



## Article

# Tri Hita Karana as Environmental Ethics: Balancing Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism Approaches in Sustainable Tourism Governance in Bali

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## Abstract

Bali island is famous for being an important tourist destination in Indonesia. The concept of its development is based on cultural tourism since 1970's. Due to the emphasis was heavily given on economic profit rather than on the sustainability of nature wellbeing of all, some environmental problems raise despite the fact the government has tried hard to solve the them. The study aims at finding the role of Tri Hita Karana (THK) an indigenous environmental ethics as a balancing power on the human dominance approach (anthropocentrism) over nature (ecocentrism) in Bali. Adopting qualitative research, the primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with Tetra Helix components: business, government, experts, informal leader, and media person. Secondary data is taken from on line journals, books, reports, social media, etc. to complete the research. The research came out with the result that the anthropocentric approach views the natural environment from a purely instrumental perspective, and eco-centric approach which views nature has intrinsic values of its own right to live are seriously competing approaches in the field. The former still dominates over the latter as imbalance even depletion the quality of nature like uncontrolled conversion of green area into tourism infra structure, facilities, road, hotels, etc., waste especially plastic waste, pollution, global warming, and a seemly shift from spiritual to materialistic life style of the Balinese. The Tri Hita Karana (THK) an indigenous Balinese principle of harmony: human with human, human with nature, and human with the divinity acts as balancing power to navigate the two approaches on which ecocentrism has been incorporated for a fair and balance practice of tourism not only for economic benefit but also sustainable nature, culture, and well-beings of the local community. The principles can be utilized in formulating rules, regulation, business plan, operations along with the law enforcement for long lasting sustainable tourism of Bali. The novelty of this study that balancing of the triple P: planet, people and profit can contribute to policy maker, stake holder, and business person to implement the principles of THK in forming any rules or regulation as well as on the law enforcement.

**Keywords:** anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, balancing, tri hita karana, nature

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## Introduction

Tourism has become a major economic income for the province of Bali in Indonesia Exceeding agriculture sector; this leading sector has contributed significant economic benefits despite the fact some threats come into prominence especially related to environments. The tourism sector's contribution to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was recorded at 4.67 percent in 2023, according to Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) data [1]. Anjarbaiti reported that in 2024, Bali contributed approximately IDR 107 trillion, or 44% of national tourism foreign exchange, with economic growth reaching 5.48% and strengthening to nearly 6% by early 2025 [2]. As a growing business, tourism development requires various facilities or infra structures to support it. Roads, airport, harbor, and the conversion of green spaces like subak irrigation field or natural resources are inevitable. However, the rapid growth of the tourism sector has resulted serious consequences, including environmental degradation or depletion, cultural commodification, and increasing social tensions within local communities. These problems have encouraged scholars and policymakers to seek balanced and culturally grounded solutions to sustainable tourism governance [3,4,5,6,7] Many times had happened; the utilization of natural resources or green spaces fails to take into account on its sustainability and the well-being of local communities; it has been mostly focused on economic earnings.

The ongoing tension between anthropocentric (human-centered) and eco-centric (nature-centered) approaches has long been a debate in sustainable tourism development no matter in Bali. Anthropocentrism tends to prioritize human needs, instrumental value, and economic gains, while eco-centrism, a challenge to anthropocentrism, emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature, biodiversity, and well-being of local community, and conservation. On this tension, Tri Hita Karana (THK), a Balinese environmental ethics, occupies a unique position in this regard, as it inherently mediates between these two opposing ethical orientations by integrating spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions into a single holistic framework [8,9,10,11,12]; implementing this approach tourism of Bali has its own character integrating Western and indigenous thoughts.

Anthropocentrism, a human-centered approach to development, remains strongly held especially by business sector; they act as the controllers over nature. On the ground, issues of imbalance and even environmental damage, degradation or destruction are increasingly existed, especially in developing countries. Bali a small island in the archipelago of Indonesia is not immune to these problems; in fact, they are increasingly prominent, especially in South part of Bali where most of tourism accommodations built. Green spaces, subak a traditional irrigation system area, and

beaches have been getting less significantly in last 40 years, especially in Denpasar, Badung, and Tabanan regencies. In the future, demographic and even geographic maps of Bali may change gradually due to uncontrolled establishment of infrastructure and reclamation activities driven by economic interests not yet counting coastal abrasion.

The study conducted by Sutawa [13] that the rate of agricultural land conversion in Bali reaches 1,000 hectares per year, due to the establishment of tourism facilities. This not only impacts the local ecosystem but also threatens the sustainability of water resources and the ecological balance of the island [14]. Thinkers and observers have considered it to incorporate eco-centrism or bio-centric approach that views nature as having intrinsic value that deserves to be protected in any development of tourist destination. And for reason political will of the authority is required to guide the implementation in the practices.

Environmental observers have noticed the recent uncontrolled land conversion approximately 400-1000 acre per year, traffic congestion, pollution, urbanization, and so on. Spiritual or religious intellectuals have underlined the persistent changes of life style from communal to individualistic style and from spiritual to materialistic way of life [15.] The negative impacts of tourism are rarely taken into account with real actions to solve the problems; general public opinion is often hypnotized by appealing narratives of economic benefits rather than the sustainability. Due to the uncontrolled use of nature, tourism and other industries resulting from tourism are also suspected of causing environmental degradation, such as global warming, deforestation, environmental pollution, waste problems, especially plastic waste, water scarcity, or water pollution still coloring the natural landscape despite of awareness and efforts from various parties have been attempted.

As remarks by Fundrika (2021) [16] that the development of tourism has given pressure on environment. The increase in the number of visitors come to Bali has led to a massive surge in waste volume. As per Bali Provincial Environment and Sanitation Agency data, waste production in Bali reached 4,281 tons per day in 2021, with 11% of it being plastic waste [17]. In 2025, Bali faces a serious environmental crisis marked by daily waste generation reaching 3.4 thousand tons (only 29% managed). On September 9-10, 2025, heavy rains caused flash floods in 7 regencies/cities (Denpasar, Badung, Jembrana, Klungkung, Gianyar, Tabanan, Karangasem) with a height of 50–300 cms. This disaster claimed lives and reflects the fragility of environmental governance. which hit 7 regencies/cities, and chronic plastic waste pollution on the coast [18]. This crisis was exacerbated by the plan of closure of the Suwung Final Disposal Site (TPA) at the end of 2025. Plastic waste still dominates pollution in coastal and marine areas.

Some water reservoirs alike lakes are not free from pollution. Thus, as developing countries like Indonesia and other countries alike are still struggling to environmental problems; balancing the course between the planet, people and profit as the pillars of sustainable tourism.

In response to these issues, the concerned people start to look at local wisdoms, which may be utilized to raise awareness as well as controlling the stakeholders involved in developing tourism infrastructure. Key principles in sustainable tourism development, such as the Triple P (Planet, People, and Profit), can accordingly act as a guide in its implementation. A good combination of them is the harmonious relationship and balance between profit, planet and people, thus positively impacting the harmony of the natural environment and the well-being of the surrounding community. What is pertinent, businesses are continually encouraged to develop and spread economic opportunities for all, but if they utilize or interact with nature, they must act wisely guide by research, avoiding excessive exploitation that could disrupt the balance or even cause environmental damage. Future generations of Bali should enjoy the same condition as what we have nowadays. Sustainability means what we are doing now is not harming our tomorrow.

Bali island in Indonesia, has long been known as a beautiful island and a major tourist destination. However, only a few people know that local development in Bali, across various sectors, was planned and implemented using local wisdom known as Tri Hita Karana (THK---three causes of well-beings, namely harmonious relationships between people and people, people with the environment, and people with God [19, 20, 21, 22, 23] whether in individual or community level. This concept does not only organize the external world but also the internal one, namely the relationship between humans with themselves; while development is often associated with the external, physical world. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), initiated by the United Nations, have seen environmental disruption and even damage that threaten global life. It was designed as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the environment, and ensure global prosperity by 2030. These 17 interconnected goals, emphasizing that "no one should be left behind," address social, economic, and environmental sustainability [19, 20, 21, 22, 23]. The spirit of THK aligns with the SDGs. However, the issue of environmental imbalance, evidenced by floods, waste and other events, proves a significant gap between expectations and reality. This is interesting to examine, where the problem lies: planning, implementation, law enforcement, human resources, financial resources, and so on.

Ideally, THK is understood not merely as an abstract ethical guideline, but as a living philosophy that permeates and guides Balinese daily life, rituals, governance

structures, and community practices [20, 21, 22, 23]. Its integration into tourism policies, spatial planning, and institutional management reflects the growing recognition of the value of indigenous wisdom in addressing complex sustainability challenges [8, 25, 26]. With this balanced integration, the development of tourism still has its root in Balinese culture without rejecting goodness from other traditions.

This paper aims to explore the existence and role of THK in navigating the two poles of interests based on anthropocentrism and ecocentrism in tourism development in Bali; explaining THK as a philosophical force that harmonizes two different interests to realize tourism development that is not only sustainable, profitable but also dignified. Some real actions are attempted to solve problems.

## **Methodology**

This research adopted a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono [27] qualitative research method is a research method based on post-positivism or interpretive philosophy, used to research the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation (a combination of observation, interviews, documentation), the data obtained tends to be qualitative, data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the results of the research are to understand meaning, understand uniqueness, construct phenomena, and find hypotheses. Qualitative descriptive analysis techniques are used to describe, illustrate, and explain a tourism phenomenon using accurate data from interviews in the form of audio and transcripts or text that have been collected previously [28]. The technique of presenting the results of the analysis uses an informal method so that the presentation of the results of the data analysis uses ordinary words to make it easier for readers to understand and comprehend [28].

The research sample was determined using purposive random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaire followed by in-depth interviews with two individuals from each member of Penta Helix: businessmen, government policymakers, academia, community informal leaders, and media persons. Secondary data were collected from sources such as from the Statistics Bureau, the Tourism Office, books, theses/dissertations, journals, reports, and social media. All data are presented, categorized, and analyzed to answer the research questions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Anthropocentrism**

Environmental imbalances or even destruction is mostly due to development approach adopted known as anthropocentrism. According this philosophy, "that

human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world. This is a basis belief embedded in many Western religious and philosophies that regards man as separated from and superior to nature, and believe that human life has intrinsic value, while other entities (including animal, plants, mineral resources, and so on) are resources that may justifiably be exploited for the benefit of mankind, rather than being regarded as entities with their own intrinsic value" [29]. In this human-centered approach, human is the controller over nature. In tourism development, stake holders are persons/institutions who are the most responsible in its development. They have interests and establish communication and cooperation in establishing a tourist destination/object. For utilizing the nature, various forms of technology were created to satisfy their needs or desire. In this society 5.0, digital technology transforms our life including business operation in tourism. The involvement of technology in the fields of transportation, navigation, information, education, and even war to achieve the goal of world domination. In the Indonesian context, particularly in Bali, weak instrumental anthropocentrism is applied; efforts to protect nature are mostly seen from the benefit side only. The consequence is that the conversion of green space like subak or forest areas cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, discussion about it still mostly remains in paper only not yet executed in a real action by the stake holders.

In Bali tourism was welcomed with optimism and promises of per capita income growth, numerous job opportunities, cultural preservation/revitalization, and other things shared hopes for the prosperity of all. Despite of its benefit given by tourism as a business, many disadvantages like uncontrolled land conversion, soil, water, and air pollution were already in front our doors. A growing concern from various people or non-government organization have started to speak up about it; and they thought whether the present development in tourism can protect the environmental sustainability in the future. Next generation should still have the same chance like us today to experience the beauty and sustainable Bali. No one would like to think tourism as a disaster rather than blessing for the welfare of Bali. This is due to the fact that the anthropocentrism view leads humans to use nature to fulfill their desires, while desires (lust) are never satisfied; they continually seek to be fulfilled. Here lies the question of moral action in utilizing nature.

Several environmental cases as impacts of tourism development, both small and large scale, have colored the tourism journey in Indonesia, especially Bali, a small island between Java and Lombok islands. Major environmental problems in Bali are water crisis, land degradation and conversion, pollution and environmental quality, deforestation and biodiversity loss, and natural disaster risk. These mentioned cases above exist due to some contributing factors like low public awareness, including waste sorting; weak law enforcement/local regulations; lack of waste disposal sites; and waste management does not yet utilize advanced technology.

## **Ecocentrism**

In different with anthropocentrism approach in tourism, eco-centrism or biocentrism approach considers nature's right to exist without any disturbance or destruction. Each and every entity in the universe has an intrinsic value which contribute to the whole system of universe; hence it should be respected and protected by all of us. It does not necessarily give direct benefit to human, but the whole universe is supported by all existences [29]. Meanwhile according to The International Ecotourism Society, "Ecotourism is now defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests" [30]. It urges moral action to preserve nature while utilizing for tourism business. This approach can provide solutions to environmental damage or degradation caused by unchecked utilization that only considers instrumental values, while the overall ecosystem remains disturbed and even endangered. So, many cases can be seen in daily life which does seemingly not attract people to think of this case. Nevertheless, global warming is no longer a problem of one or two countries, but the whole world, and its handling involves the global community. ["It stands that the Earth itself is placed at the center of ethical consideration, rather than prioritizing humans (anthropocentrism). Its argument that humans are just one part of a larger web of life, emphasizing the health of entire ecological systems and promoting moral responsibility towards all non-human beings and processes, often advocating for sustainability and deeper connection with nature" [31]. Each entity in the world is connected in one or other way forming the whole system of the universe.

Apart from too much dominated with anthropocentrism, Bali struggles hard to incorporate principles of ecotourism in the development of tourism in Bali. This effort is to control the anthropocentrism approach, balancing between profit-oriented and nature-oriented tourisms. Awareness of the stake holders are of the utmost importance, not only in theory but in practices. It seems no tourism object or sites is purely developed based on ecotourism or biocentrism in Bali despite the fact awareness towards it has been increasing in recent years. Some actions have been attempted in some resorts, hotels, villas, restaurants, etc.to protect nature from dangers. The practices of implementing the Triple R: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle; green energy, waste management, etc. have been done by many hotels, resorts, restaurant, etc. These actions are not without results; a changing mind from rigid and closed anthropocentrism to ecocentrism has been starting to flourish.

Ecocentrism at the current stage, where tourism development is still dominated by the control of anthropocentrism and short-term economic interests, this approach can be consciously utilized by the stakeholders. It is difficult to change way of thinking and acting as long as no public awareness to fight with destroyers of nature.

Some core principles of ecotourism are worth to considers. According to the International Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. This means that those who implement,

participate in and market ecotourism activities should adopt the following ecotourism principles: (1) minimize physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts, (2) build environmental and cultural awareness and respect, (3) provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts, (4) provide direct financial benefits for conservation, (5) generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry, (6) deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates, (7) design, construct and operate low-impact facilities, and (8) recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous people in your community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment [32]. Irrespective of intrinsic value of every entity in the world, nature-centered orientation, interconnectedness of all living beings and moral responsibility to preserve nature, ecotourism should respect local people and culture in global world. Indigenous culture tends to be marginalized and ultimately can be fade away due to global culture. The beliefs in the divinity should ideally be also respected and protected as the creations of God. The stronger the belief, the more respecting and protecting nature are. This is often symbolized with *tapak dara* sign that is a cross in Balinese tradition; meaning that one should maintain a balancing and harmonious relationship vertically and horizontally not only with the divinity, but also with human fellow and nature as revealed in THK principles. Human position is at the center of the cosmological awareness, and act as a balancing agent.

Leaving these two uncompromising positions remaining unsettled, there will no benefit could be gained unless a consciously compromising approach is attempted to bring them working together for the well fare of all. Emerging scholarship in sustainable tourism has increasingly questioned the strict separation between these two mentioned ethical orientations, calling for more integrative, more-than-human perspectives that acknowledge the interconnectedness of human and natural systems [33, 9, 34]. THK is frequently cited in this literature as a culturally grounded model for transcending this binary, offering a holistic framework that positions human well-being as inseparable from spiritual and environmental harmony. The Anthropocene concept has further catalyzed a broader policy shift toward pluralistic governance frameworks that are more compatible with THK's integrative philosophy [35, 36, 33]. With view, Bali development in tourism is still rooted in the values of indigenous culture compatible with the culture tourism.

### ***Tri Hita Karana (THK) as a mediating and balancing force***

The gap between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism remains unsolved unless no compromising attempt pursues to consider benefits for the triple P: planet, people, and profit. The negative impacts left by the development adopting anthropocentric approach in tourism is not without bad consequences. Social media has shown many environmental problems exist all over the world. Hence, awareness of stake holders especially the business persons and governments are required for building tourism as a business beneficial for all, especially the local community who protects and preserves

the culture and environment. Balinese people pays a lot for preserving, protecting, and developing their culture and environment since time immemorial. It is not fair for anyone closing eyes and heart to protect them just simply aiming at economic gains. Frankly speaking no business can grow well when environment is in danger. Respecting and protecting local culture and the wellbeing of local community is a principle of eco-tourism. Ecocentrism approach emphasizes on planet only or local community causing an extreme position of anti-human, whereas for anthropocentrism it is human to control the nature. As a matter of fact, nature is protected is just to satisfy their desires. Unfortunately, human sometimes takes too much from nature which can cause imbalance environment. Further, this approach does not consider divinity in every existence including nature; it is purely naturalism. So, the relationship as is depicted in anthropocentrism or ecocentrism approach is only horizontally connected, in fact everything is connected in a way around in subtle way; interconnectedness is the core principles in eco-centrism.

The Balinese approach to environmental sustainability is rooted in local culture, wisdom and religious beliefs. Balinese society demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental protection, guided by the principles of ecocentrism and the Hindu philosophy of THK, which emphasizes harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and the divine. This worldview is evident in daily practices, rituals, and community-based management systems. For example, the subak irrigation system, local bans on polluting waterways, and the sacred treatment of forests all reflect a holistic understanding that environmental stewardship is both a spiritual duty and a practical necessity. Traditional knowledge, religious rituals, and customary laws (such as awig-awig) collectively ensure that nature is respected, preserved, and integrated into the cultural identity of the Balinese people [37]. Traditional religious practices like Tumpek Wariga (tree blessings), Tumpek Wayang (weapon blessing), Tumpek Kandang (animal/creatures belessing), and Wana Kertih (forest preservation), Samudra Kerthih (ocean blessing), Danu Kerthih (lake blessing), etc. demonstrate deep-rooted ecocentrism ethics within Balinese Hinduism.

Irrespective its positive contribution, however, Bali currently has modern pressures challenge traditional environmental practices, necessitating integrated and collaborative solutions. Despite strong cultural and religious foundations for environmental care, Bali faces significant challenges from urbanization, tourism, and land conversion, which have led to water crises, loss of agricultural land, and threats to forest sustainability. These pressures risk undermining traditional systems like subak and the customary management of forests [37]. The implementation or application of it in an actual business is still hard to do. There should be a rigorous shift from ritual ethics to real action of preservation ethics. Contributing to sustainable tourism, THK scholarship lies in its role as a non-Western ethical model that challenges the dominance of Euro-American sustainability frameworks. THK forms eco-centric approach in environmental ethics by fostering community empowerment, ecological justice, and restorative approaches to governance that differ fundamentally from

punitive Western regulatory models [35, 23]. With this collaboration, it looks fair and balances of two traditions not only in theory but in practice.

An increasing significance positions of THK as a mediating framework is capable of reconciling anthropocentric and eco-centric tensions in tourism governance. By integrating social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions into a single coherent philosophy, THK provides a culturally grounded pathway for addressing the competing demands of tourism development and environmental conservation [8, 21, 26, 23]. Again, acting as a mediator, THK should be implemented in the field giving a philosophical foundation as well as practical guidance for the stake holders. Irrespective of any real action to be attempted, awareness and the faith of the law of causation (karma phala) for the Balinese is the utmost importance.

Common understanding in looking at the THK positions human as a conscious agent whose relationships are with external entities, viz. other human, environment, and divinity. The unexplored domain is the relationship within oneself; a subtle relation between the small I and the capital I. Psychological imbalance experienced in oneself, is rooted in the inability to build a harmonious relationship with oneself rooted in ignorance in viewing the body as a biological system only. Thus, knowing one own real identity is utmost important. It is only viewed from gross body (sthula sarira) perspective and identify himself as the body; subtle body (suksma sarira) and causal body (antah karana sarira) are not the concerned even ignorant about them. Conducive internal relationship is the base on it to build harmonious relationship with external agents. Here is the place of culture mind and contemplative life demanded in the changing fast world. Pranayama breathing control as a part of yoga is helpful in reaching calm, balance, and equipoise state of mind. Mindful action is needed to do moral action to human and nature. Human is a part and parcel of the external world; they are in the state of interconnectedness and all creatures including human are a big family (vaisudaiva kutumbakam); so treating others as our members of our big family.

The uncontrolled use of nature is due to imbalance relation internally. Balinese people maintain harmonious relationships with other people; as the society becoming more heterogenous and complex the communication and relationship are not only among Balinese people but with anyone come or stay to Bali. In reality, they come along with their different socio-cultural backgrounds; so Balinese people should be wise in viewing this and adapt to the good whenever necessary. Nevertheless, they come not only bring good things, but sometimes also negative power which can degrade the purity of Bali. The culture tourism developed in Bali is competing with "tourism culture," which may not all can be accepted. THK in this regard can be utilized for a balance and harmonious relationship.

For Balinese maintaining a relationship with God is a personal belief in the supreme and oneness of God. He is the highest, all knowing, omnipresent, omniscience, the creator, sustainer and finally pull everything back to its origin. Everything that exists is God's creation, so every human should feel like brothers and sisters with anyone regardless of their background differences because everything or

everyone is equal before the God; hence how can one do harmful action to other. People who believe in God, should also care for God's creations. Balinese people according this THK also maintains a harmonious relationship with nature / environment, both biotic and abiotic. This is increasingly challenging now as Balinese people have likely shifted their cosmic orientation from viewing nature as a part and parcel of life and humanity, towards nature as something to be controlled and exploited as widely as possible for human life, without a deep consideration for its sustainability. This trend tends to be increasing, necessitating a balance between tourism and sustainable environment.

Balinese environmental ethics are deeply rooted in the belief that nature is sacred and must be treated with utmost respect, as any harm inflicted upon the environment is seen as causing disharmony not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual realm. This perspective is reflected in the integration of religious rituals and local wisdom into water and forest management practices, ensuring that conservation efforts are both culturally embedded and community-driven. However, the increasing pressures from land conversion, waste pollution, and the rapid growth of tourism present significant challenges to these traditional systems [37]. The pressure may be taken as challenge to find out a better way to keep going tourism in the right way.

For such securing a balance and harmonious relationship, THK is getting challenges especially in practical level. In so far, THK is much understood from ritual point of view not yet from business practices, i.e. tourism. This mediating function is particularly evident in community-based tourism initiatives, where THK principles simultaneously guide the protection of natural ecosystems and the empowerment of local communities. For example, ecotourism projects in areas such as Bukit Cemeng and the dolphin ecotourism site in Lovina, North Bali, demonstrate how THK informs spatial zoning, community engagement, and environmental stewardship at the same time [38, 23]. These cases illustrate THK's capacity to operationalize sustainable tourism principles in ways that are simultaneously culturally meaningful and ecologically effective [39, 40, 41]. The practices on external environment are in fact much expected to implement since many imbalances existed due to lack participation of THK principles started from the planning till the operation of a tourism project. The concerns are not only on environment but also on local community and culture.

At the corporate level, THK-based sustainability practices have been found to enhance organizational performance in the hospitality sector by providing strategic cultural differentiation and competitive advantage. The revitalization of Balinese cultural identity through THK-based management approaches has enabled hotels and tourism enterprises to align profitability with sustainability goals [42]. Research on five-star hotels in Bali further confirms that THK-aligned practices in human resource management and eco-innovation contribute positively to both employee performance and long-term organizational sustainability [43, 44, 45, 46]. These cases testify that

THK, if seriously considered, can be useful bringing a dynamic balance by integrating the two approaches in tourism governance.

### **Hurdles to THK integration**

Integrating THK in a real practice is not free from hurdles despite the fact the actors in the field are Balinese. A shift from ritual ethics to practical or business ethics seems to be hard to materialize in the practice of tourism business. A range of institutional and structural barriers impedes the effective integration of THK into sustainable tourism governance. Weak inter-agency coordination, economy-centered approaches to tourism planning, and limited institutional support for customary governance systems are among the most frequently cited obstacles [6, 7]. Apart from these weakening factors, awareness on the importance of THK of the concern is the most dominant leading to the uncontrolled conversion of land or deforestation had happened in the last 40 years. Land use transformation driven by commercial tourism development also poses a significant threat to biodiversity and the cultural landscapes that THK seeks to preserve, with regulatory gaps between national-level spatial planning frameworks and local customary governance mechanisms creating implementation inconsistencies [47, 48, 6]. In many cases, local people only got to know the project has been started securing the permit was issued by the central government without the involvement of the stake holders, especially the local community.

As approach adopted by anthropocentrism in business, the practice concerns mainly on economic benefit. Commercialization pressures further compound these barriers by incentivizing the superficial instrumentalization of THK as a tourism branding asset, at the expense of its deeper philosophical and governance commitments [49, 41]. These pressures are particularly acute in rapidly developing areas of Bali, where economic growth imperatives frequently override cultural and environmental sustainability concerns. Addressing these barriers will require stronger inter-agency policy alignment, more robust customary law enforcement mechanisms, and institutional frameworks that genuinely value indigenous governance systems rather than appropriating them for commercial purposes [50, 26, 7]. Apart from this fact is the good will is required of all the stake holders to save Bali from destruction environmentally and culturally.

### **Key enablers of effective THK application**

In contrast to the hurdles mentioned above, several enabling factors have been often associated with successful THK implementation in sustainable tourism practices. Community empowerment and a strong sense of cultural identity are highlighted as the most critical enablers, providing the social and philosophical foundation necessary for THK-based governance to function effectively [38, 25, 26] providing serious consideration that local community should be taken into account for its dignity and well-being. In so far, the involvement local community through its proper

representation is lack; and THK is only taken as giving flavor to cause the ingredients looks nice or delicious. Ideally, when communities maintain ownership over their cultural heritage and governance systems, THK can fulfill its mediating function more effectively, ensuring that both human and environmental interests are protected within the tourism development process. The role of mediation should be consciously given to all stake holders so that balancing and harmonious relation as the bases for the well-being of all.

Apart from the attempt to integrate the two approaches for a fair and inclusive paradigm, management plays an important role. Transparency, accountability, and ethical governance practices that align with THK values have been shown to reduce conflicts related to resource misuse and strengthen social cohesion among tourism stakeholders [50, 12]. Green infrastructure investments that incorporate THK principles, such as bamboo-based watershed restoration and THK-integrated spatial planning for disaster risk reduction, demonstrate the practical viability of applying THK in environmental management and climate adaptation contexts [51, 52]. These enabling conditions collectively suggest that THK's effectiveness is maximized when cultural, institutional, and environmental governance dimensions are addressed simultaneously [4, 25, 26, 12]. Owing these facts, communication and coordination amongst the stake holders are required to ensure every step is completed with care for sustainable development tourism of Bali.

### **Calling for awareness and environmental sensitivity**

Any ideally good concept remains ineffective unless real action performed to materialize the abstract concept. Similar condition happens with reference to the THK as an indigenous ethics. Balinese is proud of it, and becomes a concept articulated in various occasions to “sell” Bali economically no matter tourism utilized it. Awareness on its importance to keep sustainable of nature is still less comparing to the spirit to reach economic profit in tourism business. In real practice, tourism as a business comes first, then comes culture in the second place, not otherwise as per the spirit of tourism of Bali.

Before calling for action, igniting awareness of the importance of nature and people is the utmost important. Collective awareness on the importance of sustainable tourism which covers both nature and culture impacts bigger force and pressure to the concerned people, especially the government and the business world. Many Balinese keep silence or keep away from this issue, especially those who have been against the green ethics proposal or has gained economic benefits from endangering environment. Due to digitalized tourism, Bali's tourism faces increasing environmental pressure, driving a shift towards greater awareness and sensitivity, rooted in the traditional THK philosophy (harmony with God, people, and nature) implied balancing relationship in utilizing nature and building harmonious relationship with human fellow. Since the Bali island is small, the uncontrolled use of green space for infrastructure should be done with care rooting in research.

This cultural-ecological integration positions THK as both a complement and a critique to global sustainability frameworks. While the SDGs offer a widely accepted international reference point for sustainable development, THK introduces spiritual and cultural dimensions that the SDGs' triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability often overlooks [8, 53]. Scholars argue that this philosophical gap limits the SDGs' applicability in culturally embedded governance contexts such as Bali, and that indigenous frameworks like THK are therefore necessary to ensure that global sustainability discourse remains culturally sensitive, equitable, and holistic [54, 55, 56, 57]. With these thoughts the growth of tourism of Bali becomes holistic and integrative in which THK acts as a balancing agent for the well fare of all.

## Conclusions

The growth of tourism of Bali has been mostly influenced by anthropocentrism approach, i.e. human centered, rather than eco-centrism, i.e. nature-centered approach in its development. The growth of it in the last 40 years has contributed significant economic benefits. Nevertheless, threats even environmental depletions or damages cannot be avoided especially in south part of Bali. Deforestation, conversion of lands for infrastructure, waste especially plastic wastes and its management, and pollutions are serious environmental problems as a consequence of tourism development. Thinkers have been looking for a solution for it minimizing the gap between the two approaches. Incorporating principles of eco-tourism is one way to make it more integrative started from planning till operations.

As an indigenous Balinese philosophy, THK provides a mediating role to minimize even stabilize the tensions between anthropocentric and eco-centric approaches to tourism development. These principles keep maintaining a balancing and harmonious relationships between business and environmental sustainability and local community welfare; and between worldly and spiritual achievements. In its operations it integrates legal frameworks, special use, corporate sustainability, community-based tourism, and participatory of stake holders, offering a holistic through integrating material, spiritual, social, environmental sustainability, and harmony.

As a balancing power in the competing powers of anthropocentrism and eco-centrism, a balancing and harmonious relation either with divinity, human fellow and nature cannot be reached properly unless the same exists internally, that is, between the small I and the capital I. To keep a balancing and dynamic state of relationship, one needs to practice a contemplative life for reaching a state of a calm, balanced, and equipoise mind. In here, the role of yoga is important for cultivating and stabilizing the body, mind and soul. In a such state, the conscious mind can function to control the mind itself in utilizing nature and running the business. Owing to this fact, the THK can be added one more relationship thus becoming Catur Hita Karana (CHT)-four causes for happiness, i.e. internal relationship between the small "I" and the

capital “I”. The former is being a limited consciousness, whereas the latter is the unlimited one. In this system of ethics, human is at the center acting to keep the relationships balance, harmonious and dynamic.

THK's enduring relevance to sustainable tourism theory and practice lies in its firmness on the inclusivity of human, spiritual, and environmental well-being as well as the importance of awareness to implement THK principles in practices. As an indigenous philosophy like THK it offers indispensable perspectives that challenge dominant paradigms and open new pathways toward genuinely sustainable futures of Bali tourism. These challenges highlight the need for more systematic and evidence-based approaches to THK integration in various levels like theory, policy, practice, evaluation, and research.

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