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PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE IN THE *GANAPATI TATTWA* MANUSCRIPT: SANSKRIT–*KAWI* AS A MEDIUM FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF VEDIC EPISTEMOLOGY IN NUSANTARA

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Abstract

The transmission of Vedic knowledge across civilizations has depended not only on sacred texts but also on the linguistic systems through which religious knowledge is preserved, interpreted, and transmitted. Within the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara, the coexistence of Sanskrit and Kawi in palm-leaf manuscripts represents a distinctive bilingual tradition that has sustained the continuity of Vedic thought. However, existing scholarship has primarily examined Lontar Ganapati Tattwa from philological, theological, or cosmological perspectives, while its Sanskrit–Kawi bilingual structure as an epistemological mechanism remains insufficiently explored. This study investigates how the Sanskrit–Kawi linguistic system functions as a medium for transmitting Vedic epistemology in Nusantara from the perspective of the philosophy of language. Employing a qualitative library-based approach, the study integrates philological analysis, philosophical hermeneutics, and qualitative content analysis. The primary source is the Lontar Ganapati Tattwa manuscript, supported by scholarly works on Sanskrit, Hindu philosophy, manuscript studies, and the philosophy of language. The findings demonstrate that Sanskrit and Kawi operate as complementary epistemological systems: Sanskrit preserves the canonical authority of Vedic teachings, while Kawi contextualizes and interprets them within the cultural horizon of Nusantara. Furthermore, Vedic knowledge is transmitted through interconnected processes of preservation, hermeneutic interpretation, cultural internalization, and intergenerational regeneration, illustrating that vernacularization involves epistemic reinterpretation rather than mere translation. The study proposes the Sanskrit–Kawi Epistemic Transmission Model, offering a new conceptual framework for understanding the transmission of religious knowledge and providing practical implications for Hindu manuscript preservation, Sanskrit–Kawi studies, Hindu education, and the revitalization of Nusantara intellectual heritage.

Keywords: sanskrit–kawi; ganapati tattwa; philosophy of language; vedic knowledge transmission; epistemic vernacularization; hindu manuscripts; nusantara.

INTRODUCTION

Language constitutes a fundamental pillar in the construction, transmission, and reproduction of knowledge across civilizations. From the perspective of the philosophy of language, language is not merely a communicative instrument but a symbolic system

through which human beings interpret reality, construct meaning, and preserve intellectual traditions. In the Hindu philosophical tradition, the concept of *Śabda-Brahman* positions language as the manifestation of ultimate truth and a valid source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Consequently, Sanskrit evolved beyond its liturgical function to become the principal language of philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, grammar, and scientific inquiry that underpinned the development of the Vedic intellectual tradition (Cardona, 1997). As argued by Houben (1996), the diffusion of Sanskrit throughout Asia represented not simply the expansion of a linguistic system but the transmission of philosophical values, religious doctrines, and intellectual traditions that profoundly shaped the cultural development of societies beyond the Indian subcontinent.

Within the Nusantara, this transmission unfolded through the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* (Old Javanese). Rather than constituting a hierarchical relationship, these two languages engaged in a dynamic intellectual dialogue that generated distinctive forms of Hindu scholarship. Pollock (2006) conceptualizes this process as vernacularization, whereby local languages evolved into vehicles for the dissemination of knowledge while remaining deeply rooted in the Sanskrit intellectual tradition. In this context, *Kawi* functioned not merely as a language of translation but as an interpretative medium through which Vedic metaphysical concepts were rearticulated in accordance with local cultural contexts. The Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship therefore represents a process of localization through which Vedic knowledge was reconstructed and reproduced via the interaction between a canonical sacred language and a vernacular intellectual language.

This tradition is vividly reflected in the Balinese palm-leaf manuscript (*lontar*) tradition, which continues to serve as one of the principal repositories of Hindu religious knowledge. Thousands of manuscripts preserved in libraries, museums, royal courts (*puri*), priestly residences (*griya*), and private collections encompass diverse branches of knowledge, including theology, philosophy, ritual studies, law, astronomy, traditional medicine, literature, and ethics. These manuscripts demonstrate that *lontar* should not be regarded merely as cultural artefacts; rather, they constitute a living intellectual heritage that continues to shape religious education, ritual practice, and the intergenerational transmission of Hindu values in Bali.

Among these manuscripts, the *Ganapati Tattwa* occupies a particularly significant position. The text presents a philosophical dialogue between Lord *Śiva* and Lord *Gaṇapati* concerning cosmology, the nature of human existence, yoga, and *mokṣa* (liberation). Adnyana (2021) demonstrates that the manuscript systematically elaborates the doctrines of *utpatti* (creation), *sthiti* (preservation), and *pralina* (dissolution) within a *Śaiva* cosmological framework, employing Sanskrit ślokas accompanied by extensive Kawi expositions. This bilingual textual structure suggests that the *Ganapati Tattwa* serves not only as a theological treatise but also as an epistemic mechanism through which Vedic knowledge was transmitted from canonical Sanskrit sources into the intellectual tradition of Nusantara.

Existing scholarship on Hindu manuscripts in Nusantara has developed along several major trajectories. The first examines Sanskrit as a cosmopolitan language that established intellectual networks across South and Southeast Asia (Houben, 1996; Pollock, 2006). The second consists of philological studies focusing on transliteration, critical editing, textual criticism, and translation of Sanskrit–*Kawi* manuscripts, thereby providing authoritative editions for subsequent scholarly investigation (Acri, 2011; Acri & Hunter, 2011). A third body of scholarship investigates the theological dimensions of *tattwa* literature,

particularly its cosmological doctrines, concepts of divinity, yogic philosophy, and the path toward *mokṣa* (Adnyana, 2021; Harsananda, 2021; Giri & Windya, 2024). More recently, Aminullah and Rahayu (2025) have argued that Kawi commentaries in Old Javanese manuscripts should not be understood merely as translations of Sanskrit originals but as interpretative discourses that transform Sanskrit linguistic thought into locally meaningful philosophical expressions.

Existing scholarship on Hindu manuscripts in Nusantara has generated substantial insights into the historical development of Sanskrit, *Kawi*, and the broader intellectual tradition of Hinduism in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the literature remains fragmented across several disciplinary perspectives. Studies in intellectual history have primarily examined Sanskrit as a cosmopolitan language that established transregional networks of religious and scholarly exchange throughout South and Southeast Asia (Houben, 1996; Pollock, 2006). Within this perspective, the spread of Sanskrit is understood as the diffusion of a prestigious intellectual tradition that shaped political authority, literary production, and religious knowledge beyond the Indian subcontinent.

A second body of scholarship has concentrated on philological investigations of Sanskrit–*Kawi* manuscripts. These studies have focused predominantly on transliteration, textual criticism, critical editing, and translation, thereby producing reliable editions that have become indispensable for subsequent research (Acri, 2011; Acri & Hunter, 2011). More recent work by Aminullah and Rahayu (2025) demonstrates that *Kawi* commentaries preserved in Old Javanese grammatical manuscripts should not be regarded merely as literal translations of Sanskrit texts. Instead, they function as interpretative commentaries through which Sanskrit linguistic concepts were reformulated within the intellectual and cultural context of Java and Bali. This finding suggests that bilingual manuscripts constitute dynamic sites of knowledge production rather than passive repositories of translated texts.

A third line of inquiry has explored the theological and philosophical dimensions of *tattwa* literature. These studies have examined cosmological doctrines, metaphysical concepts, Śaiva theology, yogic practices, and the soteriological path toward *mokṣa* (Adnyana, 2021; Harsananda, 2021; Giri & Windya, 2024). Collectively, this scholarship has significantly enriched our understanding of Hindu doctrinal traditions preserved within Balinese manuscripts. However, its primary emphasis has remained on theological interpretation, while the linguistic mechanisms through which philosophical knowledge is constructed and transmitted have received comparatively limited attention.

Although these three strands of scholarship have made substantial contributions to Hindu manuscript studies, they remain largely disconnected. Philological research tends to privilege textual reconstruction and manuscript preservation; theological studies focus on doctrinal interpretation; and intellectual history emphasizes the macro-historical diffusion of Sanskrit across Asia. Consequently, language is generally treated either as a communicative instrument or as a vehicle of translation rather than as an epistemological medium capable of producing, legitimizing, and transmitting religious knowledge. This disciplinary separation has left an important conceptual gap regarding the role of bilingual textuality in shaping Hindu intellectual traditions in Nusantara.

This limitation is particularly evident in studies of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript. Existing research has successfully identified its cosmological structure, theological doctrines, and Śaiva philosophical foundations (Adnyana, 2021), yet none has systematically examined how the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* constructs the epistemological architecture of Vedic knowledge. Likewise, previous philological analyses

have clarified the textual relationship between Sanskrit verses and *Kawi* commentaries, but they have not investigated how this bilingual structure functions as a mechanism for the preservation, interpretation, and transmission of religious knowledge across generations. Consequently, the epistemic role of language within *Ganapati Tattwa* remains insufficiently theorized.

Addressing this gap requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the philosophy of language, philology, and Hindu studies. Rather than viewing language solely as a medium for expressing theological doctrines, this study conceptualizes Sanskrit and *Kawi* as complementary epistemological systems that collectively facilitate the production, interpretation, legitimization, and reproduction of Vedic knowledge. Such an approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how bilingual manuscripts function not merely as textual artefacts but as intellectual instruments that sustain religious traditions through linguistic mediation.

This study proposes a new analytical perspective by examining the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship in *Ganapati Tattwa* as a system of Vedic epistemic transmission. Unlike previous studies that have approached the manuscript primarily from philological or theological perspectives, this research develops an analytical model that explains how bilingual textual structures operate as mechanisms for transmitting religious knowledge within the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara. By integrating insights from the philosophy of language, philology, and intellectual history, the study demonstrates that the interaction between Sanskrit as a canonical language and *Kawi* as an interpretative language constitutes a dynamic process through which Vedic knowledge is localized, contextualized, and continuously reproduced.

The originality of this research therefore lies not in the manuscript itself, but in the analytical perspective employed. It advances the argument that the Sanskrit–*Kawi* bilingual system should be understood as an epistemological structure rather than merely a linguistic phenomenon. Building upon this perspective, the study proposes the Sanskrit–*Kawi* Epistemic Transmission Model, a conceptual framework that explains how canonical authority, hermeneutic interpretation, cultural internalization, and intergenerational knowledge transmission interact to sustain the continuity of the Hindu intellectual tradition in Nusantara. By doing so, the study contributes not only to Hindu manuscript studies but also to broader discussions in the philosophy of language, manuscript studies, religious epistemology, and the intellectual history of Southeast Asia.

Against this background, the present study addresses three interrelated research questions. First, how does the Sanskrit–*Kawi* bilingual structure in the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript function as a mechanism for the transmission of Vedic knowledge in Nusantara? Second, why should the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* be understood as an epistemological mechanism rather than merely a practice of textual translation? Third, what are the implications of the philosophy of language embodied in *Ganapati Tattwa* for reconstructing the intellectual history of Hinduism in Nusantara?

To answer these questions, the study pursues three principal objectives. First, it analyzes the structural relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* in *Ganapati Tattwa* through the perspective of the philosophy of language. Second, it reconstructs the mechanism through which Vedic epistemology is transmitted within the manuscript tradition of Hindu Nusantara. Third, it develops an analytical model that explains the role of language as a medium for the production, legitimization, interpretation, and transmission of religious knowledge across generations.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integration of three scholarly traditions that have generally developed independently: the philosophy of language, Hindu philology, and the intellectual history of Southeast Asia. Previous scholarship has primarily emphasized textual criticism, theological interpretation, or historical reconstruction. In contrast, this study argues that the Sanskrit–*Kawi* bilingual system constitutes an epistemological structure through which religious knowledge is preserved, interpreted, and continually reproduced. By conceptualizing language as an epistemic medium rather than a purely communicative instrument, this research extends current debates on the relationship between language, meaning, and knowledge within the broader field of Hindu Studies.

More specifically, the study proposes the Sanskrit–*Kawi* Epistemic Transmission Model, a conceptual framework that explains the multilayered process through which Vedic knowledge is transmitted within the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript. The model consists of five interconnected epistemological stages: (1) Epistemic Authority, in which Sanskrit functions as the canonical language preserving the authority of Vedic revelation; (2) Hermeneutic Interpretation, whereby Kawi mediates and contextualizes Sanskrit concepts within the cultural horizon of Nusantara; (3) Epistemic Internalization, through which philosophical concepts are transformed into religious understanding and spiritual practice; (4) Cultural Reproduction, in which knowledge is transmitted through ritual, education, manuscript traditions, and religious institutions; and (5) Knowledge Regeneration, whereby Vedic knowledge is continuously reinterpreted and renewed across generations. Unlike existing models that emphasize either textual translation or historical diffusion, this framework conceptualizes bilingual manuscripts as dynamic epistemological systems that sustain intellectual continuity within Hindu civilization.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide a conceptual foundation for the preservation, interpretation, and digital documentation of Balinese palm-leaf manuscripts. They also offer valuable insights for the development of Sanskrit and *Kawi* education, Hindu manuscript studies, and the revitalization of Nusantara's intellectual heritage. Furthermore, by demonstrating that *lontar* manuscripts function not merely as historical documents but as living repositories of religious knowledge, this study contributes to ongoing efforts aimed at safeguarding Southeast Asia's manuscript traditions while enhancing their relevance within contemporary Hindu scholarship.

Ultimately, this study argues that the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* should not be understood simply as a linguistic phenomenon but as a sophisticated epistemological system that enabled the localization, preservation, and regeneration of Vedic knowledge in Nusantara. Through this perspective, *Ganapati Tattwa* emerges not only as a theological manuscript but also as an intellectual monument that illustrates how sacred knowledge is continually negotiated, interpreted, and transmitted through language across time and cultural contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a library-based research design, integrated with philological analysis and philosophical hermeneutics. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to interpret the meanings, linguistic structures, and epistemological constructions embedded in the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript rather than to examine causal relationships among variables through quantitative methods. The research focuses on understanding the relationship between

Sanskrit and *Kawi* as a medium for the transmission of Vedic knowledge within the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara. Such an approach enables an in-depth exploration of the meanings embedded in the manuscript while elucidating the interrelationship between language, knowledge, and cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The primary source of data consisted of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript in its transliterated and translated form, with particular emphasis on sections containing Sanskrit *ślokas* accompanied by Kawi commentaries. The manuscript was selected because it represents one of the most significant textual traditions illustrating the interaction between Sanskrit and Kawi in the transmission of Vedic knowledge throughout Nusantara.

Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and previous studies concerning the philosophy of language, Hindu philology, Nusantara manuscript traditions, Sanskrit–Kawi intellectual culture, and Hindu intellectual history. These sources were selected based on three criteria: (1) direct relevance to the research objectives; (2) publication in credible and academically recognized sources; and (3) priority given to works published within the last decade while retaining foundational theoretical contributions, including those of Pollock (2006), Houben (1996), Cardona (1997), and Gadamer (2004).

Data collection was conducted through document analysis and library research. Document analysis involved identifying, examining, transliterating (where necessary), and systematically classifying sections of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript that demonstrate the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi*. Library research complemented this process by reviewing both primary and secondary literature related to the philosophy of language, Hindu manuscript traditions, philology, hermeneutics, and theories of knowledge transmission. All collected data were subsequently organized into four analytical categories: linguistic structure, epistemological functions of language, mechanisms of Vedic knowledge transmission, and the intellectual-historical context of Hinduism in Nusantara.

Data analysis proceeded through the integration of qualitative content analysis and Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics. The first stage involved data reduction, in which textual passages containing key philosophical concepts including *śabda*, *tattwa*, *jñāna*, *Brahman*, *Ātman*, *mokṣa*, and the relationship between Sanskrit *ślokas* and *Kawi* commentaries were identified and selected for detailed analysis. The second stage employed thematic coding to classify the data into conceptual themes, including bilingual linguistic structures, epistemological functions of language, mechanisms of knowledge transmission, and the localization of Vedic teachings within the Nusantara context.

The third stage applied qualitative content analysis to identify recurring patterns, conceptual relationships, and narrative structures through which knowledge is constructed within the manuscript. Subsequently, Gadamerian hermeneutics was employed through the process of fusion of horizons to interpret the dynamic relationship between the text, its historical context, and the interpretative horizon of the researcher. This hermeneutic process enabled the reconstruction of the epistemological role of the Sanskrit–*Kawi* bilingual system as a medium for the transmission of Vedic knowledge. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a conceptual model explaining how language functions as an epistemological mechanism for the production, legitimization, interpretation, and intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge within the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation, peer debriefing, and an audit trail. Source triangulation was undertaken by comparing textual evidence from the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript with relevant philological studies, Hindu scholarship, and previous academic research. Peer debriefing was conducted through scholarly discussions with specialists in Sanskrit, Hindu philology, and Hindu studies to evaluate the consistency and validity of the interpretations. Furthermore, an audit trail was maintained by documenting each stage of data collection, coding, interpretation, analysis, and conclusion drawing, thereby ensuring the transparency, credibility, and reproducibility of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dual Linguistic System of Sanskrit–Kawi in Ganapati Tattwa

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript is its employment of a dual linguistic system, combining Sanskrit *ślokas* with extensive *Kawi* (Old Javanese) commentaries. This bilingual structure is not merely a stylistic convention but represents an intellectual strategy for transmitting Vedic knowledge within the Hindu tradition of Nusantara. In this textual configuration, Sanskrit functions as the language of canonical authority, preserving the authenticity and legitimacy of Vedic teachings, whereas *Kawi* serves as an interpretative medium that bridges Indian metaphysical concepts with the cultural horizon and intellectual understanding of local communities. Consequently, the relationship between these two languages should be understood as complementary rather than hierarchical.

This phenomenon corresponds closely to Pollock (2006) concept of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis, which argues that the diffusion of Sanskrit throughout Asia not only established transregional networks of intellectual communication but also initiated a process of vernacularization, whereby local languages evolved into vehicles for the expression and dissemination of religious and philosophical knowledge. Within the context of Nusantara, this process did not diminish Sanskrit status as a sacred language; rather, it created a dialogical space in which canonical Sanskrit interacted dynamically with vernacular intellectual traditions. Accordingly, the presence of *Kawi* in *Ganapati Tattwa* should not be interpreted as subordinate to Sanskrit but as an essential component of the localization of Vedic knowledge, enabling Hindu teachings to be understood and internalized within the cultural framework of Bali.

A close examination of the textual structure of *Ganapati Tattwa* reveals a remarkably consistent pattern. Nearly every major philosophical doctrine is introduced through a Sanskrit *śloka* that establishes canonical authority, followed by an extended explanation in *Kawi*. This recurring structure demonstrates that Sanskrit functions as the source language of authority, while Kawi operates as the language of interpretation. Such a bilingual arrangement not only preserves the authenticity of Vedic terminology but also creates a hermeneutical space in which readers are able to engage with philosophical concepts through their own cultural experiences. In this respect, Kawi should not be regarded as a language of literal translation; rather, it reconstructs meaning through contextual interpretation while maintaining the doctrinal integrity of the original Sanskrit text.

This interpretation reinforces Acri (2011) argument that the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* within the Old Javanese and Balinese manuscript traditions is more appropriately understood as translation as commentary than as straightforward linguistic translation. According to Acri (2011), *Kawi* commentaries constitute an active process of

interpretation because they do not merely explain Sanskrit verses but also relate them to indigenous systems of knowledge, ritual practices, and philosophical traditions. Consequently, *Kawi* commentaries should be understood as mechanisms of knowledge production, rather than simple linguistic reproductions of Sanskrit originals.

The same interpretative strategy can be observed in the treatment of fundamental philosophical concepts such as *Brahman, Ātman, Tattwa, Śūnya, Yoga*, and *Mokṣa*. These concepts are consistently preserved in their original Sanskrit forms, thereby maintaining continuity with the Vedic intellectual tradition. Their accompanying *Kawi* explanations, however, provide conceptual elaborations that enable readers to grasp both their philosophical significance and practical implications within the local religious context. This textual strategy demonstrates that preserving Sanskrit terminology serves not merely to retain linguistic authenticity but also to safeguard the epistemic authority of the text. Simultaneously, the use of *Kawi* illustrates the capacity of the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara to reinterpret universal philosophical concepts without compromising their essential meanings.

From the perspective of the philosophy of language, this bilingual system reflects the inseparable relationship between language and the construction of meaning. Cardona (1997) argues that within the Vyākaraṇa tradition, language is understood not merely as a grammatical system but as the medium through which *śabda* (word), *artha* (meaning), and *jñāna* (knowledge) are interconnected. Consequently, linguistic choice in a religious text carries profound epistemological implications because it shapes the manner in which knowledge is understood, legitimized, and transmitted. Within *Ganapati Tattwa*, Sanskrit preserves the normative meanings derived from the Vedic tradition, whereas Kawi enables those meanings to be reinterpreted and internalized within the intellectual and cultural context of Hindu communities in Nusantara.

This relationship can also be interpreted through Gadamer (2004) philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer maintains that meaning does not reside statically within a text but emerges through the dialogue between the text, tradition, and interpreter a process he describes as the fusion of horizons. In the context of *Ganapati Tattwa*, Kawi functions as the dialogical medium through which the philosophical horizon of the Vedas encounters the cultural horizon of Nusantara. Consequently, *Kawi* commentaries do more than clarify the meaning of Sanskrit *ślokas*; they transform and reactivate Vedic knowledge, allowing it to remain meaningful within the social, cultural, and religious life of Balinese Hinduism.

The present analysis demonstrates that the bilingual structure of *Ganapati Tattwa* performs at least three interrelated epistemological functions. The first is a preservative function, whereby Sanskrit maintains the canonical authority and doctrinal continuity of Vedic revelation. The second is an interpretative function, through which *Kawi* contextualizes metaphysical concepts and renders them intelligible within the local intellectual tradition. The third is a transmissive function, whereby the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* facilitates the intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge. Together, these three functions establish a coherent system of knowledge transmission that simultaneously preserves the continuity of the Vedic tradition and enables the emergence of a distinctive Hindu intellectual tradition in Nusantara.

These findings suggest that the bilingual structure of *Ganapati Tattwa* cannot be reduced to a purely linguistic phenomenon. Rather, the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship represents an epistemological mechanism that connects the canonical authority of Vedic revelation with locally situated processes of interpretation. Language therefore functions

not merely as a communicative instrument but as a medium for the production, legitimization, and reproduction of religious knowledge. The continuity of Hindu intellectual traditions in Nusantara consequently depends not only on the preservation of sacred texts but also on the capacity of language to mediate an ongoing dialogue between universal religious traditions and local cultural contexts.

Based on these findings, the bilingual structure of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript may be conceptualized as a three-layered epistemic mechanism. At the first level, Sanskrit preserves the normative authority of Vedic teachings; at the second, *Kawi* actualizes philosophical meaning through contextual interpretation; and at the third, the interaction between both languages generates an epistemological process through which Hindu knowledge is continuously transmitted, reconstructed, and revitalized within the intellectual tradition of Nusantara. This interpretation extends previous scholarship, which has tended to separate philological and theological analyses, by demonstrating that the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship constitutes an active linguistic system that constructs religious knowledge rather than merely conveying it. This discussion also provides the conceptual foundation for the subsequent section, which examines the philosophy of language as the epistemological foundation of Vedic knowledge, focusing on how the concepts of *śabda, artha*, and *jñāna* operate in establishing epistemic authority within the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript.

Philosophy of Language and Vedic Epistemology

The bilingual structure of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript not only illustrates a linguistic strategy for communicating Hindu teachings but also reflects an epistemological foundation in which language functions as a legitimate source of knowledge. Within the Indian philosophical tradition, *śabda* is understood not merely as a means of communication but as an epistemic medium that connects *sat* (reality), *artha* (meaning), and *jñāna* (knowledge). Consequently, the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* in *Ganapati Tattwa* should be examined within the broader framework of Indian philosophy of language, which conceives language as a valid means of cognition (*pramāṇa*) through which reliable knowledge is acquired.

An important theoretical foundation for this perspective is provided by the *Vyākaraṇa* tradition of Sanskrit grammar. As Cardona (1997) demonstrates, Pāṇini grammatical system extends far beyond the description of linguistic forms. Rather, it establishes an analytical framework that explains the relationship between words, meaning, and reality. Within this tradition, language is conceived as a conceptual system through which human beings recognize, classify, and organize the world. Consequently, linguistic analysis cannot be separated from epistemology because meaning emerges through the dynamic interaction between linguistic expression and the object of knowledge.

This philosophical understanding reaches its most comprehensive formulation in *Bhartṛhari Vākyapadīya*, where language is elevated from a communicative instrument to an ontological principle underlying consciousness itself. Through the concept of *Śabda-Brahman,* Bhartṛhari argues that language and reality are inseparable dimensions of existence, jointly constituting the basis of meaning and knowledge. Ferrante (2020) observes that, within *Bhartṛhari philosophy*, language functions as the medium connecting consciousness with the external world, implying that understanding can never occur independently of linguistic structures. Knowledge, therefore, is not derived solely from

empirical experience but is constituted through interpretative processes mediated by language.

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that *Bhartṛhari philosophy* of language retains significant relevance beyond its historical context. Ferrante (2026) argues that *Bhartṛhari* discussion of linguistic universals (*jāti*) reveals language's capacity to mediate between universal concepts and particular experiences through semantic interpretation. This interpretation reinforces the view that language should not be understood merely as a system of signs but as an epistemological framework that enables the construction of intersubjective knowledge. Consequently, the philosophy of language in the Indian tradition provides a theoretical basis for understanding how linguistic systems simultaneously preserve doctrinal continuity and facilitate conceptual transformation across different cultural contexts.

Viewed from this perspective, the textual structure of *Ganapati Tattwa* illustrates how śabda operates as a form of pramāṇa, or valid knowledge. Sanskrit *ślokas* preserve the canonical authority of Vedic revelation, while *Kawi* commentaries actualize their meanings within the socio-cultural context of Nusantara. This bilingual relationship demonstrates that the acquisition of knowledge does not conclude with the reading of canonical texts but unfolds through interpretative engagement that mediates between the language of revelation and the interpretative horizon of its audience. Kawi functions not merely as an explanatory language but as an epistemological medium through which Vedic knowledge is reconstructed within the intellectual tradition of Bali.

This interpretation resonates with Gadamer (2004) philosophical hermeneutics, particularly his concept of the fusion of horizons, which argues that meaning emerges through the encounter between the historical horizon of the text and that of its interpreter. Within *Ganapati Tattwa*, Kawi serves as the dialogical medium through which the philosophical worldview of the Vedas encounters the lived religious experience of Hindu communities in Nusantara. Consequently, the interpretative process does not diminish the authority of the Sanskrit text; rather, it expands its semantic possibilities, enabling Vedic teachings to remain intellectually and spiritually relevant within changing cultural contexts.

Further evidence of this epistemological relationship can be observed in the manuscript's treatment of fundamental philosophical concepts such as *Brahman, Ātman, Tattwa, Yoga*, and *Mokṣa*. These concepts are consistently preserved in their original Sanskrit forms, thereby maintaining continuity with the Vedic intellectual tradition, while their conceptual elaboration is provided through *Kawi* explanations. This textual strategy reveals a clear division of epistemological functions: Sanskrit safeguards the canonical authority and conceptual precision of Vedic philosophy, whereas *Kawi* facilitates the internalization of meaning through contextual interpretation. The bilingual structure therefore exemplifies a process of knowledge mediation, whereby universal religious concepts are transformed into culturally intelligible knowledge without compromising their philosophical legitimacy.

These findings extend previous scholarship that has largely interpreted the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship as either a philological phenomenon or a practice of textual translation. The present analysis demonstrates that the interaction between the two languages is more appropriately understood as an epistemological mechanism through which Vedic knowledge is produced, legitimized, interpreted, and transmitted across generations. *Ganapati Tattwa* should be regarded not merely as a theological manuscript but also as evidence of an indigenous intellectual tradition in which sacred and vernacular languages

interact creatively to sustain the continuity of Hindu knowledge in Nusantara.

Based on this analysis, the study proposes that the bilingual structure of *Ganapati Tattwa* operates through three interconnected epistemological functions. The first is the authoritative function, whereby Sanskrit preserves the legitimacy of Vedic revelation and the continuity of canonical tradition. The second is the hermeneutic function, in which *Kawi* provides an interpretative space that contextualizes metaphysical concepts within the cultural horizon of Nusantara. The third is the transmissive function, through which the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* enables religious knowledge to be transmitted across generations while preserving its philosophical integrity. Collectively, these functions demonstrate that language in *Ganapati Tattwa* is far more than a communicative instrument; it constitutes the epistemological foundation through which the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara has been preserved, interpreted, and continuously regenerated.

Sanskrit–Kawi as the Mechanism of Knowledge Transmission

Unlike conventional philological studies, which generally interpret the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* primarily as a practice of textual translation, the analysis of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript demonstrates that these two languages constitute a systematic mechanism of knowledge transmission. Within the manuscript, Sanskrit preserves the revealed authority of Vedic revelation, whereas *Kawi* develops an interpretative dimension that enables Vedic teachings to be understood, internalized, and transmitted within the cultural context of Nusantara. Consequently, the interaction between Sanskrit and *Kawi* is neither hierarchical nor subordinate; rather, it constitutes an epistemological system that integrates text, meaning, and religious practice into a coherent process of knowledge transmission.

This epistemological mechanism is already evident in the dialogical structure of the manuscript. From its opening sections, the text presents a philosophical dialogue between *Bhaṭāra Śiwa* and *Gaṇapati*, in which *Śiwa* assumes the role of the source of knowledge, while *Gaṇapati* represents the seeker of knowledge. Every Sanskrit *śloka* is consistently followed by an extensive Kawi exposition that elaborates its conceptual significance. For example, the discussion of the origin of *pañcadaiwātmā* begins with a canonical Sanskrit verse presenting the cosmological doctrine, which is subsequently interpreted through an extended Kawi commentary explaining the relationships among *Oṃkāra, Bindu, Śūnya*, and the five divine manifestations. This dialogical structure illustrates that knowledge is transmitted not through isolated textual statements but through an interactive pedagogical process in which authoritative revelation is progressively interpreted and contextualized.

The recurring textual pattern further demonstrates that *Kawi* should not be regarded as a language of literal translation but rather as a pedagogical language that facilitates conceptual understanding. *Kawi* commentaries expand the meanings of Sanskrit *ślokas* by providing cosmological explanations, illustrating the relationship between the *pañca tanmātra* and the *pañca mahābhūta*, and relating these metaphysical principles to the human body (*microcosm*) and the universe (*macrocosm*). Consequently, the transmission of knowledge proceeds through successive stages of canonical authorization, hermeneutic interpretation, and epistemic internalization, rather than through the mere transfer of linguistic information. This finding supports Acri (2011) argument that Sanskrit–Old Javanese textual traditions are best understood through the notion of translation as

commentary, whereby translation simultaneously functions as an interpretative act that generates new layers of philosophical meaning.

The same mechanism becomes particularly evident in the manuscript explanation of the relationship between cosmic principles and the human body. The Sanskrit *śloka* concerning *pañca daiwātm*ā is elaborated through *Kawi* by mapping *Brahmā, Wiṣṇu, Rudra, Īśwara,* and *Sadāśiwa* onto specific bodily centers, including the *mūlādhāra, nābhi, hṛdaya, kaṇṭha*, and *jihvāgra*. Rather than merely repeating the content of the Sanskrit verse, the *Kawi* commentary transforms abstract metaphysical concepts into embodied spiritual experience. Through this process, cosmology is reinterpreted as a framework for understanding the relationship between the human body and the cosmic order, thereby making philosophical knowledge directly applicable to religious life.

From an epistemological perspective, this strategy demonstrates that knowledge is not conceived as information transferred mechanically from one language to another but as meaning constructed through interpretative engagement. Such an understanding corresponds closely to Gadamer (2004) philosophical hermeneutics, particularly his concept of the fusion of horizons, according to which understanding emerges through the dialogue between the historical horizon of the text and that of its interpreter. Within *Ganapati Tattwa*, *Kawi* functions as the dialogical medium through which the metaphysical horizon of the Vedas encounters the cultural horizon of Balinese Hindu society. Consequently, Vedic knowledge does not remain confined to the normative authority of canonical texts but becomes a living intellectual tradition continuously reinterpreted within religious practice.

The mechanism of knowledge transmission is equally evident in the manuscript's treatment of *Ṣaḍaṅga Yoga*. The Sanskrit verses introduce the six stages of yogic discipline *pratyāhāra, dhyāna, prāṇāyāma, dhāraṇā, tarka*, and *samādhi*, while the accompanying *Kawi* commentary provides detailed explanations of their meanings, practical techniques, and spiritual implications. This textual arrangement demonstrates that *Kawi* functions as a medium through which philosophical concepts are transformed into practical religious knowledge. Vedic wisdom is therefore not merely known, but realized, embodied, and integrated into everyday spiritual practice.

A similar interpretative process can be observed in the manuscript's discussion of *Oṃkāra, Nāda, Bindu,* and *Pañcākṣara*. The text describes the cosmological process of emanation beginning with *Niṣkala*, progressing through *Nāda, Bindu*, and *Ardhacandra*, and culminating in *Oṃkāra*, before relating these metaphysical principles to phonetic structures and the anatomy of the human body. The *Kawi* commentary subsequently explains how specific Sanskrit phonemes correspond to different bodily organs, including the head, eyes, throat, and other anatomical components. This intricate relationship among phonology, cosmology, and anthropology demonstrates that language is understood not simply as a symbolic system but as an ontological structure connecting the human body with the cosmic universe.

Collectively, these observations reveal that *Ganapati Tattwa* develops a multilayered mechanism of knowledge transmission consisting of three interrelated stages. The first is preservation, in which Sanskrit *śloka* safeguard the canonical authority and doctrinal continuity of Vedic revelation. The second is interpretation, whereby *Kawi* contextualizes and elaborates philosophical concepts in accordance with the intellectual traditions of Nusantara. The third is internalization, through which metaphysical knowledge is embodied in ritual practice, yogic discipline, and spiritual cultivation, allowing religious knowledge to

be transmitted across generations. This model demonstrates that the transmission of Vedic knowledge extends far beyond textual preservation; it fundamentally shapes the ways in which Hindu communities understand, experience, and reproduce their religious traditions.

These findings also extend Pollock (2006) theory of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis. Whereas Pollock emphasizes the diffusion of Sanskrit as a transregional language of political and cultural authority, the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript illustrates how this process operated at the micro-level of local manuscript traditions through sustained interaction with vernacular languages. The continuity of the Vedic tradition in Nusantara therefore depended not solely upon the preservation of Sanskrit but equally upon the interpretative capacity of *Kawi* to function as an epistemological bridge between sacred texts and their communities of interpretation.

Building upon these findings, this study proposes that the Sanskrit–*Kawi* system embodied in *Ganapati Tattwa* constitutes a multi-layered model of knowledge transmission. At the first level, Sanskrit preserves the authority of revelation and the continuity of the Vedic tradition. At the second, Kawi performs conceptual reinterpretation that situates Vedic teachings within the cultural and intellectual landscape of Nusantara. At the third, the interaction between the two languages facilitates the internalization of knowledge through ritual performance, yogic discipline, and spiritual consciousness. Accordingly, the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship should be understood not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as an integrated epistemological system through which Vedic knowledge has been preserved, transformed, and continuously regenerated within the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara.

Vernacularization of Vedic Knowledge in Nusantara

The analysis of the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript demonstrates that the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* extends far beyond the processes of linguistic translation or textual adaptation. Instead, it represents a process of vernacularization of Vedic knowledge, whereby Vedic epistemology is transformed and rearticulated within the intellectual horizon of Nusantara through a vernacular language. In this context, *Kawi* functions not merely as a medium of communication but as an epistemological space in which Vedic metaphysical concepts are interpreted, reconstructed, and transmitted according to the social, cultural, and religious realities of Balinese Hindu society. Consequently, the vernacularization embodied in *Ganapati Tattwa* illustrates that the dissemination of Hindu traditions in Nusantara was accomplished through a continuous intellectual negotiation between the canonical authority of Sanskrit texts and the interpretative creativity of local traditions.

Pollock (2006) theory of vernacularization provides an important conceptual framework for understanding this process. Pollock argues that the emergence of vernacular languages throughout South and Southeast Asia did not replace Sanskrit as the principal intellectual language; rather, it generated new forms of literary and philosophical expression that remained deeply rooted in the Sanskrit tradition. Within this framework, vernacular languages function as epistemic media through which universal knowledge is translated into locally meaningful experience without compromising the authority of its canonical source. The *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript exemplifies this process with remarkable consistency. Sanskrit *śloka* are preserved as the authoritative expression of Vedic revelation, while *Kawi* commentaries expand and contextualize their meanings through conceptual explanations that resonate with the intellectual worldview of Hindu

communities in Nusantara.

Nevertheless, vernacularization in *Ganapati Tattwa* should not be understood merely as a linguistic transformation. The manuscript reveals a more profound process involving the recontextualization of Vedic epistemology. Discussions of *pañca mahābhūta, pañca daiwātmā*, and the structure of the cosmos are not simply rendered into *Kawi* but are reinterpreted through their relationship to the human body (*microcosm*), ritual space, and spiritual experience. The correspondence established between *mūlādhāra, nābhi, hṛdaya, kaṇṭha*, and *jihvāgra*, on the one hand, and the manifestations of *Brahmā, Wiṣṇu, Rudra, Īśwara*, and *Sadāśiwa*, on the other, demonstrates how Vedic cosmology is transformed into an anthropocosmic framework that is more readily understood and practiced within Balinese Hinduism. Rather than preserving cosmology as an abstract metaphysical doctrine, the manuscript integrates it into embodied religious experience.

A similar transformation is evident in the discussion of *Ṣaḍaṅga Yoga*. The Sanskrit *śloka* briefly enumerate the six stages of yogic discipline, whereas the accompanying *Kawi* commentary provides detailed explanations of their practical meanings, ranging from sensory restraint (*pratyāhāra*) and concentration (*dhāraṇā*) to the realization of *samādhi*. Through this interpretative expansion, Kawi converts normative doctrinal knowledge into practical guidance applicable to everyday religious life. Vernacularization therefore operates not simply through linguistic translation but through the transformation of abstract philosophical knowledge into concrete spiritual experience.

These observations indicate that *Kawi* performs a dual function as both a pedagogical language and a hermeneutic language. As a pedagogical language, it enables Vedic teachings to be understood by communities lacking formal proficiency in Sanskrit. As a hermeneutic language, it opens new interpretative possibilities through which metaphysical concepts engage with the cultural realities of Nusantara. This interpretation is consistent with Acri (2011) argument that Old Javanese and Balinese commentaries should not be viewed merely as translations of Sanskrit texts but as interpretative discourses that enrich the intellectual tradition of Hinduism in Southeast Asia.

From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, this process exemplifies what Gadamer (2004) describes as the fusion of horizons, namely the encounter between the historical horizon of a text and the experiential horizon of its interpreters. Within *Ganapati Tattwa*, Kawi serves as the dialogical medium through which the metaphysical worldview of India encounters the lived religious experience of Balinese Hindu communities. Consequently, the meanings that emerge are not passive reproductions of Vedic doctrines but creative reinterpretations generated through the interaction between text, tradition, and cultural context. This dynamic process explains why Hinduism in Nusantara has maintained continuity with the Vedic tradition while simultaneously developing distinctive local characteristics.

The manuscript further demonstrates that vernacularization extends beyond semantics into the domains of phonology, cosmology, and symbolic ontology. The sections describing the cosmological emanation of *Nāda, Bindu, Oṃkāra*, and the subsequent development of sacred phonemes into the constituent elements of the human body reveal a conception of language as a cosmic principle underlying existence itself. Sanskrit phonemes are presented not merely as linguistic symbols but as creative forces that connect the human body, the universe, and divine reality. The accompanying *Kawi* commentary elaborates these relationships by relating sacred sounds to bodily organs, energy centers, and ritual practices. Accordingly, vernacularization encompasses

simultaneous linguistic, cosmological, anthropological, and spiritual transformations, illustrating the multidimensional role of language in the transmission of religious knowledge.

These findings demonstrate that *Ganapati Tattwa* should be regarded as a product of the Hindu intellectual tradition of Nusantara rather than as a simple reproduction of Indian textual traditions. Vedic knowledge was not transferred mechanically from India to Bali; instead, it underwent continuous reinterpretation that generated new forms of understanding appropriate to local cultural environments. From the perspective of intellectual history, this process reveals that Nusantara functioned not merely as a recipient of Sanskrit civilization but as a knowledge-producing region that actively synthesized Indian philosophical traditions with indigenous cultural experience. Such a perspective challenges diffusionist models of cultural transmission by emphasizing the creative agency of local intellectual communities.

Building upon these findings, this study argues that the vernacularization of Vedic knowledge in *Ganapati Tattwa* operates through three interrelated mechanisms. The first is linguistic adaptation, in which Kawi explains Sanskrit terminology while preserving its philosophical integrity. The second is epistemic reinterpretation, whereby Vedic doctrines are reconstructed through the cosmological, anthropological, and spiritual frameworks of Nusantara. The third is cultural internalization, through which interpreted knowledge becomes embedded in ritual performance, yogic discipline, religious education, and manuscript traditions. Together, these mechanisms demonstrate that vernacularization is far more than a process of language shift; it is a comprehensive transformation of knowledge that enables Vedic teachings to remain intellectually dynamic and culturally relevant within the civilization of Nusantara.

The *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript therefore provides compelling evidence that *Kawi* played a central role in shaping the intellectual identity of Hindu Nusantara. The interaction between Sanskrit and Kawi produced a model of knowledge transmission that simultaneously preserved the canonical authority of Vedic texts and facilitated the emergence of new interpretative traditions grounded in local cultural experience. In this respect, the findings extend Pollock (2006) theory of vernacularization by demonstrating that, within the Balinese manuscript tradition, vernacularization generated not only new literary forms but also a distinctive local epistemology that became fundamental to the continuity, adaptation, and regeneration of Hindu intellectual traditions in Nusantara.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Sanskrit–*Kawi* bilingual system in the *Ganapati Tattwa* manuscript functions as a mechanism for the transmission of Vedic knowledge in Nusantara from the perspective of the philosophy of language. Through the integration of philological analysis, philosophical hermeneutics, and qualitative content analysis, the findings demonstrate that the relationship between Sanskrit and *Kawi* cannot be adequately understood as either a practice of textual translation or a simple manifestation of bilingualism. Instead, the two languages constitute complementary epistemological systems. Sanskrit preserves the doctrinal authority of the Vedas through canonical *śloka* that embody the principle of *śabda* as a legitimate source of religious knowledge, while *Kawi* serves as a hermeneutic medium through which Vedic concepts are contextualized within the cultural and intellectual horizons of Nusantara. Accordingly, the study answers its central research questions by demonstrating that the Sanskrit–*Kawi* relationship

operates through interconnected processes of preservation, interpretation, internalization, cultural reproduction, and knowledge regeneration, thereby ensuring the continuity and adaptability of the Vedic intellectual tradition within Hindu Nusantara.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the fields of Hindu Studies, the philosophy of language, Hindu philology, and the intellectual history of Southeast Asia by integrating Pollock (2006) theory of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis, Acri (2011) concept of translation as commentary, and Gadamer's (2004) philosophical hermeneutics into a unified analytical framework for explaining the transmission of Vedic epistemology. Whereas previous studies have generally approached *Ganapati Tattwa* from philological, theological, or historical perspectives independently, this study proposes the Sanskrit–*Kawi* Epistemic Transmission Model as a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic relationship among canonical language, vernacular interpretation, meaning construction, and the reproduction of religious knowledge. The proposed model demonstrates that language should be understood not merely as a communicative instrument but as an epistemological system that preserves, legitimizes, interprets, and transmits religious knowledge across generations.

The study also offers several practical implications. The proposed model provides a conceptual foundation for advancing Hindu manuscript studies, the preservation of Balinese *lontar* manuscripts, and the teaching of Sanskrit and *Kawi* within Hindu educational institutions. Furthermore, it offers an analytical framework for culturally informed manuscript interpretation, curriculum development in Hindu philology, and strategies for the digital preservation of manuscript collections. More broadly, the findings reinforce the view that Balinese palm-leaf manuscripts constitute a living intellectual heritage, preserving systems of religious knowledge that remain relevant for contemporary Hindu scholarship, manuscript conservation, digital humanities, and the revitalization of Nusantara's intellectual traditions.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is based exclusively on library-based research, with *Ganapati Tattwa* serving as its primary textual source. Consequently, the proposed interpretations have not been validated through ethnographic investigation of contemporary manuscript reading, transmission, and ritual use within Balinese Hindu communities. Second, the analysis is confined to a single manuscript and therefore cannot be generalized to the broader corpus of *tattwa* literature preserved throughout Nusantara. Third, the analytical framework is primarily grounded in the philosophy of language and philosophical hermeneutics, leaving anthropological, sociolinguistic, and digital philological perspectives largely unexplored. These limitations indicate that the proposed model should be regarded as a conceptual framework that remains open to empirical testing, comparative validation, and further theoretical refinement.

Building upon these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended. Comparative studies involving other Hindu manuscripts from Nusantara such as *Tattwa Jñāna*, *Bhuvana Kośa*, *Wrhaspati Tattwa*, *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan*, and related *Śaiva* texts—would provide opportunities to evaluate the broader applicability of the Sanskrit–*Kawi* Epistemic Transmission Model. Future studies could also adopt mixed-methods approaches by combining philological analysis with ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and interviews with *sulinggih*, *pemangku*, manuscript custodians, and traditional scholars to investigate how mechanisms of knowledge transmission continue to operate in contemporary Hindu practice. Finally, cross-cultural and

comparative research involving Hindu manuscript traditions in Indonesia, India, Nepal, Thailand, and Cambodia would contribute to a deeper understanding of the diverse processes through which Vedic knowledge has been vernacularized and transmitted across Asia. Such investigations would not only refine the conceptual model proposed in this study but also strengthen its contribution to international scholarship on manuscript studies, the philosophy of language, Hindu intellectual history, and the transmission of religious knowledge.

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