

A Javanese Dance is A Representation of *Rasa* in Javanese Culture

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This paper presents the concept of *rasa* in Javanese culture embodied in Javanese dance. The ethnographic approach in the Ethnochoreology discipline used as a step in data collection was in-depth interviews with actors (dancers, choreographers) in a society with a Javanese cultural scope. The observation step in the data collection effort was carried out using the involved observation model or participant observer, completed by data collection through literature and relevant documents. The theoretical perspective and concept used as the basis for thinking in discussing the case study of the Ela-ela dance in this paper is the concept of *rasa*, as put forward by Paul Stange. Namely, that *rasa* is a "tool" or "means" of perception, or a "function" of "whisper of heart or intuition", and *rasa* in Javanese dance as expressed by Katarina Indah Sulastuti, that *rasa* in Javanese dance is an element that is integrated with the senses in the body in a comprehensive manner which involves: the sensibility of heart vibrations, sharpness of intuition, imagination, bodily intelligence, and understanding of Javanese culture. Javanese dance, in the example of the case study, the Bedhaya Ela-ela dance is a representation of the *rasa* in Javanese culture, namely that the Bedhaya Ela-ela dance is a form of dance that substantially depicts the life of the Javanese people and the culture of *rasa* which involves issues of ethics, aesthetics, and religion in Javanese culture.

Keywords: *Javanese dance, reinterpretation, rasa, Javanese culture, bedhaya Ela-ela*

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INTRODUCTION

Dance is not just the appearance of the physical reality of the dancer's body with muscle strength in a series of motions and all its supporting mediums. So, dance is usually understood as a plastic art of visual motion. But besides that, dance is the behavior of humans who have been prepared with a specific purpose, rhythmically and in terms of cultural attitude patterns and gestures (Bahri et al., 2024). The important is, however, that dance is a form that is alive and meaningful, has *rasa* (sense-taste-feeling-meaning), and is lived by the dancer's body as an individual and social being, which has a reason, feeling, aspirations and hopes. Through the dancer's body, the meaning of dance is represented. Suzanne K. Langer, in her book entitled *Art Problems*, stated that:

What the dancer creates is...a manifestation of active forces...assisting in creating what...we see. ...Dance is something more than existence, something that can be felt. ...What is expressed in dance is a mind; a mind of feelings, emotions, and many other subjective expressions that appear one after another, arise and develop in a complex process leading to harmony, and provide consumption of 'inner life'... (Langer, 1988).

Ambition in dance is *rasa*, feeling, idea, notion, or view that lives in a person (choreographer, dancer) amid their social and cultural life.

According to Windelband & Rickert (1984), in social and cultural life, humans are driven by 4 (four) fundamental values, namely truth, goodness, beauty, and divinity (The four basic values describe the existence or life of humans who are moved by the basis of the enjoyment of reason (truth), the joy of the presence of an object (beauty), regulating human behavior (ethics and morals), the search for one's essence in actual spiritual values (divinity) (Dick Hartoko, 1990). These four things are then manifested in their cultural results, namely: knowledge (aspects of reason and its truth), moral values in public relations or ethics (goodness aspect), works of art (beauty aspect), and religion or belief in absolute power (divinity aspect). These four things are then reflected in every human work, which implies that there are these essential aspects in every human work.

Humans are the only creatures with the gift of reason, mind, and feelings. These three things drive humans to live dynamically, leading to progress and

improvement. With reason and sense, humans can improve the quality of their lives. With feelings, humans can be more aware of their existence in society and their natural environment. As stated by Soren, in human life, 3 (three) aspects are sources of fundamental values or meanings, namely aesthetic life, ethical life, and religious life (Dick Hartoko, 1990). If it is associated with *rasa* as a substantial element in human life (Javanese), it closely relates to religious values (religion), ethics, and aesthetics.

METHODS

The methods in this paper emphasized their relationship with human and cultural research, which is research with a phenomenological perspective. In this regard, the method used in this research was descriptive-interpretative. The descriptive-interpretative method is researching an object, whether in the form of human cultural values, systems of philosophical thought, ethical values, the value of works of art by a group of people, events, or other artistic objects. The goal is to make a systematic and objective description, picture, or painting of facts, characteristics, and relationships between existing elements or a particular phenomenon. The descriptive-interpretative method is fact-finding with precise and systematic interpretation (Kaelan, 2005).

Research that suggests a discussion of dance can refer to experience, behavior, habits, creative work, and patterns of interaction, including views, concepts, and ideas about something related to dance, which is a cultural phenomenon or on issues of cultural symptoms (Maeryani, 2005). The existence of dance cannot be separated from the region or culture, the supporting community, where the dance grows and develops when it was created (and the background of its existence), who made it, how the art looks and so on. This research is under ethno-ethnochoreology, considering that *bêdhaya* is a cultural entity within the tribal area, namely the Javanese community. Dance work has complex facts, and in connection with that, in the discipline of ethnochoreology, various perspectives of study (multi-perspective) are needed (Soedarsono, 1999).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Concept of Javanese Cultural *Rasa* in the Aspects of Religion, Ethics, and Aesthetics

Referring to the fundamental values of human life, *Rasa* in Javanese culture is not limited to the abstraction of a feeling of beauty. However, it is closely related to all essential aspects of Javanese life. In this case, *Rasa* is intended as a concept that

refers to a condition related to the state of mind, soul, or feelings in all aspects of life in society and its culture. In this regard, when scrutinized, in Javanese culture, *Rasa* is a keyword implemented in the realm of religious life, ethics, and aesthetics of Javanese culture.

In a religious sense, *Rasa* is an awareness of managing human relations with the outer nature, which opens up experiences to enter into one's mind intensively, bringing awareness about Divinity. *Rasa*, in this case, indicates a state reached (peak) and an understanding of experience and efforts to unite with the Divine (*manunggaling kawula Gusti*). Thus, *rasa* simultaneously means being *eling* (aware), remembering one's origins from the Divine. Through *rasa*, the Javanese attain *kawruh sangkan paraning dumadi*, an understanding of the origin and purpose of all beings. *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* as a *kawruh* is achieved after experiencing the essential unity of the divine origin, which is the unity of the servant and God (Geertz, 2013). In that case, *rasa* is awareness of the highest reality, which is called true feeling, as stated by Clifford Geertz.

... *rasa* is the "connecting link" between the three major components of religious life: mystical practice, art, and etiquette. This is especially true for the *priyayi* (the aristocratic elite). The person who truly understands ultimate reality - *rasa sejati* - can express that understanding through gestures in dance, sounds in music, or words in poetry. Such a person is naturally refined (*alus*) in his or her outer behavior. The concept of *rasa* is important not only to the *priyayi* but to many other Javanese as well (Geertz, 2013)

The concept of *rasa*, which is related to understanding the ultimate meaning and reality of the Oneness of God, can be seen in the *jarwa dhosok* expression in the words *beksa* or *hambeksa* (Javanese *krama* for dance). *Beksa* or *hambeksa* is a combination of *hambek* and *sa* or *esa* or *sawiji*, which means *ambekipun rasa sawiji*, which means that when we are in a state of silence and total concentration, we can know our position in life and unite with the One God. *Beksa* is also interpreted as *ambekipun Kang Esa*, which refers to the characteristics of the One God (Prabowo, 1990).

Apart from *beksa* or *hambeksa*, the dance term in Java is also known as *mataya*, meaning 'to unite with God', which comes from the words *ma* (to unite) and *taya* (God or God). *Mataya* means to be *taya/become tan ana*; being vague, empty, and

empty is very close to the meaning of *tandhak*, which means *tan ana*. The terms *tandhak*, *taya*, and *mataya* are very closely related to the concept of *beksa*, which is rooted in the idea of *suwung nanging kebak*, meaning that in dancing, one must eliminate feelings of emotion that are personal (subjective/ego) to achieve unity of creativity, taste, and intention to concentrate on one will. *Esa* is united with the nature of oneness (Murgiyanto, 1980). These terms for dance signify an understanding of the One that has been embedded in the life of the Javanese. In addition, Javanese dances always begin with a worship movement. If it is related to the history of the existence of dance arts that live in Java, in the past, the function of traditional arts (forms of populist art as well as classical art-palace art) in Java was closely related to 'spiritual' interests. In the Kasunanan palace, the *Bêdhaya Kêtawang* dance is still being evacuated as a means of ritual. Meanwhile, outside the palace, the art of populist dance, which used to be associated with ritual functions, such as *sintren*, *tayub*, *tiban*, and *ujungan*, has now shifted from its ritual function.

Dance that lives in the palace usually has a spiritual function, especially in the *bêdhaya* dance, which is related to meditative activities. As an example, from its appearance, the *Bêdhaya Ketawang* dance in the Surakarta Kasunanan palace shows that the dance is the result of the meditation of Sultan Agung (Pradjapangrawit, 1990), which subsequently the dance becomes a means of magical sacred ceremonies. Referring to meditative activities, the movements created in the *Bêdhaya Ketawang* dance are full of control of the mind, body, breath, and inner feelings. The movements created are calm (*sêmêlêh*) and not 'tempestuous' *meneb*, flowing (*banyumili*), which shows patterns of meditative behavior. Meditative behavior patterns are intended as bodily activities prioritizing controlling the mind, soul, and feelings and performed with body movements: body, arms, hands, and feet with energy regulation. At a certain level, the movement of meditation gives rise to *rasa*, and at the highest level, it will bring a sensation of cosmic power, which leads to self-awareness as a servant of God. The science of *taichi* states that 'consciousness' feels oneself or knows oneself and will also know its God.

On the next trip, these forms of motion are used as a pattern in composing *bêdhaya*. That activity forms a conventional tradition regarding form (container) and content, and natural taste becomes the pinnacle of its beauty. *Bêdhaya* is a serious dance, so it requires contemplation, sharp concepts, internalization, and *rasa*, and therefore requires a

special process in performing it (audience) and experiencing it ([Suseno, 1993](#)).

In Javanese ethics, *rasa* is rational, which refers to the truth directly experienced by the Javanese in their moral and social life. In social relations, the Javanese always prioritize *rasa* in connection with this, the concept of *ngemong rasa* is known, which has implications for the attitude of *tepa slira* - tolerance, cooperation, and so on. By prioritizing *rasa*, the Javanese maintain good relations with each other in society and with each other (([Koentjaraningrat, 1984](#)), ([Suseno, 1993](#))).

In Javanese ethics, *rasa* becomes a 'moral attitude'; as a 'correct' essential attitude, the deeper and more accurate the feeling will produce the right ethical attitudes. The proper ethical attitude is related to one's actions, which must maintain harmony in society and nature as the highest value. In this connection, two fundamental categories are used in Javanese ethics to regulate all physical and spiritual elements: subtle *rasa* (*rasa halus*) and rough *rasa* (*rasa kasar*). Subtle refers to subtlety in demeanor, sensitivity, politeness, good looks, and so on, as well as a sign of harmony. Subtle shows someone who can control his physical body and regulate his mind to achieve the right feeling. Rough is the opposite of smooth ([Geertz, 2013](#)).

The refined *rasa* is evidenced by the impeccable use of the Javanese language, mastery of appropriate manners for all circumstances, and intuitive sense of what is and is not applicable. It can also be seen in dance, music, and batik art; the world of birth is refined, and at the same time, the physical feelings of rhythm, balance, beauty, sensitivity, and emotions will continue to be trained to refine *rasa*. The first object of refinement is the nature of the body. The body is smoothed, primarily through dance ([Suseno, 1993](#)).

The ethical patterns that apply to Javanese women, in general, are polite behavior, which is indicated by behavior that is smooth and full of rules. The movement of women's dances can be seen in body movements that are smooth, gentle, flowing, calm, and orderly. The refinement of women can be seen from their movements, which tend to be minor, slow, and controlled. In the dance movements, this can be seen in the character of the female dance, which is *luruh*, with the movement patterns of the body segments of the arms, such as stretching the arms that lead to a low level, small steps, *luruh* eyes looking straight down, gentle head *tolehan*, and body movements that 'flow' smoothly, which is a reflection of the ideal rules of behavior for Javanese

women. The Code of Ethics leads to the idealization of Javanese women who are gentle, refined, with stable emotions, and fully regulated with specific rules and efforts to control the body.



Picture 1. The movement of women's dances can be seen in body movements that are smooth, gentle, flowing, calm, and orderly

(Documentation of Katarina Indah Sulastuti)

In the aesthetic aspect, *rasa* is a fundamental concept, which becomes the orientation of the embodiment of dance, namely in the process of composing the dance, in dancing, and in living the dance (observing intensely by involving the soul feelings as a device of appreciation), to be able to capture the vibrations of *rasa* through the dance form. *Rasa* is also the culmination of the 'experience of appreciation, which results from a feeling process involving reason, imagination, interpretation, and emotion. *Rasa* as a 'developmental experience' becomes a provision for the choreographer to realize his ideas, thoughts, and feelings into dance, for dancers as a means to bring dance to life, and for connoisseurs as a provision in appreciating dance.

In the aesthetic aspect, *rasa* is related in its understanding as the culmination of the appreciation of art and the orientation of expression in artistic activities, namely in the preparation of dance, presentation, and appreciation of dance. *Rasa*, so known in The Hindu aesthetics of *Nawarasa* as a part of the '*taksu* (inner power)' of Balinese art, also relates to nine types of emotional situations (called '*bhava*') which give rise to one's aesthetic experience when interacting with art objects. *Navarasa* consists of *Shringara* (love), *Hasya* (funny), *Karuna* (mercy), *Raudra* (angry), *Vira* (zeal), *Bhayanaka* (fear), *Bibhatsa* (disgust), *Adbhuta* (amazement) and *Shanta* (peace) ([Kadek et al., 2019](#)). *Rasa* can be interpreted as a picture of feelings, inner flush, or emotions expressed through aesthetic forms. *Rasa* is also interpreted as the combination of ideas led by a series of sense understanding, with sensory reception conveyed by a patterned form, motion, or sound symbolizing a specific experience ([Sedyawati, 1981](#)).

Referring to the concept of *rasa* concerning religious, ethical, and aesthetic aspects, in the explanation above, it can be used as a basis for discussion of *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* as a manifestation of ideas about values (ethics, religion, and aesthetics) in Javanese culture.

B. *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* Dance as a Representation of the *Rasa* Concept in Javanese Culture

Dance is a form of representation of *rasa* related to inner flush 'emotions' and human ideas in their lives as individual and social beings, which are expressed through beautiful body movements arranged in the design of the dancer's position formation in space and supported by elements of visual and sound elements (makeup-costumes-and props, stage settings, and dance music), to strengthen the substance of their beauty. Ideas, inner flush, and feelings become the aesthetic substance of the work, manifested through the cultivation of dance elements within its socio-cultural sphere. Regarding expressions and emotions, Suzanne K. Langer suggested that dance works and art, in general, are as follows.

A form of expression created for our perception through sensation or imagery, and what it expresses is a human feeling. The word 'feeling' must be used here in a broader sense, meaning something that can be felt, from physical sensations, both heartache and pleasure, excitement and serenity, some of the most complex emotions, mental stress, or the qualities of feeling involved in human life ([Langer, 1988](#))

As a form of expression of feelings in the social life of the Javanese people, the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance represents the whole concept of *rasa*, manifested through its dance elements.

Manifestation of the Concept of Javanese Cultural *Rasa* in the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* Dance

According to the KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary), manifestation means embodying a statement of feeling or opinion. It can also be interpreted as the embodiment or form of something invisible. The manifestation of the concept of *rasa* in the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance is a form of expression of feelings or inner flush, ideas about values, understandings, and beliefs in the social life of Javanese society, as a reflection of religious values (*rasa* of true-mystical), ethics (*rasa alus*), and aesthetics (the beauty of the *rasa regu: agung, mrabu, gagah*) in *trenyuh-prihatin* in Javanese culture.

a. *Religious Aspects*

At the beginning of its creation (during the time of Paku Buwana IV), the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance was a form of dance that was used as an activity for inner management, which penetrated the realm of 'spiritual', related to belief and not merely as a means of consolation. As stated by R.Ng. Pradjapangrawit: "*Wontênipun badhaya ... mênika mengku kawigatosan ... ngawuningani kabudayaan Jawi bab bêksan bêdhaya, ingkang anuntun datêng patrap samadi (sêmadi)*" ([Pradjapangrawit, 1990](#)). *Sêmèdi* behavior (concentrating the mind with body movements) is an effort to unite oneself with nature and its creator. Implicitly, the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance has a deep 'spiritual' content as written in the content of the story conveyed through its *sindhênan bêdhaya*.

The manifestation of the concept of *rasa* from the religious aspect in the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance can be seen from the content or theme of the dance, such as the story of Bima's journey to seek the perfection of life symbolized through the search for holy water or '*Banyu Pêrwitasari*' or '*Tirta Amêrta*', in *Sêrat Dewa Ruci*. The story illustrates the knowledge of *sangkan paraning dumadi* in Javanese mysticism (*Kejawen*). *Sangkan paraning dumadi* is knowledge in living the origin and purpose of life to achieve essential knowledge, namely the unity of servant and God (*manunggaling kawula Gusti*).

Sêrat (book) *Dewa Ruci*, born during the spread of Islam amid Javanese society, is a literary work in the wayang world that refers to the *Serat Nawa Ruci*. *Serat Nawa Ruci*, which has a Hindu nuance, has inspired Kyai Yasadipura I to compose it into *Serat Dewa Ruci*, which was inserted by elements of Islamic Sufism from the results of Islamic-Javanese syncretism. The figure of *Dewa Ruci* was not found in the Mahabharata text, so the story of *Dewa Ruci* is an original Javanese story ([Astiyanto, 2006](#)).

Dewa Ruci's story is predicted, according to Soedarsono, Ng Purbotjaroko, and Stutterheim around the time of the transition of religion or at the beginning of the spread of Islam in Java. The original story, which is considered to be the baboon, is attributed to Mpu Ciwamurti. However, later, the texts were linked to Ajisaka, who is said to have been a student of Maulana Ngusman Ngali, a propagator of Islam. Sunan Bonang translated the original *Sêrat Dewa Ruci* from Kawi into Modern Javanese.

The *Dewa Ruci* play told about Bima's experience of undergoing his spiritual experience searching for perfect identity (true perfection in life). The climax

is when Bima meets *Dewa Ruci*, a manifestation of God within himself. The story illustrates the spiritual phenomenon of *manunggaling kawula lan Gusti* (*tasawuf* or *Kejawèn* teachings), namely the union of humans and their God, which in principle, wants to show the belief in God or the actual life force that exists within humans. *Rasa* in the religious aspect is formed from the phenomenon of 'self' which experiences its unity with the divine basis so that equality (equation) applies: *rasa* means I mean Gusti ((Suseno, 1993), (Geertz, 2013)).

Bima's journey through his spiritual experience while searching for *kasampurnan jati* (true life perfection) in Dewa Ruci's story as can be observed in the Serat Pesindhen Bêdhaya (with the number of years 'Pawaka (3), Ro (2), Wiku (7), Raja (1) namely 1723 AJ (Javanese year). This spirituality was later raised in the form of the dance work Bêdhaya Êla-êla which was created during the reign of Paku Buwana IV (1788 - 1820 AD) and was written on the *Sêrat Wêdhapradangga* in the following writing. "ingkang sinuhun wau kêjawi ugi iyasa lêngên dalêm bêksan ... Bêdhaya Gêndhing Êla-êla (Ela-êla Bêdhaya), gêndhing gamêlan raras pêlog pathêt nêm ... panganggitipun amarêngi warsa Alip angka 1723". Alip is a Javanese calendar system created by Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma, which is a combination of the Hindu (Saka) and Islamic (Hijri) calendar systems as an effort to unify the people who are divided into two groups, namely users of tarikh and the Saka calendar with Hindu roots and users of the Hijri calendar who use Islamic roots. It was inaugurated in 1633. The Javanese year numbers continue the Saka year numbers (M: 78 Saka), so the Alip or Javanese year numbers immediately started at 1555. The Javanese calendar system uses a month rotation calculation system. In contrast, Saka uses a sun rotation calculation system so that each year between Saka and the Javanese year is 13 days apart. The year of Alip 1723 means that it has a difference of 6 years with its Saka year so the Saka year refers to 1717 (1723-1555=168 x13 days = 2184: 30 days:12 months = 6 years, 1723-6 = 1717) and year 1795 for the year AD (1717+78).

In connection with the explanation above, it can be understood that the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance is a manifestation of the feelings of the soul and the inner depiction of its creator. This inner flush arose over phenomena related to the understanding developing at that time, namely matters related to *Kejawèn's* beliefs. The manifestation of the *rasa* concept in the religious aspect of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance is its *sindhênan gêndhing karawitan*, as a form of expression of the understanding of belief (Javanese) and religiosity (Islam), which developed

at that time and gave birth to a Javanese - Islamic understanding called *Kejawèn*.

Rasa is the highest-feeling reality that appears in the intensive appreciation of all phenomena in life (including through meditation) until it reaches a very subjective peak. In his article "Logic of Taste," Paul Stange argued that "basically, *rasa* occupies a fundamental place in the map of Javanese 'spiritual' consciousness" (Stange, 1984).

The meditative character is related to the quality of the dance movement, which demands a calm demeanor and is full of self-control (body, emotions, and mind). Bêdhaya Êla-êla dancers, in carrying out meditative dance movements, apart from understanding the content or main ideas of the dance, are also stimulated by the atmosphere evoked by the *gêndhing* of the dance, as can be observed from the following statement by Hadawiyah Endah Sri Utami.

When I danced the Bêdhaya Êla-êla, there was still no emotion during *sembahan*. It released everything I felt. During the *sembahan* movement, I entered a meditative mood, and what I felt was a kind of meditation. But actually, dancing bêdhaya still has to start with *maju beksan*. Starting from *ngek ngek*, it has already started, as a means of entering the meditation room, the slow walking of *maju kapang-kapang* becomes a meditative atmosphere... then begins the deposition to the *sembahan* and reaches the *jèjèr wayang*, that is the initial meditative, then *risang* [singing] it has started to enter (Interview, Hadawiyah Endah Utami, 23 October 2013).

Related to *rasa sejati* as spiritual awareness in the religious aspect, this is manifested in dancers, as stated by Hadawiyah Endah Sri Utami and several Bêdhaya Êla-êla dancers. They admitted that they had the same feelings when praying and dancing the bêdhaya dance.

When I prayed solemnly, how come I felt like *mlêbu blêng*... it was like entering a room... *padhang*...[bright], feeling detached, feeling light. Well, it's the same as when I'm dancing, when I'm engrossed in it – animating it, I also felt like *enteng, lepas, longgar, padhang*. At that point, I was not thinking of any technique. Thus, it's like when I pray at a certain point, I enter a relaxed atmosphere. That's what I felt when I

danced this Bêdhaya Êla-êla (interview, Hadawiyah Endah Utami and Ninik Suturangi Mulyani).

In these conditions, for a while, the dancers are in a state of 'ecstasy', namely being pulled up from their usual condition, as if standing outside the world or detached from themselves (Dick Hartoko, 1990). It can also be said that they have experienced 'catharsis', namely feeling mental renewal or mental relief obtained through aesthetic experiences (Wibisono, 2007).

b. Ethical Aspects

Concerning Javanese ethics, the concept of *rasa* is manifested in the form of the dance movements of the Bedhaya Ela-ela with a standard pattern that refers to the characteristics of the dance movements of Javanese women - Surakarta style. The form of movement in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance uses Javanese dance motifs (particularly in the characterization of the female dance) created from the crystallization of ideas regarding ethical patterns prevailing in the society in Javanese culture. Ethical patterns of noble behavior are identified with refined behavior, especially in Javanese women. These subtle behavioral patterns are reflected in dance movements that reflect ethics understood in society, such as patterns or eye glances, hand movements, walking motions, body movements, and so on.

Reflection of Javanese women's ethical patterns related to movement patterns, such as calm eye patterns, moderate head movements, low arm stretches (not raising arms at a high level), slow, orderly footsteps, directed body movements, and calm demeanor. From an ethical perspective on subtlety, as conceptualized in the behavior of the Javanese woman, the movements of the bêdhaya dance (Bêdhaya Êla-êla) are representational images. The dance movements arranged in bêdhaya (Bêdhaya Êla-êla) still regulate movements strictly related to eye gaze patterns, head movements, arm, leg, and body movements. Movement in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, as in other classical bêdhaya dances, is still based on the principles of subtlety *rasa* (ethics). The pattern of the eyes or patterns in the dance remains the standard, with calm eyes and slow head movements. To fulfill the demands of an aesthetic expression of *rasa gagah*, the pattern of arm movements in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance demands arm movements with a slightly wider range or with a larger volume compared to other bêdhaya dances.

However, the movement patterns of the arm stretches are still worked out following the concept of ethics in the attitudes of Javanese women. These

arm movements do not exceed the horizontal line and still aim at a low level. Likewise, foot movements are worked out in the corridor of traditional patterns that reflect the ethics of Javanese women's behavior, namely not lifting their feet beyond the ethical limits, as in the pattern of footwork in classical bêdhaya dance in general, namely remaining at a low level and in a small volume. The body movement pattern also still refers to standard movement patterns, as it does not work much on the transition of body movement (body) frontally, and it still refers to the concept of soft and flowing turning motion. The bêdhaya dance is danced calmly, gently, gracefully and firmly, showing a *rasa agung, gagah* and *wibawa* (majesty, gallantry and authority). As can be felt in the composition of the *gendhing karawitan* of the bedhaya dance in general, the impression of *rasa* that arises is the *rasa rêgu*, which then also appears as the impression or *rasa agung, gagah*, sacred, calm, and deep.



Picture 2. The bêdhaya dance is danced calmly, gently, gracefully and firmly, showing a *rasa agung, gagah* and *wibawa* (majesty, gallantry and authority)

(Document by Katarina Indah S).

Rasa in Java could refer to *rasa* in India. Nawarasa ia aesthetics, as a part of Balinese artistic taxonomy, is also related to the nine types of emotional situations (*bhava*) that give rise to a person's aesthetic experience when interacting with art objects. Nawarasa consists of Shringara (love), Hasya (funny), Karuna (mercy), Raudra (anger), Vira (enthusiasm), Bhayanaka (fear), Bibhatsa (disgust/disgust), Adbhuta (amazement) and Shanta (peace). Nawarasa Hindu aesthetics, as a part of Balinese artistic taxonomy, is also related to the nine types of emotional situations (*bhava*) that give rise to a person's aesthetic experience when interacting with art objects. Nawarasa consists of Shringara (love), Hasya (funny), Karuna (mercy), Raudra (anger), Vira (enthusiasm), Bhayanaka (fear), Bibhatsa (disgust/disgust), Adbhuta (amazement) and Shanta (peace) (Kadek et al., 2019).

c. *Aesthetic Aspects*

The Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance is a work of art from within the palace, which considers unique aesthetic values, namely the nuances of the beauty of *rasa*. Its existence in the past is no longer traced and then undergoes reinterpretation through new arrangements. In composing the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, Agus Tasman consciously works with the beauty of *rasa* in mind. The beauty of *rasa*, which refers to the story of Bima's journey in searching for *banyu perwitasari* as a symbol of the perfection of life, is stated as follows.

When I started to recompose the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, I described the *rasa-rasa* that would appear in Bima's journey in the *Dewa Ruci* play. It feels *gagah, gagah gagah resik, rasa gagah alus* (interview, Agus Tasman, 11 March 2014).

The manifestation of the *rasa* of aesthetic aspects in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance conceptualized by Agus Tasman is the harmonization of all the elements in the dance performance (movement, make-up and costume, dancer formation, and dance *karawitan*). The harmonization here also includes conformity in form due to '*kemungguhan*' or elements of accuracy and appropriateness in work. Therefore, what must be observed is the appropriateness of a dance pattern and the accuracy of using a movement pattern to describe a certain character or a certain atmosphere. In this regard, it is stated that the key to achieving taste is the presence of elements of accuracy and appropriateness in work (Sedyawati, 1981). Related to accuracy or appropriateness (*mungguh*) in the choreography of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, Agus Tasman gave the following statement.

For the movements of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance in exploring the motion of the Kala-kala mbayangke lelakune Bima, bedane yen bêdhaya kui dudu wayang, so it is returned to the form and character of the bêdhaya. Yen wayang, Bima kae kan jegglong-jengglong. Ning nggon bêdhaya yo aja ngono. Gagah gagah resik, rasa gagah alus, gagah neng mungguh kanggone penari putri (Agus Tasman, interview 13 November 2014).

(For the movements of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, in exploring the motion, sometimes imagining Bima's journey, the difference is that the bêdhaya is not a puppet, so it returns to the form and character of the bêdhaya'. However, in

bêdhaya, it is not like that. The dashing is clean (*gagah bersih*), soft (*gagah alus*) dashing but adapted to female dancers).

The Bêdhaya Êla-êla Agus Tasman dance is a new compositional work related to the factor of cultural preservation. Cultural values reflect collective and communal interests that depart from personal experiences (Afryanto, 2023). Related to this, the reborn Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance is not merely an expression of the composer's soul. However, it is a reinterpretation of the expression of the artist's soul in its cultural context at that time. As a new composition of traditional dance, the distinctive forms of that tradition are prioritized. For this reason, in composing his movements, Agus Tasman always refers to forms that have been patterned from generation to generation or standard patterns. The most essential new composing activity is the ability to reinterpret the form and content of the dance.

The content of the *rasa* of the aesthetic of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance is also referred to from the results of the re-interpretation of the dance's existence during the palace era under the reign of Paku Buwana VI (1823-1849). During the reign of Paku Buwana VI, the palace was in difficult times due to Dutch colonialism. Paku Buwana VI, as a ruler, experienced inner flush, which was then expressed and recorded in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla palace at that time, which appeared the *sindhênan bêdhaya*, as seen in the notes in the *Serat Pesindhên Bêdhaya*.

Notes about *sindhên Bêdhaya Êla-êla* found in the *Serat Pesindhên Bêdhaya*, which do not directly tell about Bima in *Dewa Ruci*'s story but tell about Paku Buwana VI's heartbreak. It can be interpreted that during the war against the invaders, the existence of warriors dominated one's mind. Here are some sentences in *sindhênan Bêdhaya Êla-êla* showing this.

Êla-êla Pamengkuning wadya tantra
Sang Sudibya trah naréndra Ngêksiganda,
dhé
Mangunèng ing driya mamrih sinatwamta,
Mring sang mindha Supraba lunturing karsa,
babo
Swajéndra puspitaning purantara, dhé
Wus pininta nginang durung pamrih dadya,
Marma dahat margiyuh anglêr pralaya, dhé
Mung tulusa dasihé angèstupada,
Patri rukmi, bêksa catur kang badhaya, babo
Pijer kèpi kusuma jroning anéndra
(Pakubuwana VII, tt: 760).

(Ouch . the leadership of the army of war
 The leader is a descendant of the Mataram
 dynasty, hey
 Grieving at the unfulfilled wish,
 To people like Supraba who are not
 passionate, babo
 'Swajendra' princess palace flower, ouch
 Having been asked to eat betel nut has not
 become his will,
 Take immediate serenity in death, fabulous!
 Just be sincere so that all worship,
 Beautiful princess, four dances named
 bedaya, babo
 Continuing to be a sleeping flower)

In this case, Agus Tasman argued that the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance, which once lived in the Kasunanan palace, is a form of expression of a king's feelings or inner flush in an atmosphere of concern over the suffering of his people due to oppression or Dutch colonialism. Agus Tasman explained as follows:

Bêdhaya Êla-êla feels *agung*
 (...pause)... Is it only *agung*? in terms of
agung there are *regu*, *lungit mrabu*,
luhur can be so varied. Bêdhaya Êla-êla
agung is *agung luhur* and *prihatin*
 (concerned). Concerned because its
 original creator was concerned because
 at that time,...(...pause) PB VI was
 concerned about the people's suffering
 due to colonialism.

Starting from the sources of aesthetic ideas as content (*rasa*) in the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance that has been described, Agus Tasman underlined that the aesthetic sense in Bêdhaya Êla-êla is *regu*, *agung-luhur-wibawa-mrabu*, *lungit*, a nuance of concern. *Rasa prihatin* arose from empathy and sharing in the people's suffering caused by Dutch colonialism. However, his creative ideas are still based on Bima's story in *Dewa Ruci* as a source of *garap rasa* (Agus Tasman, Interview 13 November 2013).

The choreographer's (Agus Tasman) aesthetic experience is related to understanding dance (concept and technique) and concepts in Javanese culture that have built (*kasarira*) within him. That experience is then manifested in the form of dance works. In creating *rasa*, the choreographer explores his emotions and body by understanding the background of the work (Paku Buwana VI) and its story (Bima in *Dewa Ruci*).

Regarding the *Dewa Ruci* story, Agus Tasman stated that characterizing the characters is an aesthetic idea in Bêdhaya Êla-êla's work. The character used as *canthelane pikir* or a spur of the imagination is

Bima, the central figure in the story of *Dewa Ruci*, who has a dashing, *anteb*, *teguh*, and persistent character, which gives rise to *rasa* (impression) of *gagah*. At the same time, the figure of Dewa Ruci gave the impression of *lungit* that is sacred or secret. Agus Tasman put it as follows.

As a race of *rasa*, it describes *rasa-rasa* Dewa Ruci, understanding who Dewa Ruci is, ...there is *rasa lungit*, that *lungit* is deep and sharp, sharp and sacred, that is, secret-mystery. For the movements of the Bêdhaya Êla-êla dance in exploring the motions of the kala-kala mbak yang who is on Bima's journey, but bedhaya is not a wayang, so it is returned to the form and character of bedhaya. So Bima *mlakune jêngglong-jengglong ning in bêdhaya ya aja ngono. Gagahe gagah resik, rasa gagah alus, gagah ning mungguh kanggoné penari putri*. I draw from the meaning of the sacred from Bêdhaya Êla-êla. The sacred is *Dewa Ruci*. *Dewa Ruci* is a sacred figure who does not exist because it is only a manifestation of imagination, a manifestation of an idea. Every artist has it because of the artist's power from the idea..what is captured by the artist is then realized (Agus Tasman, Interview 13 November 2013).

The aesthetic of *rasa* is the basic concept of realizing the beauty of dance. This is manifested through the combination of all the elements of the dance (physically: dancers, floor pattern movements, make-up and costume, dance *karawitan*, and the staging space, and non-physically: lighting and the atmosphere formed from the situation in the staging area). But, *rasa* is also understood through its elements, such as *rasa gerak*, *rasa gêndhing*, and *rasa*, which appear in floor patterns, dancers' formations, make-up and costume, floral scents, and so on. Sense as a source of beauty begins with the perception of ideas, main ideas, nuances, impressions, and feelings that become the spirit of dance. Perception of ideas, inner flush, and *rasa* are embodied in the Bêdhaya Ela-ela dance with a high level of complexity.

The discussion about *rasa* (sense) in Javanese culture, which is interpreted through the Bedhaya Ela-ela Dance, is based on the results of an exploration of Agus Tasman's creative process as a choreographer, the dancers' interpretations, and the audience's experiences. The results of exploring the three important elements in dance life (artists/choreographers, dancers and the public - in

this case, the audience) indicate a connected understanding of the concept of *rasa* in Javanese culture. From this phenomenon, it can be concluded that the concept of *rasa* in Javanese culture is represented in the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance as a result of the cultural activities of the Javanese people. The interpretation of the sense of Javanese culture by the choreographer through the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance, the interpretation of the sense of Javanese culture by the dancers through the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance, and the interpretation of the sense of Javanese culture by the audience in the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance is an aesthetic experience.

The choreographer is the subject of efforts to interpret *rasa*/ sense through his creative process in creating dance. The choreographer's creative process (Agus Tasman) based on internal and external encouragement greatly influenced his success in interpreting the *rasa* of Javanese culture in the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance. The choreographer's aesthetic idea in creating the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance refers to the character Bima in the story *Dewa Ruci* and *Perjuangan Paku Buwana VI*. Departing from the characters of these two figures, the idea emerged of a *rasa* of *rasa teguh* (semangat), *gagah*, *agung antêb*, *mrabu* (wibawa). Apart from basing the idea on the characters Bima and Paku Buwana VI, the choreographer also looked at the meaning/ *rasa* of the name of the dance, which is taken from the name of the music, namely *êla-êla*. The word *êla-êla* is a word to describe mood, feeling, and taste (*rasa*/ *raos*: Javanese). In the Javanese Kawi dictionary, you can find the words *êla*, which means *éman*, praise, and *êla-êla* which means *eman-eman*, then *ing êla-êla* which means *diana-dama*, *diéman-éman*, *diugung*. The choreographer's creative process in interpreting the *rasa* that emerged into the creation of the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance is based on the concept of *Hastasawanda*, namely eight elements or terms in one unit, which include *pacak*, *pancat*, *ulat*, *lulut*, *wiled*, *luwes*, *irama* and *gendhing*.

To bring out the feelings contained in the dance, dancers need the power of interpretation to be channeled through the body with established technical abilities. These *rasa* (*gagah*, *agung antêb*, *mrabu-wibawa*) are brought to life through the wandering imagination of the dancer. Several things, including the story or theme of the dance, the characters in the story, the form of movement motifs or characterization of the characters and movements, and the background to the existence of the dance, stimulate the wandering of the imagination. Some dancers interpret *rasa* to give life force to their dance by imagining characters that are realized through the implementation of their movement techniques. The

dancers develop the imagination of the characters to bring the *rasa* of dance to life, including by understanding the themes and substance of the dance, which are reflected in the characters in the *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance, namely Bima's spiritual journey in the *Dewa Ruci* story. This understanding was carried out as an effort to animate the characters, namely Bima/ *Werkudara*/ *Bratasena* and, at the same time, the character *Dewa Ruci*, both of whom convey the impression of being dashing, majestic and sacred, as stated by the choreographer. The dancers stated that:

The *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance have a *rasa gagah*, but that doesn't mean the movements are broken...they still have to flow. The *rasa* of *gagah* comes from his movements, which can be seen in the *penthangan* [stretched arms], the movement of *rada dhuwur-dhuwur* [moving his arms slightly high], *menthange rada amba-amba* [stretching his arms rather wide], and his gaze is also *rada dhuwur* [rather high], so that you can display a sense of dashing. In order to be able to display a *rasa* of *gagah*, *agung*, *mrabu*, in carrying out the movement you must be *ndegeg* [upright].



Picture 3. The interpretation of a *rasa gagah* (sense of dashing) is manifested through a slightly high arm movement

(Document by Katarina Indah S)

When dancing, a dancer also has to go through a process of appreciation. The process of appreciation requires high levels of imagination and interpretation. The sensibility of feeling is also needed to appreciate the *rasa* in the dance - which arises from the characterization in the dance and the dance music. The process of appreciating this *rasa* is important for dancers so that they can bring their dance to life and bring out feelings in their dance presentation. Understanding and being inspired by the story and characters is very influential in understanding the *rasa* expressed through movement elements. From this inspiration, the image will be

projected into the movement so that the movement will appear as a *rasa*.

The *rasa* evoked by dance movements is determined by several things, including the accuracy of the movement elements. The elements of movement consist of shape, power, effort, dynamics, rhythm, volume. From the management of these movement elements, a sense of movement can be formed. Management of movement elements is closely related to the technical implementation of movement. Mastering the correct technical movements will bring the *rasa* of movement to life in a choreography. Other form elements are make-up, dance clothing, dancer formation and floor patterns. *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance make-up, using corrective make-up and wearing a *gelung kadhal mènèk* with complementary accessories, namely *jambul bulu*, *cundhuk cungkak*, *sirkam*. *Gelung kadhal mènèk* has a historical background related to the existence of male in ancient times that has a long hair, and than them hair was folded up their head with a *sirkam*. In this regard, the shape of the *gelung kadhal mènèk* will lead an imagination of the gallantry of soldiers (in accordance with the figures of Bima and Paku Buwana VI), so that it can trigger a *rasa* of *gagah*, *agung* (*rêgu*), *wibawa*.

Several things, including the accuracy of the movement elements, determine the *rasa* dance movements evoke. The elements of movement consist of shape, power, effort, dynamics, rhythm, and volume. A sense of movement can be formed from the management of these movement elements. Management of movement elements is closely related to the technical implementation of movement. Mastering the correct technical movements will bring the *rasa* of movement to life in a choreography. Other form elements are make-up, dance clothing, dancer formation and floor patterns. *Bêdhaya Êla-êla* dance make-up, using corrective make-up and wearing a *gelung kadhal mènèk* with complementary accessories, namely *jambul bulu*, *cundhuk cungkak*, *sirkam*. *Gelung kadhal mènèk* has a historical background related to the existence of long hair of males in ancient times, and their hair was folded up their head with a *sirkam*. In this regard, the shape of the *gelung kadhal mènèk* will lead to an imagination of the gallantry of soldiers (by the figures of Bima and Paku Buwana VI) so that it can trigger a *rasa* of *gagah*, *agung* (*rêgu*), *wibawa*.

In interpreting the Javanese dance they witness, the audience requires sufficient imagination, taste sensitivity, sharpness and intelligence, supported by emotional stability (*empan lan mapane pangrasa*).

Apart from that, it is also based on knowledge of Javanese dance concepts. Several factors influence the fluency in interpreting *rasa* in dance, namely the understanding and comprehension of the symbols used in dance presentations, including similarities in socio-cultural backgrounds and interpretations of cultural values ("*rasa*") represented in the dance. In detail, this knowledge and understanding are also related to the form and content as well as creative activities, the concept of Javanese culture, the concept of the beauty of dance, the concept of the work and the creation of all the media used (concerning the content and all elements in dance: body, movement, make-up, dancer formations-floor patterns, music and space). The audience's emotions will generally emerge through various 'feelings' that reach a psychological condition, namely a deep impression of the performance (Kadek, 2018).

CONCLUSION

In the case of the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance, Javanese dance is an art form that represents the taste of Javanese culture. *Rasa* in Javanese culture is a concept that is understood holistically, encompassing the realms of religion, ethics, and aesthetics. The representation of *rasa* in the realm of religion in the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance can be seen in the composition of the movement structure, the motives for the *manembah* movement, as well as the depiction of the Bima Suci and *Dewa Ruci* figures who become symbols of '*sangkan paraning dumadi*', namely '*manunggaling kawula Gusti*' as in the Javanese belief. *Rasa* in religion is also reflected in the dancers through their bodies when performing the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance. In the realm of ethics, the essence of the movements of the *Bedhaya Ela-ela* dance is a description of the attitude or behavior of Javanese women bound by rules in behavior. *Rasa*, in the realm of aesthetics, becomes the spirit or substance of the beauty of the *Bedhaya ela-ela* dance, which underlies the idea of composing the dance, as a basic reference for the dancers in presenting the *Bedhaya ela-ela* dance, which will be reflected in the audience who appreciates the dance presentation.

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INFORMAN

Agus Tasman, (passed away at the age of 83 years), a dance master, dancer, choreographer / arranger of traditional Surakarta style classical dance, lived in Karangasem Surakarta.

Hadawiyah Endah Utami, 61 years old, dancer, bedhaya dance choreographer/stylist, lecturer/instructor at the ISI Surakarta Dance Department, choreographer, dancer and dance observer.

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Ninik Suturangi Mulyani, at the time of the interview, was 58 years old, (she died in 2020 due to Covid), a dancer, instructor and dance teacher at the ISI Surakarta Dance Department.