Tirtha; A sprinkle to the soul

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ABSTRACT

Balinese believe water has abilities to cleanse and neutralize sin through ritual. People use water in their various activities that related to religious practices. The functions are divided into two categories. First, it has a profane role and the other type; they used water as sacred material. Profane purpose means any activity to apply water as a material to fulfill daily human needs. While water with holy function, indicates it is used in religious activities. It is called Tirtha. According to legend, Tirtha is an elixir of immortality. There are two methods to obtain Tirtha. Firstly, water is placed in pelinggih pura or merajan to receive blessings from God Almighty. Second, Balinese obtain Tirtha through a ritual that conducted by the priest. Moreover, Balinese people divides several types of holy water, namely tirtha wangsuhpada, tirtha pembersihan, tirtha pengelukatan, tirtha penembak, and tirtha pengentas.

Keyword: Tirtha, Water, Offerings
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INTRODUCTION

Since long time ago, humans, animals, and plants have been surviving on the earth. They depend their lives on the water. Water, which composed from two hydrogens and oxygen, cannot be separated from almost any living things on earth due to its enormous role to fulfill daily human needs, for instance, drinking, washing, bathing, etc. Furthermore, water can be used as the renewable energy sources and also help people to maintain the irrigation system. Since it plays as our primary necessity, people also use water in their various activities that related to religious practices, including Balinese Hindu. People who lived in Bali are commonly known water for religious purpose as Tirtha.

THE HISTORY OF TIRTHA

According to legend, the history of Tirtha could be tracked in the story of Mandara Giri event, which has been written in Adi Parva, the first chapter of eighteen books of the Mahabharata. Before the human presence in this world, Tirtha is treasured as an elixir of immortality. The only places to obtain the Tirtha is in the base of Mandara Giri mountain. Should anyone reach its lower part, they have to dive into the deepest part of the hill, at the seabed of Kisra ocean. As mentioned in Hinduism manuscript, the story has begun with the summit between the God and detya (rakshasa). They decided to join their forces as a team, to seek the potion, Tirtha Amertha. The method that should be used to retrieve the tirtha amertha by stirring the ocean continuously.

To execute the process, Naga Basukih assisted the Gods and detya by constricting the mountain, then the join forces of Gods and detya hold the tail of the dragon and spin the mountain. Meanwhile, to keep the earth stable during the process, Lord Vishnu transformed himself into a giant turtle called kurma which assigned to brace the bottom of Mandara Giri. After a long and tiring process, Apsara (fairy), Sura (the Goddes Wine), Laksmiti (the Goddes of fortune and prosperity), Uccaihsrawa (a type of horse, used as the ride of the God), Kastubhamani, Kalpawreksa (a tree that fulfill desire), Kamadhenu (the ancestor of cow), Airawata (the first companion of Lord Indra) and Dhanwantari, emerged to the surface carrying the Tirtha Amertha. However, the Tirtha was quickly stolen by the detya. They eagerly wanted to have it since they believed the God would not give them any share. When the holy water was not in the right hand, Lord Vishnu was afraid that the detya might abuse the Tirtha and turned this world into the chaos.

Then, Lord Vishnu has an idea to sneak into the detya’s camp, to take the holy water back. Thus, the Lord Vishnu shapeshifted into a beautiful woman. She was immediately asked detya for the Amertha. Infatuated by Lord Vishnu’s disguise, the detya without any hesitation returned the elixir to Lord Vishnu. However, after the beautiful woman succeeded in convincing the detya, the demon realized they had been tricked and gone rampage. A great war occurred between detya and the Lord Vishnu. The battle was over, and the demons experienced great lost from him. Finally, the Tirtha
Amertha safely carried by the Lord Vishnu and returned to the heaven. The Gods share the potion and live in immortality. In various hymns of Hinduism manuscripts, such as Atharva Veda and Rig Veda, water is a media that have purification power. Water has nature of bhutakas, chitakas, and chudaakas, namely strength as the fundamental element, awareness, and spirituality. The liquid can cleanse and neutralize sin through the ritual process. Apparently, the practice does not mainly belong to Balinese or even Hinduism. A similar tradition has been done by various tribes and religion worldwide, with their respective purposes while mostly practice for sanctification. Moreover, the Greek also has the same myth about water. According to the Greek's faith, water is known as Nectar; the god's drink. Also, based on Greece's history, the water was called Ambrosia, means the food of the God. Ambrosia is a powerful fluid; it will cause an everlasting life.

WHO'S CREATE TIRTHA?

As for the Balinese, they believe the water may be divided based upon its function. The functions divide into two categories. First, it has a profane role and the other type; they used water as sacred material. Profane purpose means any activity to apply water as a material to fulfill daily human needs. While water with holy function, which often called Tirtha, is used in activities related to religious practices. Tirtha has been created by blessing the water in many certain way and method.

Tirtha is obtained by two methods. Firstly, the water is placed in pelinggih pura or merajan to receive the blessings directly from the God. By this method, Tirtha is known as tirtha wangsuh pada or banyun cokor. Second, Balinese also could have it throughout the ritual process conducted by the priest. The ritual is Ngareka Tirtha or creating the holy water or commonly refers as Pasupati. The method of transmuting water into Tirtha is by giving a soul into the object by sacred script through a mantra. If the mantra is not cast correctly, the aksara that compiled in the holy text would not provide any effect or could not turn the water into the holy water. When the mantra has been successfully delivered to the water, it will be applied as pengurip bebanten, to provide urip or to live the offerings.

In addition, water is not only the source of tirtha. In any occasion that related to Hindu's ceremony, people use coconut water as tirtha. Coconut water has the ability to cleanse and to purge. In usadha taru Pramana, it mentions that coconut water has the power to neutralize all kinds of disease and problem. Coconut, in the local language called bungkak nyuh gading, philosophically held a symbol to offset the influence of sad ripu, the six enemies to human according to the Hindu teachings. The coconut water is Sukla, has the power of Tirtha Amertha, the symbol of the Lord Vishnu's power that written on Mandara Giri Event. Then in Yadnya, coconut always included in several rituals associated with worship.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TIRTHA IN BALINESE HINDU'S CEREMONY

In Hindu's ritual, there are five types of offerings or Banten. They are Dewa Yadnya (to the God), Rsi Yadnya (to the priest), Pitra Yadnya (to the ancestor), Manusya Yadnya (to human), and last but not least Bhuta Yadnya (to nature). In Bhagavadgita, the main component of the offering consists of five natural elements, namely water, fire, flowers, fruits, and leaves. After we picked the materials from nature, yet these objects cannot be directly used as an offering. Before the beginning of Hindu’s ritual, all of the main components are neatly compiled as Banten / offering; then it is blessed with Tirtha Pembersihan or tirtha pengurip. It symbolizes to sanctify and give the power to all instrument of the offering. It is mentioned in Lontar kusuma Dewa Gong Wesi; the priest must have to purify the Banten by using tirtha. In this case, tirtha serves as
After the community finishes their prayer, they have to receive another type of tirtha which called Tirta Wangsuhpada or Banyun Cokor. They need to splash it on their head, drink and washes to their face three times. The action is aimed to purify the prayer physically and spiritually. When the cleansing and sanctity process has been done, it is hoped, the person who received the blessing may able to manage their emotions. Tirtha that has been given to the community is a symbol of wara nugraha or blessings from the God. The intention is to obtain safety and prosperity in life.

In Hinduism, there is a teaching about reincarnation. Based on this belief, the Balinese Hindu has many ways to honor the deceased. One of many ways to guide the spirit or Atma to return to the afterworld is by using Tirtha. Tirtha Pengentas, which means “to cut off,” is one of many types of tirtha that only applied to the deceased in Ngaben ceremony. The priest creates this type of tirtha, and it has purposed to cut the bond between purusa (soul aspect) and Prakriti (material aspect). Purusa and Prakriti are described as Naga Banda. It has been mentioned in Lontar tutur suksma; Naga has been represented as Bayu or energy, as the results of the unity of Purusa and Prakriti. Besides tirtha pengentas, the priest also used tirtha penembak which has a function to set the soul free from any obstacle that may be faced ahead. Thus, these two types of tirtha have a principal existence in Balinese Hindu ceremony.

CONCLUSION

Water has two function, which is a profane and sacred function. As a holy function, Balinese Hindu turns water into Tirtha or holy water. Tirtha is used in many Hindu’s activities. It has the power to purge and to bless. There are two methods to obtain Tirtha. Firstly, water is placed in pelinggih pura or merajan to receive blessings from God Almighty. Second, Balinese also believes that the tirtha may be achieved through a ritual that conducted by the priest. Moreover, Balinese people divides several types of holy water, namely tirtha wangsuhpada, tirtha pembersihan, tirtha pengelukatan, tirtha penembak, and tirtha pengentas.

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