

Melukat: Exploring the Educational Significance of Purity in Balinese Ritual Practices and Religious Leadership Development

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Abstract

This study explores the educational significance of purity in Balinese ritual practices and religious leadership development. Purity is a central concept in the Āgama Tīrtha religion of Bali, which is a unique blend of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Tantra. The study uses autoethnography as its methodology to understand the strength of the Balinese beliefs and the impact of ritual practices on education and leadership development. The study focuses on the water purification ceremony (Upacara Melukat), which is of central importance to the daily Sūrya-Sevana, worship of the sun. The study examines the impact of purity, pollution, anomaly, and taboo on Balinese gender roles, traditions, ceremonies, and religious leadership. It argues that the need for purity is the motivator for rigidity in Balinese society and religious leadership and that purity ideals could also be behind other biases. The study concludes that the motivation behind the rules and taboos observed and documented is the preservation of the very Balinese identity. This study contributes to the existing knowledge in the field of Balinese ritual practices, faith-based healing traditions, and religious leadership development.

Keywords: Melukat, purity, Balinese Ritual Practices, religious leadership development, education

1. Introduction

Melukat is a traditional purification ritual that holds great importance in Balinese Hinduism, which is based on the Āgama Tīrtha, a blend of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Tantra. The cleansing process is believed to be a means of achieving spiritual purification and mental clarity, which are essential for spiritual progress. The ceremony is performed under the guidance of a priest or Brahmin. The ritual has been passed down from generation to generation and remains a significant part of the Balinese religious and cultural heritage (Meranggi, 2018; Sari et al., 2022; Luntungan et al., 2022; Suarja et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2023).

Beyond its religious significance, Melukat has educational value. The concepts of purity and pollution are deeply embedded in Balinese culture and society and play a crucial role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of the Balinese people. Through Melukat, participants learn about the principles of purity, self-discipline, and self-reflection, which are considered essential for spiritual growth (Astuti et al., 2019; Hynson, 2021; Yuni & Artana, 2021; Purnamawati et al., 2022; Octaviyani et al., 2023).

Moreover, this is particularly important in Balinese Hindu culture, which places a strong emphasis on community and social responsibility. The ritual is often performed at natural water sources, such as rivers or springs, which are considered sacred by the Balinese Hindus. In addition to its spiritual and moral education value, Melukat also has a therapeutic aspect. The ritual is believed to have healing properties and is often used to treat physical and mental ailments (Eryani & Jayantari, 2019; Endi & Prasetyo, 2020; Tary Puspa & Saitya, 2021; Suartika & Cuthbert, 2022; Damayanti et al., 2022).

In particular, Pedandas or priests hold a position of great respect and authority. However, despite the importance of purity and the role of religious leaders in Balinese society, there is little research on the educational significance of Melukat and its role in shaping religious leadership. In addition, they must lead by example and maintain a high level of purity in their thoughts, words, and deeds. Despite the significance of purity and the role of religious leaders in Balinese society, little research has been done on the educational significance. However, Melukat can also provide a space for Pedandas to impart knowledge and wisdom to their disciples, fostering the growth of religious leadership (Rahmawati et al., 2019; Sukarsa et al., 2020; Junaedi & Waruwu, 2020; Pageh et

al., 2022; Agung et al., 2023).

Therefore, this research article aims to explore the educational significance of Melukat in Balinese ritual practices and religious leadership development. Through a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of purity and pollution and their impact on Balinese society and religious leadership, this research article seeks to shed light on the role of Melukat in shaping the educational values and practices of the Balinese people.

To achieve this objective, this research article will address the following research questions:

- 1) What is the significance of purity in Balinese culture and society, and how is it demonstrated through religious rituals such as Melukat?
- 2) How does Melukat fit into Balinese purification practices, and what is its educational significance?
- 3) What is the role of purity in Balinese religious leadership development, and how does it impact the selection and hierarchy of religious leaders?
- 4) What are the educational motivations for the Balinese quest for purity, and how do they shape the behavior and attitudes of the Balinese people?

By answering these questions, this research article seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the educational significance of Melukat and its role in shaping Balinese ritual practices and religious leadership development. This research article will be of interest to scholars in the fields of education, religious studies, and anthropology, as well as to educators and practitioners interested in Balinese culture and society.

2. Method

The research method used in this study is autoethnography, which combines personal experience, cultural analysis, and interpretation to understand cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences. The data collection process involves a combination of textual/linguistic analysis, anthropology, religious studies, ethnography, and perceptual psychology to gather data. The data for this research was collected from both primary and secondary sources, including past research literature, journals, and books in the field of Balinese religion, Balinese society, the concept of purity and pollution, the Melukat ceremony, etc. The study employed formal fieldwork instruments that utilized mixed methods research to understand the perceptions of Balinese people on the role of purity in Balinese religious traditions and religious leadership. The analysis of data in this study involves a thematic approach, and the researcher identifies themes related to purity in Balinese ritual practices and religious leadership development. The study's sample population was 155 Balinese individuals over the age of 18, and the target sample size was adequate for this study since it gives a below 10% margin of error. The limitations of the research include the Covid-19 crisis, which created a severe data verification hurdle, and the fact that the study focused specifically on the impact of purity and pollution on the Balinese religious leadership. Therefore, generalizations of findings to religious leadership in other regions, such as India, may not be well advised due to the unique cultural factors in Bali.

3. Literature Review

The author proposes that purity is central to Balinese religious beliefs and is the basis of many issues faced in Balinese society and leadership. The author will study purity through the prism of the Melukat water purification ceremonies and explore the concepts of purity, pollution, anomaly, and taboo. The Melukat ceremony is a versatile ritual of purification using water in Bali, aimed at cleansing and purifying. The author conducted an empirical investigation utilizing mixed research methods and will critically analyze the evolution of the concepts of purity and pollution.

3.1 Balinese Society

The culture in Bali is based on the concept of community, where everything is done in groups. There is no apparent differentiation between people during ceremonies, regardless of their caste or social status. Anecdotes illustrate the Balinese people's belief in the equality of all members of their society (Sara et al., 2020).

Table 1. The organizations to which Balinese belong are summarized in the following table

Name of organization	Type of organization
<i>Desa Adat</i>	customary village
<i>Banjar</i>	customary hamlet
<i>Desa Dinas</i>	administrative village
<i>Subak</i>	organization for irrigation farmers
<i>Subak Abian</i>	organization for upland farmers
<i>Pemaksan</i>	temple congregation
<i>Seka</i>	functional groups
<i>Warga</i>	Kin based networks

The caste system in Bali has been in place for over 500 years and is still significant today, although it is officially banned by the government due to its discriminatory nature. The caste system has four groups—Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriyā, Wesya, and Sudrā—each with a specific function and hierarchical status. Wargas provide another social structure in Bali that sometimes overlaps with caste divisions. The importance of the caste system is more pronounced in Bali due to religious and cultural uniformity. The author argues that despite government directives, biases related to the caste system are still at play in Balinese society (Sihombing, 2022).

3.2 Balinese Religion

This research aims to explore the role of Balinese religion in creating rules and taboos based on purity, specifically looking at the Āgama Tīrtha, which is a combination of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Tantra. The author believes that in order to understand the cultural significance of the Melukat ceremony, it is important to first examine Balinese ritual practices through each of these religious prisms. The author argues that there is hidden caste and gender bias within the idea of purity. The author will also draw on the work and will examine the influence of each religion and the historical development of Balinese religion to understand the hidden elements that influence Balinese culture.

3.2.1 Hinduism

The influence of Hinduism in Bali is significant, with religion playing a crucial role in Balinese spirituality and culture. Bali is known as a religious and spiritual center, with many pilgrims visiting the island to experience its unique offerings, such as daily offerings and a multitude of art forms. However, the researcher argues that caste discrimination and gender discrimination are deeply rooted in Balinese efforts to achieve purity, with the varna bias and gender bias being two important societal biases that exist in Āgama Tīrtha. The study explores the origins of these biases and their impact on defining the Balinese identity, with a focus on caste-based rules, norms, and differences, and gender-based rules and differences (McDaniel, 2020; Noseworthy, 2022; Picard, 2022).

3.2.2 Buddhist Influence on Balinese Religion

The author visited Borobudur temple in Central Java, the world's largest Buddhist temple, and witnessed ceremonies performed by Ida Resi that involved both Hinduism and Buddhism. The Balinese religion is a blend of Hinduism and Buddhism, which developed due to the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism on the Javanese Majapahit kingdom. The fall of the Majapahit Empire and the arrival of its survivors to Bali led to the spread of the Siwaist Hindu and Mahāyāna Buddhist religions to the island. The historical development is responsible for the marked differences between ritual practices observed in Bali today. Balinese healers also follow tantric Buddhism practices, and both Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tantrayana had developed in Central Java, where they coexisted harmoniously. In Indonesia, Buddhism fused with Hinduism to form tantric Buddhism, and Siwa-Buddha priests still practice it today (Winaja et al., 2019; Gottowik, 2019; Weifen, 2022).

3.2.3 Elements of Tantra in Balinese Religion

Tantra, a practice involving mudras, mantras, and the recitation of prayers, is present in Balinese culture and religion. It is a path designed to elicit mystical experiences leading to enlightenment and mystical powers when one purifies themselves. Balinese culture and religion are influenced by Tantrism and Buddhism, and the origins of Tantrism can be traced back to India. Balinese religion is deeply influenced by Tantrism and can be seen in rituals, ceremonies, and societal norms. The magical aspects of Balinese Hinduism can be attributed to the influence of Tantra (McDaniel, 2023).

3.3 The Concepts of Purity, Pollution, and Taboo in Balinese Religion, Traditions, and Ritual

This dissertation focuses on the concepts of purity, pollution, and taboo in the context of Balinese water

purification ceremonies. The literature review section explores existing research on these concepts, with a particular emphasis on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas. Douglas's books, "Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo" and "Natural Symbols," are considered seminal works in the field of social anthropology and will be used as a theoretical basis for this study. The author critically revisits Douglas's work and uses her theories to investigate purity in Balinese traditions (Dwipayanti, 2019).

3.3.1 Defining Purity, Pollution, and Taboo

The meaning of "purity" and "pollution" in various contexts, including religion, must be understood before examining the theoretical aspects of the Melukat purification ritual. Purity refers to the opposite of dirt, which means something out of place, and impure things display undesirable combinations. Pollution can refer to different areas that concern humans, such as environmental pollution and hygiene beliefs, and it is generally associated with specific stages of life, such as birth and death. Pollution demands separation from other members of the community, but it is not permanent, and mourners are ritually reincorporated back into society after a specific period of time. The concepts of purity and pollution have different meanings depending on the situation, and dirt is a relative term, which is something out of place in the perception of the labelers. In this dissertation, the author explores how purity impacts the social order of religious leadership in Bali and examines how Ida Resi broke Balinese social norms (Scheid, 2020; Humphrey, 2020; Jacobi & Zolli, 2021).

3.3.2 Applying Purity, Pollution, and Taboo

The Balinese are proud of their culture and traditions, and follow strict codes of conduct. They avoid confrontation and value cleanliness. The body is considered pure in some parts and impure in others, and there are rules around touching and pointing with the feet. Purity rules are crucial to maintaining societal order and organizing people. Pollution is a threat to the purity of the subject and is associated with specific stages of the life cycle. Passing wind in public is taboo while urinating is considered natural. Pollution beliefs derive their power from deeply held cosmological beliefs and help maintain social and cosmological order (Feder, 2019; Kitamura & Matsuo, 2021; Ditlevsen & Andersen, 2021).

3.3.3 A Literary Overview of Ritual Theory

Purification rituals are an important part of many religions and cultures, including Balinese, and involve washing or immersing in water to remove "uncleanliness" or "pollution." Other means of purification include burning and applying substances like oil or blood. Catherine Bell defines rituals as actions that exemplify beliefs and myths, and they integrate thoughts and actions. In the case of the Balinese Melukat water purification ceremony, it exemplifies their beliefs and myths related to purity and pollution. Rituals are a means of socially conditioning and appropriating individual behaviors and perceptions to reflect community norms and beliefs (Ratcliffe et al., 2019; Helland & Kienzl, 2021; Bell & Kreinath, 2021).

3.3.4 Purity and Rituals

The importance of purity-related rituals in Balinese society is highlighted, with the belief that these rituals acknowledge the power of disorder and help individuals achieve special healing powers by leaving rational control. Rituals are seen as playing a crucial role in religious life, bringing order and healing. Healers such as the Pedandas play a central role in performing these rituals (Feldman, 2020; Moazami, 2020; Osim & Eteng, 2021).

3.4 *The Importance of Purity in Balinese Religion and Society*

This section discusses the importance of purity in Balinese religion and society, with an emphasis on the roles of water and fire. The Tri-Hita-Karana, which emphasizes the balance between elements, nature, and humans, is also explored. The author uses Douglas's work to analyze how Balinese culture forms purity-based rules, regulations, and taboos. The cultural significance of the Melukat ceremony in the Balinese ritual is also discussed. Lastly, the chapter considers Balinese religious leadership and the strong connection between Balinese society and religion, with a focus on space and time concepts based on purity.

3.4.1 Ubiquitous Religious References

The daily Canang Sari offerings are an important part of Balinese Hinduism and are made as a form of thanksgiving to the Supreme God, Acintya. Balinese Hinduism is a distinct form of Hinduism that combines Shaivism and Buddhism and has its own specific rituals and philosophies. The Balinese religion is based on Hindu philosophy, which forms the foundation of Balinese ethics and rituals. The five elements (Bhuta) are honored in Bali through offerings and play an important role in ceremonial life (Gümüsay, 2020).

3.4.2 Balinese Heritage, Names, and Titles

This section provides background information on Balinese culture and social structure. It explains how Balinese

names and titles carry social status and position information, and how they relate to the hierarchy of healers and priests, with a focus on the roles of Pedanda and Pemangku. It is noted that understanding Balinese social structure can be complicated and that teaching in Bali is mostly spiritual and part of the ineffable realm.

3.4.3 The Concepts of Space and Time

The Balinese view of space and time is focused on purity and pollution. Rituals take place in ritual space and time, which are purified and form part of the ritual itself. To comprehend purity in Bali, it's necessary to consider it in relation to space and time (Wright, 2019).

3.5 The Melukat Water Purification Ceremonies

This section analyzes the Melukat water purification ceremony in Bali from the perspective of the ritual and the tasks performed by the Pedandas. It explores the interrelatedness of Tattwa, Susila, and Upacara in Āgama Tīrtha, which are represented as the three parts of an egg. The chapter covers the theory of purification rituals in Āgama Tīrtha, the historical evolution of Balinese religious rituals, and the significance of Melukat water purification rituals. The chapter presents a detailed description of the ceremony, including transcripts of mantras used, and interprets the magical aspects of the ritual. It also examines the role of traditional Balinese healing and healing through the Melukat ceremony. This chapter relies on original research conducted in Bali, including self-mapping of the Melukat ceremony, surveys, interviews with Balinese individuals and religious leaders, and pictures of the ceremony.

3.5.1 Defining Ritual

Rituals are defined as fixed actions and words performed regularly as part of a ceremony, and they play a crucial role in Balinese religious and social life. The Balinese religion includes five spiritual ceremonies called Panca Yajñā, which are of particular significance. These ceremonies are linked to beliefs in God, the soul, karma, reincarnation, and liberation. Pedandas are important because their role incorporates all of these elements and their duty is to clear the soul from karma so that liberation can be achieved (Hancock, 2019; Farmer, 2019; Bocock, 2020)

Table 2. Tattwa: The five principal beliefs of the Panca Sraddha (or Crada)

Panca Crada	The <i>Tattwa</i> has five principal beliefs
Brahmān	The belief in the existence of one almighty God
Atman	The belief in the soul and the spirit
Samsara	The belief in reincarnation
Karma Phala	Belief in the law of reciprocal actions (one gets back, eventually, what one gives out)
Moksha	The belief in the possibility of unity with the divine (<i>Moksa</i>).

The Tri-Kaya Parisudha is the three foundations of human ethics, which are thinking good, saying good, and doing good. In addition, the concept of treating others fairly, Tat Twam Asi, was also emphasized (Suryandari et al., 2021).

Table 3. Susila: the three major rules for behavior (Tri Kaya Parisudha)

Tri Kaya Parisudha	The Susila (etiquette) places emphasis on three major rules for behavior, and <i>Tat Twam Asi</i> .
Manacika	To think good thoughts
Wacika	To talk well and honestly
Kayika	To do good deeds
Tat Twam Asi	“You are as I am” and I as you, in other words, “to feel the feeling of one’s fellow beings.” This teaches one to treat others as you would treat yourself.

According to Ida Pedanda Gede Wayahan Wanasari, Panca Yajñā refers to five areas of holy sacrifice. These include temple ceremonies, ancestor ceremonies, ceremonies for becoming a priest, ceremonies related to human beings, and ceremonies to restore harmony in the universe. The human-related ceremonies include weddings, pregnancy, and puberty, among others. The Buta Yajñā ceremony, such as Nyepi, aims to restore harmony in the universe (Diarmita et al., 2019).

Table 4. Upacara (ritual) is divided into five areas of holy sacrifice (Panca Yadnya)

<i>Panca Yadnya</i>	Five areas of the holy sacrifice
<i>Dewa Yadnya</i>	Holy rituals for the gods
<i>Pitra Yadnya</i>	Holy rituals for the higher spirits, and “rites of death”
<i>Rsi Yadnya</i>	Holy rituals for the holy Hindu prophets (<i>Resi</i>)
<i>Manusa Yadnya</i>	Rituals for, and on behalf of humans (from the baby in the womb until marriage and death) - Melukat is part of the Manusa Yadnya rituals.
<i>Bhuta Yadnya</i>	Sacrifices for neutralizing the negative influences from the natural and supernatural worlds.

The complexity of Balinese rituals is vast and requires years of study before being ordained as a pedanda, typically in their 50s or 60s. It is an intricate universe that must be understood as a whole (Geertz Ed., 2022).

3.5.2 Definition: Melukat

Melukat is a Balinese Hinduism tradition that aims to purify the human body and soul to prevent diseases, misfortune, and chaos caused by human activities and sins from past and present lives. The ceremony is dedicated to human beings and involves cleansing with water and purification through Tirtha Penglukatan, which has been requested before the Holy One. Melukat aims to eliminate dirtiness (*Klesa*) comprising five types of unholy conditions: *Awidya*, *Asmila*, *Raga*, *Dwesa*, and *Abhiniwesa*. The practice is not limited to Hindu or Balinese and is performed universally for mental and spiritual wellness. The origins of Melukat are historical, and mythological, and present various versions, including the story of Dewi Uma, Bima, and Ida Pedanda Sakti (Seniwati & Ngurah, 2020; Gepu, 2021; Widana, 2023).

3.5.3 Lontar Kala Purana Supuleger Referring to Melukat, Translation

The Melukat ceremony is a ritual that aims to rectify tainted energies. It originated from the Lontar Kala Purana Supuleger, which is a story enacted in Wayang Kulit, the shadow puppet theater. The story is about Bhetara Kala, a giant who wanted to eat his brother Sang Rare Kumara. Jro Anom philosophically interpreted this story as a message that human life is always chased by time, and enjoying arts is the remedy for life not being wasted due to time. The Lontar Kala Purana Supuleger narrates that Sang Hyang Catur Bhuja had two sons, Batara Kala and Sang Rare Kumara, and Batara Kala wanted to eat his brother. Batara Kala's desire was suspended until Sang Rare Kumara was an adult, and eventually, he escaped and sought protection from Dalang Mpu Leger (Suryani et al., 2020; Budasi & Suryasa, 2021; Sanjaya & Astina, 2023).

3.5.4 Melukat Places and the Significance of the Sea

Melukat is a purification ritual in Bali that can be performed at natural water sources, springs, waterfalls, and the sea. The sea is considered the ultimate purifier and is where the Balinese believe impurities can be thrown away, including the ashes from cremation ceremonies. The sea is also the location where the gods reside and is home to Baruna, the God of the sea. Incest, bestiality, suicide, and temple vandalism are considered polluting acts that require purification through holy water. Balinese mythology believes that the soul of the deceased is entrusted to Baruna after the cremation, and the sea purifies it until post-cremation rites are completed. Sending the ashes of the body into the sea allows the water element of the human to return to nature and the soul to be properly put to rest, allowing for reincarnation (Kiswara, 2019; Suartika et al., 2019; Januar, 2021).

The Balinese are hesitant to visit the beach or swim due to the sea's ambiguity as a receptacle of impure things. However, they do go to the beach for certain required ceremonies, such as Banyu Pinaruh and Mekiis procession. The sea is considered both threatening and promising, and Balinese temples at the sea guard against evil. The sea is also used for ritual immersion and energy recycling in some ceremonies, and prayers are addressed to God Baruna for healing. Melukat can be performed naturally in the sea (Wiwekananda et al., 2022).

3.5.5 Types of Melukat Ceremony

Melukat is an exchange of offerings with the gods for healing or forgiveness. Balinese people use mediums like incense, water, flowers, and ivory coconut. There are seven main types of Melukat ceremonies, each with a specific purpose and implementation. Melukat can be conducted by trained officiators or self-conducted through holy places like Tirtha Empul and even at home by bathing in ivory coconut water. Pedandas use specialized mantras adapted to the island's specificities (Sutraningsih et al., 2019).

3.5.6 Benefits to Participants

Melukat ceremony uses water as a purification medium to eliminate negative energies and improve participants' well-being. Participants report feeling more grounded, calm and transformed after the ceremony. Pedandas play

an essential role in this ceremony by using their knowledge, energies, and healing powers to purify the participants. Special Pedandas with healing powers like Ida Resi Alit can drastically improve the lives of their participants through the Melukat ritual (Saputra & Pitanatri, 2023).

3.5.7 Role of the Pedanda

Pedandas in Bali purify people and their dwellings, bless people after accidents or illness, and prevent the effects of curses and sorcery. They serve as high court judges and are consulted to determine good or bad days. The final stage of evolution on earth is to become a pedanda, a position that brings supernatural traits and social dignity. Pedandas are vital for the ceremonies of aristocrats, and even the poorest Balinese make huge sacrifices to avail their services. Pedandas play a central role in the Melukat water purification ceremony, using water to remove the pollution of the body and mind. They perform the ceremony and use their spiritual powers to realign the energies of participants, improving their overall well-being (Made, 2022).

3.5.8 Melukat Ritual Steps

Melukat water purification ceremonies require choosing a good day to perform the ritual. The Balinese calendar is consulted to determine the dates. The ceremony is carried out in a temple or specific location with the assistance of a local Pemandu. It is important to ensure good health, cleanliness, and concentration during the ritual. The stages of the Melukat ceremony include chanting, which has been transcribed and checked by Ida Pandita Agni Bang, who also provided the Mantras used in the ceremony. Some translations were provided by his assistant, Ni Ketut Sunaradi (Mekarini, 2020; Tanu, 2020; Mayuni, 2021).

3.5.9 Interpretation of Ritual

3.5.9.1 Magical Elements

The Balinese culture and rituals have been influenced by Tantrism, which is characterized by its magical healing practices. Pedandas use mantras, mudras, and mandalas during water purification ceremonies. Balinese Tantra is based on lontar texts, written in Sanskrit and Old Javanese, and is mainly described in these texts. The Pedandas perform tantric techniques and rituals to empower themselves and their followers for materialistic or spiritual purposes. The Balinese healers use tantric techniques during ceremonies like Melukat and Surya-Sevana, demonstrating a strong influence of Tantrism in Balinese healing practices (Brighenti, 2023).

3.5.9.2 Perewangan

In Bali, healers may achieve a state of trance, known as Perewangan, during the healing process. However, it is not necessary for the healer to be in a state of possession to perform a healing ritual. Healers may also experience psychic insight due to the development of their intuitive power, Ilmu Tetenger. Balian healers may perform rituals such as mantra meditation under a tree, at the confluence of three rivers, or a small waterfall. Some Pedandas, such as Ida Resi, are known to be in a state of Perewangan when performing ceremonies. The reason practitioners with strong Taksu are sought after is due to the transference of magic, as healing is a Niskala power with Sekala effects (Gunawan & Putro, 2020).

4. Results and Interpretations

This dissertation conducted an empirical investigation to answer research questions about Balinese perceptions of purity and pollution. The survey questionnaire focused on what it means for Balinese people to be pure, how they maintain purity, and their expectations for religious leaders. The survey collected data from 155 Balinese individuals and the results were categorized into six major categories. The sample included a balance of males and females and respondents from different caste groups. Results highlighted Balinese social perceptions and their views towards religious leaders regarding purity norms.

4.1 Purity in Balinese Social Perception

Purity plays a crucial role in Balinese society, defining the lines that classify and arrange their world. Religious and social purity are important cultural and religious beliefs for Balinese people, and purity is believed to improve their lives. Maintaining purity is a function of Balinese taboos that preserve the order of society. The importance of religious and social purity in Balinese society was confirmed by an empirical investigation. This desire for purity is also seen in other aspects of society, such as the pursuit of pure art or science.

4.1.1 A Strong Foundation of Religion: The Balinese Social Structure

The dissertation explores Balinese concepts of impurity, which are linked to social and cosmological order. The importance of purity in Balinese religious and social life has remained unchanged over time, as it is believed to lead to personal improvement, social harmony, and well-being. Balinese people maintain purity by following

religious teachings and beliefs, worshiping and praying, and performing purification rituals. Compliance with Balinese religious beliefs are seen as crucial for maintaining purity, particularly through the purification of the mind and thoughts. Purity and purification rituals are associated with the purification of body, mind, soul, thoughts, and a calmness of mind. Purity rules play a crucial role in maintaining social order.

4.1.2 Caste System

The Hindu religion has well-developed concepts of purity and pollution, institutionalized through casteism. The caste system provides strict rules for contact, hierarchy, and marriage, among other things. This bias is potentially hidden behind the idea of purity and is explored in this dissertation. Purity rituals and remedies are widely practiced in Hinduism. The caste system regulates different caste norms and associated punishments. Varna classifies groups based on ideological notions of purity and impurity, with brahmin being the purest and at the top of the hierarchy. The caste system is hereditary, endogamous and has a well-established hierarchy between castes. The Hindu caste system exists in Bali but is not strictly enforced. Priests such as Pedandas are required to belong to the Brahmin Varna, but this is not strictly enforced in Balinese society.

4.1.3 Balinese Perceptions of Occupational Purity

The Hindu belief links caste with the profession, but this segregation was not prevalent in Bali. A survey found that 80% of respondents believed there was no link between caste and profession. Pedanda Ida Maharishi Nilaikanthaida said that caste and clan are no longer relevant, and social structure is more influenced by occupation and wealth. Balinese people are free to choose a job regardless of their caste, and caste-based purity and pollution rules do not apply to their professional choice. The position of pedanda is traditionally occupied by Brahmins, but there is no link between jobs and caste in Bali. Occupational mobility across caste divisions is frowned upon in the Buddhist religion. Traditional stratification is counterproductive from the standpoint of capitalist development.

4.2 *Purity in the Understanding of Major Life Events*

4.2.1 Birth and Death

In the Hindu religion, birth and death are significant life events that cause pollution. Baby, mother, and father are Sebel after birth, and they cannot participate in any ritual for 42 days due to the blood's Sebel nature. Similarly, death is impure, and contact with the dead body is considered impure. Persons dealing with the cremation of the dead are considered impure and kept in the lowest hierarchy of the Hindu varna system. In Bali, there are specific rules for handling the dead, and cremation ceremonies purify the dead, their families, and the entire village. Pollution can be temporary or permanent, depending on the rules defined in Balinese religion. The presence of the notions of purity and associated taboos and prohibitions shape the manners in which individuals interact in society, such as through ritual.

4.2.2 Purity and Marriage

The caste system in Hindu society is based on the belief that purity and pollution determine a person's social status. In Bali, the importance of these rules on marriages prescribed by the Hindu religion is not paramount, but caste-based rules still exist, particularly for certain groups like Brahmin women and religious leaders such as Pedanda. Maintaining purity is crucial in the Hindu religion, especially for Brahmins, who must avoid contact with impure substances and persons like the untouchables. In a study, a majority of Balinese respondents believed that Pedandas lacking the purity of body and mind should be removed from their position. The same strict application of caste-based rules on marriages is observed among Brahmin women and religious leaders, who are expected to marry within their caste or risk losing their status. The majority of respondents suggested that a Brahmin woman will belong to the caste of her husband after marriage and that religious beliefs do not allow it. The results highlight that purity and pollution-based rules are still relevant in Bali for certain caste groups.

4.3 *Purity on Balinese Traditions: Food and Sacrifice*

Cultural norms in Bali dictate the use of the right hand for eating and the left hand for washing after excretion. The caste system also plays a role in the acceptability of food and drinks, with pollution resulting from consumption from a lower caste. Offerings in Balinese ceremonies involve the killing of animals, with each part of the animal presented to individual gods and the meat divided among the community. Animal sacrifices are important in appeasing the Bhuta Kala through blood offerings.

4.4 Purity in Balinese Ritual Activities

The Balinese people place great importance on purity and purification ceremonies. The Melukat ceremony is a popular form of healing in Bali, with the majority of respondents participating in it to purify their bodies and minds, and to eliminate negative influences and energy. Most respondents were well aware of the ceremony, and many participated in it regularly. The survey data validates the observations that water is used in purification ceremonies to purify the body, make thoughts pure, steady, and holy, and drive away bad thoughts. The Melukat ceremony remains important in the social and religious life of the Balinese people, with the belief in religious and social purity remaining strong despite modern influences.

4.5 Purity in Balinese Religious Leadership

The thesis explores the importance of purity in Balinese religious ceremonies and leadership. Pedandas, who perform purification rituals, are required to maintain their own purity, which includes purifying their bodies and instruments, and the locale of the ceremony. While the position of Mangku has no caste limitations, Pedandas are expected to be Brahmins. The Balinese believe that religious leaders must strictly follow purity rules to purify others effectively. The survey conducted confirms that 98.7% of the participants believe that Pedanda and Mangku are required to maintain the purity of body and mind to perform religious ceremonies. Purity is maintained through worship, prayers, meditation, spells, mantras, and staying away from negative influences causing pollution. The observations suggest that purity is a significant aspect of Balinese social and religious life.

4.6 Purity in the Balinese Gender Role

Pedersen interviewed a high-caste man who stated that women hold a high status in their society and are protected to prevent damage. Although women's rights may appear limited, this is due to the respect they are given. This paternalism is also applied to priests, who are held to high standards and are vulnerable to falling with the slightest mistake.

4.6.1 The Big Divide: Menstruation

Balinese women are subject to gender-specific rules during their menstruation. They are forbidden from praying, breastfeeding in the temple, and participating in temple ceremonies. Menstruating women are considered impure and are separated from the rest of the community. Menstruation is considered taboo, so conversations about it are avoided. Women are also not allowed to handle Kris Daggers or participate in any ritual work. To maintain social order, purity, and pollution rules are strictly enforced, and women are expected to don a special menstrual dress and eat from a different set of dishes.

4.6.2 Panca Ma

Panca Ma are the five elements of tantric practice that include alcohol, meat, fish, hand gestures, and sexual intercourse. They are embraced by left-hand tantric, while right-hand tantric oppose them, considering them to lead to immoral behavior. The teachings of Panca Ma prescribe an austere life and ascetic conduct, but these practices may seem somewhat immoral to the conduct prescribed by Hinduism and Buddhism. In Bali, the right-hand path of Tantra is promoted by PHDI. Black magic practitioners may practice these left-hand tactics, and women are more likely to be accused of witchcraft. Ida Resi's reputation was as a virgin priestess, but she lost her purity by having a baby and marrying, which was a severe offense to the Balinese resulting in her demotion.

4.6.3 Inheritance

According to Pedanda Ida Maharesi Nilaikanthaida, men always receive inheritance, but inheritance for women depends on their marital status. Married women do not receive inheritance, but unmarried women do. While Balinese people do not always approve of intermarriage between Balinese women and non-Balinese men, they have become more accepting of it in modern times due to changes in society. Brahmin women who marry non-brahmin men still face strict purity and pollution-based rules that affect their status. In one example, a woman from a Brahmin caste lost her status and inheritance after marrying a lower-caste man. However, she was an entrepreneur and believed she could provide for her family regardless of inheritance.

4.6.4 Sexual Relations

Sex is a taboo subject in Indonesia and Bali, but Balinese people view sex as natural. However, discussing one's sexual life is considered impolite. Sexual relations are seen as impure and require a purifying bath, according to Hindu teachings. Sexual relations outside of societal norms can also be seen as impure. In Bali, sexual activity with tourists is common, and there is a fascination with white foreigners. Pre-marital sex is accepted in Bali, and

brides are often pregnant before marriage. Pedandas, high priests, are expected to maintain purity in sexual relations. Tantrism does not encourage free sexual relations and has a deep respect for women. Right-hand Tantra teachings prohibit relationships outside of legal marriage.

4.6.5 Fertility Cult and Feminism

Tantra recognizes the divinity in women, which is also recognized in ordinary Vedic teachings. The role of the pedanda in Bali is only theoretical, and while sexual relations for religious means are not considered taboo in tantrism, Bali does not easily follow these models of open sexuality. Tantrism upholds feminism, particularly the central aspect of Shiva, which represents womanhood. Unlike Hinduism and Buddhism, Tantrism affords particular importance to menstrual blood due to its link to new life and reproduction and encourages the fertility cult. In Bali, women have an elevated status during menstruation, and it is believed that they can use their menstrual discharge to elicit the help of evil spirits.

5. Discussion

The dissertation explores caste and gender discrimination in Balinese society, particularly in relation to the quest for purity. The author conducted extensive fieldwork and an empirical investigation to answer four research questions related to the importance and impact of purity in Balinese religious traditions and leadership, as well as the motivations behind the Balinese quest for purity. The study also examines the contemporary popularity of the Melukat ceremony in the context of globalization and tourism. The author argues that while biases in purity and taboo rules exist, their motivation is the preservation of Balinese identity. The research contributes to the understanding of Balinese ritual practices, faith-based healing traditions, and religious leadership.

5.1 *Barong and Rangda*

According to Balinese culture, purity is essential for maintaining balance in the universe. The Balinese believe in the principle of Rwa Bhineda, which means that two opposites must remain in balance to bring about the balance of the universe. Dichotomies in Bali can be seen in concepts of pollution and purity, death and life, evil and good, demons and gods, Bhuta Kala in the world and within us, and so forth. Balinese believe that both negative and positive forces exist in everything and must be balanced. The most famous dance in Bali is the Barong dance, which represents the never-ending cycle of fighting between good and evil. During festivals, the dancers are possessed by spirits and use kris knives to stab themselves or others, but no blood is drawn as it is believed to be a magical manifestation of the ceremony. Balinese representations of Rangda and Durga reveal a flux and transformation between good and evil. The female representation of power is both benevolent and gruesome, and it is always in flux. A purification ceremony, like Melukat, can take something that is purely evil and transform it into something benevolent. Purity is only defined by its opposite, dirt, and purification is always needed because becoming impure is inevitable in human life.

5.2 *A Fierce Identity*

Bali is an island of Hinduism in a sea of Islam, where around 90% of the Indonesian population practices Islam, while in Bali, a similar proportion of the population practices Balinese Hinduism. Despite the encroachment of outsiders, the Balinese have managed to preserve their unique religion, culture, and traditions. The Balinese have redefined their Hinduism according to local practices, leading to the development of the specifically Balinese Āgama Hindu religion, which survives and thrives in the presence of Islamic religion and other outside influences. The enforcement of rules, such as Nyepi (Day of Silence), aims to keep Bali apart, unique, and alive, and the Balinese religion continues to evolve naturally as a process of its development.

5.3 *Tradition and Modernity*

The Balinese people are actively working to preserve their values and culture in the face of globalization. Central to their efforts is the principle of Tri-Hita-Karana, which emphasizes maintaining harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and divinity. Balinese people are incorporating this philosophy into policies and procedures and are even teaching it to foreign students of Bahasa Indonesia. They are using innovative ways to merge tradition with modernity and are resisting Westernization to maintain their unique identity. Their efforts to preserve their culture and traditions are a real and admirable endeavor.

5.4 *Ethical Ritual Practices*

The Pedandas of Bali are holy men and women who are treated with great respect and reverence. They strive to achieve a harmonious relationship with all living beings and gods, and their role as religious leaders is to promote and follow the philosophy of truth. Balinese people follow religious practices with the aim of achieving physical and spiritual happiness, which involves four stages: Dharma, Artha, Khama, and Moksha. Pedandas

believe that their prayers and meditations are a way to please the gods and achieve moksha, or perfection. The Melukat water purification ceremony is also a means to purify the body and soul in order to achieve moksha. Pedandas are ordained based on their personal purity, rather than caste. The Pedandas interviewed for this research emphasized the importance of sacrifice, self-sacrifice, and commitment to maintaining purity.

5.5 Sacrifice and Self-Sacrifice

The Balinese people believe that making sacrifices to Ida Sanghyang Widi Wasa is a manifestation of human gratitude towards God for creating nature and its contents. Sacrifice is seen as desirable and God-like. Impurity, on the other hand, denotes something that is not in its right place, whereas purity refers to the opposite. The Balinese maintain their identity and autonomy through their commitment to their cultural system of religious rules, which also serve as a means of preserving cultural identity and social cohesion. The Klung Klung Puputan is an example of the Balinese people's fierce protection of their identity and autonomy, as they performed ritual self-sacrifice to resist Dutch colonial rule. The Balinese identity is preserved through the religious rules and cultural system, which is why they are willing to accept, forgive, or ignore actions that do not threaten their identity.

5.6 The Role of Ida Resi Alit in the Popularization and Expansion of Melukat into the West

Ida Resi, a powerful figure in Balinese society, was seen as a new role model by her followers, especially among women practicing new-age beliefs. Her popularity brought in a steady cash flow but also created conflict with conservative Pedandas. However, strong-minded Balinese women started surrounding her, and she became a staple on Bali TV and in Bali News. Ida Resi's influence helped to popularize Melukat ceremonies internationally, despite her demotion. Her teachings of Tantra emphasized the realization of the universe within oneself and the union with the divine feminine. Her strong Taksu, or spiritual energy, was considered unique and could not be approached by the patriarchy. However, when Ida Resi broke some rules, it was used as an excuse to remove her from power. Nevertheless, she has brought international attention to Balinese water healings and Melukat ceremonies.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

The dissertation highlights several areas for further research, including the importance of investigating feminism in religious scholarship and the animistic influences in Balinese culture. The influence of Tantra on the magical tendencies of ceremonies is also a topic of active debate in scholarship. Additionally, the significance of Balinese calendars and the holiday of Nyepi, the concepts of time, space, and change in Balinese ceremonial practices, and the variations of the Melukat ritual practices across the island are worth exploring further. Further data from a larger sample size of Pedandas, Mangku, and other Balinese religious leadership is needed for a more representative study. Lastly, a more complete study of the influence of Buddhist heritage in Āgama Tirtha could lead to avenues of collaboration between Indonesia and other predominantly Buddhist countries.

6. Conclusions

The dissertation explored the significance of purity in Balinese ritual practices and its impact on religious leadership development. Through a survey questionnaire, data were collected from 155 Balinese individuals from different caste groups, and results were categorized into six major categories. The study revealed that purity plays a crucial role in Balinese society, defining the lines that classify and arrange their world. Purity rules play a crucial role in maintaining social order, and maintaining purity is believed to lead to personal improvement, social harmony, and well-being. Balinese people maintain purity by following religious teachings and beliefs, worshiping and praying, and performing purification rituals. The importance of purity in Balinese religious and social life has remained unchanged over time. The study also explored the caste system and its association with purity and pollution, finding that while the caste system exists in Bali, it is not strictly enforced. Purity and pollution-based rules are still relevant in Bali for certain caste groups, particularly for Brahmin women and religious leaders such as Pedanda. The study also revealed that purity rules are observed in Balinese traditions related to food and sacrifice. Overall, the study sheds light on the educational significance of purity in Balinese ritual practices and its impact on religious leadership development.

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