

# Ritual Communication of Obiyem on Tamil Hindu Ethnic in Medan City Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The Tamil Hindu ethnic community is spread across Indonesia, the majority live in Medan North Sumatra. Obiyem ritual is a religious activity believed by the Tamil Hindu ethnic community. The ritual has existed since the time of Bharatayudha and it is believed to eliminate bad karma for anyone who participates and performs the ritual. This ritual also obliges the devotees to make offerings to the Gods and Goddesses as a form of gratitude for giving abundance, maintain and protecting the universe. With the existence of ritual communication, the Tamil Hindu ethnic community in Medan can communicate and relate to the creator through the Obiyem ritual. This ritual is still carried out by the Tamil Hindu ethnic community to this day. The purpose of this study is to find out how the ritual communication is at the ceremony to the Tamil Hindu ethnic in Medan and what preparations are needed when the ritual is performed. Theories used in this research are communication theory, ritual communication and transcendental communication. The research method used was a phenomenological method with a qualitative descriptive approach. The data were obtained from in-depth interviews with three sources who understood about the ritual of Obiyem. The conclusion of this study is the ritual of Obiyem is a media used to communicate between humans and the Creator so that all bad karma is eliminated. It is also strengthening the relationship of Tamil Hindu ethnic society.

**Keywords:** Obiyem, Communication, Ritual Communication, Transcendental communication, Tamil, Hindu

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 9th century Tamil ethnicity had explored the sea using sailboats from India and landed on the shores of the Sumatran island to sell and spread their culture and beliefs from Tamilnadu. Tamil Ethnic is one of the ethnic in the city of Medan North Sumatera, Indonesia. Tamil is a forerunner of Indian culture that has long existed in the city of Medan. Tamil spreads and leave the cultural footprint in Medan [1]. Tamil Hindu Ethnic is still very close to the ritual of worship. Because it is very close to the implementation of ritual cults and religious ceremonies in Medan there are some temples that are houses of worship or prayer places for Tamil Hindu ethnic. One of the rituals still held by Tamil Hindu ethnic is Obiyem ritual. Obiyem is a Hindu religious ritual performed by a person, a family or an organization that has a certain intention or celebration. A Pandita can only lead this Ritual because the Pandita position Hindu belief is a scholar or a teacher who is tasked to guide Bhakta or the congregation to the right path of serving the Lord. The ritual is aimed at removing the bad

karma by performing adoration to the deity Goddess while including offerings, charity and giving foods to the Bhakta who participated in this ritual. Karma is a thing that is believed by Hindus therefore Obiyem ritual is implemented hereditary and must be preserved. cultural diversity can be seen in several forms, one of which is a ritual, which makes our homeland a portrait of a diversity of Cultures [2]. communication is a social process between a person or individual using symbols to create and interpret meanings in their environment [3]. communication pattern formed in the ritual view is a sacred or sacred ceremony performed by every human being in a deep and assembled form [4]. Transcendental Communication is the communication that connects human to God [5]. The author summarizes the above theories, Obiyem ritual is a Hindu ethnic culture that is one of the cultural richness in Indonesia. Obiyem Ritual is performed by giving offerings to gods and goddesses as symbols that radiate the interweaving of communication between Bhakta and God. Ritual is the medium of communication between humans and God that is usually done together. Obiyem Ritual can be performed properly if the condition of a person or a group is in a state of transcendental or condition with a subtle mind so that the

communication process between human and God is woven as desired. The purpose of this study is to find out how the communication of the ritual of Obiyem on Tamil Hindu ethnic in the city of Medan. And to know what equipment and preparations at the time of Obiyem ritual done. The other reason is that the study of Obiyem's ritual of Hindu Tamil ethnicity has not been examined before.

### **1.1. Related Work**

There are several researches that discuss the religious ritual of Tamil Hindu ethnic. Firstly, the research came from Yosi Pratiwi and Trisni Andayani with the title of The process of Thirumanam on Tamil ethnic in Medan [6] The Thirumanam process in Tamil ethnic is the implementation of Hindu marriage ceremonies tailored to the local customary ordinances. Tamil ethnic in village Madras Hulu no longer considers caste, economic status and social status, but includes aspects such as age, education stage, and family background. The development of the times caused this system to be not a benchmark in determining the choice of life. On the same basis both of parties then the marriage can be done even though they differ caste or class. The pattern of the dwelling of married couples living in a place that belongs to the family area or relatives of father husband. This research examines the custom of dating, the wedding ceremony ritual process, and the traditional settled after marriage and the symbolic meaning contained in the implementation of Thirumanam on Tamil ethnic in the village of Madras Hulu, Medan Polonia. Secondly, it was the research from Riyaf Agus with the title The change of Thaipusam Ritual at Sree Soepramaniem Nagarattar Temple in Tamil ethnic in Medan [7]. The research aims to describe the process of implementing Thaipusam ritual in Tamil ethnicity at Sree Soepramaniem Nagarattar Temple, anyone involved in the conduct of the Thaipusam ritual, knowing the philosophy of the ritual celebration of Thaipusam, and explaining the changes in the ritual celebration of Thaipusam at Sree Soepramaniem Nagarattar temple in Medan. The writer's research equation with previous studies is to elevate the theme of Tamil culture in the religious ritual aspect of Obiyem with Thaipusam is a religious ritual that still implemented and the method of research being initiated is qualitative. Thirdly it was the research from Suzy Azeharie Entitled Cultural Studies of Nonmaterial citizens of Jatun [8]. The Jatun society holds true to the teachings of culture, values, and norms that are categorized as nonmaterial inheritance. Similarly, the Minahasa tribe. This is in a unique value because the two different cultures of this background live in harmony and mutual respect in the same region. In fact, there is a mixed marriage between these two cultures. The equation between

these two studies is using qualitative methods with and in-depth interviews. In this study, the authors used methods of qualitative descriptive approaches in the phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods according to Conny R. Semiawan, is a descriptive research whose purpose is to provide an overview of problems, symptoms, facts, events, and reality broadly and deeply so that the creation of new understanding [9]. According to Herbert Spiegelberg, the phenomenology is a movement contrary to a steady philosophy, with a dynamic momentum, whose development is determined by the principle contained therein, and also by the things of the territorial structure [10]. According to John W. Creswell, the stage of data collection in phenomenological research is by way of interviews [11]. From the theory above, the author chose a qualitative approach because this approach is most appropriate to explain the purpose of the study is to find out how to communicate Obiyem ritual to Tamil Hindu ethnic in the city of Medan. And the phenomenology is a science that studies the real phenomenon of living environments and people interacting in the environment in terms of point of view for customs. In this study the author interviewed three sources of the familiar Obiyem ritual as well as Tamil Hindu ethnic.

### **1.2. Our Contribution**

This paper aims to determine how the communication of the ritual of Obiyem in Hindu Tamil communities in Medan and to know what are the series of events, anyone who involved, as well as what stuffs and materials needed during the Obiyem ritual.

### **1.3. Paper Structure**

This paper will be written in several parts. The first part is an introduction that will reveal the inclusion of Tamil Hindu culture in Indonesia and how Tamil Hindu culture in the city of Medan. The second part is a related work that contains previous research on some similar Hindu religious rituals and culture diversity. This section also states the research methods used in this paper. Then there's a discussion section. Findings from the research results are divided into two parts. The first part is a detailed explanation of the Obiyem ritual and the second part is a component of the ritual communication associated with the Obiyem ritual. The last part is the conclusion of the paper followed by the list of libraries used in this paper.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The inclusion of the Hindu religion to Indonesia occurred in AD. The existence can know this of ancient objects from the 4th century CE, namely seven Yupa relics of the

Kingdom of Kutai in East Kalimantan [12]. According to Mookerjee in Anak Agung, Indian merchants with large fleets brought in Hindu belief from India to Indonesia. After arriving in Java island they established colonies and built cities as a place to advance their efforts. The contact that lasted for a long time made the spread of Hindu religion to Indonesia [13]. India has a variety of subcultures. In Southeast India there is the Andra tribe, then the Gond tribe spread over central India, the Gujarat people of Western India, the Oriya tribe who reside in the eastern India region, the Rajput tribe of North Indian and Tamil tribes residing in the South Indian region or commonly familiar with the name Tamilnadu.

In the 9th century, Tamil ethnicity had sailed the sea on sailboats from India and landed on the shores of West Sumatra and East Sumatra to spread their culture and beliefs from Tamilnadu (interviews to A.S Kobalen on 8 April 2020 at 10:30 AM). One of the cities in Indonesia that has the most ethnic Tamil population compared to other cities in Indonesia is the city of Medan Sumatera Utara. Total Tamil people in Indonesia is 100,000 inhabitants, 25,000 people are scattered in the greater Jakarta region and the remaining 75,000 lives in North Sumatera (the result of interviews with A. S Kobalen on 8 April 2020 at 10:25AM). Ethnic Tamil is one of the ethnic in the city of Medan. This Tamil ethnic is the forerunner of cultural diversity in the city of Medan. Tamil spreads leave the cultural footprint of the city of Medan [14]. Tamil is also known as the Dravians who are based on Sanskrit terms, traditionally Dravida used to designate Tamil ethnic as a South Indian society. India is broadly divided into two areas of North and South India. People living in North India tend to have high physical characteristics, are thin and have a more modern lifestyle, although there are some cultures that are still in the preserve. While South Indians have physical characteristics that tend to be sturdy, strong, wider and more traditional lifestyles and still retain the authenticity of the culture and language that they possess. Ethnic Tamil also does not escape with the celebration and religious cults, this activity is done as worship done in the temple or there are some worship that is commonly done at the altar of prayer in the House (the result of interviews with A. S Kobalen on 8 April 2020 at 10:25AM). One of the cultures of Indian Tamil Society still inherent today is Obiyem's cult ritual. Obiyem Ritual is a cult ritual performed at the temple every week or every month and the entire procedure is done by a Pandita and the congregation. This Ritual is believed to be the medium that conveys all please to the gods of goddesses. This Ritual is believed to have been aimed at the welfare of all family members and kept away from negative or pesky carriers (the result of interviews with Pandita Jaysangker conducted on 27 February 2020). The communication of rituals is closely related to the expressive communication that is usually done jointly. Those who participated in the form of the ritual communication reaffirmed their commitment to family, community, ethnic, state, ideology, and religious traditions [15]. Communication in the context of rituals is not merely sending and receiving messages, but is aimed at maintaining and maintaining the values and norms that have been established long ago. It can be

concluded that the communication in the concept of rituals sees communication as a common property used to maintain certain values and norms in society [16]. The author is interested in conducting this research to find out how the ritual communication of Obiyem on Tamil Hindu ethnic in the city of Medan. The author also wanted to know what equipment and preparations at the time of the Obiyem ritual was done. Another reason for the research on the communication of Obiyem ritual has not been studied before.

## **2.1. Obiyem Ritual**

Ethnic Tamil is closely related to ritual and adoration. One of them is Obiyem ritual. Obiyem consisted of several processions performed at the temple. Obiyem Ritual has existed since the Bharatayuda period. Obiyem is a Hindu religious ritual performed by a person, a family or an organization that has a certain intention or celebration. This Ritual can only be led by a Pandita because the position of Pandita in the Hindu belief is a scholar or a teacher who is tasked to guide Bhakta or the congregation to the right path of serving the Lord. To lead the ceremony of Obiyem a Pandita must be aware of the sacred spells and prayers based on the Vedas and the Ramayana story. The ritual is aimed at removing the bad karma by performing adoration to the deity Goddess while including offerings, charity and giving foods to the Bhakta who participated in this ritual (interview with Punis Pri on 10 May 2020). Obiyem was trusted as a medium to convey all pleases to the gods of goddesses. Each procedure is believed to have been aimed at the welfare of all family members and so that Bhakta who follows is kept away from negative or pesky bearer. Karma is very trusted by Hindus, therefore Obiyem ritual is implemented in hereditary and must be preserved (interview with Pandita Jaysangker on 27 February 2020). Based on the results of an interview with Pandita Jaysangker, Hindu believers believe in karma. Karma is a deed that during human life do good or bad one day will consequently return to the person. Karma is also described as a result of good or bad deeds of a person in the past or reincarnation before. Therefore, Hindu people avoid the occurrence of bad karma in their lives. Even God Brahma and God Vhisnu though pleaded with the Lord Shiva to eliminate all the karma they had and did not want to be reborn or reincarnated.

The purpose of the Obiyem ritual is believed to be able to remove bad karma for the ritual. According to Pandita Jaysangker the influence of Obiyem ritual in life is to all parties who perform this ritual to consciously help others by means of charity, concurrently serving the gods and goddesses who are praiseworthy deeds. Because one of these ritual processions is the party that carries out this ritual will share what they have with fellow

If someone performs a Obiyem ritual then it is considered doing good deeds and bad karma will be elated when conducting Obiyem ritual seriously, sincerely, sincere and wholehearted (interview with Pandita Jaysangker on 8 May 2020).

## 2.2. Components of ritual communication

According to Koentjaraningrat, there are four main components in the ritual implementation [17].

### 1. Place of ritual

The place used to carry out a ritual is a special place that is sacred and only interested people can use the place.

Based on the results of the interview with Punis Pri where Obiyem ritual can only be performed at the temple which is a place to gather and pray the Hindu people and the place of the statue of God and Goddess (interview with Punis Pri on 10 May 2020).

### 2. Ritual Execution Time

Ritual timing is a certain moment that is felt right to perform a ritual.

Punis Pri said that Obiyem's ritual can be done anytime depending on what God is trusted by the family, a person or an organization because every deity and Goddess has a big day of each. In the present day Obiyem ritual is commonly carried out at night after the whole people finish the activity (interview with Punis Pri on 10 May 2020).

### 3. Ritual objects

Ritual objects are tools used in the way of a ritual such as containers for sajen places, small tools such as spoons, knives and others.

Pandita Jaysangker explained that the objects of ritual are items used at the time of Obiyem ritual such as the tray used to put Arcenei offerings, sacred lamps, bells and water containers are all made of brass and used as a means to perform Obiyem ritual (interview with Pandita on 8 May 2020).

### 4. People who involved

The people involved in the ritual are the ones who act as leaders of rituals and people who understand a ritual.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

The author concluded several conclusions that became the result of the research authors as follows:

1. Tamil Hindu ethnic has long been in Medan and still retain their culture, especially in conducting rituals in temples scattered in Medan. One of the rituals that is still held is Obiyem which is done at Shree Mariamman Temple.

2. Ritual communication is an important component in the implementation of Obiyem ritual. With the communication of the ritual of Hindu Tamil ethnic community in Medan can communicate and relate to the creator through Obiyem ritual.

3. Obiyem ritual is a ritual that presents a variety of offerings and 10% of the income of the Bhakta to gods and goddesses or the creator, whose use is believed to remove all bad karma. In addition, this ritual is intended as a tribute and a thank you to the creator because it has been maintaining and preserving the universe.

Based on the results of the authors' interviews with Punis Pri, the people involved in Obiyem ritual are Pandita as the leader of ritual implementation, then the party who wants to make a ritual that is a person, a family or an organization and the last party is the Bhakta of Tamil congregation (interview with Punis Pri on 10 May 2020).

Still in the same book Koentjaraningrat explain there are two indicators related deeds in the implementation of a ritual that is:

#### a. Pray

Praying is an element that is found in various rituals. Prayer is a speech from man's desire to the ancestors and also prayer is a courtesy and praise to the ancestors. Usually prayers are accompanied by the motion and attitude of respect and humble themselves to the ancestors.

This is in accordance with the described by Pandita Jaysangker that the offerings will be presented in advance by Pandita and the parties who perform Obiyem ritual. The prayerful prayer contains the admiration and the petition to be removed from all bad Karma (interview with Pandita Jaysangker on 8 May 2020).

#### b. Served

Serving is the deeds to serve food, objects or others to the gods and the spirits of the ancestors. It becomes a habit and is regarded as an activity that will automatically produce what it means.

Pandita Jaysangker explained that after offerings were prayed, offerings would be distributed to all Bhakta present in the Obiyem ritual so that all involved in this ritual could get a blessing (interview with Pandita Jaysangker on 8 May 2020).

4. Obiyem Ritual is a media that describes the relationship between humans and gods and goddesses and strengthens the relationship between Hindu Tamil people.

5. The process of Obiyem ritual is from the sanctification of the statue of God and Goddess, recitation of spells, praying offerings, hymns, meditation, recitation of the closing prayers, the division of offerings, to the eating together.

6. Equipment needed at the time of the first Obiyem ritual is water, milk, young coconut water, lime, flower water, turmeric powder, sandalwood powder, saree, Vesti is a garment for gods and goddesses and Pancamargam are five kinds of sweet fruit that will be smoothed with honey and brown sugar.

The second is a tray made of brass used to put the offerings to be prayed for by Pandita. These offerings are old coconut, banana one comb, areca nut, betel leaf, flower, flower necklace, incense and camphor.

The third is Kheer which is rice pudding cooked with brown sugar, then the nuts are stir-fried with spices. This material will later be placed on the altar as an offering.

The fourth is a banana leaf tip facing north that is the direction of God Yama which is believed to be a deity that launches all kinds of cult rituals for Hindus. The banana leaf tip will be the base of all offerings. Then fruits such as mango, banana, grape, apple, orange and other fruits will be placed on the altar.

7. Obiyem ritual in Hindu Tamil ethnic society until now is still carried out because this Ritual is a relic of the ancestors who have been ingrained.

### 3.1 Suggestion

From the research results there are some suggestions that the authors want to convey related to the research thesis is:

#### 1. Practical Suggestion

a. In this study, the author suggests that Hindu Tamil ethnic or Hindu Tamil organizations can make socialization about Obiyem ritual by making short films uploaded to social media so that people understand about Hindu religious rituals in ethnic Tamil traditions.

b. The author also suggests that Obiyem's ritual can be understood by all the people to write a book or a picture comic for a child that tells or depicts Obiyem's ritual can make the ritual continue to be preserved.

#### 2. Academic Suggestion

The author hopes that this research can be continued and can be used as a reference for friends who want to do research on Tamil Hindu ethnic.

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