



Siwa Nata Raja: A Monumental Work From Aesthetic and Heritage Perspectives

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Abstract

Dance arts related to the great dance are the most popular. This beautiful dance is performed in all regions now. Even in the educational environment, which is the epicenter or center of trends, there is a proliferation of essential dances. One of the dances that marked the beginning of the creation of great dance was the Shiva Nata Raja dance at Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar. The Shiva Nata Raja dance still exists today and is a form of transmission or inheritance that is still running well. The question that generally arises in dance development is how to teach it. Ideally, the transition process does not reduce the foremost essence of the dance. A person's understanding of the intricacies of dance can be obscured by the assumption that dance is simple. Therefore, another way is needed so that the main parts of the dance are not lost. Every part of the movement is crucial to learn. The method used to conduct this research is a qualitative descriptive analysis method, which reveals the aesthetics and inheritance of the Shiva Nata Raja dance style. This inheritance process has been going on for approximately 34 years, so the Shiva Nata Raja dance still survives today and can be classified as a monumental dance.

INTRODUCTION

Dance art, which refers to a great dance, is the most popular. Every region now has its great dance. Even in the educational environment, which is known as the initiator or trend center, there is a proliferation of great dances. One of the dances that marked the beginning of the emergence of great dance was the Siwa Nata Raja dance owned by Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar.

In Balinese Hindu belief, "Siwa Nata Raja" is a cosmic dance of Lord Shiva as the God of dance, where Lord Shiva rotates this world with His *mudra* movements (hand gestures). It is said that every hand gesture with body movements has a certain meaning, so that this dance has the power of the visible realm (*sekala*) and the invisible realm (*niskala*). This concept is then visualized into a great dance of ISI Denpasar, Siwa Nata Raja dance, which is a monumental creation created by N.L.N. Swasti Widjaja Bandem and I Nyoman Windha in 1990 (Bandem & Windha, 1990). Siwa Nata Raja, owned by ISI Denpasar, was created specifically to be performed at every ceremonial event. It is intended for every open ceremonial event, so it will be performed several times a year. This Ciwa Nataraja dance is usually performed at academic ceremonies such as the ISI Denpasar student graduation event as an opening dance, new student admission event, inaugurating professors, awarding honorary doctorates, other awards, and special ceremonies. The creation of this dance makes the guests who attend the ISI Denpasar ceremonial event not only treated to a series of greetings but also presented with performing arts. Arts education institutions presenting performances can enrich and increase appreciation of the arts, not only for the pride of institutions but also for the community. The Siwa Nata Raja dance has existed and survived until 2024. Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar has no plans to create a new dance form as a noble dance, so this dance continues to exist at every ceremonial event.

The Siwa Nata Raja Dance, which continues to exist until now, is a form of transmission or inheritance that is still going well. The problem in the development of dance is how to transmit a dance. Ideally, the transmission process does not reduce the main essence contained in the dance. A person's awareness to understand a dance in detail is sometimes obscured by the assumption that the dance is easy. Therefore, another way is needed so nothing is lost from the essential parts of a dance. Every part of the movement is a crucial part to learn.

Balinese people, in general, still rely on their memory to store the knowledge they know. As Sartono Kartodirjo said in the book *Pendekatan Ilmu Sosial dalam Metodologi Sejarah*, he stated that:

"Humans, as God's creatures who are given reason and mind, have the potential to store experiences in their memory, and at any time, if needed, they can be released, either in imagination or in the form of stories. Oral tradition is the main medium for passing on individual and collective experiences. Transmission is the transfer of information from a sender to a recipient. The transmission of culture or cultural elements is considered the process of replicating anything that is transmitted to other individuals or other groups" (Schonpflug, U., 2012)

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used to complete this research is the qualitative descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis is a research method that involves collecting data according to the actual data. Then, the data is arranged, processed, and analyzed to provide an overview of the existing problems. This method is about descriptive research by delivering the aesthetics and inheritance of the Siwa Nata Raja dance. The data is in the form of a collection of literature on the Siwa Nata Raja dance and the results of observations of teaching this dance, through the following stages:

Data Collection Stage:

a. Literature Study

Literature Study is important to avoid repeating research problems. The purpose of searching for books or notes directly or indirectly related to the main problem was analyzed. The theory to dissect the issue will be known when starting this literature study.

b. Interview

In addition to several books and notes that contain written information, it is still necessary to obtain oral facts, namely, interviews. Interviews were conducted with dance figures directly related to the object being analyzed. In addition, information from sources is also needed. The expected information can be known, namely how the teaching system of the Siwa Nata Raja dance is in the environment of Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar.

c. Observation

Observation was carried out by Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar, to observe the practice process and performances. It aims to see how to pass on the Siwa Nata Raja dance movement techniques to the latest batch of students.

Analysis Stage

The stage used is descriptive analysis to analyze data by describing or depicting the collected data. All forms of data that have been collected, either in the form of interviews or written study sources, were then analyzed using descriptive methods. In this discussion, the transmission or inheritance of a dance with a dance inheritance system is a form of dance language that is communicative and becomes a rule in teaching dance according to the type of style, context, or genre of dance. This means that when applied in dance studies, the competence of inheritance and its presentation competence must be understood as a concept in the communication system and sign system regulating how to present and teach dance to the community. Therefore, a form of dance teaching can be studied using semiotics, from the overall form of

the dance and its supporting elements, or just the movement arrangements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ciwa Nataraja dance is a new creative dance creation, a group dance consisting of nine dancers, one playing the role of Ciwa, and the other eight representing the holy energies or rays of the God Ciwa. This dance can be said to be a source of awareness and creativity to disseminate art that brings prosperity and well-being. ISI Denpasar has a symbol called Ciwa Nataraja, the embodiment of Ciwa as the supreme God who created art. The movement forms, in addition to the basic movements of the mask, and many mudras, are also taken from the Kekebyaran dance. The structure of this dance consists of *pepeson*, *kebyar*, *pengawak*, *bapang*, *pengecet*, and *pekaad*. The structure or arrangement of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance is as follows: The *pepeson* section depicts the authority and majesty of Lord Shiva dancing to the music. The *pengecet* section describes the happiness and beauty of art. The ending of the dance symbolizes Shiva as the king of dance.

The philosophy of this dance, which tells the story of Siwa Nata Raja, is the manifestation of Siwa as the supreme dancer, the God of dancers. Siwa continues to dance, creating rhythm and order within the universe. Siwa's movements are the irradiation of primal energy that then unites to create this universe. In this study, the authors used the concept of aesthetics. In this aesthetic study of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance, the authors used the theory of aesthetics, which stated that aesthetics is a science studying everything related to beauty and examining all aspects therein, including (1). Form, (2). Weight, (3). Ideas/Concepts, (4). Appearance, (5). Skills, (6) (Djelantik, A.A.M., 1999) Facilities and Media. The creation of this paper is based on the stylization of the observation results of video sources of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance.

Aspects of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance Form

The Ciwa Nataraja Dance, a grand dance of the ISI Denpasar, was created by Dr. N.L.N. Swasthi Wijaya Bandem, S.ST., M.Hum., and composed by I Nyoman Windha, S.SKar., M.A., in 1990. This dance form is classified as a new creative dance, a development of traditional dances adapted to current developments and then refined into a new creative work. The Siwa Nataraja Dance depicts a work of art that utilizes Balinese dance conventions (*agem, tandang, tangkis, and tangkep*), or can be said to use traditional dance forms. The Ciwa Nataraja Dance is a group dance, with nine female dancers: one portraying the Lord Shiva, symbolizing Shang Hyang Shiva, believed to be the source of the taksu manifestation of Balinese dance, and the other eight dancers representing the energy possessed by Lord Shiva.

Aspects of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance Value

The Ciwa Nataraja Dance contains several atmospheric elements in this dance work. The first part or *pepeson* section tells the story of the Greatness of Shang Hyang Siwa as the manifestation source of taksu of Balinese dance. The second part, *pengawak*, is marked by the emergence of eight dancers who convey the energy of the various universes possessed by Shang Hyang Siwa's manifestation. The third part, *pengecet*, tells the unification of the varied energy sources in this universe controlled into one so that the elements of the Bhatara dance are united and inseparable. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the Ciwa Nataraja dance has a deep meaning and atmosphere. The value or artistic event of the Ciwa Nataraja dance work includes not only what is seen, but also what is felt or experienced as the meaning of the creative form. In the Ciwa Nataraja dance work, the atmosphere created is majestic and beautiful based on the ideas or concepts expressed in this work. It is Lord Ciwa's manifestation as the leader or as the God of the dancers. Ciwa continues to dance, creates rhythm,

and orders in the universe. Ciwa's movements depict the radiance of prime energy, which then merges to create this universe.

Idea/Concept of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance

The idea/concept of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance is that dance is a branch of the performing arts. Therefore, one of the purposes of creating dance is to be performed in front of an audience. This performance requires preparation. This preparation begins with the development of the idea and ends with the work being ready to be performed on stage. The idea for each dance creation is different. This gives various dance works. The movements and supporting elements demonstrated this diversity. The Ciwa Nataraja dance was designed to be the mascot of the ISI Denpasar. Its symbol is Ciwa Nataraja, the embodiment of Ciwa, the supreme God who created art. The idea for this dance work originates from Shang Hyang Siwa, the object of the idea and concept within this dance. Similarly, the Ciwa Nataraja dance is the embodiment of Lord Shiva, the king of the arts, often referred to as the god of dancers. As we know, Lord Siwa is the source of beauty, consciousness, and artistic creativity. Therefore, all dancers, especially Balinese dancers, worship Lord Shiva to invoke taksu, or strength, in His manifestation as Sang Hyang Taks. This dance depicts the God who radiates energy to the universe through dance because Lord Siwa is the king of dancers.

Performance Aspects of the Ciwa Nataraja Dance

The Ciwa Nataraja Dance is performed as a group dance of nine dancers. One of them portrays Lord Siwa. Furthermore, the performance lasts approximately 7 minutes and can be performed anywhere, as the Ciwa Nataraja Dance is classified as a *balih-balihan* dance. It means that it can be performed anywhere and at any time. The Ciwa Nataraja Dance has a performance structure consisting of the *pepeson*,

pengawak, and *pengecet*. The performance is also accompanied by *gamelan gongkebyar*, played live or as a music recording.

The makeup for the new dance creation, Ciwa Nataraja dance, uses a gentle male makeup style to create a charming, masculine appearance. The last is the stage management and lighting that complement the Ciwa Nataraja dance's good performance.

Aspects of Skills in the Ciwa Nataraja Dance

First, all dancers must understand the meaning of the Ciwa Nataraja dance. Furthermore, dancers must master the basic techniques of Balinese dance, which are key to a successful performance. This is because this new dance creation features a variety of hand, foot, body, head, and facial expressions, enhancing the overall performance. Furthermore, dancers must be skilled and understand the structure, floor patterns, and direction of the Ciwa Nataraja dance.

Technical skills include the ability to memorize movement sequences, body control, and the ability to follow dance styles, as well as flexibility. Then, the other skill is sensitivity to music, namely sensitivity in aligning the rhythm of body movements with the rhythm of the music or aligning the rhythm of movements with other dancers, and being able to appreciate and express the character of the role and character of the dance. The form of the new creative dance movement of Ciwa Nataraja is very varied. The movements, especially for walking and spinning, have undergone many changes in technique and soul. The spinning movement, according to the standard rules in Balinese dance, is technically moved to the right or left only once, but the technique is changed to a spinning movement as many as five to six times until the dance is finished. This movement reflects the existence of local values influenced by globalization. The spinning movement is a form of innovation in the new creative dance movement of Ciwa Nataraja, which

characterizes the combination of regional and global culture.

Skill is not only expressed in movement but also the dance accompaniment. The accompaniment used in the new Ciwa Nataraja dance consists of *kawitan*, *pepeson*, *kebyar*, *pengawak*, *bapang*, *pengecet*, and *pekaad*. *Kawitan* is the beginning of the *gending pepeson*. The *gending pepeson* marks the dancer's entrance. *Kebyar* is *gending* for transitions from one section to another. *Pengawak* is the core of the *gending* composition. *Bapang* is a song to create an angry atmosphere. *Pengecet* is a composition of *gending* that compacts the *pengawak* form with a faster tempo. *Pekaad* is the final section of the entire song.

Aspects of Facilities and Media for the Ciwa Nataraja Dance

The Ciwa Nataraja dance performance requires many facilities and media, such as costumes and makeup. The makeup of Siwa dancers use smooth/sweet male makeup thickening the lines of the face to look like a man with a sweet character, the and costumes are as follows: *gelungan* made of carved cowhide and then given a gold color decorated with gems, worn by the Siwa actor, and the other dancers have their hair teased and enhanced with gold and red flowers. The Siwa actor's costumes are blue, added with beaded and leather *badong*, *ampok-ampok* at the waist, blue and red *kamen*, and blue pants, and bracelets on the legs. For the other dancers, the costumes are pink, wearing leather *badong*, yellow ruffles, *ampok-ampok*, and dark purple *kamen* combined with red and blue. All dancers wear kana bracelets on their wrists and arms. Therefore, the Ciwa Nataraja dance is a dance used as a grand dance of ISI Denpasar, which has the symbol of Ciwa Nataraja, the embodiment of Ciwa as the highest God in the creation of art.

In addition, the performance uses the *gamelan gong kebyar* media to accompany the performance. The instruments are as follows: 1. *Kendang*, in its arrangement at the front (in front of the *ugal*), *gending*, make *angsel-angsel*, and controlling the

rhythm of the gending. 2. *Ugal*, in the overall *gamelan* arrangement, is usually placed in the second row behind *kendang*. 3. *Pemade*, *tungguhan pemade* in its arrangement parallel to the *ugal*, which is located to the right and left of the *ugal*. 4. *Kantilan*, *tungguhan kantilan* in its arrangement is behind *pemade*. 5. *Penyacah*, *tungguhan penyacah* is behind *kantilan*. 6. *Jublaga* is behind *kantilan*. 7. *Reong* is behind *kantilan*. 8. *Cengceng gecek* is located next to *kendang*. 9. *Kajar* is located between *ugal* and *pemade*. 10. *Kempul* is located at the very back, along with the gong and *kempli*. 11. *Kempli*, located at the very back, along with the *kempul* and gong. 12. Gong, located at the very back with *kempul* and *kempli*. 13. The flute is located next to the *kendang*. 14. *Rebab* is located parallel to the flute.

The aesthetic explanation of the Siwa Nata Raja Dance is so complex that it is a monumental dance with many aesthetic elements. Therefore, the process of transmission, or inheritance of this dance, is essential. This dance was last danced on September 3, 2024, to welcome new students of Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar. Having been around for decades, this dance has had the opportunity to be performed by several generations of dancers.

Since it was first created in 1990, Mrs. Komang Sri Wahyuni had the opportunity to dance the Siwa character once at a graduation ceremony. Then, she graduated in 1991. From 1991 to 1995, Mrs. Ni Wayan Suartini danced Siwa. In 1997, she continued to be the Siwa character because she had been appointed as a lecturer at STSI Denpasar. The dancers who have danced Siwa include: Dwi Wahyuning Kristian Santi, Ni Kadek Dewi Ariani, Eka Laksmi, Tiara, and Ayu Devi.

Since its creation in 1990, the Siwa Nata Raja Dance has been recognized as the great dance of STSI Denpasar. Since 1991, it has been taught to new students during campus orientation activities. New students enrolled in the Dance Arts Study Program receive annual Siwa Nata Raja dance training. During this process, nine

students are selected to perform at the closing ceremony of the PKKMB (New Student Orientation Program). The Siwa Nata Raja Dance is specifically performed at ceremonial events at ISI Denpasar, such as graduation ceremonies, anniversary ceremonies, professorship inaugurations, and PKKMB.

Dance training takes place before these events. Selected dancers from each class perform the dance until graduation or if they are unable to attend. The practices process leading up to the performance involves at least five practices, including two sectoral practices, where only the dancers participate, and three joint practices with accompanying music, followed by a full rehearsal. Then, the performance is the following day. This concept of practicing at least five times is specifically for advanced dancers or dancers who have danced several times in the same position.

This dance training process is different for first-semester students. Those who have previously received Siwa Nata Raja dance training but have never performed will certainly have the opportunity in their fifth semester to be selected to dance Siwa Nata Raja. Before joining the other dancers, these selected students will practice independently to fill in for the position they are replacing. Independent practice is done by watching dance videos or practicing with a partner because each dancer's position has a partner, except for the Siwa dancer. Having an *agem* position opposite the partner makes it easier to practice directly with a partner. The Siwa Nata Raja dance team is selected based on the dancer's physique, especially height, to ensure a good balance between the right and left sides.

This process of inheritance, which has been ongoing for approximately 34 years, has ensured the Siwa Nata Raja dance continues to live on today, so it can be classified as a monumental dance work.



Figure 1. Siwa Nata Raja Dance (Source: Kandiraras, July 30, 2024)

CONCLUSION

The Siwa Nataraja Dance is an important group dance that embodies the essence of creativity, aesthetics, and prosperity through the representation of Lord Shiva. It showcases a blend of traditional and contemporary Balinese dance elements. This performance not only highlights the artistic expression of the dancers but also serves as a cultural symbol of Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar, emphasizing the importance of preserving and passing down this monumental art form from generation to generation.

The continuous practice and training of the Siwa Nata Raja Dance at ISI Denpasar since its creation in 1990 has established it as a significant cultural performance, ensuring its relevance and classification as a monumental dance. This structured approach to training and selection preserves the dance's traditions and fosters a sense of community among the students involved.

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