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Padmasana and the Aesthetic of the Sacred: Symbol and Spiritual Experience at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta

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Abstract. The *Padmasana*, a central element of Hindu temple architecture, embodies the intersection of art, spirituality, and philosophy. This study examines the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of the *Padmasana* at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta through a philosophical–semiotic approach, integrating Roland Barthes' theory of signs with the concept of the *aesthetic of the sacred*. Beyond its architectural form, the *Padmasana* represents a visual articulation of transcendence–linking the earthly, spiritual, and divine realms (*triloka*). Each component, from the lotus base to the *Garuda* and dragon figures, reveals a layered symbolism that unites Hindu cosmology with local Javanese–Balinese cultural expressions. Through field observation and interpretive analysis, this research reveals that the *Padmasana* functions as both a symbolic structure and an aesthetic experience of the sacred. It reflects the spiritual ascent of the human soul toward the divine while expressing values of harmony, balance, and universality. By highlighting how regional adaptations preserve philosophical depth within artistic form, the study contributes to understanding sacred architecture as a medium of cultural continuity and spiritual reflection in modern Hindu aesthetics.

Keywords. Padmasana, Jagatnatha temple, Bali temples.

1. *Introduction*

The *Padmasana* stands as one of the most profound expressions of sacred architecture in Balinese Hinduism, merging spirituality, symbolism, and aesthetic philosophy into a single architectural form. Beyond its physical appearance, the *Padmasana* embodies the metaphysical relationship between humanity and divinity, serving as a visual and spatial manifestation of cosmic harmony. Its tiered lotus structure, which symbolizes the *triloka* (three realms)–the earthly, spiritual, and divine worlds–represents the ascending journey of the soul toward ultimate truth (*satya*) (Wiana [2017]: 15-17). Ornamented with mythical figures such as *Garuda*, *Anantaboga*, and *Basuki*, the *Padmasana* reflects the fusion of protective power, cosmic balance, and divine revelation (Suartha [2019]: 113). Each element carries symbolic weight, uniting aesthetics and theology, form and faith, material structure and transcendental meaning (Subrata [2020]: 46-48).

The term *Padmasana* is derived from Kawi (Old Javanese), which in turn originates from Sanskrit, combining the words *Padma* («lotus flower» or «center») and *Asana* («being seated» or «guidance»). The lotus flower is a potent and ubiquitous symbol throughout Hindu–Buddhist art and philosophy, representing purity, divinity, and spiritual enlightenment (Smith [2018]: 68). It is commonly depicted as the seat or throne of deities, emerging pristine from the murky waters below. Thus, at its most fundamental level, the *Padmasana* is the «lotus throne» of God–a visual and metaphysical emblem of the divine presence that transcends material form (Mahendra, Arta [2020]: 102-104).

The historical development of this sacred shrine form is attributed to the 16th-century religious reformer Dang Hyang Nirartha, a Shaivite priest who migrated from Java to Bali following the decline of the Majapahit Empire. As recorded in the *Dwijendra Tattwa*, Nirartha established the *Padmasana* as the principal shrine for the worship of the supreme God, *Parama Shiva* (Idedhyana *et al*. [2020]: 170). This historical moment is crucial, for it establishes an indelible link between Balinese and Javanese theological traditions, positioning the *Padmasana* as a spiritual legacy of Hindu–Javanese cosmology preserved and evolved within Balinese religious thought (Schoenfelder [2011]: 149).

The primary function of the *Padmasana* is to serve as a *palinggih* (shrine or resting place) for the supreme, formless deity of Balinese Hinduism, *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, also known as *Acintya* («the inconceivable») or *Sang Hyang Taya* («the void») (Sunardi [2004]: 22). This concept of a transcendent, aniconic divinity demonstrates a sophisticated monotheistic theology within Balinese Hinduism (Pande [2015]: 78). In the modern context, it resonates with Indonesia's foundational ideology, *Pancasila*, specifically the principle of *Ketuhanan*

Yang Maha Esa (Belief in One Supreme God). The *Padmasana* thus serves as both a theological and cultural symbol, harmonizing ancient cosmology with modern spiritual identity (Krishna [2020]: 28-30).

Architecturally, the *Padmasana* represents a microcosm of the universe (*Bhuana Agung*). Its tripartite structure mirrors the cosmic hierarchy of *Tri Loka–Bhur Loka* (the underworld), *Bwah Loka* (the human world), and *Swah Loka* (the divine realm)–a vertical cosmology that guides the devotee's spiritual ascent (Subrata [2020]: 47; Guna [2017]: 603). The *Bhur Loka*, forming the base (*tepas*), represents the realm of primordial forces and is often adorned with depictions of *Bedawang Nala*, *Naga Anantaboga*, and *Naga Basuki*. These mythological beings embody the dynamic tension between creation and destruction, chaos and order, forming the foundation of cosmic stability (Raka [2020]: 18). The middle tier, *Bwah Loka* or *batur*, symbolizes the human realm, ornamented with motifs of flora, fauna, and deities of direction (*Astadikapala*), representing balance and interconnection within the living world (Yogantara, Pd [2024]: 25). The uppermost part, *Swah Loka*, culminates in the empty stone throne (*Singhasana*), symbolizing the invisible presence of the divine–a visual metaphor for transcendence beyond form (Murphy [2019]: 114-115).

This vertical structure transforms the act of worship into a spiritual pilgrimage through the cosmos. The devotee's gaze ascends from the depths of *Bhur Loka* toward the transcendental realm of *Swah Loka*, mirroring the soul's journey toward liberation (*moksha*). The carvings on the *tepas* are not mere decoration; they are semiotic articulations of metaphysical principles (Barthes [1972]: 89). *Bedawang Nala*, the cosmic turtle, supports the world upon its shell, representing the latent energy of the earth's core. Entwined around it, *Naga Anantaboga* and *Naga Basuki* restrain and stabilize this immense force–symbols of elemental balance between earth and water, the foundation upon which all life and order rest (Wiana [2017]: 19).

In the Balinese context, the *Padmasana* functions as the *axis mundi*–a sacred vertical axis linking heaven, earth, and the underworld. It is the site where ritual, art, and philosophy converge to express humanity's longing for unity with *Hyang Widhi Wasa* (Hall [1997]: 33). Scholars such as Wiana ([2017]: 16) and Suartha ([2019]: 115) have examined the *Padmasana* primarily as a ritualistic element of temple architecture; however, its philosophical and aesthetic significance has been less explored. The *Padmasana* at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta offers a compelling extension of this inquiry. Situated within a Javanese cultural landscape characterized by syncretism and pluralism, the temple's *Padmasana* recontextualizes Balinese sacred architecture within a Javanese philosophical framework that emphasizes *rukun* (harmony), balance, and humility (Rismalasari *et al*. [2023]: 80).

The coexistence of Balinese and Javanese symbolic systems within this shrine demonstrates the adaptability and universality of sacred forms. It also

reflects the continuity of Hindu metaphysical ideas that transcend regional and temporal boundaries (Seneviratne [2018]: 36). This study, therefore, investigates the *Padmasana* at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta through a philosophical–semiotic lens, integrating Roland Barthes' theory of signification with the concept of the *aesthetic of the sacred* (Lustyantie [2016]: 58; Sunardi [2004]: 25). By analyzing its denotative, connotative, and mythical dimensions, the research seeks to reveal how sacred architecture communicates transcendence through visual and spatial language, and how aesthetic experience can serve as a medium for spiritual awareness (Mahendra, Arta [2020]: 110; Schoenfelder [2011]: 151).

Ultimately, this research situates the *Padmasana* within broader philosophical discussions on beauty, truth, and divinity. Through the principles of *Tri Hita Karana* and the experiential understanding of *rasa* and *taksu*, the *Padmasana* is revealed as a living embodiment of *aisthesis*: the unity of sensory perception and metaphysical insight. In this way, it becomes both a physical structure and a metaphysical bridge–uniting art and faith, culture and spirituality, the human and the divine (Pradoko [2015]: 56; Dewi *et al*. [2024]: 9).

2. *Method*

This study employs a qualitative and interpretative approach utilizing artifact analysis to explore the symbolic, architectural, and cultural meanings of the *Padmasana* at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta. The method focuses on examining the physical attributes of the *Padmasana*, including its tiered lotus structure, the *rong* or divine throne at the apex, and various symbolic ornaments such as *Garuda*, *Anantaboga*, and *Basuki*. Data were collected through a comprehensive review of photographic documentation, architectural records, and historical sources related to the temple and its significance within the local Hindu community (Pande [2015]: 76; Seneviratne [2018]: 36). The research employs Roland Barthes' semiotic framework to interpret the *Padmasana* through three interconnected levels of meaning: denotative, referring to its literal and structural form; connotative, revealing its symbolic and spiritual interpretations; and mythical, expressing the synthesis of Hindu cosmology with local Javanese cultural values (Barthes [1972]: 89).

This semiotic reading is further supported by a philosophical–aesthetic perspective, emphasizing that sacred architecture embodies transcendence through form, perception, and interpretation (Hall [1997]: 35; Murphy [2019]: 115). Through this integrated framework, the *Padmasana* is understood not merely as a physical monument but as a communicative and contemplative medium that unites art, faith, and culture. The methodology thus enables a deeper understand-

ing of how the *Padmasana* transcends geographical and cultural boundaries while maintaining its theological essence and spiritual vitality within the unique socio-religious context of Yogyakarta.

3. *Results and Discussion*

Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta stands as a monumental expression of spiritual devotion and cultural identity within the complex religious landscape of Java. The temple not only functions as a site of Hindu worship but also represents a symbolic space where Balinese and Javanese worldviews converge into a unified sacred architecture. Strategically located near the northern square of the Yogyakarta Palace, the temple's placement is deeply meaningful: it articulates a cosmic axis connecting the divine order of the heavens with the temporal order of the kingdom, symbolizing the harmony between spiritual and political power. This proximity to the royal center also underscores the temple's historical dialogue with Javanese notions of sacred geography, where the temple (*pura*) and palace (*kraton*) exist as twin poles in maintaining cosmic balance and moral order within society.

Architecturally, *Pura Jagatnatha* reflects the principles of Hindu cosmology and the indigenous Javanese aesthetic of harmony (*rukun*) and balance (*tata titi tentrem*). The temple is divided into three main courtyards that correspond to the tripartite structure of the universe, known as the *Tri Loka*: the *nista mandala* (outer courtyard), representing the earthly world; the *madya mandala* (middle courtyard), symbolizing the human sphere of activity; and the *utama mandala* (inner sanctum), which embodies the realm of the divine. This tripartite spatial organization functions not only as a ritual path of ascension for the worshipper but also as a philosophical representation of human spiritual evolution–from the profane toward the sacred, from the immanent toward the transcendent. The temple's axial orientation and open-air design allow worshippers to engage directly with the natural elements–earth, air, and light–thereby materializing the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*, the harmonious relationship among humans, nature, and the divine.

At the heart of the temple stands the *Padmasana*, the central shrine and the most sacred architectural feature. Its form, a vertical composition rising from a broad lotus-shaped base toward a tiered peak, embodies the metaphysical principle of ascent–the human journey toward the divine. The *Padmasana* symbolizes the seat of *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, the Supreme Deity, and serves as a physical and metaphysical representation of the cosmos. The lotus (*padma*), which forms its foundation, is not merely a decorative motif but a profound philosophical symbol representing purity, spiritual enlightenment,

and the emergence of divine consciousness from the depths of material existence. The upward-reaching structure mirrors the cosmic order, uniting the realms of *Bhur Loka* (the underworld), *Bwah Loka* (the human world), and *Swah Loka* (the celestial world). Each level of the structure is adorned with symbolic ornamentation–floral patterns, mythical guardians, and serpent figures–that collectively narrate the dynamic interplay between the visible and the invisible, the material and the divine.

The *Padmasana*'s rich ornamentation also demonstrates the temple's aesthetic sophistication and its role as a living embodiment of religious philosophy. The carvings of *Garuda*, *Anantaboga*, and *Basuki* are not merely artistic embellishments but act as visual theology, each representing elements of creation, preservation, and cosmic balance. The intertwining vines and floral patterns evoke the continuous flow of life energy (*prana*), while the symmetrical arrangement of decorative elements reflects the Hindu aesthetic principle of *rwa bhineda*–the unity of opposites. This concept, which emphasizes the coexistence of dualities such as beauty and strength, heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, is central to Balinese and Javanese thought alike. Through this visual language, the *Padmasana* transforms from a static structure into a metaphysical text–an architectural scripture that embodies the sacred order of the universe.

Materially, the *Padmasana* is constructed from andesite stone, a volcanic rock chosen for its endurance and symbolic association with resilience and stability. In this choice of material, one can discern a deeper metaphysical significance: just as the stone withstands the passage of time and the forces of nature, so too does faith endure amidst the changes of the world. The use of natural stone also connects the temple to the earth, grounding spiritual aspiration within the reality of the material world. The peak of the *Padmasana*, shaped like a *meru* or mountain, reinforces this symbolic relationship between heaven and earth. The mountain form–central to Hindu-Buddhist cosmology as *Mahameru*, the axis of the world–signifies the eternal ascent toward enlightenment and the divine presence that permeates all existence.

Functionally, *Pura Jagatnatha* serves as the principal center of Hindu religious life in Yogyakarta. It is a space where faith and community intertwine, where ritual practice becomes a medium for preserving cultural memory and transmitting spiritual knowledge. Daily worship, offerings (*canang sari*), and communal rituals reinforce social cohesion while affirming the continuous presence of the divine within community life. The temple is especially significant during major ceremonies such as *Nyepi* (the Day of Silence), *Galungan*, and *Kuningan*, as well as in rites of passage including weddings, cremations, and purification rituals. These events are not merely religious observances but also expressions of cultural continuity, binding the community through shared symbols and collective devotion.



Figure 1. Jagatnatha Temple Yogyakarta

Beyond its ritual function, the temple acts as a cultural and educational center for the Hindu community, hosting traditional dance performances, scriptural recitations, and discussions on philosophy and ethics. In this way, *Pura Jagatnatha* extends its sacred function into the social sphere, nurturing not only spiritual growth but also cultural resilience. It embodies the living synthesis of art, religion, and community–a microcosm of harmony where aesthetic form becomes a vessel of philosophical truth. Through its architecture and ongoing ritual life, *Pura Jagatnatha* exemplifies how sacred spaces in Indonesia continue to adapt and evolve, reflecting both the timeless principles of Hindu metaphysics and the local genius of Javanese cultural expression.

Thus, the *Pura Jagatnatha* of Yogyakarta transcends its role as a physical monument. It stands as a living testimony of the aesthetic of the sacred–where architecture becomes a form of contemplation, ornament becomes language, and space becomes a bridge between humanity and the divine. Its enduring presence reveals the capacity of sacred art to unite diverse traditions, affirm spiritual identity, and sustain harmony amidst the plural realities of contemporary life in Indonesia.

The interplay of symbolic and theological meanings within the Padmasana can also be understood through Peircean semiotics, where the image operates as an "iconic sign" that participates in the triadic relation between object, representamen, and interpretant (Eco [1979]: 14). In the Balinese context, this triadic system resonates with the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy–the harmony among

God, humans, and nature–which situates the act of seeing (*darśana*) as both aesthetic and devotional (Tilakasiri [1993]: 62). The Garuda and the divine throne, therefore, are not only mythic representations but epistemological devices that mediate human perception of transcendence (Gell [1998]: 19; Coomaraswamy [1956]: 88). From this perspective, the Padmasana functions as what Panofsky termed an "iconological synthesis," where form and meaning are inseparable within the cultural logic of sacred expression (Panofsky [1955]: 29).

Moreover, when interpreted through Heidegger's concept of *dwelling* (*Bauen Wohnen Denken*), the Padmasana becomes a site where the divine reveals itself through built space–*aletheia*, or the unconcealment of Being (Heidegger [1971]: 154). The act of worship in front of the Padmasana thus corresponds to an ontological participation: an encounter between human finitude and divine infinity mediated through material form (Eliade [1959]: 21; Gombrich [1960]: 31). This convergence of aesthetics, symbolism, and theology reinforces the thesis that the Padmasana embodies an *aesthetic ontology*–a sacred art that discloses metaphysical truth through visual form and ritual experience (Kandinsky [1912]: 37; Belting [1994]: 46).

The figure illustrates the vertical cosmological composition of the *Padmasana*, one of the most sacred architectural forms in Balinese Hinduism and a central feature of *Pura Jagatnatha* Yogyakarta. The structure visually embodies the Hindu–Balinese conception of the universe, known as *Bhuana Agung* (the Great World), which integrates metaphysical, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions. Its tripartite vertical arrangement corresponds to the *Tri Loka*–the three realms of existence: *Bhur Loka* (the underworld), *Bwah Loka* (the human world), and *Swah Loka* (the celestial world).

At the base of the structure lies *Badawang Nala*, the cosmic tortoise that supports the universe. In Balinese cosmology, *Badawang Nala* represents the primordial foundation of existence, a chthonic force that embodies the elemental power of the earth. The tortoise is entwined by two sacred serpents, *Anantaboga* and *Basuki*, whose intertwined forms stabilize and regulate the world. *Anantaboga* symbolizes the earth and its solidity, while *Basuki* represents the ocean and the life-giving principle of water. Together, this triad functions as a semiotic expression of cosmic equilibrium–an articulation of the divine order imposed upon primordial chaos. The base thus signifies both physical and moral stability, reminding humanity of its duty to maintain balance between material and spiritual forces.

The middle section, *Bwah Loka,* represents the human realm–the domain of moral action, creativity, and social harmony. This portion of the structure is often adorned with floral and animal motifs, as well as depictions of guardian deities (*Astadikapala*), symbolizing humanity's role as mediator between the natural and divine worlds. The aesthetic principle of *rwa bhineda*–the harmony of op-

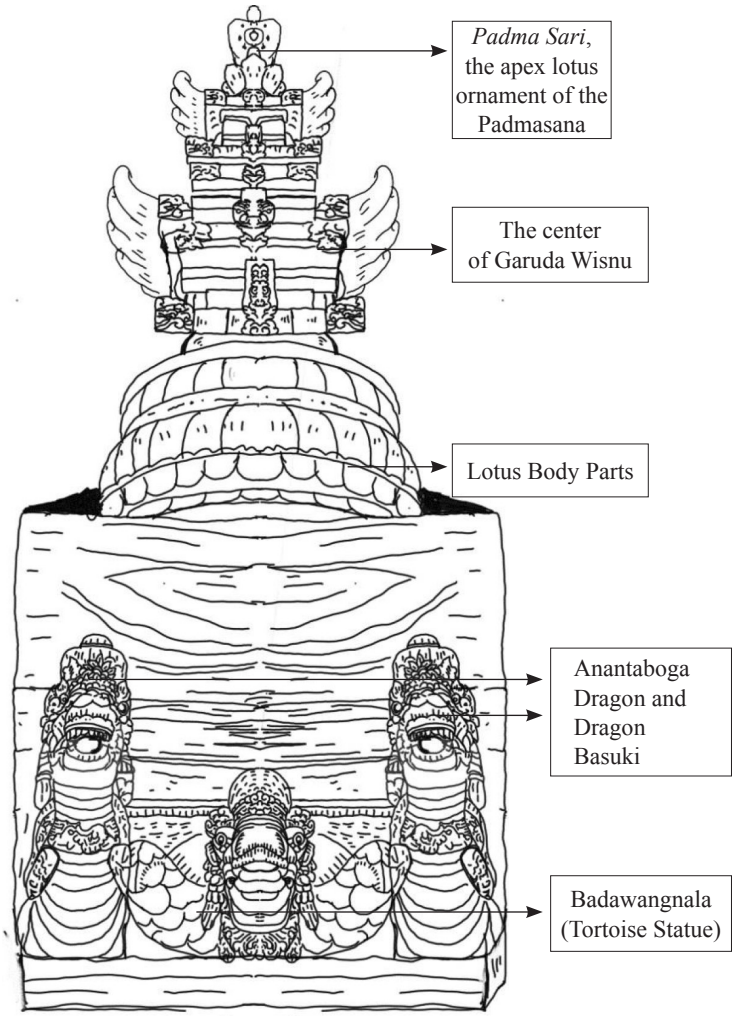


Figure 2. Sketch of Padmasana

wposites–is embodied here through the balanced composition of natural and divine elements, expressing the Hindu philosophical concept of interdependence between the visible and the invisible, the finite and the infinite.

The uppermost section, *Swah Loka,* embodies the celestial realm and culminates in the *Singhasana*, the empty stone throne that serves as the seat of *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, the Supreme God. The emptiness of the throne conveys a profound theological message: divinity is formless, transcendent, and beyond human comprehension (*Acintya*). Occasionally, a small gilded figure of *Acintya* is depicted above or behind the throne, represented in a dynamic pos-

ture resembling *Shiva Nataraja*, the cosmic dancer whose movement sustains and dissolves the universe. The vertical ascent of the structure–from the chaotic, subterranean energies of *Badawang Nala* to the serene void of the *Singhasana*–constitutes a metaphysical journey that mirrors the human soul's progression toward enlightenment.

The *Padmasana* thus operates not merely as a ritual object or architectural form, but as a symbolic and philosophical diagram of the cosmos. It encapsulates the essence of Balinese metaphysics, uniting theology, semiotics, and aesthetics in a single sacred composition. The upward gaze of the devotee during prayer signifies an experiential ascension through the three realms, transforming worship into a philosophical act of contemplation. In this sense, the *Padmasana* manifests what might be called the "aesthetic of the sacred"–a convergence of visual beauty, symbolic meaning, and spiritual truth that continues to define the cultural and religious identity of Hindu communities in Bali and Yogyakarta alike.

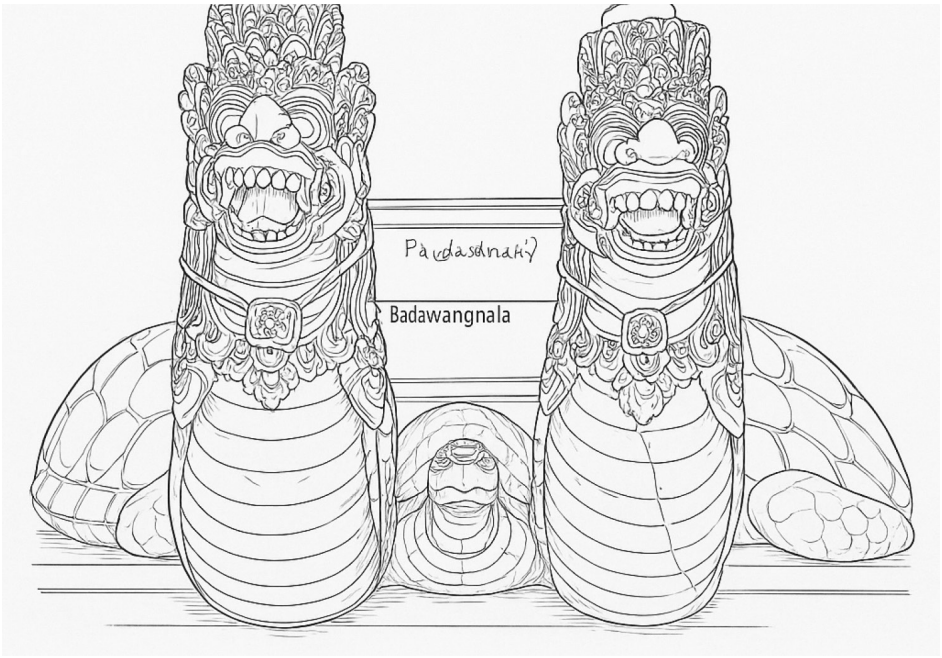


Figure 3. Anantaboga and Basuki dragons

The intertwined figures of *Anantaboga* and *Basuki* surrounding *Bedawangnala* at the base of the *Padmasana* form a rich semiotic structure that encapsulates layers of meaning extending from the material to the metaphysical. Interpreted

through Roland Barthes' three-tiered model of signification–denotation, connotation, and myth–the image operates as a language of the sacred that visually communicates philosophical and cosmological ideas. At the denotative level, the twin Nagas are represented as serpentine guardians carved from volcanic stone, flanking the tortoise at the shrine's foundation. Their physical form, characterized by rhythmic curves and ornamental detail, manifests the Balinese commitment to symmetry and precision, embodying the literal function of divine protectors who stabilize the world.

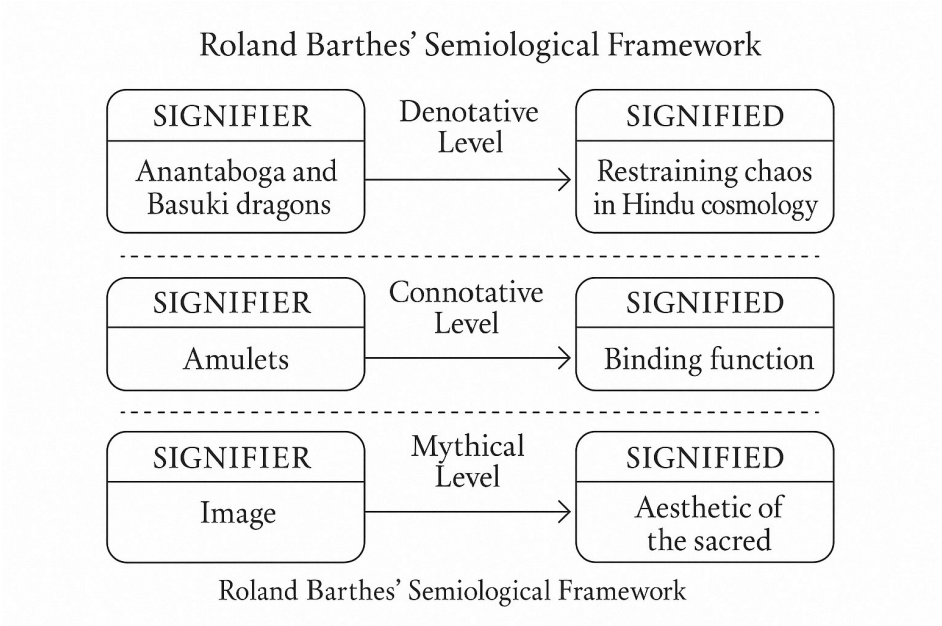


Figure 4. Roland Barthes' Semiological Framework

At the connotative level, these figures transcend their literal appearance to signify balance, protection, and the coexistence of opposites. The entwined serpents symbolize *rwa bhineda*–the Balinese principle of dual harmony–where *Anantaboga* represents the solidity of earth and *Basuki* the fluidity of water. The visual dialectic between the two evokes a dynamic equilibrium between stillness and movement, permanence and transformation, suggesting that cosmic and moral stability emerges from the tension of opposites held in harmony. The tortoise beneath them, *Bedawangnala*, serves as the axis of this harmony, supporting both the physical structure of the temple and the metaphysical order of the universe.

At the mythic level, the imagery communicates a universal cosmological narrative, transforming the cultural symbol into an archetype of divine order. Within Hindu-Balinese cosmology, *Anantaboga* and *Basuki* restrain the volatile force of *Bedawangnala* to prevent the world from collapsing into chaos. This act of containment expresses a profound metaphysical truth–that creation itself depends on the continuous negotiation between chaos and order, destruction and renewal. The myth thus naturalizes the philosophical idea of balance into a sacred truth, transforming the temple base into a visual scripture of cosmic ethics.

Through this semiotic lens, the Naga composition becomes an instance of what Barthes describes as the transformation of cultural signs into mythic meaning: a process through which art communicates collective belief as natural law. The *Padmasana*'s foundation, therefore, does not merely illustrate mythological beings but embodies a metaphysical structure of existence. It reveals how art and architecture can function as semiotic mediators between sensory perception and transcendent understanding. In this synthesis of image and idea, the aesthetic of the sacred emerges–where the visual form becomes both a reflection and revelation of the divine order, guiding perception (*aisthesis*) toward metaphysical insight. In philosophical terms, the *Padmasana*'s symbolic configuration exemplifies what can be described as the *aesthetic of the sacred*–a mode of perception in which beauty becomes a medium for metaphysical revelation. Through the semiotic process delineated by Barthes, the carved forms of *Anantaboga*, *Basuki*, and *Bedawangnala* are not merely artistic expressions but semiological pathways that guide consciousness from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the transcendent. The image speaks a language that unites *aisthesis* (the act of sensing) with *noesis* (the act of knowing), demonstrating that perception itself can become a form of spiritual cognition. In this sense, sacred architecture functions as a hermeneutic field–where myth, art, and philosophy converge into an experiential understanding of divine order.

Within this interpretative framework, the *Padmasana* stands not only as a cultural artifact but as an ontological statement. The serpents and tortoise do not merely guard the temple; they articulate the structure of being itself, embodying a dialogue between chaos and cosmos, matter and spirit. The balanced interplay of these forces, visually and symbolically rendered, mirrors the human quest for inner harmony and spiritual enlightenment. Thus, the *Padmasana* reveals the essence of *Aisthesis*: the awakening of perception that allows the beholder to encounter beauty not as ornament, but as manifestation of truth. Through its semiotic depth and philosophical resonance, the *Padmasana* becomes both an artwork and a meditation–a space where architecture transforms into revelation, and vision becomes an act of contemplation.



Figure 5. Garuda Wisnu

The *Garuda Wisnu Padmasana* represents a visual synthesis of divine authority, cosmic balance, and theological symbolism, embodying the aesthetic of sacred order in Hindu-Balinese architecture. Through the semiotic framework of Roland Barthes, the structure can be interpreted across three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth.

At the denotative level, the sculpture presents a literal depiction of Garuda with outstretched wings supporting the seated figure of Lord Wisnu above, crowned by an urn symbolizing divine essence. The composition is vertically aligned, directing the observer's gaze upward toward transcendence. The stone carving–meticulously balanced and proportioned–communicates a tangible sense of elevation and sacred symmetry.

At the connotative level, the relationship between Garuda and Wisnu transforms into a symbolic expression of divine protection and cosmic harmony. Garuda, the mythic bird, embodies strength, loyalty, and liberation, while Wisnu represents preservation and the sustaining power of the cosmos. Their union con-

veys the theological principle of cooperation between divine energy (*shakti*) and wisdom (*jnana*), a dynamic balance that ensures the continuity of life and order in the universe. The wings of Garuda symbolize the expansive power of faith, while the calm posture of Wisnu evokes serenity and the spiritual discipline of divine governance.

At the mythical level, as articulated in Barthes's theory of cultural signification, the *Garuda Wisnu Padmasana* transcends its physical form and becomes a grand metaphor for divine sustenance. It enacts the perpetual myth of balance between chaos and order, mortality and eternity, human devotion and divine benevolence. Within this mythic register, the sculpture affirms the philosophical ideal that the cosmos itself is maintained through harmony between spiritual ascent and ethical restraint. The *Padmasana* thus functions not merely as an object of worship but as a semiotic system–an architectural scripture that encodes metaphysical concepts through aesthetic form.

In this interpretative framework, the *Garuda Wisnu Padmasana* expresses what can be termed an aesthetic of the sacred–a mode of visual discourse where art becomes theology in stone. Its form speaks of transcendence not through representation but through structure, rhythm, and symbolic integration, transforming architecture into a language of divine revelation and human understanding.

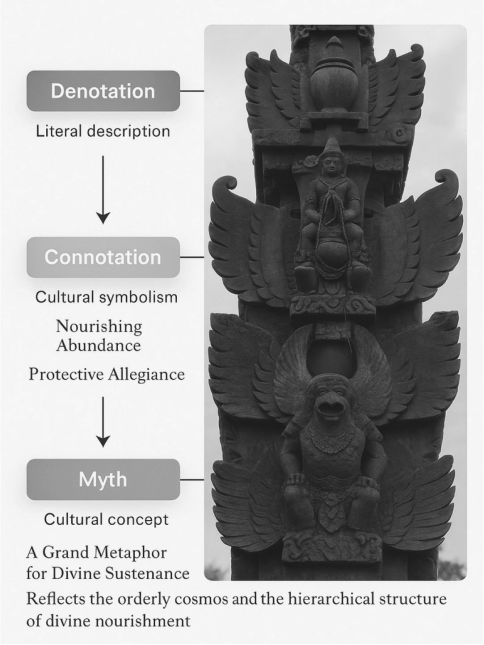


Figure 6. Garuda Wisnu Analisis

At the denotative level, the upper structure of the *Padmasana* presents a vertical arrangement of three main iconographic elements: a Garuda figure at the base, a deity seated in meditation above it, and an empty lotus-shaped throne at the peak. The sculpture is carved with refined symmetry, where the outspread wings of Garuda visually support the divine figure, and the open space of the upper throne forms the focal point. Each element is positioned with precise balance, creating a sense of upward motion that directs the viewer's gaze toward transcendence.

At the connotative level, this composition expresses the philosophical journey from the material to the spiritual realm. The Garuda represents strength, protection, and the power of liberation; its wings embody freedom and the dynamic force that elevates the soul. The meditating deity symbolizes spiritual discipline, purity, and enlightenment – the stillness within movement. The empty throne at the top suggests the presence of the divine in its most abstract form, emphasizing the idea of transcendence beyond representation. Together, these symbols create a visual dialogue between movement and stillness, form and formlessness, signifying the harmony between human effort and divine grace.

At the mythical level, the structure transforms into a cosmological narrative. The Garuda becomes the guardian of the world, carrying divine truth through the realms of existence. The seated deity represents the union of wisdom and compassion, while the empty throne signifies the highest, ineffable reality – the ultimate source of being that transcends all forms. This triadic configuration reflects the cycle of creation, preservation, and transcendence. The vertical composition thus mirrors the human spiritual ascent: from the grounded strength of faith, through contemplation and devotion, toward the realization of the divine essence.

In essence, this upper section of the *Padmasana* operates as a sacred semiotic system – a visual scripture that encodes theological and metaphysical concepts into form. It communicates not through words but through the rhythm of line, proportion, and gesture. The interplay of these elements transforms the architectural object into a living symbol of balance, purity, and cosmic unity.

4. *Conclusion*

The *Padmasana* of Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta serves as a profound architectural testament to the unity of art, philosophy, and spirituality within the Hindu-Balinese tradition. Through a semiotic analysis grounded in Roland Barthes' framework, this study reveals that the Padmasana operates simultaneously as an aesthetic object and a theological discourse. Each of its components – from the intertwined serpents of Anantaboga and Basuki at the foundation to the Garuda-Wisnu configuration at its peak – encodes layers of meaning that move from the

denotative to the mythical. The result is a sacred visual language that communicates the metaphysical structure of the cosmos and the ethical responsibility of maintaining balance between the human and the divine.

In the cultural context of Yogyakarta, the Padmasana embodies more than the transposition of Balinese Hindu architecture; it becomes an intercultural symbol of spiritual adaptation and philosophical synthesis. The integration of Javanese notions of *rukun* (harmony) and *tata titi tentrem* (cosmic order) enriches the temple's symbolic structure, illustrating the dialogical relationship between local wisdom and universal religious expression. The Padmasana thus transcends its material form to function as a living semiotic system – a continuous negotiation between aesthetics and transcendence, between cultural diversity and metaphysical unity.

Ultimately, this study affirms that sacred architecture, when read through the lens of semiotics, can be understood as a dynamic medium of philosophical reflection. The *Padmasana* at Pura Jagatnatha Yogyakarta is not merely an artifact of devotion but a visual articulation of *aisthesis* – a sensory encounter that awakens awareness of the sacred. It embodies the ontological dialogue between beauty and truth, revealing that art, in its highest form, is a path toward the comprehension of divine reality.

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