. According to him, this dance not only depicts the beauty of movement, but also strengthens the values of spirituality and harmony in society. Through the flowing movements and the symbolism contained in them, this dance needs to be further explored related to the symbolism contained in it (March 17, 2023).

2. METHOD

The method used in this study adopts a qualitative approach, as explained by Sugiyono (2019), which emphasizes a deep understanding of social phenomena from the subjective perspective of the perpetrators. This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, experience, and interpretation given by the research subject to the phenomenon being studied, especially in the context of culture and performing arts. The type of research chosen is descriptive, which aims to describe phenomena systematically and in detail, without making generalizations or looking for cause-and-effect relationships. Through this method, the

researcher tries to provide a complete picture of the characteristics of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta ceremony and dance in Tulungagung Regency.

The data sources used in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the results of interviews and observations of actors and stakeholders involved in the ceremony, such as dancers and music arrangers. Interviews were conducted in depth with the main speakers, such as Taniya Sahisnu Sufisyar and Muhammad Gufron S.Pd., to obtain information related to the concept, symbolic meaning, and technique of dance performance. Observations were carried out directly during the ceremony, so that the researcher could accurately record the details of dance movements, costumes, and accompanying music. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from field documentation, such as visual footage, photographs, as well as culturally relevant articles, which are used to reinforce and validate the primary data. The data collection techniques applied include interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the symbolic and artistic meaning of the dances being studied, while observation allowed researchers to observe first-hand the process of performing the dance, including the interaction between the performers and the atmosphere of the ceremony. Documentation acts as an additional source of data that supports the validity of information that has been obtained from interviews and observations. These three techniques were chosen to ensure that the data collected is comprehensive, accurate, and scientifically accountable.

The data analysis process is carried out in stages, starting from data reduction, data presentation, to drawing conclusions, as explained by Sugiyono (2019). Data reduction involves sorting and grouping important information that is relevant to the focus of the research, namely the symbolic meaning of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement. After that, the data that has been reduced is presented in the form of a narrative or table so that it is easy to understand and analyze further. Conclusions are drawn based on the results of the analysis, which are then associated with relevant theories or concepts. The validity of the data is maintained through the data triangulation technique, which is comparing and consolidating results from various sources and methods, so that research findings can be accounted for and free from bias.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati is a dance whose creator raised the philosophy of water into the form of dance with the historical background of Tulungagung Regency which was previously called the duchy of Ngrowo, because geographically at that time it was a swamp area that was identical to the water element. This dance has its roots in the Bedhaya Ketawang of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace, and its movements represent a calm, controlled, and symbolic flow of water. Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta is a form of supplication to the Creator and a means of meditation that helps the dancer in self-control. Based on an interview with Taniya Sahisnu Sufisyar, the dance movements in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta require a deep understanding of typical movements such as *sindheth Lingga Sharira* and *Alir Tirta*. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows:

"The dance movements in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta emphasize the *sindheth* movement of *Lingga Sharira* which symbolizes pure multiplicity and *Alir Tirta* which depicts the journey of life towards perfection. Every movement should be done with full appreciation and calmness to reflect a deep meaning." Dance movements in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta require a deep understanding

About special movements such as the *sindheth Lingga Sharira* and *Alir Tirta*. *Sindheth Lingga Sharira* is a movement that symbolizes pure multiplicity and life after death, while *Alir Tirta* depicts life's journey to perfection. Each of these movements must be performed with full appreciation and calmness, requiring the dancer to articulate each movement carefully. Based on an interview with Nabila Permatasari, the challenge in interpreting the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement involves physical endurance and a deep understanding of

slow and meaningful movements. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The dance movements in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta display a shady and sacred feeling, with slow and coordinated movements from head to toe, as if water is flowing calmly." Tantangan dalam menginterpretasikan gerak tari Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta melibatkan ketahanan fisik dan pemahaman mendalam tentang gerakan yang lambat dan penuh makna. Gerakannya menampilkan perasaan teduh dan sakral, dengan gerakan lambat dan terkoordinasi yang mencerminkan aliran air yang tenang.

Based on an interview with Anisa Salsabila Oktaviani, the interpretation of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement emphasizes serenity and sincerity, which is depicted through movements like flowing water. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement has a distinctive movement 'Alir Tirta' which requires the dancer to move calmly like flowing water, reflecting calmness and order in each movement."

The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance moves emphasize calmness and sincerity. The interpretation of this dance movement is depicted through the movement of Alir Tirta, which requires the dancer to move calmly like flowing water, reflecting the calm and orderliness in each movement. Based on an interview with Muhammad Gufron S.Pd., the music in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is designed to support and strengthen the symbolic meaning of the dance movements. The music created contains elements of sacred, solemn, holy, and wingit that blend with the dance movements, thus creating the silent and sacred atmosphere expected in the performance. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows:

"Music and dance in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta are a complete unit, complementing each other and emphasizing taste, clarifying the meaning and solidifying the goals to be achieved in the presentation of sacred and silent dance movements." The music in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is designed to support and reinforce the symbolic meaning of the dance movements. The sacred, solemn, holy, and winged music blends with the dance movements, creating the expected atmosphere of silence and sacredness in the performance.

The music in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is designed to support and reinforce the symbolic meaning of the dance movements. The sacred, solemn, holy, and winged music blends with the dance movements, creating the expected atmosphere of silence and sacredness in the performance. Based on an interview with Anugrah Natalin Nilawati, the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement was developed to reflect the theme of calm, controlled, and orderly water, which is also a symbol of self-control from lust. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The dance movements in Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta represent the movement of water that flows calmly, controlled, orderly, and semeleh, as a symbol of self-control from lust and supplication to the Creator." The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement was developed to reflect the theme of calm, controlled, and orderly water. This movement is also a symbol of self-control from lust and supplication to the Creator. The calmly flowing movements reflect calmness, order, and sincerity.

Based on an interview with Taniya Sahisnu Sufisyar, the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement has a strong symbolic meaning, especially in the Lingga Sharira sindhet movement which symbolizes pure multiplicity and life after death, as well as the Alir Tirta movement which symbolizes the meaning of life to achieve perfection. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The sindhet movement of Lingga Sharira is a symbol of pure multiplicity or life after death, while Alir Tirta symbolizes the journey of life to achieve perfection." The dance movement of Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati has a strong symbolic meaning, especially in the sindhet movements of Lingga Sharira and Alir Tirta. The sindhet movement of Lingga Sharira symbolizes pure multiplicity and life after death, depicting the process of transcendence and purification of the soul. Meanwhile, the Alir Tirta movement symbolizes life's journey to achieve perfection, a reflection of man's spiritual journey towards enlightenment and self-integrity. Each movement in this dance is not only performed with precise technique but also with a deep appreciation that depicts a complex philosophy of life and spirituality.

Based on an interview with Nabila Permatasari, the movements in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance also carry a deep symbolism, especially in the understanding of the function of dance as a means of meditation, prayer request, and self-control. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The understanding and function of Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta as a means of meditation, prayer request, and self-control." The movements in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance carry a deep symbolism, especially in the context of its function as a means of meditation, prayer supplication, and self-control. This dance is not only an artistic performance but also a ritual that helps the dancer and the audience enter into a solemn state of meditation. Through this dance, the dancers make requests for prayer and spiritual reflection, as well as practice self-control from worldly temptations. The slow and steady movements reflect the contemplative depth and spirituality that is at the heart of this dance, showing how dance can be a medium to achieve inner peace and sincerity in life.

Based on an interview with Anisa Salsabila Oktaviani, the symbolic meaning of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement emphasizes serenity and order, which is represented through movements that depict flowing water. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "In my opinion, what is the key elements in conveying the symbolic meaning in the movements of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is the characteristic of the movements of this dance which depicts water that flows calmly, controlled, ordered, and smooth." The symbolic meaning of the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement emphasizes serenity and order, which is represented through movements depicting flowing water. The flowing water in this dance movement reflects its calm, controlled, and orderly nature. The dancer must be able to express calmness and sincerity in each movement, showing how this dance reflects a balanced and harmonious life. The subtle and continuous movement depicts the uninterrupted flow of water, carrying a philosophical message about the importance of tranquility and regularity in achieving happiness and perfection in life. Based on an interview with Muhammad Gufron S.Pd., the musical composition that accompanies the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance also has a symbolic meaning that strengthens the dance movements. This music helps to describe a sacred and prayerful atmosphere. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows:

"Starting with the intro of the "monggang" model in the barrel of the pelog pathet goods as an introduction, then uran-uran Gambuh (=fit, suitable, suitable) continued Ladrang Wilujeng (=safety) working on bedhayan followed by Kinanthi Padhang Bulan kethuk 4 often climbing kendhang for each work of bedhayan to strengthen the sense of difference, then at the end is presented Ladrang Raket (=close, friendly) with rhythm 1 with "ngelik" to emphasize the ending." The musical composition that accompanies the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance also has a symbolic meaning that strengthens the dance movements. The music in this dance is designed to create a sacred and prayerful atmosphere. Starting with the intro of the "monggang" model in the barrel of pelog pathet barang as an opening, the music then continues with the Gambuh urans which symbolize harmony and compatibility, and Ladrang Wilujeng which carries the message of safety. The music that accompanies the dance movements is designed to reinforce the sense of behaya, emphasizing the meditative and sacred atmosphere. At the end, Ladrang Raket with the rhythm of "ngelik" emphasized a harmonious and meaningful ending, strengthening the spiritual and symbolic message that wanted to be conveyed through this dance. Based on an interview with Anugrah Natalin Nilawati, the main inspiration in creating the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement is the philosophy of water and the history of Tulungagung Regency. This was revealed in the results of the interview as follows: "The main message is that Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta is a form of supplication to the creator and a means of meditation which is one of the efforts to control oneself from human desires that must be eliminated, namely Saptatimira: Surupa (intoxication of appearance), Dhana (intoxication of wealth), Guna (intoxication of intelligence), Kulina (intoxication of nobility), Yowana (intoxication of youth), Sura (drunk of liquor), Kasuran (drunk of victory)."

The main inspiration in creating the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance movement is the philosophy of water and the history of Tulungagung Regency. This dance was created as a form of supplication to the Creator and a means of meditation which is one of the efforts to control oneself from human desires. The symbolic meaning contained in this dance reflects the

self-control of Saptatimira, which is worldly temptations such as intoxication of appearance, wealth, cleverness, nobility, youthfulness, liquor, and victory. The movement that depicts calm, controlled, orderly, and semarsh water reflects a philosophy of life that teaches calmness, order, and sincerity. This dance is not only visually beautiful but also rich in profound spiritual and philosophical messages, making it a meaningful work of art.

3.2 Discussion

This dance features a series of distinctive and symbolic movements, such as Sindhet Lingga Sharira, which is the key movement. This movement symbolizes pure multiplicity as well as life after death, demanding dancers to bring deep appreciation and understanding. The upright and graceful body position, as well as the gentle curved hand movements, create a visualization of eternity and peace. Every detail in this movement is designed to reflect stability, tranquility, and a spiritual journey to harmony. The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance is also known for its slow and coordinated movements, which mimic the flow of water. The dancer must maintain harmony between the body parts, moving slowly but awakely, so as to create a soothing and sacred visual effect. The Alir Tirta movement is one of the important elements, describing life's journey to perfection. The soft, flowing rhythm, as well as the hand movements resembling a stream of water, demand the dancer to maintain harmony and smoothness of movement. This not only creates an atmosphere of peace, but also instills a message about the importance of patience and consistency in going through the process of life.

The symbolic meaning of each movement is very strong, especially in Sindhet Lingga Sharira, which represents transcendence and purification of the soul. This movement is a reflection of the spiritual journey from earthly life to a state of purity and harmony after death. Dancers are required to manifest inner peace and self-control through every subtle and calculating movement. The message I want to convey is that earthly life is a process towards enlightenment and freedom from attachment, where true balance and harmony can be achieved. The movements in this dance also emphasize calmness and sincerity. Through movements that resemble a stream of water, dancers are invited to express self-control and acceptance of the situation. Slow, regular movement shows how inner peace can help a person face life's challenges without losing balance. Sincerity in every movement teaches that accepting circumstances with gratitude is part of a deep spiritual process. This dance shows that life balance can only be achieved through continuous self-control exercises. The integration of dance movements with accompanying music is an inseparable element in creating a sacred and meditative atmosphere. The music used, such as the intro of the "monggang" model with the barrel of the pelog pathet barang, provides a calm and solemn feel that supports the expression of the dancers' movements. Musical compositions such as Ladrang Wilujeng and Ladrang Raket reinforce the themes of safety, protection, and harmony. The synergy between movement and music results in an immersive spiritual experience, where the audience not only enjoys the visual beauty, but also feels the spiritual message conveyed through every element of the performance.

The philosophy of water is the main inspiration in the Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta Dance, emphasizing the importance of self-control in spiritual journeys. Each movement reflects the calm, restrained, and harmonious character of water, becoming a symbol of man's ability to control worldly desires and temptations. The concept of Surupa or drunkenness of appearance, for example, is depicted through gentle and harmonious movements, asserting that excessive interest in physical appearance must be balanced with spiritual awareness. This dance, through the symbolism of water and self-control, teaches that balance and enlightenment can only be achieved through a process of constant mental reflection and practice.

4. CONCLUSION

The Bedhaya Ambadya Tirta dance by Anugrah Natalin Nilawati features highly structured and symbolic movements, combining elements of tradition and deep spiritual philosophy. Each movement reflects elegance, harmony, and a message about achieving inner balance as well as a connection to the spiritual dimension. The symbolic meanings in this

dance include the concepts of purity, peace, and order, where gentle and controlled movements depict inner peace, while symmetrical patterns indicate balance in life. Apart from being an artistic expression, this dance is a medium of conveying cultural and spiritual values, connecting dancers with the elements of nature and the cosmos, thus creating a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds.

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