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The Tragedy of Rara Kuning in Wayang Timplong: A Semiotic Analysis Based on Moral and Character Education

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Abstract

The Wayang Timplong performance, as a traditional art form distinctive to East Java, serves as a cultural symbol that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach. This study aims to examine the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings in the play "The Tragedy of Rara Kuning", which was broadcast on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel and performed by the puppeteer Ki Badaralam. The research employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as its analytical framework. The findings indicate that the main narrative of The Tragedy of Rara Kuning by Ki Badaralam contains classical elements commonly found in folk traditions. The story presents themes of struggle, love, and justice. Rara Kuning, as the central character, is frequently portrayed as possessing both physical beauty and moral virtue. The sequence of scenes in the Wayang Timplong narrative, featuring characters such as Dewi Sekartaji, Klana Sembaja, Arya Wiguna, and Resi Darmo, demonstrates a close interrelation between aesthetic, moral, and spiritual values within Javanese tradition. Each event conveys denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings that collectively construct the narrative structure while simultaneously functioning as a medium for value transmission. Overall, the Wayang Timplong storyline is not merely a form of traditional entertainment but also a medium for moral and character education. The narrative reinforces Javanese myths emphasizing the importance of loyalty, purity, and courage in opposing destructive ambition, while simultaneously highlighting the function of traditional arts as a vehicle for character formation and the reinforcement of noble values in social life.

Keywords: Semiotics, Roland Barthes, Wayang Timplong, Rara Kuning.

Introduction

Indonesian traditional arts possess a rich array of cultural and symbolic values, particularly within wayang performances. Amid the currents of modernization, Wayang Timplong, a traditional art form originating from Nganjuk, East Java, continues to survive to the present day. Wayang Timplong is a wooden puppet tradition characterized by flat figures that appear almost three dimensional, carved from waru or mentaos wood, with movable arms made of buffalo hide. The narratives are primarily based on the Panji cycle. These characteristics closely resemble those of Wayang Klithik or Wayang Krucil. In line with Koentjaraningrat (1994: 290), Wayang Klithik or Krucil employs flat wooden puppets with leather arms, and its stories are derived from the Panji tales.

Wayang Timplong performances function not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium that conveys educational values related to moral and character formation, as well as local wisdom, through storytelling, dialogue, and the

portrayal of puppet characters. Moral and character values are not confined to the level of knowledge, but are manifested through exemplary characters and the consequences of their actions. Moreover, moral and character education cultivates habitual understandings of what is considered good, enabling members of society, including children, adolescents, and adults, to distinguish between right and wrong, to internalize positive values, and to practice them in everyday life (Putri, 2018: 40). One particularly compelling play within the Wayang Timplong repertoire is The Tragedy of Rara Kuning, which is available on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel. With the advancement of digital technology, wayang performances that were once locally bound can now be accessed globally through digital platforms such as YouTube.

Rara Kuning, whose original name is Dewi Sekartaji, originates from the Kingdom of Kediri. The name Rara Kuning is widely recognized among the people of Nganjuk and its surrounding areas, as it is also used to designate a waterfall tourist site located in Bajulan Village, Loceret District, Nganjuk Regency. At this site stands a statue of Rara Kuning, visualized as a graceful princess with exceptional beauty. This representation aligns with Prasetyo and Hidayatno (2017), who describe the Rara Kuning statue as a realistic female figure rendered in golden tones and associated with the character of Dewi Sekartaji. The statue is adorned with complete traditional attributes and accessories, including a crown, sumping, earrings, armlets, bracelets, a sash, and a belt, all featuring various ornamental motifs and incorporating a traditional shawl from Nganjuk Regency. The golden color of the statue symbolizes glory, grandeur, luxury, victory, and prosperity, thereby establishing Rara Kuning as an icon of Nganjuk Regency.

The primary issue addressed in this study is the limited public awareness of Wayang Timplong performances. Furthermore, many members of the community do not fully understand the meanings embedded in the stories conveyed through Wayang Timplong. According to Prameswari et al. (2023: 29), conceptual understanding is facilitated by visual representation, which is believed to stimulate cognitive processes that enable individuals to interpret images and attract interest. Therefore, this research aims to examine the signs present in the Wayang Timplong performance of The Tragedy of Rara Kuning. The objective of the study is to analyze the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings within The Tragedy of Rara Kuning, as presented on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel and performed by the puppeteer Ki Badaralam, using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach.

The Wayang Timplong play The Tragedy of Rara Kuning highlights the theme of Javanese asceticism, in which suffering is perceived not as an end, but as a path toward wisdom and spiritual maturity. Broadly, the narrative revolves around the illness suffered by Dewi Sekartaji, which remains uncured for a prolonged period. This illness is caused by excessive contemplation during her longing and search for Panji Asmarabangun, who is destined to become her husband. As a result, Dewi Sekartaji contracts a condition in which her entire body turns yellow. Subsequently, Resi Darmo advises Dewi Sekartaji, also known as Galuh Candra Kirana, to undertake ascetic meditation on the slopes of Mount Wilis, located in Nganjuk, East Java. During this period of ascetic practice, she purifies her body and soul through continuous prayers. After several weeks, she ultimately returns to her original form as Dewi Sekartaji, once again embodying extraordinary beauty akin to that of a celestial being.

Previous studies addressing the figure of Rara Kuning serve as important references for strengthening the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic framework in analyzing the Wayang Timplong performance of The Tragedy of Rara Kuning on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel. Prasetyo and Hidayatno (2017) authored an article entitled Visual Analysis of the Rara Kuning Statue at the Rara Kuning Waterfall Tourist Site in Nganjuk Regency, which examines the form, characteristics, and meanings of the Rara

Kuning statue as a realistic female figure. The statue represents a royal princess wearing traditional Javanese attire and is depicted in a walking posture, symbolizing a journey directed toward the slopes of Mount Wilis. In the creative process, the sculptor focused on visualizing the legendary narrative of Dewi Sekartaji disguising herself as Rara Kuning during her journey to find Panji Asmarabangun, a story that ultimately inspired the naming of the waterfall tourist attraction in Nganjuk Regency.

Another relevant study was conducted by Maghfiroh and Lodra (2023) in their article Rara Kuning as the Manifestation of Dewi Sekartaji in Nganjuk Society as an Idea for Decorative Painting Creation. This research discusses the creation of decorative paintings inspired by the journey of Rara Kuning or Dewi Sekartaji in her search for her husband, Panji Asmarabangun. The study resulted in five artworks produced using canvas and acrylic media, including overwhelming longing, crossing the forest to reach the beloved, the waterfall as a resting place, releasing longing at Mbok Rondo's house, and Rara Kuning as a legend.

Within this context, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach is particularly relevant. Barthes' theory posits that signs encompass not only denotative and connotative meanings but also myth, which plays a crucial role in interpreting cultural signs within performances and shaping societal perspectives on certain values. Through the Wayang Timplong performance of The Tragedy of Rara Kuning on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel, the performance transcends its function as mere entertainment and emerges as a subject of digital cultural study.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze signs in the Wayang Timplong performance entitled The Tragedy of Rara Kuning. Qualitative descriptive research aims to obtain meaningful and in depth data (Sugiyono, 2016: 9).

Barthes developed two levels of meaning in signs, namely denotation and connotation. One of the most distinctive concepts in Roland Barthes' theory is the concept of myth. In this context, myth does not refer to tragedy, but rather to a system of cultural signs that conveys ideology as if it were natural and self evident. Roland Barthes, who lived from 1915 until 1980, argued that all phenomena regarded as natural or taken for granted within a society are the result of connotative processes. According to Sudarto et al. as cited in Fahida (2021: 36), myth refers to the way a culture explains or understands certain aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Therefore, myth can be understood as connotation that has been accepted as common truth within a culture.

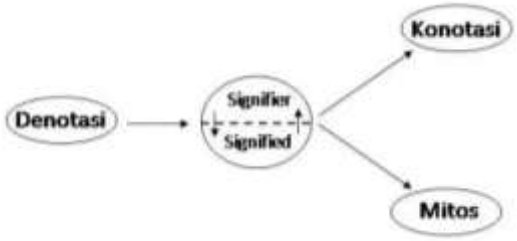

Figure 1. Diagram of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory
(Source:https://komunikasiana.wordpress.com/2008/02/19/teori-teori-semiotika-sebuah-pengantar/Accessed on 27 June 2025)

According to Sugiyono (2019), data sources consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the video recording of the Wayang Timplong performance The Tragedy of Rara Kuning published on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel. Secondary data were collected from literature related to Wayang Timplong, semiotic theory, and scholarly articles or books on Javanese culture. Data collection techniques included library research and documentation through observation of the performance video. The

data analysis technique applied in this study follows the Miles and Huberman model.

Result and Discussion

The Wayang Timplong performance entitled The Tragedy of Rara Kuning, which was broadcast on the Asthabrata Media YouTube channel, has a duration of one hour, twenty minutes, and five seconds. The performance was presented by the puppeteer Ki Badaralam, M.Sn, accompanied by the sinden Niken Salindri. The video of this Wayang Timplong performance has reached more than thirteen thousand viewers and was uploaded four years ago on 25 January 2021. The term Asthabrata refers to eight principal virtues, namely the sun, moon, stars, earth, water, sea, wind, and fire. These eight principles represent human characteristics such as strength, beauty, stability, patience, purity, talent, wisdom, and serenity (Dwijonagoro, 2014: 14). Thus, Asthabrata symbolizes the attributes of God Almighty as manifested in the created world.

Furthermore, Wayang Timplong is a traditional puppet art form originating from Nganjuk Regency. The puppets are made of wood and are accompanied by simple gamelan instruments such as gambang, kendang, bonang, and gong. In this performance, Ki Badaralam performed Wayang Timplong for the first time using the play The Tragedy of Rara Kuning, a folkloric narrative related to the Rara Kuning flowing water site located in Bajulan Village, Nganjuk Regency. The main performers involved in a Wayang Timplong performance consist of the puppeteer, the niyaga, and the wiranggana. The puppeteer is responsible for manipulating the puppets and leading the entire performance. The niyaga are the musicians who play the gamelan instruments, while the wiranggana refers to the sinden. According to Setiawan (2020: 38), the term sinden derives from the word pasindhian, which means richness in song or vocal expression. Sinden are also referred to as waranggana, in which wara means woman and anggana means alone.

Synopsis of the Wayang Timplong Performance Entitled The Tragedy of Rara Kuning

The performance begins with Dewi Sekartaji suffering from jaundice that has persisted for a long time without recovery, causing her name to change to Candra Kirana. She suffers from the illness due to the absence of any news or information from her beloved future husband, Panji Asmarabangun. As a result, Dewi Sekartaji is instructed by Lembu Amisena to seek Resi Darmo in order to ask for a solution so that she may recover from her illness. Eventually, Dewi Sekartaji arrives at the slopes of Mount Wilis following the advice of Resi Darmo, where she undertakes ascetic meditation for several weeks while praying to the Almighty for healing.

The Sincerity of Love of a Palace Princess

In Javanese language, the term Sekar Kedaton has two layers of meaning. The word sekar means flower or blossom, symbolizing beauty, purity, and the flourishing of the soul. Meanwhile, kedaton refers to the palace or the central residence of the royal court. Thus, Sekar Kedaton may be interpreted as the flower of the palace, referring to a figure who radiates grace, purity, and moral beauty within the royal environment. In line with Herusatoto (1984), the term sekar when applied to palace women does not merely signify physical beauty, but also inner nobility.

In the past, royal daughters or noblewomen were often referred to as Sekar Kedaton because they were regarded as the jewels of the palace and symbols of honor and dignity for the royal family. Koentjaraningrat (1986) emphasizes that in Javanese culture, palace women are positioned as the center of harmony within the royal household, both in political and social spheres.

In traditional wayang performances, the figure of Sekar Kedaton frequently appears as a princess character symbolizing sacred love and sacrifice. For instance, in the story of Rara Kuning in Wayang Timplong, the royal princess Dewi Sekartaji is portrayed

as a figure of profound sincerity despite facing life tragedies. According to Endraswara (2013), folklore and wayang narratives often employ female characters as symbols of morality and exemplars of loyalty.

Sekar Kedaton is also viewed as a representation of Javanese feminine values, including refinement, noble character, compassion, and resilience in confronting adversity. Zoetmulder (1983) notes that the image of women in Javanese literature is often constructed as an embodiment of harmony between gentleness and spiritual strength.

Therefore, the character of Dewi Sekartaji in the Wayang Timplong performance represents a royal princess from the Kingdom of Kediri who possesses physical beauty and gentle virtue, as presented in the play entitled The Tragedy of Rara Kuning. Furthermore, in order to clarify the identification of the research problem, six scenes from the Wayang Timplong performance of The Tragedy of Rara Kuning are selected for analysis of visual meaning using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, as follows.

1. First Scene

In the first scene, Dewi Sekartaji is portrayed as a beautiful princess from the Kingdom of Kediri. Lembu Amisena is the king of Kediri and the father of Dewi Sekartaji. Lembu Amisena instructs Dewi Sekartaji, who is suffering from jaundice, to seek medical treatment. This situation can be interpreted through denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings as reflected in the following visual representation.

- Visual

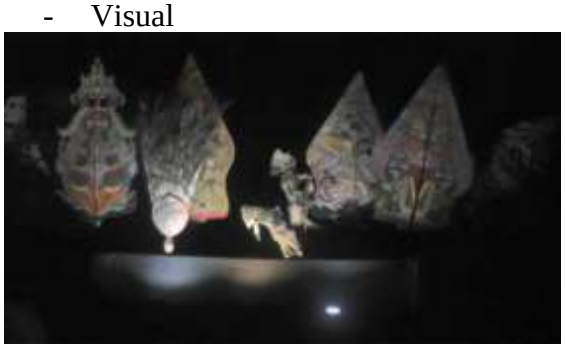

Figure 2. Lembu Amisena and Dewi Sekartaji
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

Dewi Sekartaji is depicted with her head bowed, her hair flowing and adorned with a princess crown. She wears a greenish yellow kebaya, and her body appears to be turning yellow. Behind Dewi Sekartaji stands Lembu Amisena, who wears a royal crown and the sumping gajah ngaling accessory, with a face depicted in black. The scene is set in the territory of Kediri and narrates how Lembu Amisena, as the father of Dewi Sekartaji, instructs his daughter to seek treatment in the southern, western, and eastern regions, as Dewi Sekartaji has begun to suffer from jaundice that has spread throughout her body. However, these efforts are unsuccessful. Consequently, Lembu Amisena offers guidance to Dewi Sekartaji to seek healing in the northern region, namely Nganjuk.

- Connotative Meaning

Jaundice symbolizes inner imbalance, as the illness is not merely physical in nature but also serves as a metaphor for sorrow and emotional burden. The illness may be interpreted as resulting from prolonged emotional distress caused by waiting for her beloved, Panji Asmarabangun, who never sends any news or reassurance to Dewi Sekartaji. The journey toward the four cardinal directions is connotatively understood as a symbol of the search for the meaning of life, self purification, and the pursuit of harmony. These four directions represent the stages of human spiritual journeys in seeking truth and enlightenment. Ascetic practice signifies withdrawal from worldly life and symbolizes the control of desire, purification of the soul, and efforts to attain a higher level of consciousness.

- Mythical Meaning

Jaundice that cannot be cured through ordinary means is associated with the myth that severe illness represents a spiritual trial rather than merely a physical disorder. In Javanese culture, illness is often believed to

be caused by supernatural disturbances, karmic imbalance, or divine will. This belief is reinforced by the Javanese cosmological worldview, which adopts a holistic model emphasizing that illness arises from disharmony within the human body, both physically and metaphysically (Trinawarti, 2011: 333). Furthermore, Javanese perspectives view illness as a result of imbalance between the macrocosm and the microcosm, rather than solely as a physical phenomenon.

The four cardinal directions constitute a cosmological myth that conceptualizes the world as divided into four directions, symbolizing the totality of existence. According to Trinawarti (2011: 333), these directions are also associated with the human life journey, which is accompanied by the concept of kadang papat lima pancer, consisting of kawah or amniotic fluid, getih or blood, puser or umbilical cord, and adi ari ari or placenta, while pancer refers to the ego or the human self (as cited in Yitno, 1985; Endraswara, 2006). The search across all directions represents an effort to harmonize oneself with the universe. Ascetic practice embodies the myth that purification through spiritual discipline is the path toward salvation or moksa. This belief reinforces the notion that true healing originates from within rather than from external sources.

Figure 2 depicts the scene in which Lembu Amisena offers guidance to Dewi Sekartaji regarding the illness she suffers. Both verbally and visually, the scene emphasizes that illness is not merely a physical issue but also reflects inner imbalance that must be addressed through spiritual discipline. The journey across the four cardinal directions and the decision to undertake ascetic practice reflect human efforts to seek harmony between the self as the microcosm and the universe as the macrocosm. Thus, this scene represents Javanese cultural teachings regarding the importance of balance, patience, and self purification as pathways toward salvation.

2. Second Scene

In the second scene, Candra Kirana arrives in Nganjuk and meets Resi Darmo in order to undertake ascetic practice to cure her illness. Resi Darmo then summons Arya Wiguna to accompany and protect Candra Kirana during her ascetic practice on the slopes of Mount Wilis. This scene can be interpreted through the following visual representation.

- Visual

Figure 3. The characters of Resi Curigonoto or Resi Darmo, Princess Galuh Candra Kirana, and Arya Wiguna
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

This scene narrates the arrival of Dewi Sekartaji or Galuh Candra Kirana in Nganjuk to meet Resi Curigonoto or Resi Darmo in order to ask for guidance on how her illness may be cured. Resi Darmo explains that the illness suffered by Galuh can be healed by undertaking ascetic practice in the flowing water located on the slopes of Mount Wilis. Resi Darmo also assigns Arya Wiguna to accompany and protect her from enemies. The character of Resi Darmo is depicted with a red facial appearance and wearing a crown along with complete attributes of a begawan. The character of Arya Wiguna is portrayed as tall, large, and strong, with a black facial appearance. Meanwhile, Galuh Candra Kirana is depicted with her entire body colored yellow, her posture slightly bent forward, and her face lowered. The yellow coloration of her body signifies the jaundice she suffers from.

- Connotative Meaning

First, the yellow color of Galuh Candra Kirana body signifies that her body and soul are in a state of disharmony and that she must purify herself. Second, the bent posture and

lowered face indicate humility, surrender, and readiness to receive spiritual guidance. Third, the red facial color of Resi Darmo symbolizes wisdom, while the begawan attributes he wears signify spiritual authority and his position as a mediator between humans and cosmic forces. Fourth, ascetic practice in the flowing water on the slopes of Mount Wilis symbolizes purity, tranquility, and spiritual cleansing. The water functions as a medium of purification both physically by healing illness and spiritually by cleansing past karma or sins. Fifth, the character of Arya Wiguna represents a knightly figure who embodies virtue, loyalty, and the role of protecting the weak.

- Mythical Meaning

First, healing is believed not to occur solely through medical treatment, but also through rituals, ascetic practice, and inner purification. Second, there exists a myth within Javanese patriarchal culture that positions the ideal woman as patient, accepting, and resigned in facing suffering in order to achieve spiritual maturity or personal perfection. Third, Mount Wilis and the flowing water are not merely physical locations, but represent a mythic and transcendental space. In Javanese culture, mountains are regarded as sacred places where gods and ascetics meditate. Fourth, the figure of the resi is perceived not only as an advisor, but also as a bearer of natural law and a conduit of guidance from supernatural forces such as gods or God. This myth reinforces a hierarchy in which humans must submit to the guidance of the resi in order to attain salvation.

Figure 3 depicts the ascetic practice of Galuh Candra Kirana on the slopes of Mount Wilis, reflecting the Javanese cosmological view that true healing is not merely medical in nature, but also spiritual, achieved through self purification and surrender. The symbolism of the yellow body color, the bent posture, and the ritual performed in flowing water emphasizes the meaning of balance between the outer and inner self, attained through the guidance of the resi as a spiritual authority. Thus, this scene affirms the importance of harmony among humans, nature, and transcendental forces as the path toward salvation and personal perfection.

3. Third Scene

Next, in the third scene, Klana Sembaja hears rumors from Precet and Mbok Cemeng that Candra Kirana is performing ascetic meditation on the slopes of Mount Wilis. If Galuh immerses herself there, Klana Sembaja intends to jump into the pool as well in order to bathe together with Galuh. This is shown in the following excerpt.

- Visual

Figure 4. Klana Sembaja, Precet, and Mbok Cemeng
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

Precet and Mbok Cemeng tell the story of Galuh condition, who is currently ill and has gone to seek treatment from Resi Darmo or Curigonoto by performing ascetic meditation on the slope of Mount Wilis, based on circulating rumors. Klana Sembaja strong belief and desire to immediately propose to Dewi Galuh Candra Kirana for marriage is revealed, as he has admired her for a long time.

- Connotative Meaning

First, Love that obscures rational judgment in Klana Sembaja. Klana Sembaja intention to jump into the pool is not an expression of empathy, but rather a form of obsession that reflects excessive desire or attraction. Connotatively, this action symbolizes unhealthy and possessive love that has the potential to violate personal boundaries. Second, Precet and Mbok Cemeng as the voice of the people. These characters represent common people who obtain information from circulating news,

indicating their role as messengers, spokespeople of the people, and social observers. Connotatively, they also function as symbols of conscience or social criticism toward the actions of the nobility.

- Mythical Meaning

Klana Sembaja actions reflect the myth of male authority over women they desire. This is a patriarchal myth frequently found in classical narratives, in which the love of a king or nobleman is framed as absolute and unquestionable, even though it is ethically problematic.

Precet and Mbok Cemeng in this narrative are not merely comic figures, but guardians of moral values. In local wayang mythology, they often function as balancing figures who convey criticism through humor. Their presence symbolizes that in every form of power and elite desire, such as that shown by Klana Sembaja, there must be a voice of conscience that offers reminders.

Figure 4 represents a scene of Klana Sembaja that illustrates excessive romantic obsession which exceeds ethical boundaries, reflecting the patriarchal construction of Javanese culture that positions women as objects of male desire. Klana Sembaja obsession with fully possessing Dewi Sekartaji or Dewi Galuh Candra Kirana demonstrates how love can obscure rational judgment. In contrast, the presence of Precet and Mbok Cemeng serves as a representation of the voice of the people, delivering moral criticism through humor and satire.

4. Fourth Scene

Next, in the fourth scene, when Klana Sembaja arrives on the slope of Mount Wilis, Arya Wiguna is already standing guard around the area. A battle then breaks out between Arya Wiguna and Klana Sembaja. Klana Sembaja uses a bow and arrows to fight Arya Wiguna. In the end, Arya Wiguna wins the battle against Klana Sembaja. This scene can be explained through denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and myth as follows.

- Visual

Figure 5. The battle between Arya Wiguna and Klana Sembaja
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

Upon arriving at the slope of Mount Wilis, Klana Sembaja encounters Arya Wiguna. Klana Sembaja intends to meet Galuh Candra Kirana, whom he wishes to take as his wife. However, his intention fails because Arya Wiguna prevents and forbids him from proceeding. As a result, Klana Sembaja challenges Arya Wiguna to a battle.

- Connotative Meaning

The encounter and battle between Klana Sembaja and Arya Wiguna signify a struggle between evil intentions and the protection of goodness. Meanwhile, Galuh Candra Kirana represents a female figure as a symbol of honor, where the contest over her becomes a metaphor for the struggle over territory or a kingdom.

- Mythical Meaning

In myth, Klana Sembaja is not merely a villain, but a disruptor of cosmic order. Within mythological narrative structures, his presence is essential to create conflict and to demonstrate that goodness will ultimately prevail through trials. Meanwhile, Arya Wiguna embodies the archetype of the protective knight who is able to overcome destructive forces. He functions as a symbol in Javanese mythology that the balance of the universe is safeguarded by figures who are knowledgeable, patient, and loyal to dharma.

Figure 5 depicts the battle between Klana Sembaja and Arya Wiguna, who seeks Dewi Sekartaji or Galuh Candra Kirana as his wife. The battle scene represents the conflict between destructive forces and protective forces within Javanese cosmology. Klana symbolizes evil desire that disrupts order,

while Arya Wiguna affirms the archetype of the protective knight who preserves honor and cosmic balance. Thus, this narrative reinforces the belief that goodness and dharma will always prevail over evil.

5. Fifth Scene

Next, in the fifth scene, after performing ascetic practices according to the guidance of Resi Darmo, she finally returns to her original form as Dewi Sekartaji, a princess with great beauty and a noble heart. This scene is explained in the following excerpt.

- Visual

Figure 6. Dewi Sekartaji Returns to Her Original Form
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

After completing the ritual immersion, Galuh Candra Kirana returns to her original form as Dewi Sekartaji, resembling a celestial nymph from the heavenly realm. Dewi Sekartaji then meets Resi Curiganata or Resi Darmo. Subsequently, Resi Darmo names the water used by Dewi Sekartaji on the slope of Mount Wilis as Banyu Rara Kuning, which is believed to be the source of her recovery from illness.

- Connotative Meaning

The return of Dewi Sekartaji to her original form after immersion symbolizes transcendence, namely a return to a pure and elevated true self. Her depiction as a celestial nymph signifies that she has achieved a state of purity, health, and nobility both physically and spiritually.

The act of Resi Darmo naming the water used for bathing as Banyu Rara Kuning represents a process of sacralization. Through this naming, the water becomes a sacred object endowed with spiritual power because it has come into contact with purity and has become part of the healing process.

- Mythical Meaning

In many Javanese myths, water is considered an element that contains spiritual power. Water from Mount Wilis that has been used by Dewi Sekartaji and later named Banyu Rara Kuning becomes a symbol of divine water or tirta panguripan, the water of life that is believed to heal and provide spiritual enlightenment.

Figure 6 depicts the transformation of Dewi Sekartaji after performing ascetic practices, reflecting the achievement of transcendence, namely the return of humans to their pure and noble essence. The naming of Banyu Rara Kuning by Resi Darmo demonstrates the sacralization of water as tirta panguripan, a symbol of life and healing. Thus, this scene emphasizes the Javanese cosmological belief that true healing is attained through harmony between spiritual practice, nature, and transcendental forces.

6. Sixth Scene

Next, in the sixth scene, Resi Darmo orders Klana Sembaja not to disturb Dewi Sekartaji. He declares that Dewi Sekartaji will never love Klana Sembaja and that he will never receive her blessing. Consequently, Resi Darmo utters a sacred curse as explained in the following excerpt.

- Visual

Figure 7. Resi Darmo, Klana Sembaja, and Arya Wiguna
(Source: Researcher Screenshot, 2025)

- Denotative Meaning

Klana Sembaja asks Resi Darmo about the whereabouts of Galuh, expressing his

desire to marry her. However, Resi Darmo refuses to grant his permission or blessing to Klana Sembaja. He explains to Arya Wiguna that the flowing water has been cursed so that Klana Sembaja will never be able to marry Galuh and will remain unmarried for the rest of his life. The flowing water above Rara Kuning is later named Banyu Sedudo.

- Connotative Meaning

The cursed water signifies that moral and spiritual laws have established boundaries that cannot be violated. If these boundaries are crossed, a curse follows, namely that Klana Sembaja will remain unmarried forever. This conveys the message that human desires must submit to spiritual laws and noble values.

The water of Rara Kuning carries a dual meaning. On one hand, it contains a curse for those with impure intentions. On the other hand, it remains sacred and honorable because it becomes a witness to the oath that protects the purity of Galuh. This reinforces the idea that nature itself sides with truth and moral righteousness.

- Mythical Meaning

Resi Darmo functions as a mythological figure who safeguards dharma or truth. He is not merely a wise figure but also a mediator between the will of the universe and human life. The oath placed upon the water serves as a warning that humans must not exceed moral and spiritual boundaries.

In mythological narratives, curses do not function as revenge but as mechanisms to maintain cosmic balance. Klana Sembaja, driven by excessive ambition, would disrupt purity and harmony if allowed to marry Galuh. Therefore, the curse of eternal bachelorhood represents the universe rejecting imbalance and moral disorder.

Figure 7 represents the final scene of the play Tragedy of Rara Kuning. The oath pronounced by Resi Darmo emphasizes that human ambition must submit to moral and spiritual laws. The sacralized water of Rara Kuning symbolizes duality, serving as a curse for those driven by impure desire while simultaneously acting as protection for sacred purity. Thus, this scene illustrates the function of Javanese myth as a cosmic mechanism to preserve balance and uphold dharma.

Conclusion

The sequence of scenes in the Wayang Timplong narrative featuring the characters Dewi Sekartaji, Klana Sembaja, Arya Wiguna, and Resi Darmo demonstrates a close interconnection between aesthetic, moral, and spiritual values within Javanese tradition. Each event contains denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings that shape the narrative structure while simultaneously functioning as a medium for value transmission. The scene portraying Klana Sembaja's obsession with Dewi Sekartaji reveals a depiction of blind love that obscures rational judgment, whereas Arya Wiguna's resistance symbolizes the force of goodness and honor that serves to protect social and cosmic order. The transformation of Dewi Sekartaji through ascetic practice is not merely a physical change, but rather a symbol of a spiritual journey toward transcendence, emphasizing water as tirta panguripan, a source of life and inner purification. Furthermore, the role of Resi Darmo as the guardian of dharma reinforces moral and spiritual boundaries that function to maintain the balance of the universe.

Thus, the overall narrative of Wayang Timplong is not merely a form of traditional entertainment, but also a medium for moral and character education. The story reinforces Javanese myths concerning the importance of loyalty, purity, and courage in resisting destructive ambition, while simultaneously highlighting the function of traditional arts as a means of character formation and the reinforcement of noble values within society. The values embedded in traditional performing arts such as Wayang Timplong, particularly in the story of the Tragedy of Rara Kuning, convey moral teachings in the form of sincerity, loyalty, and responsibility. When these values are examined and integrated into educational contexts, they function not only as moral education but also

as character education by presenting behavioral models that can be emulated by children, adolescents, and adults. Therefore, character education plays a role as a process of experiencing moral values through habituation, exemplary conduct, and direct experience, leading to the formation of a holistic and sustainable personality.

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