MATERIALITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN BALI TOURISM: AN ETHICAL REFLECTION ON THE *TRI-HITA-KARANA*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at finding out ethical drawbacks the concept *Tri-hita-karana* has in its pragmatic level and offer an insight of critical analysis of ethical values. *Tri-hita-karana* has been seen as the foundation on which Bali Tourism developed to its full range. The methods of study used are library and field researches focusing on the ontological, axiological, and pragmatic levels in Bali tourism. It has found that the significant gain in the field of materiality, spirituality tends to be marginalised and vice-versa. This has further impact on life of Balinese. Imbalance of relationships exists between human beings and their fellows, human beings and nature, and human beings and divinity. Nevertheless, both domains are required in life, and any of these is absent, life is just impossible since life is the permutation of them in complex ways. Materiality gains seem to bring Balinese away from spirituality vis-a-vis religion in its right sense. Of the ethical perspective, the *Tri-hita-karana* as the philosophical foundation of tourism in Bali provides ideas/thoughts that can be used to minimalize the gaps because it does not lay down ethical outlook as how to cope with the gaps. The relationship amongst those elements involved is basically a matter of ethics as philosophy of moral, and hence ethical consideration is required in designing as well as in implementing policy in tourism. Critical ideas are required for not only of metaphysical perspective but also of ethical values and pragmatic practices. Bali tourism tends to dehumanize Balinese if not immediate ethical considerations of *Tri-hita-karana* are taken into account in pragmatic levels. Development and sustainability of Bali Tourism should be based on Balinese cultural spirit and values; looking it from its inner strengths.

Keywords: Bali tourism, materiality, spirituality, balance, *Tri-hita-karana*.

INTRODUCTION

Starting its impetus of growth in the late twenties (Peters and Wardana, 2013: 341-342; Pitana, 2008: 197), there has been increasing number of tourists coming to beautiful island of Bali in Indonesia for various reasons and lengths of stay. One outstanding attractions of Bali is its natural beauty and rich culture, in addition to its friendly people welcoming visitors with "spirit of Bali". A spiritual nuance of Bali is felt immediately as visitors landed in the soil of Bali. In this context, Picard looks at Bali is being an island opened for external world (Picard, 2006: 21). In that period under the control of Dutch government, Bali was made original as a living museum (*Ibid.*). Bali

was still calm, natural, and free from pollutions, an original Bali which is much different from the present-day Bali when art, culture, and tourism become mass industries.

Bali tourism has been developed on the ground of its potentials and possibilities to grow up cultivating its peculiarity and grandeur, which is later taken up by business world for earning economic benefits. Capital investments were invited to come to Bali to accelerate economic progress. Everyone speaks about tourism as it promises more jobs and better future rather than cultivating land for agriculture. Hence, mass tourism (since 1990) which is supposed to invite massive number of tourists and massive amount financial benefits cannot be avoided; and the discourse of cultural tourism as recommended by SCETO (Peters and Wardana, 2013: 371) seems to be dismissed. No doubt, commercialization of culture has started; culture is developed not for the sake of culture itself but for selling. Culture is taken as a product – in the language of McKean, culture as performance (Picard , 1986) – which can be sold; thereby cultural activity is not for shake of culture itself but culture for commercialism for visitors. It is true that there is a relationship between tourism and culture (Vickers, 2008: 99-100), but to what extent its relationship is still divergent views amongst scholars. Of these relationships, the issues of cultural tourism, touristic culture, and cultured tourism are worth to consider as there is always interplay between nature, culture, and tourism.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper attempts to discuss the *Tri-hita-karana* as an ethical system in the development of Bali tourism. Two interconnecting aspects, materiality and spirituality, will be analysed and its impacts have on the life of Balinese people and culture. All are sourced from literature review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Despite fantastic development of Bali tourism in the last 30 years, it is acknowledged that there has not ever been critical consideration undertaken on the basis of ethics; rather most concerns or efforts have been given on cultural, ecological, and economic fields blended with political interests. What is obvious here is that the kinds of relationship of those elements in the *Tri-hita-karana* either

positively or negatively, is basically a matter of ethics. This concept of balance and harmony puts human being in the central point as he/she acts of virtue or vice.

Most of us agree that tourism has given prosperity in some ways for Balinese in particular and Indonesian in general; but that was viewed from economic point of view with empirical indicators. Ethics matters as a philosophy of moral are not yet felt important to be addressed publicly while they are focusing on economic return of investment or distribution of good or welfare for all citizens. Being ethical matter, perhaps, it is not so important than the economic growth. Most people think economic growth contributes significantly rather the basis of moral or ethics on which development should be carried out. The importance of ethics was overshadowed by the interest in economic benefits as that is used as indicator for achieving progress. They think of economic entrepreneurship is not necessarily to be ethical in nature as with reference to Balinese culture. Accelerating economic benefits by making use ecological aspects seem to be too much if not destroying ecological balance; not yet counting how massive effect the global warming of the globe has been giving to us. In short, ethical reflection is required to shape Bali tourism going on in right direction without threatening Balinese life, nature, and culture.

There has been increasing numbers of problem arise, which are rooted in ethical matters, e.g. imbalance or disharmony of development between North and South or East and West Bali, the tent-to-be marginalized Balinese workers in global market, mid-to-top management of most star hotels occupied by foreigners, Balinese tends to be servants not master in their home land; they are strangers rather than taking part controlling tourism, the gap between the poor and the rich, etc. As remarked by Vickers that the "sale of land and the destruction of the environment in Bali ... along with a lack positive action by political leaders, is threatening the island" (*Ibid*). Land conversion cannot be controlled despite of the fact city or area design plan has been issued officially, but still law breaking practices in the field exist. There is not yet any precise data how many acres of land actually owned by Balinese themselves as selling lands and housing projects have been increasing drastically. Outsider tent to occupy increasing number of strategic space of land as the progress is going on causing rice field for irrigation is getting less and less. It is a kind of movement of land for tourism rather than land for cultural preservation and/or development. Some of them think that tourism should be in the first place and then

culture comes later since culture can be sustained or developed only when Balinese prosperous economically.

Amongst many aspects prevalent, ethical issues worth to note are the changing of Balinese mind in facing life, which becomes a way of life. It is a matter of how to think of life for better future without uprooting from our cultural identity as it is at high risk as far as globalization is concerned. Serious shift has happened from spirituality to materiality not otherwise that forgetting the very nature of human being as spirit. As remarked by Peters that there were also socio-cultural conflicts emerging on Bali that was caused by materialism and opportunism in tourism development, which violates the principles of harmony and togetherness (Peters and Wardana, 2013: 91). Tension or conflict started uprooting our harmony of family life, with neighbours and sometimes amongst members of villagers and neighbouring villager—even the number is still limited; due to emphasis is put more on the material gaining rather than living in harmony. Materiality becomes mode of life for most of Balinese now.

Balinese is between the purity of spiritual pursuit and material gain. Consequently, nurturing effects have emerged from it; gaps even conflicts exist between human being and human being (called *pawongan*), between human being and nature (called *palemahan*), and human being and god (called *parhyangan*) are so obvious. Some gaps are observable; the others are silent, which psychologically effect Balinese life. Some conflicts have been inherited from past and some are new created. When such tensions or conflicts happened, question of the significance and effectiveness raised. In the course of time, *Tri-hita-karana* becomes the brand of Bali tourism, originated from indigenous culture. But at the same time some disturbing elements start degrading them. What efforts had been put to save it from destruction?

The *Tri-hita-karana*: A Matter of Ethics

The *Tri-hita-karana*, a Sanskrit term, means three causes for happy and prosperous life as per Balinese philosophy of life. According to this principle, causes of happiness of human being is due to being able to keep or maintain three balance and harmonious relationships, viz. between human being and human being, between human beings and nature/environment (either physical or non-physical) , and between human beings and the God/divinity, known as *pavongan, palemahan* dan

parhayangan respectively. Further implication is that on the first place is social, second is natural /environmental, and third is spiritual in nature. They cannot be separated rather they form a whole unit in which human being is the core. This shows that happiness is not awarded by God, nature or human being without effort to keep balance and harmonious relationship within and external world. Looking at this conception from empirical point of view, of the cardinal elements involved there are human, nature, and divinity. It implies that human being lives and interacts in his life in pluralistic of realities.

In the past question of imbalance relationship between nature and man almost did not exit, they lived peacefully. But nowadays since massive economic developments and massive movement of people around the world exist, the questions of being ethical and unethical become a serious concerned especially for the lovers of peace and nature. Human become greedy in having possession of materiality. Natural degradation and imbalance environment followed by disharmony amongst people and finally imbalance with divinity cannot be avoided despite the fact, for the last point, Balinese densely involve in ritual practices. Ritual becomes more formalistic and mechanic losing the spirit of sacred sacrifice. A reformation of thought and attitude to face the relationship should be attempted; otherwise, material gaining as the effects of massive capital resulted by tourism will be spiritually meaning less. The relationship covers the realms of empirical (*sakala*) and trans-empirical (*niskala*) paradigms, and each has its own indicator to measure it. Trans-empirical domain, which is in the realm of physics is supposed to be the foundation on which physical domain is built. These relationships presuppose harmony, balance, and happiness as the goal of life. As per Balinese tradition, each of these should be maintained through postulating human being as the central actor of it.

When *Tri-hita-karana* is agreed to be used as the spirit in Bali tourism, it is accordingly practised for achieving happy life for all Balinese. Unfortunately, as changing of mind has existed, the concept of happiness seems to be changed, and therefore needs to be redefined looking at the future. However, happy life in the right sense is still far away as gaps or conflicts seem to be increasing in either in family, villages or society in general. What is meant by "happy life" needs to be formulated explicitly with reference either to spirituality or materiality of approaches or both. On this regards, Balinese sometimes take worldly happiness, in which possession/wealth/gaining (*artha*) and desires/lust (*kama*) are pursued, to be

preliminary condition for higher happiness. Thus, worldly happiness in realm of *artha* and *kama*, is not an end in itself. Tourism is not intended to satisfy endless desires or lusts of human beings because there will be no limits unless death is coming.

None has ever put attention on "relationships within" a human being, which is supposed to be the key in building external relationships. The relationships amongst inner parts organs are not less complex than the external world. Unfortunately, external relation either to other members of society or nature is understood as a relation of supply and demand like business transactions. It is mechanic rather than spiritual. As far as one needs other, one builds and maintains relationship with him/her. How can be a relation to nature/environment can be well established unless we take it as homogenous with us because essentially human beings and nature are essentially the same? There is no difference in essence between macrocosmic world of reality and microcosmic world. This attitude has existed even in a primitive people who considered natures as their home, part and parcel of their life. Hence by nature they both are connected in subtle and complex ways.

Up to now relationship is viewed externally not otherwise, so it tends to be formal and mechanistic. Within human being itself, there are various principles which compose a human being starting from the very subtle to gross ones, i.e. from *buddhi* (intellect) to *bhutas* (elements), and they are related inherently forming life. At least there are three elements, viz. subtle element (*suksma sarira*), gross elements (*sthula sarira*), and the cause element [*antahkarana* – self (*atma*)] interplay in complex ways having its core on self as the centrality of life. This internal domain is never touch by the concept of *Tri-hita-karana* as everyone looks at the external world only either to see human, nature or god. What is the existence and role of human being in that system? How do we start to understand it? Shall we start from the relationship with the God first then with human being and nature? Or, shall we start to understand the relationship within? These questions are worth to consider.

When it is looked in more details, *Tri-hita-karana* only states such relationship exists either subtle or gross, and lets human being as the main actor to think of and do necessary action to realize the goal of life. This concept does not show us whether external world is real or unreal reality viewing from metaphysical perspective as advocated by Balinese philosophy of life. This view will affect policy maker or practitioner in pragmatic level to implement of policy or to realise the principles of *Tri-hita-karana*. After all, the *Hita-hita-karana* as an ethical concept is never elucidated

from ontological point of view rather most of Balinese look from pragmatic level, like that of THK award for short-term objective or critizing policy issued by government. This is so because this point is easy to carry out when everything required empirical indicators to measure any relationship, e.g. the human being-God relation for workers in a company/hotel is measured by physical apparatus, like the availability of temple and activities, like doing prayer of going out in pilgrimage (*tirtha yatra*) visiting holy places (temple).

When it is applied in the world of Bali tourism, question on the ethical issue seems to be getting important; lot problems arise due to unethical behaviour of human beings; even though it is agreed that ethics is often associated with ethical values of culture or a certain ethnic group. The case of mega projects of Bali Nirwana Resort in Tabanan, Benoa Gulf Reclamation Project are some of them. An action is considered ethical in one community may be not the same in other community. But, what we want is any ethical action accomplished is based on the strength of metaphysics as it is the fundamentals to human behaviour. When tourism in Bali involves non Balinese actor or ideas, they bring their own ethics, which may be not acceptable in Balinese society. Some ethical values they used are sometimes diametrically opposite to Eastern or Hindu culture. In other words, touristic culture should be differentiated with cultural tourism as developed in Bali. Above all, ethics of *Tri-hita-karana* should become the basis of ethics for Bali tourism. With this fact, distinctiveness or uniqueness of Bali tourism can be maintained without excluding good points may come from outside of it.

It is generally acknowledged that the nature of business (including tourism) and culture is diametrically different. That is the reason that for many times tension or even conflict has happened in course of time between them. As remarked by Picard that the doctrine of cultural tourism has come to blend the "fostering of culture" with the "development of tourism", to the extent of entrusting the fate of Balinese culture to the care of the tourism industry. To come to such a point, the conflict of interests between culture and tourism had to be defused beforehand, since it is this conflict that had governed the elaboration of the doctrine of cultural tourism in the first place (Picard, http://www.espacestemps.net/en/articles). Inherent conflict by nature is threatening invisible power which may affect tourism in the future. What is obvious with reference to Bali is that culture and nature give impetus to the emergence of tourism not *vice-versa*. How can tourism neglect the life of culture and sustainability

of nature? But now, it seems that tourism is the only one sector money getter for Bali and consequently culture sustainability depends on tourism. By nature culture proceeds to the stage of refinement and sophistication of things/ objects and external expression of mind, feelings or faith; whereas business leads us to reach material or worldly sensual gains as much as possible, which is in opposition with spiritual motives of life. For Bali in the future, these things – tension between culture and/or nature and tourism – will come again and again if the concept of *Tri-hita-karana* as an ethical principle is not implemented in reality in its right sense*. Tri-hita-karana* is a buffer, standing in between two poles of different orientations, e.g. spirituality and materiality, tourism and culture, etc. It is a balancing power for the establishment of harmony and peace.

Bali tourism between Materiality and Spirituality

Bali tourism has been developed based on its potentials, i.e. culture, and hence it is "cultural tourism" in addition to nature. Nature behaves as a base on which culture is created. When land of Bali is no more, culture disappears sooner or later. Culture is not possible when people who live in it is not creative. In other words, cultural tourism exists due to creativity of the Balinese. Question can be raised in this regards, whether mass tourism stimulates creativity in wide sense? The concept of cultural tourism has been adopted and strengthened through political policy of local government of Bali (known as *PERDA* No. 3, 1974 and No. 3, 1991). This is the foundation as well as spirit on which the tourism sector should be built. In other words, Balinese culture is not only the core spirit but also the brand of Bali tourism to attain goal of life of the Balinese. Definition, scope, and methods of developing tourism become interesting issues to look at since there has been a dichotomy of culture and tourism. How to compromise these two domains of interest? Is it necessary tourism to be cultured or culture is to be touristic?

Culture is understood as tangible things/objects dismissing its core spirit, i.e. the intangible aspect. Picard stated that Balinese culture is invariably defined in reference to three concomitant elements, which are like superimposed strata: its sources are in the Hindu religion; it inspires the customs of Balinese community and animates its customary institutions; it incarnates artistic forms of high value (Picard, *Ibid*). In its deep structure, spirituality which is intangible is the core of any initiatives including tourism. There has been a confusion viewing culture as an ideas and plastic arts. For some people, they are of no interest to talk about culture rather than

religion. When this view is to be held, Bali tourism will be developed to foster on physical appearances, gain, and grandeur. For some of them culture is understood like dance, drama, song, handcraft, painting, manuscripts, etc. The idea to have a "high culture" is still a lip service. As remarked by Vickers that for Bali high culture is in a difficult position, since tourism is inherently about commercialization and reducing things to lowest common denominator... high culture as the most refined and highly developed art objects and performances that can be produced by a society. High culture is not typical of everyday social expression, but it does define the most serious efforts to concentrate certain aspects of a culture in a way that is affective for participants in that culture, but may also reach out beyond to other audiences through aesthetic values" (Vickers, *op.cit.*: 100). Tension between these may still exist in the future. In this regards, Ardika (2004: 21) states that components of Balinese culture have been treated as commodities for tourist consumption so that it creates an impression of commercialisation and may degradation the quality of culture, especially arts.

Observing further, culture tourism as perceived by Balinese is spiritual tourism despite the fact that materiality involves in it. Materiality should be seen as an expression of spirit. These two domains, viz. spirituality or immateriality and materiality always come together for the possibility of life. None can be excluded from the other; spirituality requires materiality and *vice-verse* for its existence. This is a binary division like that of *Purusa* and *Prakrti* in Samkhya philosophical tradition. Each needs the existence of the other, despite the fact that they totally different, one is consciousness and the other one is unconsciousness or materiality, otherwise no life or tourism is possible. Taking Balinese tradition as a base, it is another form of the concept *Rva Bhineda* (two opposing principles) which is cardinal values for Balinese culture. This concept happens in almost spheres of Balinese life. When one is travelling to visit places, like forest, river, hermitage, mountain, temple, cave, bathing places, etc. – as depicted in textual tradition of Bali – one is actually undergoing consciously the process of purifying oneself; it is a process of going within provided that there is an awareness of it in oneself. It is going-out and at the same time going inward to purify mind and self-transformation. It is contained in the concept of *yatra* (travelling for purification) as depicted in the tradition to visit places for spirit enlightenment; it involves in the magnificent power of nature, mind expanding to its fullest awareness. As religious practice in the post *yajna* (sacred

sacrifice) devotees will go out to visit holy places, i.e. sea (*sagara/pasir*) and mountain (*gunung/vukir*); hence this is a tradition of *Nyagara-Gunung.* It is performed to purify body-mind; and at the same time thanks giving to nature and divinity for being successful in accomplishing ritual sacrifice. This is at the same time implementing the concept of waterscape of Bali giving importance of sea and mountain in water preservation and distribution for the entire Bali (Suamba and Mahapatni, 2015).

When cultural tourism is really implemented in the practice, spirituality should be given the first priority, not otherwise as happens now in every level of practice. There will be no such rude actions to human beings and nature, because everyone thinks that every human being is our brother and sister, nature/ environment is an integral part of our existence. Be it is so, these are none but the main components of *Tri-hita-karana*. Our universe is our big family. When spirituality is taken for granted there will be no demarcation with reference to religion, culture, skin colour, nation, etc., because by essence they are forms of spirit. Human action which causes suffers to nature or animal is basically our suffering. Sustainable, healthy nature is our happiness. It is so because spiritually no such different between human and nature despite the fact the nature is concrete or physical things/ object. Nature is none but sparks of divinity having concrete manifestations. Nature as per Balinese way of life is not only physical in nature but non-physical one. There is a parallel between human being (microcosm – *bhuvana alit*) and nature (macrocosm– *bhuvana agung*) as their materials of composition are essentially the same. When hotels, bungalows, villas, restaurants, malls, and roads are built for the enjoyment of tourists, how the Balinese the owner of this culture can stay in healthy good house with happy family? Too much concern in providing comfort and enjoyment for tourists, we should not forget to provide sufficient housing, health, and education for our own fellows.

Since materiality and spirituality come together for the possibility of life, it requires serious attention in the pursuit of eternal happiness. These are two opposite principles which always come together, known as *Rva-bhineda* (two different opposite principles) in Balinese philosophical life, as mentioned above. It is true in some extent they are equally put in an equal position due to its importance, or even materiality is given predominant with reference to a certain stage of life, but after all they should be transcended to become one of which spirituality becomes the core of everything. After all the concept of *Tri-hita-karana* culminates in the oneness of being

with the Supreme Being, and this is reached through building harmonious and balancing relationship with those depicted in the *Tri-hita-karana*. In one way, the *Tri-hita-karana* can be viewed as a balancing power for the smooth running of every elements within the system, one the other way, it should be transcended for unification of self and supreme self. Unfortunately, it is not yet implemented in real practice in Bali tourism despite the fact the *Tri-hita-karana* awards have been granted many times to some elements of society, like hotels, company, institution, etc. After all spirituality and materiality needs not be demarcated in water tight compartment rather taken together for balance life. Nonetheless, spirituality which is always associated with consciousness should ideally govern the pursuit and use of material objects (immaterial) since it pervades and controls them.

CONCLUSION

Tri-hita-karana is basically a matter of ethics because it expounds relationships of three important elements of life, viz. human being, nature, and god. Unfortunately the kinds of relation are still unclear or ambiguous since its ontological status of the elements involve are also not yet formulated. It lets us to interpret the kinds of relationship. The difficulty is realised when this principle is applied in pragmatic level since there is no guide line on implementing it. Due to being an ethical principle, analysis on part of ontology and metaphysics are required since ethics is developed based on the strength of metaphysics. It deals with the nature of realities, and their ontological status, and their relationship both in empirical and trans-empirical worlds. When these points are clear, the implementation of THK both in policy and pragmatic levels can be accomplished in a proper way putting materiality and spirituality in right order/portion. Since both are required for life, both should be put in the right place composing philosophy of *Tri-hita-karana. Tri-hita-karana* adopted as a philosophy of Bali tourism is expected to lead people to go to higher plane of consciousness. With this materiality is taken not as hurdle in self-transformation.

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