Memunjung, a feast for the dead

Putu Herry Hermawan Priantara

ABSTRACT

Memunjung is a form of respect and solidarity with the deceased. It realizes by the family visiting their late relative in cemetery, then spend their time having meals together with the dead. The tradition has been practicing since the Hindu-Buddhist period. It is well developed both in Java and Bali. The community practices this activity on certain days, such as Galungan, Kuningan and Pagerwesi day while in Java, they carry out Memunjung during holidays such as Idul Fitri. Balinese Hindu offers Tampelan punjung and Banten punjung to the spirit of ancestors, families or relatives at home or cemetery. In certain days, the visitor brings the deceased’s favorite food to the cemetery then they enjoy the meal together with the dead. Recently, the custom to visit the grave is rarely done by Balinese, especially to those who live in regional areas that do not have strict rules about burial. Some argue that the increasing Balinese’s standard of living as well as technological advancements, contribute to change people mindset about the funeral in the present. Hence, there are only a few areas that are still practicing burial for the dead.

Keyword: Memunjung, Offering, Burial

Cite This Article: Priantara, P.H.H., Memunjung, a feast for the dead, Bali Tourism Journal (BTJ)2018, 2 (1): 37-40

BACKGROUND

Pitra Yadnya has a philosophical meaning to pay respect for the ancestor. The Ancestor has a special place for Balinese. In their daily activities, the Balinese asks for a blessing to their late forefather. They always establish direct contact with the deceased, even though the relationship is invisible, but deep in their heart, they believe the dead watches their offspring, families, and relatives in this world. Surround them with protection, and as a beacon to guide the living. The Law of Reincarnation, and Karmaphala teaching strongly rooted in Balinese society. The philosophical background of the ritual. They believe human behavior in this world affects the ancestor in the netherworld. Memunjung is a form of respect and solidarity with the deceased. It realizes by the family visiting the cemetery, then spend their time having meals together with the dead. The community practices this activity on certain days, such as Galungan, Kuningan and Pagerwesi day. It is said that the tradition is a custom acculturation between Java and Bali, that has been passed down from generation to generation, since the day Hindu-Buddhist teachings being introduced to the island of the Gods.

A HERITAGE FROM THE PAST

The Memunjung tradition has been practiced since the Hindu-Buddhist period. It is well developed both in Java and Bali. The Balinese practices the culture since they hold Hinduism as their religion. While in the land of Java the tradition survives as a real form of acculturation of Hindu-Buddhist with Moeslem. Moreover, Balinese who hold Christian as their religion. They always establish direct contact with the deceased, even though the relationship is invisible, but deep in their heart, they believe the dead watches their offspring, families, and relatives in this world. Surround them with protection, and as a beacon to guide the living. The Law of Reincarnation, and Karmaphala teaching strongly rooted in Balinese society. The philosophical background of the ritual. They believe human behavior in this world affects the ancestor in the netherworld. Memunjung is a form of respect and solidarity with the deceased. It realizes by the family visiting the cemetery, then spend their time having meals together with the dead. The community practices this activity on certain days, such as Galungan, Kuningan and Pagerwesi day. It is said that the tradition is a custom acculturation between Java and Bali, that has been passed down from generation to generation, since the day Hindu-Buddhist teachings being introduced to the island of the Gods.

The Philosopher background

Tradisi Memunjung saat Hari Raya di Jawa dan Bali, he explicitly mentions that similar custom and terms are well known for Javanese. They carry out Memunjung during holidays such as Idul Fitri. The meaning is more or less the same; to pay homage to the elder. If in Bali, they only visit the deceased, then in Java, Javanese also visit their living elder or parent. Memunjung in Java is usually to visit older women especially mother or grandmother. Additionally, there is also a punjung offering placed in the living room. Unlike sophisticated Balinese offering, their punjung is a jar full of sweet cookies. It acts as offering for the spirits or as welcome snacks for their living families who may visit them when the fast day arrives.

The Chairperson of the Paruman Walaka of Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) Buleleng Regency, Dewa Nyoman Saudana explains that Hindus who still have deceased families or relatives that have not been cremated through Ngaben ceremony, they are compulsory to visit the dead and bring them offerings, food or Punjung. It is clearly mentioned in the manuscript
of Medang Kemulan and Usana Dewa. As the form of Pitra Yadnya, the holy and sincere sacrifice for the ancestors, it has a meaning more than to pay respect for the late family or relative. This activity also serves as a form of bonding and as a reminder to the living that there are blood ties that connect their families.

**THE OFFERING**

Balinese Hindu offers Tampelan punjung and Banten punjung to the spirit of dead ancestors, families or relatives. If the body of the deceased is not yet been cremated, in another word, still buried in the cemetery, then, in every particular holy day such as Galungan, Kuningan, Pagerwesi, Tumpek, Anggara Kasih and so on, the mourner or relatives are compulsory to provide offerings on the grave.

The offerings are simple Banten Sodan or Canang Jempani, Tampelan Punjung and canang genten kembang ura. Tampelan punjung consists of plates made of banana leaves; betel leaves in an odd number (3 or 5), two sets of cone-shaped banana leave, tobacco and three slices of areca nut.

Sometimes, the visitor brings the deceased's favorite food. They put the food or the drink on a banana leave plate or any disposable plate and leave the offering on the grave mound. They Sprinkle the offering with holy water, burn incense, and call the deceased's name to enjoy the meal.

Whereas for the deceased who has passed the Ngaben procession, the family presents the punjung in Bale Peyadnyan or offering pavilion at their house. In general, the offering is similar to the one at the grave. However they put the sodan on a small table or tray, Pulu contains rice grain, areca nuts, betel nuts, betel leaves, gambir, Tampelan Punjung, and additionally, the deceased's favorite food.

If we classify the offering based on the time it is given, there are daily, and specific day offering. The specific one is usually presented at the cemetery; then the visitor enjoys the meal together with the dead. They are going to call the dead's name, expecting the spirit would come to appreciate the punjung offerings that have been provided before it. The visitor then wishes the late to reach tranquillity and happiness in their new world. It is essential to offer canang and incense, as a form of sanctification, therefore it becomes a holy offering. It acts as a transmission for the ancestors who did not have time to join the feast. Thus the core essence or Amertha from the offerings may reach them, wherever they currently are. Therefore, it would please them.

**MEMUNJUNG IN PRESENT**

As time goes by, Memunjung tradition slowly begins to fade in the middle of hustle bustle living of modern Balinese. In fact, for the Balinese themselves, nowadays the term is only familiar in some areas on the island. In recent days, the tradition to visit cemetery is rarely seen, especially in regional areas that do not have strict rules about burial.

In the past, the process of Ngaben was a ceremony that could not be done by many people since it spends a lot of money. Additionally, the ceremony should only be done on certain days...
which makes the community unable to carry out the ceremony carelessly. Hence, burial is commonly done by Balinese people at that time, while waiting for the right time and sufficient fund to conduct the Ngaben ceremony.

According to the community’s account, the increasing Balinese’s standard of living, accompanied by technological advancements contribute to change people mindset about the funeral in the present. The majority of Balinese are now able to carry out the procession for their deceased family. As a result, the number of burials is decreasing. A well-established economy also creates new habits in society. When a member of a family passed away, and in the next few days, there is no good day to do Ngaben ceremony; then the family commonly decide to leave the body in the hospital that provides mortuary rental facility. Should the right day have been in a matter of time, the body will be taken home and treated for the procession sake. According to the community, it saves them from spending a lot of money. It is also more efficient since they do not need to carry out two ceremonies; burial, and then Ngaben in the future.

We might now able to see the tradition of memunjung in the cemetery around Klungkung, Gianyar, Tabanan, and especially in Singaraja regency. Chief of Pakraman Buleleng village, Singaraja regency, Jro Nyoman Sutrisna revealed, currently, the tradition of visiting the dead has begun to fall due to there are many people who no longer carry out burial ceremonies. Usually to the family who are unable to carry out the Ngaben ceremony, they choose to do mekingsan ring geni ceremony. In Pakraman Buleleng Village, the tradition of Munjug is still sustainable for the people of Banjar Jawa. Meanwhile, for other Banjar, it is no longer a common custom.

CONCLUSION:
Memunjung is a tradition that emphasizes respect and solidarity with the deceased. Family and relative of the dead, visit the cemetery, then spend their time having meals together with the dead. It is believed that the tradition has been existing since the Hindu-Buddhist era. Moreover, it is well developed not only in Bali but also in Java. Recently, the custom to visit the grave is rarely done by Balinese, especially to those who live in regional areas that do not have binding rules about burial. Some argue that the increasing standard of living of the Balinese, as well as technological advancements, contribute to change people mindset about the funeral in the present. Thus, there are only a few areas that are still practicing burial for the dead.

REFERENCES:

3. Mariasa IW. Memunjung Studi Sosio-Teologis Tradisi Memunjung pada Perayaan Paskah di GKPBl Jemaat Pniel Blimbingsari. Fakultas Teologi Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. 2015. Available at URL: http://repository.uksw.edu/handle/123456789/9937


