

## Ambivalence and Symbolic Dualism in the Character of Kumbakarna in the Wayang Golek *Lakon* “Kumbakarna Gugur”: A Narrative Analysis

Marsel Ridky Maulana<sup>1\*</sup> 

Pendidikan Seni, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia  
Corresponding author: [ridkymarsel@upi.edu](mailto:ridkymarsel@upi.edu)

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### Abstrak

Lakon *Kumbakarna Gugur* dalam wayang golek mengangkat tema ambivalensi moral dan dualisme simbolik yang melekat pada karakter *Kumbakarna*. Sebagai panglima perang kerajaan Alengka Kumbakarna menghadapi kebimbangan antara kesetiaannya kepada kakaknya Rahwana dan tanggung jawabnya terhadap rakyat dan negerinya Alengka. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menganalisis ambivalensi dan dualisme simbolik dalam karakter Kumbakarna menggunakan teori fungsi naratif Vladimir Propp dan oposisi biner Claude Lévi-Strauss. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis naratif berbasis data teks cerita lakon dan wawancara dengan dalang wayang golek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kumbakarna berperan sebagai *donor* dan *villain* dalam struktur naratif mencerminkan konflik nilai yang kompleks. Melalui pendekatan analisis oposisi biner Kumbakarna diinterpretasikan sebagai representasi simbolis dari penggabungan antara kebajikan dan keburukan yang memiliki relevansi signifikan dalam merefleksikan nilai-nilai kepemimpinan. Nilai moral yang terkandung dalam cerita *lakon* ini seperti pengorbanan dan tanggung jawab menjadi media edukasi yang penting bagi masyarakat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi baru dalam kajian wayang golek purwa sebagai bentuk seni yang tidak hanya menghibur tetapi juga kaya makna filosofis. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru tentang makna simbolik Kumbakarna dalam konteks budaya Sunda sekaligus merelevansikan pesan etisnya untuk moral dalam konteks kehidupan masyarakat masa kini.

**Kata Kunci:** ambivalensi, analisis naratif, dualisme simbolik, Kumbakarna, wayang golek purwa Sunda

### Abstract

The lakon “Kumbakarna Gugur” in wayang golek highlights the moral ambivalence and symbolic dualism inherent in the character of Kumbakarna. As a warlord of the Alengka kingdom, Kumbakarna faces doubts between his loyalty to his brother Rahwana and his responsibility to the people and his country Alengka. The purpose of this research is to analyze ambivalence and symbolic dualism in Kumbakarna's character using Vladimir Propp's narrative function theory and Claude Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition. The research uses a qualitative method with a narrative analysis approach based on data from the text of the lakon and interviews with dalang wayang golek. The results showed that Kumbakarna's role as donor and villain in the narrative structure reflects a complex conflict of values. Through the binary opposition analysis approach, Kumbakarna is interpreted as a symbolic representation of the combination of virtue and vice that has significant relevance in reflecting leadership values. The moral values contained in this play such as sacrifice and responsibility become an important educational medium for the community. This research provides a new contribution to the study of wayang golek purwa as an art form that is not only entertaining but also rich in philosophical meaning. This research provides new insights into the symbolic meaning of Kumbakarna in the context of Sundanese culture as well as releasing its ethical message for morals in the context of contemporary society.

**Keywords:** ambivalence, Kumbakarna, narrative analysis, symbolic dualism, wayang golek purwa Sunda

## INTRODUCTION

*Wayang* as a performing art and epic narrative has long been an integral part of Nusantara culture (Atmadibrata, 2006). Essentially, *wayang* stories represent heroic stories of figures with noble characters who fight against and eradicate evil, reflecting high ethical and moral values (Maulana et al., 2024; Solichin, 2010). *Wayang* in its current form is a cultural heritage that has deep historical roots as a result of the creativity of Indonesia's ancestors. The existence of *wayang* is estimated to have reached an age of more than 1,500 years BC long before the influence of outside religions and cultures entered Indonesian territory (Atik Soepandi, 1988; M. A Salmun, 1961). This shows that *wayang* is not only a symbol of Indonesia's indigenous culture, but also one of the oldest cultural products that continues to survive through various transformations of the times (Soetarno & Sudarko, 2007).

The origin of *wayang* performances can be traced to the community's belief in the existence of ancestral spirits that are believed to still play a role in human life (Atik Soepandi, 1978). In this context, there is a tradition of worship ceremonies to ancestral spirits with the aim that those who

are still alive can foster a sense of devotion and respect for ancestors who have died (Heru S. Sudjarwo, Sumari, 2010). This belief has its roots in prehistoric times or the Animism-Dynamism era in Indonesia where people believed that all inanimate objects had power and spirits that came from their ancestors (Andrew Noah Weintraub, 2004). This phenomenon illustrates how Indonesians since ancient times have instilled the value of deep respect for ancestors which is realized through a series of worship ceremonies carried out both at home and in special places together (A. Sukatno, 2003).

Along with the ancestral belief in the power of spirits attached to inanimate objects, an embodiment was created for the residence of spirits known as *Pratima* which in Javanese tradition is called *Unduk* while in Bali it is known as *Archalingga* or *Pralingga* (Ayuni, 2024; Supriyono, Djumiran Ranta Admaja, Bambang Sukmo Pribadi, 2008). This belief is rooted in animism which teaches that every inanimate object holds a spirit that has a duality of good and evil nature. To avoid the interference of evil spirits, these spirits are depicted in the form of shadows or images (*wewayangan* or *wayang*) which are then worshiped and given offerings (Lukman Pasha, 2011). This belief lasted for a long time but with the arrival of Hinduism, the function of the spirit image was transformed into a means of props to convey religious teachings. Currently, *wayang* has changed its function as a spectacle and guidance that still contains symbolic meaning in a cultural and spiritual context (Hendra & Supriyadi, 2020).

Written records of *wayang* performances are recorded in an inscription dating from 930 AD which states that “*si Galigi mawayang*” or “Galigi plays wayang”. Since the inscription was discovered there have been a number of aspects of traditional *wayang* performance that have remained consistent (Rasoma, 1971). A number of scholars have argued that the roots of *wayang* performances lie in the manifestation of people's love for their ancestral spirits which later developed into a form of cultural expression (Sabunga et al., 2016).

The meaning of the term “*wayang*” encompasses a variety of interpretations that include representations of figures or characters, puppets, and objects in the context of the *wayang* performance itself. Etymologically, the word refers to a dynamic and transient visual image that moves repeatedly across without a fixed direction and appears vague or dimly lit (Wardani, 2020). This phenomenon can be understood through the physical characteristics of the puppets used in the performance, which often create a shadow or silhouette effect. Therefore, the puppets used in *wayang* performances produce shadow or silhouette effects, which in this context is the basis for giving the term “*wayang*” as a representation of the phenomenon of creating these visual shadows (Sri Mulyono, 1979).

Some experts state that *wayang* art is the original cultural heritage of the Indonesian people. One of these opinions was expressed by C. R. O. Sukatno, (2021) who stated that during the reign of King Sanjaya in the Mataram Kingdom, which was centered in Central Java around 750 AD, the Javanese people were familiar with *wayang* stories. This story is rooted in Hindu myths, especially the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In addition, Godard Arend Johannes Hazeu, (1979) suggests that during the reign of King Airlangga in East Java around 1035-1045 AD the art of *wayang* performance had developed and most likely even existed before that period. This view shows that the art of *wayang* has been rooted in the culture of the archipelago since the past.

Wayang *lakon* stories contain an abundance of fundamental values that include philosophical, ethical-religious, and aesthetic dimensions. *Wayang* as a traditional art medium represents a symbolic language of life that focuses more on spiritual and *ruhaniyah* aspects than external aspects (Endang Caturwati, 2008; Krismayanti & Sujarwoko, 2021). However, in the

current era, cultural values in society have experienced significant degradation, some of which are even threatened with extinction. This phenomenon is especially evident in the younger generation who tend to show indifference towards their own local culture. Instead, they are more interested in adopting foreign cultures that in many cases are not in harmony or even contradictory to Indonesian cultural identity (Riyanto, 2012).

Narrative analysis is an approach that examines a text as a series of events that are logically organized into a story structure. Whether in fictional narratives such as novels, poetry, folklore, fairy tales, movies, comics, and music, or in factual narratives such as news, narrative analysis provides a deep understanding of how a story is constructed, how events are constructed, and how values and meanings are communicated to the audience. This approach allows us to understand how a text through its narrative construction not only presents the flow of events but also represents certain social, cultural and ideological values dominant in society (Eriyanto, 2015).

In the context of this study, narrative analysis has several key advantages. First, it helps in understanding how social knowledge, meanings and values are produced and disseminated in society. By applying narrative analysis we can reveal the various values that are explicitly or implicitly embedded in the text and how these values are transmitted and accepted by the audience (Eriyanto, 2015). In the *lakon Kumbakarna Gugur* in *wayang golek* performances, for example, we can see how the character of *Kumbakarna* represents the ambivalence of heroic values and loyalty, which at the same time illustrates the contradiction between duty to the state and individual moral values.

Second, narrative analysis allows us to understand how the social and political world is represented in a particular story (Eriyanto, 2015). In the *Ramayana* epic narrative that serves as the setting for the play *Kumbakarna Gugur*, there is a clear dichotomy between heroes and villains as seen in the characters of *Rama* and *Rahwana*. However, in the case of *Kumbakarna*, these boundaries are blurred, resulting in an interesting narrative complexity. *Kumbakarna*, although coming from *Rahwana* side, is portrayed as a figure who has honor and loyalty to his country but at the same time also criticizes his brother's policies that are considered unwise. This ambivalence shows that in narrative construction not all characters can be easily categorized in binary oppositions such as good and evil but there is room for complex nuances that reflect inner struggles and conflicting values within an individual.

Third, narrative analysis allows us to investigate latent aspects of a text. In narratively organized stories there are often implied ideological messages that are not immediately apparent on the surface (Eriyanto, 2015). *Kumbakarna* as a character in the *wayang golek* play is not only a character who dies in battle but also conveys moral messages about responsibility, loyalty, and ethical conflicts faced by someone in a dilemmatic position. This narrative reflects how a text can contain deeper meanings than just the apparent storyline and how the interpretation of a particular character can open up insights into the shifting or continuity of values in a society.

Fourth, narrative analysis also serves to reflect changes in communication over time. A story can be retold in various forms and through various mediums with modifications that reflect changes in values and perspectives that occur in society (Eriyanto, 2015). In the context of *wayang golek*, for example, the play *Kumbakarna Gugur* can have variations in storytelling and interpretation depending on the social and political context in which the performance is held. This shift in narrative shows that the interpretation of the *Kumbakarna* character can change according to the discourse that develops in society, confirming that symbolism in folklore and traditional arts always interacts with existing social and cultural dynamics.

There are several studies regarding the special play “Kumbakarna Gugur”, a study conducted by (Anom Candrayana & Kodi, 2021) entitled “*Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Agama Hindu dalam Pertunjukan Wayang Kulit Cenk Blonk Lakon Kumbakarna Lina*” this study concluded that the Cenk Blonk Wayang Kulit performance not only functions as entertainment, but also as a medium for Hindu religious education for the community. The values contained in the *Kumbakarna Lina* play reflect Hindu teachings that educate community character, instill nationalism, and strengthen spirituality. This research also shows that shadow puppetry can be an effective means of conveying religious education values, so it can be used as further material for study in the realm of Hindu art and cultural education. Then the study conducted by (Anggoro, 2011) entitled “*Perancangan Komik Kumbakarna Lakon Gugur untuk Mengangkat Komik Wayang dan Budaya Lokal*” This study focuses on designing comics with the *Kumbakarna Gugur* play as an effort to lift puppet comics and introduce local culture to the community, especially teenagers. The main problem raised is the declining appreciation of local comics due to the dominance of imported comics, as well as the lack of a professional comic industry in Indonesia. Through a visual communication design approach, this research tries to present wayang comics with illustrations that suit modern market tastes, without losing the essence of traditional culture. This comic is designed to be able to attract the attention of readers with a fresher visual style and a narrative that still emphasizes *pewayangan* values.

Previous studies have not specifically discussed the character of *Kumbakarna* in depth in the context of narrative and morals in the *Ramayana* epic. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the character of *Kumbakarna*, who is often reduced to an antagonist. The findings show that *Kumbakarna* is a complex and ambivalent figure; he not only supports *Rahwana* out of brotherly loyalty, but also out of nationalism and love for *Alengka*. In addition, this study reveals how the narrative structure of *wayang* conveys subtle moral values through *Kumbakarna's* characterization, providing new insights into the dynamics of characterization in *padalangan* art.

Thus through narrative analysis we can understand how ambivalence and symbolic dualism in the character of *Kumbakarna* is constructed in the *lakon Kumbakarna Gugur*. This character not only represents the conflict between loyalty to the state and individual moral considerations but also reflects the complexity in narrative construction that is not always black and white. By examining narratives in more depth we can explore hidden meanings that contribute to a broader understanding of the social and cultural values that continue to evolve in society (Rifwan & Purnama, 2015).

Characters in *wayang* stories often contain ambivalence and symbolic dualism that describe human nature. This phenomenon is very relevant when examining the character of *Kumbakarna* in the *lakon “Kumbakarna Gugur”* which is the center of analysis in this study. *Kumbakarna's* character is often positioned in a narrative structure that reflects binary opposition. According to Claude Levi-Strauss, (2008) argues “binary opposition is that most narratives in various media, such as books and films, contain a dichotomous (contradictory) structure that describes the main characters who are opposed to each other between good and evil, strength and weakness, and obedience and rebellion, according to the basic thoughts of the human mind”. The binary opposition seen in *Kumbakarna's* relationship with other characters such as *Rahwana* and *Rama* presents a picture of moral vacillation and ambivalence within the individual.

In narrative studies, Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative function provides a useful framework for analyzing *Kumbakarna's* role in the story structure. Propp, (1968) identifies certain functions in folklore that recur in different variants of the story such as providing assistance, obstruction, and overthrow, which can be applied to understand *Kumbakarna's* role in the *lakon*

“*Kumbakarna Gugur*”. For example *Kumbakarna* functions as an anti-hero who brings together the qualities of physical strength and kindness but also his attachment to loyalty towards his brother *Rahwana*. Through Vladimir Propp's theory, he explains how characters with specific functions such as *Kumbakarna* who acts as the guardian of the evil side play a key role in the development of the narrative. However, this character is not completely trapped in a black-and-white role. *Kumbakarna* shows the tension between the value of loyalty and resistance to evil that creates a deep moral ambivalence.

In the *lakon* “*Kumbakarna Gugur*” the depiction of *Kumbakarna's* death highlights the symbolic duality at the heart of the story. *Kumbakarna* is not only a symbol of physical strength but also a character who suffers from the conflict between his loyalty to his brother and the truth he believes in. This presents a picture of moral conflict that can be analyzed through the lens of Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition theory. This oppositional structure describes the way humans think and categorize their world in opposing forms but both are interconnected and necessary to form meaning in the narrative.

This study aims to delve deeper into the ambivalence and symbolic dualism contained in the character of *Kumbakarna* in the *lakon* using Vladimir Propp's narrative theory approach that focuses on the narrative functions that govern *Kumbakarna's* role in the storyline and Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition structure perspective that reveals the moral and symbolic dynamics in the story. This analysis will thus not only deepen the understanding of *Kumbakarna's* character but will also make an important contribution to understanding how wayang functions as a medium rich in meaning and values.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a narrative analysis method to examine the character of *Kumbakarna* in the *wayang golek lakon* “*Kumbakarna Gugur*”. This approach allows the author to explore the ambivalence and symbolic dualism reflected in the character of *Kumbakarna* by looking at the narrative function and symbolic structure that shape it (Farris Iskandar, Idola Perdini Putri, Freddy Yusanto, 2016).

Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative function is applied to analyze *Kumbakarna's* role in the storyline identifying specific functions he performs according to traditional narrative structures such as a helper and an obstacle in the hero's journey. In addition, Claude Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition theory is used to understand the moral tension within *Kumbakarna* who is caught between loyalty to *Rahwana* and sacrifice for the sake of the country that has provided enjoyment to his ancestors, family, parents and siblings.

The main sources of data in this study are the script of the *lakon* “*Kumbakarna Gugur*” and documentation of *wayang golek* performances including videos and live performances. Data were collected through literature study and direct observation of puppet performances as well as interviews with a *dalang* named Diynan Prayuga Sutisna, one of Adhi Konthea Kosasih's *dalang* students (Bowen, Glenn, 2009; Subandi, 2011).

The analysis was conducted using a narrative approach to map the function of the *Kumbakarna* character according to Vladimir Propp's theory. Through this approach, this research aims to uncover the symbolic and moral complexity of the *Kumbakarna* character and its contribution to the development of narrative and understanding of cultural values in *wayang golek*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the world of the *pewayangan Kumbakarna* is one of the characters with high character complexity that reflects various psychological, moral and social aspects. In the *lakon "Kumbakarna Gugur"* he is depicted as a figure who experiences existential vacillation between loyalty to his country *Alengka* and loyalty to his brother *Rahwana*. Narratives in *wayang golek* including the *lakon "Kumbakarna Gugur"* often contain philosophical values that not only function as entertainment but also as a medium of moral education for the community. This *lakon* reflects social and political dynamics that are relevant to various life contexts, making it a means of contemplating ethics, leadership, and the concept of heroism in Nusantara culture. Therefore, the narrative analysis of *Kumbakarna's* character is significant in exploring deeper meanings related to identity, responsibility and the battle between loyalty and moral principles in the social and political realms.

### The Story of "Kumbakarna Gugur" in the Epic Ramayana

The *wayang* story that is the object of study in this paper is *Kumbakarna Gugur*, a *lakon* that adapts the story of the *Ramayana* epic. *Ramayana* is one of the Hindu mythological epics originating from India, told in Sanskrit by Walmiki (Valmiki). The epic not only became part of the Indian literary tradition but also spread widely to various regions in Asia including Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, as well as the Malaysia and Javanese regions (Supriyono, Djumiran Ranta Admaja, Bambang Sukmo Pribadi, 2016).

The *Ramayana* is thought to have been written around 400 BC with the story taking place between 500 BC and 200 BC. The epic is divided into seven main sections (*kanda*) namely *Balakanda*, *Ayodhyakanda*, *Aranyakanda*, *Kiskindhakanda*, *Sundarakanda*, *Yudhakanda*, and *Uttarakanda*. In Java, the *Ramayana* developed in two main versions: *kakawin* (poetry) and prose, each of which originated from a different Indian text (M. A Salmun, 1986).



Figure 1. Wayang Golek Performance Lakon "Kumbakarna Gugur" (Source: YouTube PGH 3 Channel)

The main story of *Ramayana* centers on the journey of *Rama*, a prince from *Ayodya* who has to face various obstacles in his quest to save his wife *Dewi Sinta* from the clutches of *Rahwana*. *Sinta* was kidnapped by *Rahwana* when she was left alone in the forest and has since become a prisoner in the Kingdom of *Alengka*. *Rahwana*, the ruler of *Alengka* who had great power, fell in love with *Sinta*. Despite having many wives only *Sinta* was able to thrill him even though there was no marriage bond between them.

But *Sinta's* presence in *Alengka* brought bad consequences for the kingdom. The crops decreased and the prosperity of the kingdom was disrupted. This phenomenon caused a moral

quandary for *Kumbakarna*, *Rahwana*'s brother who was also a warlord. On the one hand, *Kumbakarna* was happy to see his brother find happiness. But on the other hand, he realized that *Rahwana* act of kidnapping *Sinta* was a big mistake that could potentially destroy the kingdom. In addition, the *Ayodya* side led by *Rama* demanded that *Sinta* be returned. *Rama* even threatened to attack *Alengka* if these demands were not met.

*Kumbakarna*, who is known as a knight who is loyal to his duty, tried to advise *Rahwana* to return *Sinta* to avoid the destruction of *Alengka*. At first, *Rahwana* refused because his feelings for *Sinta* were so deep. But after a long debate he was willing to accept *Kumbakarna*'s proposal on one condition: *Kumbakarna* must become a warlord and lead *Alengka*'s army in the battle against *Ayodya*. *Rahwana* considered that *Kumbakarna*'s opposition to *Sinta*'s abduction had become an obstacle to his ambition.

A great war ensued between the *Alengka* troops led by *Kumbakarna* against the *Ayodya* troops led by *Gunawan Wibisana* and *Laksamana*. *Gunawan Wibisana* who was also *Kumbakarna*'s brother felt confused to fight against his own brother. Therefore, he did not go directly to the battlefield but sent an army of apes led by *Hanoman*. In the battle *Kumbakarna* finally died at the hands of the *Ayodya* army. After this tragic event *Rahwana* was finally defeated and *Sinta* was rescued and returned to *Ayodya*.

Through this story, the research will analyze the main character, *Kumbakarna*, who has an important role in the dynamics of conflict between loyalty to the state and nation and loyalty to his brother. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of *Kumbakarna*'s character and the moral values contained therein.

### **Kumbakarna's Dualistic Identity: Between Loyalty and Truth**

One of the fundamental aspects of *Kumbakarna*'s character is his dual identity that reflects his moral and ethical complexity (Nurgiyantoro, 2011). As a giant and a member of *Rahwana*'s family, he has an obligation to defend his homeland *Alengka*. On the other hand, his conscience rejects the injustice committed by his brother *Rahwana*, especially in the context of *Sinta*'s abduction. In the play *Kumbakarna Gugur* this ethical vacillation reaches its peak when *Kumbakarna* must choose between his loyalty to the country and the moral truth he believes in.

Symbolically, this dualism reflects the inner struggle that humans often face in social life: between compliance with collective obligations and personal moral principles (Rifwan & Purnama, 2015). *Kumbakarna* chose to fight for his country even though he realized that the war was the consequence of an unethical decision. This decision reflects the values of loyalty in Sundanese culture that emphasize the importance of carrying out duties and responsibilities even when one does not fully align with one's leader.





Figure 2. The character of Kumbakarna who is trapped between loyalty to Rahwana (Source: Youtube PGH 3 Channel)

In the context of Vladimir Propp's structural theory, *Kumbakarna* can be categorized as a character with a dual function (Propp, 1968). On the one hand he acts as a helper in the narrative structure as an individual who supports his country in critical situations. But at the same time he can also be seen as a tragic hero who experiences deep internal conflict and must face the consequences of his choices. This role enriches the complexity of the narrative by displaying moral tension and heroism under less than ideal conditions.



Figure 3. When the character Kumbakarna sacrifices for the country that has given pleasure to his ancestors, family, parents, and siblings (Source: Youtube PGH 3 Channel)

Through this analysis, it can be concluded that the character of *Kumbakarna* not only represents a loyal warrior but also symbolizes a universal ethical vacillation: how one balances social obligation and moral righteousness. His story provides deep insights into the meaning of loyalty, sacrifice, and the complexity of moral decisions in human life.

### **The Ambivalence of Kumbakarna: Morals and Heroism**

*Kumbakarna* is one of the tragic heroes in the *Ramayana* epic, especially in the play *Kumbakarna Gugur*. He is portrayed as a valiant warrior but at the same time a victim of circumstances that he cannot control. His moral ambivalence arises from the fact that he is involved in a war that he does not agree with (Sri Mulyono, 1979). Nevertheless, his choice to fight for his homeland shows that his loyalty and moral principles are above personal interests. His courage in the face of death is not just a manifestation of his duty as a knight but also a form of devotion to the noble values he believes in.

In *wayang golek* narratives, characters with moral ambivalence are often presented to illustrate the complexity of humans in facing ethical vacillation. *Kumbakarna* in this case is not



simply a representation of antagonism but a symbol of pure loyalty and courage that is not driven by personal ambition. The story of *Kumbakarna Gugur* not only reflects the conflict between *Alengka* and *Rama's* army but also displays the inner battle of a warrior in determining his moral position in the midst of a war full of contradictory values.

From a structuralist perspective, the analysis of *Kumbakarna's* character can be studied using the binary opposition theory proposed by Claude Levi-Strauss (Claude Levi-Strauss, 2008). *Kumbakarna* symbolizes fundamental contradictions in the narrative such as loyalty versus truth, giant versus knight, and power versus morality. In this framework, *Kumbakarna* not only functions as a supporting character in the main conflict but also as a link that shows the complexity of the relationship between the two opposing camps: *Alengka* who is considered aggressive and *Rama* who is positioned as the defender of *dharma*. *Kumbakarna's* presence in the epic thus enriches the understanding of the story structure and illustrates how moral dynamics in classical epic can reflect ethical struggles in human life.

### Symbolism in Kumbakarna Character

In *wayang golek* performances the visualization of *Kumbakarna* often presents a paradox that reflects two conflicting but harmonious aspects of personality. His large face and sinister expression depicts courage and his physical strength reflects the figure of a tough knight in battle. But behind the fierce physical impression *Kumbakarna* also displays wisdom, sincerity, and simplicity in his dialogues. This shows that the symbolism of *Kumbakarna's* character is not only limited to physical representation but also contains deeper philosophical values, especially in the context of Sundanese culture (Tim Sena Wangi, 1999).

Furthermore, *Kumbakarna's* character reflects the concept of *manunggaling kawula gusti*, which is the unity between humans and the forces greater than them in both spiritual and social aspects (Sri Mulyono, 1982). His loyalty to his country despite contradicting his personal moral values shows sacrifice as a form of obedience to an inevitable destiny. In this regard, *Kumbakarna* can be compared to heroic figures in other epics such as *Karna* in the *Mahabharata* who also experienced a vacillation between his obligations and moral values. Thus the character of *Kumbakarna* is not just a character in *pewayangan* mythology but also represents universal values of sacrifice, loyalty, and courage in the face of life's uncertainties.



Figure 4. Wayang Golek Character Kumbakarna (Source: researcher documentation)

According to the *dalang* Diynan Prayuga Sutisna through the results of the interview “*Kumbakarna miboga dua pamadegan, kabiji anjeunna kudu bela kanu jadi lanceuk kaduana anjeunna miboga prinsip kudu melaan nagara Alengka nu diruksak ku Rahwana. Kumbakarna mah dina ati sanubari na teu satuju nu dilakukeun ku Rahwana malah ngenta dibalikeun deui Sinta teh kanu jadi carogena nyaeta ka Rama. Tapi ngaranna Rahwana miboga sifat egois, jadi tina dua pamadegan eta teh Kumbakarna tetep pengkuh manehna maju ka medan peperangan, hiji rek melaan nagara anu diruksak ku rakana Rahwana lain rek melaan hawa nafsu nu jadi rakana*”.

From the interview above, it can be concluded that although *Kumbakarna* internally rejects *Rahwana's* actions, especially in kidnapping *Sinta*, he still holds on to the belief that his country must be defended from destruction. This attitude shows the ambivalence within *Kumbakarna*: on the one hand he realizes that *Rahwana's* actions are against the principles of ethics and justice but on the other hand he feels a responsibility as a knight to protect his homeland. *Kumbakarna's* decision to fight in the war was not based on his loyalty to *Rahwana's* lust and ambition but on his sense of responsibility to his threatened country. This dichotomy illustrates how *Kumbakarna* symbolizes moral dualism in the *Ramayana* epic. A figure of moral complexity who illustrates the ethical dilemma between family loyalty and duty to country.

*Wayang* is not just a performing art or fairy tale but a reflection of life rich in moral, philosophical and symbolic values. Every play in *wayang* depicts the complex dynamics of life including the eternal battle between good and evil that represents the dualism of nature and *papasan* (Soepandi et al., 1998; Suwandono et al., 1991).

One such *lakon* that is rich in meaning is *Kumbakarna Gugur*, which shows how a character that has been considered an antagonist has extraordinary heroic value. *Kumbakarna*, despite being from *Rahwana's* side, who is considered an evil character, shows great loyalty to his country *Alengka*. His sacrifice was not solely out of loyalty to his brother *Rahwana* but rather his responsibility as a citizen who sticks to his principles. This attitude shows that the good or bad of a person is not solely determined by his position or job but by the moral values that are held firmly in his life (Hernawati & Utami, 2021; Permana, 2019).

In addition, the story of *Kumbakarna* also shows the emotional ambivalence of an individual who is faced with a moral quandary. As a younger brother he certainly wanted happiness for *Rahwana*. But on the other hand, he realized that *Rahwana's* act of kidnapping *Sinta* was something that could not be justified and would bring destruction to his own country. This realization makes *Kumbakarna* stick to his principle of defending his homeland without having to justify his brother's actions that violate norms and justice.

From a broader perspective, *wayang* is not just a spectacle but also a life guide that teaches wisdom, leadership, and the importance of maintaining the values of truth and justice. The stories in *wayang* hold local wisdom that is relevant to social, political and ethical life to this day. Therefore, understanding *wayang* does not only mean enjoying the performing arts but also contemplating the deep meanings contained therein as a reflection of life values.

## CONCLUSION

The *lakon Kumbakarna Gugur* in *wayang golek* represents the moral ambivalence and symbolic dualism inherent in the character of *Kumbakarna*. As the warlord of *Alengka*, he is torn between loyalty to his brother *Rahwana* and moral responsibility to his country. This study highlights how *Kumbakarna's* character is analyzed through Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative function and Claude Lévi-Strauss's binary opposition, revealing the complexity of his role and the philosophical

value contained therein. In Vladimir Propp's perspective, *Kumbakarna* has a dual function as donor and villain that adds depth to the narrative through its internal conflict. Meanwhile, based on Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition, *Kumbakarna* symbolizes the encounter between virtue and vice, obedience and resistance, and loyalty and moral righteousness. This duality reflects the dynamics of leadership and ethical battles that are still relevant in today's social and political context. Furthermore, the story of *Kumbakarna Gugur* teaches that heroism is not always black and white. *Kumbakarna* is not only an antagonist in the great *Ramayana* war but also a figure of high moral integrity who chooses to defend his country without having to justify his leader's decisions. His sacrifice is a reflection of a complex loyalty that is not just blind obedience but a form of responsibility to a larger social order. As part of the cultural heritage of the archipelago, *wayang golek* not only functions as a spectacle but also as a medium for moral education guidance that is rich in meaning. By understanding the narrative structure and symbolism in the story of *Kumbakarna*, we can see how the values of leadership, responsibility and sacrifice continue to be reflected in people's lives. This study confirms that *wayang golek* as a traditional performing art remains relevant in shaping the understanding of ethics and philosophy of life in modern society.

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