

# Bali Responds to Bombings: Tat Twam Asi

## Bali Reflects in its Unique Way to a Second Episode of Unspeakable Horror and Cruelty.

(10/2/2005) On Sunday morning October 2, 2005, following the tragic bomb blasts at three Bali dining venues the night before, numerous large floral bouquets bearing the message "*Tat Twam Asi*" suddenly began appearing at each of the bomb sites. Derived from the original *sanskrit*, the sentence merits varying religious interpretations. To the Balinese, however, it means that each soul, without exception, is part of a unified cosmos; each person is God-like and God is found in every man. *I am you and you are me; Thou art that and That thou art.*

Or, in the words of John Donne:

*No Man is an island, no man stands alone*

*Each Man's joy is joy to me, Each man's grief is my own.*

This Balinese sense of "oneness" with nature and the universe frames the island's response to adversity, man made or natural. Here, the local tendency is to react to adversity and catastrophe by questioning how we may have allowed our lives to become so badly out of balance as to permit such events to unfold? In this vein, Balinese are now flocking in great numbers to the scene of the restaurant bombings in Kuta Square and the beach at Jimbaran to perform, respectively, *pecaruan eka sata* and *pemelaspas durmanggala* ceremonies. Both ceremonies are part of a mandatory Bali-Hindu cleansing and re-balancing process that a deeply spiritual people bring to any part of their island defiled by blood and violence.

### Assessing the Damage

On Sunday, one day after the attack, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited Bali to inspect the crime scenes, personally console the injured in local hospitals and meet with the growing international press corps gathering on the Island. Speaking to the press and sounding every bit the retired-general and now popularly elected leader of the world's fourth most populous nation, the President outlined the immediate tasks ahead: first, to care for the injured and the bereaved; second, investigate the case to clearly identify those responsible for the evil act of cowardice; and three to bring those responsible to justice. In the words of President Yudhoyono, this is what Indonesia did successfully after the last

bombing and this is what Indonesia will do again this time round.

Proof that Indonesia will keep this pledge and a fact certain to make the perpetrators of the latest attack rest uneasy is the presence of Bali's Chief of Police, Made Mangku Pastika, at the head of the current investigation. Named *Time Magazine's* "Asian Newsmaker of the Year" for his efficient and professional pursuit and capture of the 2002 bombers, Chief Pastika shared with the press important insights on his continuing investigation of the latest attack. Now certain that the attacks were the work of suicide bombers carrying TNT, he distributed pictures of the dismembered heads of three men thought to be the bombers. There is now little doubt that the identities of these men, their recent movements, and details of their personal associations will slowly be uncovered by Chief Pastika and his team of international investigators.

### **The Terrible Toll**

Preliminary figures provided by the *Bali Tourism Board's Communication Center* show that an estimated 25 died in the blasts, including the three suspected suicide bombers. In all, 107 people suffered injuries, of which 94 remain hospitalized either in Bali or in hospitals in Singapore and Australia.

However, a fact not always evident to those following international media coverage of the Bali attacks, the nation that has suffered the most casualties in the latest installment on the world-wide war on terror is Indonesia. Of the total 132 casualties at least 61 were Indonesian nationals. Australians suffered 17 casualties, 3 of which numbered among the dead, with Japanese, Koreans, and Americans also listed among those killed or injured in the blasts.

### **Where You Gonna Run To?**

Initial indications are that the world may react in a markedly different way than it did to the October 2002 Bali bombing. While there have been some visitors booking early departures from the island and a trickle of cancellations for future bookings, there is still no hint of a mass exodus, such as that which followed the terror attack of three years ago. Moreover, planes from Australia landing in Bali on Sunday remained largely full with Australian's who have decided to continue their pilgrimage to Oz's favorite overseas holiday destination, despite last weekend's bombing.

Why the reaction to this latest tragedy appears so much more muted than just three years ago is the subject of much conjecture. The growing consensus is, however, that the world has changed greatly over the past three years. During the interim between the two attacks the world has been, to some degree, anesthetized by similar events in Madrid, Turkey, Thailand, the Philippines, London and elsewhere. With this has come the realization that the threat of terror is now truly

world-wide, leaving those of us who still cherish travel as a life style singing the chorus of the old song "*where you gonna run to.*"

### **The New Normal**

Either by choice or necessity, the Balinese are becoming adept at handling change. How we conduct our businesses and how we endeavor to care for and protect our guests changed radically following the bombing of 2002. This latest episode of terror will, no doubt, also prompt a radical rethink on what must be done to continue to allow this island to be considered the world's most popular holiday destination and guarantee its visitors the simple pleasure of an evening meal enjoyed in an atmosphere of peace and serenity.

*Tat Twam Asi.*