

## The Turning Cycle of Life: Mythical and Noble Wisdom in the Ayunan Jantra Tradition of Tenganan Pegringsingan

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### ABSTRACT

The Ayunan Jantra tradition in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village is a cultural procession deeply rooted in philosophical meaning within the Ngusaba Sambah ceremony. This ritual features young men and women swinging together on a traditional swing, symbolizing balance, harmony, and the continuous cycle of human life. From the lens of myth and ancestral wisdom, Ayunan Jantra represents not only social togetherness but also the cyclical rhythm of existence—birth, growth, and regeneration. More than a cultural performance, Ayunan Jantra can be interpreted as a visual metaphor for sustainability in both life and design. The rhythmic motion of the swing mirrors the design principle of harmony and continuity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of form, function, and purpose. The Bali Aga community of Tenganan Pegringsingan embodies these values by maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and ancestral traditions. This article explores the philosophical dimension of Ayunan Jantra as an expression of myth and wisdom among the Bali Aga people, positioning it within the broader Asia-Pacific cultural context. Through a descriptive-qualitative approach and literature review, the study highlights Ayunan Jantra as a symbol of cultural identity and a universal representation of balance, unity, and life's ongoing sustainability.

### KEYWORDS

Ayunan Jantra;  
Tenganan  
Pegringsingan; Bali  
Aga; Ritual Tradition;  
Myth and Noble  
Wisdom



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## Introduction

The Ayunan Jantra tradition in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village is one of the customary processions imbued with deep philosophical meaning about balance and the cycle of human life. As part of the Ngusaba Sambah ceremony, this tradition involves young men and women swinging together on a traditional swing known as a *jantra*. The swinging movement is not merely a physical activity but symbolizes cosmic order and harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual values inherited from their ancestors. As explained by Aditya, Arsana, and Suarsana, the traditions in Tenganan Pegringsingan represent ecological and spiritual values that are intertwined within the myths and daily practices of the Bali Aga community [1].

Furthermore, the Ayunan Jantra procession can be interpreted as a form of cultural continuity that connects the past, present, and future. The involvement of younger generations in this tradition signifies social regeneration, reinforcing the sustainability of local cultural values amid the current wave of modernization. Putri, Hardoyo, and Santosa reveal that the customary system in Tenganan Pegringsingan possesses a strong social structure that serves to maintain balance between humans and their

environment, including the management of natural resources [2]. These values illustrate that sustainability is not only an ecological concept but also a moral and cultural one.

In a broader context, phenomena such as the Ayunan Jantra can also be found in civilizations across the Asia-Pacific region, where traditional rituals often represent a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. For instance, in the study by Kealiikanakaoleohailani et al. (2018), Hawaiian ritual traditions are understood as a form of sustainability science that integrates spiritual and ecological values rooted in local wisdom [3]. Similarly, research conducted by Lim and Sinha (2019) reveals that Southeast Asian communities perceive ritual practices as socio-ecological systems that function to maintain balance between cultural identity and environmental sustainability [4]. This shared pattern indicates that societies in the Asia-Pacific region hold a cosmological worldview that places balance and natural cycles at the core of cultural life.

Therefore, the study of Ayunan Jantra not only serves to understand the local wisdom of the Bali Aga community but also reflects upon the more universal principles of sustainability. Through a descriptive-qualitative approach and symbolic analysis, this research positions the Ayunan Jantra tradition as a visual metaphor of sustainable rhythm in life and design—reflecting ancestral wisdom and the philosophical relevance it continues to hold in the modern world.

### **The Philosophical Meaning of Ayunan Jantra in the Asia-Pacific Context**

The Ayunan Jantra ritual in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village holds profound symbolic meaning, illustrating the balance between humans, nature, and spiritual forces. For the Bali Aga community, the swing is not merely a means of play but a sacred medium that signifies the connection between *sekala* (the visible world) and *niskala* (the unseen realm). This understanding of balance aligns with philosophical perspectives across the Asia-Pacific region, which view life as a harmonious cycle between humans and the cosmos. Tilley (2019) notes that symbols within traditional rituals in the Pacific serve to maintain continuity between the physical and spiritual worlds [5]. From this perspective, Ayunan Jantra can be seen as part of a universal symbolic language that teaches harmony in life across cultures.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a cultural phenomenological approach, focusing on uncovering the symbolic meanings behind the Ayunan Jantra practice. Data were collected through direct observation, interviews with traditional leaders and ritual participants, and visual documentation to record its symbolic elements. The phenomenological approach enables the researcher to understand meanings derived from lived experiences and social contexts. As explained by Creswell

(2021), phenomenology emphasizes the importance of understanding human experience from the participants' own perspectives [6]. Through this method, the philosophical meaning of Ayunan Jantra is explored through the spiritual, social, and cultural relationships that accompany it.

The findings of this study reveal a strong connection between the Ayunan Jantra practice and the symbolic representations of life balance found across various Asia-Pacific traditions. For instance, in the Swing Festival of Nepal and India, the act of swinging is interpreted as a form of reverence toward nature and the recurring cycles of agrarian life [7]. This similarity indicates that the concept of spiritual and ecological balance has become a shared consciousness throughout the region. In the Balinese context, such meaning is integrated with the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*—the doctrine of harmony between humans, nature, and God [8]. Through this shared value, the Ayunan Jantra can be understood as part of the broader Asia-Pacific cultural narrative that emphasizes balance and life sustainability.

From various perspectives, the Ayunan Jantra is not merely a ritual of aesthetic value but also conveys a universal philosophical message: life moves in a continuous cycle, guiding humanity toward a deeper understanding of balance and sustainability. Ingold (2020) describes the human-environment relationship as a “dwelling perspective,” a way of living that aligns with the rhythm of nature [9]. In this context, the Ayunan Jantra becomes a metaphor for ecological and spiritual awareness deeply rooted in Balinese culture—a reflection that sustainability is not simply a modern concept but an integral part of traditional wisdom that has endured for centuries.

### **Ayunan Jantra as a Representation of the Life Cycle and Sustainability**

The Ayunan Jantra tradition in the Tenganan Pegringsingan community illustrates a worldview in which life is perceived as a continuous, cyclical process. The upward and downward movement of the swing is not merely a physical act but a symbol of the human journey through birth, growth, aging, and returning to one's origin. Each swing invites reflection on the relationship between the self, nature, and the encompassing spiritual existence. According to Geertz (1973), symbols in Balinese rituals function to affirm both cosmic and social order, where every ritual act carries meaning beyond its material aspect [10]. Thus, Ayunan Jantra serves as a visual representation of an awareness that unites human life with the universe.

This research employs an ethnographic approach to understand the values of sustainability embedded in the Ayunan Jantra practice. Through observation and in-depth interviews, it was found that the procession not only preserves traditional values but also strengthens the Tenganan community's ecological awareness of their natural resource sustainability. The ethnographic method allows researchers to comprehend

social and symbolic interactions within a living cultural context. As emphasized by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), ethnography aims to uncover meanings emerging from daily practices and social habits [11]. In this sense, sustainability as understood by the Tenganan community is not a modern global discourse but a way of life rooted in customary philosophy and ancestral belief.

The meaning of sustainability manifested in the Ayunan Jantra tradition also finds resonance across various regions of the Asia-Pacific. Among the Māori of New Zealand, for instance, the concept of *whakapapa* emphasizes the interconnectedness between generations and the ecological responsibility toward the Earth [12]. Similarly, in Japanese culture, the philosophy of *mottainai* teaches appreciation for the sustainability of resources through spiritual awareness [13]. Both illustrate that sustainability is not merely an economic or environmental concept but a moral and spiritual value deeply embedded within culture. Thus, Ayunan Jantra can be viewed as a reflection of the broader Asia-Pacific narrative of balance and life preservation—a universal value uniting civilizations throughout the region.

Through its philosophical essence, Ayunan Jantra can be interpreted as a metaphor for the continuous and evolving cycle of sustainable living. In a modern context, this tradition provides inspiration for the concepts of *sustainable living* and *circular design*, which emphasize harmony between human needs and environmental preservation. As Papanek (1985) asserted, good design must be rooted in humanistic values and ecological balance rather than merely functional aesthetics [14]. Therefore, Ayunan Jantra is not just a ritual of the past but also a contemporary reflection on how traditional values can serve as the foundation for cultural and environmental sustainability in the future.

### Ayunan Jantra and the Principles of Sustainable Design

The rhythmic motion of the Ayunan Jantra not only represents the life cycle but also embodies the principle of balance that aligns with the concept of sustainable design. Within each swing lies the continuity between form, function, and meaning — a foundational aspect of design philosophy. Conceptually, this swing can be interpreted as a “visual metaphor of sustainable rhythm in life and design,” a visual expression of sustainability that lives within the daily practices of the Tenganan community. As Manzini (2015) explains, sustainable design is not merely about using environmentally friendly materials but about creating systems of meaning that are harmonious with social and cultural life [15]. Therefore, the local values reflected in Ayunan Jantra contribute to the global understanding of ethical and sustainable design.

To examine this relationship, the study employs a symbolic-design analysis approach, focusing on interpreting the visual forms and conceptual values embedded within

cultural practices. Field data, including documentation of swing structures, physical design, and ritual movement patterns, were analyzed using the sustainable design theories of Papanek and Fry. Fry (2009) emphasizes that sustainable design is a process of redirective practice—a practice that redirects consumer culture toward a more ethical and responsible system of living [16]. In this context, Ayunan Jantra serves as a tangible example of how sustainability principles are organically embedded within local cultural structures—not as a product of modern intervention, but as an expression born from a spiritual relationship with the environment.

The sustainability values contained within the Ayunan Jantra tradition essentially reflect what Walker (2017) refers to as *design intelligence rooted in culture*—a form of design wisdom derived from the values and social practices of the community [17]. The swing not only serves a ritual function but also embodies natural design principles: material efficiency, the use of local resources, and social continuity across generations. This phenomenon demonstrates that the traditional cultural practices of the Bali Aga community have long internalized the concept of *eco-design*, long before the term became popular in global academic discourse. A similar view is expressed in Chang's (2020) study, which highlights how Asia-Pacific traditions have contributed to the evolution of the global green design paradigm [18]. Through this interpretation, the Ayunan Jantra can be positioned as a tangible embodiment of dialogue between traditional wisdom and modern innovation.

From a broader perspective, the Ayunan Jantra conveys an important message that sustainability is not born solely from technology, but from an awareness of life's harmonious rhythm. Contemporary sustainable design principles, such as *biophilic design* and *regenerative design*, fundamentally seek to restore the balance between humans and nature—something that has long been inherent in Tenganan's cultural philosophy. As Rawsthorn (2018) emphasizes, design must function as a moral agent that sustains life, rather than merely as an instrument of aesthetic production [19]. Thus, the Ayunan Jantra can be interpreted not only as cultural heritage but also as a conceptual source of inspiration for future design practices that place balance, sustainability, and humanity at the core of the creative process.

## Conclusion

The Ayunan Jantra tradition, which forms part of the sacred *Usaba Sambah* ceremony in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village, carries a philosophical meaning that transcends its ritual form. Through the repetitive motion of the swing, the Bali Aga people affirm their worldview of balance between humanity, nature, and spiritual forces. In the broader Asia-Pacific context, this meaning reflects a universal awareness of life's cycles, harmony, and sustainability—values also found in similar traditions across the region.

Thus, Ayunan Jantra can be seen as a cultural bridge that unites local values with global perspectives on human existence within the cosmos.

Furthermore, Ayunan Jantra represents the continuous cycle of life—from birth and growth to the return of humankind to cosmic balance. Embedded within it are sustainability values expressed through the social, ecological, and spiritual practices of the Tenganan community. These values are not merely symbolic but are manifested in everyday life: in how they maintain environmental balance, respect natural resources, and preserve ancestral heritage. In other words, this tradition is a tangible expression of sustainable living rooted in local wisdom.

In the context of design, the sustainability embodied in Ayunan Jantra offers conceptual inspiration relevant to contemporary principles of sustainable design. The recurring motion of the swing can be interpreted as a *pattern of continuity*—a natural and harmonious rhythm of sustainability. This principle aligns with sustainable design thought, which emphasizes the interconnection of function, aesthetics, and ecological responsibility. Therefore, Ayunan Jantra stands not only as a cultural symbol but also as a visual metaphor for the rhythm of sustainability in life and design.

Ultimately, this study asserts that Ayunan Jantra embodies the living relationship between myth, noble wisdom, and the continuity of life. The tradition demonstrates that local wisdom can serve as an essential source of knowledge for the future of design and culture. Amid the tides of global change, the values embedded in Ayunan Jantra remind us that true sustainability begins with the awareness to live in harmony with nature, to honor the cycles of life, and to preserve the balance between humanity and the universe.

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