Religion as the Spirit of Arts in Bali

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The religious and arts life of the Balinese are interconnected and fulfill each other. There is domination or hegemony on the two subjects. The religious practices are based on satyam, swaam, sundaram (truth, ethics, and beauty) slogans and complemented by the arts. Meanwhile, the arts are embodied by Hinduism. It can be observed clearly that the arts as one aspect of culture is the vessel and representation of religion, and on the other hand religion becomes the spirit embodied in the arts. The Hinduism teaching covers tattwa (philosophy) as the source of ideas, ethics as the behavior guidance, and upacara as the spiritual empowerment in arts. Tatwa prompts the ideas for artistic activities, to be continued by preparing the resources including means and tools and the implementation of the artistic activities. The religious and artistic life in Bali is viewed as a union of both and soul. This can be seen from the absorption of modified Vedas arts which then developed by Balinese local genius. The entwined spirit of Balinese arts has existed for hundreds of years and cannot be separated. Said state, capturing the cultural solidarity, peace and prosperity for the people’s body and soul, therefore should always be preserved.

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Many people have made a mistake to conclude that the Hinduism adhered to in Bali is a cultural religion, especially when they say that the performances of great ceremonies are always completed with art activities. Actually, this is an attempt to show what religion looks like, indicating that Hinduism should be applied by referring to satyam, swaam, sundaram (truth, holiness, and beauty). Religion is revealed by God; what is revealed inspires humans to do activities which then lead to the creation of cultural words such as arts. Therefore, in the level of concepts, one should be able to distinguish religion from culture, although, in practice religion cannot be separated from culture. Similarly, arts and religion cannot be separated in Bali; arts are one of the cultural elements which support religious practices, and every art performance is inspired by Hinduism.