

# ORAL TRADITION OF DEWI KRESNA DANCE DRAMA PERFORMANCE IN KERAMBITAN TABANAN - BALI: A STUDY VIEWED FROM FUNCTION AND VALUE PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe functions and values of Dewi Kresna Dance-Drama Performance in Kerambitan Tabanan. The underlying theories used as the basis of this research are the theories of structuralism and hermeneutics. The data of the research was obtained through conducting field observation, interviewing some source persons, research libraries and recording the performance on the spot. The result of the recording was transcribed and translated literally and idiomatically. Then it was analyzed descriptively using argumentative techniques. The result of the findings is that the plot of the story is made up with two main acts with nine types of conventional scenes. The characters involved in the performance were categorized into stock characters, conventional formulaic ones who are always present in every traditional performance in Bali and also central characters. Why Dewi Kresna is used here, not Calonarang as commonly used in the other parts of Bali is due to the factors of feeling, esthetics and the society's belief in Kerambitan. They avoid using "Calonarang" who has so far negative connotation. The theme sets forth here is the eternal battle between good and bad spirits. The functions of the performance for the village community in Kerambitan are for completing the process of the temple ceremony, as the media of education, for entertainment, as a means of tightening the society's relationship, and for driving away disaster. The values that can be taken from the performance are values of legend, magical phenomena, religious practices, loyalty, esthetics, ethics, and the two opposing powers: rwa-bhineda.

**Keywords:** Oral Tradition, Performance, Function, Value

## Introduction

Oral literature, including oral stories or oral tradition, is a national cultural heritage that still has values that should be developed and utilized for the present and future life. In fact, oral literature has for centuries served as a basis for communication between creators and the community, in the sense that creations based on oral tradition will be easier to associate with because there are elements known to the community (Guy Cook, 1994)

Considering the position and the role of oral literature which is quite important as mentioned above, then oral literary research needs to be carried out. Even more so if you remember that changes in society, such as advances in technology, the existence of radio and television can cause a gradual loss of oral literature in the archipelago. Thus, oral literary research can save oral literature itself from extinction, so that oral literature can be passed on to future generations. Oral literature

harbors many values and ways of life and the way of thinking of the community of its owner. Almost every tribe in Indonesia knows oral literature, as well as the Balinese people. The story of "Calon Arang" is one of the many oral literatures possessed by the Balinese people. But in the village of Kerambitan, this dance drama performance uses the name of the character "Goddess of Krishna". Even though the general public in Bali is familiar with the performance by the name of the character "Calonarang". Why is the name of the character "Dewi Kresna" and not Calonarang? What is the background behind the character of "Dewi Kresna"? This discourse is interesting to know in terms of function and meaning contained in the discourse of Dewi Kresna dance drama performances which is more commonly referred to as Calonarang by the general public. There are two main problems that really need to be answered. 1. What is the

function and meaning or value of the oral discourse of Dewi Kresna dance drama Performance ? 2. Why do people in Kerambitan keep on using Dewi Krishna, not Calonarang as is commonly used in other places in Bali?

This research is expected to contribute to the development of humanities. In addition, this research can be considered as an effort to excavate, preserve and develop cultural heritage, especially in regional literary activities in the form of performing arts. It is also intended to be able to reveal how the description of the function and meaning of the discourse of Dewi Kresna dance drama performance in Kerambitan Tabanan. And then in order to find out why the people there used the name Dewi Kresna instead of Calonarang as it commonly used.

Benefits of Research Theoretically, research on Dewi Kresna dance drama discourse concerning the study functions and meanings is intended to get a picture of the totality of Dewi Kresna's dance drama discourse by looking at structuralism theory which ultimately also sees the totality of structural meaning with semiotic and or hermeneutic theory as the foundation of analysis. Thus, this research can be expected as a vehicle in the development of literary theory in general and oral literature in particular. Practically, it is intended to get a picture of functions and meaning (values) through the story or structure used in the dance drama performance of Dewi Kresna.

### Research methods

The method used in this research is descriptive method because this research is only describing a number of phenomenon related to the discourse of oral tradition of Dewi Kresna dance drama performance.

#### Data collection technique

The steps taken in collecting data were conducting direct observations to the field to find out and clearly determine the location of the research, then conducting interviews with community leaders and artists who knew a lot about Dewi Kresna Dance Drama performances, then held a live recording when the dance drama performance was staged during

the *Pujawali* Ceremony (temple ceremony) in Kerambitan Village, Tabanan. Then the results of the recording were transcribed and translated into Indonesian for the analysis focusing on function and meaning or value.

#### Data source

The main data source of this research is the recording of Dewi Kresna classical dance drama performance discourse, which was performed at *pujawali* ceremony in Kerambitan Village, (banjar Tengah Kawan) Tabanan and the results of interviews with a number of credible resource persons.

#### Data processing

After the data was obtained in the form of transcription and the translation of the drama performance "Dewi Kresna", then the analysis of function, and meaning was done descriptively and analytically. Inductive data processing, which started from the description and finally to be concluded. To translate this transcription, a combination of translations was used, namely the literal translation and the automatic translation.

### Results and Discussion

Analysis of function and Meaning or value of Dewi Kresna classical dance drama Performance can be set forth vividly below. The focus of description is limited just focusing on functions and meaning or values

#### Structure of Dramatari Scenarios

A play scenario such as a drama including classical Dewi Kresna dance drama performance must have elements of a plot, an actor, a theme, presented with a media of dialogue and action, by which elements of conflict and tension build a clear emotional response to the audience (Ommanney in A, Adjib Hamzah, 1985: 96)

#### Plot

If we look at the technique of flow of Dewi Kresna story in the observed performance, it seems clear that the distribution of Dewi Kresna story is quite simple. The flow is arranged chronologically from one event to the next, without any flash back. The grooves are arranged linearly (straight grooves).

The following will be presented a plot of Dewi Kresna as observed in the performance during the temple ceremony in Kerambitan Village, such as the following.

(Early introduction) : Dewi Krishna had a very beautiful daughter, her name was Ratna Mengali. Although she was very beautiful, no one proposed to her because she was afraid of her mother who was famous for having magic powers.

Complications (Generating Circumstances): Because no one dared to propose to his daughter, Dewi Krishna became angry. She and her students with sorcery carried out her evil intentions to destroy the kingdom of Daha. Resistance also occurred from the royal side, with one goal, namely to kill Dewi Krishna.

(Rising Situation): King of Daha in Kediri, Erlangga, ruled wisely, so he was loved very much by his people. In a village, the village of Dirah, which was still under the authority of the king of Daha, there lived a widow named Dewi Krishna.

(Rising Action): Knowing this murder plan, Dewi Kresna's was getting worse. She along with her students tried to expand the destruction of Daha to all corners of the kingdom. Even though the situation in Kediri was getting worse, King Erlangga and the servants of other countries never gave up hope.

(climax): There was a fierce battle between Prime minister, Patih Pandung who was assisted by other royal servants with Dewi Krishna and her loyal students. In this battle Dewi Krishna changed form to "Rangda", a very scary and frightening figure.

**Settlement (denouement):** Finally the battle between Dewi Kresna and Patih Pandung ended with the conclusion that no one had lost and neither had won.

### Function Analysis

In connection with the function of literary discourse, Wellek and Warren (1990: 25) which refer to the Horace concept states that literary works function as "dulce" (entertainment) and "utile" (usefulness). If the literary work is not entertaining nor does it bring benefits to the community, the literary work cannot be considered a good or quality literary work. From interviews with some informants in the Kerambitan village, that the most basic and main function of Dewi Kresna dance drama

performance is as a complement to temple ceremonial process, as an offering to *Ida Betara, Sesuhunan* who resides in the community temple in Kerambitan village, while other functions are as educational media for society, as entertainment, as a means of unifying and binding the society social system, as driving away disease outbreak.

The following will describe each function of Dewi Kresna dance drama (DKDD) performance in accordance with the information provided by resource persons, especially in Kerambitan village, as the following describes.

#### a. Complementing the Ceremony (The Most Main / Main Function).

It is a media so that *Ratu Biang Lingsir* and *Jero Gede* (the scary figure where it is believed the gods resides), a drama scenario was made that took the drama performance "Dewi Kresna". Dewi Kresna in the performance was in the form of *Rangda, Ratu Biang Lingsir's* figure (demon-like figure). Supporting communities do not call it "Rangda", but "Ratu Biang Lingsir" or "Ratu Biang Sakti Sapuh Jagat" to express their respect for *Betara* (god) which is believed, respected and highly sacred by the residents of Kerambitan village. So, every temple ceremony, it is a must that "Ratu Lingsir" is to be performed as a sign that the ceremony has been completed successfully. The temple ceremony was not considered complete before Ratu Niang Lingsir was staged.

#### b. As a Community education media channels of communication

It includes (a) communication through religious hierarchies, (b) communication through scientists (writers) and (c) communication through theater or performing arts (Nurgiayanto and Bandem, 1996: 30).

The DKDD discourse clearly appears that dialogs / songs are full of some educational values that contain delivering goodness or moral values to the village community. Through this DKDD performance, the audience can ponder and finally be expected to be able to realize which actions are appropriate to emulate and which actions must be thrown away.

#### c. As an entertainment

As the writer was observing during the performance, people came in droves to

watch the performance. This is a sign that the performance still has its own charm to be enjoyed even though they have watched it many times. As Lotman puts it, there may be a "classical aesthetic" or "equality aesthetic" that might appeal to the audience. If it is not interesting, it is certainly not possible for them to come sitting or standing for hours to watch it.

#### **d. As a media to strengthen community social relations**

For the institutional performance of the DKDD, all members of the Banjar Tengah village Kerambitan community were involved: some were as performers, some were gamelan performers, artisans made offerings, or assisted in the field of performance equipment. In this case because they feel one as traditional community member of Banjar Tengah Kerambitan village whose daily lives may be preoccupied by their respective professions, they have never met or exchanged greetings with each other, also because their places to make a living are scattered everywhere. This special moment is an excellent opportunity to strengthen social relations, establish unity, strengthen brotherhood or friendship between citizens consisting of various social strata.

#### **e. As a means of repelling outbreaks**

In addition to the afore mentioned functions, DKDD performance is also believed by the community owners as a means to drive out a frightening epidemic (*grubug*) in the village. It's just so far if there is an epidemic of rampant disease, after the show, "Ratu Biang Lingsir" is also called "Ratu Biang Sakti Sapu Jagat" (Rangda) along with "Jero Gede" (Barong) were paraded around the local village. In front of the entrances of people's houses, the family members, usually mothers, offer simple offerings to Ratu Niang Lingsir and Barong and other attendants as they pass through their houses hoping that they will not be spared by any disasters at all. After completing the offerings, the residents were given holy water (*tirta*) by the priest to be sprinkled to residents or members of the village and also sprinkled for sacred buildings (family temples) or in other residential buildings.

### **Values or meaning Analysis**

Ricouer (1985) states that the concept of meaning allows interpretation that reflects the main dialectic between events and meaning. A similar opinion is also said by Kleden (1996: 5) that values or meanings are usually regarded as something related to culture or more specifically with the symbolic world in culture. The symbolic world is the world where production, reproduction and storage of mental and cognitive contents of culture are found in the form of knowledge and belief, in the form of meanings and symbols as well as the values and norms that exist in a culture. The following will analyze the meaning or values that can be drawn from the oral discourse of Dewi Kresna dance drama performance in Kerambitan Tabanan. The meanings or values presented here are the meaning of legend, magical, religious, responsibility, loyalty, aesthetic, ethical and rwa-bhineda meaning.

#### **a. The Legend Meaning**

Stories with the theme of nominations in this case also include stories of Dewi Kresna dance drama (better known as Calonarang) can be categorized as stories that include historical legends, which are a blend of historical elements with elements of legend. Historical elements can be seen from the names of places and names of characters that have existed in history, such as Kediri in East Java, Raja Erlangga, Empu Beradah and Empu Bahula. This can be used as an indicator that these characters/figures have indeed existed in history. However, when exactly the event happened is unknown, there is no definitive data. One thing that can be used as an indicator that the event was told around the XI century where at that time Erlangga was ruling. It should be noted that Erlangga was crowned king on February 1, 1020 (Poesponegoro and Noto Susanto, 1984: 261). But the names of central antagonists such as Dewi Kresna (more commonly known as Calonarang), Ratna Mengali, Patih Pandung Maguna have never been mentioned in history. The names are only in the legend. The characters as mentioned above have experienced the process of Balinese-ness from the original story. Specifically in Kerambitan, Calonarang became a local concept (local genius) replaced by the name Dewi Kresna. It can be concluded that the element of

legend in the story of Dewi Kresna (Calonarang) is very strong.

### **b. Magical Meaning**

Magical meaning (magic) as said by Hornby that is the art or way of controlling events or circumstances with supernatural powers (Hornby at al, 1974: 510). When explored carefully, Dewi Kresna dance drama performance is a class drama that has relatively many elements of magical value. Based on that, DKDD can be categorized as a nominating performance. Some magical elements that can be seen in DKDD performance can be explained as follows. The beautiful students of Dewi Kresna with sweet words while still in the form of ordinary human beings, then transformed their forms from ordinary humans to become bare frightening giants (*celuluk / pangpang*), pocong, *apes*, *leaks* of various colors: some are white, red, black when they want to destroy the kingdom of Kediri (making *grubug/desaters*). It feels that the magical atmosphere was very strong. Events like this are clearly absurd, irrational, because abilities like this can only be done with supernatural powers, with magical powers like what Hornby said. The magic can be positive and can also be negative according to the purpose for which the magical power is used.

### **c. Religious Meaning**

The meaning or religious value contained in the DKDD can be seen from the use of songs that are filled with religious teachings or *dharma (good virtue)*, especially the teachings on how to be a good leader where *darma* must always be held in everyday life in order to get happiness in the world and in hereafter. King Erlangga, in ruling his government, always thinks, says, and does good (*Tri Kaya Parisuda*) based on *darma*, for the sake of people's welfare. Various methods and efforts were made by King Erlangga as a form of devotion to his people. King Erlangga has done good things, based on *darma*. The act of virtue in this world is something that must be carried out by religious people in accordance with the guidance of religion, whatever religion they believe, because the obligation to do good things is universal.

### **d. Responsibility Meaning/Value**

In Dewi Kresna story, which was performed through a traditional dance drama in Kerambitan village, the responsibility value can also be learned from watching the performance. Even though the values of responsibility are not explicitly revealed, the values that imply responsibility can be absorbed through the contents of the story compiled by the director, as in the example below. King Erlangga who is responsible to the people, has done his utmost in eradicating the plague that devastated the kingdom as a result of sorcery or the science of defeating Dewi Kresna and her students. The king sent Patih Pandung to go to Dirah with the ultimate goal: to kill Dewi Kresna and her students. This is as a proof that both King Erlangga and Empu Bahula are very responsible for the safety and welfare of their people. They are very concerned with the fate of their people.

### **e. Loyalty Meaning/Value**

If we pay attention to the story of Dewi Krishna, that the royal officials or other royal servants are very loyal to the King. This can be seen how Empu Bahula who was willing to sacrifice his personal interests for the sake of his loyalty to the king when he was asked to make Ratna Mengali as his wife so that the secret of the deception of Dewi Krishna, Ratna Mengali's mother, could be revealed.

### **f. Aesthetic Meaning/Value**

There are three things that distinguish literary works from other non-literary works, namely the existence of fictionality, the existence of artistic values (esthetic values), and the way of using special language, special use of language (Sumardjo and Saini KM, 1986: 13). DKDD performance is a traditional discourse, which is studied as a work of art in the form of this performance, is able to provide fresh entertainment to the audience (*dulce*) because it contains aesthetic values that we can pick, as can be seen in the dance arrangements, costumes, the songs while dancing, the storyline, etc. DKDD discourse dialogues are loaded with aesthetic and philosophical values. These values are expected to provide benefits (*utile*) and can provide a positive influence on the audience.

### g. Ethics Meaning/Value

After analysing DKDD discourse in depth, the author can find the meaning or ethical values contained in there. Ethics is related to morals. Moral value means a doctrine of good and bad that is generally accepted about rules, attitudes, obligations, morals, character or moral. Morals in literary works usually reflect the viewpoint of the author concerned, his views on the values of truth, and that is what he wants to convey to the audience (readers / viewers). In DKDD we can reap the ethical meaning as shown by the servants of the kingdom or the bellymen on the stage. That attitude or ethic can be seen in the characters' attitudes for example in the speech or the language used, in this case the royal servants use subtle language towards their equals. This is in accordance with norms, ethics that apply to Balinese people with Balinese cultural backgrounds that have social strata.

### h. Rwa-Bhineda Meaning/Value

In communities with Balinese cultural backgrounds where Hinduism is the source of inspiration, the term "Rwa-Bhineda" is a familiar terminology. Rwa-Bhineda means conflicting mutuality, for example good - bad, day - night, male - female, and so on. For the term "rwa-bhineda", Berg uses the term "cosmic classification" to borrow his term Prof. Drs. Shaleh Saidi. DKDD performance clearly shows the value of rwa-bhineda in which there is a conflict between the two opposing forces, that is : bad or evil forces which in this show is represented by the presence of Dewi Krishna and her students with good strength represented by Prabu Erlangga and all his servants.

In religious teachings as proclaimed by Sri Krishna as the incarnation of God who descended to the world to Arjuna in Kurukesetra before the war began that truth will always win against evil (Mahabrata on Bali TV, 2005). Although in the beginning in the dispute between the forces of good and evil, we often see the good forces are helplessly made, in the end the good at last will also win. However, in DKDD the struggle between the two opposing forces was not resolved. It seems that the author of the story scenario deliberately made the show end without winning and losing either good or evil force. The fight between good and evil is described as continuing to last

forever. The performance organizer here seems to intentionally use a dependent plot, in the sense that the audience is expected to provide the answer. This is one of the interesting findings obtained by the writer. This is also in accordance with the statement of a resource person quoted by the writer on the Hindu pulpit on TVRI Denpasar on April 22, 2006 which says that the fight between *dharma* and *adharma* is not final, they have existed since ancient times, now and in the future, the struggle will be eternal. Inspiration for this model is what seems to be used by the author of the story scenario in Dewi Krishna performance. It also means that a symbol will mean that as long as humans are still inhabitants of this virtual world, the conflict between good and bad, evil forces and good forces will always be there, always stand side by side, eternal all the time.

### Conclusions

From what has been described in the previous section, it can be summarized as follows.

Dewi Kresna Dance Drama performance discourse consists of two stages by utilizing a simple flow with five stages, namely introduction, complications, rising conflict, climax and denouement.

The theme adopted was the eternal conflict between *rwa-bhinedha*, between evil forces and good forces. In implementing the plot and the theme, DKDD discourse utilizes the actions

or use dialogue and monologues and some in the form of traditional songs which are sung while dancing. To give an aesthetic effect in dialogue or monologue, several styles of language (stylistics) are used, among others, the style of parables, repetition, metaphor and also utilizing the style of sarcasm. As one of the traditional theater of the Balinese that cannot be separated from the convention or formula of a traditional performance in Bali area, DKDD also utilizes conventions including utilizing fantasy characters (stock characters) who are always present in traditional Balinese dance drama performances, whatever the story is. In addition, there are also conventions on the use of languages: Old Javanese, Balinese and also Mixed use of languages. What is unique here is that the use of characters more commonly

known as *Calonarang* in other places, specifically in Banjar Tengan Kerambitan (Village), Calonarang name is replaced by Dewi Kresna, because it is related to the issue of "taste, aesthetics, traditional religious belief of the people there who feel taboo, to mention something sacred with the name of Calonarang that is commonly known to have negative connotation. For the community of Kerambitan village (Banjat Tengah kawan), DKDD performance has the following functions: 1) The most important function is to complement the *Pawawali* ceremony. 2) As a medium of education to the community. 3) As a community entertainment. The public was very enthusiastic to watch Dewi Kresna performance even though the performance has often been staged. This is inseparable from the classical aesthetic problem contained in the performance. 4) As a media to strengthen community social relations. 5) As a means to drive away disease outbreaks. Then, the meaning or value that can be analyzed from the performance of Dewi Kresna is : 1) Legend meaning, can be seen from the main character such as Dewi Krishna which never existed in reality, the names of these character only exists in legends. 2) Magical meaning, because DKDD displays many aspects or events that cannot be digested with common sense. 3) Religious Meaning, related to people's belief in realizing their belief in Almighty God. 4) The meaning of responsibility, is taken up by the king and other royal servants who earnestly strive to eradicate the plague (*grubug*) for the sake of a service to his people. 5) The Meaning of Loyalty, it can be seen how Empu Bahula willingly sacrificed his personal interests when asked by the King to marry Ratna Mengali even though he did not love her. 6) Aesthetic Meaning, related to *ulite* and *dulce* 7) Ethics menaing and 8) *Rwa-bhineda* Meaning. This two opposing powers will continue to exist as long as humans are still as inhabitants of this universe. *Rwa-bhineda*, spesifically the conflics in DKDD is a symbol or representation of eternal conflicts between good and evil forces.

### Suggestion

Seeing the fact that Dewi Kresna dance drama performance in Kerambitan Village in Tabanan is very popular up to present time. It means the performance has its own aesthetic

aspect. If possible, the performance should be more professionally organized, in addition in complementing the *pujawali* ceremony, it should also be well arganized for a better quality entertainment in the sense of the performance of Dewi Krishna expected to provide spiritual enlightenment to the community through the dialogue of the characters. Thus, Dewi Kresna's performance can be more useful (*utile*) for the public or the audience who are hungry for entertainment to fill their spirituality after finishing struggling with daily routine tasks. However, the packaging should still pay attention to the elements of art as the development of art itself

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