



***HOW CAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP BE EMPOWERED
THROUGH RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
IN BALI?***

**BAGAIMANA MEMBERDAYAKAN KEPEMIMPINAN
PEREMPUAN MELALUI PENGETAHUAN AGAMA DAN
BUDAYA DI BALI ?**

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Abstract

This research explores the intersection of religious, cultural, and educational leadership in Bali, critiquing patriarchal practices and promoting leadership grounded in Balinese local wisdom. Bali, with its deep-rooted traditions, often reinforces patriarchal norms that limit the roles and rights of women in religious and social spheres. Balinese women, while central to community life, often face marginalization. This study investigates how Balinese religious texts, particularly lontar (Palm-leaf manuscript) such as Geguritan Niti Rajasesana and Geguritan Dharma Sesana which contain crucial leadership principles, including catur pariksa and brata nembelas that emphasizing self-awareness, integrity, and religious character that can empower women become leader. This qualitative research uses data analysis techniques: data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Both manuscript does not directly discuss about the concept of leadership and dismantle patriarchy but is relevantly integrated into praxis progressive women's empowerment based on a more inclusive interpretation of customs and openness to the potential of Balinese women to become leaders based on The five loyalties Hinduism that consist of Loyalty to conscience (Padma Hardhaya), Loyalty to conscience (Satya Wacana), Loyalty to promises (Satya Semaya), Loyalty to people (Satya Mitra), and loyalty to responsibility/trust (Satya Laksana).

Keyword : *Balinese Hinduism, Patriarchy, Women Empowerment, Women Leadersh*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persimpangan kepemimpinan agama, budaya, dan pendidikan di Bali, dengan mengkritik praktik-praktik patriarkal serta mempromosikan kepemimpinan yang didasarkan pada kearifan lokal Bali. Bali, dengan tradisi yang mengakar kuat, sering kali memperkuat norma-norma patriarkal yang membatasi peran dan hak-hak perempuan dalam ranah agama dan sosial. Perempuan Bali, meskipun memiliki peran sentral dalam kehidupan komunitas, sering menghadapi marginalisasi. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana teks-teks agama Bali, khususnya lontar seperti Geguritan Niti Rajasesana dan Geguritan Dharma Sesana, yang memuat prinsip-prinsip kepemimpinan penting, termasuk catur pariksa dan brata nembelas, yang menekankan kesadaran diri, integritas, dan karakter religius, dapat memberdayakan perempuan untuk menjadi pemimpin. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan teknik analisis data: reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi data. Meskipun kedua manuskrip tersebut tidak secara langsung membahas konsep kepemimpinan dan pembongkaran patriarki, keduanya relevan ketika diintegrasikan ke dalam praksis pemberdayaan perempuan secara progresif berdasarkan interpretasi adat yang lebih inklusif dan keterbukaan terhadap potensi perempuan Bali untuk menjadi pemimpin. Hal ini didasarkan pada lima kesetiaan dalam agama Hindu, yang berbasis pada Kesetiaan terhadap hati nurani (Padma Hardhaya), Kesetiaan terhadap ucapan (Satya Wacana), Kesetiaan terhadap janji (Satya Semaya), Kesetiaan terhadap sesama (Satya Mitra), dan Kesetiaan terhadap tanggung jawab/kepercayaan (Satya Laksana).

Kata Kunci: *Hindu Bali, Patriarki, Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Kepemimpinan perempuan*

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian island of Bali is widely admired for its culture and nature. However, rarely is a study done that looks from the Balinese perspective on how customs shape one's way of life, especially women, in such a way amidst the glittering tourism industry. Its's shows on study according

to Joko Suyanto (2018) explains, patrilineal inheritance system enforces male dominance in both the family structure and the wider community, where women's rights are often secondary to those of men. The duties that women play are frequently restricted to the home and conventional tasks like child care and housework. This restriction is evident in their restricted access to political and social decision-making, work opportunities, and education (Triana & Krisnani, 2018). The dominant patriarchy poses serious obstacles to Balinese women's empowerment initiatives. Social conventions currently in place restrict women's potential and impede their advancement in a number of areas, such as economics, education, and decision-making involvement. The potential of both individuals and society at large has been hindered by these constraints (Astrina & Tanaya, 2020).

When imagining Balinese women, or "*Gek Bali*," what often comes to mind? Indeed, what comes to mind is beautiful, graceful in kebaya (traditional clothing), skilled in dancing, and skilled in cooking. However, are Balinese women only seen for their aesthetic and domestic skills? Their overlooked leadership potential is an excellent asset behind their elegance and skill.

The patriarchy, which is closely attached to Balinese culture, is an epistemic problem that hinders the potential of Balinese women. According to Rawat (2014) Patriarchy is a social and ideological construct that upholds male superiority, perpetuates gender stereotypes, and reinforces unequal power dynamics between men and women. The patriarchal culture in Balinese society is rooted in the concept of *purusa* and *pradana*, which represents men and women, respectively. This concept forms the basis for differentiating the status and roles of men and women in the society (Pardi et al., 2023). Balinese patriarchal culture is characterized by several things, such as (1) triple roles in addition to domestic, economic roles, and a social role subject to customary rules (Darmayoga, I., K., 2021; Suyadnya, 2009); (2). Gender bias that positions women in domestic roles (Nisa, 2018); and (3). The dominance of men's positions in decision-making (Ariyanti & Ardhana, 2020), etc.

In the context of patriarchy in Bali and Indonesia, when women appear in the public sphere, they are often considered passive subjects who are only present as complements. Women's leadership potential is equal to that of men. This patriarchy has created a mindset that limits women's space for movement, both in everyday life and in broader contexts such as leadership. As a result, the presence of women in the public sphere is often ignored, not recognized, or even considered a compliment created female submission that. It is crucial to examine

our perspectives on submission and its connection to gender. According to Garcia, (2023) some people may adhere to the belief that women are inherently submissive, while others reject the idea of women being naturally inferior and instead view submissive women as either passive victims or individuals who willingly embrace submission. It is important to embrace diverse viewpoints on this matter while advocating for equality and empowerment for everyone.

However, it is necessary to re-understand the patriarchal culture justified by tradition through critical reading. The benefits of research are to bridge between reflection and practice that can support efforts to break the patriarchal culture from the perspective of culture and religion that are intertwined so that culture and religion themselves are not understood as tools for the victimization of women (Vinoth & Vijayakumar, 2023; Websdale & Johnson, 2005). This study focuses on the concept of religious and cultural studies to dismantle this issue. This study focuses on the concept of religious and cultural studies to dismantle this issue. Despite certain advancements in women's rights in Bali, the dearth of female village chiefs (Perbekel) is still a notable illustration of gender discrimination. In Bali's traditionally male-dominated village government, women are still rarely given the chance to assume positions of political and administrative control. This disparity demonstrates how firmly ingrained patriarchal structures are in Balinese society, where women are expected to provide support rather than take on positions of authority. Despite a few notable exceptions, like as the election of Ni Luh Suryani as the first female village head (Perbekel) in the Pekutatan village in Jembrana Regency in 2018, women in Bali continue to encounter major obstacles when it comes to obtaining village-level leadership positions. Long-standing patriarchal customs that had barred women from holding such posts were challenged by Ni Luh Suryani's election, making it historic. Her achievement served as an example for other villages, proving that women in Bali are capable of capable and visionary leadership. The election of Ni Luh Suryani is still anomalies in a culture where men predominate in positions of authority. In order to establish a more equal system of governance in Bali, cultural reforms and gender-inclusive policies are required. By giving women greater chances to hold political leadership positions, patriarchal barriers will be broken down and women will be able to actively participate in determining the direction of Bali's communities.

Besides, Ni Luh Djelantik is also the other example in this role which is she known for her role as a prominent businesswoman, particularly in the fashion industry. She is the founder and owner of Djelantik, a renowned

brand of high-quality leather sandals that has gained recognition both within Bali and internationally. Her position in business and her active role in promoting Balinese craftsmanship have made her a strong example of female empowerment in a male-dominated sector. Yet, despite her accomplishments, Ni Luh Djelantik's journey as a leader underscores the lack of women in political and governance roles in Bali.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology based on a phenomenological approach to analyzing patriarchy in Bali, along with a review of religious texts. The study employs a qualitative methodology underpinned by a phenomenological approach to explore the dynamics of patriarchy in Bali. This approach aims to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals affected by gender-based norms in Balinese society. By focusing on the subjective experiences of the participants, the study seeks to uncover the manifestations of patriarchal structures in daily life, traditions, and cultural practices in Bali. In addition to the phenomenological approach, the research incorporates a review of religious texts, particularly those rooted in Balinese Hinduism, to examine how these texts may perpetuate or challenge patriarchal ideologies. This dual focus on lived experience and religious doctrine provides a comprehensive view of the influence of patriarchy in both contemporary and traditional contexts. To ensure a rigorous and accurate analysis of the interplay between gender, leadership, and religious-cultural knowledge, this data reduction involves filtering out irrelevant or tangential information and distilling the data into core concepts, such as women's roles in Balinese society, the influence of Hinduism on gender perceptions, and the ways in which religious teachings can either restrict or support women's leadership potential.

Data presentation will involve the findings in a coherent, structured manner shows that the researcher categorizes the data according to themes such as "religious teachings on women's roles," "cultural traditions and leadership," and "empowerment through knowledge." The findings are presented in a way that highlights the specific ways in which religious and cultural knowledge can be harnessed to challenge patriarchal structures and support women in leadership roles. By presenting the data clearly, the researcher ensures that the reader can easily follow the analysis and understand the implications for empowering women's leadership in Bali.

Data verification shows that Women in Bali hold significant leadership roles in religious ceremonies, particularly in temple rituals, where they lead certain rites and act as spiritual leaders. This involvement highlights the cultural respect for women's spiritual leadership in the community.

The literature review was conducted in two stages. First, it involved an examination of previous research related to the issue of patriarchy, which has hindered opportunities for Balinese women to assume leadership roles, particularly in educational leadership. The second stage focused on the review of sacred Balinese literature, specifically the literary works *Geguritan Niti Rajasesana* and *Geguritan Dharma Sesana*. These texts were authored by Cokorda Mantuk, a Badung king who passed away during the badung battle on September 20, 1906. This event was a historical battle between the Badung Kingdom and Dutch forces, symbolizing resistance against colonialism in Bali beside we also used other Hinduism text.

DISCUSSION

Construction of Patriarchy in Bali

The Balinese culture is deeply intertwined with Hinduism, as Hinduism serves as its inspiration. This cultural bond is sustained by traditional villages and their customs and traditions. In essence, Hinduism forms the roots, customs and traditions the trunk, culture the branches and leaves, and art the flowers of the Balinese cultural tree (I Ketut Donder, 2021). In Balinese Hinduism, the position of women is actually very special, according to Junianti & Kusuma (2019) Hindu women are living beings who are creations from God or Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa who have many roles in life. However, Balinese customary law features a patrimonial family system and lacks gender equality, leading to role inequality for Balinese women (I Ketut Donder, 2021; Masrurroh, 2022). The patriarchal system in Bali is rigidly practiced, with men dominating social and spiritual matters, relegating women to subordinate positions in rights and inheritance (Nyoman & Segara, 2019).

Offspring have alternative options to ensure the continuation of the family line and ancestral connection. They can achieve this by either adopting male offspring from other families within the same clan (known as *dadia*) or arranging a "*sentana rajeg*" marriage for a daughter, which reverses the typical pattern of female exogamy (Titisari et al., 2023). The revealing belief in Bali, and perhaps in many other places in Indonesia, suggests that women are primarily responsible

for tending to the needs of their families, regardless of their professional achievements.

Despite efforts to advocate for women's rights, the traditional roles and perceptions of women in society persist. This is often reflected in the portrayal of women in popular media, where they are depicted as primarily responsible for household chores and caregiving (Ni Made Ary Widiastini et al., 2018). In Balinese literary works, the patriarchal image is often portrayed as the central theme, as seen in Oka Rusmini's novel "Tarian Bumi," which follows the story of Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada, a Brahmin girl. Caste holds significant importance in Balinese social life, with the Brahmin caste, being the highest, receiving special treatment and expected to embody true. Telaga has been rigorously educated since childhood to uphold the esteemed title of Ida Ayu, a title reserved for those of the Brahmin caste, without blemish (Damayanti, 2020; Dewa Gede Edi Praditha & Made Hendra Wijaya, 2022; Dewi, 2015; Maulana & Dharma Putra, 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2020; Putra, 1977).

Literary stories about Balinese women align closely with the socio-religious roles they fulfill in Balinese society. This is evident in the first picture (picture 1) , which highlights the significant role of women in traditional ceremonies. Their active participation not only ensures the proper conduct of these rituals but also reflects their central position in maintaining cultural and spiritual traditions in Bali. "Traditional ceremonies also serve as an important platform for Balinese women to contribute to both religion and society, as shown in picture 2. These gatherings not only strengthen communal bonds but also reflect the spiritual dedication of women in preserving sacred rituals and cultural values. This aligns with the Hindu Balinese sloka "*Tri Sandhya Sadhana Pavitram Atmanam Sadhayet* (Through sacred rituals, one purifies the self and fulfills spiritual duties).



Figure 1.

Balinese women and men toward temple

Source: Private documentation



Figure 2.

Balinese women in religious ritual

Source : Private documentation

Religion and Culture Knowledge in Bali

According to Beyers (2017), religion and culture sometimes mutually exclusive, the relationship between religion and culture *vice versa* is still very closely connected; there are at least four premises (1). Studying religion can only be done by studying culture (2). Studying culture can only be done by studying religion (3). Interreligious dialogue can only be studied by studying the underlying traditions and myths contributing to viewing the other relationship between the two provides knowledge about and related to the community concerned. These two existing concepts or phenomena actually exist together and work for the good of society (Udoh, 2017). Furthermore in the context of education, culture and religion it will influence the social and political processes of society in the future (Kondratieva et al., 2022).

However, the relationship between religion and culture cannot be overstated because religion relates to society in a more complex and paradoxical way than culture. Religion is a passive reflection of existing social reality and a robust and comprehensive response to that reality. Religion acts as a social force, challenging, opposing, protesting, demanding, and influencing change and transformation of existing social structures (Udoh, 2017). On other side, Culture provides the contextual framework within which religious beliefs and practices develop and are expressed, reflecting a particular society's values, norms, and traditions (Hirsch, 2008) that Defending the essence of religion goes beyond the boundaries of doctrine, encapsulating the eternal human search for connection, meaning, and universal truth that resonates across cultures and ages (Kumar, 2021).

In Bali, the connection between religion and culture is intricately intertwined, reflecting a distinctive social framework where spiritual beliefs profoundly influence cultural customs. Balinese Hinduism, referred to locally as Hindu Dharma, is not only a religion but a holistic way of life that permeates everyday existence (Howe, 2005). At the heart of Balinese culture lies the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*, representing the three pillars of prosperity: interpersonal harmony (*pagan*), alignment with nature (*palemahan*), and connection with the divine (*parahyangan*). This ideology demonstrates how spiritual convictions form the basis of societal interactions and ecological conservation, influencing community principles and customs. In the third picture (picture no 3), the manifestation of Tri Hita Karana is demonstrated through an offering to God, made by Balinese women in one of the traditional villages in Tabanan, to

pray for a successful and abundant rice harvest. This practice reflects the deep connection between spiritual beliefs, agricultural traditions, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature in Balinese culture.



Figure 3.
Balinese women praying in the middle of rice field
Source : Private documentation

Rituals and ceremonies, such as odalan (temple anniversary) and nyepi (Day of Silence), play a crucial role in expressing the deep connection between the Balinese people and their spiritual beliefs. These traditions not only serve to honor the deities but also to strengthen social unity and preserve the cultural identity of the Balinese community. As highlighted by Geertz (1973) in the *Interpretation of Cultures*, these rituals form a “web of significance,” where symbols and meanings contribute to a shared interpretation of the world. The act of creating offerings, known as banten, symbolizes devotion and gratitude, further intertwining the sacred with the everyday. This daily practice reinforces the bonds within the community, as families and neighbors come together to prepare and exchange these offerings, emphasizing a collective religious identity (Hadzantonis, 2019; Howe, 2005; Kumar, 2021; Lathrop, 2022).

Serat Niti Raja Sasana: A Study of Balinese Leadership for Women Empowerment

Geguritan Niti Raja Sasana is a literary work that contains leadership teachings, one of which is the teaching of *Tri Tataning Kamantrian*. *Tri Tataning Kamantrian* is a teaching that guides in terms of behaving towards fellow human beings in a dimensional context—guidance on how a person behaves towards fellow human beings in various dimensions of life. There needs to be balance in life because if something is not balanced, it will cause problems, including balance and equality between men and women. Women have the same roles and responsibilities as men. So, women deserve to be appreciated and respected (Nadra, 2022; Sanjaya et al., 2020). As per the Balinese Hindu manuscript, a good leader embodies the ideal qualities that everyone aspires to. Such a leader possesses a clear vision, charisma, integrity, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, the ability to inspire others, and internalized values that translate into ethical behavior in their daily life. While finding an individual with such comprehensive capabilities is challenging, it is certainly not impossible.

The poem “*Geguritan Niti Rajasesana*” encapsulates important concepts, values, and norms related to leadership, especially in the context of empowering women in this field. At its essence, the poem delineates “brata enambelas” (sixteen values), which lay out sixteen guiding principles for leaders, and “*catur pariksa*,” which defines four essential behaviors expected from them. Based on Ida Cokorda Ngurah Made Agung, *catur pariksa* value consist of these attitudes are the *sama, beda, dana, and danda*. SAMA, the leader must give equal attention to his people because all humans are the same; BHEDA, the leader must be able to organize the differences in society in an orderly manner. Because all humans are different, DANA, the leader, must always strive for clothing, food, and shelter to improve the welfare of the people, and DANDA, the leader, must enforce the law fairly according to each person's mistakes (Suryawan & Gata, 2020; Wayan Agus Gunada et al., 2024).

In *Geguritan Niti Rajasena*, exist the Brata Nembelas consists of sixteen parts: *Giribrata, Idrabrata, Mretawarsabrata, Genibrata, Lawanabrata, Mregabrata, Singabrata, Anilabrata, Satabrata, Mayubrata, Cantakabrata, Kaganilabrata, Wiyaghabrata, Cundagabrata, Welasabrata, and Yamabrata*. These sixteen sections delineate the qualities of effective leadership. However, in the context of women's leadership, these principles are also pertinent to advancing women's empowerment. The first principle of *Giribrata* emphasizes a leader's resilience and determination, especially in empowering women's

leadership. This principle signifies that a true leader remains steadfast and does not yield in the face of challenges, actively advocating for Balinese women's roles in leadership positions. This first principle is associated with several studies that have found that it has a very important influence in many fields, such as resilience in entrepreneurship.

Women's leadership not only functions as a driver to overcome challenges but also plays a crucial role in creating a more equitable and diverse business environment (Alam et al., 2021; Etuknwa et al., 2020). In a political context, resilience and determination influences their attitudes, beliefs, commitment, determination, fortitude, intentions, will to win, perspective, tenacity, and self-regulation (Pillay-Naidoo & Nel, 2022). The second principle of *Idrabrata* means careful and careful leaders. Prudence, women's leadership, must always be based on the principle of thoroughness; in making decisions, the opinions of each party must be heard and weighed to reach sound decisions.

The third principle, *Mretawarsabrata*, emphasizes the qualities of generosity. Effective women's leadership ensures fair and equitable service for all. In practice, women leaders should aim to build capacity, maintain systems, focus on the future, and foster collaboration while harnessing the skills of others (Adams, 2023). The fourth principle of *Lawanabrata* is that leaders can see the level of error and punishment. This role is to provide how to handle between reward and punishment. In giving rewards and punishments, women leaders must understand the level of individual error. Although Gender stereotypes about emotions present a unique set of challenges from the difficulties women face in navigating other double binds rooted in stereotypes of communality and agency (Brescoll, 2016), it does not mean that when women lead, they cannot objectively assess what is wrong and what is right. In the context of leadership, women should be judged based on the soundness of their arguments, not on stereotypes about their ability to think rationally (Frasca et al., 2022).

The fifth principle of *Geni Brata* is that leaders must be able to fight all forms of crime. Crime here can be interpreted as a problem; a leader must be able to solve and prevent problems from occurring. In the context of women's leadership, this principle highlights the vital role female leaders can play in addressing societal challenges. In Hindu teachings, the cycle of human life in this world is a struggle between evil (adarma) and good (dharma), symbolized by the *Kaurva* (who symbolizes evil) and the *Pandava* (who symbolizes good) in the *Bhagavad Gita* (Gupta & Garg, 2020). In the context of Bali, women have played a significant role in leadership in fighting against crime since the

colonial era. For example, in the late 19th century, Ida I Dewa Agung Istri Kanya from the Klungkung kingdom led the Puputan Kusamba War against Dutch colonialism. In the 20th century, Sagung Ayu Wah from the Tabanan kingdom also contributed to this cause. Ida Ayu Nyoman Rai, the mother of Soekarno and the first president of Indonesia supported her son in fighting the Dutch. Gusti Ayu Rapeg was a prominent figure in women's and children's education in Bali. These are just a few examples of women's leadership in Bali overcoming evilness.

Leaders embody unwavering steadfastness and make decisions without hesitation. This is the sixth principle of *Megabrata* of Niti raja sesana that encouraging women to embody confidence, resilience, and a clear vision this principle empowers them to overcome gender-based stereotypes and multidimensional challenges. By embracing resilience, women leaders can cultivate confidence, make sound decisions, and serve as powerful role models. Countless stories abound of women leaders in Bali, who have triumphed over adversity, established credibility, and defied gender-based biases. Ultimately, this principle highlights the significance of unwavering determination and adept decision-making, enabling women to thrive in leadership roles across diverse fields.

The seventh principle of *Singabrata* emphasizes that leaders must build harmony within their communities. In the realm of women's leadership, this principle underscores women's essential role in fostering collaborative environments. Female leaders often bring unique perspectives and empathetic approaches to conflict resolution, helping to create inclusive spaces where diverse voices are heard. By prioritizing harmony, women leaders resolve conflicts and cultivate a sense of unity (Khushk et al., 2023; Kulkarni & Mishra, 2022). The eighth principle of *anilabrata* is that the leader moves quickly when dealing with problems. Leaders must make decisions soon to handle issues but must consider many aspects.

The ninth principle is *Satabrata*, emphasizing the importance of compassion in leadership, particularly in the context of women's leadership, which is characterized by gentleness. Women leaders often bring empathy and understanding to their roles. Based on social science research, women tend to adopt a more relational leadership style, enhancing group cohesion and morale. By embodying *Satabrata*, women leaders inspire those around them and create a culture of care and respect (Harquail, 2008). The tenth principle is *cantakabrata*; leaders must have attention. Consider the context of women's

leadership. Attention-related characteristics, such as the sense of feeling and hearing, protect and develop the people they lead (Conn & Billy, 2017; Dasig, 2020; Guerra et al., 2024).

The eleventh principle is *mayubrata*, which means that leaders must interact politely. Thus, leaders must choose an effective communication style; although there is a stereotype that women are unable to communicate effectively, research by Joyce Cheah Lynn-Sze proves that female leaders also tend to display masculine and feminine characteristics when communicating with those they lead (2021).

The twelfth principle of *kaganilabrata*, the leader can predict destruction or problems to situations and conditions or even decisions that have been taken. Female leaders typically demonstrate strong analytical skills and emotional intelligence, enabling them to effectively anticipate challenges. Research indicates that women are generally proactive in identifying risks by fostering collaborative environments to enhance their predictive capabilities and ensuring sustainability progress (Baqutayan & Raji, 2017; Kristiyanto et al., 2022; M. O'Connor, 2018; Rosener, 1990). The thirteenth principle of *wiyaghabrata* is that leaders should not act in doubt and hesitation.

The fourteenth principle of *cundagabrata* means that leaders must be able to build good suggestions and infrastructure. In the fifteenth principle of *welasabrata*, leaders choose intelligent individuals to be messengers. The sixteenth principle of *yamabrata* means that leaders must be fair. In the context of women's leadership within Hinduism, these principles align with the qualities often attributed to female leaders, such as decisiveness, compassion, and the ability to foster collaboration. Hindu texts frequently celebrate female figures who embody these traits, such as Durga, who symbolizes strength and determination, and Saraswati, who embodies wisdom and knowledge.

The Importance of Education and Training for Balinese Women

Education and training are vital to empowering women. Leadership training and skills development programs must be expanded to reach more women in Bali. Women in Bali have great potential to become robust and influential leaders. Over the years, Balinese women have demonstrated courage, perseverance, and commitment to their families and communities. However, to ensure that Balinese women can take on greater leadership roles in the next 100 years, several important factors must be addressed and optimized. Formal and Non formal education serves as the cornerstone of women's empowerment.

Through education, women gain access to the knowledge and skills crucial for their personal and professional growth. In Bali, it is imperative to instill the significance of education for women from a young age.

A strong foundation in primary education equips women with essential literacy and numeracy skills, laying the groundwork for further education at the secondary and tertiary levels. By offering leadership training, skills enhancement, mentoring programs, and removing barriers to access, Balinese women can be prepared to take on significant leadership roles. Collaboration among the government, private sector, and communities such local and International NGO or CSO is essential to create an enabling and empowering environment for women, ensuring that they have all the necessary tools to succeed and drive positive change in their communities. By doing so, Bali can serve as a successful example of women's empowerment and inclusive leadership.

Social and Political Involvement for Balinese Women

In improving the ability of Balinese women in terms of leadership, it is necessary to involve them in every activity that leads to Social and Political. Education in order to increase social and political sensitivity can be done through seminars and other activities that discuss the development of political literacy through women's forums can help increase the awareness and ability of Balinese women in participating in politics. This can enable them to be more active in the political process and influence decisions that affect their lives. Increasing women's participation in politics and the decision-making process is very important to achieve gender equality. This can be done through various strategic steps. Implementing quotas for women's representation in legislative and executive bodies can be an effective way to ensure greater participation. Political education programs should be introduced to provide an understanding of the political system and legislative process. This will help women understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

In addition, efforts to encourage active participation, encouraging women's active participation in politics can be done through various initiatives, including awareness campaigns and training programs. Awareness campaigns that focus on the importance of women's participation in politics should be expanded. This can be done through mass media, social media, and community activities. Mentorship programs for Balinese women can connect young women with experienced women leaders to help them develop the skills and networks needed to succeed in politics.

REKOMENDATION

Reinterpretation of Religion and Culture that is Pro Gender Equality

The basic teachings of Hinduism are interpreted progressively. For example, the concept of "Shakti" in Hinduism describes the essential feminine power and is equal to the masculine energy (Shiva). In many Hindu mythologies, goddesses such as Durga and Saraswati are revered as powerful and sovereign entities. This reinterpretation can be done by highlighting teachings that support equality and criticizing gender-biased interpretations. It is also essential to involve religious and community leaders in constructive dialogue to change how they view women's roles.

In Hindu society, the *Warna* system groups people based on their profession, talents, and skills. In its development, feudal rulers and their followers often distorted the *Warna* system of Hinduism to perpetuate their political influence in society. The *Warna* system, which groups people based on the tasks and obligations carried out in community life, changed into levels that differentiate a person's degree based on descent. The basic idea of this system, namely grouping people based on profession and skills, is often or even completely ignored. These class levels are then called *Castes*.

Hinduism is often erroneously linked with the concept of *Caste*, despite *Caste* not being a part of traditional Hindu teachings. The terms such as *Brahmana*, *Ksatria*, *Waisya*, and *Sudra*, known in society, are actually part of *Catur Warna*, not *Caste*. The misinterpretation of the concept of *Catur Warna* from the *Veda* scriptures led to the emergence of feudalism in Hindu society. It's important to note that the *Veda* scriptures do not recognize the *Caste* system at all, and the word "Caste" is not found in a single sentence in the *Veda*. *Catur Warna* is solely based on a person's work and quality, rather than on their birth (descent) as the misinterpreted *Caste* system suggests.

Although based on a mistaken culture and errors in the interpretation of the *Warna* system derived from the teachings of the *Vedas*, many also try to preserve this *Caste* system on the grounds of preserving cultural customs and religion. They express many reasons as justification. In fact, in Hinduism, the term *Caste* is not known. This *Caste* is different from the *Warna* system derived from the *Vedas*. The *Caste* system, which is often disguised by the existence of this *Warna*

system, is a word derived from Portuguese that means a dividing wall. The Caste is structured high and low (elevating and degrading). Implementing the Divide Et Impera policy during the Dutch East Indies occupation strengthened the Caste system in Balinese Hindu society. It even shifted the understanding of the original Warna system.

Caste in Bali began when Bali was filled with small kingdoms, and the Dutch came to practice divisive politics (Divide Et Impera). Caste was created with a name taken from Hindu teachings, Catur Warna. Over time, the Balinese were confused about the Caste and the Catur Warna teaching. These mistakes continue to grow because they are deliberately made confusing by those who are already "high caste" in the Hindu community in Bali; there is a controversy (pros and cons) in the understanding of color, Caste, and dynasty that has been going on for a long time.

Now and future is the time for Hindus in Bali to realize that in Hinduism, there is no term Caste. What exists is Catur Warna. Do not be fooled again by some human beings who are drunk on Caste, glorifying themselves (considering themselves to be of high rank and considering others to be of low rank). So, the division of Catur Warna (Brahmana, Ksatria, Vaisya, and Sudra) is not intended to determine the high and low rank but according to each group's interests, functions, and capabilities. This division is not intended to glorify Brahmana or degrade the status of Sudra; this is only a symbol based on work, not descent.

According to the Hinduism worldview, all humans are equal. All humans are brothers in equality (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam). Descendants can also be a person's pride. However, excessive pride will lead to arrogance. Arrogance of descent so that one will feel superior to others. People who glorify descent or nobility are evil, let alone consider others inferior. Hinduism teaches that everyone should respect and appreciate fellow creatures of God according to the concept of Tat Twam Asi and Vasudaiva Kutumbakam. God judges a person not because of his descent; what is judged is his Dharma bhakti and yajña. Likewise, the most important thing is to have high moral ethics. In Javanese proverb, any term "*swargo nunut, neraka katut*", literally it can be interpreted as "to heaven he follows, to hell she is also taken along". The phrase is commonly interpreted as implying that the husband holds a superior position within the household, and that the wife is expected to unquestioningly comply with his decisions.

This viewpoint relegates women to a subordinate role, reflecting gender inequality perpetuated by the patriarchal system. Consequently, women are unfairly stigmatized and constrained by these societal expectations. But, In Bali,

The problem of patriarchy is not caused by the dichotomy between traditional and modern, but by a misunderstanding formed by a social construction that wrongly prioritizes men and women. In Balinese culture, the term *Mewinten* is about social status and function as it should be. *Mewinten* is sometimes misunderstood by placing women in a double burden, whereas *Mewinten* is an affirmation that life cannot be one-sided; there are joint obligations, which must be carried out between husband and wife in the context of the household or men and women in a broader context.

The Vedas give a critical woman a dignified and high position. It describes education, initiation, modesty, virtue, duties, rights, and women's social roles. Women in the Vedas are called the queen of the house, and the Vedas also emphasize the granting of rights to become the ruler of the state (leader of society) and leader of religion. So the assumption that women have a different leadership potential than men is baseless. Once again based on Hinduism theology, have shown how women's contributions to leadership can make significantly impact. For example, in Hinduism that become major religion in Bali, any Goddess Laksmi gives beauty, fertility, and prosperity, and Goddess Durga with her courage and strength. In Indonesia's history, we also know many women with characters like Durga, who lead with courage and strength, and women who give Laksmi's touch by giving fertility and prosperity throughout history, Hinduism has prominently featured female figures in both human and divine forms.

Women played significant roles in the realization and authorship of the Vedas, with female sages like Lopamudra and Maitreyi composing hymns in the Rig Veda. Sage Gargi, who appears in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, skillfully questioned Sage Yajnavalkya about the nature of the soul, extracting profound teachings that eluded a courtroom of male philosophers. Hindu epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana also exalt women, portraying characters like Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava princes, and Sinta, the wife of Prince Rama.

Additionally, numerous Puranic texts elaborate on the stories and symbols of the feminine divine, as seen in the Devi Mahatmyam and Devi Bhagavata Purana, which have inspired art, poetry, dance, drama, and worship. Furthermore, the consorts of male Gods, such as Vishnu and Shiva, hold central positions in the respective Vaishnava and Shaivite scriptures. In the Vedas also women are beings that have a sense of sacrificial; that is, they are worshipped like yagya. There is no restriction for women in the Vedas – they are always depicted as victorious, and support and encouragement have been given in all

their endeavors. In the Vedic period, women studied and went to the battlefield. Like Kaikeyi fought with Maharaj Dasharatha. By giving the daughter the right to choose her husband, the Vedas kept her one step ahead of the men.

CLOSING

Balinese women have many characteristics that support them in becoming influential leaders—first, discipline and order. Balinese culture, rich in ceremonies and rituals, requires high discipline and order. Balinese women, who are often responsible for carrying out these ceremonies, demonstrate extraordinary organizational skills, including mental and emotional strength. Balinese women usually face various challenges in their daily lives, both in their roles as housewives and in society. This mental and emotional strength is a vital asset in leadership. Third, Communication Skills: Balinese women generally have good communication skills in Balinese, Indonesian, and, in some cases, foreign languages. This ability is essential in leading and interacting with various parties. Fourth, Empathy and Social Concern. In Balinese culture, cooperation and social concern are highly valued. Balinese women who are actively involved in social activities demonstrate high empathy and concern, which are essential leadership qualities.

The local wisdom in Indonesia encompasses numerous empowerment concepts that emphasize the active involvement of women as leader. For instance, the principles of *silih asuh* (care), *silih asih* (affection), and *silih asah* (fairness) are often cited to define effective leadership. The *Manawa Dharmasastra* Book, particularly in verses 147-169, expounds on the “Rights and Obligations” of Hindu women, highlighting their crucial and esteemed roles as wives and mothers in Balinese Hinduism. Additionally, the Vedas assert that Hindu women can also partake in warfare, a tradition dating back to ancient Bali. In the next 100 years, there is a strong possibility that women’s leadership in Bali will increase, provided that consistent and systematic efforts are made to overcome existing obstacles. Reinterpreting religion and gender, improving education, implementing supportive policies, and utilizing technology will be key factors in achieving this goal. As Soekarno said, if women are strong, then the country will be strong. Therefore, the future of women’s leadership in Bali is very promising, as long as there is commitment and real effort from all parties, because Bali needs the leadership of a woman to be a role model in courage and bring about positive change for a better Bali. As part of the commitment to gender equality, it is crucial to create platforms and programs that encourage

women's political participation. These platforms can take the form of training programs, leadership workshops, and political mentoring that specifically target women in Bali. By providing women with the necessary tools to engage in the political process, such initiatives can empower them to run for office, engage in governance, and participate in community decision-making. Local political parties and community organizations also need to actively recruit and support women candidates. Political parties should ensure that women are represented not only as candidates but also as part of the leadership teams that make key decisions within these parties. Without such efforts, women will continue to remain at a disadvantage when competing for leadership positions.

The ideal role of Balinese women is to be creative, independent, and educated based on based on five loyalties Hinduism that consist of Loyalty to conscience (Padma Hardhaya), Loyalty to conscience (Satya Wacana), Loyalty to promises (Satya Semaya), Loyalty to people (Satya Mitra), and loyalty to responsibility/trust (Satya Laksana).

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