



The Worship of God Agni in the Ngekehin Tradition

Dewi Rahayu Aryaningsih¹

Universitas Hindu Negeri IGB Sugriwa, Indonesia

dr9360868@gmail.com

I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana²

Universitas Hindu Negeri IGB Sugriwa, Indonesia

ngurahsudiana@uhnsugriwa.ac.id

I Wayan Wastawa³

Universitas Hindu Negeri IGB Sugriwa, Indonesia

wastawa65@ihdn.ac.id

Address: Jl. Ratna No. 51, Tonja, Kec. North Denpasar, Denpasar City, Bali

Corresponding author: dr9360868@gmail.com

Abstract: Names are essential in society, with interactions starting by mentioning names. Parents give names to their children differently across regions, tribes, and clans, often involving rituals and traditions. The Hindu community of West Lombok Regency has a naming tradition called Ngekehin, performed for babies who are 12 or 42 days old. This unique tradition uses 11 rolled papers with different names stuck in ash and pis bolong within a tamas. The Ngekehin tradition is still practiced across generations, though many do not understand its theological significance. Qualitative research, involving primary and secondary data sources, was conducted to gather information. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, and data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation. Research shows that the upakara procession in Ngekehin holds many meanings, particularly theological. The rolling fire in the tradition implies worship of Lord Agni, a deity revered since the Vedic era. In Ngekehin, Lord Agni serves as: 1) The leader of the naming ceremony, 2) An intermediary between the worshipper and the Almighty, giving a "sign" through the lintingan fire indicating the suitable name, chosen from the first or last burning lintingan, 3) A witness to the chosen name, 4) A purifier of mala/impurities since the 12-day baby ceremony is the first "cleansing" in the life cycle, and 5) A remover of previous karmawasana sins.

Keywords: Tradition, Ngekehin, Lintingan

1. INTRODUCTION

Every person has a name that is an identity for themselves. Names are an important element in society, and interaction begins with mentioning names. This is emphasized by Sihotang (2020: 52) who says that although there is an expression that says "what is the meaning of a name", names have meaning for each person. The name is the embodiment and representation as well as a person's personal identity. A person called by his or her name does not just make a sound in an orderly arrangement of letters, but contains a meaning of recognition of the existence of the owner of the name. This recognition is complete. This means that calling someone's name well is recognizing the existence of the person involved. Otherwise, insulting someone's name is the same as insulting the person who owns the name.

The basis for giving names is very diverse. Names given by parents can be based on expectations, social relationships, certain cultures and based on prayers, such as names that become prayers from parents. The diversity of naming is also based on regions, tribes, clans and even naming is carried out through a procession of ritual ceremonies and becomes a tradition in various regions.

The tradition of naming several regions has a variety of ceremonies that vary. Divika, (2019) examined the naming ceremony in Tungkal Harapan, Tanjung Jabang Barat Jambi which is still carried out today while still prioritizing two elements, namely custom and Islamic law. This ceremony is carried out when a baby is seven days old or one and a half years old and sometimes even when the child can walk. Apart from this ceremony as a form of affection, it is also meaningful as a form of giving parents' prayers to their baby. Furthermore, Megawati (2020) said that Kaharingan Hindus also carry out various unique traditions and one of them is the *Nahunan* ceremony. The *Nahunan* ceremony is a naming ritual for one-month-old babies or toddlers who are brought down outside the house. Geertz (2000) added that in Bali people give names ritually which are carried out 105 days after birth.

The Hindu community in West Lombok Regency also carries out a naming tradition termed the *Ngekehin* tradition. The *Ngekehin* tradition consists of elements of ceremony and *upakara*. The ceremonial process is carried out for babies who are 12 days old or when the baby is 42 days old with the ritual of giving names through the *melintingan* process. It is called *melintingan* because the media used are pieces of sticks of the same size whose ends are wrapped in cotton totaling 11 with the names to be given to the baby with 11 different names.

Based on preliminary studies, it was found that the *Ngekehin* tradition still exists, but the Hindu community only maintains the tradition because it is carried out from generation to generation even though many still do not understand the theology of the tradition. By understanding theology in tradition, it can foster faith, social order, respect and appreciation of ancestral cultural heritage and can develop thinking and philosophy..

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research also refers to the sacred Susastra of Hinduism, namely the Manawa Dharma Sastra. In Manawa Dharmasastra or Manu Dharmasastra which is also called Weda Smrti emphasizes that sacred ceremonies should be carried out at the time of conception in the mother's womb, during other humanitarian ceremonies, aiming to purify from all sins of life in

this world and after death. Furthermore, specifically the transition ceremony (life cycle) in the Hindu tradition is clearly stated in our Manawa Dharmasastra II, in sloka 29 it is stated that the Jatakarma ceremony or newborn ceremony must be carried out. This means that the ceremony becomes important in Hinduism because since the fetus is in the womb and then continues at the next stage through rituals. The next stage also describes the ceremony that should be carried out by Hindus, namely the *Namadheya* ceremony, which is the naming ceremony.

This research uses Religion theory (Pals, 2011) to discuss the implementation of the *ngekehin* tradition of Hindus in West Lombok both in religious emotions, belief systems, processes, rites, ceremonial tools, and the attitudes of the people who carry it out. The next theory is Durkheim's structural functional which examines the importance of religion in the ceremonies that can give new spirit to the individuals of their group. These rituals then create the need for a symbol that illustrates ideas about ancestral spirits and gods. Societies need certain rituals to exist, so the consequence is that there is no society that does not have a religion or something that functions similarly to religion. The third theory is the theory of symbolic interactionism, this theory researchers use as a basis for revealing the implementation of the *ngekehin* tradition in Hindu communities in West Lombok Regency, the symbols used in the *Ngekehin* tradition undergo interpretation and reinterpretation which has implications for the construction of contextual meaning.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in West Lombok Regency. West Lombok region consists of 10 sub-districts. The 10 sub-districts are; 1). Sekotong, 2). Lembar, 3). Gerung, 4). Labuapi, 5). Kediri, 6). Kuripan, 7). Narmada, 8). Lingsar, 9). Gunung Sari and 10). Batu Layar. Of the 10 sub-districts, the research will focus on the Sekotong, Lembar and Gerung sub-districts. The region is currently the center of the development of the West Lombok region which has the tendency to cause an increase in population migration from outside, especially the diaspora of Balinese traditions that came post-independence to Lombok which has implications for the blending of Balinese-Hindu cultural migrants with cultural traditions that have been settled since the Karangasem kingdom in Lombok.

This research uses descriptive qualitative research concept using an ethnographic approach (see Bungin, 2011). The data sources used in this research are primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data in this study is data provided by someone who can

provide an explanation of the *ngekehin* tradition. Secondary data in this study is data obtained from records, researchers also use books related to theology, anthropology, Hindu literature. The technique of determining informants in this study was carried out by purposive sampling. In this study, the informants are those who work as *Sarathi banten* (*banten* makers), *Pinandita*, religious leaders, community leaders and parents who carry out the *Ngekehin* tradition. Data collection techniques using participant observer, using unstructured interviews to get initial information from the *Ngekehin* tradition. Furthermore, researchers use semi-structured interviews, namely by using interview guidelines to obtain in-depth information and in accordance with the issues raised by researchers. This research also uses data collection techniques with document studies.

4. FINDINGS AND DUSCUSSION



Picture of *Melintingan*
(Source: Aryaningsih 2024)

The highlight of the *Ngekehin* tradition is *melintingan* which is when the simultaneous lighting of the *lintingan* begins, 1 large *lintingan* is placed on the *mensemueng* and 11 *lintingan* with 11 names on the ash-filled *tamas*. The 11 names are made on pieces of palm leaves tied to the *lintingan*. Before being burned, the *lintingan* is dipped in coconut oil and then burned simultaneously. In the next process, the first dead *lintingan* is marked with *pamor*/chalk (white) and the last dead with *adeng* (black). Then the two names are conveyed to the family, usually respect is given to the elders or elders by the baby's parents to deliberate on the name chosen

which dies first or the name with the last dead *lintingan*. Of course, the *lintingan* process is led or *dipuput* by a *pinandita* or *pemangku* with the chanting of mantras.

The *melintingan* process uses a *lintingan* fire. The use of fire in Hinduism is a manifestation of the God Agni. Suamba (in Yudhatriguna Channel) explains that spiritually Agni is the name of a god, namely the God Agni, the god who rules over fire itself. Agni is a prominent deity in the Vedas. In the context of yadnya: agni/fire as; 1). priest/leader of the ceremony (*purohito*), 2). intermediary between the worshiper and the worshiped, 3). summoner of other gods, 4). successor to offerings, 5). witness to *yadnya*, and 6). cleanser of the natural environment including disease, 7). as *pemralina*, dissolver to its origin.

Thus in Hinduism fire is very special, no ceremony is carried out if there is no fire or agni, both the ceremony of *Dewa yajna*, *Rsi yajna*, *Pitra yajna*, *Manusa yajna* and *Bhuta yajna* clearly use fire. This is contained in the Manawadharmasastra susatra. In Manawadharmasastra I. 23 (Pudja, 2002) reinforces that Agni/fire is used as the basis for performing *yajna*. The expression of the sloka is as follows.

*“Agniwayu rawibhyastu trayam
Brahma sanatanam
Dudoha yajsiddhyartha
Mrgyajuh samalasksanam”*

Meaning:

Indeed, He created the eternal teachings of the three Vedas (traya Brahma) and fire (AGNI), wind (WAYU), and sun (RAWI) to serve as the basis for performing yadnya.

Agni/fire is actually the majesty of Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. The primacy of fire or agni as a priest, as an intermediary to maintain and live the divine is clearly stated in Hindu literature, such as in the Rg Veda Samhita. In the Rg Veda Samhita mandala I sukta 1 the first word is written the word "Agni". The sloka from the Rg Veda is as follows.

*“Agnim ile purohitam
Yajnasya devam Rtvijam
Hotaram Ratna Dhatamam”*

Meaning:

We worship God, the ultimate priest of the universe, who conducts activities through eternal law, who nourishes and animates all that is divine and brilliant.

The above sloka explains that God is called agni and agni is the main leader in a ceremony. This proves that God Agni as the priest of the ceremony is very important before worshipping other gods. He determines the success of a ceremony given his position as the priest of the ceremony. The sloka is a guideline that in performing worship or worship must use fire.

Furthermore, in the Vedic scriptures, agni is generally divided into two: 1). *Laukika Agni*: ordinary fire used in daily life, such as for cooking, lighting rooms, burning garbage, farming, used in art, for example shadow puppetry, used as a torch in sports activities, etc. In short, fire that is not used in a religious context. 2). *Alaukika Agni*: fire used in yadnya ceremonies. These fires are of different types according to their function in a yadnya ceremony. Thus the fire used in the *Ngekehin* tradition is *Alaukika Agni*.

Hindu religious traditions in the archipelago, especially in Bali, there are a number of upakara facilities/tools that use the element of fire, including:

1. *Dipa/pedamaran* priest/*sulinggih*: a means of a priest/*sulinggih* in leading a ceremony or worship in the form of a lamp that uses head oil with a certain shape.

2. *Dhupa*: one of the worship tools for *sulinggih* using fire in the worship procession. *Dhupa* is also used in *banten / bhakti umat / pemedek*. *Dhupa* is also used as a means of worship of Hindus. The incense fire as an intermediary between the worshiper and God Almighty / Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa as the worshiped and His holy light. Incense is also used as a means of taking the oath of office. Of course, incense must be lit first before use.

3. *Pasepan/padupaan*: Fire from fire wood in a *dulang* made of clay, firewood consists of *dapdap* wood (sakti wood), *menyan*, *majagau*, *candana*. *Menyan* is a symbol to worship Lord Siwa. *Majagau* means to worship Sadasiwa and *Candana* symbolizes the means to worship Parama Siwa. Everything is called *astanggi*. *Pasepan* smoke billows upwards. Used among others when *nuwur Ida Bhatara*.

4. *Takep* fire: a fire made of two halves or two peels of dried head fibers placed in a crossed pile like a plus sign placed under/on the ground/in front of the gate of a house; the fire is lit before use. *Takep* fire is used for *mesegeh*, *mecaru* or *taur* ceremonies. The swastika-shaped *takep* fire (plus sign) symbolizes balance and the *takep* fire here functions as a soul force that can foster self-defense from negative energy.

5. *Tetimpug/penimpug* fire: The fire used in the *mecaru* or *tawur* ceremony is made from three pieces of bamboo tied together filled with *tuwesan sasap* (pieces of *janur* that are shaped in such a way as to appear as a pair of eyes) placed on a brick on the side of the bamboo until underneath is placed the media to burn the bamboo. burned from below until it makes an explosion sound.

6. *Prakpak*: made of several dried coconut leaves (*danyuh*) tied together and then lit / burned from the end, like a torch. This is one of them used after the *taur kesanga* ceremony the day before Nyepi.

7. *Cittagni/ Utik*: A fire that is used to ignite firewood to burn the consecrated *sawa* (corpse) during the *ngaben* ceremony. *Cittagni/ Utik* is made of materials that are tied together to ignite the fire; it can be said to be the fire of the *sawa pemrelina*. The ingredients: meduri stem, white juwet, cempaka, candana, *majagau*, *plasa*, *ambegan poh gading*, *keloping sudamala*, and *danyuh*.

8. *Lintingan*: *Lintingan* fire is made from a stick wrapped around cotton and infused with coconut oil and burned. It is used during *ngelepas aon*. Adnyana (tt: 115-116) emphasizes that the *lintingan* is hung with the baby's name written on pieces of palm leaves and tied with thread. The number of *lintingan* is one, three, five, nine and eleven. If the number of fire sticks is eleven, it means that the baby's name is made up of eleven names. The function of the *lintingan* fire in *banten pengelepas aon* is to release the baby from *leteh/mala* (non-scale defilement).

In addition to the 8 types of tools in *upakara* in Balinese Hinduism in particular and of course there are many other *upakara* tools that use the element of fire in the Hindu tradition in the archipelago. Of the 8 types of *upakara* tools above, the *Ngekehin* tradition uses *lintingan* fire. Agni / fire is the ruler of *teja* and light. Agni/fire is a witness, and if it is associated with the *Ngekehin* tradition, it can be seen that when the *lintingan* is burned and the *lintingan* is lit, the flames of the 11 *lintingan* with 11 names become a witness to which name with the first dead *lintingan* and the name with the last dead *lintingan*. Thus agni/fire as a witness does not only apply to the *Pawiwahan* ceremony, but in the *Ngekehin* tradition the Tri upasaksi is applied, namely three witnesses in the procession of ritual ceremonies, namely; god witnesses, Bhuta witnesses and human witnesses. How giving names in the *Ngekehin* tradition is very sacred. As stated by Jro Mangku Ketut Sukada in his interview as follows.

“In addition to thanking the gods and ancestors who have been present in the *Ngekehin* tradition procession, we also sacralize or *nguningayang* (convey) the "name" given to the *rare* by witnessing the gods, ancestors, family, local residents and the universe.”.

That is the fire that burns actually has a permeating nature, so it is believed that the name chosen (either from the first dead *lintingan* or the last dead *lintingan*) permeates according to the expectations of the name. It is not only in the *pawiwahan* ceremony that the fire is a witness, in the *Ngekehin* tradition it also shows that the fire is also a witness that the name chosen is the

name of the baby as his identity which is blessed by God and will happen according to the expectations of the name.

The use of *lintingan* fire is not just a mere *lintingan* fire but implies how important the fire is and not only as a witness, but as a sin remover from one's *wasana*. This is because in lontar Wrehaspati Tattwa 65 (Putra and Sadia, 1998) it is explained as follows.

“*Sakweh ning papa nika sang Yogisvara, lawan ikang Vasana kabeh, yateka tinunwan de bhatara ring Sivagni, ri huwusnya hilang ikang karmavasana, tan molah alanggeng samadhi nira, tan, molah bhatara ri sira yan mangkana, ya ta matangyan cintamani sira, asing sakaharep nira teka, sakahyunira dadi ndan wyaktinya kapanggih ikang kastaisvaryan de nira*”

Meaning:

Lord Agni destroys all the sins that have accumulated. Then Siva is like *cintamani*, fulfilling all desires. All sins along with the *karmavasana* of a *yogisvara* are destroyed by the Lord in *Siwagni*. When the annihilation of *karmavasana* is complete, his concentration becomes firm and strong. The Lord is always within him. Therefore he is said to be *cintamani*, everything he wants is fulfilled. As a manifestation he gets eight *aisvarya*”.

Thus it can be concluded that *lintingan* fire has a function as 1). The leader of the ceremony in the ritual of naming the *rare*/baby, 2). As an intermediary between the worshiper (devotee) to the worshiped God Almighty / Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa to give a "sign" through the fire of the candidate name that is suitable for the baby, can be chosen from the candidate name with the first dead *lintingan* or the last burning *lintingan*, 3). As a witness to the name chosen for the *rare*/baby. 4). Fire dissolves *mala* / impurities, because the 12-day baby ceremony is the first "cleansing" ceremony in the life cycle 5). as a sin remover from the previous *wasana*.

Therefore, the theological implications of the Ngekehin tradition are primarily directed at the god Agni. God Agni in the development of Hinduism has been worshiped in ancient Vedic times. As we all know, the development of Hinduism in India is divided into three major parts, namely the Ancient Vedic era, the Brahmin era and the Upanisad era. In the Vedic Samhita era, worship of the gods was very strong, the gods were always present in the sacrificial ceremony. Even the gods are grouped into three groups, namely; 1). The god of the sky, namely the god Surya, the god Varuna who is declared as the god who separates the sky and the earth. 2). Space gods such as the god Indra and 3). Earth gods namely Agni and Partiwī.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The *Ngekehin* tradition has implications for Hindu theology with the concept of Saguna Brahman, which means believing in God in various aspects of His manifestation. When the procession of burning 11 *lintingan* worship is carried out in front of the god Agni, a god who was worshiped in ancient Vedic times until now, the *lintingan* fire symbolizes the leader of the ceremony, as a witness, the fire symbolizes melting / exterminating / burning *mala* / defilement.

To the Hindu Community in West Lombok Regency, especially the sub-districts of Gerung, Lembar and Sekotong to maintain the *Ngekehin* tradition because it is full of religiosity values so that the traditions carried out are in line with tattwa, ethics and ceremonies. As well as maintaining the *Ngekehin* tradition can be a cultural identity of West Lombok in particular and the Hindu community of the archipelago in general.

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