

REIMAGINING SUSTAINABILITY: THE PHILOSOPHY OF *TRI HITA KARANA* AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BALI AND BEYOND

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Abstract

This paper reimagines *Tri Hita Karana*, the Balinese philosophy of balance between the spiritual, social, and natural realms, as a globally relevant framework for integrated community development. Drawing on over two decades of collaborative fieldwork through the Bali Field School, we examine how this philosophy is lived out in Balinese ritual, ecology, education, and governance. By examining the lived expressions of Parahyangan (human–divine), Pawongan (human–human), and Palemahan (human–nature), we demonstrate how these interdependent values shape everyday practices of sustainability in Bali. Situating *Tri Hita Karana* within global discourses on indigenous knowledge, moral development, and sustainability, we compare it with other culturally rooted frameworks such as *Buen Vivir*, *Ubuntu*, and *Aloha ‘Āina*. Through qualitative analysis of student reflections, community interviews, and ethnographic observations, we demonstrate how relational ethics and spiritual ecology inform resilient, place-based models of development. We argue that *Tri Hita Karana* offers not only a local philosophy, but a holistic, ethically grounded, and adaptable paradigm for addressing global challenges through decolonial pedagogy and community-based sustainability.

Keywords

Tri Hita Karana, Sustainability, Indigenous Epistemology, Community Development, Experiential Education, Spiritual Ecology

Introduction

The island of Bali has long attracted global attention for its spiritual, cultural, and ecological richness. Its terraced rice fields, intricate temple architecture, and ritual calendar are often portrayed as hallmarks of a harmonious integration between human society and the natural world. Yet beneath this image lies a growing tension: Bali faces mounting ecological pressures—including deforestation, water scarcity, and overdevelopment—exacerbated by decades of rapid tourism-driven growth. In 2024, Bali hosted over 16 million visitors (6 million international and 10 million domestic) annually (Bali Hotel Association, 2025), placing immense strain on infrastructure, natural resources, and traditional social institutions.

Amid these pressures, the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana offers an alternative paradigm rooted in indigenous knowledge. This philosophy—literally “the three causes of well-being”—emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance between the human and the divine (*Parahyangan*), among humans (*Pawongan*), and between humans and nature (*Palemahan*). Though often cited in policy and tourism discourse (Sutawan, 2004; Yudiantini, n.d.), Tri Hita Karana is frequently misunderstood as a symbolic or promotional framework rather than a living, dynamic system of community governance and spiritual ecology.

Scholars have increasingly turned to indigenous epistemologies in the search for sustainable development models that go beyond technocratic or market-driven solutions (Kimmerer, 2013; Escobar, 2018). Within this discourse, Tri Hita Karana remains underexplored as a site of practical knowledge and ethical reasoning, especially in relation to global debates on moral development, environmental stewardship, and the role of spirituality in sustainability.

This article builds on insights from over twenty years of educational collaboration and participatory fieldwork in Bali, developed through the Bali Field School (BFS)—a long-term partnership between the University of Guam and Udayana University. By analyzing a rich archive of ethnographic data, we argue that Tri Hita Karana is not a static cultural relic but a holistic, evolving framework for integrated community development. Our purpose is to demonstrate how its values and practices offer a context-sensitive, ethically grounded, and globally relevant model for sustainability—one that speaks to the spiritual and relational dimensions of human flourishing too often overlooked in mainstream development paradigms.

In articulating Tri Hita Karana as a model for integrated development, we aim to contribute to broader global conversations that are increasingly recognizing the importance of indigenous, relational, and spiritually grounded frameworks. Around the world, alternative epistemologies—such as *Buen Vivir* in Latin America, *Ubuntu* in Africa, and *Aloha ‘Āina* in Hawai‘i—are similarly rooted in ethical relationships among people, nature, and the sacred. These frameworks challenge dominant paradigms of development that prioritize growth and consumption, offering instead holistic visions of well-being grounded in reciprocity, stewardship, and spiritual ecology. By situating Tri Hita Karana within this emerging translocal discourse, our study affirms the significance of localized knowledge systems in informing global sustainability efforts and moral development. In this way, the Balinese experience speaks not only to regional or cultural specificity, but to a wider reimagining of human flourishing in an era of planetary crisis.

Context and Methodology

Since its inception in 2000, the Bali Field School (BFS) has served as a dynamic educational and research model that combines experiential learning, critical reflection, and cultural immersion. This program—an academic partnership between the University of Guam and Udayana University—invites undergraduate students to live with Balinese families, participate in religious rituals, and engage in collaborative fieldwork alongside local scholars, farmers, educators, and spiritual leaders. Rooted in principles of decolonial pedagogy, the BFS emphasizes learning *with* and *from* communities, rather than conducting research *on* them.

Over the course of 24 years, the BFS has facilitated deep, reciprocal engagement between students and host communities. From 2000 to 2024, data was collected during fifteen field school sessions, each lasting three to five weeks. In total, the dataset comprises more than 300 student reflection journals, approximately 40 focus group transcripts, and 60 semi-structured interviews with Balinese community members. Student participants ranged in age from 19 to 38, representing a diversity of ethnic and academic backgrounds. Community participants included temple leaders, subak (irrigation cooperative) members, village elders, educators, environmental activists, and youth leaders. Informed consent was obtained either verbally or in writing, and interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, Balinese, or English, depending on participant preference and context.

Our theoretical approach draws on constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), which prioritizes co-construction of meaning, researcher reflexivity, and attention to sociocultural context. Rather than beginning with predefined hypotheses, we allowed themes to emerge through a systematic, iterative process. The data analysis unfolded in three coding phases. First, open coding was used to identify recurring motifs and conceptual categories in the journals, interviews, and field notes. Next, axial coding grouped related codes under broader themes corresponding to the three pillars of Tri Hita Karana: *Parahyangan* (human–divine), *Pawongan* (human–human), and *Palemahan* (human–nature). Finally, selective coding integrated these themes into a coherent conceptual framework that illuminates the ethical and spiritual underpinnings of sustainable community life in Bali.

To enhance analytical rigor, data validation was achieved through methodological triangulation, comparing insights across multiple sources—student reflections, participant interviews, group discussions, and ritual observations. In addition, we employed member checking, sharing preliminary interpretations and theme summaries with Balinese collaborators for feedback, clarification, and cultural accuracy. This collaborative review process not only improved the validity of our findings but also deepened our own understanding of contextually embedded meanings. Periodic peer debriefings with external academics familiar with Balinese culture further strengthened the credibility of the analysis.

Importantly, the BFS positions itself not only as a pedagogical intervention but also as a form of community-based participatory research (CBPR). Research is embedded in relationships and structured through mutual learning, humility, and long-term commitment. Students are not neutral observers but reflective participants, and Balinese community members are not subjects but co-educators and co-creators of knowledge. This approach has generated a rich longitudinal dataset that documents both continuity and change in how the values of Tri Hita Karana are interpreted and lived across generations.

Conceptual Framework: Moral Education and Human Purpose

Our analysis is informed by a conceptual framework that emphasizes the spiritual and moral dimensions of human development, particularly as they relate to education and community building. Drawing on the work of Noguchi, Hanson, and Lample (1992), we position Tri Hita Karana within a broader understanding of human purpose that integrates ethical behavior, social responsibility, and spiritual insight.

Noguchi et al. propose that moral education must transcend utilitarian goals and instead cultivate inner capacities such as honesty, compassion, and a desire for justice. These virtues, when embedded in institutions and social practices, can transform individual lives and strengthen collective resilience. This view is reflected in Balinese pedagogy, where ethical values are taught not only through formal education but also through rituals, community participation, and familial duties. In this way, character development is inseparable from one's social and spiritual life.

In linking education to development, this framework supports the notion that sustainable progress cannot be achieved through material indicators alone. Instead, human well-being must be understood as a holistic condition that includes spiritual fulfillment, ecological harmony, and social cohesion. The Tri Hita Karana philosophy offers precisely such a multidimensional approach, rooted in a cosmology that balances individual growth with collective responsibility.

This philosophical alignment also resonates with global movements advocating for alternative development models—those that challenge dominant neoliberal paradigms and instead emphasize relational, communal, and ecologically attuned ways of living. In this sense, Tri Hita Karana offers not only a local solution but also a globally relevant ethical vision.

Findings and Analysis

Parahyangan: Human–Divine Relationship

In Balinese Hinduism, the connection between the human and the divine is ever-present, shaping daily life and larger social structures. This relationship, known as Parahyangan, is not limited to temple ceremonies or religious festivals; it is enacted through everyday rituals such as *canang sari* offerings, water blessings, ancestral prayers, and agricultural rites. These practices reinforce a cosmology where divinity permeates all aspects of the environment and community.

Central to this cosmology is the belief in the sacredness of place. Mountains, rivers, and trees are often seen as the abodes of spiritual beings or ancestral presences. The orientation of homes and temples adheres to spiritual principles, such as *kaja-kelod* (mountain-sea axis), which influence not just architecture but ethical orientation. Living in harmony with this sacred geography fosters humility, gratitude, and restraint—values that are crucial for both social ethics and ecological stewardship.

One of the most profound expressions of *Parahyangan* documented in our fieldwork is the ritual devotion to Dewi Sri, the Balinese rice goddess. Dewi Sri embodies the principles of life, fertility, and prosperity, and rituals in her honor sanctify the entire cycle of rice cultivation—from seed selection to planting, harvesting, and storage. This understanding emerged repeatedly in interviews with farmers and temple priests, particularly in the Tabanan and Bangli regions, where participants described how offerings and prayers to Dewi Sri are integrated into agricultural tasks. As one elder explained during a 2018 interview: “*We do not just grow rice—we care for the spirit of the land. Dewi Sri is part of every step, and that keeps us grateful and careful.*”

This theme was further reinforced in student field journals, where participants frequently reflected on the centrality of Dewi Sri ceremonies during temple visits and village stays. For example, one student wrote: “*It became clear that the rice fields are more than food—they are a sacred space, cared for with offerings and love, not just labor.*” Through open coding, these reflections were grouped under recurring themes such as “ritual ecology,” “sacred labor,” and “spiritual stewardship.” These codes, developed during the thematic analysis phase, contributed to our conclusion that Dewi Sri devotion functions not only as a religious observance but also as a cultural mechanism for reinforcing ecological ethics and community cohesion. In this way, the ritual devotion to Dewi Sri reflects a lived theology of interdependence that sustains both material and spiritual well-being.

Our fieldwork documents how such rituals continue to be practiced even amid modern pressures. For instance, students observed temple ceremonies where young people used social media to livestream sacred dances,

integrating digital tools while preserving spiritual intention. This fusion exemplifies how Parahyangan remains vibrant and relevant in contemporary Bali.

Pawongan: Human–Human Relationship

The second element of Tri Hita Karana, Pawongan, emphasizes the interrelationship among people. In Bali, this is most vividly expressed through the social structures of *banjar* (neighborhood associations), *desa adat* (customary villages), and *subak* (irrigation cooperatives). These institutions are not merely administrative; they are deeply moral and spiritual bodies that govern collective life.

The *banjar*, for example, is responsible for organizing communal labor, festivals, and decision-making meetings. Membership in a *banjar* is not optional but expected, and participation is a mark of ethical maturity. Within this context, values such as *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), *rukun* (harmony), and *adil* (justice) are continuously reinforced. Conflicts are often resolved through restorative rather than punitive measures, guided by customary law (*awig-awig*) that reflects centuries of communal wisdom.

Equally significant is the *subak* system, which organizes the equitable sharing of water among rice farmers. Governed by temple-based councils, *subak* illustrates how environmental management and social cooperation are integrated. Decisions about planting times, irrigation schedules, and pest control are made collectively, with reference not only to ecological needs but also to religious calendars and rituals. This model of governance exemplifies decentralized, democratic decision-making rooted in shared values.

Modernization has placed strains on these systems. Younger generations often migrate to cities or work in tourism, disrupting traditional roles. However, our research shows that the moral ethos of Pawongan persists. Youth-led initiatives for temple restoration, cultural festivals, and eco-tourism projects indicate a continuing commitment to communal well-being, albeit in transformed modalities.

Palemahan: Human–Nature Relationship

Palemahan, the third pillar of Tri Hita Karana, describes the sacred relationship between human beings and the natural world. In Bali, this relationship is not a metaphorical or ideological construct—it is embodied in how land is cultivated, how waste is managed, and how everyday spaces are designed and cared for. Nature is not viewed as a resource to be extracted, but as a realm filled with spiritual presence and ethical responsibility.

The most striking example of Palemahan in action is the Subak system of irrigation, which integrates religious practice, ecological management, and social organization. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage practice, Subak reflects a traditional Balinese understanding of harmony: water is not simply allocated but blessed, distributed not just efficiently but equitably, in consultation with ancestors and the divine.

The farmers we interviewed frequently emphasized that the rice fields are not just a means of livelihood—they are sacred sites. Offerings are made at each stage of the rice-growing cycle, and even the pests are acknowledged with spiritual rituals rather than exterminated with chemical pesticides. This ethic of reverence shapes not only agricultural practices but also informs the built environment. Villages are landscaped to accommodate natural features, trees are preserved as spiritual beings, and household design often includes open-air altars for daily offerings.

However, as land is increasingly sold for tourism infrastructure, Palemahan faces significant threats. Construction of villas and resorts frequently leads to the fragmentation of Subak lands and the disruption of traditional irrigation patterns. Concrete replaces rice terraces; temples are overshadowed by hotels. Yet, responses from communities have not been passive. Our research documents environmental activism by village youth, reforestation projects led by temple councils, and village ordinances to limit development on sacred lands. In this sense, Palemahan remains a dynamic site of contestation, adaptation, and cultural resilience.

Contemporary Challenges and Adaptive Responses

The forces of globalization, commodification, and climate change pose considerable challenges to the Tri Hita Karana framework. Many Balinese have voiced concern about the erosion of traditional values, especially as consumerism and urbanization gain ground. The construction boom, particularly in southern Bali, has led to ecological stress, including water scarcity, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Simultaneously, social fragmentation has emerged as young people migrate away from villages in search of economic opportunity.

Despite these pressures, Balinese society exhibits remarkable adaptive capacity. Concepts such as *rwa bhineda*—which suggests that harmony arises through the balance of opposites—and *desa kala patra*, the principle of contextual appropriateness, allow for continuous reinterpretation of tradition in light of changing conditions. These are not excuses for cultural dilution but strategies for dynamic survival.

We observed how many community leaders reinterpret Tri Hita Karana to address contemporary issues. For example, the notion of Parahyangan is invoked in climate activism, with ceremonies to restore balance with nature after environmental damage. In education, schools integrate Tri Hita Karana into curriculum, not only in

religious studies but also in science and civic education, encouraging students to see themselves as moral agents in a living ecological system.

Moreover, tourism—often seen as a threat—has paradoxically strengthened cultural identity. As cultural performances and sacred ceremonies gain wider recognition, there is renewed investment in language, dance, and

ritual education. Rather than leading to homogenization, the interaction with global audiences has pushed many Balinese to “become more Balinese,” as one elder phrased it.

The challenge, then, is not how to resist change but how to shape it. This requires local leadership, youth engagement, and institutional support—all of which we have observed through the ongoing evolution of the Bali Field School and other grassroots initiatives.

Educational Implications: The Bali Field School

The Bali Field School (BFS) serves as a case study in how higher education can move beyond extractive research models and cultivate ethically grounded, experiential learning. At its core, the BFS is designed not simply to teach students about Balinese culture, but to invite them into a dialogue about their own values, assumptions, and societal structures.

Students from the University of Guam enter the program with varying degrees of cultural awareness. Through homestays, temple visits, community service, and shared reflection, they are guided to understand development not as a linear, technocratic process but as a deeply relational, moral, and spiritual undertaking. Faculty from Udayana University co-design and co-lead the curriculum, ensuring that local knowledge systems are centered and respected.

Reflection is a key component. Each student is required to keep a field journal, in which they document not only observations but also internal shifts—moments of discomfort, realizations of privilege, and questions about progress and sustainability. These reflections are later discussed in small groups and analyzed for common themes, many of which highlight a profound sense of humility and transformation.

The BFS also offers workshops on traditional crafts, agricultural methods, and environmental stewardship. These activities are not framed as cultural demonstrations but as invitations to engage with practices that express an integrated worldview. In this sense, the program embodies the very principles of Tri Hita Karana: it seeks balance between teaching and learning, between giving and receiving, and between knowing and being.

Comparative Perspectives on Community-Based and Indigenous Education

Across the globe, a growing number of educational models are emerging in response to the limitations of technocratic and market-driven learning paradigms. These models center indigenous epistemologies, moral education, and ecological responsibility. The Bali Field School (BFS), grounded in the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, is part of this global movement. By examining parallel efforts in other cultural contexts, we situate the BFS within a wider constellation of transformative, community-based pedagogies that challenge dominant paradigms and emphasize spiritual, relational, and environmental dimensions of education.

In the **Pacific Islands**, several culturally embedded approaches offer compelling parallels. In **Fiji**, *Talanoa*—a traditional mode of storytelling and communal dialogue—is increasingly used in education and development contexts to foster trust, empathy, and shared decision-making (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). *Talanoa*-based pedagogy is not merely a teaching tool but a relational ethic that aligns with *Pawongan* (human–human relationships), emphasizing mutual understanding, cultural grounding, and deep listening. Similarly, in the **Federated States of Micronesia**, *culture-based education* integrates clan histories, navigation knowledge, and subsistence practices into school curricula. These programs are designed not only to preserve cultural identity but to equip students with a sense of ecological responsibility and belonging—paralleling *Palemahan* (human–nature relationship) within the Balinese framework (Thaman, 2003).

In **Samoa**, the *Fa’a Samoa* (the Samoan way) is being reasserted as a foundation for education. Grounded in values of respect (*fa’aaloalo*), service (*tautua*), and extended kinship (*aiga*), this approach promotes communal obligations and spiritual discipline. Educational reforms now encourage schools to integrate Samoan values alongside Western curriculum, fostering students who are both academically prepared and culturally rooted. This mirrors the BFS’s goal of balancing intercultural understanding with local wisdom.

In **Hawai’i**, *Aloha ‘Āina* (love for the land) serves as a central pedagogical principle in land-based learning. Here, students participate in restoring lo‘i kalo (taro patches), maintaining fishponds, and protecting native ecosystems—while also learning language, genealogy, and spiritual protocols. These activities are infused with ancestral knowledge and a worldview that treats land as kin and teacher. Like the Balinese subak system, these educational practices are not extractive but reciprocal, emphasizing gratitude, ritual care, and ecological harmony (Meyer, 2003).

Elsewhere in **Southeast Asia**, **Thailand's sufficiency economy philosophy**, inspired by King Bhumibol Adulyadej and rooted in Buddhist principles, emphasizes moderation, local resilience, and ethical decision-making. Educational programs built around this philosophy promote mindfulness, sustainability, and community solidarity—echoing Tri Hita Karana's call for spiritual and moral balance in human development. In the **Philippines**, *Kapwa* psychology, developed by Virgilio Enriquez, provides a framework for understanding the self in relation to others (Enriquez, 1992). *Kapwa*—loosely translated as “shared identity”—has become a basis for educational reforms that emphasize empathy, social cohesion, and the interdependence of all beings, resonating strongly with the relational ethos of *Pawongan*.

In the **Andean region of South America**, the concept of *Buen Vivir* (living well), drawn from Quechua and Aymara worldviews, offers another powerful comparison. Enshrined in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, *Buen Vivir* promotes harmony with nature, communal well-being, and spiritual flourishing as the goals of development. Educational programs aligned with this philosophy prioritize intergenerational knowledge transfer, collective decision-making, and indigenous cosmologies—all of which mirror the holistic and ethical dimensions of Tri Hita Karana (Gudynas, 2011).

These comparative models illustrate a shared aspiration: to reclaim education as a deeply moral, place-rooted, and spiritually meaningful process. While each is distinct in language, cosmology, and institutional form, they all seek to cultivate learners who are not merely employable, but whole—capable of contributing to their communities with wisdom, humility, and a sense of sacred responsibility.

The Bali Field School adds a distinctive voice to this global discourse. Through sustained, reciprocal engagement with Balinese communities, it demonstrates how higher education can be reimagined as a practice of co-learning, spiritual inquiry, and ecological renewal. In embracing Tri Hita Karana as both a philosophy and a method, the BFS affirms that education, at its best, is not an abstract transaction of knowledge—but a transformational relationship between people, places, and purpose.

Taken together, these comparative models underscore a worldwide resurgence of education as a moral and relational process, one that reclaims the spiritual and ecological roots of learning. Within this broader movement, the Bali Field School offers a uniquely sustained and immersive approach to experiential education—one deeply informed by Balinese cosmology, intergenerational partnership, and a decades-long commitment to community-based inquiry. In the following section, we turn more specifically to the structure, philosophy, and outcomes of the Bali Field School as a living embodiment of Tri Hita Karana in practice.

From Balinese Roots to Global Relevance: Community Development through Tri Hita Karana

As the world faces compounding crises—climate change, ecological collapse, cultural erosion, and spiritual disconnection—there is an urgent need to imagine models of development rooted not just in technical expertise, but in moral clarity, cultural continuity, and spiritual values. The Balinese philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana* offers such a model—one that is deeply local yet globally resonant.

This paper has shown that *Tri Hita Karana* is not merely a symbolic or ceremonial ideal, but a lived philosophy that actively shapes community development in Bali. Through our long-term engagement with village leaders, farmers, educators, and youth, we have documented how the principles of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* are embedded in everyday governance, agricultural practices, and ecological stewardship. For instance, the subak system exemplifies decentralized water management that integrates ecological wisdom, ritual life, and democratic decision-making. The banjar system fosters civic participation and conflict resolution through customary law rooted in relational ethics. Young people, inspired by temple teachings and ancestral values, are leading eco-rituals and reforestation campaigns that reclaim both land and spiritual purpose.

These practices reflect a distinct vision of development—one in which prosperity is measured by balance rather than accumulation, and success is understood as living in harmony with land, spirit, and community. Rather than resisting modernity, Balinese communities are adapting tradition to meet new challenges. In doing so, they offer a context-sensitive model of sustainability grounded in spiritual ecology and communal responsibility.

As global development frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, begin to recognize the value of indigenous knowledge systems, *Tri Hita Karana* stands as a vital contribution to the emerging discourse. Its integration of the sacred and the practical, the communal and the ecological, provides a foundation for rethinking sustainability in holistic terms. Importantly, this model is not exclusive to Bali—it holds lessons for any community seeking to reconnect with place, purpose, and people.

Ultimately, *Tri Hita Karana* invites us to see sustainability not as a technical fix or policy goal, but as a sacred relationship—to be nurtured daily through acts of care, reflection, and reciprocity. In this spirit, the journey toward just and integrated development becomes not only possible, but profoundly human.

Scholarly Contribution and Future Directions

This study contributes to emerging interdisciplinary conversations on sustainability, community development, and indigenous knowledge systems by offering a deeply situated analysis of Tri Hita Karana as both a cosmological philosophy and a practical framework for integrated living. Drawing on over two decades of participatory research and experiential pedagogy through the Bali Field School, the paper demonstrates how Tri Hita Karana functions not only as a cultural reference point but as an actionable paradigm for ethical development.

Our work advances scholarship in several key areas. First, it contributes to the theorization of indigenous epistemologies in sustainability by showing how spiritual, relational, and ecological values are not ancillary but

central to community resilience and regenerative practice. Second, it responds to growing calls for decolonial and participatory approaches in higher education, presenting the Bali Field School as a model of long-term, reciprocal learning that challenges extractive research methods (Smith, 2021). Third, by situating Tri Hita Karana within a comparative and translocal context, the study offers a fresh contribution to global moral development discourse, emphasizing the role of ethical reasoning, spiritual cultivation, and interdependence in shaping sustainable futures (Shiva, 2005; Earth Charter Commission, 2000).

This research also opens new avenues for practice. In an era marked by ecological crises, spiritual disconnection, and social fragmentation, our findings suggest that development models grounded in relational ethics—those that honor place, purpose, and people—are not only viable but necessary. Future research may build upon this work by exploring how similar philosophical frameworks are being reactivated in other cultural contexts, and how academic institutions can more fully integrate indigenous knowledge into their curricula, research agendas, and institutional cultures.

Ultimately, Tri Hita Karana offers more than a framework for Bali—it offers a lens for reimagining the very aims of development and education. By affirming balance over growth, reciprocity over extraction, and spirit over abstraction, it invites scholars, practitioners, and educators to co-create futures that are both rooted and regenerative.

Conclusion

In a world grappling with environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and spiritual emptiness, the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana offers a holistic and hopeful vision of sustainability. It reminds us that development is not merely a technical or economic issue—it is a moral and spiritual journey that must involve our deepest relationships: with the divine, with each other, and with the natural world.

Our research through the Bali Field School demonstrates that Tri Hita Karana is not a relic of the past, but a living, adaptive system of knowledge and practice. It continues to guide agricultural practices, social institutions, and spiritual life in Bali, even as the island undergoes rapid change. Moreover, it provides a vital lens through which global educators, policymakers, and development practitioners can rethink their approaches to sustainability. Reimagining development through the lens of Tri Hita Karana challenges us to question the foundations of modern life. What if prosperity was measured not by accumulation but by balance? What if success meant living in harmony rather than domination? What if education cultivated not just skills, but virtues? In answering these questions, we may begin to build a future that honors both our material needs and our spiritual aspirations.

Tri Hita Karana calls us toward such a future—not as an ideology, but as a way of life rooted in humility, reciprocity, and reverence. It invites us to see sustainability not as a destination but as a sacred relationship to be nurtured, day by day, in the spirit of shared humanity and planetary care

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