

Home Temples of Bali

By

Mr. Manoj Krishnan

krisofeden@gmail.com

Abstract

Home temples of Bali reflect the cultural and spiritual traditions of the island where Hinduism has been burgeoning for thousands of years. The temples look quite distinct from the temples elsewhere in the world. The overwhelming presence of them in Bali showcases the firm belief of Balinese people that the spirits of their ancestors, as well as the Gods of heaven, guard them against every evil. And to show their gratitude, people worship them in shrines erected in their home premises.

Keywords

Bali, Balinese Hinduism, Home Temples, Spirituality

Introduction

The day I entered scenic Bali, one thing that I noticed was that homes on either side of the road had big temples. Sometimes, they appeared bigger than the home itself. They all looked so mystical. My eyes were searching for the idols that would be atop the pillar. In India too, we have small tulsi vases or altars in our home premises, but in none of the homes here have I seen big temples.

This question puzzled me, and I wanted to know how different Hinduism in India is from that of Bali.

The home temples are so prevalent in Bali that they can't go unnoticed, especially by those who have travelled from the country of temples itself.

I tried to delve more into it.

And then I came to know that these temples are called Sanggah or Merajan.

These happen to be the most sacred place in every home, where people worship and offer flowers or leaves. The offering is known as Canang Sari.

Home Temples of Bali

Home temples of Bali enclose in them centuries-old traditions, and every generation of Balinese people follows the same tradition with full zest.

Very rarely in the world will we see such deep connectivity between spirituality and humanity.



Image 1: Home Temple in Bali

Architecture

These temples are built primarily on ancient Balinese architectural rules. It is called Asta Kosala Kosali. The temples are located based on sunrise, mountain-facing, and other architectural norms.



Image 2: Worshipping in Home Temple

However, I noticed there were many shops that had readymade temple setups of all sizes available. I believe that instead of getting them built from scratch, Balinese Hindus would now get these readymade temples installed on their premises. In the old days, the entire temple would be hand-carved. But minutely observing these readymade temples, they appear to be machine-carved and quite uniform in their architecture.

Pura Keluarga

The Pura Keluarga is considered the central family temple in every Balinese household. This temple is dedicated to ancestral spirits to whom family members offer flowers, etc., pray, and seek blessings so that they shower their blessings on the family and bestow them with health, peace, and wealth.

Pelinggih Surya

As the name suggests, this temple is dedicated to Lord Sun, who is regarded as a God of life. It is projected towards the direction of sunrise.

Pelinggih Penunggun Karang

This is the Guardian Spirit Shrine. It is considered the shrine of holy spirits who protect the land over which the home has been constructed. Like other temples, the home dwellers perform offerings and consider it holy.

Kemulan Shrine

This shrine is dedicated to the trinity, i.e., Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. This is considered the home's axis of spirituality and is a highly revered place.

Common Offerings

Canang Sari: A small, hand-woven palm-leaf basket filled with specific flowers, a bit of rice, and a coin.



Image 3: Canang Sari

Incense: These fragrant sticks are lit during prayers.



Image 4: Incense Sticks

Holy Water or Tirta: Sprinkled over the gifts presented before the shrine.

Banten Saiban: Small portions of the regular cooked rice and side dishes are also placed near these shrines.

Conclusion

Hundreds of years old, these magnificent home temples of Bali make this island so unique and enthrall all visitors. It is a rare combination of spirituality and burgeoning tourism. While strolling on the lanes of Bali, these home temples often perplexed me. These temples are a beautiful example of how humanity stays connected with their ancestors, reveres the creator of the Universe, and embraces spirituality in daily life.

References

Author's personal photographs

About the Author

Mr. Manoj Krishnan is a prolific and erudite writer, widely respected for his contributions to literature and the arts. He is the founder of the Asian Literary Society, a global community that brings together thousands of readers, writers, and artists from across the world.

He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Asian Arts, Culture and Literature (JAACL) and is

also the founder of the ALSPHERE Monthly Magazine, a platform celebrating creative expression.

A life member of both The Poetry Society (India) and the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), Manoj actively supports and promotes literary and social initiatives.

He is the author of the historical fiction Kanishka, and has published ten poetry collections: The Fragrance of Nature and Love, Enchanting Korea, Nagmani Darshan, Main Shiv Ban Jaaunga, Vo Dhuaan Kuch Roshan Tha, Song of Silence, Vo Rang Pyar Ke The, Navras, Vo Silwaten Karar ki thi and The Rhythm of Falling leaves.

In addition, Manoj Krishnan has compiled and edited more than forty national and international anthologies of poetry and short stories, fostering voices from diverse backgrounds and regions.

