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## Deconstructing The Meaning Of The Representation Of The *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance

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## Lekesan: Interdisciplinary Journal of Asia Pasific Arts

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### Deconstructing The Meaning Of The Representation Of The *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance

Ida Ayu Trisnawati

This present study explores *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali. The qualitative approach was employed to implement the critical ethnography of the existence of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance. The study focuses on the identification of the existence of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance and on the description of the form of its performance and meaning as the dance performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali. The result of the study shows that when *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance was created and how it has been developed cannot be definitely described; however, its existence at Sidatapa Village cannot be separated from the local people's belief. It was created and has been performed as an attempt to ward off misfortune. It was created and performed to avoid disaster or epidemic locally referred to as *mra-na*, whereas *Gandrung* Dance was created and performed to be offered to Gods for the abundant agricultural yield. It has usually been performed before *Sanghyang* Dance is performed. The ceremonial procession during which they are performed is initiated with several traditional activities, starting from a notification which is made for the local people to get involved in the event when cockfighting is held. Then, the procession, which lasts for 42 days (the Balinese calendar-based one month and seven days), is held. They are performed at night from 7.00 to 10 p.m. Indonesia Central Time. The procession starts with *Gandrung* Dance, which is performed with 9 dancing movements, and then *Sanghyang* Dance, which is performed with 11 dancing movements. After lasting for 42 days, the procession is closed with a rite locally referred to as *tegen-tegan* procession in which agricultural products are carried by those involved in the procession. *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance has religious, social and educational functions. The local people perform it to express their thanks to God, ethics and aesthetics, and to ward off misfortune.

*Keywords: sangyang gandrung, history, function, meaning*

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## Introduction

As human creations, the arts, which have been created since a very long time ago, have different forms. In KBBI (2008: 1414), it is explained that the arts refer to the expertise of creating quality work. There are many types of the arts developing in society; they are the art of music, the art of singing, and the art of performing art. They all reflect the socio-cultural life of their supporting communities. The arts have been developing and spreading in every part of Indonesia; therefore, Indonesia is well-known for being rich in the arts.

The development of the arts can be observed in Bali, as one of the islands in Indonesia. It has both classic and modern arts widely developing and spreading in every area. One of the forms of the performing art which has been developing is the *Gandrung* performing art. In Indonesia it is commonly known that its origin is Banyuwangi; therefore, *Gandrung* has been adopted as its icon (Suharti, 2012). It has also developed in Lombok Island (Trisnawati, 2016a, 2016b, 2016d). It turns out that in Bali the dance has also developed especially in the native villages of Bali (Bali Aga). However, the one performed at Sidatapa is so different from the one performed in the other areas. The difference is that it is combined with *Sanghyang* Dance; therefore, it is referred to as *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance. What has made it unique if it is compared to the one performed in Banyuwangi is that the dancers who perform it. In Banyuwangi, it is performed by female dancers, whereas the one performed in Bali is performed by male adolescents. The way how the dancers get dressed also distinguishes the *Gandrung* Dance performed in Bali from that performed in Banyuwangi. The dancers performing it in Banyuwangi wear many accessories, whereas those performing it in Bali get simply dressed. The one performed in Lombok Island keeps developing in order to maintain its identity from the era development (Trisnawati, 2016a, 2016b, 2016d).

The uniqueness described above motivated the researcher to explore and comprehend the *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance performed at Sidatapa in-depth, including the form of its performance, function and symbolic meaning to the local people. In addition, the researcher intended to excavate the meaning which every highly symbolic movement contains. Geertz (in Kusumawardani, 2012: 2) explains that a symbol refers to everything (material object, event, act, utterance, and human movement) which signifies or represents another thing or everything to which meaning has been specifically assigned. Apart from that, it is important to obtain the true conception of the existence of *Gandrung* Dance as one of the sacred (*wali*) dances performed in Bali. The reason is that a symbol is used to reflect several ideas (for example, literature and the arts) (KBBI, 2008:1451). Moreover, *Gandrung* Dance fully contains complex meaning such as the character value (Trisnawa-

ti, 2016c). Therefore, this present study was conducted in order to be able to identify the existence of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance, the forms of its performance, and the symbolic meaning it contains to the people living at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali.

## Methodology

This present study was conducted to identify the existence, genealogy, function and meaning of the *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali. As stated by Foucault (1969), genealogy refers to the relation between one phenomenon and another which is full of relation of power and discourse in any existing social phenomenon. The developing ideology and discourse can certainly affect the function and meaning of a social phenomenon, which, in this case, is the *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali. The data were collected using interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The collected data were then analyzed using the theories previously determined so a holistic and critical study can be produced based on the interactive analysis proposed by Mile and Huberman (1992).

## Discussion

### The History of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance Performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar Village, Buleleng

The history of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance cannot be specifically identified. The artist who created it has not been known so far. However, as far as its functions are concerned, *Sanghyang* Dance was created to ward off misfortune locally referred to as *mrana*. Unlike *Sanghyang Dance*, which was created to ward off misfortune, *Gandrung* Dance was created to be offered to Gods for the abundant agricultural yield. Its performance is preceded by the performance of *Sanghyang* Dance.

The existence of *Gandrung* Dance could not be separated from the epidemic which had caused the local people living at Sidatapa Village to suffer from strange illnesses, one of which was ulcer. Many local people suffered from it, and it was believed that a adverse energy or forces termed as 'Bhuta Kala' had been responsible for that. Therefore, a rite locally referred to as *Upacara Bhuta Yadnya Sanghyang Gandrung* (sacrificial ceremony for *Sanghyang Gandrung*) was performed to compensate for the illness the bad spirit locally referred to as 'Bhuta Kala' had created. Since the rite was performed, no epidemic has attacked the local people.

*Sanghyang* Dance is performed by two prepubescent female dancers symbolizing the heaven dancers (*Dedari*). *Gandrung* Dance is performed by two prepubescent male dancers symbolizing the adverse energy or forces termed as 'Bhuta Kala' named *Gandrung*, meaning someone whom

the adverse energy or forces termed as 'Bhuta Kala' '*Gandaruwo* is fond of. All the adverse energy or forces termed as 'Bhuta Kala', including the one named *Buta Kala*, are made to be amused and happy to watch the dance.

The signification assigned by the local people living at Sidatapa Village is similar enough to that assigned to the word "Gandrung", meaning love and being affected. Substantially, the word "gandrung" means being loved and affecting (Depdikbud, 2005: 17). The feeling of being loved and affected was then reflected by its supporting community in the form of a dance, which was then referred to as *Gandrung Dance* (Suharti, 2012). In Banyuwangi and Lombok Island the word 'gandrung' also refers to the same thing. In Lombok Island, *Gandrung Dance* has been performed and developed at several villages such as Teleng Village, Lenek Village, and Suwangi Village (Yatiningsih, 1994). It has been performed to express thanks to Goddess Sri (*Dewi Sri*) for the abundant agricultural yield (Yatiningsih, 1994: 27). However, the fact that the function of the dance performed in one area is slightly different from that of the dance performed in another area cannot be separated from the fact that the arts keep changing following its supporting community's way of thinking (Kodiran, 1998: 541-544). In Bali, according to Mas (2015:6), the arts keep changing based on the concept of space, time and situation, locally referred to as '*desa, kala, patra*'.

*Sanghyang Gandrung Dance* is the sacred dance performed once in three years for 42 days, in the Balinese calendar-based second and third months 'sasih karo-ketiga', from August to September. It is performed to ward off misfortune. During its performance, an offering locally referred to as 'caru' in the form 'tumpeng' (ceremonial dish) in five colors is offered. The offering is placed underneath what is locally known as 'sanggah cucuk' and is offered to the bad spirit 'Buta Kala'. The white ceremonial dish 'tumpeng' is also placed on 'sanggah cucuk' and is offered to the Almighty God as the only strength which can control the Bad Spirit.

From the things related to *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance*, especially the costume worn by its dancers, it can be seen that they are so simply dressed. The costume they wear is stated to be simple as it is not similar to the one worn by a dancer which we commonly see. The costume they wear is what they have. The female dancers (*Sanghyang* dancers) only wear a piece of fabric 'kamen', a type of belt locally known as 'sabuk lilit (bebet)', sash, shawl locally known as 'selendang rembang', and several golden flowers as the head ornament. The uniform worn by the male dancers (the *Gandrung* dancers) is not different from that worn by the *Sanghyang* dancers. However, the former are different from the latter in respect to the hard ornament they wear. The head ornament worn by the former is similar to the one worn by the 'rejang' dancers completed with a tassel made of plastic rope. No specific colors are required; how-



Figure 1. The *Gandrung* Dancers (on the left) and the *Sanghyang* Dancers (on the right)  
(Source: Trisnawati, 2017)

ever, the fans they use are specific.

### **The Offering 'Banten' used before the performance of *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance***

What is locally known as *Canang Tubungan* or *Canang Lembaran* is the main offering offered before *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance* is performed. It is made up of young coconut, *canang sari*, *canang raka*, *base palpalan*, *caru*, mat and fermented palm wine. The offering is carried by those who are already married. They alternately prepare the offering every time the ceremonial procession is held.

The other important offering offered in front of every gate of the families is known as *segehan panca warna*. It is made in five colors and offered to the bad spirit so that it will not disturb the people living at Sidatapa any longer.

### **The Form of the *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance* Performed at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali.**

The Performing Process of *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance*

a) As an initial activity, the local people are notified that the ceremonial procession of *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance* will start for which they should pay for contribution 'iuran' and 'ngaturan pepeson'. Someone who is supposed to do this activity visits every family bringing a written palm leaf manuscript with him to inform that the performing process of the dances will take place. This initial activity is locally referred to as *ngduhan urak (menjalan arah-arah)*.

b) Three days after the notifying activity is done, 'upacara piuning' (the rite performed to inform the Sea Controlling Lord 'Betara Segara' that the performing process will take place) and 'pecaruan' (the rite performed to neutralize the disturbing bad spirit that comes from the sea) are held. These rites are performed in the northern part of Celagi Village for three days, completed with the cock fighting and the performance of *Sanghyang Gandrung Dance*.

c) Then similar rites are also performed at the outer yard 'bencingah' of the Bale Agung Temple located at the village to let the Lord residing at the temple know that the



Figure 2. The Performance of *Gandrung* Dance and *Sanghyang* Dance

(Source: Trisnawati, 2017)

performing process of the dances will start so that the negative strengths can be neutralized.

d) After that similar rites are also held at Dalem Temple to neutralize the bad spirit coming from the cemetery.

e) Every time after the rite is already held, *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is performed at night.

f) After the performing process takes place for nine days, an opportunity is provided to the local people to perform *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance; added together, all the performing process lasts for 42 days.

g) The rites performed as the last part of the performing process are *pecaruan* (sacrificial ceremony), *tabuh rah* (cock fighting) and the procession in which several agricultural yields such as cassava, sweet potatoes, fruit and so forth are offered to *Dewa Sengkara* as another name for the Almighty God who controls the nature.

#### Types of the Movements Made in *Gandrung* Dance and *Sanghyang* Dance

The performance of *Gandrung* Dance lasts for 60 minutes and involves at least nine (9) movements made by the dancers. The movements are repeatedly made for 42 days. Based on the information provided by the dancers, they were taught by someone called *Balen Desa* before they perform it. They said that in the beginning the movements they made were awkward and that they sometimes forgot the movements. However, as the movements were repeatedly made, they become good at them. Gede, aged 16, whom was interviewed on 20 August 2017, stated that there are nine dancing movements which should be made when performing *Gandrung* Dance at Sidatapa Village. They are 1) *Tari Pelayonan*, 2) *Tari Jang Galah Gandrung*, 3) *Tari Pengerangrang*, 4) *Tari Made Cenik*, 5) *Tari Topeng*, 6) *Tari Baris*, 7) *Jogedan Gandrung*, 8) *Tari Ronggeng*, and 9) *Tari Omang-omang*. Each is performed for about five minutes per dancing time and is repeated 2-3 times every time it is performed.

The same movements are made by the *Sanghyang* dancers. They told that they were taught and supervised by *Balean Desa* at Desa Temple. Before they performed it they learned with the *Gandrung* dancers. They practiced for a long time before they performed *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance at Desa Temple located at the village. They admitted that in the beginning it was difficult for them to make the movements needed; however, finally, they automati-

cally became good at making the movements. Contrary to *Gandrung* Dance, *Sanghyang* Dance is performed for nine days in succession in the beginning of the ceremonial procession; however, after that, if there is a special request, except on the day which is locally referred to as 'pasah', they perform it again. *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is performed again on the 42th day of the procession. Ayu, aged 20, whom was interviewed on 10 August 2017, told that the *Sanghyang* Dance performed at Sidatapa Village includes 11 dancing movements; they are 1) *Sekar Jepun* Dance, 2) *Sekar Melati* Dance, 3) *Sekar Jamtit* Dance, 4) *Rejang Galuh* Dance, 5) *Rejang Bhayan* Dance, 6) *Dayung* Dance, 7) *Goak* Dance, 8) *Manis Dalem* Dance, 9) *Jejangeran* Dance, 10) *Omang-Omang* Dance, and 11) *Mantuk Dedari* Dance.

The *Sanghyang* Dance performed at the *Sanghyang* performing procession at Sidatapa Village is also initiated with the song sung to invite *Sanghyang* to come. The song is sung by the village's elders who sit together in the middle of the stage where it is performed. 'Kemenyan' (the burned incense derived from gum benzoin) used to invite *Sanghyang* to come is placed in front of them. They sing four songs functioning to invite *Sanghyang* to come. They are *Dengklang Arja*, *Olog-Olog*, *Kebyar-Kebyar* and *Enggal-Enggal Medali Sanghyang*. They are sung together and each is repeated three times. Jro Parma, aged 55, whom was interviewed on 10 August 2017, explained each song as follows.

1. *Dengklang Arja*, which is sung three times, is as follows  
 Dongklang arja, pindange bayan pindange,  
 Pindang Dut-dut bekel meyong,  
 Meyonge rambut Sinarda  
 Olen ene Olen Kung  
 Dar dar kung  
 kek-kek kung,

2. *Olog-Olog*, which is sung three times, is as follows:  
 Olog-olog ne mangapung  
 nyuh mentung mededale  
 serintog serondengan  
 tinggal getok megelengan,

3. *Kebyar-Kebyur*, which is sung three times, is as follows:  
 Kebyar-kebyur Pada makebyur  
 pakebyur ke gunung sari sidatapa  
 lamun seneng ayu dedari  
 meriki turun medadi Sanghyang  
 payas ida penganten sarwaning anyar

4. *Enggal-enggal medali Sanghyang*, which is sung three times, is as follows:  
 Pang enggal-enggal menadi kumara gana  
 Eka mara sidhi, temulune mungguh-mungguh  
 pepelik medadi sanghyang



Figure 3. The atmosphere when the *Gandrung* Dancers are surrounded by those who are already possessed by a spirit (Source: Tirsawati, 2017).

The magical atmosphere is strongly felt when *Gandrung* Dance and *Sanghyang* Dance are performed. The local people who go into a trance are also involved in the performance. They get mixed with the dancers, causing the atmosphere when they are performed to be different from that when the other dances are performed in which the only dancers who are involved, as can be seen in the following picture.

In the end of the performance of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance, the family heads are obliged to get involved in the procession of *tegen-tegenan* or *salaran* in which cassava, sweet-potatoes and fruit '*pala bungkah, pala gantung*' are carried to be offered, as their thanks, to the Almighty God '*Ida Sanghyang Widhi Wasa*'. A rite known as *pecaruan* (sacrificial ceremony) in five colors is also performed for the bad spirits '*Bhuta Kala/Bhuta Kali*', led by the *Balian Adat*, namely the *Balian Luuran* (Gede 'senior') and *Balian Alitan* (*pengesor* 'junior') (the interviewee was Jro Parma, aged 55, 10 August 2017).

What are carried by the local people are the agricultural products produced at Sidatapa as their thanks to the Almighty God, *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*. After the ritual event is over, everybody does his/her best to have what is already offered which is believed as blessing.

### **Function and Meaning of the Representation of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance to the People Living at Sidatapa Village, Banjar District, Buleleng, Bali**

*Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is the sacred dance performed once in three years. It is performed to be offered to Gods for the abundant agricultural yield acquired by the local people. It can also be stated as the dance performed to express thanks to Gods. The *Gandrung* Dance is the dance performed in the outer yard of the local temple to ward off epidemic or disaster. It is performed by two boys who are about fifteen years old. It is performed as a part of a religious ceremony; it is also performed as an amusement, a means of communication and a historical expression (Bandem, 1996; Soedarsono, 2002). In the past, the per-



Figure 4. The procession in which cassava and sweet-potatoes '*Pala Bungkah*' and fruits '*Pala Gantung*' offered on the 42<sup>nd</sup> day of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is almost finished.

forming art was not only performed as an amusement, but it was also performed to give aesthetic enjoyment. As well, it was also performed as a part of any communal celebration held for a religious event. Apart from that, it was also performed as a means of communication. Traditionally, this channel can spread concepts, beliefs, and the system of values, namely the religious hierarchy (Brandon, 2003: 363). Soedarsono (2003: 1) stated that the performing art performed by people highly varies; it is performed as a part of the rite held to express thanks for the land fertility; it is performed to commemorate the cycles of life, starting from birth to death; it is performed to ward off epidemic and protect people from any kind of danger; it is performed as a personal amusement; it is performed to present aesthetics; it is performed as a means of propaganda and to inspire social solidarity; it is also performed as a means of national unification. The function of the performing art is so complex that it keeps developing and changing, as can be seen from its development. According to Titib (2003), the performing art in Bali is performed to express aesthetics and religiosity, meaning that it is functional and highly symbolically meaningful.

### The Function of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance

#### a) Religious Function

From the religious point of view, as far as Hinduism is concerned, *Gandrung* Dance is a sacred one which is only performed at Sidatapa Village. It is religiously functional as it is performed for the Almighty God '*Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*' for the abundant agricultural yield. It is also performed to ward off bad spirits from the village so that the local people get protected from any epidemic. It cannot be performed as the local people like, as it should be performed on special days of the Balinese calendar-based second and third months '*sasih karo ketiga*'. In addition, it can only be performed once in three years

#### b) Social Function

*Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is performed to ward off misfortune '*penangluk merana*' and to protect the local people from bad spirits and any danger. If they local people keep

healthy, they can live safely. Apart from that, the performance of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance can indirectly make the local people help one another when they prepare the procession. Everybody living at the village and those who have to live outside to work should go home to participate in the procession. In this way, the social value becomes better (the information was given by I Wayan Ariawan, aged 45, on 20 August 2017).

#### c) Educational Function

The *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is a sacred one with sacred value as it contains educational value, namely it teaches us, as Hindus, that we should always perform sacrificial ceremonies 'yadnya' as our thanks to the Almighty God 'Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa'. It also indirectly teaches us what to do to express our thanks and to offer what we acquire to the Creator.

#### The Meaning of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance

Based on the costume worn by the dancers and how the dance is performed, it can be seen that it is different from the other sacred dances performed as a part of any religious ceremony. The dancers do not wear glamour costume but every performance is meaningful. The philosophical meaning which the dance contains is as follows:

a) It is performed to be offered to the Almighty God 'Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa' for the abundant agricultural yield. It is performed to thank the Almighty God as the Creator; it is performed in the form of dancing movements which are full of joy, as can be seen from the viewers' participation in the performance, meaning that the farmers believe that the abundant agricultural yield they acquire cannot be separated from the God's interference for which they perform the dance.

b) It is performed to ward off misfortune and avoid disasters. From the procession of its performance, it can be seen that it is also performed to ward off misfortune in addition to expressing thanks for the abundant agricultural yield. Its performance starts with a ceremony performed to neutralize bad spirits which are believed as *Butha Kala*, as bad spirits can negatively affect the local people's lives. The sacrificial ceremony 'pecaruan' and the cock fighting 'tabuh rah' show this. These two activities are performed to neutralize the negative strengths which can disturb human beings.

c) The Ethic and aesthetic Meaning. The dance is also performed to show the value norm (ethics) which the local people living at Sidatapa Village adhere to. The reason is that it cannot be performed as the local people like, as it is a sacred dance. In addition, the steps taken before it is performed are complex enough and sacred, causing the sacred values it contains to be getting stronger. Many people get possessed by spirits when the dance is performed which strengthens the magical-religious values of the dance. In addition, the packaged dancing movements also prove that the local people are highly aesthetic, as can be seen from the well-set stage where the dance is performed, the danc-

ing movements made by the dancers, the color of their costume and so forth, which are so well-organized that common people become interested in watching and can enjoy the performance.

### Conclusion

Historically, when the *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance was created has not been identified. However, it is predicted that it was created when *Sidatapa* Village was established. It was created to ward off disaster or epidemic locally referred to as *mrana*. *Gandrung* Dance was created and performed for Gods for the abundant agricultural yield. In the performance, *Gandrung* Dance is performed before *Sanghyang* Dance is performed. *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance is performed once in three years for 42 days, namely every the Balinese calendar-based second month 'sasih karo'. There are nine dancing movements made by the *Gandrung* dancers and eleven dancing movements made by the *Sanghyang* dancers. Each dance is performed for 60 minutes. The four inviting songs, namely *Dengklang Arja*, *Olog-Olog*, *Kebyar-Kebyur* and *Enggal-enggal Medali Sanghyang* are used to initiate the ceremonial procession. The songs are sung together and repeated three times. The existence of *Sanghyang Gandrung* Dance performed at Sidatapa Village cannot be separated from its functions and the meaning it contains. It has religious, social, and educational functions. It is performed to be offered to the Almighty God 'Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa' for the abundant agricultural yield, and is performed to ward off misfortune or disaster, and to express ethics and aesthetics. It is its functions and meaning that have caused it to be still in existence up to now.

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## Informants

Gede Ardi, male Gandrung dancer, 16 years old, interviewed in Sidetapa Village on 10 August 2017.

I Wayan Ariawan, The leader of Sidetapa village, 45 years old, interviewed in Sidetapa Village on 20 August 2017

Jro Parma, The tradisional secretary of Sidetapa village, 55 years old, interviewed in Sidetapa Village on 10 August 2017

Kadek Ayu, female Sanghyang dancer, 20 years old, interviewed in Sidetapa Village on 10 August 2017

Made Utama, The secretary of Sidetapa village 50 years old interviewed in Sidetapa Village on 20 August 2017

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