

Pedagogical Reinterpretation of *Kakawin Nilacandra* for Deep Learning: A Model of Hindu Character Education

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Abstract: A Deep Learning approach based on mindfulness, meaningfulness, and joy has become a focus of educational transformation in Indonesia; however, integrating this modern concept with local wisdom remains a challenge. This study presents a pedagogical reinterpretation of *Kakawin Nilacandra*, a Balinese literary work that narrates King Nilacandra's spiritual journey toward wisdom, self-control, and ethical leadership through Śiwa-Buddha teachings. Using a qualitative approach, the study employs content analysis and hermeneutic interpretation, supported by triangulation and textual evidence. The findings reveal that *Kakawin Nilacandra* embodies educational values closely aligned with Deep Learning principles. The reinterpretation identifies three sequential learning stages: self-awareness, self-transformation, and self-internalization. It also demonstrates the text's relevance to teaching modules and its potential application in language, character, history, and citizenship education. These findings highlight how the reinterpretation of local literary wisdom can contribute to culturally grounded pedagogical innovation and support the implementation of Deep Learning in Indonesia.

Keywords: deep learning; Hindu character education; *Kakawin Nilacandra*; pedagogical reinterpretation; local wisdom

1. Introduction

The Deep Learning approach has become a central focus within Indonesia's current educational landscape. This approach is built upon three core principles: mindful, meaningful, and joyful, which are colloquially simplified by the term "Deep Learning Ful-Ful". This Deep Learning concept is expected to revolutionize classroom teaching and learning methods (Fajri, 2025).

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Consequently, the design of the Deep Learning approach in Indonesia must be carefully tailored to meet various contemporary educational demands (Wijaya, 2025, p. 10).

Deep Learning is designed to provide students with a profound learning experience that encompasses understanding, application, and reflection (Bråten & Skeie, 2020). Learning experience itself is a process through which individuals internalize knowledge, develop skills, and form attitudes and values. This process is not limited to formal environments like schools; it also occurs in the workplace, at home, and in daily life through interactions with materials, educators, peers, or the surrounding environment (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 32). In character education, students must be able to internalize various types of knowledge through intellectual development, spiritual and emotional development, affective and creativity development, and physical and kinesthetics development (Abdillah, 2019, p. 42).

The concept of Deep Learning emphasizes the importance of a student's internal engagement through reflective thinking, connecting knowledge with life experiences, and the ability to reassess personal values or beliefs (Dieudé & Prøitz, 2024). Interestingly, these values have long been present in various traditional literary texts, including the *Kakawin Nilacandra*. *Kakawin Nilacandra* is an important Balinese literary text that portrays King Nīlācandra's spiritual journey and embodies moral, spiritual, and educational values.

Character education has become one of the central concerns of contemporary education, particularly in efforts to develop learners who possess not only cognitive competence but also moral, social, and spiritual integrity. Within the context of Hindu education, character formation is inseparable from the cultivation of ethical values, self-discipline, wisdom, responsibility, and spiritual awareness. Hindu educational traditions have long emphasized the importance of integrating knowledge, morality, and devotion as a holistic process of human development. However, educational practices often remain focused on knowledge transmission, while the internalization of values and character formation receives less attention. This situation highlights the need for educational approaches capable of fostering deeper engagement, reflection, and meaningful learning experiences (Gunada, Pramana, & Rudiarta, 2021, p. 311; Perbowosari & Rudiadnyana, 2024, p. 476).

The implementation of Deep Learning, however, requires culturally relevant learning resources that resonate with learners' social and cultural backgrounds. In the context of Hindu education, local literary traditions offer a valuable source of educational wisdom that can support the development of character-based learning. Among these traditions, *Kakawin Nilacandra* represents an important literary work containing moral, spiritual, and educational

teachings. The text narrates the spiritual journey of King Nīlācandra and presents various values related to self-control, ethical leadership, compassion, social responsibility, wisdom, and spiritual fulfillment. These values have significant potential to support contemporary educational goals, particularly those related to character development and Deep Learning.

Several previous studies on *Kakawin Nilacandra* have primarily focused on its philological aspects, literary structure, religious teachings, the *Śīwa–Buddha* encounter, and the cultural values embedded in the text (Poniman, 2019, p. 1; Widiyana & Indrayani, 2020, p. 101; Geria & Yudha, 2022, p. 212; Purwanto & Wedana, 2026, p. 81). Previous studies have predominantly interpreted the text from theological, literary, philological, and cultural perspectives. Consequently, *Kakawin Nilacandra* has mainly been understood as a source of religious doctrine and literary heritage. Little attention has been given to its pedagogical structure as a narrative of learning and character formation. More importantly, no previous study has systematically examined how the educational processes embedded in *Kakawin Nilacandra* correspond to the principles of contemporary Deep Learning. This study contributes a new perspective by reinterpreting *Kakawin Nilacandra* as a pedagogically structured literary text whose narrative embodies the principles of meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning for Hindu character education (Baginda, 2016, p. 8).

This research gap is significant because integrating local wisdom into modern educational theory can enrich educational practices in Indonesia. Furthermore, studying the relationship between traditional literature and Deep Learning has the potential to open new horizons in understanding how past societies viewed the learning process as a form of self-transformation. This research is also relevant to the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes character strengthening, creativity, problem-solving, and high-order thinking skills. By extracting educational values from traditional works, educational institutions can develop learning models that are not only modern but also deeply rooted in the nation's culture.

In addition, the findings of this study have practical implications for contemporary educational practices in Indonesia. The educational values identified in *Kakawin Nilacandra* may serve as a foundation for the development of learning modules, instructional materials, and classroom activities that integrate local wisdom into the educational process. These resources can support the implementation of Deep Learning by fostering reflective inquiry, contextual understanding, ethical reasoning, and meaningful learning experiences among students. Furthermore, the integration of *Kakawin Nilacandra* into instructional modules may assist teachers in aligning curriculum objectives with culturally relevant content, thereby strengthening character education and promoting

more contextualized and culturally responsive learning environments in Indonesian schools (Fajri & Amrin, 2025, p. 25).

Based on the description provided above, the research questions to be addressed are: (1) what are the educational values in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* that align with the principles of Deep Learning? and (2) how are the educational values in *Kakawin Nilacandra* relevant to teaching practices in Indonesia, particularly as manifested in teaching modules?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Deep Learning in Indonesia

Deep Learning, originally introduced by Marton and Säljö (1976), emphasizes learners' active construction of meaning through critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and the application of knowledge across diverse contexts (Biggs & Tang, 2011, pp. 30–40; Sarnoto, 2025, p. 4). Its educational significance has influenced curriculum reforms in several countries, including Norway, where it has been integrated into the national curriculum since 2020 to foster broad competencies, reflective learning, and knowledge transfer (Bråten & Skeie, 2020, pp. 1–16).

Several other countries have also implemented Deep Learning to create a supportive environment for students to achieve their competencies, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, and Finland (Tan et al., 2017, p. 425; Halinen, 2018, p. 74; Dieudé & Prøitz, 2024, p. 28). In 2024, Indonesia initiated the discourse on the implementation of Deep Learning (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 25). The concept of Deep Learning in Indonesia is formulated as a “dignifying” approach that emphasizes the creation of a learning atmosphere and process that is mindful, meaningful, and joyful through the holistic and integrated development of the mind, heart, feeling, and body. The Deep Learning framework consists of four components: (1) graduate profile dimensions, (2) learning principles, (3) learning experiences, and (4) the learning framework (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 26) (Figure 1).

The learning principles form the fundamental characteristics of Deep Learning: mindful, meaningful, and joyful. Mindfulness is a state in which students undergo the learning process with full awareness, enabling them to engage actively and manage themselves during learning activities (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 30). Meaningful learning occurs when students are able to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, moving beyond mere information comprehension to practical utility (Elyana and Agustiningrum, 2025, p. 91). Joyful learning is created through a positive, challenging, and enjoyable learning atmosphere that is capable of arousing motivation. When students experience joy, their emotional connection to the material increases, making

understanding, memory, and the application of knowledge easier (Elyana and Agustiningrum, 2025, p. 92).

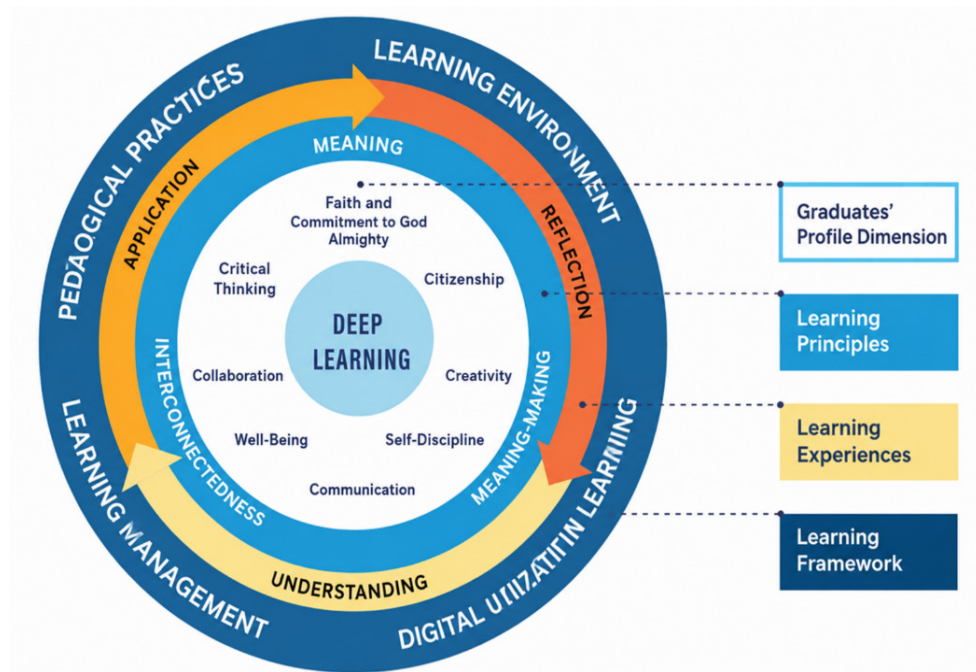


Figure 1. The Deep Learning Framework (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 27)

Character education occupies a central position in Hindu educational philosophy. Hindu education emphasizes the cultivation of self-discipline, moral responsibility, compassion, wisdom, spiritual awareness, and harmonious relationships with others. In the Hindu educational tradition, learning is understood as a process of self-transformation that integrates intellectual, ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions. Several studies have examined Hindu character education through religious texts, ethical teachings, and cultural practices. However, many of these studies focus on normative explanations of values without exploring how such values can be interpreted through contemporary educational frameworks. As a result, the relevance of Hindu educational values to current pedagogical approaches, including Deep Learning, remains underexplored (Sari & Ariyoga, 2023, p. 101; Giri, 2026, p. 10).

Kakawin Nilacandra is one of the important Balinese literary texts containing rich moral, spiritual, and educational teachings. The narrative portrays the spiritual journey of King Nīlācandra and presents values such as self-control, wisdom, ethical leadership, compassion, social responsibility, devotion to knowledge, and spiritual fulfillment. These values reflect the broader objectives

of Hindu character education and provide a culturally relevant source for contemporary learning. Previous studies on *Kakawin Nilacandra* have primarily examined theological aspects, particularly the encounter between *Śiwa* and Buddha traditions, religious teachings, literary characteristics, and cultural meanings embedded in the text. While these studies contribute significantly to understanding the religious and literary importance of the manuscript, little attention has been given to its educational dimensions. More specifically, no study has systematically analyzed how the educational values contained in *Kakawin Nilacandra* correspond to the principles of Deep Learning and contribute to Hindu character education in contemporary educational settings. Therefore, this study addresses an important gap by examining the educational values embedded in *Kakawin Nilacandra* through the lens of Deep Learning. This approach provides a bridge between traditional Hindu literary wisdom and contemporary educational innovation while contributing to the development of culturally grounded character education in Indonesia.

This study serves as an initial step in excavating the educational values contained within literary works, specifically the *Kakawin Nilacandra*. These educational values can be used as a source of reflection and a reference for implementing Deep Learning in Indonesia. By integrating local wisdom, ethics, and ancient philosophy into pedagogical practices, we can produce learning experiences that are contextual, meaningful, and shape student character holistically.

2.2 *Kakawin Nilacandra: A Literary Source of Hindu Character Education for Deep Learning*

Research connecting literary works to education has been conducted by various experts (Qur'ani, 2018, p. 182; Amalia and Octaviani, 2021, p. 416; Simanungkalit et al., 2024, p. 1451). Fundamentally, these studies explain that a strong link exists between literature and various educational values that foster character education. This is understandable as literature contains diverse life values, such as religious, psychological, moral, and socio-cultural values (Sukirman, 2021, p. 26).

Literature plays a significant role in character formation, cognitive development, and the cultivation of values such as religiousness, nationalism, and patriotism (Qur'ani, 2018, p. 183; Amalia & Octaviani, 2021, p. 417). Moreover, integrating local wisdom through literature enriches the *Kurikulum Merdeka* by promoting a more inclusive curriculum while strengthening institutional quality, teacher professionalism, and student competencies (Simanungkalit et al., 2024, pp. 1451–1452). Previous studies on *Kakawin Nilacandra* have primarily examined its theological, literary, and cultural

dimensions. Poniman (2019, p. 6), analyzed fundamental Hindu theological concepts embedded in the text, including the nature of *Ātman*, reincarnation (*punarbhawa*), karma, and the ultimate union of the self with God (*mokṣa*). In addition, Purwanto and Wedana (2026, p. 82) explored the encounter between *Śiwa* and Buddha traditions represented in the text, emphasizing its theological significance and contribution to religious harmony. Meanwhile, Geria (2019, p. 3) examined the literary creativity and distinctive characteristics of *Kakawin Nilacandra* within the Balinese literary tradition. More specifically, no study has systematically investigated how the educational values embedded in *Kakawin Nilacandra* correspond to the principles of Deep Learning and contribute to Hindu character education in contemporary educational contexts.

Examining the studies above reveals a shared framework: literary works are valuable assets for education, primarily for fostering character. However, as the Deep Learning approach was only recently designed, research using the Indonesian version of the Deep Learning framework has not yet been conducted, particularly regarding the exploration of values in classical literature. Therefore, this study on *Kakawin Nilacandra* focuses on its role as a literary work capable of contributing to the implementation of Deep Learning in Indonesia.

3. Method and Theory

3.1 Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using content analysis and hermeneutic interpretation. A qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate because the study aims to identify, interpret, and understand the educational values embedded in *Kakawin Nilacandra* and to examine their relevance to the principles of Deep Learning. The primary data consist of textual passages from *Kakawin Nilacandra*, which are systematically analyzed through content analysis to identify themes, concepts, and educational values. These findings are subsequently interpreted using Gadamerian hermeneutics to uncover deeper meanings within their religious, cultural, and educational contexts (Ahmadi, 2019, p. 6).

The primary data source used in this research is the book containing the translation of *Kakawin Nilacandra*, titled "*Kakawin Nilacandra Abad XX*" by Anak Agung Gde Alit Geria (2019), which is written in Indonesian. All quotations presented in this article have been translated into English by the authors. This text was selected because it provides a critically edited version of *Kakawin Nilacandra* accompanied by transliteration, translation, and contextual explanations. In addition, the work is based on the oldest available manuscript attributed to I Made Degung and is recognized as one of the most comprehensive contemporary references on *Kakawin Nilacandra*. This book contains three

Kakawin Nilacandra texts composed by three different authors in different years. This study specifically analyzes the oldest *Kakawin Nilacandra* text in the collection, composed in 1993. The text was completed by I Made Degung on Friday *Paing*, *Wuku Sinta*, the 13th day of the waxing moon (*Pananggal*) in the *Saka* year 1915 (Geria, 2019, p. 2). Secondary data sources, including relevant previous studies, scientific journals, books, and academic references, were also utilized to support the analysis phase.

The collected data is analyzed using content analysis (Wilson, 2016, p. 177). The implementation of content analysis is supported by Hermeneutic theory, three primary steps are followed: (1) Pre-understanding, (2) Text-Interpreter Dialogue, and (3) Recontextualization. In this specific context, the educational values found in *Kakawin Nilacandra* are actualized within the Deep Learning framework currently being implemented in Indonesia (Septaria, 2024, pp. 2–3).

Meanwhile, the analytical method employed in this study was triangulation. Triangulation is widely recognized as a technique for verifying and establishing the trustworthiness of research data by comparing information obtained from multiple sources, methods, or theoretical perspectives. The validity of the data was ensured through both source triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the Hindu educational values identified in *Kakawin Nilacandra* with teachings found in the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Sarasamuccaya*, and previous studies on Hindu education.

Theoretical triangulation was carried out by interpreting the data through a hermeneutic approach, as well as through the perspectives of Hindu educational theory and Deep Learning theory. Through this process, the meanings derived from the text were not solely dependent on the researcher's individual interpretation but were verified through multiple sources and theoretical perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the research findings (Nurfajriani et al., 2024, p. 827).

3.2 Theory

The theoretical framework for this study is Hermeneutics. Literary works require interpretation because although they are composed of language, they contain many hidden or intentionally obscured meanings (Riffaterre, 1978). The process of assigning or interpreting the content of a literary work is fundamentally an encounter between a literary creation and the researcher, who simultaneously acts as the reader. When engaging with a literary text, the reader brings a set of knowledge, whether conscious or unconscious, which forms their horizon of expectation upon entering the world of the text, subsequently guiding the process of meaning-making (Jauss, 1975, p. 15). This

diverse knowledge, which Iser (1978, p. 45) refers to as the repertoire, creates the horizon of expectation that allows the reader to engage in a dialogue with the work.

Riffaterre (1978, p. 88) expresses a similar view, stating that interpreting a text begins with a heuristic reading, reading at the grammatical and mimetic level, followed by retroactive reading (a re-reading process, similar to the hermeneutic method, to discover deeper meaning). Within the context of literary communication (author, text, and reader), Iser's perspective on Gadamer's (1978) concept of hermeneutics reaffirms that the reader's position plays a vital role (Hardiman, 2015, pp. 180-182; Iswanto et al., 2021, p. 46). In this research, the researcher's horizon meets the horizon of the text, specifically the *Kakawin Nilacandra*. This encounter creates a tension, a process of interpretation and understanding, which is then made explicit through the interpretation of educational values within the *Kakawin Nilacandra*.

To provide a deeper analysis, this study also employs Ellen Langer's Mindfulness Theory. Langer conceptualizes mindfulness as a cognitive state characterized by active engagement in ongoing experiences, openness to new information and experiences, sensitivity to situational and contextual factors, and the ability to understand phenomena from multiple perspectives (Moafian et al, 2019, pp. 2-9). In this study, Ellen Langer's mindfulness theory is utilized to analyze the Hindu educational values contained in *Kakawin Nilacandra*, particularly those related to self-awareness, moral reflection, mental self-regulation, wisdom, and the search for meaning in life. These values reflect a learning process that fosters reflective awareness, contextual meaning-making, and a profound understanding of various dimensions of human existence (Waney, Kristinawati, & Setiawan, 2020, p. 77).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 *Kakawin Nilacandra as Traditional Balinese Literature*

Kakawin Nilacandra is written in the Balinese script and utilizes the Old Javanese language (*Kawi*). The title "*Nilacandra*" is derived from the name of the story's protagonist (Geria, 2019). Etymologically, the word "*nila*" can mean blue or black (Mardiarsito et al., 1992, pp. 20 & 54), while "*candra*" means moon (Mardiarsito et al., 1992, p. 22). Therefore, in a literal sense, the name can be understood as the "Blue Moon" or "Black Moon". Interpretations regarding the meaning of the name may vary; however, what requires particular attention is the presence of *Śiwa-Buddha* elements. *Śiwa* is analogized as *nila* because *Śiwa* is also referred to as *Nilakantha*, while *Candra* (the moon) serves as a symbol of the Buddha, as this aligns with the collective perspective based on the moon's characteristics. This meaning appears consistent with the content of the *Kakawin*

Nilacandra text itself, as it incorporates *Śiwa-Buddha* elements (Geria, 2019, p. 1; Purwanto et al., 2025).

Based on the study by Putra (2021, p. 1), the development of literature in Bali can be categorized into three types: Traditional Balinese literature, Modern Balinese literature, and Indonesian literature. Traditional Balinese literature has flourished since the 13th century and reached its golden age in the 16th century, heavily influenced by Old Javanese literature. Interestingly, traditional Balinese literary works continued to be written well into the 2000s, necessitating further research and appreciation (Karmini, 2017, p. 150). When examining the three types of literature developing in Bali as described above, it can be stated that *Kakawin Nilacandra* is categorized as Traditional Balinese Literature, drawing its narrative sources from the *Mahabharata*. The story is structured in the form of *tembang* (songs/verse), such as *pupuh sinom*, *durma*, *ginada*, *pangkur*, *adri*, *ginanti*, *demung*, and *smarandana*.

The story within the *Kakawin Nilacandra* represents a hierarchical yet harmonious social structure consisting of kings, prime ministers (*patih*), ministers (*mantri*), sages (*resi*), warriors (*ksatria*), and the common people. The King is positioned as both the center of power and a moral role model. The relationship between the ruler and the people is depicted as mutually binding through duty (*swadharma*) and devotion (*bhakti*). The people live in peace because of the king's just and compassionate leadership. Furthermore, the inclusion of stories regarding the poor, orphans, and the marginalized reinforces a social consciousness that every individual, regardless of status, has an equal opportunity to achieve virtue through noble behavior.

On the other hand, the narrative portrays a society that learns through the exemplary conduct of its characters. Maharaja Nilacandra does not merely rule; he educates his people through symbols and parables. The construction of depictions of heaven and hell serves as an educational tool, allowing the community to understand the concrete consequences of good and bad deeds. This reflects a social view that moral education must be applicable and easily understood by all levels of society, including those who do not possess a profound mastery of literary teachings.

4.2 Educational Values of *Kakawin Nilacandra* in the Context of Deep Learning

4.2.1 Mindful Learning: Introspection and Self-Regulation

The *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript implicitly contains several points that intersect with the concept of mindfulness as intended in Deep Learning. The beginning of the manuscript describes the worship of Goddess *Saraswati*, who is regarded as the source of knowledge. The citation is as follows:

“Oh Goddess Saraswati, the wise and noble *shakti* of Lord Brahma, the source of knowledge who perpetually blesses the entire universe” (Geria, 2019, p.125).

The aforementioned citation can be interpreted to mean that every learning process must be underpinned by a focused mind. The worship of Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge, signifies a high state of awareness and intention toward both spiritual and intellectual learning processes. In the context of Deep Learning, focus is defined as the student’s ability to consciously and meaningfully establish their learning objectives. Therefore, it can be argued that the exhortation found in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript aligns with the initial steps of the learning experience. Learners must possess a focused and concentrated attitude, as evidenced by the expression “*now Arjuna is diligently meditating, his body is perfect until reaching the state of dhyayī*” (Geria, 2019, p. 141). *Dhyāyī* refers to an individual who has attained a stable and sustained state of mental concentration, in which the mind remains firmly focused on the object of meditation and the entirety of one’s awareness is directed toward it without distraction (Geria, 2019). This condition illustrates a holistic and profound state of learning. It reflects that the ideal learner resides in a state of inner focus entirely directed toward the learning objectives. The term *dhāraṇa yoga* signifies a conscious concentration of the mind, aligning with the principle of focus in Deep Learning.

Concentration of the mind is also practiced by Sang Nilacandra during a battle, as stated in the phrase “Nilacandra *once again centered his thoughts*” (Geria, 2019, p. 93). This process can be described as metacognitive reflection. Metacognitive reflection is understood as a cognitive stage that allows students to review the cognitive processes they have undertaken to consider the progression or the results of their thinking activities. Through this reflection, students are able to realize their own way of thinking and evaluate the steps they have taken (Ramadani and Ubaidilah, 2023, p. 58).

Other texts also imply an awareness of the thinking process, specifically “*ahengkara enters buddhī, and buddhī enters citta; that citta enters the intellect (daya), and finally enters citta once more*” (Geria, 2019). In *Kakawin Nilacandra*, this is evident in the awareness of thought, *buddhī*, and *citta* as a unified sequence of inner consciousness (Gupta and Agrawal, 2021). The *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript describes how an individual must be capable of accepting the perspectives and knowledge of others. This is evident in several excerpts, such as: “*so noble was Yudhistira’s advice to King Naraja, and thus King Naraja followed the counsel of the King of Hastina*” (Geria, 2019, p. 154). King Nilacandra’s action in following the teachings of the King of Hastina reflects intellectual humility and the recognition that truth and knowledge can originate from outside

oneself. An interesting point is found in the sentence “*requesting King Krishna to understand the truth of Shiva’s teachings*” (Geria, 2019, p. 168). This can be interpreted to mean that the request to King Krishna to comprehend the truth of Śiwa’s teachings reflects the spiritual and intellectual openness that lies at the heart of deep learning (Sarnoto, 2025). Students actively open themselves to new truths and integrate them into their self-understanding and spiritual lives. This can be traced through the following expressions.

“A report of which reached King Krishna, who then wished to send envoys thither, commanding Sang Kretawarma and Satyaki to investigate the palace” (Geria, 2019, p. 130).

King Naraja’s (Nilacandra) persistence in applying himself daily to high-level knowledge demonstrates that curiosity drives a continuous and disciplined learning process. Moreover, the action taken by King Krishna dispatching Kretawarma and Satyaki to investigate directly reflects an urge to acquire a more holistic understanding through direct experience. This aligns with the assertion by Langer (in Mamu, 2025, p. 220) that learning conducted mindfully encourages students to be more sensitive to the nuances of new information, to pay attention to different contexts, and to open up opportunities for understanding concepts from diverse perspectives.

The urge to continuously study new knowledge is implied in the description “it is fitting that you must understand all of this, and furthermore, there is that which must be remembered and strengthened by the true Buddhist teachings” (Geria, 2019, p.162). An achievement in Deep Learning is certainly realized when every student can internalize the new knowledge they acquire. This form of internal appreciation is manifested in their ways of thinking and behaving (Darnanengsih and Rusyaid, 2020). The requirement for new knowledge is emphasized in the stanza “not just anyone is told such teachings; keep them now secret in the heart, for this is no different for those who hope for inner virtue” (Geria, 2019, p. 154). From this description, it can be seen that profound knowledge can only be understood and given meaning by those who possess inner readiness and sincere curiosity.

One element that fosters curiosity is influenced by comfort within the learning process. A calm and peaceful atmosphere in learning has been alluded to in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript “*now named Nilacandra, who loves peace and is patient; the purity of his mind is not overwhelmed by the nature of the five senses*” (Geria, 2019, p. 126). This excerpt describes a clarity of mind that is not dominated by sensory impulses. Such an inner state creates space for conscious and focused learning engagement, enabling students to open themselves to new knowledge and experiences.

4.2.2 Meaningful Learning: Contextualization and Tangible Contribution

Contextual learning is grounded in the philosophical view that the learning process becomes more effective when instructional material is connected to the life contexts and professional worlds that students already know or have the potential to encounter (Trisniawati, 2015, p. 147). This contextual learning process appears to be reflected in the textual descriptions within the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript, as evidenced by the following excerpt.

“...the country becomes secure and peaceful because it is based on *Pancasila*; although differing in behavior, they are always united” (Geria, 2019, p. 125).

The mention of “*pancasila*” indicates an effort to contextualize ancient literary values within the foundation of the modern Indonesian state. When drawn into the framework of Deep Learning, such an attitude can serve as an inspiration for educational implementation in Indonesia (Sarnoto, 2025, p. 6) (see Figures 2).



Figure 2. Implementation of Deep Learning at Candra Kasih Elementary School, Denpasar (Photo: Documentation of Candra Kasih Elementary School, Denpasar)

The idea of character education that is relevant to real life is already present in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript, as seen in the description “*practicing ultimate truth based on honesty in society is thanks to the love of his elder brother who bestowed such glory; Rsi Andasingha is his name, who made (Nilacandra)*” (Geria, 2019, p. 125). This text demonstrates that the knowledge acquired by King Nilacandra from his brother (Rsi Andasingha) was applied in daily life. According to the contents of the text under study, it can be traced that *Nilacandra* consistently provides tangible contributions to his people. This is evidenced by the fact that whenever he encounters the disabled or the poor, he always provides them with food and clothing (Geria, 2019). From this text, one can observe the practice of humanitarian values or philanthropy toward fellow human beings.

The description above aligns with the concept of character education under the “social concern” indicator, which suggests that this character trait plays a vital role in forming individuals with social sensitivity, demonstrated through attitudes and actions oriented toward providing assistance to those in need. (Salim et al., 2022, p. 24). In the context of the utility of knowledge for society, King Nilacandra also implemented the *Catur Warga* teachings. This is demonstrated in the text below.

“...as well as with a friendly demeanor that earns him the respect of society, for he has fully understood all the teachings of the *Catur Warga*.” (Geria, 2019, p. 125).

According to the text above, *Catur Warga* consists of *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (material well-being), *Kama* (legitimate desires), and *Moksha* (spiritual liberation). These four components are currently known as the teachings of *Catur Purusa Artha*, which are the four goals of human life in achieving a meaningful existence in the world (Astrid and Dewi G, 2023, p. 63). King Nilacandra successfully channeled the *Catur Warga* teachings into his social role as a leader. Aligning with the direction of this study, the *Catur Warga* teachings in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* text appear to harmonize with meaningful learning-based education. The value of *Dharma* teaches the importance of a moral foundation in action; *Artha* affirms the proportional function of material means; *Kama* guides the ethical fulfillment of pleasure; and *Moksha* emphasizes the ultimate goal of inner liberation.

The depiction of heaven is described as being full of peace and comfort; it is further detailed that “...his palace is like a supreme heaven beyond compare, also in pursuing knowledge his behavior in the world is like the people of old, the purity of his mind is not overwhelmed by the nature of the five senses...” (Geria, 2019, p. 126). Based on the description in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript, the purpose of

constructing these depictions of heaven and hell was to serve as a metaphorical or simulated representation (not literal) to teach humanity about ultimate truth. Furthermore, this instructional process is representative of Deep Learning; abstract knowledge is transferred into visual and architectural media to make it more accessible and understandable for students. The construction of heaven and hell can be categorized as a project-based activity. Elements of society, representing the students, were actively invited to build these two environments (Tahir, 2025, p. 197).

Meanwhile, another part of the text describes a portrayal of collaboration and working together to find the best solutions. This process can be seen as a form of collaboration and partnership between a leader and relevant parties. Through discussion, group work, and collective problem-solving, students are encouraged to broaden their perspectives and test their ideas within a social context (Sarnoto, 2025, p. 22).

The description above is further reinforced by King Nilacandra's behavior in advising his ministers and the public to always lead lives based on *Dharmasastra* (The Treatise on Dharma). It appears that the king acts as an educator providing solutions to the life problems of his people, linking the cause-and-effect of actions with the real conditions experienced by the populace. This evokes problem-based techniques, as stated by Hung (Sarnoto, 2025), Problem-Based Learning (PBL) trains critical thinking skills because students are confronted with real-world problems that demand solutions.

Meaningful learning occurs when students construct new knowledge by integrating new information into existing cognitive structures, resulting in deeper and more enduring understanding (Isma, 2025, p. 87). This concept is both explicitly and implicitly present in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript. When wanting to build his palace, the king recalled the past. Nilacandra built his palace based on spiritual experiences or memories of a past life (reincarnation). A clearer illustration of meaningful learning regarding the indicator of connection to prior experience can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of Textual Data Regarding Meaningful Learning Related to Prior Knowledge and Experience

No	Text Excerpt	Context of Prior Knowledge/Experience	Analysis within Deep Learning Framework
1	"...Now I compose words from the <i>parwa</i> (stories) of old..."	Classical Literature (<i>Parwa</i>)	Linked to previous experiences.
2	"...building it as it was seen when deceased in the told past..."	Spiritual Experience (Metaphysics)	The learning experience to be applied in new contexts.
3	"...I remember King Naraja in the time of old..."	Collective Memory or History	Linked to previous experiences.
4	"... (<i>Nilacandra</i>) still remembers and receives us with respect..."	Interpersonal Experience	Linked to previous experiences.
5	"...thanks to the love of his brother... Rsi Andasingha is his name, who made (<i>Nilacandra</i>) successful..."	Knowledge from a Mentor	foster the qualities of a lifelong learner
6	"...imitating the devoted service of the poets..."	Observation and Exemplarity	The learning experience to be applied in new contexts.
7	"...once said to be named <i>Purnawijaya</i> ... now named <i>Nilacandra</i> ..."	History and Self-Identity	Linked to previous experiences.
8	"...remembering that he is the true Lord Vishnu..."	Theophanic Experience	Linked to previous experiences.
9	"...he fully understood all the teachings of <i>the Catur Warga</i> ..."	Doctrinal Knowledge (Theology)	be connected to other fields of study.
10	"...my memory is still fresh regarding the famous story of <i>Kamandaka</i> ..."	Classical Literacy (<i>Nitisastra</i>)	Linked to previous experiences.

Source: Organized from Geria (2021)

Based on the Table 1, it can be stated that existing knowledge serves several critical roles. Learning cannot be meaningful if new information lacks a connection to what is already known. Furthermore, meaningful learning allows an individual to reconstruct their identity based on an evaluation of the past. Experiences of past failures or successes are processed to form a more mature

character. The knowledge of his past existence serves as the starting point for Nilacandra to improve himself and become a wise king. The description of using memory to analyse enemy war tactics reflects how prior knowledge acts as a bridge to solve problems in a new context.

4.2.3 Joyful Learning: Cultivating Feeling and Emotional Development

Several indicators define when learning can be considered “joyful”: an interactive learning environment, engaging and inspiring learning activities, motivating challenges, and the achievement of learning success, often referred to as the AHA moment” (Tim Penyusun, 2025). An AHA moment is an experience of understanding or realization that occurs when an individual recognizes a connection, meaning, or solution that had previously gone unnoticed. In cognitive psychology, an AHA moment is commonly referred to as an insight, describing the experience in which a concept that was initially confusing becomes clear and meaningful (Tim Penyusun, 2025). It is clear that such a learning atmosphere occurs simultaneously with Mindful and Meaningful Learning. As recorded in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript: “...all the people arrived because of their human obligations in the world; those enjoying virtue as well as those struck by wickedness were advised of the causes by him; that is what he always carried out together with his followers...” (Geria, 2019, p. 130). This atmosphere can be described as joyful because the people feel accepted and heard regarding their problems, thereby creating an interactive dialogue that is enlightening (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Implementation of Deep Learning at Candra Kasih Elementary School, Denpasar (Photo: Documentation of Candra Kasih Elementary School, Denpasar)

An engaging learning process is reflected in the expression: "...creating a temple of letters based on *guru-lagu* (rhythmic rules), may the essence of *Saraswati* grace every verse..." (Geria, 2019, p. 125). In this context, studying literature is approached creatively, likened to building a temple from a collection of words. The singing method has proven highly effective in motivating students, particularly at the elementary level, by increasing their enthusiasm for learning. Consequently, the learning atmosphere becomes more vibrant and enjoyable (Ni'mah, 2017, p. 187; Padmadewi, et al., 2025).

As previously discussed, the learning process implicit in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript utilizes visual media by manifesting heaven and hell into physical forms. This activity naturally boosts student enthusiasm because they are engaged in Project-Based Learning (PBL). This method serves as an effective alternative for delivering material to students, preventing boredom and disengagement. When a project is successfully completed, the sense of achievement makes the learning experience feel truly joyful. This is reflected in the expression: "...the understanding of the artificial heaven and hell has been enjoyed; so perfect and similar / to the original within the palace by him..." (Geria, 2019, p. 130).

One of the manifestations of character education is through the exemplary leadership of great figures, such as national heroes, historical personalities, and. Setianto (2019) explains that the affective aspect of history learning can be developed by linking historical material to the exemplary nature of heroes. The description provided above is also found implicitly in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript, although it focuses more on emulating the figure of a poet (*pujangga*). The excerpt reads: "... (so that) the intention arises to imitate the devoted service of the poet..." (Geria, 2019, p. 125). Other inspirational activities mentioned include the king's generosity in distributing jewels to the people and the Pandawa's struggle to uphold *dharma*.

Designing a challenging learning environment is occasionally necessary to stimulate students' critical thinking (Fatmawaty, 2024, p. 73). This concept is implicitly reflected in the story of Sri Kunarajaya, who found great joy in performing meditation (*semedi*) with a diligent and sincere heart. His place of meditation was far from the crowds, described metaphorically as becoming one with the forest, as he no longer returned to his home (Geria, 2019). In Hindu character education, this challenge is not viewed as an agonizing burden; rather, it is seen as a spiritual process that motivates one to achieve grace which, in a pedagogical context, equates to learning success.

4.2.4 *The Spiritual Journey of King Nīlācandra as a Reflection of the Deep Learning Process*

The life journey of King Nīlācandra is inseparable from the beliefs he held. The values within these teachings shaped King Nīlācandra into an individual with profound spiritual strength and a leader respected by many. As explained in the preceding sub-chapters, the values of Hindu character education have been detailed and linked to the principles of Deep Learning.

The value of religiosity (*sraddha* and *bhakti*) can be considered the primary foundation of the character portrayed in the text. The figure of *Nilacandra* demonstrates that worldly and spiritual success can only be achieved through diligent meditation (*semedi*) and religious obedience. Meanwhile, there is an exceptionally strong presence of the values of integrity and honesty (*satya*). The text mentions the importance of practicing ultimate truth based on honesty within society, as well as behavior grounded in *satwam* (pure and calm) thoughts (Geria, 2019). This is in alignment with the Hindu teaching known as *Panca Satya*, or the Five Loyalties (Saputra, 2022, p. 4). The values of responsibility and discipline (*dharma*) are also reflected in the implementation of the *Catur Warga* teachings. This character education teaches that every individual possesses social and spiritual obligations that must be carried out in balance. *Nilacandra* is portrayed as a disciplined leader who pursued knowledge daily and consistently applied the laws of *Dharmasastra*.

The portrayal of the value of *Tat Twam Asi* (social and humanitarian values) can be observed through the interactions between the king, the people, and their environment. The characters of humility and compassion displayed by figures such as Rsi Andasingha and *Nilacandra* reflect the principle that helping others is a form of devotion to God. *Nilacandra's* ability to sense the suffering of his people and provide wise counsel demonstrates deep empathy. The character of the learner who reflects a “thirst for *Jnana*” (knowledge) representing the attitude of a lifelong learner—can be considered the pinnacle of the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript.

These values are manifested throughout the life journey of *Nilacandra* as the central figure. The opening of the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript begins with hymns of praise to Ida Hyang Saraswati as the ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom. The story then focuses on the main character, Maharaja Śrī Nīlācandra. Before attaining inner perfection, Nīlācandra is depicted as once being dominated by worldly passions and negative human traits. However, through a process of earnest spiritual learning, he was able to control his five senses (*panca indra*). This process can be described as a form of self-awareness an individual's understanding of themselves, recognizing both their strengths and weaknesses (Agniarahmah et al., 2023, p. 8). In Deep Learning, self-awareness

is crucial because it is a fundamental component of self-assessment. Therefore, self-assessment at the early stages of learning can serve as a guide to determine the most appropriate learning strategies or methods.

After attaining spiritual awareness, Nilacandra ruled Naraja Desa with profound compassion and justice. He fulfilled his *swadharma* (personal duty) as a king by prioritizing the welfare of his people, resulting in a kingdom that was secure, peaceful, and prosperous. This progression can certainly be described as self-transformation. Self-transformation is a process of internal change that brings about a shift in an individual's level of consciousness, way of thinking, and behavior, generally leading toward a better condition (Anderson and Anderson in Saleh and Humaidi, 2022, p. 2). Nilacandra, who initially lacked awareness (*avidya*), finally achieved enlightenment through consistent learning. This is further marked by his identity shift from *Purnawijaya* to *Nilacandra*.

In an effort to educate the people so they could understand the teachings of *dharma* concretely, Nilacandra, acting on the advice of his elder minister, constructed representations of heaven and hell around the palace. This imagery was intended as a means of moral education, allowing the community to witness the tangible consequences of good and evil deeds. The powerful educational message in this part is the cultivation of empathy, social solidarity, and sincerity as the foundation for forming a virtuous human character. The climax of the story occurs when Maharaja Yudhistira and the *Pandawas* visit Naraja Desa to witness the constructed representations of heaven and hell. The dialogues that take place reaffirm the law of cause and effect (*karma phala*) as a principle of moral education, teaching responsibility for every human action.

The description above illustrates the internalization of values within King Nilacandra, meaning that character education has been fully received and manifested through his attitudes and behaviors. It is no exaggeration to say that King Nilacandra achieved self-internalization, where his knowledge was not kept for himself but disseminated to his people (Sa'diyah and Gumilar, 2025, pp. 933-934). This is perfectly aligned with the spirit of Deep Learning, which posits that education is not merely a means to acquire knowledge, but an instrument of social transformation that allows humans to continue evolving alongside changing times (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 7). Regarding the journey of Nilacandra in the process of self-learning, it can be visualized in the diagram below (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. The Deep Learning Flow of the Figure *Nilacandra* in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* (Source: Tim Penyusun, 2025)

As explained in the principles of Deep Learning, the application of its three core principles can be carried out separately or simultaneously and does not necessarily have to be sequential (Tim Penyusun, 2025, p. 16). The finding of this study is that the first stage required when engaging in Deep Learning is self-awareness. The self-awareness stage in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* represents an individual's consciousness of their inner condition, strengths, and weaknesses. In an educational context, this stage reflects meaningful learning, as the learning process begins with personal experience and internal needs. The second stage is self-transformation, which describes the process of changing mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors through continuous learning. This aligns with the principles of learning that are both challenging and reflective. The third stage is self-internalization, demonstrated through the application of wise values in social life, specifically in *Nilācandra's* efforts to educate and protect his people. Values that have been internalized are manifested in concrete actions that benefit many, ensuring that learning becomes contextual and joyful for both the individual and society.

Although the findings were organized into the three dimensions of Deep Learning (mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning), the educational values embedded in *Kakawin Nilacandra* extend beyond these broad categories. The three dimensions function primarily as an analytical framework, while the text itself contains a wider range of Hindu educational values. Within the mindful dimension, the *kakawin* promotes self-awareness, self-discipline, moral reflection, wisdom, and critical consideration before action. Within the meaningful dimension, it emphasizes *dharma*, responsibility, devotion to knowledge, ethical leadership, respect for teachers, and the integration of learning with real-life experience. Within the joyful dimension, the text encourages inner harmony, spiritual fulfillment, positive social relationships, and the cultivation of learning as a meaningful and enriching life process.

4.3 Integration of Kakawin Nilacandra Educational Values into Hindu Religious Education Teaching Modules

This section describes the connection between the Deep Learning process implicit in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* manuscript and three specific teaching modules, representing the primary (SD), junior high (SMP), and senior high (SMA) levels of education (see Figure 5). The primary level module focuses on Grade III within the Hindu Religious Education and Character subject, developed by Desak Made Juniani from Sekolah Dasar Negeri 5 Penatih. Learning is centered on introducing the concept of *Tri Parartha*, classifying behavioral examples in daily life, and interpreting the values of compassion, sharing, and devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi (Juniani, 2025). The junior high school teaching module focuses on Grade IX within the Hindu Religious Education and Character subject, developed by Elni Yuniati from SMP Dwijendra Denpasar. The module implements an active and reflective learning approach through group discussions, personal experience assignments, presentations, and assessments integrated with the *Pancasila* Student Profile (Yuniati, 2024).



Figure 5. Teaching Module Class III, IX, and X were edited using ChatGPT (Source: Adnyani, 2022; Yuniati, 2024; Juniani, 2025; chatgpt.com)

The teaching module for the senior high level focuses on Grade X (SMA/SMK) within the Hindu Religious Education and Character subject, developed by Ni Made Adnyani. It is designed to help Grade X students understand *Punarbhawa* (reincarnation) as one of the core tenets of Hinduism. Through active learning approaches such as discussions, reflections, sacred text analysis, and environmental observations it is intended that the teachings of *Punarbhawa* become meaningful and relevant to the students' real lives.

The three teaching modules mentioned above share a commonality in their application of meaningful learning principles, where each subject is consistently contextualized with real-life situations. Each module also strives to encourage students to shape their character toward a better direction. All three teaching modules demonstrate an orientation toward student engagement throughout the learning process. After analyzing the three modules, it is evident that the learning processes within the *Kakawin Nilacandra* share a strong connection with modern pedagogy. The educational values in the *Kakawin Nilacandra*, focusing on self-awareness, self-transformation, and self-internalization, are reflected in the teaching modules, though they vary in depth. To provide a concise overview of the relationship between the educational values in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* and the SD, SMP, and SMA teaching modules, the following table is presented:

Table 2. The Relationship Between Educational Values in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* and Teaching Modules

No	Educational Value	SD Module Component (Primary School)	Correlation Analysis
1	Self-Awareness	Basic understanding of student behavior and the desire to become a better person.	To recognize their daily behaviors.
2	Self-Transformation	Learning experience in ethics and etiquette through visual and kinesthetic learning styles.	Habituation of <i>Asih</i> (compassion).
3	Self-Internalization	Examples of daily interactions with <i>Tri Parartha</i> at home and school.	Perform concrete acts of <i>Punia</i> (charity).
No	Educational Value	SMP Module Component (Secondary School)	Correlation Analysis
1	Self-Awareness	Understanding that the self is a part of God (<i>Atman</i>).	To recognize their internal spiritual potential.
2	Self-Transformation	Self-control and conquering "inner enemies."	The module teaches systematic self-control techniques.
3	Self-Internalization	Documenting the application of <i>Bhakti</i> and <i>Karma</i> in community life.	Perform real service through the path of <i>Karma Marga</i> .
No	Educational Value	SMA Module Component (High School)	Correlation Analysis
1	Self-Awareness	The principle of <i>Punarbhawa</i> : that rebirth is determined by previous self-quality.	The module teaches existential awareness.
2	Self-Transformation	Analysing <i>Punarbhawa</i> teachings as a means of character improvement.	Students are invited to perform a deep paradigm shift.
3	Self-Internalization	Internalization of <i>Sraddha</i> (faith) to become a steadfast individual.	Students are expected to reach a firm conviction that influences every moral decision in society.

Source: Authors (2026)

The analysis presented in Table 2 reinforces the fact that the learning processes contained within the *Kakawin Nilacandra* can be effectively implemented in modern education. As previously outlined, the learning journey undertaken by Nīlācandra in the text has proven successful in shaping his character into a virtuous individual who provides significant value to his society. These learning outcomes are directly aligned with the Deep Learning approach currently being promoted by the Indonesian government, specifically through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Furthermore, it can be asserted that the deep learning process model found in the *Kakawin Nilacandra* can serve as a foundational guide for developing education in Indonesia. These modules embody the pedagogical transformation of textual values into structured learning experiences aligned with the principles of Deep Learning.

The implementation of these modules at Candra Kasih Elementary School illustrates the continuity between the literary text and educational practice. Classroom observations revealed that the learning activities encouraged students to construct knowledge through inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and contextual problem-solving, reflecting the principles of meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning (see Figures 3 and 4). The relationship among the literary text, the instructional modules, and classroom implementation forms a coherent pedagogical trajectory, beginning with the extraction of educational values from the text, followed by their transformation into learning materials, and culminating in their implementation in classroom practice.

The findings of this study have implications not only for Hindu Religious Education but also for broader educational contexts. The Hindu educational values identified in *Kakawin Nilacandra*, including self-awareness, ethical reflection, wisdom, responsibility, respect for knowledge, and meaningful engagement in learning, align closely with the principles of Deep Learning, particularly mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning.

In language education, *Kakawin Nilacandra* can be used as a literary and cultural text that promotes mindful learning. Students may engage in interpretive reading, reflective writing, critical discussion, and contextual analysis of the text. The use of *Kakawin Nilacandra* in language teaching also supports cultural literacy, character education, and communicative competence through meaningful interaction with local literary heritage. Classroom discussions may further encourage learners to explore multiple interpretations of a particular stanza, fostering openness to diverse perspectives and deeper contextual understanding. The educational values contained in *Kakawin Nilacandra* can also be integrated into social studies, citizenship education, history, literature, and character education.

Future research may focus on the empirical implementation of *Kakawin Nilacandra*-based learning models in different educational settings and subject areas. Experimental and classroom-based studies could examine the effectiveness of integrating *Kakawin Nilacandra* into language learning, character education, history, and civic education. Further studies may also investigate how local literary texts contribute to the development of students' critical thinking, cultural awareness, mindfulness, engagement, and deep learning competencies.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that *Kakawin Nilacandra* contains a comprehensive framework of Hindu character education that is highly relevant to the principles of Deep Learning. King Nīlācandra's spiritual journey reflects a transformative learning process consisting of three interconnected stages: self-awareness, self-transformation, and self-internalization. These stages demonstrate that character formation is not limited to the acquisition of moral knowledge but culminates in the embodiment of ethical values through concrete actions in society. Values such as integrity, honesty, responsibility, discipline, compassion, and lifelong learning are therefore internalized as lived educational practices rather than abstract ideals.

This study contributes a pedagogical innovation by reinterpreting *Kakawin Nilacandra* as a conceptual model for Hindu character education within the contemporary Deep Learning framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined *Kakawin Nilacandra* from theological, literary, or aesthetic perspectives, this research demonstrates its pedagogical relevance by translating textual values into a structured learning model. These three stages are reflected in the design of the primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary Hindu Religious Education teaching modules analysed in this study, indicating that the educational values embedded in the text can be systematically implemented across different educational levels.

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