

Research Article

## The Cultural Significance of Transitioning from Traditional Hindu Creation Ceremonies Using Firewood to Modern Practices Employing Gas as Fuel

Dewa Putu Wipayana Kusuma <sup>1\*</sup>, Budhi Waskito <sup>2</sup>, Noning Verawati <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup> Universitas Bandar Lampung, Indonesia; e-mail : [dputuw@gmail.com](mailto:dputuw@gmail.com)

\* Corresponding Author : Dewa Putu Wipayana Kusuma

**Abstract:** This research investigates the cultural significance of the transformation in the Ngaben ceremony, a central cremation ritual in Balinese Hindu tradition, focusing on the shift from traditional firewood-based methods to modern gas-based cremation practices. The Ngaben ceremony holds profound religious, philosophical, and social meaning, symbolizing the liberation of the soul from worldly ties and its journey to the afterlife. In recent decades, technological advancements and socio-environmental considerations have prompted many communities in Bali to adopt gas cremation systems, offering greater efficiency, reduced environmental impact, and lower operational costs. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, this study draws on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to explore how this transition affects cultural meaning, community values, and religious interpretations. The research compares the symbolic elements embedded in traditional and modern methods, examining how changes in materials, process duration, and ceremonial aesthetics influence the perceived authenticity and spiritual significance of the ritual. Findings reveal that while some community members view the adoption of gas cremation as a pragmatic adaptation that aligns with contemporary needs, others express concern about the erosion of cultural heritage and the diminished role of traditional craftsmanship. Furthermore, the study highlights the adaptive strategies employed by Balinese Hindu communities to integrate modern technology while preserving essential spiritual values, such as maintaining ritual sequences, symbolic offerings, and priest-led prayers. The analysis underscores that cultural transformation within religious practices is not a simple replacement of old methods with new ones, but rather a process of negotiation between tradition and innovation. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader discussions on cultural resilience, religious continuity, and the dynamic interaction between technological change and sacred tradition in contemporary Balinese Hindu society.

**Keywords:** Cremation ritual; Cultural transformation; Hindu tradition; Ngaben ceremony; Religious adaptation

### 1. Introduction

Death, in the Hindu perspective, is not the end of everything, but rather a process of transition from one life to the next. In this context, the cremation ceremony or cremation plays a vital role as a sacred ritual that guides the spirit to the next realm. As stated by (Arniati, 2018), the cremation ritual is not simply the burning of a corpse, but rather a philosophy that involves the restoration of the elements of the universe (Panca Maha Bhuta) to their origins: pertiwi (earth), apah (water), teja (fire), bayu (air), and akasa (ether). Historically, the cremation ceremony has undergone various transformations since the time of the Hindu kingdoms in the Indonesian archipelago. Ancient inscriptions mention that cremation rituals have been carried out since the 8th century AD, with various levels according to the social status of the deceased. In Hindu tradition, cremation is expected to cleanse the spirit, end ties with the material world, and deliver the spirit to the ancestors, as explained by (Fox, 2015) in the context of Balinese rituals.

In traditional times, cremation was carried out by burning using firewood in a container called a bade or container. This procession requires very complex preparations, from

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constructing the container, collecting firewood, to performing the ritual, which can take days. Each stage of this traditional ceremony has deep symbolic meaning, reflecting the relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator. One important aspect of traditional cremation is community involvement in the entire process, where mutual cooperation and togetherness are fundamental values that strengthen social bonds. However, over time, the cremation ceremony has undergone significant shifts along with technological advances and the need for efficiency. As stated by (Darmawan, 2020), the use of technology in rituals, such as gas cremation, offers attractive practicality in the modern era, although this has led to a shift in the ritual's social and cultural essence. This method became widely known in the early 21st century and offers various advantages in terms of time efficiency, cost, and environmental impact.

This shifting phenomenon is very interesting to study, especially in the context of the Hindu community in Lampung Province. This is connected to a phenomenon observed by (Putra, 2021), where in urban Hindu communities, including in Lampung, social and cultural changes are increasingly influencing traditional methods of conducting cremation ceremonies. As a transmigration area, the Hindu community in Lampung has unique characteristics in adapting ancestral traditions to the local socio-cultural context. (Bagus, 2019) notes that the Hindu community in Lampung has distinctive characteristics that reflect local influences in their religious practices.

The presence of modern crematories in several major cities in Lampung provides a new alternative for Hindu communities in conducting cremation ceremonies. The shift from traditional methods to the use of gas crematories has profound implications for the cultural significance of cremation ceremonies. On the one hand, the efficiency and practicality offered by modern crematories align with the demands of fast-paced modern life. However, on the other hand, there are concerns about the loss of traditional values that have long been the foundation of social cohesion. (Suryani, 2020) points out that while gas cremation offers convenience, there are concerns about the loss of social cohesion once created through mutual cooperation in traditional processions. On the other hand, some Hindu groups in Lampung choose to combine the two methods—maintaining traditional rituals in their form and symbolism, but using modern crematories for cremation, an adaptation also discussed by (Suastika, 2019).

Theoretically, this study uses Blumer's (1969) Symbolic Interaction Theory as the main foundation in understanding how meaning is created and modified through the process of interpretation in social interactions in cremation rituals. The Communication Accommodation Theory developed by Giles (1973) is also used to understand how society adapts its ritual communication practices to the demands of modernity. Carey's (1989) Ritual Communication Model provides a framework for understanding how communication in rituals functions not only as a message transmission, but also as a maintainer of cultural values and social cohesion, and is very relevant in analyzing the shift in meaning from traditional to modern rituals. The Ethnography of Communication approach developed by Hymes (1974) is used to analyze communication patterns in specific cultural contexts, helping to understand how changes in ritual practices affect communication patterns in Balinese Hindu society.

This research is crucial for understanding how the Hindu community in Lampung, particularly in Trimomukti Village, interprets and responds to changes in cremation ritual practices. Based on data from the comparison table of cremation methods in Bali Trimomukti from 2018 to 2024, it can be concluded that there has been fluctuation in the choice of cremation methods between traditional and gas. Initially, the traditional method was more popular, but over time, there has been an increase in interest in the gas method, although this is inconsistent. This indicates a change in community preferences regarding cremation methods, which may be influenced by various factors such as cost, time efficiency, or environmental issues.

## 2. Method

### Methods Type of Research

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach using the post-positivist paradigm. It is designed to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of communication phenomena, particularly the cultural meanings of the shift in Ngaben ceremonies. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research emphasizes meaning and interpretation over generalization, with the researcher acting as the key instrument in data

collection and interpretation. This study aims to explore perceptions, behaviors, and communication processes related to customer trust.

### **Research Location and Time**

The research was conducted in Desa Trimomukti, Kecamatan Candiporo, Kabupaten Lampung Selatan, Provinsi Lampung. This location was chosen due to several considerations: it is one of the villages with a significant Hindu population in Lampung, it has experienced a shift in Ngaben practices from traditional to modern, there is adequate accessibility for field research, there is a variation of generations allowing for perspective comparison on tradition shifts, and there is availability of representative informants from various layers of the Hindu community. The research activities took place over a period of six months, from January to June 2025. The stages included pre-research and permitting (January 2025), initial observation and informant identification (February 2025), primary data collection (wawancara and observasi) (March-May 2025), and data verification and member checking (June 2025). The distance from the University of Bandar Lampung to the research location ranges from 35.3 – 62.7 km.

### **Research Informants**

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on their involvement, experience, and knowledge regarding the changes in the Ngaben ceremony. Informants in this study are classified into three categories: key informants, main informants, and supporting informants.

#### **Key Informants**

Individuals with deep knowledge of cultural and ritual aspects in the Ngaben ceremony and the shifts occurring. They include Hindu religious leaders (Sulinggih) and traditional elders who understand the historical and philosophical meaning of the Ngaben ritual. Their presence is crucial for providing a comprehensive understanding of the cultural values inherent in this tradition. Examples include Ida Pedanda Made Suweca (65 tahun), a senior Hindu religious leader who has led Ngaben ceremonies for 30 years and witnessed the direct shift from traditional to modern methods, and Bapak I Ketut Sudana (58 tahun), Chairman of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) Desa Trimomukti, active in coordinating religious ceremonies and possessing comprehensive understanding of ritual practice changes.

#### **Main Informants**

Individuals directly experiencing or involved in the execution of the Ngaben ceremony and feeling the impact of the shift. They may come from the Hindu community performing this ritual, including families organizing the Ngaben ceremony, as well as younger generations experiencing changes in the procedures and execution of this ceremony. Information from main informants helps in understanding how changes in this ritual are received and adapted by the Hindu community. Examples include Ibu Ni Made Sari (52 tahun), a female figure in the community who experienced both methods in her family, and Bapak I Wayan Sutrisna (45 tahun), a craftsman of ceremonial equipment who provides facilities for both methods.

#### **Supporting Informants**

Parties connected to the Ngaben ceremony but not directly involved in its execution. They may include academics, cultural researchers, or tourism practitioners who have insights into the cultural shifts in Hindu religious ceremonies. Information from supporting informants serves as a complement and reinforcement to data obtained from key and main informants, providing a broader perspective on the researched phenomenon. Examples include Bapak I Made Wirawan (62 tahun), a village elder with strong memories of past Ngaben practices, and Ibu Ni Putu Dewi (29 tahun), representing the younger generation in the Hindu community.

## Data Collection Methods

Three methods were used for data collection to ensure depth and triangulation:

### a. Participant Observation

The researcher conducted structured interviews with Hindu religious leaders who have deep knowledge of the Ngaben ritual to explore their theological, philosophical, and symbolic understanding of the ceremony and their views on the changes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ritual practitioners (such as key holders, traditional leaders, and families organizing the ceremony). These interviews were more flexible and open, allowing the researcher to explore their personal experiences in undergoing and performing the Ngaben ritual. Interviews were also held with groups of community members involved in or affected by the changes in the Ngaben ceremony, aiming to understand their perceptions, views, and attitudes towards the shift and its impact on their cultural identity.

### b. In-depth Interviews

The researcher conducted structured interviews with Hindu religious leaders who have deep knowledge of the Ngaben ritual to explore their theological, philosophical, and symbolic understanding of the ceremony and their views on the changes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ritual practitioners (such as key holders, traditional leaders, and families organizing the ceremony). These interviews were more flexible and open, allowing the researcher to explore their personal experiences in undergoing and performing the Ngaben ritual. Interviews were also held with groups of community members involved in or affected by the changes in the Ngaben ceremony, aiming to understand their perceptions, views, and attitudes towards the shift and its impact on their cultural identity.

### c. Document Study

The researcher examined Hindu scriptures or texts containing instructions or references to the Ngaben ceremony. These documents were analyzed to gain an understanding of the meanings contained in traditional texts and whether there were changes in ritual execution over time. The researcher also reviewed previous research relevant to Ngaben, whether conducted in the context of Hindu culture or other traditions. This study aimed to gain an academic perspective on the topic and enrich understanding of the dynamics occurring in the Ngaben ritual.

### d. Data Validity

To ensure data credibility, this research applied data triangulation, both in terms of sources and techniques.

### e. Source Triangulation

Data obtained from various informants involved in the research were compared and checked. By using various perspectives, from religious leaders, ritual practitioners, community members, to traditional elders, the researcher could verify the consistency of the information obtained. This process allowed the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive picture and reduce the possibility of bias from a single source of information.

### f. Technique Triangulation

To ensure data validity, the researcher used various data collection methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and document study. The use of diverse methods allowed the researcher to cross-confirm findings from one method with another. In this way, the results obtained were more trustworthy as they were based on more than one approach.

### g. Member Checking

This is an essential data validity technique in qualitative research, carried out by returning data analysis results to informants to obtain confirmation about the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation. The main purpose of member checking is to ensure that the researcher's understanding of the informant's perspective is accurate and that no misinterpretations have occurred. This process increases the credibility and reliability of research findings as informants themselves verify the truthfulness of their data representation.

#### ***h.* Audit Trail**

This is a validity procedure carried out by creating a complete trail of the entire research process. The purpose of the audit trail is to ensure transparency, accountability, and reconstruction of the research flow. By having a well-documented trail, third parties (e.g., readers or examiners) can track how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted, thereby increasing the dependability and confirmability of the research.

#### **Data Analysis**

This research utilized SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) as a method for processing data related to the cultural meaning shift in the Ngaben ceremony in Hinduism. This framework was chosen to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. The application of the SWOT matrix allowed for the formulation of appropriate strategies to face cultural dynamics, with the aim of maintaining the noble values of the Ngaben ceremony while adapting to ongoing changes. Through this approach, positive aspects and existing opportunities could be maximized, while constraints and threats that could potentially disrupt the preservation of tradition could be minimized. The results of this analysis can also be used to design effective cultural communication strategies, enabling the Hindu community to better understand and appreciate the meaning behind the Ngaben ceremony. With a clear and directed strategy, the preservation of tradition can be strengthened, increasing love and awareness for religious values and maintaining the continuity of Hindu cultural heritage.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

This study revealed a number of internal and external factors that influence the cultural meaning of the Ngaben ceremony in Desa Trimomukti, Lampung Selatan, particularly in its shift from traditional to modern methods. Based on in-depth interviews, direct observations, and supporting documentation, the findings highlight several key themes: the understanding of traditional and modern practices, the process of shifting, and the resulting cultural meanings.

##### **Data about Traditional Ngaben Practices: Understanding Cultural Roots**

To appreciate the changes, it is essential to first document the original practices. This data includes a deep understanding of cremation with firewood, a method passed down through generations and rich in meaning. Details collected include:

1. **Procession and Stages of Ngaben Ceremony with Firewood:** The researcher meticulously recorded every step of the ceremony, from initial corpse preparation, creation of the bade (corpse-carrying tower), procession to the setra (cemetery or cremation ground), to the cremation itself using firewood and the final ritual of ash scattering. Participant observation and interviews with village elders provided a rich overview of this strict ritual sequence.
2. **Symbolic Meaning of Each Ceremony Stage:** Every movement, offering (sesajen), and prayer in traditional Ngaben holds deep symbolic meaning. Data was collected to elaborate on the meaning behind using specific types of wood, the shape of the bade, the direction of the procession, and accompanying minor rituals. Senior Hindu religious leaders, such as Ida Pedanda Made Suweca, were key sources in explaining this spiritual dimension.
3. **Role of Each Community Member in the Ceremony:** Traditional Ngaben is a communal event involving almost all layers of society. Data identified the specific roles of each individual and group, from the bereaved family, banjar adat, juru banten (offering makers), to traditional leaders and the general community participating in mutual cooperation (gotong royong). This involvement reflected strong values of togetherness and social solidarity.
4. **Philosophy and Values Contained in Traditional Practice:** Behind every ritual lies a complex Hindu philosophy about life, death, reincarnation, and reunion with the universal elements (Panca Maha Bhuta). This data explored values such as bhakti (devotion), karma (law of cause and effect), and moksa (liberation), which form the spiritual basis of traditional practice. In-depth interviews with religious leaders were crucial in uncovering this aspect.

### Data about Modern Ngaben Practices

Uncovering Innovation and Adaptation Over time, Desa Trimomukti experienced a shift towards more modern cremation methods, using gas as a substitute for firewood. Data collection focused on implementation details and their implications:

1. **Procession and Stages of Ngaben Ceremony with Gas:** Although the essence of the ritual remained the same, there were adjustments in the procession and stages when using gas. Data recorded differences in technical preparation, the use of portable crematories or special facilities, and how gas fire was integrated into the ritual. Direct observation of gas-based ceremonies provided concrete insights into these changes.
2. **Changes Occurring in the Ritual:** The researcher documented specific changes in the ritual, such as the elimination of the need for large volumes of firewood, adjustments in burning duration, and potential modifications to some parts of the ceremony directly related to wood use. This data also sought to determine if new rituals emerged in response to modern methods.
3. **Adaptation of Symbolic Meaning in Modern Context:** Despite changes in tools, the community strived to maintain symbolic meaning. This data investigated how gas fire was still interpreted as a manifestation of Dewa Agni and how spiritual values were preserved despite physical form differences. Religious leaders, such as Ida Pedanda Made Suweca, provided explanations of this continuity of meaning.
4. **Efficiency and Practicality of Modern Methods:** Data included information on the practical advantages of using gas, such as faster burning time, minimal smoke and pollution, cleanliness, and logistical ease. Interviews with families who experienced both methods and ceremonial equipment craftsmen, Bapak I Nyoman Sutrisna, provided perspectives on efficiency and cost aspects.

### Data about the Shift Process: Analyzing Dynamics of Change

Understanding this shift is not just about comparing "before" and "after," but also about analyzing how the change occurred. Data collected included:

1. **Factors Driving the Shift:** This data sought triggers for the shift, which could include economic factors (cost of firewood, long-term cost efficiency), environmental factors (deforestation concerns, smoke pollution), social factors (convenience of participation, health), and technological factors (availability of gas cremation equipment). Interviews with the Chairman of PHDI Desa Trimomukti, Bapak I Ketut Sudana, were highly relevant in uncovering these factors.
2. **Stages of the Shift:** Data documented how this shift developed over time. It explored whether there was a transition period, pilot projects, or significant moments triggering widespread adoption. This information helped construct a chronology of the shift.
3. **Community Response to the Shift:** Data recorded the spectrum of community responses, from initial resistance and concerns about losing tradition, to acceptance and adaptation. Interviews with village elders (Bapak I Made Wirawan) and younger generations (Ibu Ni Putu Dewi) provided different perspectives on this acceptance.
4. **Challenges and Obstacles in the Adaptation Process:** Despite the advantages, this shift also faced challenges, such as initial investment costs for gas equipment, dependence on external gas supply, and community adaptation to new technology. This data identified difficulties faced by the community.

### Data about Cultural Meaning

Deepening Interpretation and Identity The core of this research is how the shift in practice affects cultural meaning and the spiritual identity of the Hindu community. Data collected included:

1. **Community Interpretation of the Shift:** This data explored how community members interpreted this change. Did they see it as progress, a compromise, or a threat to cultural heritage? In-depth interviews allowed for an exploration of the nuances of these interpretations.
2. **Values Maintained and Changed:** It was important to identify core values that remained strong despite changes in practice (e.g., bhakti, respect for ancestors) and values that may have adapted or even faded (e.g., mutual cooperation in preparing firewood).
3. **Influence of the Shift on Hindu Cultural Identity:** This data analyzed how the shift in Ngaben affected the collective identity of the Hindu community in Desa Trimomukti.

Did they feel their identity strengthened by adaptation, or were there concerns about losing cultural uniqueness?

4. Strategies for Preserving Spiritual Meaning in Modern Context: Data sought to uncover efforts made by the community, especially by religious leaders and PHDI, to ensure that the core spiritual meaning of Ngaben remained intact despite changes in technical methods. This included education and socialization efforts for the community.

The comprehensive collection of primary data through participant observation and in-depth interviews with various informant categories allowed the researcher to build a rich and layered understanding of the shift in Ngaben practices and its implications for cultural meaning in Desa Trimomukti.

### SWOT Analysis and Strategic Planning

The SWOT analysis facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meaning of the shift in the Ngaben ceremony from traditional to modern methods. This approach allowed the researcher to identify internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) influencing the adaptation of this tradition, thereby generating adaptive and sustainable cultural preservation strategies.

#### 1. Strengths

Strengths of the modern gas-based Ngaben method refer to its inherent advantages compared to the traditional firewood method. These strengths are key drivers of the adoption and acceptance of the new method by the Hindu community in Desa Trimomukti.

- a. Efisiensi Operasional (Operational Efficiency): This is a primary strength. The burning process is faster and more controlled, significantly reducing ceremony duration. It is not dependent on weather conditions, allowing the ceremony to proceed smoothly. Burning results are more perfect and even, ensuring complete cremation without significant material residue. Overall, these aspects facilitate ceremony time planning, providing certainty and logistical convenience.
- b. Aspek Lingkungan (Environmental Aspect): The gas method offers significant environmental advantages. Gas use effectively reduces air pollution and smoke from large amounts of firewood, creating a healthier environment. It does not require large-scale tree felling, contributing to forest preservation. Thus, gas cremation is considered more environmentally friendly and sustainable long-term. It also reduces uncontrolled fire risks.
- c. Kepraktisan Sosial (Social Practicality): This method offers various social practicality benefits. A cleaner, less smoky process facilitates participation for those unaccustomed to smoke, creating a more comfortable environment for children and the elderly. Better documentation is possible without smoke interference. Crucially, it reduces the preparation workload for bereaved families, allowing them to focus on spiritual aspects.
- d. Kontinuitas Makna Spiritual (Continuity of Spiritual Meaning): Despite changes in the burning medium, the spiritual essence of Ngaben as a purification ritual is maintained. Religious leaders, Ida Pedanda Made Suweca, affirm that "Api tetap api, baik dari kayu maupun gas, semuanya adalah manifestasi Dewa Agni", ensuring the presence of fire as a symbol of Dewa Agni. Processions and prayers are conducted reverently, ensuring core values and objectives are not compromised.

#### 2. Weaknesses

Weaknesses in the shift to modern Ngaben refer to internal negative aspects or challenges arising from adopting the gas method. These weaknesses must be identified for the community to manage this transition more carefully and mitigate unintended impacts.

- a. Aspek Tradisional (Traditional Aspect): The shift to modern methods raises concerns about the loss of "natural" and "traditional" nuances of firewood use. For many, especially elders, smoke and the firewood burning process are integral to the spiritual and historical experience. This leads to reduced community involvement in firewood preparation, which was a communal ritual strengthening social bonds. There's also potential loss of traditional knowledge about wood types and burning techniques. This results in a discontinuity of intergenerational knowledge transmission about traditional methods, threatening the continuity of unwritten cultural aspects.

- b. Dimensi Ekonomi (Economic Dimension): Despite long-term efficiency, the shift to gas has initial economic weaknesses. There is a relatively large initial investment for gas equipment, which can burden some communities or families. Dependence on external gas supply emerges, creating vulnerability to price fluctuations or availability. Operational costs may be higher short-term compared to free natural firewood in the past. This shift also reduces local economic opportunities for firewood gatherers and sellers.
- c. Aspek Kultural (Cultural Aspect): The loss of traditional nuances also has broader cultural implications. The reduction of "gathering rituals" in firewood preparation eliminates a significant moment for community interaction and mutual cooperation. This potentially leads to a loss of learning mutual cooperation values in ceremony preparation, a vital pillar in Balinese and Hindu culture. There are also concerns about potential individualism in ceremony execution, shifting focus from communal participation to task completion. Furthermore, "stories and history" usually shared during wood preparation may decrease, eliminating informal cultural narrative transmission.
- d. Resistensi Generasi Tua (Elderly Resistance): A significant weakness is the resistance from the older generation. This is seen in some elders' reluctance to accept change, driven by concerns about losing "authenticity" of tradition. They may struggle to adapt to new technology and have nostalgia for old ways. As Bapak I Ketut Sudana acknowledged, "Awalnya ada keraguan dari generasi tua, mereka khawatir tradisi akan hilang". This doubt requires intensive communication and education efforts.

### 3. Opportunities

The shift in Ngaben practices to modern methods also opens various opportunities that can be utilized by the community for cultural, economic, and spiritual growth. These opportunities represent potential external benefits that can be accessed or created from the change.

- a. Pengembangan Pariwisata Budaya (Cultural Tourism Development): This modern tradition adaptation has great potential to attract tourists interested in the blend of tradition and innovation. This can create a unique selling point for religious tourism in Desa Trimomukti, offering a distinct cultural experience. It also opens opportunities for more accessible cultural education for visitors interested in rituals without exposure to smoke or overly intense processes. The community can develop environmentally friendly cultural tourism packages.
- b. Inovasi Teknologi Lokal (Local Technology Innovation): This shift can encourage the development of more efficient local burning technology, stimulating creativity and innovation among local craftsmen and engineers. This creates business opportunities for modern ceremonial equipment, as experienced by Bapak I Wayan Sutrisna who had to "menyediakan peralatan gas dan sistem pembakaran modern". The potential to develop hybrid systems combining tradition and modernity is also open, as well as opportunities for further research and development of ritual technology.
- c. Revitalisasi Makna Spiritual (Spiritual Meaning Revitalization): This method change provides an opportunity for re-education about the essence of the ceremony, as emphasized by Ida Pedanda Made Suweca on the importance of maintaining "esensi makna simbolis". It can also be a moment to purify practices from non-essential or habitual aspects without deep meaning. Thus, focus can be redirected to spiritual aspects rather than technical ones, allowing for the development of new interpretations relevant to the modern context.
- d. Strengthening Community Bonds (Memperkuat Ikatan Komunitas): While there is potential for fragmentation, this shift can also create new discussion forums on tradition adaptation, encouraging communication and negotiation. This has the potential to build intergenerational understanding, as pursued by Bapak I Ketut Sudana through "komunikasi dan edukasi" to address elder doubts. Furthermore, communities can develop dynamic cultural preservation models capable of adapting to change. Ultimately, this can strengthen the Hindu community's identity amidst a pluralistic society, demonstrating their ability to preserve tradition in the modern era.

#### 4. Threats

Threats are external factors that could potentially jeopardize the sustainability or integrity of Ngaben practices and their associated cultural values, resulting from the shift to modern methods. These threats need to be anticipated to formulate mitigation strategies.

- a. *Erosi Nilai Tradisional (Erosion of Traditional Values)*: There is a serious risk of losing deep understanding of Ngaben philosophy, especially if the focus is solely on practical efficiency without adequate education. This can lead to potential secularization of religious ceremonies, where rituals lose their sacred dimension and become mere formalities. Technological convenience may also reduce the sense of sacredness. Furthermore, the loss of meaningful small rituals in traditional preparation, like communal firewood gathering, can erode unseen cultural richness.
- b. *Fragmentasi Komunitas (Community Fragmentation)*: Differences in views towards this shift can cause division between supporters of traditional vs. modern methods. This potentially triggers intergenerational conflict in implementing changes if dialogue and education are ineffective. Such polarization can weaken social cohesion within the community. Ultimately, this condition can lead to the emergence of groups with varying practices, disrupting the uniformity and collective strength of tradition.
- c. *Dependensi Teknologi (Technological Dependency)*: The use of modern methods increases dependence on technology that may not always be available. This creates a risk of technical disruptions that could interrupt the ceremony, for example, if gas supply is hindered or equipment breaks. The need for maintenance and specialized technical expertise to operate and maintain gas equipment also becomes a challenge. The community will become vulnerable to changes in gas prices and availability in external markets, which can affect the sustainability of the practice.
- d. *Komersialisasi Berlebihan (Excessive Commercialization)*: There is a risk of the ceremony becoming too commercial and losing spiritual meaning, especially if efficiency and practicality become the sole focus. This can lead to practices that prioritize practical aspects over spiritual ones, where organizers are more profit-oriented than dharma service-oriented. This shift potentially erodes values of simplicity and sincerity characteristic of traditional rituals. There is also potential for economic exploitation in the name of modernization, where certain parties may exploit this trend for personal gain without regard for cultural values.

The SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of cultural meaning in the shift of Ngaben ceremonies, as well as guiding the development of adaptive and sustainable cultural preservation strategies.

#### 5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the shift in the form of the Ngaben ceremony from traditional firewood-based methods to modern gas cremation in Desa Trimomukti, Lampung Selatan, is a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional cultural process. This shift is not merely driven by technical or practical factors, but also by a deep interaction between traditional values and the needs of modernity, both from internal and external perspectives of the Hindu Trimomukti community.

In general, the cultural meaning of traditional Ngaben is still firmly held by the community as part of spiritual sacredness and cultural identity. The use of firewood in the Ngaben procession is considered a form of soul unification with nature, strengthening the value of mutual cooperation (

gotong royong), and serving as a symbol of the last respect for ancestors. However, economic limitations, time constraints, and environmental regulations pose real challenges to the sustainability of this method.

On the other hand, the use of gas cremation is accepted as a form of cultural adaptation that is spiritually legitimate. This adjustment is driven by the community's internal awareness of the importance of efficiency and contemporary context. The process of discussion, religious education, and government policies supporting access to crematories have also accelerated the acceptance of modern methods. In this regard, the community does not abandon ancestral values, but rather repackages them into new forms that are more relevant and sustainable.

From the SWOT analysis, it can be concluded that the flexibility of Hindu teachings, the cultural resilience of Balinese culture, and institutional support are significant strengths and opportunities in maintaining the substance of Ngaben. However, there are also serious threats such as the potential for secularization, fragmentation of understanding between generations, and unequal access to modern cremation facilities, which must be wisely anticipated.

Thus, Ngaben in Trimomukti has undergone a transformation from a traditional rite towards a hybrid rite—a combination of old and new forms, spiritual values and social realities, religious substance and technological demands. This transformation reflects the ability of Balinese Hindu culture not merely to survive, but to continue living and adapting to the context of space and time.

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