

WALAKA GRIYA ROLE IN NGABEN TRADITION: A SUSTAINABLE STUDY OF ANCESTRAL HERITAGE IN BALI

IDA AYU TARY PUSPA

UNIVERSITAS HINDU NEGERI I GUSTI BAGUS SUGRIWA DENPASAR
EMAIL: tarypuspa@uhnsugriwa.ac.id

IDA BAGUS SUBRAHMANIAM SAITYA

UNIVERSITAS HINDU NEGERI I GUSTI BAGUS SUGRIWA DENPASAR

Abstract

The Ngaben tradition is an important ritual in the lives of Balinese Hindus, reflecting not only spiritual values but also a means of preserving ancestral cultural heritage. The Ngaben tradition is not merely a death ritual, but also a symbolic process of spiritual purification, with profound philosophical and theological significance in Balinese Hinduism. Behind this ceremony, the Griya, as a spiritual institution, plays a crucial role, particularly the Walaka Griya—a group of people who do not live as Sulinggih (holy priests). This article analyses the role of the Walaka Griya in maintaining the continuity of the values, structure, and implementation of the Ngaben tradition amidst sociocultural changes. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach and field studies, the research results show that the Walaka Griya serve as guardians of ritual authority, knowledge of the palm leaves (lontar), and traditional kinship values, which continue to adapt in the modern era. Their role is vital in transforming traditional values into practices relevant to the current generation.

Keywords: Walaka Griya, Ngaben, cultural sustainability, Bali, ancestral heritage.

1 INTRODUCTION

Balinese traditions are extremely diverse. These traditions are deeply rooted because they are supported by Hindu beliefs and convictions. Although the majority of Bali's population is influenced by Hinduism, there are two major characteristics of the Balinese Hindu community: the Balinese Hindus in the lowlands, who are influenced by the Hindu traditions of Majapahit, and the Balinese Hindus in the mountains, known as the Bali Aga. Tradition itself is a depiction of human attitudes and behaviours that have been carried out for generations from ancestors through a long process. Tradition is influenced by the tendency to do something and repeat it until it becomes a habit (Pendit, 2001).

Indarwati et al. (2025) stated that in Bali, ngaben is a death ritual that is considered a cultural event that must be performed when someone dies. This ceremony is carried out by placing the body in a position that resembles a sleeping person. In addition, the bereaved believe that the deceased is sleeping. In this ceremony, there are no tears because they believe that the body only exists temporarily. The soul will find their final rest in Moksha, where it will be free from the wheel of death and reincarnation. This ngaben ceremony is also performed as a way to pay respect to the spirit of the deceased.

The death ritual performed by the Balinese people is called Ngaben. Ngaben is a death tradition, which is usually when someone dies, they will be given a ceremony according to the customs of their respective villages. This death ritual has different implementations from one region to another, depending on the village's kala patra (place, time, and space). The Ngaben ritual, which is one of the religious rituals, has a fairly complex process. When viewed from the perspective of the community that participated in making the ritual a success. The implementation of Ngaben cannot be carried out impromptu, considering that this ritual involves a series of special preparations and procedures to determine the right time according to the religious calendar or local beliefs is a major consideration, because Ngaben involves the involvement of many parties, including the family and the local community. While waiting for the auspicious day, residents will work together to prepare the cremation ceremony/offerings at the funeral home. Balinese death ceremonies are carried out with a series of stages that must be carried out completely and not one can be missed. Each stage has profound spiritual meaning and purpose, making its implementation crucial for the Balinese people. However, carrying out this tradition requires significant costs, considering the various preparations and requirements that must be met, from ceremonial equipment and offerings to the services of traditional leaders and ceremony workers (Apriliani, 2024).

The Ngaben tradition is one of the main ceremonies in the Balinese Hindu belief system, serving as a means of restoring cosmic balance and releasing the spirit to the inner realm (Geertz, 1973; Lansing, 2006). In its implementation, the Griya, or Brahmin family, particularly the Walaka, plays a crucial role in maintaining the sacredness and structure of the ritual.

Sociocultural changes due to globalisation, urbanisation, and modernisation have begun to shift the position of the Walaka Griya in the lives of indigenous communities (Ardhana, 2012).

Ngaben is the cremation of a corpse, performed with a series of sacred rituals. This tradition has been passed down through generations and has become an intangible cultural heritage of the Balinese people. According to Geertz (1973) in his book, "The Interpretation of Cultures," Balinese religious ceremonies such as Ngaben reflect a complex symbolic system, demonstrating how Balinese people understand the spiritual world and the cycle of life. Geertz called Bali a "cultural theatre," as nearly every aspect of life is entwined with ritual and aesthetics. According to Titib, "Ngaben is not simply a cremation of a corpse, but a form of family devotion to ancestors and a manifestation of belief in reincarnation and the law of karma."

The role of the house as a religious centre in Bali is inseparable from the role of the *sulinggih*/priest in serving the congregation, hence the term "*mesiwa*," or "teaching." Each region or family group has its *Siwa*. The term "*mesiwa*" originates from the role of the *sulinggih*/priest, who acts as Shiva during religious ceremonies. Besides that, the teachings carried out by a *sulinggih*/priest are the standard teachings of Shiva, because the worship system is the concept of Shiva Siddhanta. Goris said that Shiva Siddhanta is a religion practised by priests or *padanda* in Bali, namely Shiva priests with manuscripts as their guide. The teachings used are Siddhanta mixed with a kind of Shivaism that is somewhat obscure and which, for the most part, comes from the Shiva Upanishads. The elements of the search for Shiva Siddhanta are Speculation and ceremony, the position of the fingers during the ceremony (*arcana-mudra*), sacred formulas (*mantra*), main formulas (*kutamantra*), the sacred syllable OM (*pranawa*) (Rema, 2015).

Meanwhile, a *griya* (house) is the residence of someone who has fulfilled the duality (*dwijati*) in Hinduism. In other words, a *griya* is the term for the residence of a *sulinggih* (priest) in Hinduism. Anyone who has fulfilled the duality (*dwijati*) is called a *sulinggih*, with various titles, including *ida padanda*, *ida rsi*, *ida mpu*, and so on. The residence, previously known as a house, automatically changes to a *griya*. The norms within a *griya* are strictly observed, including language norms and behaviour, especially when following religious guidance for Hindus. Specifically in the context of a *soroh* (group), a *griya* is the residence of a person with the *soroh brahmana* status.

A *griya* can also be considered a place for a *sulinggih* (priest) to practice the *dharma kawikon* (priestly practice) in their daily lives. There is a tendency within Balinese Hindu society to consider a *griya* the place of the priest, who leads ceremonies related to the five sacred sacrifices (*panca yajna*). The majority view holds that a priest is the one who determines and leads religious ceremonies, although he is often given the title "*sang adi guru loka*" (local guru), as his role is to provide for the community. The Balinese-Indonesian dictionary states that "*loka*" means "*society*," "*pala*" means "protector," and "*sraya*" means "provide." Thus, "*loka pala sraya*" means to provide shelter for the community. However, the impression is that the priest is more focused on leading ceremonies, which seems to have a narrower scope of "*swa-dharma*" (obligations) compared to the position of "*sang adi guru loka*" and the concept of "*ngloka pala sraya*." Some literature recommends that all devotees, without exception, study the Vedas. On the other hand, some literature places very strict restrictions on those seeking the *diksa* (priesthood) ceremony, or ordination, during spiritual ascent (Suadnyana, 2022). Thus, it can be concluded that a *griya* (house) is a residence for a *sulinggih* (priest), emphasising various moral norms and serving as a centre of spiritual learning for Hindus. The Ngaben ceremony is at the heart of Balinese Hindu life cycle, aiming to free ancestral spirits towards *moksha* (spiritual liberation). In practice, the Ngaben ceremony is highly dependent on the socio-religious structure, including the existence of the Griya (House of Worship) as a spiritual centre. One important actor in the Griya is the Walaka, a person who has not ascended to the rank of *Sulinggih* but still carries out spiritual and social functions. In the context of cultural sustainability, the role of the Walaka Griya is crucial because it bridges tradition with ever-changing social realities. This study aims to examine the role of the Walaka Griya in ensuring the sustainability of the Ngaben ceremony as a living ancestral heritage.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In presenting the literature review, it will be explained based on sources related to the title of this article. The journal written by Widya Genitri is entitled, "Hindu Community Perceptions of the Mass Ngaben Ritual in Solo Village, Angkona District, East Luwu Regency." This journal explains that the Hindu community feels that the Ngaben ritual is somewhat burdensome, but after the mass Ngaben ritual was implemented, the community can carry it out, considering the high cost. In this study, the data collection methods used were observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review. The data collection techniques used were data reduction, data modelling, drawing and verifying conclusions.

A journal written by Ni Wayan Suruni entitled "Perceptions of the Restu Rahayu Village Community, North Raman District, East Lampung Regency, Regarding Ngaben Without Petulangan." This journal describes the Hindu community that performs the Ngaben ceremony without using *petulangan*. *Petulangan* is a symbol of each person's *kawitan*

(traditional group), indicating that a person comes from a kawitan/group listed in the inscription, which is written according to the instructions contained in each person's inscription. This study used a qualitative approach, with the population of all 1,599 Hindu residents in Restu Rahayu Village, North Raman District, East Lampung Regency. The instruments used were questionnaires, documentation, and interviews.

A journal written by I Made Sukariawan entitled, "Perceptions of the Pakraman Mas Village Community, Abud District, Gianyar Regency, Regarding the Use of Gayah Sari in the Ngaben Ngelanus Ceremony." This journal describes the uniqueness of the gayah sari, which is made from processed pig bones and meat. The Ngaben ngelanus ceremony is carried out simultaneously with the sawa preteka ceremony, which is a ceremony where the deceased is immediately cremated until the ceremony of menstanaka atma is completed in a holy place, namely the merajan, which is called the ngelinggihan Dewa Hyang Pitara ceremony in Merajan. The theories used are religion, symbol theory, and structural functional theory. To collect data, the informant determination technique uses the snowball sampling technique. This type of research is qualitative. Data is collected using observation, interviews, literature, and documentation techniques.

According to [Bandem \(2002\)](#), the Griya is a spiritual institution of the Brahmin family that holds authority over rituals. Walaka are members of the Griya who have not yet undergone the initiation process to become a Sulinggih but still play an active role in traditional ceremonies. Walaka is a Sanskrit word derived from the Old Javanese-Indonesian Dictionary ([Zoetmulder, 2006](#)), meaning young, not yet fully grown. The Balinese Dictionary states that walaka is equated with the word ulaka, meaning not yet ordained as a priest ([Gautama, 2007](#)). [Wiana \(2007\)](#) states that walaka comes from the Sanskrit word balaka, meaning child. When born from the mother's womb, we are called firstborn or ekajati. As long as we have not reached the Dwijati stage, we are called walaka, even if we are old.

The realm of *walaka* is the realm of children from a spiritual perspective. Griya in the Balinese Dictionary is included in the alus singgih language level, meaning a house for Brahmins or Priests ([Gautama, 2007](#)). So, Walaka Griya, in this case, is someone who lives in a Brahmin house and has the special duty to carry out the cremation ceremony according to the instructions of his Sulinggih, both for the ceremony of his sisya and for the Hindu community in general. The Ngaben tradition, which is part of the Panca Yadnya (sacred rituals), is a form of Bhuta Yadnya and Pitra Yadnya ([Compiler Team, 2015](#)). This ceremony is not only ritualistic but also contains educational, social, and spiritual elements. Cultural Heritage Sustainability, according to [UNESCO \(2003\)](#), relates to how a community maintains, adapts, and transforms its intangible heritage to keep it alive and relevant in the context of changing times.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative with descriptive analysis. Descriptive methods study the status of human groups, objects, conditions, systems of thought, or classes of events in the present ([Moleong, 2014](#)). The purpose of this study is to describe and provide a systematic overview based on data and facts related to the phenomenon under study, namely the role of walaka griya in the Balinese cremation tradition.

The data used in this study are sourced from primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with parties considered to have capabilities and who are directly related to the problem to be studied. In this study, primary data were obtained through interviews with informants, namely Walaka griya (Informant 1/IBMSA), Sulinggih (Reverend/Informant 2/IPGBM), Chairman of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia Bali Province (Informant 3/INK), Traditional leaders (Informant 4/IKD), and bereaved community members (Informant 5/SS). Secondary data were collected through literature studies related to the role of walaka griya in the ngaben tradition in Bali. In the data analysis stage, both primary data from interviews with informants were combined with secondary data collected through literature studies were combined. Both primary and secondary data were processed, then verified and matched with each other. So that only the data that is relevant to the research is used.

4 RESULTS

In the Ngaben ceremony, the presence of the Griya walaka is central to its role, as without them, the ceremony would not be possible. As stated by informant 1/IBSA.

"I play a role during the Ngaben ceremony, including bathing the body, leading the ceremony at the grave before the Ngaben ceremony, carrying the body, performing the Caru (cleansing) ceremony, and performing the Papekatan (farewell) ceremony. This role requires skill and knowledge, including mastery of the ceremony, mantras, and offerings."

The role of the Griya walaka is based on instructions from the sulinggih (priest), as each person has a distinct role, as explained by informant 2/IPGBM in the following interview.

“If a member of the Griya, including a student of the Griya, is grieving because a family member has died, they will come to the Griya to ask for a time to perform the Ngaben ceremony, including asking who will lead the ceremony. I will assign the walaka griya to carry out/lead the ceremony according to the known duties, while I, as the priest, will lead the cremation ceremony at the cemetery.”

The cremation ceremony can be performed as a small ceremony (*kanista*) or as a large ceremony (*utama*). This is determined by the financial ability of the deceased. As the highest body of Hindus, the *Parisada*, in protecting its congregation, guides on the importance of the ceremony, and the walaka griya plays an honourable role. This was conveyed by informant 3 (INK), as follows.

“A griya with a *sisya* (student) must have a walaka who plays a role in the cremation ceremony. The walaka griya is present to provide knowledge to the deceased's family about the meaning and importance of the ceremony as a cycle of birth, life, and death. The meaning of a ritual concerning society is crucial for establishing harmony within the community, as it supports the journey forward. Death is not something to be mourned but rather a cycle that must be faced. The walaka griya plays its role as the guardian and successor of the cremation tradition, passing this knowledge down to the next generation.”

The ngaben ceremony involves the indigenous community because the grave belongs to the indigenous community, and the death of an indigenous person must also be reported to the *bendesa* (traditional leader) in a village. This was conveyed by informant 4/IKD as follows.

The ngaben ceremony is implemented according to customary law, involving *krama* (traditional residents). Bonds of solidarity with fellow indigenous community members are largely determined by the social ties of the deceased. Everything from preparing the burial site at the grave, making the ceremonial equipment, and carrying the body to the grave is handled by the indigenous community. Therefore, the walaka griya (guardian of the grave) also plays a role, standing on the bier and scattering *sekar ura* (rice containing coins and flowers).”

Every death must be faced with fortitude and acceptance, because everyone who is born and lives will inevitably die, no one knows when. The account of a woman who has passed away to the afterlife aligns with the following account from informant 5/SS:

“I never expected my husband to leave me so soon; my child was still small. Faced with this, I immediately sought the advice of the walaka griya (housekeeper) before going to the priest, as he would be the one to inform the priest first. I requested a simple cremation ceremony, as long as my husband's soul was at peace after the ceremony. I must perform this ceremony so that my husband's spirit can rest, and I, the bereaved, can also find peace and strength.”

5 DISCUSSION

The Ngaben ceremony is an integral part of the life cycle of Balinese Hindus. It embodies values, beliefs, and philosophies derived from Hindu teachings and ancestral traditions that have been passed down through generations. The journey of the soul, considered crucial in Balinese Hinduism, is central to the Ngaben ceremony. It not only honours the deceased but also frees the spirit from the shackles of the mortal world to the afterlife.

The Ngaben ceremony also serves as a moment when the local community unites to provide moral and practical support to the bereaved family. This reflects the strong sense of solidarity and togetherness among Balinese people. During the Ngaben preparation activities, residents help each other by providing labour, materials, and emotional support to the bereaved family. This emphasises the strong value of cooperation (*gotong royong*) in Balinese culture, which is also a key pillar of their customs.

Furthermore, through the Ngaben ceremony, Balinese local wisdom continues to be strengthened and preserved. The rich symbolism of each stage of the ceremony, from the preparation of the body to the cremation, carries profound philosophical messages. For example, the use of fire as a means of purification, or the use of natural materials in the construction of the bade (the bier that will also be cremated), demonstrates the Balinese people's closeness to nature and their belief in the unbroken cycle of life. The Role of Walaka Griya in the Ngaben Tradition: A Study of the Continuity of Ancestral Heritage in Bali will be outlined below.

5.1 Role in Preserving Cultural Heritage

The role of custom in preserving local wisdom regarding the Ngaben tradition is evident in the preservation of cultural heritage. Custom has rules and norms that are passed down from generation to generation. These rules govern all aspects of the ceremony, including procedures, mantras, and required offerings. Custom serves as a solid guide for the Balinese

people in maintaining the sanctity and sacredness of the Ngaben ceremony, ensuring that this tradition continues to thrive and be preserved.

Even though the Sulinggih *lanang istri* (a wife) in a *gria* possesses capital in her existence as a respected person. As Fashri (2007) states, capital can be classified into four. First, economic capital includes the means of production (machines, land, labour), materials (income and objects), and money that can be easily used for various purposes and passed down from one generation to the next. Second, cultural capital is the totality of intellectual qualifications that can be produced, either through formal education or family inheritance. Included in cultural capital are, among others, the ability to present oneself in public, ownership of high-value cultural objects/codes, certain knowledge and skills from education, and certificates (bachelor's degrees). Third, social capital refers to the social networks that actors (both individuals and groups) have in their relationships with other parties in power. Fourth, symbolic capital is all forms of prestige, status, authority, and legitimacy. Walaka *Griya* has these four assets and can carry out its role through the assets it has, such as the honorable status as a Brahmin who lives in *Griya*, who has an understanding of Hinduism and general knowledge, has sufficient finances, and is seen as a respected figure by Hindus in guiding and providing knowledge regarding the Ngaben ceremony. In their role as providers of knowledge and cultural education, *griya* tend to possess multicultural awareness. Balinese Hindus live in a region with diverse local cultures, a manifestation of their multiculturalism. The multicultural awareness possessed by *griya* ultimately provides the foundation for them to recognise counselling from diverse cultural backgrounds. This aligns with Gemilang (2015) view that a person capable of providing guidance and counseling in life must possess assumptions, cultural values, inclinations, beliefs, and attitudes, be aware of how their cultural background and experiences, attitudes, and values can be influenced by psychology, and create a sense of comfort, regardless of ethnicity, culture, and beliefs, for everyone, including students and the congregation.

The *walaka griya* holds a strategic position as it serves as a liaison between the students and the priest. Because many students cannot speak refined Balinese, parents are typically the ones who visit the *griya*. Therefore, the presence of the *walaka griya* is crucial as a bridge between the students and the priest. In this regard, Hindus, or *sisya*, have greater language freedom because they are permitted to use Indonesian or common Balinese. They are more relaxed in speaking without barriers or hesitation. Therefore, *walaka griya* must understand the art of speaking to create a relaxed atmosphere. This also serves as a medium for teaching the congregation to practice the ngaben tradition as a mandatory practice when facing death, to perform this ceremony according to the holy book/*lontar* (palm leaf), and to encourage the passing on of traditional cultural values to each generation, specifically the Balinese Hindu community.

Ngaben, also known as *pelebon*, is a cremation ceremony in the Balinese Hindu tradition. Ngaben comes from the word "ngabu," meaning "to turn to ashes." This ceremony represents the return of the *Panca Maha Bhuta* (the five elements that make up the human body: earth, water, fire, air, and ether) to their origins, and the liberation of the *atman* (spirit) from worldly bonds to *moksha*, or rebirth (reincarnation) according to the law of karma.

In Hinduism, particularly that practised by the Balinese, life does not end with death, but is instead part of the cycle of *samsara* (birth, life, death, and rebirth). Ngaben serves as a spiritual means to purify the spirit (*atma*) and release it. Besides being a religious practice, Ngaben is also a manifestation of Balinese culture, rich in art, symbolism, and mutual cooperation. The Ngaben ceremony demonstrates the synergy between:

- Fine arts: such as the creation of the *bade* (body cradle) and *lembu* (cremation device).
- Musical arts: the *baleganjur gamelan* that accompanies the procession, as well as the *angklung*.
- Performing arts: such as sacred dances that accompany the ceremony, such as *Baris Katelok Jago* and *Baris Memedi*.
- *Majejaitan* arts: as seen in offerings.

According to Bandem (2002), Ngaben is Balinese spiritual theatre. It reflects the arts, philosophy, and social order of Balinese society, which are still alive and dynamic. "It is also a spirituality that teaches an understanding of life and death as part of the cycle of *samsara* and reincarnation."

5.2 The Role of Cultural Learning for the Younger Generation

The role of custom is also evident in cultural learning for the younger generation. The Ngaben ceremony is not only a means of fulfilling spiritual obligations but also a valuable form of cultural education. Through the process of preparing and performing the ceremony, the younger generation learns about life values, ethics, and respect for ancestors. They are taught to appreciate and understand the traditional traditions that constitute their cultural identity. Thus, custom plays an important role in preserving local wisdom and passing it on to future generations.

Another lesson is that when searching for the water stick used for the first time during the cremation ceremony before the body is cremated, the appropriate person to search for the stick is the *pretisentana* (descendant of the deceased, not the *gria*), in this case, the *walaka griya*. The term "shooting stick" cannot be separated from *Itihasa*, especially in the *Mahabharata*, where Bhishma lies on a bed of arrows and asks his grandchildren for water. Duryodhana arrives with water in a golden jug, but it is rejected because it is not what Bhishma wants. Finally, Arjuna shoots an arrow at the earth, causing water to gush from the ground, and Bhishma thanks him for the water from the earth. This incident in the *Mahabharata* shows that Balinese ceremonies, especially the cremation ceremony, cannot be separated from the existence of *Itihasa* as part of the *Weda Smrti*. The water shot at the earth becomes the archer's *tirta* (holy water) during the cremation ceremony, while the *pretisentana*, Arjuna, symbolically represents devotion to his parents. Because the search

for the shooting stick is carried out by the descendants of the deceased, they are given guidance on how to ask for water from the river, a common practice among Hindus. They are given mantras and procedures for carrying out this ceremony by the *walaka griya*.

Broadly speaking, education encompasses the efforts of adults to transfer their knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities to the younger generation to prepare them to fulfil their physical and spiritual roles in life. Education is one of the products of human culture, so educational activities are a reflection of that culture. Education not only takes place formally in schools but can also occur in social settings. This process can be lifelong and can be implemented within families and communities. Education in Hinduism is known as *aguron-guron* or *Asewakadharma*. The activities involved in the Ngaben ceremony reflect maintaining togetherness and voluntary mutual assistance. The educational function of togetherness and mutual assistance indirectly educates fellow Hindus (of the same age) and the younger generation within the community. It turns out that the Ngaben ceremony teaches a way of living together.

Associating with good people will lead to good behaviour. Similarly, during the Ngaben ceremony, helping each other with tasks such as making ritual instruments fosters good karma, which in turn will result in good karma. No matter how bad a person's behaviour, associating with a good, *sadhu* (spiritual leader) will reap good rewards. Those who help organise the Ngaben ceremony will, in turn, help those who help organise the ceremony. Therefore, there's no awkwardness in helping each other in Hindu education; this is following the law of karma (the law of cause and effect). As a *walaka griya* (guardian of a *griya*), Hindus or students sometimes call when they come to the *griya* to meet the priest. In this case, they are told not to be afraid to come to the *griya* even if they don't speak polite language. Sometimes, they don't understand the etiquette of communicating with the *Sulinggih/Priest*. Simply add the word "*inggih*" (yes) after every word spoken and answer it. Thus, many *sisya* or members of the congregation initially hesitated to come to the *griya* simply because they couldn't speak. Eventually, some did, including the younger generation.

With the bridge built by the *walaka griya*, communication can be established effectively if the *walaka griya* conveys it effectively. In addition to communication, they must also observe etiquette, such as when sitting. The *sisya* or members of the congregation will often sit lower than the priest or *walaka griya* due to their high status as *Shiva*, so they must face each other with their fingers joined. However, there are times when the *Sulinggih/Priest* and *walaka griya* sit parallel, cross-legged.

As Bourdieu stated in [Takwin \(2003\)](#), the priest can develop a dominant discourse called *doxa*. *Doxa* is a type of social order within an individual that is stable and bound by tradition, and where power is completely naturalized and unquestioned. In line with this, [Agusta \(2014\)](#) states that the priest, as *Shiva*, institutionalises *doxa* to shape the *sisya/disciple* into a noble, good, and righteous person. This phenomenon is evident when the *sisya-murid* communicates using verbal and body language. The *sisya* uses verbal language, namely refined Balinese, accompanied by body language to further refine it. In turn, the *sisya* responds using ordinary Balinese or even coarse Balinese. The *sisya* accepts *Shiva's* treatment of him following the *doxa* that governs him. This means that "...power manifests itself both materially and culturally in the body."

The role of the home as a cultural learning center is often achieved through the provision of cultural motivation. The cultural dynamics encountered by Hindus certainly present various challenges with the potential to weaken the congregation's mental health. The cultural motivation provided ultimately demonstrates the curative function of the home, which requires the home to act as a motivator for the congregation. The home provides motivation and guidance so that the congregation's cultural life, when practising Hinduism, can be preserved as a legacy of local wisdom in practising Hinduism in Bali. Thus, the congregation has the spiritual strength to practice religion as spiritual guidance and preserve the culture imbued with religion as both a physical and ethical asset.

There are noble values within the cremation tradition, which hold various important and still relevant values that must be practised by the younger generation of Hindus.

- Spirituality and respect for ancestors
- Cooperation (*menyama braya*) in the form of cooperation between indigenous communities
- Harmony with nature (*Tri Hita Karana*) because cremation is the return of natural elements to their origin
- Moral education through respect for parents and ancestors

5.3 Role in Strengthening Social Networks and Solidarity

Tradition also plays a role in strengthening social networks and solidarity in Balinese society. The Ngaben ceremony involves various roles and responsibilities that must be carried out by community members. This includes preparations for the ceremony, bathing the body at the funeral home, preparing the grave, and preparing offerings, all carried out collaboratively by the local community. Collaboration and cooperation in carrying out this traditional ceremony strengthen social bonds between residents and build solidarity. Custom serves as a bridge that unites the community during important moments such as the Ngaben ceremony.

Sevanam is a form of devotion to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi*, fellow human beings, and the environment. In Hinduism, the concept of *Tri Hita Karana* is recognised. During the cremation ceremony, *sevanam* is dedicated to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* and all His manifestations, including the gods, *pitra*, and *butha*, through offerings in the form of *banten* (offerings)

in various forms. Sevanam to God serves as a symbol of Hindu devotion to God. Sevanam can be performed in many ways, such as chanting mantras and chanting hymns.

Sevanam to others is a concrete act because it connects people, and can be assessed by others both during and after the cremation ceremony. The ceremony brings good name to the *walaka griya* and the organisers of the cremation ceremony. This is inseparable from harmonious relationships between people. Sevanam must be practised by all Hindus, with a sense of trust and mutual respect. In carrying out his duties as a servant to the congregation, not only his students, but also anyone who requests him to lead ceremonies, make offerings, or guide the priest will be served. Of course, a schedule will be coordinated so he can serve the congregation in need.

The Walaka Griya will strive to serve the congregation well, especially if the request comes from a member who is not his student. He sometimes says that he is paid by the congregation, so he will do his best to fulfil the request with great care because it is a gamble. This does not mean that serving Hindus can be careless. Serving a student is inherently psychologically ingrained because what the house has is also owned by the student, and vice versa. This is evidenced by any activity at the house, whether it is a cremation ceremony or other ceremonies, all students will come to the house to *ngayah* and pray at the house's sacred place.

The Bhagavata Purana mentions *Dasyam*, which is devotion through service and devotion to God, generally through the worship of idols and humanitarian service. Kinship is also a form of sevanam, as it represents a system of blood ties between one lineage and another. Communities, in a ritual, are a unified whole interdependent on the Ngaben ceremony, forming a social bond based on trust and shared needs. The community believes that this relationship is fundamental to community life.

When leading a Ngaben ceremony, the Walaka Griya (head of the griya) will not disappoint his students or the Hindu community. Even when asked to lead the Ngeluang ceremony, the preparation of the Ngaben site at the gravesite on the morning of the Ngaben ceremony, if he is not picked up, the Walaka Griya will depart alone to ensure timely attendance. This ensures that the students and community do not have to wait too long for the Walaka Griya to arrive, demonstrating the devotion of the clan.

Serving the sisya/congregation should not be selfish, for example, if there is a sisya who cannot afford it, then the griya will go by their vehicle, of course, beforehand, the sisya has already presented *canang*/offerings to the griya. If there is a sisya who will carry out a cremation ceremony, especially a sudden ngaben, to carry out the smallest possible *ngaben* because there is a griya implementing a program of faster ngaben is better and saves money, then the griya will not hesitate to give the offerings in the griya to them.

Humans are social creatures, and their presence with others is crucial for establishing kinship. The Ngaben ceremony involves family members, both nuclear and extended, as well as the community. This involves *ngoopin* (helping) among them, working together to carry out the ceremony. The Ngaben ceremony demonstrates the unity of the community and social solidarity, recognising that as part of a community, they will inevitably experience and face death. Therefore, if a community member dies, the community will also participate in the ceremony. Because we live within the bounds of a banjar (village), we are all involved in the ceremony.

The Ngaben ceremony serves as a means of social integration in an effort to fulfil and maintain the social structure of society. According to [Ahmadi \(1991\)](#), social integration (community integration) is the cooperation of all members of society, from individuals, families, institutions, and society as a whole, resulting in the fusion of several shared values. Social integration involves accommodation, assimilation, and a reduction in prejudice among members of society as a whole. Social integration will be achieved if existing prejudices are managed effectively, preventing conflict, domination, and the creation of non-complementary systems, allowing for integration without coercion.

In social and religious life, social integration is crucial, especially in the Ngaben ceremony, which is manifested in the form of *ngayah* or *ngoopin* (gathering). *Ngayah* or *ngoopin* is a form of cooperation based on solidarity/tolerance, love, mutual nurturing, compassion, and care (*sagilik saguluk salungung sabayantaka*), a sense of belonging, and so on, thus creating a harmonious, balanced, and harmonious life. Mutual assistance is carried out by the community in the form of assisting the deceased, such as making offerings, making equipment for the body washing ceremony, and constructing the crematorium at the grave. With community assistance, it is hoped that the Ngaben work will be completed quickly.

This form of mutual assistance can be realised if the community is in harmony with one another. [Suseno \(1985\)](#) states that the principle of harmony aims to maintain a harmonious society. *Rukun* means being in harmony, balance, and peace, without disputes or conflicts, but united, intending to help each other. [Wolf \(1985\)](#) states that a harmonious state can be realised when all parties are in a state of peace with each other, always working together, accepting each other in a calm state and agreeing with each other. Harmony is an ideal state that is expected to be maintained in all social relationships, in the family, neighbourhood associations in society, and so on. Even though people in general can already fulfil their own needs or their needs for goods and food, they must also organise social integration with each other. They must cooperate to maintain order, help each other, so that a sense of security and harmony is realised in life.

The social solidarity that naturally develops among the community inspires their daily social activities. [Wiana \(2002\)](#) states that in carrying out religious ceremonies, everyone can take on roles according to their function and profession

(swadharma of each individual's profession), including the *walaka griya*. Puspita (2009) states that the cremation ceremony, including mass cremation, involves the ngaben ngiring (joining the ngaben) as a collective gathering, fostering a sense of solidarity that transcends individuality, blame, and show-off. If a sense of community has been established and everyone recognises that the purpose of the mass ceremony is to strengthen bonds of brotherhood based on a spirit of togetherness, so that the local genius of *paras paros*, *menyamabraya*, *gilik saguluk*, and *sidikara* can be maintained, then the mass ceremony is appropriate.

Some cremation equipment and supplies are made collectively by community members, a characteristic of social beings that reflects a sense of solidarity. *Walaka griya* possesses social capital to build social relationships. Established social capital is built on the strength of an individual's social network. Bourdieu (Haryanto, 2014) states that mastery of social capital depends on an individual's ability to build social networks or relationships. Through the cremation ceremony, *walaka griya* possesses the ability to build social networks.

In addition to social capital, *walaka griya* possess symbolic capital. Symbolic capital lies in the ability to perceive social conditions and be socially recognised through specific capital. Thus, capital effectively fulfils its function if it is recognised by the social community. Therefore, not all capital can be interpreted in terms of economic value, but rather the symbolic meaning that society assigns to it. In other words, economic, cultural, and social capital can explicitly be considered symbolic capital.

Holding the title Ratu Aji (an honourable title) can serve as symbolic capital in building social networks to gain recognition, authority, and honor. *Walaka griya*, as social actors, cannot separate themselves from their social environment, and *sisya* (students) as supporters of the *walaka*'s role. As time goes by, the Ngaben ceremony also faces various challenges and adaptations. One of the main challenges is the increasing cost of the ceremony. This has prompted the community to seek alternative solutions, such as holding mass Ngaben ceremonies or simplifying the ceremonial procession. Furthermore, the influence of modernisation has given rise to various new perspectives on Ngaben. Some argue that Ngaben is an outdated tradition and no longer relevant to modern life. However, the majority of Balinese people maintain the Ngaben tradition as an important part of their cultural and spiritual identity. They strive to preserve this tradition through creative and innovative means, such as utilising information technology to disseminate information about Ngaben.

5.4 Challenges for Walaka Griya in Preserving the Ngaben Tradition

- Modernisation has led to changes in the form of ceremonies, for example, in the use of technology or shortening the time.
- Economic constraints have led some families to choose mass Ngaben as a more affordable alternative.
- Globalisation threatens local values, and the younger generation tends to move away from tradition.

Despite the challenges, some efforts can be made, including:

To maintain the sustainability of the Ngaben tradition as a cultural and religious heritage, strategic steps are needed:

- Educating the younger generation about the philosophical meaning of Ngaben through schools, traditional villages, and digital media.
- Revitalising the role of traditional villages and Griya to guide the community in carrying out the ceremony.
- Collaboration between the government, Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), and cultural institutions to support systematic and sustainable preservation.

Preservation effort is to maintain the sustainability of the Ngaben tradition as a cultural and religious heritage. According to Prof. Dr. I Nyoman Darma Putra, "The preservation of traditions such as Ngaben must be carried out adaptively—honouring their original values while opening up a dialogue with the times." Therefore, the Ngaben ceremony has socio-cultural functions:

- Strengthening kinship ties as it involves the participation of the extended family and the traditional community.
- Preserving arts and culture as it involves elements of architecture (*bade*), dance, gamelan music, and religious symbols.
- Demonstrating Bali's distinctive and unique local identity.
- Mutual Cooperation
- All residents of the hamlet participate in the ceremony.

However, many traditional villages and traditional institutions are working to preserve this tradition. UNESCO itself recognizes ritual practices such as Ngaben as part of the intangible cultural heritage that must be preserved.

6 CONCLUSION

Walaka Griya play a central role in the continuity of the Ngaben ceremony, a legacy of our ancestors. They are not only ritual performers but also preservers of spiritual, social, and cultural values. Amidst the tide of modernisation, *Walaka*'s role remains adaptive and strategic in maintaining the existence of tradition. *Walaka Griya* play a strategic role in

maintaining the continuity of the Ngaben tradition and the spiritual heritage of Balinese Hinduism. However, social change demands a repositioning of this role through contextual adaptation strategies. Preserving tradition cannot be done symbolically; it must be facilitated through education, community strengthening, and support from customary and state policies. The Ngaben tradition is not merely a death ritual but also a reflection of the Balinese Hindu way of life, emphasizing the balance between the real (*sekala*) and the unseen (*niskala*). It is a living cultural heritage, shaping the identity of the Balinese people while strengthening spirituality and social solidarity. Preserving Ngaben is not only the responsibility of Balinese Hindus but also part of efforts to protect national and global cultural heritage.

Implications

Stronger institutional support is needed for the existence of Walaka Griya, including in the form of regulations, digital documentation, and strengthening intergenerational capacity.

REFERENCES

1. Agastia, I. B. G. Y. (2014). *Struktur Sosial Griya di Bali*. Denpasar: Udayana University Press.
2. Ardhana, I. K. (2012). Globalization and cultural identity in Bali. *Jurnal Kajian Bali*, 2(1), 1–20.
3. Ardika, I. W. (2004). *Melacak Jejak Arkeologi Budaya Bali*. Denpasar: Yayasan Widya Dharma.
4. Ayu Diah Apriliani, 2024 Dinamika Pelaksanaan Ritual Ngaben Di Desa Adat Sampalan Tahun 2002-2022, JIIC: Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia. <https://jicnusanantara.com/index.php/jiic> Vol : 1 No: 10, Desember 2024 E-ISSN : 3047-7824, hlm 7433-7440
5. Bandem, I Made & DeBoer, Fredrik. (1995). *Kaja and Kelod: Balinese Dance in Transition*. Oxford University Press.
6. Bandem, I. M. (2002). *Bali Traditional Performing Arts*. Denpasar: Bali Post.
7. Covarrubias, M. (1937). *Island of Bali*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
8. Darma Putra, I Nyoman. (2010). *Tourism, Culture and Literature in Bali*. Udayana University Press.
9. Eiseman, Fred B. Jr. (1990). *Bali: Sekala and Niskala*. Periplus Editions.
10. Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
11. Geertz, C. (1980). *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. Princeton University Press.
12. Lansing, J. S. (2006). *Perfect Order: Recognizing Complexity in Bali*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
13. Made Sukariawan “ Persepsi Masyarakat Desa Pakraman Mas Kecamatan Abud Kabupaten Gianyar Terhadap Penggunaan Gaya Sari Dalam Upacara Ngaben Ngelanus” Jurnal Penelitian Agama, 1 Desember 2020, hal 29-36
14. Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
15. Pendit, N. S. (2019). Hari Raya Hindu: Makna dan Filosofi. Pustaka Bali Post.
16. Puspa, Ida Ayu Tary. 2009.”*Sudahkah Paras Paros?*”. Raditya 140 Maret 2009.
17. Ridia Taradipa (2022). Persepsi Masyarakat terhadap Pelaksanaan Ritual Ngaben Desa Taripa Kecamatan Angkona Kabupaten Luwu Timur Program Studi Sosiologi Agama Fakultas Ushuluddin Adab dan Dakwah Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Palopo.
18. Sitti, Halimah Ta’gan, Solidaritas Sosial Dalam Upacara Ngaben Pada Masyarakat Hindu - Bali (Studi Pada Umat Hindu – Bali di Desa Kalaena Kiri II Kecamatan Kalaena Kabupaten Luwu Timur), 2016, Diploma Thesis, Universitas Negeri Makassar.
19. Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. New York: Routledge.
20. Suarka, I N. (2008). *Teks dan Konteks dalam Tradisi Bali*. Denpasar: Udayana University Press.
21. Suarta, I. M., Artini, L. G. S., & Purbadharma, I. B. P. (2017). Cultural Identity and Strategy of Sustainable Tourism Development in Bali. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 23–32.
22. Tim Penyusun. (2015). *Upacara Pitra Yadnya*. Dinas Kebudayaan Provinsi Bali.
23. UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.
24. Wayan Seruni, “Persepsi Masyarakat Desa Restu Rahayu Kecamatan Raman Utara Lampung Timur Terhadap Ritual Ngaben Tanpa Petualangan,” Jurnal Pendidikan Agama 8, no2 (1 September 2017) hal 24-30
25. Wiana, I Ketut. 2002. *Memelihara Tradisi Weda*. Denpasar: Bali Post.
26. Wiana, I Ketut. 2007. “*Rsi Yajñā dan Sistem Kepanditaan Hindu*” dalam *Diksa Pintu Menapaki Jalan Rohani*. Surabaya: Paramita
27. Wiana, I. Ketut. (2004). *Hindu dan Budaya Bali*. Surya Dharma.
28. Widya Genitri, “Persepsi Masyarakat Hindu Terhadap Ritual Ngaben di Desa Solo,” Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan, Agama dan Kebudayaan Hindu 12, no 3 (2021) hal 177-187. <https://DOI: 10.36417/widyagenitri.v12i3.336>