

# A comparative contextual study of 'kudu sumunar pindha baskara' and 'lampsatō to phōs'



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This study explores the intersection between the concept 'kudu sumunar pindha baskara' in the Sapta Darma *Sesanti* and the phrase 'lampsatō to phōs humōn' in Matthew 5:16. The central issue addressed is how these two concepts of light relate in ethical, spiritual and theological terms, and how their relationship may serve as a foundation for gospel contextualisation. The research employs a qualitative-critical approach through biblical text analysis (narrative hermeneutics) and a theological-cultural examination of Sapta Darma teachings via literature study and contextual interpretation. The findings reveal a similarity in the ethical dimension – namely, a call to live as light for others through open and constructive good works. However, a significant ontological difference emerges: Sapta Darma presents light as the emanation of human spirituality, whereas in Matthew 5:16, light originates from the relationship with Christ as the true light. In conclusion, the Sapta Darma *Sesanti* can serve as an effective starting point for gospel contextualisation, provided that the concept of light remains grounded in the Christological and soteriological framework central to Jesus' message.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to the discourse on contextual theology by positioning local *Sesanti* as a medium for critical theological reflection. Furthermore, it enriches the methodology of gospel contextualisation in dialogue with the indigenous spirituality of the archipelago in a scholarly and responsible manner.

**Keywords:** shine; motto; Sapta Darma; light; Matthew 5:16.

## Introduction

Sapta Darma is a form of indigenous spiritual belief that has developed in Indonesia, particularly in Java (Ningrum 2018:54). Since its establishment in 1952 by Hardjosapoero – later known as Bapa Panuntun Agung Sri Gutama (Khasbullah 2020:167) – this movement has experienced significant growth both domestically and internationally.<sup>1</sup> The movement promotes a unique set of spiritual values and a system of teachings that differs from the more established religious traditions in Indonesia, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. As such, Sapta Darma has elicited varied responses from the public: some accept it, others reject it, and still others remain indifferent (Arifin 2017:35–56).

Within Indonesia's pluralistic society, Sapta Darma offers an approach that emphasises unity and harmony among human beings and a close relationship with the Supreme God [*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*]. Its core teachings – consisting of three pillars: *Sujud* [devotional practice], *Wewarah Pitu* [seven sacred teachings], and *Sesanti* [sacred maxims] – serve as a foundation for adherents in their pursuit of life perfection (Ferdian 2023:1–14). This study focuses specifically on the *Sesanti*, particularly the phrase 'kudu sumunar pindha baskara', examining its meaning from both linguistic and internal theological perspectives in dialogue with the biblical phrase 'lampsatō to phōs' (Mt 5:16). This focus is important for two main reasons. Firstly, the *Sesanti* constitutes the spirit, principle and very 'life' of the movement. Secondly, elements of the *Sesanti* have been adopted by some Javanese Christians as guiding principles in their daily lives. This phenomenon suggests the emergence of syncretism between Christian teachings and the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma (Khasbullah & Nisa 2021:39).

This situation raises two key questions: What is the appropriate Christian response to the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma? And more fundamentally, is the *Sesanti* compatible with the biblical teaching found in Matthew 5:16?

1. See <https://kebudayaan.jogjakota.go.id/page/index/persada-persatuan-warga-sapta-darma>.

To answer these questions objectively, first of all, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the *Sesanti* itself and to exegete Matthew 5:16 to uncover its original intent. To achieve this objective, this study employs a comparative theology approach (Clooney 2010:11) to examine the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma, particularly the phrase '*kudu sumunar pindha baskara*', in dialogue with the biblical expression '*lampasatō to phōs*' (Mt 5:16). The methodology proceeds in three stages. Firstly, an exegetical and comparative inquiry is undertaken, involving lexical and grammatical analysis of both phrases, as well as an exploration of their respective theological frameworks within the Sapta Darma and the New Testament (Porter & Clarke 2002:7). Secondly, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify points of convergence and divergence between the *Sesanti* and the biblical teaching. Finally, the study offers an assessment of the Christological and soteriological implications of Matthew 5:16 in relation to Sapta Darma, to provide a basis for meaningful gospel contextualisation (DeVries 2021; Goheen 2014). This methodological framework ensures that the comparative focus remains clear and academically rigorous while contributing deeper insight into both the intersections and distinctions between the two systems of belief.

The findings from both analyses will then be compared to identify points of convergence between the two teachings. These intersections will serve as a basis for gospel contextualisation through the lens of Sapta Darma's *Sesanti*. Consequently, a contextualisation approach will be applied (DeVries 2021:7; Goheen 2014:4). This methodological framework is expected to provide deeper insight into the interaction between these two systems of belief.

## Analysis of '*Kudu Sumunar Pindha Baskara*' in Sapta Darma *Sesanti*

The term *Sapta Darma* originates from Old Javanese. It consists of two words: *sapta*, meaning 'seven', and *darma* (derived from *dharma*), meaning 'noble or virtuous conduct' (Wicaksono & Setiawan 2023:60–73). Literally, *Sapta Darma* can be interpreted as 'seven sacred teachings' or 'seven noble or sacred actions' (Hadiwijono 2006:22). Within the Sapta Darma tradition, three core teachings are upheld by its adherents: *Sujud*, *Wewarah Pitu* [the seven sacred teachings] and *Sesanti*.

*Sujud* refers to the ritual practice of prostration or worship directed to the Supreme God, as taught to the followers of Sapta Darma (Hidayatullah 2023:44). *Wewarah Pitu* comprises seven obligations or sacred teachings that form the foundation for adherents in establishing their relationship with God and in living as responsible citizens of the nation. For its followers, these teachings provide a complete and sufficient guide for life (Rohmawati 2020:71).

The term *Sesanti* comes from the Javanese language and refers to a 'maxim', 'motto' or 'noble utterance'. The central *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma states: '*ing ngendi bae marang sapa bae*

*warga Sapta Darma kudu sumunar pindha baskara*', which can be translated as: 'Wherever and to whomever, followers of Sapta Darma must shine like the sun' (Chikmawati 2018:40). This profound phrase expresses the spiritual life principle of Sapta Darma adherents. To grasp the depth of its meaning, a grammatical analysis based on Javanese linguistic structure can be conducted, drawing on the *Javanese Dictionary (Kamus Bahasa Jawa)* by Nardiati et al. (1993a:vols. 1:37, 47, 208, 307, 441, 1993b:vol. 2:156, 274, 223).

Based on this linguistic analysis, the core structure of the *Sesanti* may be rendered as: 'Sapta Darma followers must shine'. The word *sumunar* derives from the root *sunar* [light], with the infix *-um-*, forming the intransitive verb *s-um-unar*, meaning 'to shine' or 'to emit light'. The verb *sumunar* is imperative in nature – emphasised by the adverbial *kudu* [must] – indicating an existential obligation for all members of Sapta Darma. In this context, *kudu* connotes more than a moral imperative; it expresses a sustained, universal calling.

The use of the adverb *bae* in the phrases *ing ngendi bae* [wherever] and *marang sapa bae* [to whomever] reinforces this universality. Semantically, the phrase communicates two key affirmations: (1) the necessity of shining in all places and contexts, with no spatial or situational exception; (2) the imperative to shine towards all people, regardless of religious background, ethnicity, social status or condition. Thus, the adverbial *bae* affirms the principle of inclusivity, which undergirds the ethical character of Sapta Darma. In daily life, *sumunar* signifies a committed posture of being a source of light, inspiration and goodness to others.

Furthermore, the act of *sumunar* [to radiate or shine] is compared to *baskara* [the sun], a metaphor that underscores the role of Sapta Darma adherents as lights within society. The sun does not discriminate in its illumination; it shines indiscriminately upon all. As expressed in an interview with Mardikin, a *Guru* [spiritual guide] of the Sapta Darma movement in Surabaya:

The *baskara* functions to offer enlightenment or illumination to anyone, especially to fellow human beings, without making distinctions. It also extends to the universe, including animals, plants, and other beings. Concretely, it means to provide comfort or life to anyone, for example by sharing positive thoughts about life with others so that they may come to a proper understanding of its meaning. (Mardikin pers. comm., 29 July 2025)

In the same vein, followers of Sapta Darma are called to illuminate life with love and devotion – selflessly and without discrimination. This concept is explicitly articulated in the *Wewarah Pitu* [seven core teachings] of Sapta Darma, particularly in the fourth principle, which states: '*tetlung marang sapa bae yen perlu, kanthi ora nduweni pamrih apa bae kajaba mung rasa welas lan asih*', meaning, 'to help anyone in need, without expecting anything in return, moved solely by compassion and love'. This teaching represents the concrete expression of the *sumunar* principle. Helping others sincerely is the praxis of radiating light – a spiritual act embodied in social relationships.

From a theological perspective, Wicaksono and Setiawan (2023) emphasise that the fourth *wewarah* mandates:

Each Sapta Darma adherent is obliged to help fellow human beings and other living creatures, both physically and spiritually (*sabda usada* – healing through the path of God), without expecting any reward, but solely out of love and compassion. (p. 63)

Based on linguistic, semantic and theological analyses of the above text, the core meaning of the *Sesanti* '*ing ngendi bae marang sapa bae warga Sapta Darma kudu sumunar pindha baskara*' can be elaborated in several dimensions. Firstly, from the existential-ethical perspective, the adverb *kudu* conveys a categorical and absolute obligation for every adherent of Sapta Darma. This imperative identity marker goes beyond mere moral exhortation, constituting a defining feature of religious life. Secondly, in terms of spatial universality, the particle '*ing ngendi bae*' nullifies all geographic or contextual limitations, affirming that the light must shine universally in every situation. Thirdly, regarding relational inclusivity, the phrase '*marang sapa bae*' erases all forms of discrimination, whether based on religion, ethnicity, class or social condition, and calls for openness to all people. Fourthly, in its analogical function, the expression '*pindha baskara*' likens the adherent's shining to the sun, highlighting an impartial, transformative and ceaseless radiance. Fifthly, from the perspective of ethical praxis, the *wewarah* tradition underscores selfless service – helping anyone in need, driven by *welas lan asih* [compassion and love], without expectation of return. Finally, at the communal and spiritual-social level, the *Sesanti* functions simultaneously as a spiritual motto and as a collective declaration of identity. It calls members of Sapta Darma to active participation in public life while embodying a shared spiritual mission.

Based on the synthesis above, the meaning of the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma can be summarised in five key points:

- A continuous call to radiate virtue: *Sumunar* is not a sporadic act but a lifelong spiritual habitus.
- Inclusive awareness without boundaries: The dual formulation *ing ngendi bae* and *marang sapa bae* affirms that Sapta Darma's light transcends borders – geographical, cultural and social.
- Altruistic orientation akin to the sun: The *baskara* metaphor illustrates a commitment to benefit others impartially and transformatively.
- Concrete praxis of compassion: This is embodied in selfless acts of physical and spiritual care [*sabda usada*], in accordance with the tradition's core teachings.
- Spiritual identity with social consequence: The *Sesanti* is more than an ethical slogan – it is a communal declaration demanding followers to be 'light to society' and agents of solidarity across boundaries.

In sum, the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma articulates a holistic religious ethos: a universal and inclusive imperative to radiate goodness like the sun – unceasingly, without discrimination and grounded in compassion [*welas asih*] – embodying the collective spiritual identity of its adherents in the social realm.

## Exegetical analysis of the phrase '*lampSATō to phōs*' in Matthew 5:16

The command '*kudu sumunar pindha baskara*' in the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma bears a notable resemblance to Jesus' imperative in Matthew 5:16, 'λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν' [let your light shine]. In Matthew 5:13–16, the disciples are depicted as the 'salt and light of the world', a status and vocation that function as a moral guide for those who have received the Kingdom of God, reflecting what Hagner (1993:98) terms kingdom ethics. Within the broader context of the Sermon on the Mount, the metaphor of light primarily pertains to the community – those who live in accordance with Jesus' interpretation of the Torah (Betz 1995:163). The imperative to 'let your light shine' emphasises the outward manifestation of the community's ethical and religious conduct; the light is not intrinsic to the disciples themselves but becomes visible through their good deeds, which illuminate the surrounding world and elicit recognition and praise of God from those outside the community. In this sense, the shining of the light functions as a performative reflection of the moral and spiritual principles articulated in the Sermon on the Mount, making visible the community's normative light in tangible ethical action and fulfilling the ethical and pedagogical purpose of Jesus' teachings. This status is exclusive to the disciples, as highlighted by the personal pronoun Ὑμεῖς ([you] v. 14), which indicates that Jesus is addressing his followers specifically rather than the general public (Morris 1992:106).

The syntactical structure of Matthew 5:16 may be outlined as follows: the adverb οὕτως functions as an adverb of result or comparison. The main imperative clause is expressed in λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν [let your light shine], followed by the locative object ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων [before others]. This is then linked by the conjunction of purpose ὅπως, which introduces two purpose clauses: (1) ἵδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα [so that they may see your good works]; and (2) καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς [and glorify your Father who is in heaven].

The verse begins with the adverb οὕτως ['thus', 'in this manner'] (Newman 1973:129), which points back to the two preceding metaphors in verses 14–15: a city on a hill and a lamp on a lampstand (Morris 1992:106). The function of οὕτως can be understood in two ways: (1) as an adverb of result drawing a moral conclusion from the previous illustrations (ed. Danker 2021:741–742); or (2) as an adverb of manner, indicating a comparison, as Robertson notes – 'just as the lamp shines, so must your light shine' (cf. NIV, NLT, ESV, CJB, NET ['in the same way']) (Robertson 1985:n.p.). Thus, the verse serves both as a moral conclusion and a practical directive for how disciples are to live as the light of the world (Culpepper 2022:n.p.).

The verb λαμπάτω means 'to shine' (Vine 1981:22), 'to emit rays of light' (ed. Danker 2021:585–586) or 'to bring light', as used of celestial bodies, lightning, lamps, torches and the like

(Louw & Nida 1988–1989:n.p.). It is in the aorist active imperative form, which focuses on the act as a whole (punctiliar), regardless of its duration (Lai & Binar 2025). Notably, the grammatical subject of the imperative is ‘the light’ [τὸ φῶς] in the nominative case, with ὑμῶν functioning as a genitive of possession (‘your’). The disciples, therefore, are the implied addressees of the command. As Betz (1995:163) observes, the imperative is directed to the community of disciples, whose light is commanded to shine before others. Hence, translations such as ‘let your light shine’ (KJV, ESV) or ‘your light must shine’ (TEV, GNT) accurately capture both the grammatical structure and the rhetorical force of the imperative.

The term φῶς [light] is a significant metaphor in Scripture, often used to refer to God, Christ, Israel, the Church, the Gospel, the Law, the Temple, Jerusalem and salvation (Hagner 1993:99–100). Hendriksen (1982:284) observes that ‘light’ symbolises true knowledge of God (Ps 36:9; Mt 6:22–23), goodness, righteousness and honesty (Eph. 5:8–9), as well as joy and true happiness (Ps 97:11; Is 9:1–7). In some contexts, a single aspect is emphasised, while in others, it encompasses the entirety of salvation blessings (cf. Ps 27:1; Lk 1:77–79).

In the context of Matthew 5:16, φῶς refers to the life of believers (Luz 2007:207). Kasdan (2011:n.p.) interprets this light as the salvation of God that must be transmitted to the world. Practically, this light is expressed through ‘good works’ [τὰ καλὰ ἔργα] observable by others. Thus, the phrase ‘good works’ defines the concrete expression of letting one’s light shine (Evans 2012:112). Osborne (2010:n.p.) emphasises that God’s light must be reflected not only in verbal testimony but also through a lifestyle characterised by love and righteousness, demonstrating God’s justice and compassion (cf. Mt 5:6, 10, 20).

This concept is central in the New Testament (cf. 2 Cor 4:6; Phil 2:15; Tt 2:8; Pt 1 2:12, 15) and is recognised today as ‘lifestyle evangelism’ (Osborne 2010:n.p.). Accordingly, the disciples become light and a blessing to the world because they themselves have been blessed (Patte 1987:70). The status of being light (i.e., blessed) is inseparable from the calling to bless others. These good works may also echo the actions mentioned in the Beatitudes (vv. 3–12) (Davies 2009:51), although it must be emphasised that they are the fruit of divine light and life, not merely human moral effort (Wilkins, Osborne & McKnight 2004:n.p.).

The imperative λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς yields several theological implications: (1) world transformation – the disciples’ light overcomes darkness and brings transformative change to the world (Case-Winters 2015:n.p.); (2) ethical distinctiveness – their presence must reflect kingdom values without compromise or assimilation (Turner 2008:156); (3) godward orientation – the primary function of the light is to direct people to God as the source of light and life (Mounce 1991:43); and (4) anti-separatism – being light requires engagement with the world, not withdrawal from it (Turner 2008:156).

The genitive prepositional phrase ἐμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων denotes location: the light must shine ‘before men’ (Vine 1981:108). This expression is inclusive – referring to both Jews and Gentiles (Davies & Allison 2000:478) – as affirmed by the phrase ‘light of the world’ (v. 14) and the images of a city and a lamp that cannot be hidden (vv. 14–15). Even in the context of persecution, the disciples’ light is to remain visible and public (Gundry 2010:n.p.), thus highlighting the universal and open nature of their witness (Patte 1987:70).

The conjunction ὅπως followed by two aorist subjunctives (ἴδωσιν and δοξάσωσιν) conveys the intended purpose of the imperative λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν, best translated as ‘so that’, ‘in order that’ or ‘with the result that’ (ed. Danker 2021:718). Two core purposes are presented:

Firstly, in the expression ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα [that they may see your good works], the pronoun ὑμῶν [your] is emphatic in Greek, distinguishing the disciples’ good works from those commonly observed in their social environment. Bruner (2004:190) asserts that the uniqueness of the disciples’ actions lies in their humility and compassion – especially when these qualities are demonstrated amid suffering and persecution (cf. v. 10).

Secondly, in the expression δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς [‘that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven’], the ultimate aim of shining light is not self-glorification, but the glorification of the heavenly father (Walvoord & Dyer 1974:n.p.). The notion of glorifying God in Revelation often implies repentance and a turning towards God (cf. Rv 14:6–7; 16:9), a nuance that may likewise be present in this passage (Osborne 2010:n.p.).

## A comparative analysis

This section presents the similarities and differences between the teachings of ‘*kudu sumunar pindhha baskara*’ and ‘*lampsatō to phōs*’ – Table 1 summarises the similarities, while Table 2 outlines the differences.

The primary convergence between the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma and Matthew 5:16 lies in their shared ethical imperative to ‘shine’ [*sumunar* or λαμπάτω], interpreted as a call to live in love, generate social impact and serve as light in communal life. Both emphasise active social engagement and non-discriminatory relationships. However, their key differences emerge in the theological foundations of such actions. In Sapta Darma, light is an internal and communal expression of altruistic ethics, without explicitly pointing towards a transcendent God. Conversely, in Matthew 5:16, light is a reflection of a relationship with God through Christ, and all good deeds are directed towards glorifying God in heaven. Thus, while Sapta Darma and Matthew 5:16 share a common ground in social ethics, they differ significantly in their ontological, soteriological and theological orientation. Their similarities can serve as points of contact in interfaith dialogue, while their differences highlight the unique distinctions between local spiritualities and the gospel, the good news.

**TABLE 1:** Similarities between ‘*kudu sumunar pindha baskara*’ and ‘*lampsatō to phōs*’.

Aspect	<i>Sesanti</i> of Sapta Darma	Matthew 5:16
Existential imperative	The word <i>kudu</i> [must] denotes an absolute imperative to shine [ <i>sumunar</i> ] as a manifestation of the identity of Sapta Darma adherents.	The verb <i>λαμπιάτω</i> [let shine] is an imperative form commanding ‘your light’ to shine actively.
Metaphor of light	Light [ <i>sumunar</i> ] is compared to <i>baskara</i> [the sun], symbolising universal illumination.	Uses the metaphor of light [ <i>φῶς</i> ] as a symbol of good deeds visible to others.
Spatial universality	<i>Ing ngendi bae</i> [wherever] implies boundless spatial application.	<i>ἐμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων</i> [before others] refers to a public, social space.
Relational inclusivity	<i>Marang sapa bae</i> [to anyone] implies non-discriminatory application across social, religious and ethnic boundaries.	<i>τῶν ἀνθρώπων</i> [all people] includes both Jews and non-Jews as recipients of light.
Ethical-practical function	<i>Sumunar</i> is expressed through altruistic acts of help (the fourth teaching of <i>Wewerah Pitu</i> ).	Light shines through <i>τὰ καλὰ ἔργα</i> [good deeds], not merely theoretical teachings.
Altruistic orientation	Like the sun, light shines without partiality or expectation.	The light shines so others may see and glorify God – not for personal gain.
Social-theological purpose	Helping others as a manifestation of love [ <i>welas lan asih</i> ].	That others may see good deeds and glorify the Father in heaven.
Public-social dimension	Spiritual identity must be tangibly expressed in the public sphere.	The light must not be hidden (cf. vv. 14–15), but be visible to all.

**TABLE 2:** Differences between ‘*kudu sumunar pindha baskara*’ and ‘*lampsatō to phōs*’.

Aspect	<i>Sesanti</i> of Sapta Darma	Matthew 5:16
Source of light	<i>Sumunar</i> is an inherent quality of adherents, a spiritual habitus rooted in the self.	Light [ <i>φῶς</i> ] is a gift rooted in God’s blessing and becomes visible through the believers’ life and good works.
Theocentricity	Emphasises horizontal relationships: light for others, based on compassion [ <i>welas lan asih</i> ].	Emphasises vertical relationship and divine purpose: that God may be glorified.
Ontological basis	Spiritual identity is formed through community membership and the teachings of <i>Wewerah Pitu</i> .	Disciples’ identity as light derives from being ‘in Christ,’ not from social affiliation.
Ultimate goal	Aims to form an inclusive, loving society without self-interest.	The ultimate goal is <i>doxologia</i> [the glorification of God] and the repentance of humanity.
Source of doctrinal authority	Teachings originate from the spiritual figure of Sapta Darma and are codified in <i>Wewerah Pitu</i> .	Teachings originate directly from Jesus Christ, the Teacher and Lord.
View of salvation	Focuses on concrete acts of help as expressions of saving compassion.	Focuses on divine light as the result of salvation; good deeds are fruit, not the source of salvation.
Historical and religious context	Emerges from a Javanese local belief system with syncretic and cultural nuances.	Rooted in Jewish tradition and reformed by Jesus within the context of the Kingdom of God.
Target audience	Directed to all Sapta Darma adherents as a collective ethos.	Addressed exclusively to Christ’s disciples, not to the general public.

## A contextual study

Within the framework of contextual theology, Christian mission demands the proclamation of the gospel that does not erase or replace local cultural values, but rather actively engages with local meanings in order to provide a deeper theological understanding. Contextualisation is not syncretism, but a critical and dialogical hermeneutical process wherein the gospel encounters culture in a communicative and transformative manner. In this context, the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma – ‘*ing ngendi bae marang sapa bae warga Sapta Darma kudu sumunar pindha*

*baskara*’ [wherever and to whomever, Sapta Darma adherents must shine like the sun] – provides a culturally and spiritually relevant foundation for communicating the ethical and theological message of Matthew 5:16.

Semantically and theologically, there is a significant point of convergence between the imperative *sumunar pindha baskara* [shine like the sun] in Sapta Darma and the imperative command in Matthew 5:16: ‘*λαμπιάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν*’ [let your light shine]. Both expressions convey the foundational idea that human life – whether as adherents of Sapta Darma or as disciples of Christ – must serve as a source of light to others, through concrete and non-discriminatory acts of goodness. In both the *Sesanti* and the gospel teaching, light is not merely an abstract moral symbol, but an active expression of love and universal social engagement.

However, within a contextualisation framework, it is crucial to distinguish the ontological aspects of the light in question. In the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma, the act of *sumunar* constitutes a spiritual habitus embedded within the collective identity of Sapta Darma adherents, with *baskara* [sunlight] functioning as a local metaphor for universal, impartial goodness. In contrast, in Matthew 5:16, light [*φῶς*] does not arise autonomously from the disciples themselves but is rooted in God’s blessing, which is then embodied in their life and witness. This light is concretely expressed through ‘good works’ [*τὰ καλὰ ἔργα*], observable by others and intended to lead to the glorification of God rather than self-exaltation. While Sapta Darma presents light as an inherent spiritual quality cultivated within the adherent, Matthew emphasises light as a bestowed identity inseparable from ethical responsibility. The distinction underscores that, in the biblical text, light is not an existential self-expression but a visible testimony of God’s salvific work, manifested through a lifestyle of righteousness, justice and compassion. Thus, while both traditions value the transformative and communal dimension of light, their ontological grounding differs significantly: one is self-derived, the other divinely conferred.

Building on this ontological distinction, the contextualisation process here requires a reinterpretation of *baskara*, not as a purely natural solar metaphor but as an ethical–missiological metaphor. In Matthew 5:16, light [*φῶς*] is embodied in the life and good works of the disciples, which enable others to recognise and glorify God. Within this framework, the concept of *sumunar* can be understood as a life that radiates love, justice and righteousness in the world. Such a reading allows *baskara* to serve as a conceptual bridge between Sapta Darma spirituality and the biblical message, showing that light functions as a visible witness to divine goodness rather than as an autonomous self-expression.

From this reinterpretation, the missiological implications become evident. The imperative ‘*sumunar marang sapa bae*’ can be contextualised with Jesus’ teaching on the openness of the gospel mission to all nations (Mt 28:19) and the inclusivity of gospel light intended for ‘all people’ (Mt 5:16; Jn 3:16). The phrase *marang sapa bae* in the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma removes

relational and social boundaries, just as Matthew 5:16 emphasises that good deeds should be seen ‘ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων’ [before all people]. In both teachings, the life of light is not spiritual exclusivism but a public, open and transformative witness.

In addition, the principle of selfless love as expressed in the fourth teaching of *Wewerah Pitu* – namely helping anyone without expecting reward, except out of compassion and mercy – aligns with the ethical imperative of the gospel that demands good works as the fruit of life in the light (Eph 5:8–9; Pt 1 2:12). Matthew 5:16 affirms that the disciples’ light must shine in the form of ‘good works’ [τὰ καλὰ ἔργα] visible to others and directed towards the glorification of God, not personal pride. Thus, this contextualisation is not merely a comparison between two similar ethics but an integration of Sapta Darma’s praxis of love with the theocentric orientation distinctive of Jesus’ theology.

Critically, this process of contextualisation also requires the repositioning of the source of light within the local belief system. In Sapta Darma spirituality, light is understood as an internal human potential driven by ethical awareness and collective values. In contrast, in Christianity, light is the result of an encounter with Christ and his redemptive work. Therefore, the contextual entry point may be built by explaining that the inner light can only truly shine when it is illuminated by the absolute divine light – Christ himself. In contextual language: true *sumunar* is only possible when the *baskara* that illuminates is Christ.

Thus, the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma provides a valuable cultural framework for communicating the message of Matthew 5:16 contextually. The understanding of light, unconditional acts of love and socially inclusive engagement become conceptual vessels that allow the gospel to be understood in a more incarnational way within the local belief context. Nonetheless, contextualisation must remain critical: enriching the gospel without reducing its meaning, and honouring culture without neglecting the uniqueness of Christ as the centre of God’s revelation.

## Conclusion

This study finds a conceptual intersection between the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma ‘*kudu sumunar pindha baskara*’ and Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:16 ‘*lampsatō to phōs humōn*’, particularly in the ethical dimension: both emphasise the importance of displaying good deeds as light in the midst of society. However, there is a fundamental difference in theological foundation. In the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma, light originates from the spiritual potential of humans as ethical beings; in Jesus’ teaching, light is not an inherent human quality but a divinely conferred identity of the disciples, manifested through their good works. These works are intended not for self-exaltation but to lead others to glorify God, thereby highlighting the ethical and missiological function of light in the Matthean context.

These findings suggest that the *Sesanti* of Sapta Darma may serve as a strategic entry point in contextualising the gospel, especially in communicating ethical values culturally. However, such contextualisation must be accompanied by the affirmation that the light in the gospel is theocentric and soteriological, not merely ethical. Thus, the light of Christ not only resonates culturally but also leads to true spiritual transformation.

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### Authors’ contributions

F.X.E.K. was responsible for conceptualisation, writing of the original draft, resources, and formal analysis. S.H.P. was responsible for conceptualisation, writing of the original draft, and resources. H.Z.L. was responsible for conceptualisation, writing of the original draft, resources, formal analysis, methodology, and review and editing of the manuscript.

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### Data availability

The authors declare that all data that support this research article and findings are available in the article and its references.

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