

# THE FORM OF BALINESE PUSPANJALI DANCE THROUGH AN AESTHETIC APPROACH

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## Abstract

*Dance is a form of expression that reflects human interaction with the environment and culture as a ritual or entertainment art. One of them, Puspanjali Balinese dance is categorized as an entertainment dance in the form of a new creation dance (Balih-balihan Dance). This research examines the aesthetics of the Puspanjali dance form which refers to the aesthetic theory of Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative by conducting observations, interviews with Balinese dance experts and literature studies. The analysis shows that Puspanjali dance movements are performed repetitively consisting of Agem (Agem right and left), Tangkis (Ngegol, Ngegol Nyemak Saput, Angsel, Ngegeh, Jalan swinging hand ukel, Jalan swinging holding saput), Tangkep (Ngliyer, Seledet). This variety of motion refers to pure motion that only shows aesthetics without meaning. This research concludes that the aesthetics of Puspanjali dance form can be seen through the concept of satyam which categorizes Puspanjali dance presentation as Balih-Balihan dance and the concept of sundaram refers to the beauty of Puspanjali dance form. Through the aesthetic approach, this research increases the understanding of Puspanjali dance form.*

**Keywords :** Dance Form, Puspanjali Dance, Aesthetic Approach

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## 1. Introduction

Dance is referred to as a complex cultural expression that creates a profound aesthetic experience by combining music, movement, and symbolism. Movement is transformed into beauty, including manifestations of the human soul. A dance is not only a ritual but also a form of entertainment. According to the book *Indonesian Dances I* (1997), dancing is the embodiment of the human soul through beautiful rhythmic movements. Dance is considered to use body language to communicate with the audience (Widaryanto, 2004). Additionally, one of the first and most fundamental forms of human expression through the body is dancing.

Through the use of the body as an instrument, humans convey their emotional reactions to the natural world around them, the rhythmic tensions of the environment, and develop dance by organizing their sensations and observations. They can connect with others in their environment through dance (Alma M. Hawkins, 1990: 1). The introduction contains the background, theoretical basis, problem, problem solving plan and research objectives. Therefore, it can be said that dance is a form of expression that reflects human interaction with their environment and culture, as well as rituals and entertainment. Thus, the reflection of human experience in dance is closely related to form.

Both visible and invisible forms shape art. The formation of internal concepts, such as themes and ideas expressed, gives rise to this notion (Murgiyanto, 1983). The result of this creative process is the exterior form, which comes second. It controls movement and the relationships between components. Rather than being a demonstrative activity involving only

physical movement, like athletics, dance uses movement as a means of expression. Understanding dance composition is crucial if dance is considered a form of art. Knowledge of composition is another term for knowledge of choreography. Without considering the underlying structure, form is the result of dance aspects encompassing movement, space, and time (Hadi, 2014:39). This form can be observed and imagined. The three basic components, namely movement, space, and time, form the basic framework of dance in choreography studies. To form a “triple sensation,” choreography is the arrangement of dance movements that utilizes time patterns and takes place in the awareness of space (Hadi, 2014:10).

As a form of artistic expression that relies on body movement, dance has aesthetic elements that include the beauty of movement and the relationship between the dancer and the audience. Among the many types of dance in Indonesia, this study focuses on Balinese dance. Balinese dance is renowned for its beauty, which is evident in its movements. As is well known, Balinese dance comes in various forms, including New Creation Dance and Traditional Dance. Two forms of traditional Balinese dance can be distinguished based on similar aesthetic preferences. These include experimental dance, which is not related to Balinese dance, and New Creation Dance, which has a close connection to traditional Balinese dance (Dibia, 2012:89).

On the other hand, Puspanjali Dance is categorized under New Creation Dance, which retains elements of traditional Balinese dance. Furthermore, Balinese dance art is divided into three categories based on function, namely Wali Dance (sacred or religious dance), Bebal Dance (ceremonial dance), and Balih-Balihan Dance (entertainment dance) (Djayus, 1980). Since most Puspanjali dances were developed purely for entertainment purposes, they fall under the category of Balih-Balihan dances. In line with this, there is a relevant study titled “Understanding the Diversity of Movement and Aesthetic Interweaving in Balinese Dance” by Ni Made Pira Erawati in 2019, which explores how organic movement stylization in the environment can be aesthetically woven into artistic performances as a cohesive and balanced stage design in the diversity of Balinese dance movements. The second study, titled “The Structure of Puspanjali Dance Accompaniment Music” by Saptono in 2024, discusses the combination of staff notation with dindong notation to form dance accompaniment music in the form of kawitan, pengawak, and pekaad. Both studies are relevant to the author’s research. This is due to the connection between the variety of Balinese dance movements and the research topic, namely the form of Puspanjali dance. Analyzing form through an aesthetic approach can help understand how the movement elements in the Puspanjali dance create visual and emotional appeal, which is the reason for this research.

## 2. Method

Based on the above explanation, this study uses qualitative methods with descriptive analysis and data collection through interviews with Balinese dance experts, observation, and literature study. The data analysis technique used is interactive analysis, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 10). The research questions in this study are: (1) What is the form of Balinese Puspanjali dance through an aesthetic approach? and (2) How can the form of Balinese Puspanjali dance be analyzed? Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the form of Balinese Puspanjali dance as a new creative dance that falls under the category of Balih-Balihan dance (entertainment dance).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### The Aesthetics of Satvam, Sivam, Sundaram

The study of how human movement in space and time reflects the perception of beauty is known as dance aesthetics. The harmony between music, space, and body movement is just one aspect of the beauty of dance. This is an essential component of social life. Aesthetics is considered crucial in the production of traditional and contemporary dance

works, such as contemporary dance, classical dance, and other forms of dance (Noviani, 2021). Art aesthetics is love. In other words, art that transforms into love, abstract yet real. The fundamental idea in creating art with aesthetic value includes the intrinsic and extrinsic values of beauty in relation to art aesthetics. The role of aesthetics in dance encompasses the richness of symbolic meaning, emotional expression, and spiritual idealism embedded in every movement, not just visual elements or enjoyment. Therefore, dance aesthetics create harmony for dancers and audiences by acting as a bridge between inner experience and physical beauty.

Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram embody the deepest aesthetic perspective on life in Hinduism, fostering harmony between truth, purity or sanctity, and beauty as fundamental elements for achieving a complete and meaningful balance in life (Bhusana & Gara, 2024). The values of sincerity, honesty, and authenticity are categorized under Satyam. In general, Satyam refers to perceptible truth. Satyam connects dance with the importance of authentic expression, arguing that dance is a manifestation of the soul's reality, not merely a physical skill.

Sivam is associated with values of purity. This concept is based on the teaching that God is the source of all purity in this world. Living a pious life and devotion to God are based on purity (Putra, 2024). Purity in dance is demonstrated through the physical discipline, purpose, and emotional purity of the dancers. This illustrates that dance is not merely entertainment; rather, it is an offering to God. Therefore, every movement is considered a form of yajña (sacred offering) in Sivam-based dance aesthetics, which affirms the bond between Sang Hyang Widhi and humanity.

Sundaram is related to the values of beauty. This idea emphasizes that there is beauty in the similarities and diversity of human life. In the context of dance, Sundaram can be seen through the form of dance. The aesthetics of Sundaram in the scope of dance forms include 1) balancing harmony between movement, music, and facial expressions, 2) symbolism uniting the way dance reflects the balance between reality and spirituality, and 3) the beauty of variation in style, movement patterns, and meaning that creates universal harmony in diversity. Beauty is pure and sacred, so it can be used to express truth.

Overall, Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram creates a comprehensive set of principles that teach people to live honorably, virtuously, and with an appreciation for the beauty that surrounds them. According to some academics, Brahma Samaj introduced this phrase to India and it is a translation of Aristotle's "The True, The Good, The Beautiful." This aesthetic goal is based on sensory things.

### **History of Balinese Puspanjali Dance**

Puspanjali Dance is a creative dance created by two renowned artists in Bali, N.L.N Swasthi Widjaya Bandem, with musical accompaniment arranged by I Nyoman Windha in 1989. N.L.N Swasthi Widjaya Bandem is the wife of I Made Bandem, a Balinese dancer and cultural figure. Puspanjali Dance was originally created at the request of Titik Soeharto, the chairperson of the organizing committee for the World Women's Sports Opening Ceremony. Both creators were asked by Mrs. Titik Soeharto to create a dance. This three- to five-minute creative dance became the opening dance for the congress (Indriyani, 2017). This was done with consideration for the efficiency of the event's schedule. The event was held at Pertamina Cottage in Kuta. The combined talents of the two artists produced a captivating performance known as the "Puspanjali Dance." The dance seamlessly blends choreography and musical accompaniment.

### **Theme of Balinese Puspanjali Dance**

The Puspanjali dance has its own origin. "Anjali" means respect, while "Puspa" means flower. The Puspanjali dance is performed in groups of five to seven female dancers. The dance movements of the Rejang dance (ritual dance) are used as a way to welcome guests with joy, and this is the inspiration behind the movements of the Puspanjali dancers. The difference lies in the fact that the Rejang dance is considered a Wali dance (religious

dance) performed to welcome the gods. Meanwhile, the Puspanjali dance is categorized as an entertainment dance in the form of a new creative dance (Balih-balihan dance). Since the Puspanjali dancers are a group of young women, the theme of this dance refers to "the elegance of a woman." This is reflected in the soft, graceful movements performed repetitively without full power.

### **Movements of Balinese Puspanjali Dance**

Balinese artists have created new dance forms. These dances feature a variety of different styles. Creating and rehearsing a dance is not an easy process. It takes a long time to produce an artistic work that meets the artists' expectations. As mentioned earlier, N.L.N. Swasthi Widjaya Bandem and music arranger I Nyoman Windha created the Puspanjali dance in 1989. Recently, new creative dances have become more prominent due to the use of additional props and stage equipment. However, the Puspanjali Dance does not use additional props like other creative dances. Despite its simplicity, the Puspanjali Dance still possesses a beautiful appearance in terms of movement, musical accompaniment, makeup, and costume design.

In choreography, the terms wiraga, wirama, and wirasa are used. In accordance with the techniques and stylization established in a particular dance genre, wiraga highlights how the dancer's body articulates movements clearly. By using accents and tempo shifts that provide emotional nuances, wirama can build a dramatic dance structure. Meanwhile, wirasa is achieved through body language, facial expressions, and movements that complement the theme and atmosphere of the dance. There is a close relationship between these three concepts and the form of choreography. Agem, tandang, tangkis, and tangkep are terms used in Balinese dance that emphasize form (Hadi, 2014: 36).

When analyzed in depth, the movements of the Puspanjali dance are simple and repetitive. The movements consist of Agem (right and left Agem), Tangkis (Ngegol, Ngegol Nyemak Saput, Angsel, Ngeseh, swinging the ukel hand, swinging while holding the saput), and Tangkep (Ngliyer, Seledet) (Bandem, 1983). Here is a more detailed explanation of each movement in the Puspanjali Dance:

#### **Agem**

- Right and Left of Agem Puspanjali Dance

The agem movement is the main movement in Balinese dance. However, the characteristics of agem in Rejang Dewa and Puspanjali dances are almost the same. The right agem in Puspanjali dance positions the right hand bent beside the eye (the fingers still form the number 4). The left hand is extended and straight, parallel to the shoulder, the dancer's body leans to the right, and the right foot (if it is the right agem) is slightly raised. This movement begins with the agem of the Bali dance and is followed by the Nyalut movement. For the left agem, the opposite occurs. The agem of the Puspanjali dance is repeated three times.



Figure 1. Agem Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

#### **Tangkis**

- Ngegol

The Puspanjali dance begins with a slight sway of the hips, followed by a “ngontel” head movement, with the feet following the head (if the head moves to the right, the right foot steps forward), the left hand straight down, and the fingers of the right hand straight. With the thumb on the palm of the hand and positioned in front of the dancer's chest, the fingers form the number four in each movement of the Puspanjali dance. When the head moves in a “ngontel” motion, the dancer moves it to the right and left while maintaining a forward or audience-facing gaze.



Figure 2. Ngegol Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Ngegol Nyemak Saput

Before entering the ngegol nyemak saput movement, this movement begins with a right-left agem, nyalut. Ngegol is a small walking movement where the head “ngontel” and the hips are swayed slowly, and the foot movements are coordinated with the head. The Nyemak Saput movement is what distinguishes this ngegol. This movement is performed while walking and releasing the end of the cloth being worn (kamen). The right hand is positioned parallel to the chest because the saput is always on the left side.



Figure 3. Ngegol Nyemak Saput Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Angsel

Angsel is an elegant movement that uses the head, hands, and feet. For example, the right Angsel movement involves turning the head to the right, placing both hands beside the chest, with each hand forming a vertical “four” shape—upward for the right hand and downward for the left hand. The right foot is raised approximately 30 degrees, while the left foot remains planted to support the dancer's body and maintain balance. When dancing, the right toes are in the “jeriring” position, which involves pointing upward to strengthen the foot. The same applies to the left Angsel movement.



Figure 4. Angsel Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Ngeseh

In the Puspanjali dance, there is a movement called “ngeseh.” This movement combines both hands placed on the sides of the chest, fingers forming the number 4, shoulders rotating quickly, feet forming the letter V, gaze fixed forward, and most importantly, feet bent into the “mendak” position.



Figure 5. Ngeseh Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Swinging Arm Movement

The swinging of the hands indicates that the tempo of the music has increased after performing the Nyalut ke Ngegol Nyemak Saput movement, which is part of this dance. The swaying motion follows the rhythm of the music, with the right hand behind the back and the left hand in front of the chest. The left foot is positioned behind the right foot, which is in front. This movement is followed by the agem posture for Balinese dance. After that, the movement continues with a sweep to the left and right. Then it is followed by a swinging hand movement while holding the saput.



Figure 6. Swinging Arm Movement Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Swinging Road Holding “Saput”

This movement is identical to the swinging motion of the ukel hand. The difference lies in the right ukel hand, which holds the end of the saput in the left

hand, followed by four steps in place and a movement of the head to the right and left (without turning).



Figure 7. Swinging Road Holding "Saput" Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

### Tangkep

- Ngliyer

Unlike agem, the Ngliyer movement involves both hands and eyes, with one eye open and the other slightly closed (squinting). The hand movements here are only needed to perform the right agem of the Puspanjali dance. The Ngliyer movement is performed on both the right and left agem.



Figure 8. Ngliyer Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

- Seledet

The Seledet movement is performed when both eyes glance to the right or left until they meet in the center without blinking. This movement is common in Balinese dance. To create power in the dance, the head follows the direction of the eyes to generate dancing power.



Figure 9. Seledet Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2020)

### Accompaniment of Balinese Puspanjali Dance

A musical source that can accompany, coordinate rhythm, or coordinate movement is called accompaniment (Jazuli, 2008b). The function of the Puspanjali Balinese dance accompaniment is to guide the movement, whether fast or slow. In addition to providing movement accompaniment, dance accompaniment creates an atmosphere that adds attention to the performance (Hendra, 2023). Thus, the structure of karawitan to accompany the Puspanjali dance consists of kawitan, pepeson, penyalit ke pengawak, pengawak, pengecet, pekaad, and penyuyud (Saptono, 2024). The part of the song composition presented to start a Puspanjali dance accompaniment composition is called kawitan. When the dancers enter the stage, the pepeson dance accompaniment is presented in an enchanting atmosphere. Meanwhile, pengawak is the part of the musical accompaniment that features slow dance movements. The transition from pepeson to pengawak is known as penyalit. Dance movements with a cheerful tempo (moderate to fast) are featured in the pengecet section of this song composition. The fast dance movements exit the stage and then slow down; this type includes the pekaad in the Puspanjali dance accompaniment. The end of the Puspanjali dance accompaniment concludes with a penyuyud to signify that the Puspanjali dance has ended.

### Makeup for Balinese Puspanjali Dance

Makeup artistry is the skill of applying color materials to the face to create the appearance of a character to be portrayed on stage (Aryani, 2022). Foundation, concealer, red loose powder, compact powder, blush, black-blue-red-yellow eyeshadow, eyebrow pencil, eyeliner, false eyelash glue, false eyelash adhesive, red lipstick, white paint (for the forehead), and setting spray are some of the tools used in the makeup of Puspanjali dancers. Here is an example of Puspanjali dance makeup:



Figure 10. Makeup for Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source: Ni Luh Jeylita, 2024)

### Costumes for Balinese Puspanjali Dance

Costumes have a significant influence in reinforcing the aesthetics and message of dance (Wahyuni, et al., 2023; Soemaryatmi & Darmasti, 2022). Balinese culture is elegantly reflected in the costumes worn in this dance, which retain traditional aspects. The Puspanjali dance costume consists of pusung gonjer-bunga imitas (hair ornament), subeng (earring), badong lanying (necklace), sabuk pending (belt), gelang kana (bracelet), tapih (inner sarong), kamen (sarong), angkin (long torso), chest cover, and shawl.



Figure 11. Costumes for Balinese Puspanjali Dance  
(Source : Ni Luh Jeylita, 2025)

### Classification of Pure and Meaningful Movements

According to Soedarsono (1977:15), movement is an emotion that is naturally communicated through one's work. It is the first way for humans to express their desires or spontaneously reflect their inner feelings through movement. This movement consists of a variety of movements that come together to form a cohesive whole. Expression is communicated through movements that are trained to achieve rhythmic movement. In accordance with this statement, the various forms of movement produced in the Puspanjali dance are a configuration of movement vocabulary arranged according to a theme that has been modified for the dance. Each dance movement has a different character. The character of the Puspanjali dance movements is gentle, graceful, and shows a feminine attitude. This is because the dance is performed by female dancers. *Agem*, *jalan ngegol*, *jalan mengayun memegang saput* highlight the graceful movements of a group of girls who are welcoming guests warmly and showing off their dance aesthetics.

"Dance Movement" is clearly related to dance performances. Dance movements are created to suit the function of the dance. Although movement is a basic component of art, the movement referred to here is beautiful movement, not ordinary or organic movement (Soedarsono, 1972: 3). Providing satisfaction to others (the audience or the dancers themselves) is another meaning of the aesthetics of movement. There are two types of movement: pure movement (representational) and meaningful movement. Pure movement or real movement is a simple movement that resembles everyday activities but has been modified so that it is not visible. For example, at the beginning of the Puspanjali dance, people often refer to it as "*agem*" even though the meaning of the movement is unclear. Therefore, this movement only shows the aesthetics of movement that has no meaning. Bali is very protective of its dances, unlike the Java region, so that "*agem*" is a movement that has been passed down since birth (Tasman, 2008: 20). Meanwhile, meaningful movements are movements that have their own meaning, such as when someone imitates a behavior that is considered good or bad or when someone expresses displeasure. In this case, the movement has meaning. Both types of movements go hand in hand depending on the dance being performed.

### 4. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study examines the form of Balinese Puspanjali dance through an aesthetic approach. The aesthetic concept of *Satyam*, *Sivam*, *Sundaram* reflects several values, including 1) *Satyam* in the context of the originality of the dance presentation, which is classified as *Balih-Balihan* dance rooted in Balinese dance tradition, 2) *Sundaram* is present through well-structured and harmonious movements that provide an aesthetic experience for the audience. In terms of movement form, the Puspanjali dance has a relatively simple structure and is repetitive in nature, making it easy to learn and perform. The movements of the Puspanjali dance include *Agem* (right and left *Agem*), *Tangkis* (*Ngegol*, *Ngegol Nyemak Saput*, *Angsel*, *Ngeseh*, swinging the hands while walking, swinging while holding the *saput*), and *Tangkep* (*Ngliyer*, *Seledet*), as mentioned by Bandem (1983). These movements contribute to the aesthetic form of the Puspanjali Dance, which is categorized as pure movement in every visual aspect, thereby holding cultural value within Balinese tradition. The meaning behind each movement of the Puspanjali Dance is almost nonexistent. Therefore, the pure movement form of the Puspanjali Dance is clearly distinct from other traditional dances.

In terms of musical accompaniment, aesthetics are achieved through the structure of the music, which is a dance ensemble with a broader function of creating an atmosphere that depicts the elegance of the dance, thereby enriching the overall aesthetics of the performance. The aesthetics of the Puspanjali dance makeup are seen in the striking colors of the eyeshadow, blush, white paint for the forehead, and red lipstick. The chosen makeup

colors contribute to the distinctive characteristics of Balinese dance, emphasizing the sharp facial lines of the Puspanjali dancers. Additionally, the aesthetic of the Puspanjali dance costume can be seen through the use of tapih as the inner fabric, kamen as the main outer fabric, and angkin wrapping the upper body, showcasing a layered clothing structure that is both comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. Along with maintaining the garment's form, a sabuk pending (belt) is worn to create a more proportional appearance while dancing and emphasize the dancer's silhouette. Furthermore, the use of a chest cover and flowing scarf enriches the visualization of dance movements, adding beauty to every gesture performed by the dancers.

Thus, the implications of this research have a significant impact on performing arts, particularly dance aesthetics. The function of pure movement as an aesthetic expression with cultural legitimacy enriches the study of Balinese dance, performing arts in general, and serves as a theoretical foundation and reference for further research. Practically, this research has implications for the development and preservation of Balinese dance, particularly Puspanjali, which can be taught in educational institutions and dance studios through an understanding of movement, costume, makeup, and musical accompaniment based on Hindu aesthetics.

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