

TIRTA IN BALINESE HINDU TRADITION

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Abstract :

Bali's Hindus are known as "Agama Tirtha," or the religion of holy water, because holy water, or Tirtha, has always been an integral part of Bali's Hinduism. Water is a powerful symbol with many meanings, including cleansing, healing, and warding off evil forces. The use of holy water is crucial in religious ceremonies held anywhere from private homes to public temples. Holy water is water that has come from a holy source and been blessed by a holy priest.

The tirtha's power and sanctity are determined by the water's origin, the mantra recited during its blessing, and the person who performed the ritual. Sacred water is sourced from holy springs, mountain springs (such as the spring at the peak of Mount Agung) for major festivities on the island

Key Words : tirta, Balinese Hindu tradition

1. Introduction

Theertham (Theertha or Tirtha) literally refers to water. In Hindu sacred literature, it is referred to as the physical holy water body associated with a temple or deity. As per Hindu religious belief, water is the principal purification mechanism. While external purification is believed to be through a dip in sacred water bodies, internal purification is through truthfulness. Most Hindu temples are associated with bodies of water, which are called Theertham. In Vishnu temples, devotees are offered a few drops of sacred water called Theertham.

Theertha Yatra is the pilgrimage associated with Hinduism. Rig Veda and Atharvaveda have detailed mention about the famous pilgrimage sites in India. Mahabharata identifies around 300 religious sites related to Theertha yatra.[4] In Hinduism, the yatra (pilgrimage) to the tirthas (sacred places) has special significance for earning the punya (spiritual merit) needed to attain the moksha (salvation). Due to political issues, the Tirthas in India were disrupted during the medieval period. These days, Theertha Yatra are organized in group by travel agencies and sometimes by the government bodies. Char Dham (meaning: four abodes) is a set of four pilgrimage sites in India.[5] It is believed that visiting these sites helps achieve moksha (salvation). The four Dhams are, Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameswaram as defined by Adi Shankaracharya consists of four Hindu pilgrimage sites along famous river banks.[6] There are major tourist Theertha Yatra circuits in India covering various historic and religious theme

Taking a bath is an important daily ritual in the Hindu faith. It's believed that bathing cleans the body but also the mind and soul.

Bathing in the morning is thought to help remove all negative energy, and 4am is considered the most auspicious time.

Many Hindu temples have public water tanks so that worshippers can bathe before entering the temple. Sacred water

Rivers play an important role in the Hindu faith. Many are believed to be sacred, and people bathe in them to cleanse themselves of their sins.

There are seven principle holy rivers: Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu/Indus, Kaveri

Ganga (the Ganges) is the holiest of the sacred rivers.

Most rivers are considered female and are personified as goddesses. Ganga is usually shown riding on a crocodile, and Yamuna rides on a turtle

2. Tirta Balinese Holy water

Tirta as holy water requires special care. The extraction process must be treated with awe and respect by worshipers from the very beginning:

1. Form a squatting position, a gesture which implies you are appealing in favor of receiving something precious from nature. The water must then be stored in a clean, new, and never been used for substances other than to keep holy water.
2. It must be carried above the head on the way back home from the springs or temple.
3. The container must be handled with care and respect, such as holding and passing the bottle using only the right hand, or both hands.
4. At home or family temple it must be and stored in the highest place possible, such as a shelf that is higher than people's heads.
5. Never handle it carelessly such as putting it on the floor or stepping over it, as the water would lose its mystical power. Those who desecrate it will be considered "Pramada," which means they are disrespectful and vulnerable to negative forces.

How to Make Holy Water

Those who are in charge of making holy water are called *sulingih*", a Hindu High Priest, "Pemangku" a common Hindu Priest and sometimes "Dalang" a puppet master. The mantras used and the procession in the making holy water might be different, depending on who is performing the blessing.

Holy water made by *sulingih*"

"Maweda" is the term for this ritual, which is performed daily. The *pedanda* will prepare for the ritual by cleansing his mind and body. Then he will enter a trance and be able to communicate with the gods. Holding flowers in his right hand while chanting mantras and

dropping petals into the water. The Pedanda holy water can then be used to cleanse participants in rituals and celebrations, such as Balinese weddings.

Holy water made by “Pemangku”

The holy water is prepared by regular village priests in the temple where they perform their services, and it can only be used for ritual cleansing. Since the Pemangku is viewed as having less spiritual power, and since they only make connections to the Gods and Goddesses worshipped at their own temples, they will chant a different mantra than the Pedanda.

Holy water made by the puppet master or “Dalang”

Whenever there is a special occasion involving a shadow puppet performance at the temple, the holy water is prepared for the ritual known as “Wayang Lemah.” While chanting a mantra, the Dalang will cleanse the water by dipping one or more of the puppet’s fingers into it.

The Balinese belief and worship of Hindu Dharma in Bali governs all the activities of the daily life of the Balinese. The three basic fundamentals of Hindu Dharma are Yadnya (rituals), Tattwa (philosophy) and Susila (moral behaviour), which are interacted to form Balinese culture.

Hindu religion is originated from India. The practice of the Philosophy in the Balinese Hindu in Bali is almost similar to the practice of Hindu in India whereas in Balinese Hindu is more attached to the local culture. Basic practice of rituals are based on the Vedas (Holy Manuscript) and the philosophy of Yadnya (rituals) are also referring to it. There are five types of Yadnya

(means holy sacrifice with a pure heart) in Balinese Hindu: 1)Dewa Yadnya: to the Gods and Goddesses as manifestations of the Supreme Being. 2)Pitra Yadnya: to the ancestors who give the people guidance in life and gave them the opportunity to be born. 3) Manusa Yadnya: to protect our lives and those of future generations 4)Rsi Yadnya: to the priests who guide us all on our spiritual journey. 5) Bhuta Yadnya: to any other beings (visible and invisible) to ensure that there will be harmony and unity in nature.

In Hindu believers there are important elements of nature to be considered as the guideline of rituals in retaining the harmonious living of the human being (Nair,2009). Those elements comprise of: earth, water, fire, air, and ether or sky (which are called as panchamahabhuta). Among the five elements water is represented by a circle symbolises fullness based on the graphical depiction of panchamahabhuta. Primarily water is the building block of life and all the living beings are at the mercy of God, for the water. In India as well as in Bali water has been an object of worship from time immemorial, which signifies the non-manifested substratum from which all manifestation arise. This leads the practice of utilizing water as the purification of all rituals. In conducting every religious rite, the presence of holy water is the most important part of all Balinese ceremonies (Agastia, 2007). Holy water accompanies every act of Balinese-Hindu worship from individual devotion at household shrine to island-wide ceremonies

3. Vedic and tirta

The greatness of tirta in the whole Balinese Hindu traditin Bāngamaye and Yajña is immeasurable. By the bāri's touch, the bāri, the purity of the bāri is transmitted to the body and mind and then to the mind, intellect, and ego, and at once opens up self-consciousness. Tirta itself is holy. No object or substance can purify the tirta of origin. Instead, tirta can purify all impure objects or substances. Mahākabi Kalidāsa, while describing tirta as the original creation of God, calls tirta as one of the visible eight forms of Maheswara –This description of Kalidāsa is consistent with the Śrauta concept of the order of creation. Because a similar description is available in Nāśadīasūkta of Ṛgveda. Again in the Taittirīa Upaniṣad, the order of creation is seen differently. But there exists the issue of tirta –

tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśa sambhūta ākāśādbāyu bāyoragni agnerāpa adbha pṛthibī
pṛthivyā auśadhaya auśadhībhyo'nnam/ⁱ

So from Paramātmā ākāśa, ākāśa from Air, Air from Agni, Agni from Tirta. In the Nāśadīasūkta of the Ṛgveda, Śalila or tirta is explained as apraketa, i.e. devoid of distinct signs. At the dawn of creation, all the physical worlds were shrouded in unconscious darkness and then–

The sage Parameṣṭī, while perceiving the origin of the visible universe shrouded in the terrible mystery of infinity, asked the question - Where was Salil, the cause of the deluge in the pre-creation stage? Tirta is used metaphorically in the Balinese Hindu tradition for the purity of nature and to point out the unfathomable mysteries of creation.

Although the Ṛgveda describes tirta as spiritual, its deity is also recognized there. The God of tirta here is Apāṅg Napāt (God of Tirta). Ṛgvedaeva is the form of this deity found in the second and tenth mandalas. The sage says that the tirta god (Apāṅg Napāt) resides under the sea. Holy tirta is required to prepare someras for Indra. Then the sages offered somrasa to the tirta god to appease him. From this, it can be understood that he used to drink somrasa. Then the God of tirta provided holy good tirta. As a result, the Somers were well purified. Then the ṛtviks chanted mantras and offered the purified delicious Somaras to Indradevatā in the yajña. Apart from this, the description of his (tirta god) body is also found in the second mandala. He is the soul of all living beings; He created the entire universe. So it is stated in the second chapter of Ṛgveda –

apām napātasūryasya mahnā viśvanyaryo bhuvanā jajāna/ⁱⁱ

She is the breeder of sea urchins. Pure tirta surrounds him. She is the giver of protection; she protects the worshipers from the perpetrators of violence, enemies. Besides, he is never pleased with people who are ungrateful, ungrateful, miserly etc. During monsoon, he helps in food production by providing tirta. She became Satyaśīlā, Tejaswī Pavitravatī. The invoker gives the desired fruits to the hosts. He is the producer of medicines. The greatness of this goddess is infinite because Ila, Saraswati, and Bhārti hold food for the three Balinese Hindu traditin deities. The place where he lives is Suvarnamaya. So it appears in the Ṛgveda –

Hiraṇyārūpa sa hirṇyasaṁdṛgapā napātsedu hiraṇyavarṇa/

Hiraṇyāyātpari yonerniṣidyā hirṇyadā dadatyannamasmai/ⁱⁱⁱ

Since he (Apāṅg Napāt) exists in the depths of the sea as a fire, his appearance is lightning. Therefore, in the description, his shape is like electricity. And his body is rich in color. The western scholar Anthony Macdonell also thinks that the power of fire is Apāṅg Napāt, the tirta god. So he said— ‘The epithet Asu-heman swiftly— speeding applied three times to Apam-napat, which refers to Agni in its only ether occurrence. Hence, Apam-napat appears to represent Agni's lighting form, which lurks in the cloud. Besides being directly called Apam-napat, Agni is also termed the embryo (Garbha) of the tirta.^{iv}

In the Ṛgveda, however, there are two forms of the Apāṅg Napāt deity. In Balinese Hindu traditin Yajña, taking a vow is considered a crucial part. Taking a vow as the initial action of Daśapūrṇamāsa Yāga, which is the nature of all Iṣṭi Yaga, is prescribed. It is clearly stated in the Śatapatha brāhmaṇam –

Bratamupaiṣyan antareṇāhavanīyāñca gārhapatyañca prāṇ tiṣṭhannapa'upasprṣati tadyadapa'upasprṣatyamedhyo vai puruṣo yadanṛtaṁ vadati tena pūtirantarato medhyā vā'āpao medhyā bhūttvā bhratamupāyānīti pavaittraṁ va'āepa pabitttrapūto bhratamupāyānīti tasmādvā apa upasprṣti//^v

When a living being is ready for self-sacrifice, he is purified by holy tirta. One has to approach the tirta god with caution. And drinking tirta is ordered. Because these tasks have to be completed before the Yajña begins, so that the self-sacrificer does not suffer any harm. Again, before starting this Kriyā, the necessary materials of Yajña must be purified with tirta. Even the holy tirta destroys all kinds of evil forces no matter how many obstacles come in the way of Yajña. In other words, Adhvaryu sprinkles tirta from his kamaṇḍalu to drive away all the disturbers or enemies who disturb the yajña. Similarly in Śatapatha brāhmaṇam it is said –

Yadvai yajñsya riṣṭtaṁ yadaśāntamāpo vai tasya sarvasya śāntiradbhirevainantacchāntyā śmyattetadeva tatra karma/^{vi}

Conclusion

This greatness and limitless importance of tirta in the fields of Balinese Hindu traditin literature and Yagyagna editing is undoubtedly surprising. Tirta in the form of rivers and seas is always engaged in the eternal welfare of the world. Avabhṛtasāna at the end of the Yajña, and Śāntibāri Prokṣan endows the Yajña with unshakeable glory. The beginning of the yajna is also marked by tirta - which is famous in Balinese Hindu traditin thought as Pranītāpranayana. Even Havimiśrita Yajmān Havishmān serves mixed tirta. Not only in the Balinese Hindu traditin period but also in the present human society, the method of ācaman with tirta is unbroken. The contribution of holy tirta from Bhumiṣṭa to Śrāddha ceremony is undeniable. Without tirta, it is very difficult to protect the environment. We cannot think of the origin of anything without tirta. Therefore no ritual of Māṅgalika action except tirta is prescribed.

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