



Tracking the Footprints of the Veda Teachings Implementation Study on Hindus in Bali

Mangku Pastika*, I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana, Sri Putri Purnamawati, Relin D E

Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

*Corresponding author Email: mademangkupastika74@gmail.com

The manuscript was received on 10 January 2025, revised on 10 June 2025, and accepted on 24 June 2025, date of publication 3 July 2025

Abstract

The Vedic teachings have been the primary foundation of the religious and social life of the Balinese Hindu community. As part of the spiritual heritage of ancient India, these teachings entered Bali through trade routes and cultural migration since the first century AD. Over time, the Vedic teachings have been acculturated with local culture, creating unique and dynamic Balinese Hindu practices. This study examines how the Vedic teachings in Bali are applied in everyday life, social systems, and religious practices, focusing on the concepts of dharma, karma, and moksha, which remain the ethical guidelines of the community. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive narrative approach, involving interviews with religious figures, direct observation of yadnya rituals, and analysis of historical and religious documents. It aligns them with local concepts such as desa, kala, and patra, which allow flexibility in implementing rituals and religious rules. The role of brahmanas as guardians of the Vedic teachings is still vital in the social structure, but changing times bring new challenges to the sustainability of these teachings, especially in the face of modernization and globalization. Modernization and urbanization have given rise to various shifts in religious practices, sometimes leading to the reduction of spiritual meaning and the transformation of rituals into mere formalities. Overall, the Vedic teachings still play a central role in the lives of Balinese Hindu society, although in a form that has undergone modification and acculturation. Academic studies and cultural preservation are strategic steps in maintaining the sustainability of this spiritual heritage amidst changing times. This study emphasizes the importance of preservation efforts through an empirical approach that explores the actual practice of the Vedic teachings and pays attention to how the Balinese Hindu community maintains its religious identity amid globalization.

Keywords: Bali, Heritage, Trapping, Middle, Veachings.

1. Introduction

Balinese Hinduism has a deep cultural and spiritual identity, rooted in the teachings of the Vedas, originating from ancient India. These teachings are not just holy books but also serve as a philosophical foundation for the Balinese Hindu community's lifestyle, belief system, and social system [1], [2]. The spread of the Vedas to Bali began with the arrival of Indian traders and priests who brought their religious traditions. Over time, these teachings have been acculturated with local culture, forming the distinctive practices of Balinese Hinduism [3], [4].

The arrival of the Vedic teachings to Bali occurred through trade routes and cultural migration from India since the first century AD. Archaeological evidence, such as inscriptions and temple sites, shows that these teachings have been part of the spiritual life of the Balinese people for a long time [5]. Besakih Temple and Gunung Kawi Temple are real examples of religious heritage rooted in the Vedic tradition. These teachings spread through written texts and oral traditions, rituals, and spiritual practices adapted by the local community [6], [7].

The Vedic teachings in Bali are not practiced literally like in India; instead, they undergo modifications and interpretations according to the needs and social conditions of the community. This adaptation process is known as "locality" in Balinese Hinduism, where the essence of the Vedic teachings is maintained but also aligned with local traditions. For example, the caste system influenced by Indian religious concepts is still applied in the social structure of Balinese society, but with a different approach.

Acculturation is also evident in Balinese art and culture. Dance, carvings, and temple architecture adopt the philosophy and symbolism of the Vedas. Carving motifs depicting stories from the Vedas and Ramayana is an essential part of the spiritual identity of the Balinese



people. In addition, the central values of the Vedas, such as dharma (obligation), karma (the law of cause and effect), and moksha (liberation), remain the basis of Balinese thinking and ethics in everyday life [8], [9].

Although the Vedic teachings remain the primary foundation of the religious life of the Balinese Hindu community, various challenges arise in maintaining their authenticity and sustainability. Modernization, urbanization, and the influence of globalization have impacted religious practices, causing a shift in the meaning of some traditions and rituals. This shift raises concerns about the loss of deep spiritual aspects passed down through generations [10].

In the Balinese belief system, the Vedic teachings also influence the social structure and caste system that determine the position and role of each layer of society. The role of the brahmana as a ritual performer and teacher of the Vedic teachings is maintained. Still, the challenges of maintaining the continuity of these teachings are increasing amidst changing times.

Research on the Vedic teachings in Bali has focused more on historical, archaeological, and religious symbolism. However, in-depth studies on implementing these teachings are still limited. Most studies focus more on texts and symbolism than on the social and cultural dynamics that influence religious practices. Therefore, an empirical research is needed that traces the textual and historical traces and pays attention to how the Vedic teachings are implemented in the lives of Balinese Hindu society today [11].

The Vedic teachings have been integral to the Balinese Hindu community's history, culture, and religious practices. However, in facing the challenges of modernization and globalization, there are concerns about shifting values and losing deep spiritual aspects. Therefore, more in-depth research on the implementation and adaptation of the Vedic teachings in the Balinese Hindu community is essential to maintain the sustainability of this spiritual heritage. Preservation efforts through field studies, academic studies, and innovations in religious education can be a strategic step to preserve the authenticity of the Vedic teachings in Bali.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to better understand religious practices, perceptions, and adaptations of Vedic teachings in Balinese Hindu society. Data were collected through interviews with the community and ritual actors such as temple caretakers and religious figures. In addition, researchers also conducted direct observations when they carried out yadnya ceremonies and other spiritual activities. Documents and photographs were also collected to support the information obtained. The collected data were then analyzed by looking for the main themes from interviews, observations, and documents. Data were arranged in a descriptive narrative to ensure accuracy.

3. Results and Discussion

The teachings of the Vedas are one of the main foundations of the Hindu tradition that has existed for thousands of years. Veda comes from the Sanskrit word "Veda," which means "knowledge" or "wisdom". Historically, the Vedas were written in Sanskrit and are divided into four main books: the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. Each book has different characteristics and purposes, but all serve as spiritual and ritual guidelines for Hindus.

The origins of the Vedic teachings can be traced back to the Vedic period, which is estimated to have lasted between 1500 BC and 500 BC. In a historical context, the Vedas emerged due to an oral tradition that was later written down. This process shows how spiritual knowledge and rituals were transmitted from generation to generation. According to research by Michael Witzel, the Vedas result from interactions between various cultures and traditions in the Indian subcontinent, including influences from the Indo-Aryan nomadic people [12].

The development of the Vedic Teachings is not limited to ritual and spiritual aspects; it also includes social and political elements. In ancient Hindu society, these teachings functioned as a guide in living everyday life, including ethics, morality, and relationships between people. Over time, the Vedic Teachings have undergone various interpretations and adaptations, reflecting Hindu society's social and cultural changes. This can be seen in the many texts and commentaries of Hindu scholars, such as Adi Shankaracharya and Ramanuja, which provide new perspectives on the Vedic teachings [13].

In Bali, the Vedic teachings significantly influence the daily lives of Hindus. Balinese people not only study the Vedic texts, but also implement the teachings in various aspects of life, from religious rituals to social ethics. Research conducted by Geertz (1973) shows that Balinese people integrate the Vedic teachings with local traditions, creating a unique form of religious practice known as "Balinese Hinduism". This indicates that the Vedic teachings remain relevant and can adapt to the local cultural context [14].

Overall, the history of the Vedic Teachings shows a long journey filled with dynamics and transformations. From its origins as oral knowledge to becoming a revered text, the Vedas have shaped the spiritual identity of Hindus, especially in Bali. Further research on the Vedic Teachings and their implementation in Bali will provide deeper insights into how these teachings continue to live and develop in modern society.

The teachings of the Vedas play a vital role in the Hindu tradition, not only as sacred texts but also as a guide in various aspects of life. The Vedas serve as a source of law, ethics, and morality for Hindus. In this context, the Vedas provide clear guidelines on how to live one's life in spiritual relationships with God and social interactions with fellow human beings.

One of the primary roles of the Vedas is in the implementation of religious rituals and ceremonies. Each Veda contains various mantras and instructions used in the implementation of rituals. For example, the Rigveda is the primary source for various mantras in the yajna or sacrifice ceremony. According to research by Doniger (1998), these rituals are not just formalities, but also a means to achieve harmony with the universe and obtain blessings from the gods [15].

In addition, the Vedic Teachings also teach ethical and moral values that serve as guidelines for the lives of Hindus. In this context, the teachings of dharma or moral obligations are essential. Dharma refers to right actions, according to one's position in society. The Vedic texts have many teachings on how to live a good life, including honesty, justice, and respect for parents and teachers. This is in line with research by Klostermaier (2007), which states that understanding dharma in the Vedic Teachings is the basis for morality in Hindu society [16], [5].

In line with the theory of the Spread of Hinduism by Mookerjee, Putra, et al (1987) in the History of the Development of Hinduism in Bali, an Indian scholar named Mookerjee explained in 1912 that the influence of Hinduism was initially brought by brave Indian adventurers with large fleets spreading out of the Indian mainland and after crossing the Indian Ocean then settled on the island of Java

[17]. On that island, the sailors established colonies, built forts and cities, and developed trade there for centuries. Meanwhile, Bengal, Kalingga, and Gujarat artists built unmatched buildings in Java. The theory of the Spread of Hinduism by Mookerjee greatly influenced Berg's thinking which stated that there was a core of truth in the motif that repeatedly appeared in the Panji Jawa cycle which tells of a ksatriya who came to the island of Java from across the ocean to establish a kingdom or seize an existing kingdom through marriage with a Javanese princess. In line with Mookerjee's view, a Dutch scholar named Moens stated that the primary focus of the development of Hinduism in the archipelago was the role of the ksatriya in the process of building settlements and cultivating land in the areas they controlled, then utilizing natural resources and labor in the region, in addition to building trade routes and controlling the market in the area. In addition, permanent settlements were built, and governments were established until the establishment of kingdoms [18].

Another scholar's opinion, namely F.D.K. Bosch on the spread of Hindu culture from India to the Indonesian archipelago, explains that the role of religious figures was huge in the spread of Hinduism in Indonesia. The process began with sending Indonesian students to religious college centers like Nalanda in Magadha. After studying in India, they returned to Indonesia and initiated the spread of Hindu teachings. At Bosch's inauguration in 1946, he gave a speech stating that Indian elements should be considered as a fertile substance in the growth of Hindu culture in Indonesia which still maintains its uniqueness. Then in 1952, Bosch coined the term local genius in his book "Local Genius en Oud-Javaansche Kunst" to state that elements of Indonesian wisdom can change the way elements coming from India are accepted according to the feelings and mood of Indonesia. F.D.K. Bosch's statement, which was initially colored or influenced by elements of Mookerjee's thinking, stated that the spread of Hinduism to Indonesia was through the adventures of Indian ksatriyas. Furthermore, Bosch concluded that Indonesia can change the way it accepts Indian elements based on the feelings and mood of Indonesia. Bosch in his statement may have forgotten or not yet known that the implementation of Hindu teachings originating from the Vedas does have a flexible nature as viewed by Swami Mukhayanda (2000: 35) that the implementation of Hindu teachings can be adjusted to the village, kâla, and nimitta (place, time, and circumstances). Whether requested or not, implementing the Veda teachings will always be where it grows and develops [19].

In the context of Balinese society, the Vedic teachings guide the carrying out religious ceremonies and daily life. Balinese people practice the Vedic teachings through various rituals that are thick with local nuances, such as the Ngaben and Galungan ceremonies. Research by Suamba (2010) shows that Balinese people adapt the Vedic teachings to local traditions, creating unique and meaningful forms of religious practice. This indicates that the Vedic teachings function as sacred texts and a living source of inspiration in local culture and traditions [20].

Overall, the role of the Vedas in the Hindu tradition is complex and multidimensional. From religious rituals to social ethics, the Vedas provide a strong framework for Hindus to live meaningful and harmonious lives. In the Balinese context, implementing these teachings shows how ancient teachings can continue to be relevant and meaningful in modern life.

4. Conclusion

Hinduism in Bali is closely related to the Vedic teachings of ancient India. These teachings are not only holy books, but also the philosophical basis that influences the Balinese people's way of life, beliefs, and social structure. The arrival of the Vedic teachings in Bali began with Indian traders and priests since the first century AD, who brought their religious traditions and interacted with the local culture. Archaeological evidence, such as inscriptions and temples, including prominent temples such as Besakih and Gunung Kawi, shows that these teachings have been an essential part of the spiritual life of the Balinese people for a long time. Their spread occurred through oral traditions and religious rituals that experienced acculturation with local culture, resulting in the emergence of typical Balinese religious practices that are local and dynamic. The Vedic teachings in Bali are not practiced literally like in India, but have been adapted according to social and cultural needs. This process, called "locality," maintains core values while adapting to local traditions, including the caste system and other religious practices. Balinese art and culture, such as dance and carving, also adopt many symbols and philosophies from the Vedic teachings. Values such as dharma, karma, and moksha remain the basis of Balinese ethics and thinking. However, the challenges of modernization and globalization have caused a shift in meaning and concerns about the loss of the deep spiritual aspects of these teachings. Nevertheless, the Vedic teachings remain the foundation of the religious and social life of the Balinese people. Preservation efforts and in-depth study are essential to keep this spiritual heritage alive and relevant in the future.

References

- [1] I. G. A. Paramita, I. B. G. Y. Triguna, and I. W. B. Utama, "Identity Politics of Hindu Society in BALI: From Dialogical Construction to Positioning," *Int. J. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 316–324.
- [2] N. G. M. Wiarttha, A. A. I. M. Septiari, and I. M. S. Adnyana, "Implementation of Hindu Religious Education in Tourism Development Building Local Wisdom and Spirituality," *J. Penelit. Agama Hindu*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 43–54, 2025.
- [3] J. Gonda, "The Indian religions in pre-Islamic Indonesia and their survival in Bali," *Indones. Malaysia und die Philipp. unter Einschluf der Kap-Malaien Sudafrica, Zweiter Band, Relig. Abschnitt*, vol. 1, pp. 1–54, 2022.
- [4] A. R. I. G. Ngurah, "The civic realm in Bali: a case study of ritual traditions in the Littoral regions," University of Huddersfield, 2017.
- [5] S. Pathak, "Influence of Indian Culture on Indonesia," *Siginjai J. Sej.*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2024.
- [6] J. McDaniel, "Religious change and experimentation in Indonesian Hinduism," *Int. J. Dharma Stud.*, vol. 5, pp. 1–14, 2017.
- [7] P. P. Mishra, "Bali and Orissa: A Study in Cultural Interaction," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1999, pp. 986–994.
- [8] S. Koul, "The Creation of the Universe and Core Principles of Sanatana Dharma: A Comprehensive Exploration of Hindu Philosophical Foundations," *Available SSRN 5165897*, 2024.
- [9] J. H. Peters, *Tri Hita Karana*. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2013.
- [10] W. Deming, *Understanding the religions of the world: an introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, 2025.
- [11] M. Adib et al., "The Controversy of Social Forestry Policy: Public Reaction on the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Decree No. 287/2022/KHDPK in Java, Indonesia," *Forest Sci. Technol.*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 383–400, 2024.
- [12] K. Roy, "The Many Meanings of Aryan," *Investig. Indian Soc. Essays Honour Prof. SR Goyal, Jodhpur, Kusumanjali B. World*, pp. 35–50, 2013.

- [13] G. D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- [14] C. Geertz and others, *La interpretación de las culturas*, vol. 1. Gedisa Barcelona, 2000.
- [15] W. Doniger, *The implied spider: Politics and theology in myth*. Columbia University Press, 2011.
- [16] K. K. Klostermaier, *A survey of Hinduism*. Suny Press, 2007.
- [17] I. Putra, G. Agung, and others, "Sejarah Perkembangan Agama Hindu di Bali," *Denpasar Pemerintah Drh. Tingkat I Bali*, 1987.
- [18] I. G. Suwantana, I. M. Sugata, I. K. Donder, and P. D. Maheswari, "The Existence of Hindus in Indonesia's Border Areas," *Migr. Lett.*, vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 1132–1147.
- [19] A. Harsono, "Chairperson Leadership Paradigm and Its Flaws," *Makara Hum. Behav. Stud. Asia*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 56–64, 2010.
- [20] K. Basyir, "Cultural cooperation and dialogue between Muslims and Hindus in Bali," *Praja Vihara-Journal Philos. Relig.*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 41–57, 2018.