

# Body Language as Medium for Expressing Collective Ideas in the Formation of National Character

Kasmahidayat Yuliawan

Faculty of Language and Art Education (FPBS),

## ABSTRACT

The national character of a nation can be shaped by a variety of factors, including language, customs, beliefs that are held, as well as the shape and style of art and culture which have grown among the people who are categorized as ancestors and parents. The forms and styles of dance in one specific area establish cultural patterns of the society's character where the dance was developed. In a broader scope, form an style, dances may form the national character. As a form of aesthetic expression of ancestors, in Indonesia, can be found in a variety of shapes and styles of dance which originate from the ideas of a collective and ultimate source form the national characters of Indonesia. For promoting diversity of forms and styles of dance, it is important to maintain them properly, as a legacy to the art and culture; it is our obligation to perform a variety of efforts to keep the forms and styles of dances to be sustainable and solid, in particular as a shaper of national characters.

**Keywords:** Dance, Form and Style of Art, and National Character.

---

*Department of Art Education, Indonesia University of Education (UPI), Indonesia  
Jl.Dr. Setiabudhi No. 229 Bandung 40154, Tel. (022) 2013163, Ext: 24115 Fax. (022)2015411,  
Email: item.centre@yahoo.com*

## Introduction

Developments in the process of learning the art of dance in educational institutions in both public and private schools (elementary, junior high, senior high school) have indicated significant improvements in various aspects, including training of protégés. The aspects that seem to have been developed cover areas of talent, interest, motivation, creativity, psychomotor, affection, cognition, intelligence, aesthetically. In addition, there have also been attempts to relate the teaching of art to the formation of aesthetic values among students. There has not been much research on the significance of art education in dance that leads to the development of aspects of the establishment of the personality values in particular the nationality character development. The national character development curriculum has been proposed by the Government through the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. In reality, the process of learning of the art of dance education is closely related to art education in music, fine art, and drama. In a broader scope of delivery subject-subject matter in art education, dance can also be correlated with other fields of study such as religion, geography, languages and therefore, nor with majors in sciences.

However, based on some observations in West Java, there are still schools that do not have teachers of art and culture in particular fields of study art education such as dance. This lack of human resources has made one obstacle, particularly in the development of aspects of personality that leads to the formation of nationality characters. The absence of art teachers with a cultural dance background tends to provide students with less exposure to the creative process of art performances, especially the art of dance. Some schools do not have teachers with an art education background of dance; but the principals think that the students need to experience the process of artistic activities through dance so that they

hold special events in the form of extracurricular activities. Although these activities are only intended for students who have an interest in art education, dance performances contribute to the formation of the nationality character, even though the practice time is limited.

Extracurricular activities, including extra-curricular dance lessons, constitute excellent media for enhancing the character and academic achievement of learners as well as the current time for the workforce practitioners in delivering the material. Extracurricular activities are educational activities outside school subjects to help the development of learners in accordance with the needs, potential, talents, and interests them through activities specially organized by educators and practitioners who are capable or energy and berkewenangan at the school. Extracurricular activities are expected to develop the ability and sense of social responsibility, as well as the potential and the achievements of learners.

The law of the national education system (Sisdiknas) article 3 mentions about the national education goals, namely “national education serves to develop and shape the character of the nation’s civilization and dignity within the framework of the intellectual life of the nation, aimed at developing potential learners in order to become people of faith and of piety to God Almighty, of high morality, of good health, learned, accomplished, creative, independent, and to become citizens of a democratic and responsible”.

Kasmahidayat (2012: iv) states that the purpose of the national education is to make the most of the resources of most operations for the development of a cultural character education nation. As for the goals of character education nation’s culture are as follows:

1. To develop the potential of learners’ conscience (*qalbu*) as human beings and citizens who have cultural values and national characters;

2. To develop habits and behaviours learners that are commendable and in accordance with with the universal values and cultural traditions of the nation's religious;

3. To instill leadership and responsibilities into learners as successors as the nation's young generation;

4. To develop the ability of learners to become people who are independent, creative, insightful;

5. To develop an environment of school life as a learning environment that is safe, honest, full of creativity and friendship, as well as with a high sense of nationhood and full strength.

The depth of aesthetic expression, which takes various forms in dances, is closely related to conscience (*qalbu*) on the part of dancers or the creators of dance (choreographers). Various types of values and meanings can also be expressed in the performing art of dance. Various obstacles appear during the expression of body language as collective ideas of media in the formation of nationality characters, leading to learners, educators, and practitioners-general public (audience, as well as researchers who have special attention to these phenomena).

These constraints should not be issues that inhibit the process mastery and understanding of body language as collective media in the formation of the national character; the origin of the learners could be given the direction that an understanding of motion as a body language to communicate can be used as an effective means of communication such as verbal communication which we have done so far. The readiness effort the practitioner or educator not only prosecuted in terms of mastery of the material only, but other aspects of the particular variety of understanding of national character. While conditioning the audience as appreciators, they are also challenged to be able to go to the depths of values to revealed in a dance performance.

The most fundamental and urgent problem is actually our people do not understand the essential meaning of the existence and relevance of the art of dance for the formation of national characters. Sadly, they even think that dance is only intended for female learners. Due to this female-oriented assumption, male students who want to learn the art of dance fear that they will have a feminine character. Therefore, it is a challenging task for many educators, parents, as well as various institutions of authority to play an active role by encouraging our people to believe that dance is an important field that can be used as a medium for the formation of national characters of Indonesians.

### **Dance as a Medium of Ideas.**

The function, role, and the position of dance as a means of ritual ceremony, entertainment, and performance are closely connected with the notion of media for communication. Various forms of dances that serve as ceremonial rituals are always associated with the presence of the community both as individuals and or groups. A form of dance that serves, as a ceremonial ritual during planting and harvesting rice in South Banten individually is used as a medium of communication between the perpetrators of the ceremony with other beings that are considered of influence on the harvest. Collectively, the ceremony is a medium of communication between farmers with other community members with power to keep rice until it is time to be harvested.

This form of dance is called *Dodod* dance that serves as a ritual for planting and harvesting rice, which started from and nurtured by the villagers of the sub-region of Saketi in Pandeglang, Banten Province (Kasmahidayat, 2010). A similar art form can also be found in other areas of Indonesia. As a form of artistic tradition, its existence is usually inseparable from a variety

of provisions that should be implemented, such as the supporters of (the dance and the music) which are not done randomly, just at any time, any venue or any equipment; offerings must be prepared to hold that dance ritual and everything must be well-planned. As a medium for the collection of ideas from various resources, art is supported as well as endorsed by different walks of life who meet the conditions. For example, there must be a master of ceremony who still have lineages with the owner of the dance art tradition. These provisions which are considered collectively may affect various other ritual terms as solemnization.

The function, position, and the role of the art of dance as entertainment and performances can also be observed and appreciated through various forms and dance performances in different events. As a medium of collective ideas, dance has functions which are related to the characteristics of Indonesian society who have extremely rich and varied cultural and ethnic art forms. In the process we may also encounter various forms of dances that serve both as the entertainment and performing for the benefit of the individual.

As a show, dance is manifested in a collective work. Dance movements could be a result of experimental dancers or dance creators (individually), which are expressed in the form of a series of beautiful and rhythmic motions. The motion series has a story line that will be communicated to the audience. Other aspects in the integrity of the presentation of a dance, however, are inseparable from the role of other crew members as arrangers (people who develop this special music to be used in the accompanying dances), a fashion stylist or dance costume stylist (the person in charge of fashion designing as well as makeup who will support the character of the dance), director of the light (the person who has the ability to regulate the lighting so that the presentation of the

dance is appropriate; he or she is helpful in determining the artful expression of the dance), as well as the stage manager (the person in charge of and responsible for the sustainability of the performing art of dance). For a great dance performance, of course every aspect is also supported by many people (not only supported by one person).

There are forms of dances in their various elements. The main element is certainly beautiful and rhythmic motion. The creation of any movement in a dance has to be done through a process in a variety of items. A fusion of movement is the unity of the whole of the work process of a dance. The movements are maintained harmoniously by dancers from beginning to end in the dance (Kasmahidayat, et al., 2012: 249). We often find a similar motion in various forms of dance or modern tradition. This is possible due to the process of impersonation that occurs from the stimulation that occurs in organizing various events or festivals, in which every ethnic dance shows its territory respectively. In accordance with the Kasmahidayat in Sedyawati (2012: 2) who states "... .. that ethnic details of motion may also be related to the rules or guidelines, for example, between directions of motion, rhythm, motion and range of motion guidelines to facial expression, costumes, along with a set of property that is valuable in the eyes of the culture in question".

There are other elements contained in a dance, namely an arrangement of music that accompanies the dance, costumes, fashion and makeup. It is well-established that the types of music used to accompany a dance are classified into internal music (i.e. music resulting from the dancer's body, e.g. music accompaniment of Syaman dance from Aceh), as well as the types of external music (i.e. music accompaniment produced from processed instruments apart from the internal music accompanying the movement of the body of the dancer, e.g. *gamelan* music, *kulintang*,

*gambus*, and others). While the forms of costumes, clothing, and makeup are used in certain dances can be markers to distinguish one form of dance from certain areas with another dance from other areas. This is because each region or ethnic characteristic or style of the form design has its own cultural treasures of the area respectively.

In a similar vein, Kasmahidayat in Sedyawati (2012: 3) states that: "As for the symbols used to express uniqueness and distinctiveness-differences of character or theme in a dance, to dance is basically expressed in kinesics, namely through the motion. But often it needs to be supported by the provision of media says the other is auditory and visual. That could be auditory sayings by the dancers themselves, in which case presented is a dance drama, but it can also be a song or just the right music to accompany the motion and or her acting. As for the visual is essentially that he has to deal with. Both with regard to model his clothes, and color, as well as ornamental motifs that he has stamped on it ".

As a collective idea of media, one dance performance can also be distinguished on the basis of the form of the implementation as well as the pattern of the floor that is often used in the plots of the dance group. Similarly, the Kasmahidayat, et al. (2012: 250) states that "the patterns of the floor are called the designs of the floor. Patterns are movements that serve to guide the dancer's movement to a specified direction. There are three directions of motion in a pattern, i.e. straight (*vertical*, *horizontal*, and *diagonal*), circles (half circle, full circle, and spirals), and zig-zag. In the tradition of the dance floor pattern, each motion phase (phase primarily walking) is usually already determined. For example, in the tradition of the movement *engke gigir* is always to walk to the left or right side. The movement *mincid* the number eight is always to spin like making eight figures".



## The Character Education of Indonesian Nationality

As it has been revealed at the beginning of this paper, the purpose of national education is stipulated in the national education policies (*Sisdiknas*) Chapter 3, where there is an emphasis that cultural aspects influence the characters of the educational goals of Indonesia, and the purposes or applications of cultural character education of a nation are expected to be implemented by the students as follows:

1. Religion: obedient behaviors and attitudes in implementing their religious teachings, tolerant of other people implementing their faiths, and living in harmony with them.

2. Honesty: the behavior based on efforts to establish oneself as an individual who is trustworthy in what he or she says and in what he or she does.

3. Tolerance: attitudes and actions that respect differences in religions, ethnic tribes, opinions, attitudes and actions of others.

4. Discipline: behaving orderly and obediently in accordance to various rules and regulations.

5. Hard work: behaviors that show an earnest effort in overcoming the various barriers to learning and assignments, as well as jobs as well as possible.

6. Creativity: thinking and doing something to generate innovative outcomes or making something from things that are already there.

7. Independence: attitudes and behaviors of individuals who do not rely on others in completing tasks.

8. Democracy: students think, behave, and act in ways that respect equalities of rights and responsibilities among all people.

9. Curiosity: attitudes and actions that attempt to discover things deeper and more comprehensively from what they see, hear and learn.

10. The spirit of nationality: ways of thinking and acting that place the country's and nation's interest above personal or groups' interests.

11. Love for the homeland: ways of thinking, acting and doing that show loyalty, concern, and high appreciation of the physical environmental, the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions of the nation.

12. Appreciating achievements: attitudes and actions that encourage students to produce something useful for the community while recognizing and respecting the success of others

13. Friendliness and communicativeness: showing enthusiasm for talkativeness, interaction and collaboration with others

14. Love for Peace: attitudes, words, and actions that cause others to feel happy and secure in the presence of the students.

15. Avid Reading: the habit of allocating time for reading various texts which gave virtues for himself

16. Concern for the environment: attitudes and actions that aim to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment, and to make efforts to repair the damage that has occurred

17. Social concern: attitudes and actions that tend to provide assistance to people and communities who need it.

18. Responsibilities: attitudes and behaviors in performing duties and obligations, which students should do, for themselves, the community, environment (natural, social, and cultural), country, and God Almighty (Grafindo in Kasmahidayat, et. Al.,2012: iii)

The eighteen points of the purposes of character education should be implemented by all students; these points contain deep insights. With these points, the students are led and guided to nurture their characters' growth in accordance with their intelligence growth, age and education levels (Primary school, Junior High School and Senior High School). Appar-

ently, these purposes have not been fully achieved. Recent trends appear to indicate that there are disheartening social phenomena.

Today social phenomena can be observed in which the phenomenon of violence in resolving the issue become public. The policy of coercion happens almost on every level of the institution. Manipulation of information has become commonplace. Pressure and coercion of one group against another group is often considered normal. The law is often not fair; it does not support justice. Actually, the characters of Indonesian people are polite and kind in accordance with this discussion to resolve the issue of *local wisdom* that is rich with plurality, tolerance and mutual assistance; this trait has been transformed into the hegemony of new groups that defeat on another (Hasanah, 2009).

As it has been revealed at the beginning of this paper extracurricular activities at the school, including extra-curricular drama/theater, music, art and dance art is one medium that potential not only for the construction of character and academic enhancement learners but can distract the learners to the various forms of activities positively, so the odds of giving birth to the phenomenon of violence like a brawl can be avoided. Dance Arts extracurricular activities undertaken collectively are not only expected to be able to develop the ability and sense of social responsibility, as well as the potential and the achievements of learners, but is expected to bring about the formation of nationality characters.

## **The Correlation of body language through the Art of Dance and formation of National Character**

Art (including dance) aims to describe social and cultural phenomena in terms of their signification to the fullest extent. The dance art aims to reveal its material object so that it becomes meaningful to

the creators of dance or choreographers and those who comprehend it through a wide range of human capacities to catch it, such as the mind, emotion, and sensory perception. Karya seni tari ditujukan untuk manusia dengan harapan bahwa pencipta dan objek yang diungkapkannya mampu berkomunikasi dengan manusia yang memungkinkan dia menangkap pesan yang dibawa karya seni itu. Dance works of art are intended for humans in the hope that the creators and the objects that they try to convey are able to communicate with other fellow humans so that these works can be understood. A good work of art usually has a message delivered to the audience, whether it be moral, aesthetic, political, or thought-provoking idea. Because the message is in the form of ' plea ' which can affect the attitudes and behaviors of human beings, then the art truly plays an important role in the education of morals and manners of a nation (Suriasumantri, 1984: 106-107).

The depths of meaning contained in the art of dance traditions reflect the ethnic characteristics of the local area where the tradition of dance was born and developed. In a similar vein, Kasmahidayat in Sedyawati (2012: 3) states: "in Malay culture, for example, the color yellow is a symbol of nobility. In Javanese culture, red is the color signifying rage so it's only suitable for for giants, and is not appropriate for Arjuna. Similarly, motions, sounds, and visuals need to get the right design in order that artistic traditions can still be alive in line with their portion, and not just flouted by mixing them improperly against the tradition.



*Figure 1: Dodod dance art as communication media collective in South Banten with the ‘ other ‘ beings that are dikultuskan and are considered to affect the abundant rice harvest table (photo reproduction results your personal documentation-author, 2010)*

There are depths of meanings expressed through the body language in the art of dance *Dodod* as a representation of the characteristics of the communities in the South Banten to tribute to their ancestors, especially those who created the *Dodod* dance as a medium of communication between people, especially farmers with *Sang Hyang Sri Pohaci* Goddess (Goddess of rice). In the dance, there is a motion rotating nine times around *leuit* or granary, intended as a tribute to the nine guardians who are trusted by the community to keep rice crops so that abundant harvests will be obtained. Communication leads to supernatural things. Through a deeper analysis, there is a formation the values of characters in conjunction with God that are religious in nature (obedient attitudes and behaviors in carrying out the teaching of religion, tolerance of other faiths, and a harmonious life along with people of different religions).

Based on the results of research conducted by the author, when presenting the dance art of *Dodod* to the students, there is an effort to implicitly convey the character value of nationality in relation to the ‘

social care ‘ (attitudes and actions that always want to give help to other people and communities in need) and ‘ caring ‘ environment (attitudes and actions that are always working to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment, and developing efforts to repair the damage that has already occurred), as well as forming the national character of the value in conjunction with yourself ‘ responsibility ‘ (the attitude and behavior of a person to perform the duties and obligations, which he should do, for themselves, the community, the environment (natural, social, and cultural), country, and God Almighty).

In West Java, dance is classified into five categories of dance, namely (1) the puppet dance; (2) *Keurseus* dance; (3) mask dance; (4) the folk dance; and (5) the dance created by the late Tjetje Soemantri. The fifth group of the dance has characteristics that are based on differences in the form of the structure of the presentation, motion, costumes, accompaniment, property, function or role, style, meaning, and deep values that ultimately shape the character of nationality in particular ethnic communities in West Java.

Various forms of dance including types of puppet dance of West Java are found in many different areas in Preanger including Sumedang. The dance of the puppets in puppet dance among *Gatot Kaca*, *Badaya*, *Jayengrana*, *Ekalaya*, *Mustakaweni*, *Shikhandi* and *Gatot Kaca Sakipu*. Each of these dance forms has distinctive characteristics of makeup and clothing, motion, property, accompaniment, as well as patterns of presentation. The differences are based on the description of the story and the basic idea beneath the creation of each dance. One example of the puppet dance *Badaya* which depicts the welcoming of guests who visited the land of Sunda. Such dances as guest *Pengangungan* (honorable guests), also have values of the grandeur of the Princess in the Sundanese land. The contents

of the Majesty of the values are expressed in the series of the graceful motions presented by the dancers. *Badaya* puppet dance in West Java is associated with the presence of *Bedhoyo* dance in Yogyakarta. It is an established fact that the *Bedhoyo* dance is a sacred dance worshipping the Majesty and the power of a King or Sultan, also closely related to the myth of Nyi Roro Kidul (the Queen of the sovereign of the seas on the South Coast). Fashion forms, used in dance *Badaya* (see image below), consist of the top (head) using flower accessories such as *mangle* (wreaths), *kembang goyang*, as well as *susumping* shaped *gugunungan*. The middle section uses the *apok* shirt with open shoulders, while the bottom of the fabric uses *sinjang* patterned *alit slopes* which also comes with a shawl or *sampur*. Other accessories used are bracelets *shoulder Flash*, as well as the rings located in the lower part of the arm. As a whole series of motion as well as the costumes used in the puppet dance *Badaya* contains deep meanings as a reflection of society, especially women, Sundanese extroversion, that is the nature of self-disclosure in accepting various cultures in the homeland of Indonesia and foreign tourists, but keep doing the filtering in a tight manner against the values that are not in accordance with the Customs and cultural patterns of the Sundanese.

Other forms of dance terms with the embodiment of the national character of Indonesia society is a mask dance which was born and developed in the region of Cirebon and the Priangan in West Java. Five mask dances that can be found in Cirebon are as follows: namely (1) *Pandji* mask dance; (2) *Rumiyang*; (3) *Tumenggung*; (4) *Pamindo*; and (5) *Klana* (see picture below *Klana* mask dance). Every dance form depicts the journey of human life on Earth. Mask dance describes that a new man has been born on Earth with a subtlety of mind: someone who has not sinned. Similarly, other mask dances depict human characters when entering the age of

teenagers, adults, as well as the age of human maturity with a variety of characters (the knights, stout, ferociously).

A variety of dance forms are included in the folk dance group in West Java, two of which are *ibing pencak* and *jaipegangan*. *Ibing pencak* is a form of the martial art *pencak silat* which is packaged and presented in the form of *ibingan* (dance). Teaching *pencak silat* has been one of the efforts made by the writer in order to establish national characters among university students; that martial art has been taught in the Dance Education Departments, Faculty of Language and Arts Education, Indonesian University of Education since 1993. Many of these writers do research to find out how far the significance of the material given in the lecture *pencak silat* to the formation of values education among students. Other research conducted Sumiati Isus (2007) with regard to the extent of the role style *pencak silat* as alternative healing process in public health.

One of the given techniques in the teaching learning process is that which is associated with the *pencak silat* style of *Prasetya* movements which not only demand that students should master the seven movements (movement one to seven), but also the students are also required to understand the depths of the meanings contained in the seventh movements from *Prasetya* movements. When it was noted in depth, every style has a meaning or meanings that lead to the formation of nationality characters. For example, *Prasetya*'s seventh movement consists of seven counts containing the meaning or meanings as follows: 1. the first movement means piety (*taqwa*) and high morality; 2. The second movement means *Pancasila* (the Five Basic Principles of Indonesia) and the 1945 Constitution; 3. The third movement means love of the nation and the homeland; 4. The fourth movement means fraternity and unity; 5. The fifth movement means progress and having Indonesian characters;



6. The sixth movement means truth, justice and honesty; and 7. The seventh movement means enduring ordeals and refrain from temptations.



*Figure 2*

This figure embodies one of the three forms of dance styles featured in the dance tradition in Tatar Sunda, namely Cirebon Mask Dance of Klana (top left), Jaipongan dance (above right), and the Puppet dance culture (bottom) (photo reproduction, 2012). With the third case of the dance through the above pictures, the formation of national characters values relate to the values of what we perceive to be appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

The art of dance is formed from a series of beautiful and rhythmic motions, constituting body language as a medium of communication on the basis of the notion of individuality and collectivity, thus establishing national characters. An array of values are contained in the form and presentation of the art of dance in religious values, education, knowledge, life, and an awareness of the environment, along with the social, and moral value of responsibility.

## Bibliography

- Hasanah, Aan (Observer for education and a lecturer at Bandung UIN) 'character-based Education <http://karakterbangkit.blogspot.com/2009/12/pendidikan-berbasis-karakter.html>. Monday, December 14, 2009. Downloaded on 10 April 2011.
- Kasmahidayat, Yuliawan. (2010). *the cultural Transformation of religion in the archipelago*. Bandung: Warli Artika.
- . (Editor) (2012) *the appreciation of the symbol in the art of the archipelago*. Bandung: Warli Artika.
- . (Editor) (2012). *artistic traditions as a medium of learning and Appreciation of art*. Bandung: Warli Artika.
- .,dkk (2012). *Learning More Art & Culture 2. Character Education-Laden Culture Of The Nation*. Bandung: Grafindo Media Pratama.
- .,dkk (2012). *Learning More Art & Culture 3. Character Education-Laden Culture Of The Nation*. Bandung: Grafindo Media Pratama.
- ., Sumiati Isus (2010). *Ibing Pencak As Learning Material issue 2*. Bandung: Warli Artika.
- The Ministry Of National Education. (2010). *character education in junior high school*. Jakarta: Directorate of Coaching junior high school, Directorate General management of primary and secondary education.
- Sumaryadi. (2011). "*the art of Drama and character education*". Scientific papers are presented as companion papers at a National Seminar on Education Sendratasik Se-Indonesia, November 11, 2011 in UNY FBS.

- Sumiaty, Isus. (2007). *“the role of Style Pencak Silat As Alternative healing process In public health (case study of some of the Garuda Pancasila in Lembang, Bandung Regency)”*.(Thesis). Bandung: Postgraduate UNPAD
- Suriasumantri. 1984. *A Popular introduction to the philosophy of science*. Jakarta: Rays Of Hope.