

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KAKAWIN RAMAYANA VALUE IN THE NGABEN CEREMONY IN BALI

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## *Abstract*

*Ramayana in the Weda is part of the Weda Smrti, precisely part of Itihasa. The presence of Ramayana as a foundation in carrying out life has been implemented in ceremonies, one of which is the ngaben ceremony. Ramayana for Balinese Hindus is known in the form of kakawin, namely poetry containing wirama with guru and laghu. At the ngaben ceremony in the mabebasan tradition, there will be someone singing the kakawin Ramayana at the funeral home. When bathing the body of a series of ngaben ceremonies, there will be someone singing it in the wirama Wangsastha/Swandewi (Sargah XXIV p.486). The values contained in the Kakawin Ramayana such as the values of dharma, bhakti, moksa should be used as a guide in life in this world. Therefore, in living life, dharma should guide every step, including realizing an attitude of devotion to God and fellow human beings. Thus, the Kakawin Ramayana provides guidance to Hindus in this life.*

**Keywords:** implementation, Kakawin Ramayana, values, cremation ceremony

## INTRODUCTION

Kakawin is one of the works of Balinese literature purwa (in Old Javanese) in the form of poetry and bound by the convention of guru laghu. Guru is a long sound (dirgha), slow, with a rather heavy and flowing intonation. Laghu is a short sound, rather fast, with a light intonation and not too flowing. Kakawin was created around the 9th century when the civilization of ancient Javanese language and literature was still ongoing in Central Java. Kakawin continues to develop following the development of politics and power in Java.

The closeness of the political and power relations between Java and Bali became a window for the spread of kakawin to Bali, such as the kakawin Ramayana, Arjuna Wiwaha, Bharatayudha, Sutasoma, and Siwaratiri Kalpha, all of which have an honorable place in Balinese society.

Kakawin Ramayana is a kakawin (poem) containing the story of Ramayana. Written in the form of a song in Old Javanese, it is thought to have been created in Hindu Mataram during the reign of Dyah Balitung around 820-832 Saka or around 870 AD. Several researchers have revealed that the Javanese version of the Kakawin Ramayana does not completely refer directly to the Valmiki version of the Ramayana. However, this refers to the transformation of the Rawanawadha book written by an ancient Indian poet named Bhattikawya. This was concluded by Manomohan Ghosh, a literary researcher from India who found several verses of the Javanese Ramayana that were the same as the verses in Rawanawadha (Purniari, 2021).

Balinese culture is a harmonious blend of Hindu religious values and local customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. One important aspect of Balinese life is the implementation of religious ceremonies, including the Ngaben or Pitra Yadnya ceremony, which is a ritual of cremation as a form of final respect for the spirits of ancestors. In its implementation, Ngaben is not only a series of processions, but is also full of literary and philosophical values that

originate from Hindu sacred texts, one of which is the Kakawin Ramayana. Kakawin Ramayana is a classical literary work in Old Javanese adapted from the Indian version of the Ramayana epic. In the Balinese context, this kakawin is not only read as literature, but is also used as a source of noble values that are implemented in various aspects of life, including in the implementation of the Ngaben ceremony.

### **Ngaben Ceremony in Balinese Hindu Tradition**

According to Wiana (in Puspa, 2014) the ngaben ceremony is included in the pitra yajña ceremony. Ngaben comes from the Balinese language from the origin of the word "api" gets the nasal prefix "ng" and the suffix "an" so that it becomes "ngapian", then undergoes a code so that it becomes "ngapen". There is a change in the consonant sound "p" to "b" according to the law of sound changes "p, b, m, w (bilabial letter family)" so that the word "ngapen" changes to "ngaben". Then the word ngaben is given the meaning 'towards fire'. In Hindu teachings, fire is a symbol of the power of the God Brahma, so "ngaben" means 'towards Brahma'. The purpose and objective of ngaben is to release the atma from the elements of Panca Maha Butha and deliver the atman to the realm of Brahman or the realm of divinity. The ngaben ceremony is part of pitra yajña, which is a sacred offering to ancestors. The main objective is to release the atma from the elements of Panca Maha Bhuta and deliver it to the realm of Brahman. There are several types of ngaben based on the condition of the body and the symbolism used:

1. Sawa Wadana: Using the body (sawa) of a recently deceased person.
2. Asti Wadana: Using the bones of a person who has died a long time ago and has been buried previously.
3. Swasta: Performed without a body, using symbols such as tirtha or cogongrass leaves (kusa) as a substitute for the body. Each type of ngaben has its own stages and ceremonies, such as pabersihan idup (cleaning the body), pebhaktian (last respects by the family), pabersihan mati (ngelelet), and pangeringkesan (wrapping the body). In addition, there are also additional ceremonies such as pengaskaran and the use of tirtha pangentas for purification and release of the atma (Wiana, 2004)

The meaning of Balinese literature is intended as content, content or in literary science it is termed as "value" in Balinese literature. Related to that, the values in Balinese literature are the views of Balinese society which are reflected in Balinese literary works. These views relate to things that are considered "good, appropriate, or appropriate" for the normative standards of Balinese society. These views are arranged in such a way by the author (writer; poet) with the expertise they have. That is what is then captured by the reader as a value. Thus, the values in Balinese literature basically concern all aspects of life

### **METHOD**

According to Bungin (2012:129) the success of a study is determined by data collection. The qualitative research method approach is used in this article which is through observation and documentation methods. The physical units of social reality and the universe of human behavior, especially the subjects of religion and culture, are included in the core of this qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Taylor (in Suyanto and Sutinah, 2013:166), a qualitative research approach is an approach that aims to collect descriptive information through written words and visual displays. According to Moleong (2014: 199), data analysis is the process of examining all study data collected by means of observation, recording, documentation, etc. Because this study is qualitative, as stated by Sudaryanto (1992: 64).

The analytical descriptive method will be used to examine the collected data. In this post, we explain the entire analysis process, from collecting data to drawing conclusions. Since the data analyzed includes qualitative data in the form of verbal narratives, the findings will be presented in a conversational style. What is meant by "informal method" is the style of presenting the results of processed research data in the form of a series of words or phrases.

In this study, the data collection method was used by preparing the texts of Ramayana I and II and carrying out the Batat technique (read and note). All the techniques used, the reading technique is the most important. No data will be generated without going through the reading process. The intended reading technique has an important role in literary research. and the various contents in it, in which various writings are the main source of data. The technique used to obtain data is by reading the entire text or literature which is the object of research and then recording the required data. This technique is used to obtain data quotations then developed in data processing and discussion (Kutha Ratna ,2010: 245).

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Synopsis**

Kakawin Ramayana tells the story of Sri Rama who destroyed the Asura Ravana. Kakawin Ramayana is divided into seven Kanda or parts, namely Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranyaka Kanda, Kiskinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yudha Kanda and Uttara Khanda. This Kakawin is a translation of Valmiki Ramayana. Ramayana is not a myth, but a historical event that really happened. The history of Ramayana took place in the Tretayuga era, around 900 thousand years ago. This Kakawin was translated into Old Javanese (Kawi) by Mpu Yogiswara during the Airlangga era. Most of the stories in Kakawin Ramayana are the same as the original Valmiki Ramayana version, although there are errors in the translation in some parts. This Kakawin begins with the story of Maharaja Dasaratha who had three wives and four sons. Sri Rama was the eldest son and was nominated to be king. However, his stepmother did not agree. Later, at the insistence of his stepmother, Sri Rama was exiled to the forest for 14 years. During his exile, his wife, Sita, was kidnapped by Ravana. This led to a great war. Sri Rama, assisted by the wanaras (monkeys), built a bridge to Sri Lanka to attack Ravana. This bridge can still be seen today at Cape Comorin, in southern India. ([https://dictionary.basabali.org/Lontar\\_Kakawin\\_Ramayana](https://dictionary.basabali.org/Lontar_Kakawin_Ramayana) accessed on May 2, 2025)

### **2. Kakawin Ramayana: Literary Heritage and Philosophical Values**

Kakawin Ramayana is one of the many kakawin that developed in Balinese society, containing the story of the life journey of Rama, Sita, and Laksmana which is full of teachings of dharma (truth), karma (deeds), and bhakti (devotion). These values are not only spiritual guidance, but also the basis for various rituals, including funeral ceremonies. The importance of implementing pitra puja, namely respect for ancestors, which is closely related to the ngaben ceremony in the Balinese Hindu tradition. Verses and Wirama in Kakawin Ramayana. One of the relevant verses is in Prathamas Sargah, stanza 3, with Sronca verse:

*Gunamanta Sang Dasaratha,  
wruh sira ring wéda bhakti ring déwa,  
tar malupéng pitra pūja,  
māsih ta siréng swagotra kabéh.*

Translation:

Gunawanlah Sang Dasarata. He is clever in the Vedas, devoted to the Gods. He does not forget ancestor worship. He also loves all his family.

This verse emphasizes that an ideal leader is one who not only understands the sacred teachings and is devoted to the gods, but also does not forget the obligation to honor ancestors through pitra puja. In the context of Balinese Hinduism, pitra puja is realized through the ngaben ceremony, which aims to release the atma (spirit) from worldly ties and lead it to the realm of Brahman or the realm of divinity.

During the nyiramang layon ceremony (bathing the body) as part of the ngaben ceremony, Ramayana verses will be sung, especially in the Wangsastha/Swandewi verse (Sargah XXIV p.486)

*81.Prihen temen dharmma dumerana ng sarat  
saraga sang sadhu sireka tutana  
tan artha tan kama pidonya tan yasa  
ya sakti sang sajjana dharma raksasa*

Translation

Strive for virtue for the country's resilience, the perseverance of those who strive for salvation is exemplary, it is not wealth, not kama, and not fame that is important, because the main goal for people who seek salvation is to hold fast to virtue."

*82. Sakanikang rat kita yan wenang manut  
manupadesa prihatah rumaksa ya  
ksaya nikang papa nahan prayojana  
jananuragadi tuwin kapanguha*

Translation:

Adinda will be a pillar of the country if she can follow it. Try to study the teachings of Manawa Dharma Sastra! The goal is to free the people from all forms of suffering. The loyalty of the people and so on will definitely be found by Adinda

*83.Guha peteng tang mada moha kasmala  
malady yola nya magong mahawisa  
wisata sang wruh rikanang jurang kali  
kalingan ing sastra suluh nika prabha*

## Translation

The nature of rashness, confusion and evil is like a pitch-dark cave. The nature of evil and others is a large poisonous snake. The heart of a person who knows when death will come is calm. Knowledge is like his bright lamp

84. *Prabha nikang jnana susila dharma weh  
maweh kasiddhyan pada mukti nirmala  
mala milet tan pamatuk makin maring  
maring wisesang yasha siddha tapasa*

## Translation

The radiance of knowledge, morality, and virtue is what provides benefits to reach the supernatural realm. The stains that entangle become weaker and are unable to bite. A pious person easily carries out good deeds, therefore he is called a great ascetic.

85. *Pasang putih tulya nikang malangiput  
luput sirang sadhu yaken pasang tuju  
tuju ng suka ngke ammunuh taman mulih  
mulih sireng moksa lepas nikang mulik*

## Translation

Truly dirty stains that cover. The pious are free because they are able to reject the pollution. If only concerned with worldly pleasures or killing will not return to the realm there. Belai successfully entered the supernatural realm without any ulterior motives

86. *Mulik patut ning (ng) aji nag awe nira  
nirantaraweh hayu dharmma ring para  
parartha tan len juga don ireng jagat  
jagat n dengo saajar-ajar nireng hayu*

## Translation

His obligation is to pursue the truth of religious teachings. He never stops seeking salvation based on love for the community. His goal is none other than to create happiness for the community. The community will diligently listen to his advice for their salvation.

What's interesting about the stanzas above is that each last word in line 1 will become the main word in line 2 and so on until the word in line 3 will become the first line in line four. The fourth line in stanza 1 will become the first line in stanza II, and so on.

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### **3. Some of The Main Values in Kakawin Ramayana That Are Relevant to The Ngaben Ceremony**

#### **1. Dharma Value (Truth and Obligation)**

The figure of Rama is depicted as a figure who upholds the truth, even sacrificing his personal happiness in order to carry out dharma. This value is reflected in the philosophy of Ngaben which aims to purify the spirit so that it can reach swargaloka (the realm of happiness), as part of the dharma obligation of descendants to their ancestors.

#### **2. Bhakti Value (Devotion)**

Laksmana's devotion to Rama and Sita's devotion to her husband are examples of unconditional devotion. In the Ngaben ceremony, the value of bhakti is seen in the form of family devotion to ancestral spirits, as a form of eternal respect and affection.

#### **3. The Value of Moksha (Release)**

The ultimate goal of life according to Hinduism is moksha, which is the union of the atman (individual spirit) with Brahman (divine source). Ngaben is a symbolic process of releasing the spirit from worldly shackles so that it can continue the journey towards moksha, as Rama finally returned to Ayodhya as a symbol of achieving spiritual happiness.

### **4. Implementation of Kakawin Ramayana Values in the Ngaben Ceremony**

In practice, several parts of the Kakawin Ramayana are read or represented symbolically in the stages of the Ngaben ceremony. Here are some forms of implementation:

#### **1. Symbolization Through Statues and Figures**

Some families use statues or puppets that represent Ramayana figures as part of the ceremony complement. This is not only decorative, but also educational, teaching moral values to the community, especially the younger generation.

#### **2. Reading of Kakawin or Gita Puja**

In certain parts of the Ngaben, reading or chanting of kakawin becomes part of the procession. Kakawin Ramayana is often used because it contains prayers and noble teachings. This reading is usually done by a *sulinggih* (priest) or recitation with the aim of purifying the spirit.

#### **3. Ceremonial Structure Representing Ramayana Philosophy**

The structure of Ngaben reflects a spiritual journey, such as Rama's journey to find Sita and face various obstacles. This is symbolized through the *pelebon*, *nganyut*, and *nyekah* processions that accompany the spirit to escape from worldly bonds, as Rama and Sita left worldly life for spiritual life.

#### **4. Educational Values and Cultural Inheritance**

The implementation of the Kakawin Ramayana values in Ngaben also functions as an educational medium. The younger generation is invited to understand the meaning of the ritual in depth, not only through actions, but also through narratives and stories from the Ramayana that are inserted into the procession.

## **CONCLUSION**

Kakawin Ramayana is not just a classic literary text, but a source of noble values that continue to live in Balinese culture. The implementation of the values in Kakawin Ramayana in the Ngaben ceremony shows how literature can be a spiritual and moral foundation in people's lives. The values of dharma, bhakti, and spiritual release are at the core of the Ngaben procession,

which is not only a death ritual, but also a celebration of the purity of the soul and the continuity of life in the Hindu reincarnation cycle.

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