

## Dancing to Devotion: The Hindu Aesthetic and Spiritual Significance of *Abuang* Dance in Tenganan Pegringsingan Bali

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**Abstract:** This research aims to explore the cultural and spiritual significance of the *Abuang* dance within the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony in Tenganan Pegringsingan, highlighting its role in maintaining cultural identity and spiritual continuity. The study utilised qualitative methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and video documentation, to gather primary data concerning the *Abuang* dance. Secondary sources were employed to enrich the contextual understanding of the dance's historical and cultural relevance. This research found that the *Abuang* dance is not merely a form of cultural expression but also serves as an integral component of the religious and communal life in Tenganan Pegringsingan, encapsulating the Hindu aesthetic values of *satyam* (truth), *sivam* (chastity), and *sundaram* (beauty). The dance fosters cultural resilience and acts as a conduit for spiritual and communal values amidst contemporary challenges. The study contributes to the wider discourse on the preservation of cultural heritage, providing insights into how traditional dances can sustain community values and spiritual life in modern contexts. It further highlights the importance of integrating cultural practices into global discussions on cultural and spiritual sustainability.

**Keywords:** *Abuang* dance; cultural preservation; spiritual continuity; ritual; *Usaba Kasa* ceremony.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi signifikansi budaya dan spiritual Tari *Abuang* dalam upacara *Usaba Kasa* di Tenganan Pegringsingan, menyoroti peranannya dalam mempertahankan identitas budaya dan kontinuitas spiritual. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, termasuk observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi video, untuk mengumpulkan data primer tentang Tari *Abuang*. Sumber sekunder digunakan untuk memperkaya pemahaman kontekstual tentang relevansi sejarah dan budaya tarian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tari *Abuang* bukan hanya bentuk ekspresi budaya tetapi juga merupakan komponen vital dalam kehidupan religius dan komunal di Tenganan Pegringsingan, menggambarkan nilai estetika Hindu *satyam* (kebenaran), *sivam* (kesucian), dan *sundaram* (keindahan). Tarian ini mempromosikan ketahanan budaya dan bertindak sebagai saluran untuk nilai-nilai spiritual dan komunal di tengah tantangan modern. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana yang lebih luas tentang pelestarian warisan budaya, memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana tarian tradisional dapat mempertahankan nilai-nilai komunitas dan kehidupan spiritual dalam pengaturan kontemporer. Ini juga menekankan pentingnya mengintegrasikan praktik budaya ke dalam diskusi global tentang keberlanjutan budaya dan spiritual.

**Kata Kunci:** Tari *Abuang*; pelestarian budaya; kontinuitas spiritual; ritual; upacara *Usaba Kasa*.

### 1. Introduction

In Bali, the fusion of identity manifests distinctly through its religious and artistic practices (Huang & Rockwell, 2023). Dance, integral to Balinese Hindu ceremonies, not only accompanies but enhances

the spiritual fabric of these events. It is a vital expression, performed during sacred ceremonies and is deeply woven into the community's religious life. In Hinduism, these dances are not mere performances but acts of devotion embodying the core aesthetic values of *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (purity), and *sundaram* (beauty) (Koch et al., 2019).

Previous research has provided a functional categorization of Balinese dance into *wali* (sacred), *bebali* (semi-sacred), and *balih-balihan* (entertainment) dances, reflecting their roles within the societal and religious frameworks. Suandi et al. (2020) have thoroughly explored these aspects. Despite this extensive background, studies specifically focusing on the *Abuang* dance of Tenganan Pegringsingan during the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony are notably limited. This oversight underscores the need for a deeper exploration of how this dance reflects the philosophical and theological ethos of the community. Moreover, there is emerging research in related areas such as the analysis of dance movements through silhouette sequence patterns, which could potentially be applied to study the *Abuang* dance more quantitatively using methods like Histogram of Gradient (HoG) and Scale Invariant Features Transform (SIFT) to build the Bag of Visual Movement (BoVM) feature (Kesiman, Maysanjaya, Pradnyana, Sunarya, & Suputra, 2021). Other relevant studies include the examination of the *kecak* dance, noted for its complex sound layers and improvisational flexibility (Stepputat, 2021), and the *Pendet* dance, which symbolizes environmental harmony and the welcoming of deities, showcasing the ethnomathematical principles in its hand gestures (Handayani & Alfin, 2020; Radiusman, Wardani, Apsari, Nurmawanti, & Gunawan, 2021). Additionally, the *Renteng* dance of Saren Village offers insights into the grassroots development of ceremonial dances in Bali, which could provide comparative insights for the *Abuang* dance study (Ruastiti, Indrawan, & Sariada, 2021). This research gap signifies a pivotal opportunity to enhance the understanding of *Abuang* dance's unique cultural and spiritual significance through both qualitative and emerging quantitative research methodologies.

This study is dedicated to exploring and documenting the *Abuang* dance, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its significance within the local religious and cultural preservation efforts in Tenganan Pegringsingan. By examining this dance, the study seeks to illustrate how artistic expressions serve as conduits for spiritual and communal values in Balinese Hinduism.

This study posits that the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony in Tenganan Pegringsingan, featuring the sacred *Tari Abuang*, represents more than mere cultural tradition; it is a critical embodiment of ancestral wisdom and spiritual dedication passed down through generations. The hypothesis argues that the *Abuang* dance serves as a direct conduit of the community's devotion to *Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, the Almighty God, reflecting the core Hindu aesthetic values of *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (purity), and *sundaram* (beauty). By integrating these elements, the dance not only honours historical events and spiritual teachings but also actively preserves and transmits the unique cultural identity of Tenganan Pegringsingan. The commitment to performing the *Abuang* dance according to "*loka dresta (desa kala patra and mawacara)*," as noted by Mangalam (2022), highlights the adaptive nature of local customs that align with broader Hindu practices while fostering a deeper connection within the community. Thus, the *Abuang* dance is hypothesised to be a vital practice that sustains and revitalises the spiritual and cultural landscape of the region.



Figure 1 *Abuang* Dance at Bale Agung by Daha-Teruna at the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony

The performance of the *Abuang Dance* is carried out by select individuals who have undergone a sacralization process. This involves bringing together *Daha* (girls) from the three *Ganah* (places of origin of *Daha*) and uniting *Teruna* (youths) from *Bale Petemu Kaja*, *Bale Petemu Tengah*, and *Bale Petemu Kelod*, who eventually merge in the joy of dancing. This unity symbolizes the togetherness of the *Daha* and the *Teruna* from each location during the *Abuang Dance*, all of whom are recognized officially by Tenganan Pegringsingan customs. The dancers wear the traditional *gringsing* woven cloth typical of Tenganan Pegringsingan. Performances take place in the sacred area in front of *Bale Agung* (Figure 1). The *Abuang Dance* features simple, yet beautifully rhythmic movements, creating a sacred and mystical atmosphere, further enhanced by the sounds of the *selonding gamelan*. This dance is inseparable from religious ceremonies, embodying the distinctive style and religious identity of Tenganan Pegringsingan's artistic expression.

## 2. Method

The focus of this research was the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony, particularly analysing the *Tari Abuang* performed in Tenganan Pegringsingan. This event was selected due to its distinctive cultural and religious importance within the community, which provided a clear illustration of the interaction between tradition, spirituality, and communal identity. This qualitative study primarily employed primary data collected through field observations, interviews, and video recordings of the ceremonies (Creswell, 2014; Saleh, 2019). Secondary data were sourced from historical texts, academic journals, and prior research to contextualize and support the primary findings.

Participants comprised a variety of informants essential to the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony, including dancers, local religious leaders, and community elders of Tenganan Pegringsingan. These informants were chosen based on their ceremonial roles and their extensive knowledge of the traditions and meanings behind the *Abuang* dance.

The research unfolded in several phases, beginning with preliminary visits to Tenganan Pegringsingan to establish contacts and secure permissions from community leaders. Subsequent extensive fieldwork took place during the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony. Data collection was conducted through participant observation—researchers actively observed and occasionally participated in the ceremonies. In-depth interviews were carried out both before and after the ceremonies to collect personal insights and interpretations of the dance and its significance. Additionally, video recordings were made to capture the movements and atmosphere of the *Abuang* dance for later analysis.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, where interview transcriptions and observational notes were coded to identify recurring themes related to the spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the *Abuang* dance. Video data were instrumental in understanding and interpreting the physical expressions and nuances of the dance, vital for discussing the aesthetic elements of *satyam*, *sivam*, and *sundaram*. Narrative analysis was also employed to construct a comprehensive narrative of

the *Abuang* dance's role within the ceremonial context, integrating the diverse perspectives of the participants with the historical and cultural framework of the community.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### *Abuang Dance in Tenganan Pegringsingan*

The *Abuang* dance, performed in Tenganan Pegringsingan, encapsulates a significant cultural narrative, reflected in the local lexicon where "luh" means woman and "muani" means man. As explained by Suastini, the term *Abuang* translates to stretching one's arms to the side. This description highlights the dance as an interaction between male and female dancers, typically teenagers known as *daha* (female) and *truna* (male), who engage in a synchronised routine of stretching their arms and moving forwards and backwards to the rhythm of the *Selonding gamelan*. This movement pattern diverges from the foundational principles typically seen in traditional Balinese dance (Suastini, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020).

Ni Wayan Lodri elaborates on the historical roots of the *Abuang* dance, suggesting that it originated when Tenganan Pegringsingan village was first established. The dance has evolved concurrently with other local dances like *Abuang Luh Muani*, *Mekare*, and *Rejang Daha*, which are related to the *Abuang* dance itself. It is believed that the inception of the *Abuang* dance dates back to the 10th century, around the time when Mayadanawa was defeated by Bhatara Indra, marking a significant epoch in the village's cultural history (Ni Wayan Lodri, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020). This historical context enriches the understanding of the *Abuang* dance, not just as a cultural performance, but as a living tradition that has withstood the tests of time, embedding itself deeply within the community's spiritual and cultural identity.

The *Abuang* dance is recognized not only for its aesthetic and cultural values but also for its sacred role within Hindu ceremonies such as the *Ngusaba*, a ritual that has been performed since ancient times. This dance is invariably accompanied by the traditional *selonding* music, which is symbolic of the beauty inherent in its choreography and rhythms. Sudiada (2022) highlights multiple meanings behind the term '*Abuang*', including its use as a prayerful offering during the dance to solicit an abundance of fruits, and as a representation of faith, affection, and love, which aligns with the villagers' duties and obligations in their religious practices.

This multifaceted interpretation ties into the broader social fabric of Tenganan Pegringsingan, particularly in the execution of the *Ngusaba Village* rituals, such as the *Muahin Kaja*, offering fruit to the North at Batu Keben Temple, and *Muahin Kelod*, offering fruit to the South at Telaga Temple. These rituals are intimately connected to the village's endogamous marriage traditions, where men (*Teruna*) and women (*Daha*) must marry within their community, maintaining the social structure and ensuring the continuity of cultural and spiritual practices as dictated by the local *awig-awig* (traditional regulations). These practices underscore the *Abuang* dance's integral role in the spiritual and cultural landscape of Tenganan Pegringsingan, serving as both a religious expression and a reinforcement of community norms.

This interpretation stems from the practices of the Tenganan Pegringsingan community in executing the *Ngusaba Desa* rituals, specifically the *Muahin Kaja* tradition of 'offering fruit offerings to the North' at Batu Keben Temple, and the *Muahin Kelod* tradition of 'offering fruit offerings to the South' at Telaga Temple, which also relate to local marriage patterns. In Tenganan Pegringsingan, the endogamous pattern dictates that a man (*Teruna*) must marry a woman (*Daha*) from the same community. Such marriages carry rights and obligations defined by the local *awig-awig* (traditional laws), preserving community purity. Those who marry outside are stripped of these rights and their status is reduced to *krama gumi pulangan* (Sudiada, 2022).

According to Sudiastika, a community leader in Tenganan Pegringsingan, the *Abuang* dance during the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony involves *Teruna* and *Daha* showcasing a sacred dance that venerates ancestors, thereby perpetuating the ancestral values of the Tenganan Pegringsingan civilization. The endogamous marriage is seen as a symbolic union of *purusa* (male principle) and *pradana* (female

principle), which is believed to bring fertility and balance to life (Sudiastika, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020).

Thus, it can be concluded that the *Abuang* Dance performed in Tenganan Pegringsingan has layered meanings adapted to the context and timing of its performance (*sasih*). The *Abuang* Dance in the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony is a sacred dance presented to the Almighty God, performed by *Teruna* and *Daha* in pairs to nurture love, affection, beauty, and successful fruit harvests, aiming to secure endogamous marriages between *Teruna* and *Daha* to sustain the civilization of Tenganan Pegringsingan. The *Abuang* dance is performed at night, known as *Abuang Peteng*, and in the morning as *Abuang Lemah*, both conducted in the front yard of the *Bale Agung*.

This cultural practice underscores the *Abuang* Dance's role in the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony, where the pairing of *Teruna* and *Daha* not only promotes a bountiful harvest but also symbolizes the continuation of community values through endogamous marriage. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory provides a theoretical framework to analyze these practices, where the dance signifies both the literal and metaphorical fruits of a union meant to perpetuate the Tenganan Pegringsingan civilization. The dance embodies the meeting of *purusa* and *pradana*, reinforcing community stability and fertility.

#### *The Concept of Truth (Satyam) in the Abuang Dance*

According to Korom (1999), enlightenment in Hinduism encourages individuals and societies to act in accordance with the values of truth, serving as moral guidance. This principle is articulated in the scriptures: "Jyotiśca me, svaśca me, Yajñena kalpantam (*Yajurveda* XVIII.1) [May we attain enlightenment and happiness by means of sacrifice (*yajña*)]" (Maddhayananda, 2021).

*Satyam*, encompassing both the authenticity of the artistic product and the values of honesty and sincerity, is vividly expressed in the performance of the *Abuang* dance. This dance, an offering and a *yadnya* (sacrifice), is performed by the Tenganan Pegringsingan community with full honesty and sincerity, reflecting their profound devotion towards Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. Typically, the value of truth in this context is explored through detailed discussions by traditional leaders and stakeholders during the ritual procession, especially at the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony, focusing on the profound understanding of truth related to the roles of dancers ratified by the custom of Tenganan Pegringsingan, known as *Teruna* and *Daha* in local wisdom (Leslie, 2017).

Nonik, a *Daha* from Tenganan Pegringsingan, shares that the *Abuang* dance is performed with selfless intentions, often referred to as *ngayah*, and brings joy and gratitude for the opportunity to partake in such ceremonial activities. This dance symbolizes the harmonious relationship between humans and God, reinforcing the community's spiritual life (Nonik, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020).

The statement was supported by Shony, one of the *Teruna* in Tenganan Pegringsingan, that the life of the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan could never be separated from ritual activities. The Tenganan people are bound by rules or *awig-awig* in local wisdom. We as the young generation of 'Teruna dan Daha' must be forged from an early age to learn everything related to Tenganan Pegringsingan. One of them is to carry out the obligation as a boy 'Teruna' and a girl 'Daha' to perform the *Abuang* dance at *Usaba Kasa*. As a boy of 'Teruna', I feel very proud and happy to be a part of the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony. As far as I know, the essence of *Abuang* dance is a form of reverence and worship to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa for all graces. This respect and gratitude certainly has a tremendous impact on the dancers in carrying out their obligations (Shony, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020). Based on the explanation above, the implementation of *Abuang* dance performance in *Usaba Kasa* must be based on a sense of devotion to be able to dance 'dance sincerely without getting material rewards', thus called *ngayah*. In this ritual, many truths are found that can be used as a basis and guide in running the wheel of reality of life. *Abuang* dance is performed as an expression of love, gratitude and reverence to God and to ask for fertility and prosperity. The concept of truth is expressed through meaning that is absorbed as an effort to preserve nature and its contents, and can have an impact on maintaining and continuing the civilization of the life of the Tenganan Pegringsingan community.

In addition, Yasa said that the concept of truth in the *Abuang* dance performance in Usaba Kasa is interpreted to create a harmonious relationship, both a harmonious relationship between humans and fellow humans, a harmonious relationship between humans and God, and a harmonious relationship between humans and nature or the environment (Yasa, Personal Communication, December 1, 2020).

The truth (*satyam*) is the form of the truth of the art product that is produced (Smith, 2022) states the concept of truth (*satyam*) in Hindu aesthetic includes the values of honesty and sincerity. It tends to emphasize the moral aspect, namely honesty, sincerity, and sincerity intentions in carrying out the *Abuang* dance in ritual. Balinese Hindus perform rituals to God which based on the values of truth (*satyam*) used as the basis for the implementation of every activity and process of carrying out religious ceremonies. The ritual activities are carried out based on full honesty of heart, sincerity, and earnest intentions, it will emerge a creativity that has a quality on inner satisfaction.

The *Abuang* dance is one of the sacred Balinese dances and the people of Tenganan believe that *Abuang* dance has accompanied religious ceremonies and sacred rites since these aboriginal Balinese settled the island long before the influx of immigrants from the decaying Majapahit Empire started arriving in the 14th century (Dewi, Ramendra, & Mahendrayana, 2022). Basically, a ritual has elements of beauty and sacred that can be able to raise the spirit and give advice and give spiritual value. According to Nonik, one of the Daha Tenganan Pegringsingan, *Abuang* dance is performed with sincere selfless intentions, it can be said to be *ngayah* I feel happy, grateful, and happy to be given the opportunity to carry out ceremonial activities, such as *Abuang* dance, because dance is also a manifestation of the harmonious relationship between humans and God in spiritual terms (Nonik, Personal Communication, December 12, 2020). Based on the explanation above, the implementation of *Abuang* dance performances must be based on a sense of devotion to be able to dance 'dance sincerely without getting material rewards', it is called *ngayah*.

In this ritual, many teachings of truth are found that can be used as the basis and guidelines in carrying out the wheel of the reality of life. The *Abuang* dance is performed as an expression of love, gratitude and respect to God and to ask for fertility and prosperity. The concept of truth is expressed through the meaning that is absorbed as an effort to preserve nature and its contents, and can have an impact on maintaining and continuing the civilization of the life of the Tenganan Pegringsingan community (Nursanti, Wilodati, & Siti Komariah, 2022). In addition, the concept of truth in the performance of *Abuang* dance is interpreted to create harmonious relationships, both harmonious relationships between humans and fellow humans, harmonious relationships between humans and God, and harmonious relationships between humans and nature or the environment.

#### *The concept of truth regarding Abuang dance*

In its direct implementation which is displayed and staged as a beauty worship practice which is used as a medium of communication in presenting the truth values contained in it. As it is known that the *Abuang* dance is a sacred dance that has become a legacy from the ancestors of Tenganan Pegringsingan. The ancestors designed the *awig-awig* of Tenganan with the aim of being able to preserve its customs, culture, and religion. In this case, the ancestors have designed a ceremony that is accompanied by the performance of the *Abuang* Dance, which has its own truth value in the form of religious and artistic realities in social life. Thus, the dancers and the local community can interpret and analyze the content of truth values if there are art objects that practice directly conveying the message of truth. In other words, the truth that has been stated in a ceremony, one of which is the performance of the *Abuang* Dance in Tenganan Pegringsingan, is a representation of love, gratitude, and sincere respect for the Creator with the hope of asking for safety, beauty, prosperity, balance and harmony (Setiawan, Adnyana, Winatha, & Trisemarawima, 2019).

According to Nonik, Daha and Teruna had to do a lot of religious activities. Before being certified as Daha and Teruna by the Tenganan Pegringsingan custom, we must undergo several ritual processes such as the Madaha ritual for Daha candidates and the Mateuna Nyoman ritual for Teruna candidates for one year. After the process was completed, we were approved as Daha and Teruna from Tenganan Pegringsingan. *Abuang* dance is an offering dance with goals and hopes that are not far from preserving

the Tenganan Pegringsingan civilization, but without losing its religious essence (Nonik, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020). As parents, said Sudiastika, in addition to the *Abuang* dance dedicated to God, we as parents also hope that through this dance performance seeds of love will emerge so that we can unite our children and become the next generation in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. It is possible that the era of globalization has already begun to affect this condition, some of our children are married to outsiders, who of course are sanctioned themselves. This is what we need to pay attention to, because there is actually more emphasis on the awareness of each individual (Sudiastika, Personal Communication, December 2, 2020).

The concept of chastity (*sivam*) in the performance of the *Abuang* Dance. In general, Hindus carry out religious ceremonies as a form of gratitude and love offered to God. The reality of art also includes an offering and worship to God. Art performed in religious activities is a symbolism of offerings to God which is categorized as sacred art, one of which is the *Abuang* dance in Tenganan Pegringsingan. The *Abuang* dance is a sacred dance that is offered to God in His manifestation as the God of Beauty. The dance is believed to be a practice of worship of beauty that can create a harmonious life, both among humans, humans with God, and humans with nature. The performance of the *Abuang* Dance is one of the sacrifices of worship, called *yadnya*. Sacred worship related to a sacrifice or offering that is based on the sincerity and purity of the hearts of the people with full devotional awareness (Jayanthi, Safa'at, & Hamidah, 2021).

The ritual is carried out according to local wisdom. The ritual that must be fulfilled is asking the candidates for Teruna Nyoman, followed by Materuna Nyoman/Madaha for one year, after graduating from Materuna Nyoman/Madaha, then they will be legalized as members of Teruna and Daha Tenganan Pegringsingan. The status as Daha can be carried by a woman for 13 years, if a Daha married before the 13 years period and a Daha has passed the 13 years period, then the Daha status is no longer valid for the girl. Unlike a young man with the status of a Teruna, this status does not have a time limit, unless the young man is married, the Teruna status no longer applies to the young man (Figure 2).



Figure 2 The cadets and teruni who are already 13 years old are inaugurated as members of the Teruna and Daha Tenganan Pegringsingan (Researcher, 2021).

According to Sena (2022), chastity (*sivam*) is a process or manifestation of the sanctity of the product of art. The concept of chastity (*sivam*) in the *Abuang* dance is not only through the dancers, but also from several other aspects, such as the staging area, offerings, dance movements and even the properties used during the performance. The *Abuang* dance in the Usaba Kasa ceremony is staged in the front yard of Bale Agung. Bale Agung is a sacred building as a place to carry out village activities, village meetings and so on, both every day and during religious ceremonies. Tenganan people believe that Bale Agung is a sacred and sacred building, so people are not allowed to enter the Bale Agung area. As a Hindu community in the Indra sect, there are several differences in traditions, culture, and religious ceremonies in general. To be able to enter the Bale Agung area, the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan must wear traditional clothes typical of Tenganan Pegringsingan in accordance with local wisdom.

The Usaba Kasa ceremony is known as the birth ceremony of a god that celebrates with the offering of holy porridge made by people who called krama desa in front of Bale Agung. Typical offerings offered in the Usaba Kasa ceremony is banten pebare which contains agricultural products from the village, and typical snacks of Tenganan Pegringsingan such as iwel, angine, gegodoh, oranges, bananas, watermelons, grapes, and other fruits. This is seen as a form of gratitude for the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan for the abundant fruit harvest bestowed by God Almighty, Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa.

The chastity (*sivam*) is also seen in the aspect of dance movements and accompanying music. According to Manuaba (2022) dance movement is the main element of dance. The *Abuang* dance in the Usaba Kasa ceremony has a very simple movement, namely the repetitive mentang and diagonal movements without carrying weapons or palm wine. The simple movements in the *Abuang* Dance in Tenganan Pegringsingan are the hallmark of an ancient dance that is full of devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. Every dance work really needs music, because they are two inseparable components. Music and dance movements are aspects of art that become one unit (Dibia, 2020). Movement without accompaniment music or vice versa will not be meaningful, because both are interrelated with one another. The sacred beauty can be radiated if the dance movement is accompanied by the strains of the *selonding* played by the gamelan interpreter with great love.

*Selonding* is the most sacred ancient gamelan in completing religious ceremonies (Hinduism) in Bali with the pelog of Sapta Nada (Figure 3). According to Sudiastika, the people of Tenganan refer to *selonding* as piturun or revelation sent down by God in His manifestation as Bhatara Bagus Selonding as a blessing to the people of Tenganan (Sudiastika, Personal Communication, April 4, 2021). I Nengah Abdi said *Selonding* allegedly came from two words, namely the word salon and ning which means holy place. Judging from its function, *Selonding* is a sacred or sanctified gamelan (I Nengah Abdi, Personal Communication, March 6, 2020). The local community has the belief that *selonding* cannot be held or played by just anyone, namely only the musicians who has been purified. This limitation aims to maintain the sacredness of the *selonding gamelan*. There are conditions that must be met to become a musician, namely being able to play the Geguron song which is a sacred song used as the opening for every traditional ceremony activity in the Tenganan Pegringsingan. If part of the gamelan falls, a special cleaning will be carried out throughout the village. When playing the *selonding gamelan*, there are several conditions that the musicians must be clean, they must not be in a state of cuntaka or resentful. The taboo is that the gamelan must not fall and hit the ground directly. If that happens, it is believed that trouble or trouble will befall a village. Hence, there is a special ritual, Mekuma Ligi (Gondoputranto & Dibia, 2022).



Figure 3 Gamelan *selonding* (Researcher, 2021)

Therefore, it can be said that the concept of chastity (*sivam*) is very visible in the implementation of the ritual of *Abuang* Dance in the Usaba Kasa ceremony. The performance of the *Abuang* Dance is as a medium for religious rituals that are bound by symbols that have certain meanings and philosophies. *Abuang* dance is a representation of love that carries an important function of chastity, namely as a symbolic form containing the teachings of Hinduism. One example that cannot be separated from the



performance of the *Abuang* dance is the woven cloth typical of Tenganan Pegringsingan, the gringsing cloth. Gringsing cloth is a cloth that is sacred by the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan. Gringsing is a cloth that is sacred by the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan. People believe that Gringsing cloth has magical powers that can protect them from illness, or as a repellent against evil. Gringsing fabric has three color components, namely red, white, and black which are obtained from natural products (Navalón, 2020).



Figure 4 Gringsing cloth (Researchers, 2021)

According to Sadra, the color component in gringsing cloth has a philosophical meaning for the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan (Sadra, Personal Communication, October 30, 2021). The red color is a symbol of fire which is geothermal energy that provides life energy in the world. The white color is a symbol of the wind which is oxygen for the survival of mankind. The black color is a symbol of water that gives life to all living things on earth. Thus, gringsing cloth can be said as a representation of love and great respect for ancestors and God in all its manifestations, as well as balance and harmony of life to achieve happiness according to the concept of Tri Hita Karana (Sukayana & Putri, 2019).

#### *The Concept of Beauty (Sundaram) in the Abuang Dance*

Religious ceremonial activities are very synonymous with offering ceremonies, one of which is the Aburan ceremony in the Usaba Kasa ceremony in Tenganan Pegringsingan. The people of Tenganan Pegringsingan have an aesthetic view that is tied to God's values which state that God is the Most Beautiful and the source of all beauty (J, Abraham, & Malarvizhi, 2017). According to Sudiastika, *Abuang* Dance has an aesthetic meaning that can make the audience feel fascinated. The beauty emitted by dance can evoke a sense of beautiful 'Lango' from the dancers and spectators. The beauty comes from the dancers of 'Daha-Teruna', the dance moves, dancers' outfits, and the accompaniment music for the *Abuang* dance (Sudiastika, Personal Communication, April 14, 2021)

The performance of the *Abuang* dance contains slick aesthetic values that are symbolic and philosophical in nature, as well as a Hindu aesthetic that animates the form, content, and layout of the presentation of the *Abuang* dance to create and achieve a harmonious life. According to Sena (2022), beauty (*sundaram*) is a form of artistic product that can be enjoyed, from the point of view of its beauty. Beauty is able to present a harmonious life which is realized by deepening gratitude and gratitude for all the gifts of God Almighty to the Tenganan Pegringsingan community, and making all life activities as offerings and sincere worship to God through the universe and its contents.

*Abuang* dance has an aesthetic meaning that can make the audience feel fascinated. The beauty emitted by the dance can evoke a sense of 'beautiful' lango from the dancers and the audience. The beauty comes from the dancers 'Daha-Teruna', dance movements, dancers' clothing, and the accompanying music for the *Abuang* dance (Millman, Terhune, Hunter, & Orgs, 2021).

The performance of the Aburan dance which involves several dancer roles, dance moves, musical accompaniment, as well as the properties used during the ceremony contain aesthetic values which are

philosophically defined as the seeds of fertility in human life. Thus, endogamous marriages can be carried out, namely marriages between men and women who come from the same area. The movement is very simple, namely stretching your arms diagonally which is believed to have the meaning of balance between Mother Earth and Sang Hyang Akasa. The movement is accompanied by the strains of *selonding gamelan* played by musicians. The song is repeated continuously until the Aburan dance performance ends (Feng, Zhao, & Zhang, 2022).

The performance of the *Abuang* dance in the Usaba Kasa ceremony is carried out in three phases. The first phase was only performed by the Daha, while the Teruna were not allowed to choose their partners during the first phase, the Teruna are allowed to dance in the second and third phase of the *Abuang* Dance performances. The dancers performed the *Abuang* Dance in pairs accompanied by shame, pride, laughing with joy and supported by the cheers of the audience. The ceremony was closed by the closing gending by the musician and offering the closing offerings that had been prepared. The beauty of the dance movements accompanied by the strains of the *selonding gamelan* through tones that vibrate the religious emotions of the people. The strains of the *selonding gamelan* in the *Abuang* dance add a beautiful and magical impression, which is able to hypnotize the listeners by the beauty of the song. Gending is a sound art that has an important role in carrying out religious ceremonies (Udovič, 2020).

The beauty and uniqueness of culture, customs, traditions, ceremonies in Tenganan Pegringsingan, especially the beauty in performing a ceremony accompanied by the performance of the *Abuang* dance in the Usaba Kasa is a form of gratitude, gratitude, love, and before God Almighty in abundance. the gift of life to lead a life that provides harmony between human beings, between humans and God, and between humans and nature (Manuaba et al., 2022).

#### 4. Discussion

The *Abuang* dance of Tenganan Pegringsingan serves as a vital cultural and spiritual practice, deeply rooted in the community's traditions and religious ceremonies. The dance, performed during the *Usaba Kasa* ceremony, is not only an artistic expression but also a ritualistic offering that reinforces communal bonds, adheres to traditional customs, and honors ancestral legacies. The findings highlight how the dance embodies the Hindu aesthetic values of *satyam* (truth), *śivam* (chastity), and *sundaram* (beauty), which are interwoven with the social fabric of the village through practices like endogamous marriage and the sacred music of *selonding*.

This study explores the *Abuang* dance not just as entertainment but as a vital element of cultural preservation and spiritual expression in Tenganan Pegringsingan, diverging from the typical research that portrays Balinese dance primarily as a tourist attraction or artistic spectacle. This approach contrasts with broader trends in Balinese performing arts, which historically integrated dance, drama, music, and theatre but now show a tendency towards more "bounded categories" (Hood, 2020). The *kecak* dance exemplifies this shift, being traditionally fixed yet allowing for variations and improvisations (Stepputat, 2021), reflecting a persistent mutualism between movement and music (Hood, 2021).

Moreover, the functional categorisation of Balinese dance not only impacts performance styles but also underscores a transformation in cultural orientation from religious to economic, driven by mass tourism and the rising number of expatriates. This change is evident in the Special Interest Tourism (SIT) framework that now includes Balinese dance (Abdillah, Supriyono, & Supriyono, 2022). Additionally, the influence of globalization is explored in the context of traditional dance training in south Bali, particularly the *topeng pajegan*, highlighting interactions between local and international practitioners and the ongoing negotiation between traditional values and contemporary demands (Strawson, 2014). This nuanced analysis situates the *Abuang* dance within both global and local discourses, emphasising the complex ways traditional practices adapt and thrive in modern settings.

The findings from this study underscore the *Abuang* dance not merely as a cultural artefact but as a dynamic symbol of cultural resilience and spiritual adherence. This aligns with observations in other cultural contexts, where traditional dances like the Fon Buang Suang dance of Udon Thani are

celebrated as crucial markers of cultural identity, playing a significant role in maintaining spiritual continuity amidst the challenges of a rapidly evolving global landscape (Chalongpak & Chansuwan, 2023). Similarly, historical analyses reveal that medieval dance was an integral component of religious thought and practice, shaping and framing spiritual experiences and religious identities (Dickason, 2021).

Moreover, the study highlights how traditional dances can empower individuals to embody and transmit cultural knowledge across generations, acting as agents of resilience and cultural preservation. This is exemplified in practices like the Korean Gimoo, where dance serves as a medium for expressing and overcoming intergenerational trauma, demonstrating the profound capacity of dance to foster resilience and act as a conduit for spiritual and cultural continuity (Yamada & Kawano, 2021). These insights reflect a broader understanding of how traditional dances function not only as performances but as vital elements of cultural and spiritual life, asserting their relevance and adaptability in contemporary societal contexts.

The implications of these research findings are profound, suggesting that traditional dances such as the *Abuang* serve not only as artistic expressions but as essential tools for maintaining cultural identity and spiritual continuity. The engagement with these traditions underscores the need to preserve such cultural expressions amidst global influences that tend towards homogenisation.

The distinct outcomes of this research arise from the inherent values embedded within the community's long-standing traditions. The resilience of the *Abuang* dance within Tenganan Pegringsingan is a testament to the community's dedication to preserving their cultural and spiritual identity. This is further emphasised by the integration of dance into the socio-religious fabric of the community, which not only enriches their cultural practices but also strengthens communal bonds and continuity.

In terms of action, it is essential to continue documenting and promoting such cultural practices both within the local community and beyond. There is a significant opportunity to enhance educational programmes that focus on traditional arts, ensuring that the knowledge and significance of such practices are passed down to future generations. Additionally, initiatives could be developed to showcase these dances on more global platforms, which could help in raising awareness and appreciation, thus securing financial and institutional support for their preservation. Finally, fostering collaborations between cultural practitioners and academic institutions could lead to more comprehensive studies and better conservation strategies, ensuring that these dances endure as living traditions rather than mere historical artefacts.

## 5. Conclusion

In Hinduism, Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa is the Most Beautiful and the source of all beauty. Inclined to descriptions in the Vedic scriptures, Hindus believe and believe that everything that has artistic value is the creation of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. Through this dance offering, in addition to fulfilling personal and community aesthetic impulses, it also becomes a vehicle for dancers to get closer to the source of beauty of 'Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa' wrapped in a unity of *satyam*, *sivam*, and *sundaram*.

In Hinduism, the emphasis is on dialectics that always places truth to contain purity and beauty, beauty must contain purity and truth, and purity must contain truth and beauty. Based on the explanation above, it can be explained that the *Abuang* dance performed in the Usaba Kasa ceremony is full of magical elements and functions as an accompaniment, complement to religious ceremonies, even becoming essential or main in religious rituals bound with certain symbols making the reality of dance art has a very important sanctity function. The symbols and aspects related to *Abuang* dance contain religious elements that show that there is a close relationship between artistic and Hindu construction in Bali. Hinduism provides an open space and container for all elements of art, to realize its role as a form of symbolism of Hindu ideology embraced by Hindus, and played in accordance with culture, customs, beliefs adapted to local wisdom.

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