

Seven Charms of Balinese Nuances at Pura Agung Giri Natha Semarang

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Hindu, Pura Agung Giri Natha, Religious Tourism	Seeing the small number of religious tourism destinations in the city of Semarang, making the Hindus of Semarang city place Pura Agung Girinatha a place for religious ceremonies, and also as a social religious place. Pura Agung Giri Natha name is taken from the words Giri which means hill or mountain, and Natha which means sturdy. The construction of this temple was deliberately built on a high place. Pura Agung Giri Natha itself is an original Hindu temple built from various kinds of Balinese architecture, as well as buildings that have their own functions and philosophies containing various interesting meanings to know. Such as the placement of several Bentar Temples or Bali Gate as boundaries between three main areas, namely Nistha Mandala, Madya Mandala and Utama Mandala. Nistya Mandala, the outermost part of the temple which functions as a supporting facility for visitors to Pura Agung. Then there is Madya Mandala which functions as a meeting place, big day activities (piodalan) and social events. Then the last and most sacred part of this temple is the Utama mandala, as the core of the temple which functions as a place of worship for Hindus. The main building in the form of the magnificent throne of Padma, which symbolizes Mount Mandara as the throne of God in the Samudramantana story, is also contained in the Utama mandala. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method using the method of observation, interviews and documentation as the main information material in writing.

INTRODUCTION

Pura Agung Girinatha is not only a sacred place for the Hindus of the city of Semarang, but also as a symbol and identity. The Hindus of the city of Semarang consist of various ethnic groups and regional origins. There are Hindus in Semarang who come from India, Bali, Java with different social conditions. The Hindus of the city of Semarang place Pura Agung Girinatha not only as a sacred and sacred place for religious ceremonies, but also as a religious social place. The erosion of Indonesian cultural awareness can be a big concern if this continues. Changing the mindset of this generation must be changed by explaining that there are many philosophies contained in the original building of the archipelago. All the reliefs and architecture that are presented is not just decoration and much can be drawn from a relief either the story or a hope and a wish engraved in a symbol that are starting to be forgotten.

In 1984 construction began to be carried out again until the temple was in accordance with the place of worship for Hindus in general. *From stage to stage the temple is laid out, starting from building Padmasana, Bale Pawedan, Panglurah, Bale Simpen, Bale Pengaruman, Penyengker Wall, Temple, Bale Bengong, Bale Ringgit, Taman Sari, and other supporting facilities.*

On April 4, 2004, Pura Agung Giri Natha name was taken from the words *Giri* which means hill or mountain, and *Natha* which means sturdy. was inaugurated by the Governor of Central Java, Mardianto, as the largest and most comprehensive place of worship for Hindus in Semarang. According to the *Pemangku* of the Indonesian Hindu Dharma Association of Semarang City, *Nengah Wirta Dharmayana*, the construction of this

temple was deliberately built on a high place because the worshippers need a quiet place to build a place of worship. Hindus pray in a comfortable, quiet, and focused condition so they can concentrate their minds. (Anisah, 2019), (Oman.Bjg.C.3.1, 2020)

The temple area is divided into three parts, namely *Nistha Mandala*, *Madya Mandala* and *Utama Mandala*. *Nistya Mandala*, the outermost part of the temple which is used for parking, canteens, and bathrooms. Then there is *Madya Mandala* which functions as a meeting place, big day activities (*pidalan*) and social events. Then the last and most sacred part of this temple, namely the *Utama mandala*, as the core of this temple functions as a place of worship for Hindus.

The purpose of writing this article is to introduce readers to a new religious tour in Semarang, namely the Agung Giri Natha Temple. Besides that, writing this article also aims to show the beauty of architecture, scenery, and the atmosphere in the Agung Giri Natha Temple.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method using the observation method. To obtain field data, several data collection techniques were used to complete the research. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation as the main information material in writing so that it can include as much information as possible from Pura Agung Giri Natha. The observation technique is a data collection technique by direct observation to the research location in order to get a clear picture of the problem being studied, as well as record and document the data needed in the study. Observations were made at the Pura Agung Giri Natha Semarang complex to collect the necessary data regarding the situation and conditions during religious and tourism activities. The data obtained can reveal and describe in accordance with the expected research objectives, to complement the data obtained, conduct a literature review and documentation in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Visitors of Puri Agung Giri Natha

Pura Agung Giri Natha is open to everyone, even visitors can enter to the Utama mandala. Yoga activities are also often open to the general public on Sundays. Visitors can come in the morning until 20.00 WIB but the afternoon is the right time to come and take photos in front of the Madya Mandala gate. (jateng daily.com, 2019), (rido123pari, 2019)

The Hindus of Pura Agung Giri Natha are also not only Semarang people, but also many Balinese, Jogjanese, and even foreign people, such as India, Germany and Australia. Because in Semarang there is no typical Indian Hindu temple, Indian Hindus pray here. Although their ways are somewhat different, they still adapt to our society's way of praying, so for that we need to mark the date of the world's Hindu holy day, such as Siwaratri and Saraswati holidays. Usually they will pray to the temple, and the chance to meet foreign tourists will be higher. So do not be surprised if in the statue of Lord Ganesha there are candle lights typical of worship in India and some prayer equipment that is rarely found in Balinese temples in general.

Nistya Mandala

When visitors enter the *Pura Area* visitors don't have to pay anything to enter here because parking is free. The security of this temple is quite guaranteed because in front of the motorbike parking lot, there is a guard post that is never empty. Visitors must make sure the health program is maintained by wearing a mask and

washing hands before entering the temple. At the front of the temple visitors will be greeted with a statue of Lord Ganesha surrounded by a lotus pond. This statue is deliberately placed at the front because Lord Ganesha is the God of repellent reinforcements. (Budhiman, 2021) And after that visitors can park vehicle there, then turn left, there is a hand washing area that visitors can use there. Now when visitors enter visitors will be greeted by the temple canteen also selling accessories, kebaya, udeng, prayer needs, food and snacks typical of the island of the gods, such as Nasi Campur Bali at quite affordable prices, which is around 25,000 rupiah per serving.

In the canteen section there is also a terrace facing directly to the sprawling and beautiful city of Semarang. Sometimes visitors can meet people who are happy to teach them Balinese. Apart from learning Balinese, visitors can also hear Balinese gamelan chants and other artistic performances during *piodalan*.



Figure 1: *Nistya Mandala Area*
Source: (Pura Giri Natha Semarang, 2014)

Surroundings Area

The air in this temple is also very cool, because there are many plants. The coolness of this temple is also mixed with the aroma of incense and *sesari* offered in many places. Although many *canangs* are scattered in this temple area, the cleanliness of this temple is maintained. Starting from the toilet and its surroundings, cleanliness in this place is the most important thing. The parking area describes the temple as the abode of God and ancestors. Cleanliness must be maintained so that their prayers are devoted to God. With the typical Balinese architecture, food, the atmosphere of prayer and the positive energy created in this temple, the temple depicts Bali island.

The Core of Pura

If visitors are interested in entering the Utama Mandala, what they have to do is wearing polite clothes (covering the feet). Wearing *kamen* is preferred, but if they don't bring it, the temple has provided *kamen* at the temple at the front shelf of the main gate of the mandala. They should also wear a scarf tied around the waist because the tied scarf symbolizes the attachment of lust and focus on the presence of God. This scarf can also be obtained on the front shelf of the Main Mandala. Then for women, it is mandatory to tie their hair, no matter how short it is. Because when the hair is loose, it symbolizes anger, and instability. And when visitors enter the Utama mandala, visitors can pass at the entrance that says IN, and should not enter through the middle door because the door is only opened on 1 holy day of Hindus, and not just anyone can enter through that door. (Anasmk, 2020)



(Figure 2: *Utama Mandala Gate*)
Source: (Anasmk, 2020)

Before entering visitors have to take off their shoes and splash some holy water, three times on visitors head, and say a mantra, which means the first is good, the second is good, the third is good/holy. They can also directly ask the temple person/holder there. Then when visitors enter the main mandala, visitors will be greeted by the strong *pelinggih - pelinggih*, but the most prominent is the *Padmasana* (Lotus where the Brahma resides). According to the people there, *Padmasana* is a medium to focus the mind on the intended deity. It is shaped like a very large mountain seat because in the past, Hindus worshiped God with the media of gods and goddesses. At one time the followers of different sects fought each other coldly about which god was the strongest and the weakest, until there was a priest who was worried about this debate, finally making a *Padmasana* which only contained 1 throne, namely for Hyang Widhi Wasa. (Sugiwa, 2021) The devotees are taught to focus on praying to the intended deity through *Padmasana*. *Padmasana* also asks Mount Mandara from the Samudramanthana story which tells about the stirring of the ocean of milk to get the nectar of life. There visitors will also find *Penunggun Karang* and *Rong Telu*. Next to it is the *Pelinggih Surya* which is surrounded by a lotus fish pond. On the outskirts of it many flowering plants are planted, and in the main center of the Mandala, there are various types of frangipani flowers that are deliberately planted there.



(Figure 3: *Padmasana*)
Source: (Author)

CONCLUSION

Agung Giri Natha Temple is one of the hidden tourist attractions in Semarang that not many people know about. This temple has a very beautiful and charming architecture. Agung Giri Natha Temple consists of

several temple buildings located around the center of the temple. Aside from being a place of worship, this pagoda has also been inaugurated as a religious tourism spot in Semarang. If traveling to Pura Agung Giri Natha visitors can feel the atmosphere like a temple in Bali, starting from the building, the atmosphere, and the people in the temple also strengthen the atmosphere like in Bali. The facilities in this place are also very adequate, such as parking areas, toilets and canteens. The experience that will be obtained when visiting this temple is also very interesting because visitors can witness religious ceremonies held at the temple. Apart from religious ceremonies at the temple, visitors can also listen to gamelan chants.

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