

The Tatwa Brata Merapi-Merbau Text: A Study of Javanese Wisdom and Its Relevance with Social Harmony

I Made Suparta

Universitas Indonesia, Kampus UI Depok 16424, Indonesia

Telp: +62217864075, Fax: +62217270038

E-mail: imd.supartha@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper examines *lakubrata* (vow) and *upawāsa* (fasting) in Javanese religious traditions based on the *Tatwa Brata Merapi-Merbabu* text. The text is written in "Buda" or Merbabu script and compiled in the *Dharma Paṇḍolih* (L 69) manuscript, a collection of the National Library of Jakarta. The methods applied to examine and understand the text are textual criticism and semiotics, as well as a religious approach. The text mentions various types of *laku brata* and *upawāsa*, namely: (1) *brata haṇapatrahara*, (2) *brata haṇekadasi*, (3) *brata ṇupawāsa*, (4) *brata ṇumbhakarṇa*, (5) *brata hamaṇḍawa*, (6) *brata maṇcamona*, and other *brata*. The conclusions are: (1) in one of the Javanese attitudes, *tapa* and *samādhi* are vital elements associated with the practices, (2) *lakubrata* and *upawāsa* are generally intended to: (a) maintain physical and spiritual health, (b) maintain harmony with the universe and the Creator, and (c) foster social harmony with fellow human beings, and (3) the *Tatwa Brata Merapi-Merbabu* text is a document of knowledge that describes Javanese wisdom (*kawicakṣanan*) and the way of life which refers to the social harmony system of the sixteenth century

Keywords: *Tatwa Brata*, *upawāsa*, Javanese wisdom, social harmony

1. Introduction

Lakupuasa (derived from Sanskrit: *upawāsa*) or fasting, which Javanese people still practice to this day, has a lengthy history that can be traced back to a similar tradition in the Ancient Javanese era. The historical fact about the tradition, apart from being carved on temple reliefs during the Hindu-Buddhist period in Java, is also revealed through written documents in the form of Ancient Javanese inscriptions and manuscripts. In those written sources, the tradition of *upawāsa* or *puasa* is always intertwined with *lakubrata* and *tapa*. In that regard, this paper specifically aims to examine and reveal the meaning and interpretation of several types of *lakubrata* and *upawāsa* in the *SanhyaṇTatwaBrata* (hereinafter referred to as *STB*) Merapi-Merbabu text, which is one of the texts compiled in the *Dharma Paṇḍolih* L 69 manuscript, a collection of the National Library of Jakarta. The principal problem analyzed is several types of *brata* and *upawāsa* as well as their meaning in the context of Javanese wisdom and their relevance with social harmony. Semiotics and the religious approach are applied to study and understand the types of *brata* and *upawāsa*.

2. Concept of *Brata* and *Upawāsa* in Old Javanese Literature

The term *brata* (Zoetmuder, 1982:260) as it is known in Ancient Javanese traditions generally refers to 'a vow, a sacred way of life, the act of fasting, and becoming an ascetic' (in the sense of *brati*, Skt: *vratin*). Specifically, the word *brata* can refer to worship or a moral behavior which represents certain *iṣṭadewatā*, as described in the concept of *aṣṭabrata* in the *kakawinRāmāyana* XXIV.52-60 (Poerbatjaraka, 2010: 862-68), which includes: *Indrabrata*, *Yamabrata*, *Surryabrata*, *Śaśibrata*, *Bāyubrata*, *Dhnadabrata*, *Barunabrata*, and *Bahnibrata*. With regard to 'a sacred way of life', the concept of *brata* actually also implies the meaning of *upawāsa*, which refers to 'fasting, abstaining from food and drink' (Zoetmulder, 1982: 2138). Such an understanding of the concept can be seen in *Adiparwa* 49.14 (Juynboll, 1906:49): "...*Nḍātansahurikesaṇṇṣi*, *apasēdēṇniramonabrata*..." ('*sangṛṣi* does not answer at all, for he is abstaining from speech'). The concept of *monabrata* (Skt: *mauna*) in fact also includes the meaning of *brata* (vow), *upawāsa* (fasting), and *tapa* (asceticism).



How the concepts of *brata-upawāsa-tapa* are closely related can be seen in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* manuscript written during the era of King Dharmawangsa-Tēguh around 991-1007 AD (Zoetmulder, 2006: 17). This text depicts competition in the methods of *tapa-brata-upawāsa* chosen by three brothers: Daśamukha, Kumbhakarna, and Wibhīṣana. Meanwhile, the *kakawinŚiwaratrikalpa* written by MpuTanakung between 1466 and 1478 AD (Teeuw, *et al.*, 1969:18) describes the nature of *brata-upawāsa* in their relation with the concept of *brata-Śiwarātri* (*pupuh* 37.7-8) which is the most important among various types of *yajña-tapa-dana*. Further, The *Sanhyan Kamahāyānikan* 50.20 (Kats, 1910: 50) asserts that *brata* also refers to the concept of *yoga* as follows: “...*yoganidraṇaranya, aturū tan paṇipi...apansiraphalaniṁsarbwayoga, sarbwasamādhi, sarbwabrata...*” (*Yoganidra* is sleeping without dreaming...as it is a result of the entire *yoga*, the entire *samādhi*, and the entire *brata*). Therefore, it can be understood that the concepts of *brata* and *upawāsa* as described in Ancient Javanese texts basically indicate a person’s sacred way of life. In the *Wṛhaspatitattwa* text, the sacred way of life is specifically linked to the three concepts of *laku-kawikon*, namely: *kayika-brata, jñāna-brata*, and *yogīśwara* (Devi, 1957: 63).

3. Concept of *Brata* and *Upawāsa* in the *TatwaBrataMerapi-Merbabu* Text

The *STBMerapi-Merbabu* text is one of the texts compiled in the *Dharma Paṇolih* (L 69) manuscript. Based on information in the catalog (Setyawati, *et al.*, 2002: 62), the manuscript measures 27.6 x 3.1 cm with the number of pages amounting to 13 *lēm̐pir*. The text is written in Merbabu script or “Buda” script. It also contains the *Pararapon* text and the *kidungRumēksaiṁWēṇi*. The *STB* text itself is written in 8 *lēm̐pir*. The text was written on the slopes of Mt.Pamrihan or Merbabu, but the year of writing is unknown.

The types of *brata* and *upawāsa* mentioned in the *STB* text include: (1) *bratapatrāhara*, (2) *bratahaṇekadasi*, (3) *brataṇupawāsa*, (4) *brataṇumbhakarna*, (5) *bratahamaṇḍawa*, and (6) *bratamaṇcamona*. In the beginning of the text (*lēm̐pir* 23 *recto*), it is mythologically narrated that the knowledge and teachings of *brata* are created from the water in the place where Bhaṭāra Guru washes his face when he performs *yoga* (“...*hanabratamijlsakiṁparahupanBhaṭāra Guru...*”). It is essential that *San̐Sewaka Dharma* or the “disciples of Dharma teachings” are aware of the knowledge and teachings of *brata-upawāsa* so that they can master the knowledge and wisdom in order to “free” all human beings as though they are their own family. The interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the types of *brata* and *upawāsa* is discussed as follows.

3.1 *Bratapatrāhara*

The concept of *brata-patrāhara* is an Ancient Javanese construction that is unknown in Indian traditions. However, based on the text it can be understood that *patrāhara* is one of the types of *upawāsa* of the vegetarian tradition. The *STB* text explains the meaning of *brata-patrāhara* in the following quote (*lēm̐pir* 24r): “...*hanabrata, patrāhararanyanya, amañanrondon sari-sari, San̐hyan̐Śwaradewatanya, phalanyamulihmariswarggaBhaṭāra Guru...*” (it is called *brata-patrāhara*, which means eating the essence of leaves, *San̐hyan̐Śwara* is the god, the reward is going to the heaven of Bhaṭāra Guru). *Brata-upawāsa* specifically recommends eating the shoots or the buds of leaves (*patra*) as practiced in the vegetarian tradition.

3.2 *Bratahaṇekadasi*

The concept of *brata-upawāsaekadasi* or *aṇekadasi* is generally connected to the lunar cycle of the Candra calendar year (lunar system), specifically the 11th day before the full moon (*purnima*) and new moon (*tilēm̐*). Therefore, the time for *ṇekadasi* occurs twice in one month. In line with the lunar cycle, in Vedic traditions there are 26 *ekadasi* in one year, namely: *Utpanna, Mokṣada, Saphala, Putrada, Sat-tila, Jaya, Vijaya, Amalaki, Papamocani, Kamada, Varutini, Mohini, Aparā, Nirjala, Yogini, Padma, Kamika, Putrada, Aja, Parivartini, Indira, Papaṇkusa, Rama, Haribodini, Padmini, and Parama* (Candrawati, 1997: 43-44).

The *STB* text explains the meaning of *brataañekadasi* in the following quote (*lěmpir* 25r): “...*hanabrata hanekadasiñaranya, hananjķēnpurnamaninķasapuluhhamatihara, olihatigañkasapuluh...*” (it is called *brataañekadasi*, which means fasting every *purnama* [full moon] of the 10th month for three years). Based on the quote, it can be concluded that the concept of *brata-ekadasi* in the *STB* Merapi-Merbabu text has undergone a significant change from the concept of *upawāsaekadasi* in Vedic traditions. In this text, *brata-upawāsa* is meant so that one can enter the realm of Sañhyañśwara, and be reborn to become a divine Śiwa-Buddha brahmana.

3.3 *Bratañupawāsa*

Bratañupawāsa is a hyperbolic way to assert the intensity of meaning of the avowed *upawāsa*. The *STB* text describes the meaning of *bratañupawāsa* in the following quote (*lěmpir* 27r): “...*hanabratañupawāsa, pituñwějīsamayanya, siñsakarēpkatēkan, wiryalawaninasihaninHyañ...*” (there is *bratañupawāsa* vowed for 7 nights, everything that one wishes for will be granted, namely power and love from God).

3.4 *Bratañumbhakarñna*

The concept of *bratañumbhakarñna* is an Old Javanese thought construction adapted from the behavior of the character Kumbhakarñna in the tale of Rāmāyana. In the *Uttarakāñḍa* 17.21 text (Zoetmulder, 2006:17), it is told how Kumbhakarñna is so devout in his *tapa-brata* that he only drinks by sucking in dew drops continuously for a thousand years. When he receives grace from the God Brahma, he mistakenly says *cirakālasupta*, namely: *aturwasewutahunlawasnya* (‘asleep for a thousand years’). *Bratañumbhakarñna* is a metaphor in the *STB* text which has its own particular meaning. This can be seen in the following quote (*lěmpir* 27r): “...*hanabratañumbhakarñnañaranya, haturu tan palihan, nēhērañupawaśa, tluñtahunsamayanya, phalanyamulih i sargga Sañhyañ Rudra, sasarnyaajanmamantri, labdarisañprabhu...*” (there is *bratas* similar to *brata* Kumbhakarñna, sleeping without differentiating the two, then vowing to fast for three years. The reward is returning to the heaven of the God Rudra, and later being reborn to become a minister, or an accomplished king).

Although the character of Kumbhakarñna is a *rakṣasa*, his loyalty in defending his homeland is set as an important example in the world of Javanese *wayang* (puppetry). This is perhaps one of the reasons why the concept of *brata Kumbhakarñna* is discussed quite prominently by the author in the *STB* Merapi-Merbabu text.

3.5 *Bratahamandawa*

The concept of *bratahamandawa* is an Ancient Javanese thought construction derived from the name of the Pañḍawa, the five sons of Pañḍu. The metaphor of this *brata* is apparently unknown in the Indian concept of *brata*. The meaning of *bratahamandawa* in the *STB* text is described in the following quote: “...*hanabrata hamañḍawañaranya, holihalimañ ķēpēlsarahina, limañ leksamayanayakasadguñan kitakasambhañan paripurñna...*” (it is called *bratahamandawa*, which means eating only five balls of rice each day, do that for five months, and you will receive *sadguña* to assist in achieving perfection). According to Zoetmulder (1982: 1587), *śadguña* refers to the six actions or efforts performed by a king in wartime, namely: *sandhi* (peace), *wigraha* (battle), *yāna* (marching), *āsana* (sitting at camp), *dwaiddhi-bhawa* (dividing troops), and *samśraya* (seeking protection from a more powerful king).

Based on the explanation, it can be interpreted that *bratahamandawa* implies how *lakubrata* was practiced by Javanese kings in the Ancient Javanese era. The specific purpose is to absorb the power of *keśadguñan* from the five Pañḍawa who are victorious in the war against the Korawa. The effort to achieve the mighty knowledge of *śadguña* is symbolized through *brata-upawāsa* by eating five balls of rice each day for three years. The five balls of rice carry a symbolic and mystical association with the characters of the five Pañḍawa, who continue to be lifestyle role models in Javanese society today.

3.6 Bratamañcamona

The concept of *mona* or *mauna* ('silence, to be silent, not speaking') refers to a type of *lakubrata-upawāsathat* is practiced by being silent or not speaking. In the *kakawinŚiwarātrikalpa* 37.1 it is said that the character Lubdaka performs *Śiwānalārcana* (the worship of Śiwa's fire) through *upawāsa* and *mona* (*duluranopawāsasahamona*).

The particular meaning of *mona* in the concept of *bratamañcamona* is explained in the *STB* Merapi-Merbabu text as follows: "...*hanabrata mañcamona, nomamañan, monananapuh, monarasmī, monasusur, monaṇisiñ...*" (there are five types of *bratamona*, namely: silent while eating, silent while sweeping, silent during intercourse, silent while brushing hair, and silent during bowel movement). Practicing *bratamañcamona* diligently earns one the reward of returning to the heaven of Bhaṭāra Guru, and later being reborn as a person who is good looking, is talented in *gamelan* and *kidung*, and excels as a human being.

In Ancient Javanese traditions, *lakumonabrata* is considered an important behavior and is equal to *lakutapa-brata-yoga* itself. The *KidungSinangsaya* text, one of the Merapi-Merbabu *kidung* literature written around the year 1592 Śaka (Kriswanto, 2012: 245) describes the *monabrata* behavior with the term *habratamatigēni* or *hamatirāga* as practiced by the character Ki Ragadharma. The same expression is also found in the *KidungSurajaya* (Merapi-Merbabu L 208), written around the year 1618 Śaka (Setyawati, 2015: 530). In the text, the character Ki Surajaya says: "...*hamati raga sinakuñ, siñbrata-tlaswuskeriñ...*" (the *amatirāga* method is truly applied, *brata-penghabisan* is also practiced).

Based on the above explanation it can be seen that the *brata-upawāsa* concept, aside from being present in the *STB* text, can also be found in other Merapi-Merbabu texts such as the *Kidung Gita Sinang saya* and the *Kidung Surajaya*. This indicates that until the end of the 17th century various parts of knowledge about *brata-upawāsa* and *tapa-yoga* were still being studied and responded to by manuscript authors, and possibly even still practiced by *ajar* or ascetic communities because of the close links to their religious traditions passed down from the Ancient Javanese era.

4. Brata and Upawāsa as a Reflection of Javanese Wisdom

Javanese wisdom as mentioned here refers to the ideas of H.G. Quaritch Wales, who uses the term local genius (Soebadio, 1986: 18), or *cerlangbudaya* (Ayatrohaedi, 1986: 111). In this case, local wisdom or *kawicaksananswabudaya* is the entire attitude, outlook, and ability of a community in managing its spiritual and physical environment in harmony with its sociocultural dynamics. In line with the above, it can be understood that the discussion of several types of *brata-upawāsa* in the *STB* text clearly reflects the thought and knowledge systems of Javanese society in the Merapi-Merbabu mountainous areas in around the 16th to the 17th century. The thought and knowledge systems expressed through the text indicate a deep mystical union (*uniomystica*) between humans and *SangkanParan*, as well as with divinity and the universe. The concept is mythologically constructed as a sacred value in the narration that *ontogenybrata* is created from the water with which Bhaṭāra Guru washes his face. In Ancient Javanese (9th-15th centuries AD) and *kejawen* religious thought framework, the character Bhaṭāra Guru is the Supreme God who leads the group of gods ruling the eight directions of the wind (Pigeaud, 1924:57-58), holding his throne in the highest heaven called *Windhupēpēt* (Suparta, 2016: 337). Theologically, the name Bhaṭāra Guru itself is a form of local genius, as it reflects religious-Javanese wisdom. The *PurwakaBhūmi* text explains that Bhaṭāra Guru is an epithet and emanates from the God Śiwa (Hooykaas, 1974: 26).

In relation to the tradition of *tapa-brata*, the *ŚiwaPurāṇa* book describes that the God Śiwa is the king of all ascetics; hence, he is called by the name *Mahāyogi* or *Sadyogin* who maintains social and natural harmony (Sanjaya, 2001: 64). Therefore, the relationship between concept of *brata* and the myth of Bhaṭāra Guru in the *STB* text significantly implies Javanese Śiwaism. The constellation of the *brata-upawāsa* concept from the *STB* text in the context of social harmony is cosmologically connected to the Merapi-Merbabusastral-ajar (ascetic-literary) realm. The author of the *STB* text

symbolically identifies as a *SanĀewakaDharmma* who practices *lakubrata-upawāsa* not solely for purposes of physical health or self-transcendence with *SangkanParaningDumadi*, but most importantly the spiritual knowledge of *brata* is meant to “free” (*umoktakna*) all human beings as though they are one’s own family. The *STB* text explicitly says:

“...*kayatnakna de SanĀewakaDharmma, marapwankapañihkasiddhanya, wruhajyatmika, samahyanhumoktaknajanma, ṇ kadyaṅganiṇadañṇe sun...*” (the teaching of *brata* should be practiced carefully by *ĀewakaDharmma* or the spiritual disciples, so that they can achieve spiritual knowledge and wisdom, in an endeavor to free the human race as though they were their own family).”

Based on the above quote, the meaning and interpretation of the *brata-upawāsa* concept as a crystallization of Javanese wisdom in the context of social harmony can be seen in the figure below:

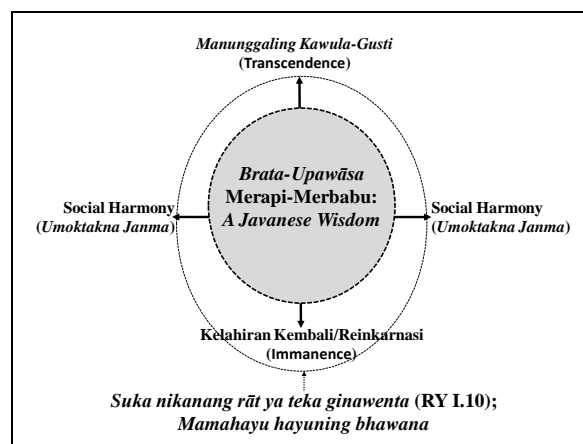


Figure 1: Constellation of *Brata-Upawāsa* in Social Harmony

The above figure shows how the conceptualization of *brata-upawāsa* is the basic value that forms the cosmological order in the thoughts of the ascetic-literary communities in the Merbabu or Damalung mountains which is a *mandala* or *kadewaguruan* as referred to in the *kakawinNagarakṛtāgamapupuh* 76.3d (Pigeaud, 1960, I: 59). Religious wisdom, humanity, and nature (*bhuwana, rāt*) inherited from the Majapahit era were still well connected with the Merapi-Merbabu manuscript traditions in the 16th-17th centuries AD. Part of the expression of religious-mystic-cultural wisdom is still being passed down and responded to in the world of *kejawen* to this day, as seen in the expressions *manunggalingkawulagusti*, or *mamahayuhayuningbhawana*.

5. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be made based on the discussions above. Firstly, the method and behavior of *brataparahara*, *bratahañaliwwan*, *bratahañekadasi*, *bratañupawāsa*, *bratañumbhakarṇa*, *bratahamañdawa*, and *bratamañcamona* in the *STB* text explicitly reveal mystic-theological-religious and cosmological wisdom. The wisdom has become part of Javanese people’s lifestyle attitudes, which are *tapa* and *samadhi* (Jong, 1984: 23). Secondly, *brata-upawāsa* also implicitly contains a meaning of wisdom in connection to social harmony. Thirdly, in relation to social harmony, *lakubrata-upawāsa* is generally intended to: (a) maintain harmony with the universe and the Creator, and (b) foster and “free” all human beings (*umoktaknajanmakadyaṅganikadañṇ*), which can be placed in parallel with the concept of *rahmatanlilalamin* in Islamic theology. Fourthly, the *STB* Merapi-Merbabu text is a document of knowledge (*kadhyatmikan*) or Javanese *kawicaṣanan* (local wisdom) that reflects a way of life in the 16th century. Nowadays the famous tradition of “*Puasa*” actually derived from the Sanskrit word *Upavāsa*.

6. References

- [1] Ayatrohaedi. (1986). “Bahasa Indonesia sebagai Cerlang Budaya” dalam *Kepribadian Budaya Bangsa (Local Genius)*. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya.
- [2] Candrawati, A.K. (1997). *Ekadasi, Bimbingan Rohani Hindu dan Berpuasa*. Jakarta: CV Pustaka Sinar Agung.
- [3] de Jong, S. (1976). *Salah Satu Sikap Hidup Orang Jawa*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- [4] Devi, Sudarsana. (1957). *Wṛhaspati-Tattwa*. Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.
- [5] Gede Oka Sanjaya. (2001). *Siwa Purana*. Surabaya: Paramita.
- [6] Geertz, Clifford. (1983). *Agama Jawa: Abangan, Santri dan Priyayi dalam Kebudayaan Jawa*. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya.
- [7] Hooykaas, C. (1974). *Cosmogony and Creation in Balinese Tradition*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [8] I Made Suparta. (2016). *Teks Putru Kalēpasan Merapi-Merbabu: kajian Filologis dan Konsep Eskatologis Jawa Kuno Abad ke-16*. Disertasi, FIB UI Depok.
- [9] Juynboll, H.H. (1906). *Adiparwa Oudjavaansch Prozageschrift*. S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [10] ----- . (1912). *Wirataparwa Oudjavaansch Prozageschrift*. S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [11] Kats, J. (1910). *Sanghyang Kamahāyānikan, Oud Javaansche Tekst*. ‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [12] Koentjaraningrat. (1994). *Kebudayaan Jawa*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- [13] Kriswanto, Agung. (2002). *Gita Sinangsaya, Edisi Teks dan Terjemahan*. Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional.
- [14] Magnis-Suseno, Franz. (1996). *Etika Jawa, Sebuah Analisa Filsafat tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- [15] Pigeaud, Theodoor G. Thomas. (1960, I) *Java in The 14th Century, A Study in Cultural History*. Koninklijk Instituut voor Tal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Translations Series 4,1-4. The Hague: martinus Nijhoff.
- [16] Poerbatjaraka, R.M.Ng. (1952). *Kapustakan Djawa*. Tjetakan ke-1. Jakarta: Djambatan.
- [17] Radhakrishnan, S. (2008). *Upanisad-Upanisad Utama*. Surabaya: Paramita.
- [18] Rahyono, F.X. (2009). *Kearifan Budaya dalam Kata*. Jakarta: Wedatama Widyasastra.
- [19] Ras, J.J. (2014). *Masyarakat dan Kesusastaan Jawa* (Penerjemah: Achadiati Ikram). Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- [20] Robson, S.O.(1994). *Prinsip-Prinsip Filologi Indonesia (Diterjemahkan oleh Kentjanawati Gunawan)* Jakarta: RUL.
- [21] Setyawati, Kartika. (2015). *Kidung Surajaya: Suntingan Teks, Terjemahan dan Analisis Makna Isi Teks*. Disertasi, Universiteit Leiden.
- [22] Setyawati, Kartika, et al. (2002). *Katalog Naskah Merapi-Merbabu*. Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma.
- [23] Sivananda, Sri Svami. (2000). *Hindu Fast and Festivals*. Delhi: A Divine Life Society Publication.
- [24] Soebadio, Haryati. (1986). “*Kepribadian Budaya Bangsa*” dalam Ayatrohaedi (ed.). Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya.
- [25] Teeuw, A., et al. (1969). *Siwaratrikalpa of Mpu Tanakung, An Old javanese Poem, its Indian Source and Balinese Illustrations*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [26] Zoetmulder, P.J. dan S.O. Robson (1982). *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*.S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- [27] Zoetmulder, P.J..(2006). *Uttarakāṇḍa, Teks Jawa Kuna*. Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma.