



The Concept of Rwa Bhineda within the Balinese Hindu Society

I Made Ari Kapela

ABSTRACT

Humans possess intelligence and consciousness to interact with their surrounding environment. This cognitive ability allows humans to contemplate, communicate, and participate in activities with others. The dynamic interplay of opposing forces, evident in the realms of positive and negative, joy and sorrow, is intricately woven into the fabric of Hindu thought. The concept of Rwa Bhineda extends metaphorically to encompass the entire spectrum of human experience, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of contrasting elements. The Black and White characteristic regions within Rwa Bhineda, though seemingly contradictory, are inherently connected, mutually sustaining and weakening one another. This duality is not a source of conflict but rather a foundation for harmony, development, and progress. Furthermore, the application of Rwa Bhineda in Balinese local wisdom provides practical solutions to global challenges, emphasizing the importance of balance and harmonious coexistence amid differences. The Balinese cultural philosophy, encapsulated in concepts like Tri hita karana and Rwa Bhinedha, serves as a foundation for tolerance and diversity within Hindu religious practices. The celebration of Purnama and Tilem in the Balinese Wariga system symbolizes this concept, serving as reminders of life's inherent dualities and the potential for harmony through their complementary nature. Thus, the profound wisdom embedded in Rwa Bhineda offers a valuable perspective on navigating the complexities of human existence with grace and understanding.

Keywords: Rwa Bhineda, Concept, Balinese Society.

Cite This Article: Kapela, I.M.A. 2023. The Concept of Rwa Bhineda within the Balinese Hindu Society. *Bali Tourism Journal* 7(2): 27-30. DOI: 10.36675/btj.v7i2.91

*PT Charoen Pokphand Indonesia;
kadek.arix@gmail.com

Received: 2023-03-02
Accepted: 2023-05-08
Published: 2023-05-12

BACKGROUND

Humans possess intelligence and consciousness to interact with their surrounding environment. This cognitive ability allows humans to contemplate, communicate, and participate in activities with others.¹ As dynamic entities, humans have an awareness that influences and is influenced by their own set of life values. This dual role makes humans both the subjects and objects within their own cultural context.² In the philosophical context presented by Rene Descartes, the body is denoted as *res extensa* or material substance, a physical entity with expansive qualities that always necessitates space within the universe. On the other hand, the soul is identified as *res cogitans* or spiritual substance, representing the embodiment of human thought and lacking spatial or concrete existence.³ Therefore, the body and soul are integral components to be considered when examining humans from a Hindu perspective.

The Sarasamuscaya manuscript elucidates the merits of leading a human

life, emphasizing its potential to alleviate one from the throes of suffering. It suggests that the opportunity of human incarnation should be wisely employed by actively pursuing and embodying Dharma. According to Hinduism, the human entity comprises two facets: the physical and the spiritual. The physical aspect pertains to the human body, while the spiritual aspect represents the atman, signifying the divine essence within individuals. These two components collectively shape humans as divine entities, where everything visible is considered a manifestation of divine consciousness. The body is viewed as a tool or vessel, the tangible expression of the divine will of Sang Hyang Widhi in the visible world. This allows the Atma to address its challenges through the body's utilization in practicing virtues (Dharma). Atma is perceived as the tiniest spark of God unaffected by worldly attributes, thus not constrained by the presence of *Panca Mahabhuta*, similar to the human body termed as the gross body.

Furthermore, individuals, endowed with the capacity for critical thinking,

possess diverse understandings of truth while undertaking the responsibilities of life guided by dharma. This diversity is influenced by their ability to engage in critical thought, resulting in a spectrum of truth concepts. In Hinduism, society is acquainted with the dualistic concept of *Rwa Bhineda*, symbolizing the equilibrium of human life within dual dimensions, acknowledging the existence of two potent forces.⁴

Rwa Bhineda "within" the human body

In essence, the concept of *Rwa Bhineda* encompasses discussions about distinctions such as right and wrong, high and low, and the scale of things. Grasping the essence of Rwa Bhineda involves understanding differences and achieving a harmonious coexistence of these disparities. The Ramayana also references Rwa Bhineda with the statement: "*Pasang putih tulya mala mangeliput. Luput sareng sadu.*" This conveys the idea that the counterpart of white is black, symbolizing darkness that envelops humanity. However, the



Figure 1.⁵ Purnama, when the moon appears perfectly round and directed towards Sanghyang Ratih.



Figure 2.⁸ Yin and Yang, similar to Rwa Bhinneda. the Black characteristic region represents negativity within Rwa Bhineda mirroring the arrangement in the White characteristic defined as positivity.

wise manage to free themselves from this darkness and confusion. This explanation interprets darkness or confusion in two ways: as murky thoughts, indicating unsettled thinking, and a dark heart, signifying restlessness. An individual in darkness is described as someone in a state of mourning, while the opposite, light, denotes a clear mind and a cheerful heart, expressing a joyful state. Consequently,

Rwa Bhineda in Hinduism is associated with both joy and sorrow.

The Black characteristic region within Rwa Bhineda encompasses these five elements, mirroring the arrangement in the White characteristic region within Rwa Bhineda. The Black region can be classified as embodying characteristics of Mother /Woman /Earth /Strength / Black /Negative /Soft /Night /Cold /

Sad. Conversely, the White region can be categorized as embodying characteristics of Father/ Man /Sky /Wisdom /White / Positive /Hard /Day /Hot /Joyful. Despite the apparent contradiction between these two characteristic regions, they are intricately connected, mutually sustaining and weakening one another. This interdependence is vital for fostering harmony, life, development, and progress. Such duality is also evident in the realms of positive and negative, akin to the scientific concepts of protons and electrons. Therefore, the philosophical essence of the term Rwa Bhineda underscores that as humans, we are not obligated to exclusively inhabit one side of the characteristic region but coexist within both realms.⁶

Human beings themselves represent a manifestation of *Bhuana Alit*, known as the microcosm, originating from the fundamental five elements of life commonly referred to as *Panca Maha Bhuta*. Concurrently, the microcosm experiences life within the universe, symbolizing the grander macrocosm. The interconnected nature of *Bhuana Alit* and *Bhuana Agung* underscores that the human birth, based on the five primary elements of life (*Panca Maha Bhuta*), follows a parallel process with that of the Universe. The spiritual domain encompasses various ethereal levels of the universe, such as the *Tri Loka*, which comprises *Bhur Loka*, *Bwah Loka*, and *Swah Loka*.⁷

Within Hindu beliefs, society recognizes the universe as having several interlinked layers or levels, mirroring the composition and philosophical depth of the human body. The human body serves as a representation of the universe's essence, encapsulating meanings and philosophies within. *Bhur Loka* represents the tangible cosmic realm that encompasses our Earth, diverse solar systems, and galaxies. Despite the presence of laws governing motion, change, and transformation, everything in *Bhur Loka* is interdependent, forming cohesive groups and organizations. *Bhur Loka* stands as the sole tangible realm among the seven *lokas*, providing a dwelling place for all living beings whose physical forms are shaped by the elements of *Panca Maha Bhuta*.

On the other hand, *Bwah Loka* signifies the spiritual or intangible realm situated at



Figure 3.¹¹ *Tri hita karana* and *Rwa Bhinedha* itself, ground frameworks offer relevant solutions to global challenges, how to foster peaceful. this notion forms the basis for tolerance and diversity within Hindu religious practices.

the lowest layer. Described as the middle realm due to its position between the three lokas – Bhur, Bwah, and Swah Loka – Bwah Loka establishes connections with both Bhur Loka and Swah Loka. It serves as the realm for ancestral spirits and other spirit entities, originating from illusion to reside in Bwah Loka based on their respective levels. Unlike the physical realm, there is no involvement of a corporeal body; instead, existence relies on an individual's merits and karma. Meanwhile, Swah Loka represents the sacred realm inhabited by deities, including Brahman Loka, Vishnu Loka, Indra Loka, and others. Analogous to the distinctions between planets in the Bhur realm, virtuous deeds enable human spirits to ascend to heavenly realms and bask in the rewards of their righteous actions. Nevertheless, this ascent is contingent upon the perceived quality of deeds deserving entry into the celestial spheres.

The creation of this universe, underpinned by the law of *Rwa Bhineda*, portrays a scenario where good and evil coexist akin to the interplay of day and night. The law of *Rwa Bhineda* propels the rotational cycle of the universe, the intricate processes of birth, life, and death, encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions. These aspects are bound by karma and merits, governed by laws that

dictate the order of creation. Consequently, this dynamic also determines the cyclical nature of human life, denoted as the reincarnation cycle.

Rwa Bhinneda in the religious life of the Balinese Hindu community

The essence of *Rwa Bhineda* is mirrored in the local wisdom of the Balinese community, which embraces diversity. This concept encapsulates a cultural philosophy that envisions a world centered on balance and the harmonious interplay between opposing elements. Found in concepts like *Tri hita karana*, *desa kala patra*, and *Rwa Bhinedha* itself, these frameworks offer relevant solutions to global challenges, particularly on how to foster peaceful coexistence amid differences and multiculturalism.⁹ Therefore, this notion forms the basis for tolerance and diversity within Hindu religious practices.¹⁰

Instances of applying *Rwa Bhinneda* in daily life are common. In moments of joy or pleasure, it's advised not to excessively boast since such experiences are fleeting. Similarly, in times of deep sadness, it's encouraged not to react excessively, understanding that these emotions are part of a natural balancing act.¹² Ultimately, both sorrow and joy, when experienced in similar proportions, contribute to a state of resolution and equilibrium. The

execution of Hindu community activities is intricately linked to determining the timing of *yadnya* ceremonies, guided by the principles of Astronomy-Astrology known as *Wariga*. This approach, based on celestial observations like the moon and stars at night from Earth, defines the cyclical nature of these occurrences. *Purnama*, when the moon appears perfectly round, and *Tilem*, when it is not visible, signify sacred days devoted to worshipping Sanghyang Rwa Bhinneda. During *Purnama*, reverence is directed towards Sanghyang Ratih, while during *Tilem*, it is directed towards Sanghyang Surya.¹³ This highlights two distinct yet inseparable aspects, emphasizing fundamental differences in determining *Purnama* and *Tilem*.

The presence of *Purnama* and *Tilem* in the Balinese *Wariga* system is closely tied to the concept of *Penanggal/Panglong*. The *Penanggal/Panglong* system involves the moon's orbit as Earth's satellite, exerting a significant influence on the universe and its contents.¹⁴ This implies that *Penanggal/Panglong* determines the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of a day based on the moon's position and appearance for human life on Earth. The *Penanggal/Panglong* cycle repeats every 30 days, comprising 15 days of *Penanggal* and 15 days of *Panglong*. Understanding *Rwa Bhinneda* means comprehending differences, the essence of those differences, and the harmonization of such differences. *Purnama* and *Tilem*, celebrated by Hindu communities, symbolize the concept of *Rwa Bhinneda*. *Purnama* and *Tilem* serve as reminders of the two contrasting sides—dark and light, black and white—in this life, emphasizing their complementary nature and their potential to create harmony in life.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of human existence through the lenses of intelligence, consciousness, and cultural context reveals a rich tapestry of beliefs, particularly evident in Hindu philosophy. The interplay between the physical and spiritual aspects of humanity, as depicted in the *Sarasamuscaya* manuscript and Hindu teachings, underscores the intricate relationship between the body and soul.

The philosophical context, as presented

by Rene Descartes and further elaborated within Hindu perspectives, emphasizes the duality inherent in human nature. This duality extends beyond individual consciousness to encompass broader societal concepts, such as Rwa Bhineda, symbolizing the equilibrium of life's dual dimensions. The dynamic interplay of opposing forces, evident in the realms of positive and negative, joy and sorrow, is intricately woven into the fabric of Hindu thought. The concept of Rwa Bhineda extends metaphorically to encompass the entire spectrum of human experience, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of contrasting elements. The Black and White characteristic regions within Rwa Bhineda, though seemingly contradictory, are inherently connected, mutually sustaining and weakening one another. This duality is not a source of conflict but rather a foundation for harmony, development, and progress.

Furthermore, the application of Rwa Bhineda in Balinese local wisdom provides practical solutions to global challenges, emphasizing the importance of balance and harmonious coexistence amid differences. The Balinese cultural philosophy, encapsulated in concepts like Tri hita karana and Rwa Bhinedha, serves as a foundation for tolerance and diversity within Hindu religious practices.

The celebration of Purnama and Tilem in the Balinese Wariga system symbolizes this concept, serving as reminders of life's inherent dualities and the potential for harmony through their complementary nature. Thus, the profound wisdom embedded in Rwa Bhineda offers a valuable perspective on navigating the complexities of human existence with grace and understanding.

REFERENCES

1. I Gusti Rai Partia (2001), Warta Hindu Dharma, dalam artikel "Rwa Bhineda: Memahami Makna Suka dan Duka". Available at URL : <https://phdi.or.id/artikel.php?id=rwa-bhineda-memahami-makna-suka-dan-duka>
2. Made, Y. A. D. N., & Hartaka, I. M. (2021). Aktualisasi Manusia Hindu Dalam Ritual Diksa. Genta Hredaya: Media Informasi Ilmiah Jurusan Brahma Widya STAHN Mpu Kuturan Singaraja, 5(1), 88-100.
3. Maia, J. S. V. D. (2023). RES COGITANS DAN RES EXTENSA SEBAGAI SUBSTANSI PEMBENTUK RUANG DAN WAKTU DALAM TERANG RASIONALISME DESCARTES. Jurnal Borneo Humaniora, 6(2), 56-64.
4. Ratminingsih, Ni Made. 2022. Manusia dan Kemampuan Berpikir. Available at URL : <https://www.balipost.com/news/2022/01/05/241419/Manusia-dan-Kemampuan-Berpikir.html>
5. Prajuru Duta. 2016. Rahinan Purnama dan Tilem. Available at URL: <http://new.babadbali.com/piodalan/rahinan/rahinan-berdasarkan-sasih/2016/rahinan-purnama-dan-tilem/>
6. Wijaya, I. (2021). Nak Mule Keto: Cerita Ngalor Ngidul dan Kangin Kauh Berdasarkan Lima Unsur Utama Kehidupan.
7. Ardana, I. K. (2012). SEKALA NISKALA: Realitas Kehidupan Dalam Dimensi Rwa Bhineda. Dewa Ruci: Jurnal Pengkajian dan Penciptaan Seni, 8(1).
8. Kaira. 2023. Yin and Yang. Available at URL: <https://facts.net/yin-yang-symbol/>
9. Made, Y. A. D. N. (2020). Kebugaran Jasmani Dan Rohani Perspektif Teologi Hindu. Jnanasiddhanta: Jurnal Teologi Hindu, 1(2).
10. Rai, S.,I Wayan. 2001."Rwa Bhineda Dalam Berkesenian Bali" dalam Mudra. Jurnal seni budaya No. 11, TH. IX. Denpasar: Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI) Denpasar, UPT Penerbitan, 2001.
11. Qian, Lisa. 2017. 'Real Bali' as Western construct: Rethinking tourism's 'ruination' of Bali. Available at URL: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/travel/2017/11/23/real-bali-as-western-construct-rethinking-tourisms-ruination-of-bali.html>
12. I Gusti Ngurah, W. (2019). Rwa Bhineda.
13. Sucitra, I. (2007). Desa Kala Patra [isme]: Sebuah refleksi Orde Jiwa.
14. Bhattacharya, W. (2019). Purnama-Tilem: Konsep Rwa Bhineda Pada Wariga Di Bali. Jurnal Yoga dan Kesehatan, 2(1), 34-43.
15. Ariana, Ida Bagus Putra Manik dan Budayoga, Ida Bagus. 2016. Ala Ayuning Dewasa, Ketut Bangbang Gde Rawi (Sebuah Canangsari). Denpasar: Penerbit ESBE Buku

