



“Sanggha Kemulan: A Sacred Shrine in Balinese Hinduism for Spiritual Connection with the Divine”

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ABSTRACT

The reverence for Hyang Guru and Tri Murti is an embodiment of the spiritual wealth and local wisdom in the religious practices of the Indonesian community. In the context of Hindu beliefs and culture, pivotal concepts such as Tri Murti and Hyang Guru assume roles of profound significance. Tri Murti encapsulates three divine facets: Brahma as the creator, Vishnu as the preserver, and Shiva as the destroyer. Conversely, Hyang Guru is perceived as a manifestation of divinity, embodied in the form of a teacher or spiritual figure. Sang Hyang Guru, originating from the oldest Hindu scripture, the Vedas, has existed since the creation of the universe. In Bali, Bhatara Guru is revered as an ancestor who underwent sacred ceremonies. Sang Hyang Guru is a central concept in Hinduism, considered the highest deity, creator of the universe, and the source of all knowledge, serving as the ultimate teacher for humanity. Sanggha Kamulan, introduced by Mpu Kuturan, aims to unite sects in Bali under the Tri Murti concept, comprising Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Sanggha Kamulan, a center for worship activities, signifies the transformed Tri Murti as manifestations of worship as *meme-bapa raganta jati*. Bapanta on the right symbolizes the father of the sky, ibunta on the left as the mother earth, and their union as *raganta jati* (Shiva) in the middle. The principle of *meme-bapa raganta jati* inspires its entire doctrine, with Sanggha Kamulan established in Balinese households before the introduction of Hinduism to Indonesia.

Keywords: *Sanggha Kemulan, Tri Murti, Hyang Guru.*

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INTRODUCTION

The reverence for *Hyang Guru* and *Tri Murti* is an embodiment of the spiritual wealth and local wisdom in the religious practices of the Indonesian community. In the context of Hindu beliefs and culture, pivotal concepts such as Tri Murti and Hyang Guru assume roles of profound significance. Tri Murti encapsulates three divine facets: Brahma as the creator, Vishnu as the preserver, and Shiva as the destroyer. Conversely, Hyang Guru is perceived as a manifestation of divinity, embodied in the form of a teacher or spiritual figure. In this context, the devotion to Hyang Guru and Tri Murti extends beyond a mere series of religious rituals; it serves as a profound reflection of the human connection with the divine. The Tri Murti concept imparts the understanding that every element in the universe embodies aspects of creation, preservation, and destruction, fostering a profound comprehension of the life cycle. Simultaneously, Hyang Guru acts as a spiritual conduit, bridging the human

realm with the spiritual, offering guidance and inspiration in the quest for the meaning of life.¹

This study primarily delves into the significance of *Sanggha Kemulan*, A mandatory shrine in every Balinese Hindu home temple in interpreting and practicing devotion to Hyang Guru and Tri Murti. As a site of worship or ritual, the Sanggha Kemulan carries a religious function that underpins the community's religious practices.² Within this framework, the Tri Murti theory provides the groundwork for understanding the concept of divinity in Hindu beliefs, while the Hyang Guru concept introduces a spiritual dimension, intertwined with revered teachers or spiritual figures. By comprehensively grasping the Tri Murti theory, the concept of Hyang Guru, and the function of the Sanggha Kemulan, this research aims to unveil the intricate and profound spiritual values embedded in the community's devotion to Hyang Guru and Tri Murti. Consequently, this study aspires

to contribute to our comprehension of the diverse spectrum of beliefs and the vibrant tapestry of religious practices in Indonesia, shedding light on how these religious values find expression in the tapestry of daily life.

The Trinity Concept of Divine Being

The Hindu concept of divinity leans towards a materialistic and somewhat naturalistic understanding, anchored in natural events and occurrences. This perspective sees all natural phenomena and movements as manifestations of symbolic power. It's not surprising that this belief in diverse powers leads Hindu divinity towards a polytheistic inclination, acknowledging numerous deities as sources of power. Among these, they fundamentally coordinate within the Trimurti divinity. In Hinduism, the belief in God's existence is foundational, forming the basis of Panca Sradha, the core beliefs for Hindu religious adherents. In the pursuit of God, Hindu followers need to



Figure 1.³ Trimurti is a widely-accepted Hindu concept of divinity on the islands of Java and Bali, affirming the existence of three supreme deities with distinct tasks. These deities are Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the restorer of creation to its origin.

internalize the teachings of *Panca Sradha*, as the ultimate belief in *Panca Sradha* is *Moksa*—a stage towards God.^{4,5}

Trimurti is a widely-accepted Hindu concept of divinity on the islands of Java and Bali, affirming the existence of three supreme deities with distinct tasks. These deities are Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the restorer of creation to its origin. Trimurti guides Hindu adherents in understanding God. The depiction of God with Trimurti is accompanied by detailed descriptions. In Trimurti, certain deities hold more power than others, acquired through differences in their strengths and abilities. The deities within Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—are distinct in their roles related to their attributes as Gods. However, the essence of these three deities is unified in Trimurti.

The historical background of Trimurti dates back to the 10th century CE, where conflicts among various Hindu sects in Bali were resolved by Mpu Kuturan. He organized the sects into the Trimurti sect, establishing an ideology structured around three aspects. This sect was founded in Pura Samuan Tiga, Gianyar Regency, giving rise to the concept of Trimurti among Hindus in Bali. The Trimurti belief is rooted in the idea that God exists in a personal form, known as *Saguna Brahman*. The teachings of *Panca Sradha* emphasize the existence of God, contributing to materialistic and naturalistic tendencies within Hinduism,

resulting in a polytheistic belief in many gods. *Panca Sradha* introduces the concept of *moksa*, a rank towards God. Thus, the belief in gods as the source of power evolved and is recognized as Trimurti.⁶

The functions of creation, preservation, and return to the origin in Trimurti are symbolized in various ways, such as offerings like *porosan* in *daksina*. The fertility, purity, safety, and prosperity aspects are symbolized through different offerings. Trimurti can also be represented through forms: Brahma as the creator is symbolized by a triangle, Vishnu as the preserver by a square, and Shiva as the returner by a circle. The Trimurti is also symbolized by three different aspects of snakes representing different attributes. The three deities of Trimurti are collectively referred to as "Om," derived from the combination of three letters A, O, and M. Worship of these deities is conducted at Pura Besakih, situated on the slopes of Mount Agung in Bali. However, Pura Besakih also serves as a place of worship for ancestral spirits. The two functions of Pura Besakih are related to Mount Agung's summit, believed to be the residence of *Sang Hyang Tohlangkir*. The Hindu community around *Candi Cetho* does not practice Trimurti worship in family temples, as in Bali. Shiva worship as the supreme deity among Trimurti is practiced at Candi Prambanan, with its towering structure resembling the sacred mountain Meru.^{7,8}

Ancestor as Higher Spiritual Entity

In the Hindu faith, especially in Bali, *Bhatara Hyang Guru*, also known as *Sang Hyang Pramesti Guru*, is revered as the true spiritual guide. The title "Bhatara Guru" was bestowed upon him by *Bhatara Surya* as a token of gratitude for being a disciple of Lord Shiva, who is acknowledged as the teacher of divine beings. *Sang Hyang Guru* represents a profound belief in Hinduism, being regarded as the supreme deity, the creator of the universe, and the wellspring of all wisdom. He is acknowledged as the ultimate teacher, imparting spiritual guidance and knowledge to humanity.

According to *Vana Parwa* 27.214, there exist five types of Gurus: *Agni*, representing the divine light of *Hyang Widhi*; *Atman*, signifying the purest essence within humans originating from *Brahman*; *Mata*, denoting the mother who gives birth; *Pita*, referring to the father who causes birth; and *Acarya*, representing the teacher who imparts knowledge. In the Balinese context, this appears to align with the doctrine of *Catur Guru*: *Guru Swadyaya*, *Guru Rupaka*, *Guru Pengajian*, and *Guru Wesesa*. *Atman*, highlighted in *Vana Parwa*, serves as the foundational concept for establishing *Kamulan* as a place for worshiping *Pitara* Gods, revered as *Bhatara Hyang Guru*.^{9,10,11}

The *Siwagama* scripture describes Shiva as God in the immanent dimension (*sakala*), *Sadasiwa* as God in the combined dimension of *sakala* and *niskala* (*Ardanareswara*), and *Parama Siwa* as God in the transcendental dimension (*niskala*). Shiva, in these three manifestations, receives the title of *Bhatara Guru* in *Siwagama*, signifying his role as the *Dang Guru ing Iswara* in this universe. The Sun God confers the title of *Bhatara Guru* upon Shiva after receiving the title of *Shiva Raditya* directly from Shiva as the Great Guru. Given Shiva's triune nature as *Tri Purusa*, Guru also exhibits three aspects known as *Tri Guru*: *Guru Purwam*, *Guru Madyam*, and *Guru Rupam*. *Guru Purwam* is the teacher in the dimension of *niskala*, *Guru Madya* is the teacher in the dimension of *Sakala-Niskala*, and *Guru Rupam* is the teacher in the *sakala* (immanent) dimension.

Hence, from the mantra quote, it is evident that the focus of worship at

Sanggha Kamulan is fundamentally God, encompassing both *Hyang Atma*, the soul of the universe with its contents (*Jagat*), and its deities Brahma, Vishnu, and Ishwara, symbolizing the horizontal aspect of God. Additionally, Shiva, Sada Shiva, Parama Shiva, symbolizes the vertical aspect (Tri Purusa) and is also referred to as Tri Guru. Consequently,



Figure 2.¹² Image of Sanggha Kemulan.

Sanggha Kamulan is deduced as the abode of Bhatar Guru/Hyang Guru. The concept of Sang Hyang Guru finds its roots in the Vedas, the ancient sacred texts of Hinduism. According to the Vedas, Sang Hyang Guru has been present since the inception of the universe. Possessing boundless knowledge, Sang Hyang Guru imparts guidance to both gods and humans, serving as the source of spiritual wisdom that can lead individuals towards enlightenment and liberation. In Balinese beliefs, Bhatar Guru is venerated as an ancestral figure who has undergone sacred and purifying ceremonies.¹³

A Monument to Connect with the Higher being

Sacred spaces stand as both symbols and focal points for devotion to the Almighty and its manifestations, as well as for honoring ancestors. While the overarching term for sacred sites in Hinduism is "Pura," there are nuanced classifications, including family temples or Sanggha/Mrajan. Sanggha/Mrajan is a unique sacred space dedicated to a specific family, with components such as Sanggha Kemulan and Taksu. Mpu Kuturan introduced the concept of Sanggha Kamulan, playing a pivotal role in unifying sects during the reign of King Airlangga in Java. At that time, these sects encountered challenges concerning belief concepts. King Dharmapatni/Udayana Warmadewa sought Mpu Kuturan's

leadership to resolve these issues for peace in Bali. Mpu Kuturan unified the sects under the Tri Murti concept, consisting of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.¹⁴

Sanggha Kamulan comprises two terms: Sanggha and Kamulan. Sanggha, a variant of Sanggar, denotes a place of worship in Balinese religious texts. In the Siwagama Lontar, for instance, it is stated: *nista sapuluhing saduluk sanggar pratiwi wangun*. Kamulan originates from the Sanskrit "Mula," meaning root, tuber, basis, origin, or source. The prefix "Ka" and the suffix "an" denote a place, signifying a place of worship. Hence, Sanggha Kamulan means the original or source place of worship, *kamimitan*, referring to the place of human birth. This is mirrored in the words *Kamimitan* or *Kawitan*, signifying origin as well.¹⁶

Sanggha Kamulan, rooted in Hindu teachings, particularly the Jnana Kanda aspect and its ethics, draws from the systems of Yoga, *Vedanta*, *Samkhya*, and *Shiva Siddhanta*. Ethically, it involves the duty (*swadharman*) of descendants or *pretisentana* to consistently honor their ancestors. The concept of ancestor worship among Hindus in Indonesia, especially Bali, stems from Hindu religious teachings, extensively detailed in Hindu scriptures, commonly known as "*sraddha*." The Griha Sutra book notes a designated place for ancestor worship called "Wastospati" in every Hindu household, with the worship ceremony termed "pinda pitara yajna."

With concrete data affirming ancestor worship in Hinduism, suggestions by archaeological experts that it originates from pre-Hindu thought in Balinese Hindu society can be discounted. Therefore, the existence of Sanggha Kamulan as a place for ancestors in Balinese households predates the introduction of Hinduism to Indonesia. Regarding the term "Kamulan," signifying a sacred place, it is mentioned in the Sri Kahulunan inscription from 842 AD, referring to Borobudur Temple. The phrase *Kamulan bhumi sambara* is interpreted as the worship of 14 ancestral levels of the Sailendra king. The name Kamulan as a sacred place is also found in the Siman A-126 inscription, mentioning *Sanghyang Dharma Kamulan i paradah*. Similarly, the term Kamulan is mentioned in the Klungkung A-439 inscription.



Figure 3.¹⁵ Samuan Tiga Temple, where Mpu Kuturan resolve religion's issues for peace in Bali. Mpu Kuturan unified disputed religious sects under the Tri Murti concept, consisting of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

Structures designated as Kamulan, sacred places, existed approximately 1,000 years ago. In Bali, guidelines for worship in every household are outlined in the Sivagama Lontar, believed to be the teachings of Mpu Kuturan.¹⁷ Therefore, it is estimated that Mpu Kuturan is the one who taught that every residential compound for Hindus in Bali should establish Sanggah Kamulan.

CONCLUSION

The Hindu concept of divinity, aligned with a materialistic and naturalistic inclination, views natural events as symbolic manifestations of power. This inclination towards polytheism in Hindu divinity, worshipping coordinated gods within the Trimurti concept, is not surprising. The fundamental Hindu belief in the existence of God forms the basis of Panca Sradha, a key conviction. To attain Moksha, the stage towards God, Hindu adherents need to internalize the teachings of Panca Sradha.

Sang Hyang Guru, originating from the oldest Hindu scripture, the Vedas, has existed since the creation of the universe. Possessing boundless knowledge, Sang Hyang Guru guides both gods and humans, serving as the source of spiritual wisdom for enlightenment and liberation. In Bali, Bhatar Guru is revered as an ancestor who underwent sacred ceremonies. Sang Hyang Guru is a central concept in Hinduism, considered the highest deity, creator of the universe, and the source of all knowledge, serving as the ultimate teacher for humanity.

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