



## The Relevance of Buddhayana Principles to Religious Moderation in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** In order to preserve national integrity, religious moderation is essential. Buddhist teachings, like those of all other religions in Indonesia, support religious moderation. Buddhayana is one of the scholastic schools of Buddhism in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to investigate the applicability of Buddhayana ideas to Indonesian religious moderation. This study's methodology is a review of the literature. The study's findings suggest that certain Buddhist teachings align with the markers of religious moderation. The Kutadanta Sutta contains Buddhist teachings about national commitment. The Buddha exemplifies tolerance in the Upali Sutta by counselling devotees like Upali to carefully consider new views before changing, always showing respect for their prior affiliations. According to the Buddha, every human being develops non-violence based on their brahmavihara, which includes metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha. The Buddha teaches accommodation of local culture in the Sigalovada Sutta, which says that proper understanding is the foundation for both openness and the preservation of local culture. The tenets of Buddhayana, which include a non-sectarian, inclusive, pluralistic, universal mindset and faith in Sanghayang Adi Buddha, are consistent with the practice of religious moderation.

**Keywords:** Buddhayana; local culture; religious moderation; Sanghayang Adi Buddha; universal mindset.

### Introduction

With a wide range of tribes, religions, ethnicities, races, languages, and cultures, as well as the rise of social status hegemony, Indonesia is a cosmopolitan nation. Indonesian society's identity has been shaped by religious diversity (Tedjoworo & Nugroho, 2025, p. 339). An "integrating force," or a unifying factor in communal life, can be this diversity (Akhmadi, 2019, p. 45). However, this diversity can also cause friction and clashes between groups. This issue has become a special concern for the government down to the grassroots communities. Religious pluralism in Indonesia may have given rise to various challenges in efforts to maintain harmony among religious communities (Tedjoworo, 2025, p. 1). The emergence of acts of violence and terror over the past 20 years, as real conflicts in the name of religion, has the potential to erode national unity. Narrow understandings and closed ideologies in religion pose a real threat to the Indonesian nation. The rise of conflicts and inter-group violence in multiple regions indicates a diminishing sense of unity in confronting variety (Rosyad et al., 2021). When disagreements escalate into violence, they frequently lead to humanitarian catastrophes that rapidly proliferate, both in their manifestations and in the individuals responsible for them. A single act of terrorism can incite analogous violence in other areas. Conflict

resolution is not an expedient procedure; it necessitates considerable time.

Acts of violence presuppose that violence is inherently destructive or obliterating. A significant source of conflict is religious feeling, both within distinct religious communities and within the same community that possesses divergent interpretations and practices of religious beliefs. This problem is significant and intriguing to analyse because, at their core, all religions advocate love and humanity. In this setting, religion is employed as a propaganda instrument to oppose factions considered incompatible with one's convictions. Moreover, the proliferation of these movements is methodically established through extensive recruitment and rigid religious ideologies to bolster acts of terrorism. The Lab 45 Team's research of terrorist acts from 2000 to 2021 identified 552 suicide bombing occurrences in Indonesia. In the past 21 years, Indonesia has experienced an average of 26 terrorist incidents every year (Gindarsah & Widjanto, 2021, pp. 1–3).

The Tanjung Balai event on the morning of Friday, July 29, 2016, exemplifies intergroup conflict, particularly concerning ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup (SARA) problems. In this instance, Muslim individuals inflicted damage upon the Tri Ratna Vihara and multiple other Buddhist temples, incinerating them. The dispute originated from a grievance by Buddhist adherents with the loudness of the Maghrib call to prayer emanating from the Al-Maksum Mosque on Jalan Karya. This episode highlights a significant deficiency in interfaith comprehension, wherein the absence of reciprocal respect resulted in a neglect of human dignity and the deterioration of universal humanitarian principles vital for cultivating harmonious religious interactions (Sitorus, 2019). Intolerant attitudes leading to violence have permeated diverse community settings. The younger generation, sometimes referred to as millennials, is especially susceptible to the brainwashing of erroneous religious beliefs, resulting in radicalisation. Consequently, effective educational initiatives are essential to disrupt the cycle of violence. The rise of radicalism and violence cannot be attributed to a singular source; instead, it is a multifaceted issue necessitating a multidimensional approach that encompasses multiple disciplines (Lubis & Mubarak, 2018, p. 26).

Regulation of conflict behaviour and violent activities within a society framework is frequently stringent; yet, there are also methodologies that cultivate instructional strategies (Gersteun & Moeschberger, 2003, p. 117). To avert acts of violence, both the government and all citizens must collectively uphold educational principles. Acts of violence arising from a limited interpretation of religious doctrines continue to pose a significant issue today. Individuals who commit acts of terror are typically associated with or have sworn loyalty to national and international terrorist organisations, like ISIS, Al Qaeda, JAD, JI, among others. Furthermore, some function autonomously after being indoctrinated or manipulated via social media. This phenomenon is referred to by law enforcement as lone wolf terrorism, exemplified by the assault on the Indonesian National Police Headquarters on March 31, 2021, executed by a female perpetrator. This dynamic is profoundly alarming, as a single act of terrorism can incite analogous acts of terror in other locations. Furthermore, some of the perpetrators of terror are from the younger generation. This calls for an evaluation by all components of the nation as to whether the values of religious education, humanism, and nationalism in Indonesia have yet to address the existing issues. Concrete preventive measures are essential. This isn't solely the government's role; religious and community leaders are crucial grassroots figures in deradicalization efforts.

The phenomenon of diversity necessitates religious leaders and community figures to understand multicultural awareness. This empowers them to provide guidance to their congregations. Religious figures become facilitators of change and experts in conflict resolution, consulting with relevant parties to enhance harmony both within their own faith and among different religious communities. The existence of terrorist acts can serve as a momentum for all interfaith aspects to unite.

Adopting religious moderation is a tactical method to counter radicalism. In 2022, labelled the "*Year of Religious Moderation*," Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs commenced the active promotion of this notion, establishing it as a foundational basis for all its programs and initiatives. Religious moderation fosters a balanced perspective within society, avoiding religious fundamentalism and curbing the unrestrained veneration of reason. The Ministry has delineated four principal characteristics of a moderate worldview, attitude, and behaviour: national dedication, tolerance, non-violence, and adaptation of local culture. Religious moderation has become a pivotal

focus in dialogues and efforts to regulate and direct Indonesia's multifaceted society. The urge for a moderate theological narrative transcends individual or collective requirements; it is a worldwide imperative, particularly in light of the swift improvements in information technology, global capitalism, and the hastened tempo of life in the digital age.

The Setara Institute's report indicated 422 instances of intolerance in 2020. This data indicates a substantial rise relative to the prior year, which recorded merely 327 breaches. In 2022, the Setara Institute documented 333 instances of intolerance in Indonesia, representing a little rise from the 318 occurrences of violations noted in 2021 (Safitri et al., 2024, pp. 1–2). BNPT head Boy Rafli stated that most identified platforms disseminated anti-Pancasila and intolerant ideologies, with 905 instances of propaganda content identified as contrary to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, anti-Pancasila, intolerant, and advocating takfiri ideology (labeling others as apostates). Numerous radicalizing social media profiles were disseminated across multiple platforms: Facebook (168 accounts), WhatsApp (156 accounts), Telegram (119 channels), Twitter (85 accounts), Instagram (54 accounts), YouTube (25 accounts), online media (14 connections), and Rocketchat (1 group) (Rafli, 2023, p. 1). This signifies that religious authority is no longer possessed by esteemed and credible experts inside their domain.

The media has regrettably transformed into an instrument for the indoctrination of radical religious ideologies, frequently employed to rationalize acts of terrorism under the guise of "*jihad*" or the defense of faith. If unaddressed, this may result in a significant increase in extremism, endangering national cohesion. Consequently, it is imperative for all religious leaders in Indonesia to dedicate themselves to internalizing and advocating for religious moderation among their adherents. Each of the six officially acknowledged faiths in Indonesia: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, and Confucianism embody fundamental philosophical principles that advocate for religious moderation, articulated through their distinct terminologies: *Madyhamika* in Hinduism, *Wasatiyyah* in Islam (Dorloh et al., 2015, p. 62), *The Golden Mean* in Christianity and Catholicism, *Zhong Yong* in Confucianism and *Majjhima Patipada* in Buddhism.

Religions in Indonesia, especially Buddhism, exhibit internal variety. Buddhism has evolved into several schools, chiefly Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, all of which are grounded in the fundamental teachings of Gautama Buddha. Despite their differences, these schools share a common foundational goal: achieving *nibbana* (*nirvana*), or liberation from the cycle of *samsara*, by following the *majjhima patipada* (middle path). This unified pursuit of liberation is often referred to as *ekayana*, which is broadly synonymous with Buddhayana.

Buddhayana, as it developed in Indonesia, was initially conceived by Mahabhiksu Ashin Jinarakkhita. Buddhayana in Indonesia exists both as a worldview and an organization. As an organization, Buddhayana serves as a body for both *Sangha bhikkhus* (monks) and Buddhist lay people across the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions. The three traditions are unified under the Buddhayana organization, while simultaneously respecting and valuing each other's unique practices, hence promoting harmony within the Indonesian Buddhayana Family (Keluarga Buddhayana Indonesia or KBI). The Buddhayana movement in Indonesia steadfastly adheres to its tenets: non-sectarianism, inclusivism, universalism, and faith in *Sanghyang Adi Buddha* (Sudhamek, 2012, pp. 43–99). These values or principles form the foundation for the Indonesian Buddhayana Family in their religious practices, national life, and state affairs.

Although considerable study has been conducted on religious moderation, studies directly connecting Buddhist teachings to this concept are few. Buddhayana, being one of the predominant schools of Buddhism in Indonesia, possesses teachings that merit examination about religious perspectives in a multicultural society. There is a significant deficiency of study regarding the direct correlation between Buddhayana principles and religious moderation. Thus, the researcher considers it essential to elucidate the significance of Buddhayana's principles in relation to religious moderation within the framework of Indonesia's religious pluralism.

## Literature Review

### Buddhayana

Diversity existed among Buddhist schools even during the era of Buddha. The Saddharma Pundarika Sutra elucidates that, notwithstanding the proliferation of diverse methodologies or

schools, the Buddha perpetually imparted the same essential truth. He elucidated the profound journey via the Triyana (three vehicles): *Shravakayana*, *Pratyekabuddhayana*, and *Bodhisattvayana*. Ultimately, all three routes unite into a singular vehicle, referred to as Ekayana or Buddhayana. This notion corresponds with *ekayana magga*, symbolizing a path of aware existence as outlined in the *Satipatthana Sutta* (Dharmawimala, 2012, p. 3). In "*Buddhayana: Living Buddhism*," Anil Goonewardene asserts that Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, although differing in their manifestations, are all grounded in the same fundamental teachings and aim towards the same ultimate goal. He designates this unifying concept as Buddhayana, symbolizing a singular Buddhist tradition expressed in several forms (Libin, 2011). Just as it is written in Udana 56: "*Seyyathā pi bhikkhave mahāsamuddo ekaraso loṇaraso, evam-eva kho bhikkhave ayam Dhammavinayo ekaraso vimuttiraso*" (Just as all the diverse waters of the great ocean share a single, unifying taste, that of salt, so too does the Buddha's teaching and discipline, the *Dhamma-Vinaya*, offer but one essential taste: the taste of liberation) (Anandajoti, 2008, p. 160; Thanissaro, 2012b, p. 81).

Buddhayana serves as a significant landmark in the evolution of modern Buddhism during the 20th century. Khrisnaputra asserts that following an extended duration of residing in sectarian factions, a yearning for oneness emerged within the Buddhist community (Krishnaputra, 1995). *The Third Annual International Buddhist Seminar*, held on March 9, 1974, in New York, was a pivotal event for the widespread acceptance of the terms Ekayana or Buddhayana. These phrases were adopted as a compromise and a cordial means to include all adherents of different Schools of Thought. The symposium convened distinguished representatives from the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions across many nations. During this event, Dr Buddhadasa Kirtisinghe introduced the word Buddhayana at the request of the seminar participants (Racheman, 2012).

Jack Kornfield, as explained by his teacher Ajahn Chah, stated that the essence within the Tripitaka texts is a living, practical, and real psychology. In practicing Buddhist teachings, one should respect the roots of each tradition but focus more on the core teachings the essence of Buddhist wisdom that encompasses all traditions. The Buddhadharma needs to be brought to a new cultural level, one that promotes a non-sectarian approach. As taught by Ajahn Buddhadasa, this means not dividing the teachings into Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana schools, but rather presenting Buddhayana as the core principle of awakening or mindfulness (Cornfield, 2008).

Ashin Kheminda compares Buddhayana to an orchestra, wherein each performer proficiently learns his instrument, yet no individual perceives themselves as superior to their peers within the ensemble. The guitar virtuoso performs on the guitar, the piano maestro plays the piano, the percussion expert plays the drums, and so forth. All perform proficiently, producing exquisite musical harmony. In accordance with the principles of Buddhayana, each sect must honor one another, acknowledging that all are virtuous. Within Buddhayana, there exist Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, however none regard themselves as superior to the others, as it is recognized that these distinctions arise solely from differing interpretations of the same Dharma (Sudhamek, 2012).

Both the *Arahant* and *Bodhisattva* pathways are acknowledged as valid manifestations of Buddhist teachings. They are founded on common fundamental ideas such as the Four Noble Truths (*Cattari Ariya Saccani*), the Three Marks of Existence, and the rule of causation. Both approaches prioritize ethical conduct and entail the development of the three trainings: *Sila* (morality), *Samadhi* (concentration), and *Panna* (wisdom). With this comprehension, practitioners can genuinely honor adherents of the *Arahant* path who assiduously endeavor to attain the ultimate objective in the present moment, achieving *Nibbana* through the application of the Noble Eightfold Path. Moreover, they can also honor practitioners of the *Bodhisattva* path who pledge to emulate the compassionate actions of *Bodhisattvas*, rendering their commitment a noble pursuit, not solely as a requisite for attaining an objective (Bodhi, 2012).

### Religious Moderation

The term "moderation," originating from the English language, is frequently employed to denote something typical, middle, standard, or non-extremist (Rijal et al., 2022, p. 13). It represents a compromise, a measured strategy, eschewing extremism, and maintaining neutrality. To be "moderate" signifies engaging in rational behavior, following a balanced approach, and exercising consideration. Moderation is an attitude that prioritizes equality in ideas, moral values, character, and

temperament, demonstrating how one articulates religious views both personally and socially.

Religious moderation is a viewpoint, disposition, and conduct characterized by the modest practice of religion. Moderate signifies comprehending and implementing religious doctrines without inclining towards the far right or far left (Agama, 2019). Religion inherently originates with modest components. It is not the religion itself that is modified, but the manner in which individuals follow it and their approach to understanding and interpreting its precepts (Hefni & Muna, 2022, p. 165). Religious moderation is a viewpoint, disposition, and practice in pursuing a spiritual life that emphasizes the core principles of religious doctrines. Religious moderation is defined as the endeavor to consistently adopt a balanced approach in religious practice, act equitably, and eschew extreme positions in religious observance. Religious moderation includes religious knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, social fellowship, and ethical principles that honor diversity, promote pluralism, tolerance, inclusivity, and reject violence (Manshur & Husni, 2020). This seeks to safeguard human dignity and foster collective prosperity by adhering to the ideals of justice, equilibrium, and constitutional respect as a mutual accord in national existence.

Lukman Hakim Saifuddin characterizes religious moderation as the comprehension and application of faith with equity and equilibrium, hence aiding in the prevention of extremism (Ahmad, 2023). He emphasizes that for a diverse, multicultural country like Indonesia, adopting a moderate religious viewpoint is crucial. It's the sole path to effectively manage diversity and foster genuine tolerance and justice. With this approach, diversity can be wisely appreciated, and justice can be achieved (Dewi et al., 2022). Religious moderation is an understanding based on religious norms and rules applied justly and balancedly, without excessively interpreting religious (Wibowo & Nurjanah, 2021).

Religious moderation does not necessitate the modification of religion, as faiths intrinsically encompass concepts of justice and equilibrium. Nasaruddin Umar (2019, p. 105) asserts that religious moderation is an approach that fosters tolerance in the context of religious and national diversity. Religious moderation is essential for attaining peace (Samsuri & Askar, 2023, p. 57). Religious moderation must be cultivated and perpetually fostered to establish it as a collective perspective (Suhendra, 2022). Indonesia's multicultural society necessitates religious moderation (Kosim et al., 2024, p. 350). Religious moderation has emerged as a pivotal concern for sustaining harmony and equilibrium in Indonesia's religious life, particularly in managing its varied religious and cultural milieu. The Ministry of Religious Affairs regards religious moderation as an essential method for mitigating extremism and radicalism, which significantly threaten national unity.

Religious moderation is essential as extreme beliefs in religion are antithetical to the core tenets of the faith. Radical actions undertaken in the name of religion frequently result in conflict, animosity, intolerance, and even wars that devastate civilization. Religious moderation arose from the necessity for pragmatic religious methodologies in Indonesia. This is the most effective strategy for protecting national integrity from the risk of disintegration, particularly in light of the widespread increase in religious exclusivism and extremism within society (Tantra & Siswadi, 2024, p. 148).

Religious moderation, as a foundational principle, can be characterized as the median approach in religious practice. It is closely associated with religious tolerance. Religious moderation instructs adherents to avoid isolation and instead engage, adapt, remain open, and socialize with others. Religious moderation advocates for adherents to maintain equilibrium and equity in their approach to diversity, encompassing religious plurality and diverse interpretations of faith, so fostering harmonious coexistence (Mughtar et al., 2022, p. 138).

Religious moderation is intricately associated with promoting unity through tolerance and reciprocal understanding. It enables individuals to optimize the advantages of religious and governmental organizations, educate subsequent generations, foster intergenerational collaboration, enhance quality of life, and promote a more inclusive comprehension of religion. This can improve the quality of resources for information dissemination and promote discussion between cultural and social values (Subchi et al., 2022). The administration has prioritized the enhancement of religious moderation as a primary national endeavor. Religious moderation is a crucial strategy for religious communities to safeguard Indonesia.

Indonesia aims to prevent the upheaval experienced by other countries. Many nations have faced societal upheaval and threatened stability owing to socio-political conflict and differing

religious beliefs (Girivirya, 2023, p. 2). Religious moderation is an innovative approach to resolving difficulties arising from diversity, including conflicts between assertions of absolute truth and subjective perspectives, as well as between radicalism and secularism. Pancasila, as the national intellectual underpinning, advocates for justice and equal rights for all citizens while incorporating the spiritual ideals essential for fostering healthy social interactions. It is anticipated that religious moderation will foster the emergence of moderate and tolerant religious practices in Indonesia.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research method, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. Data analysis is conducted inductively, focusing on meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2018, p. 2). The research approach is Library Research, involving a review of concepts and theories from existing literature, particularly articles in scientific journals. This literature review helps to construct the foundational concepts and theories for the study (Sujarweni, 2014, pp. 56–57). This research aims to explore the relevance of Buddhayana principles in the context of religious moderation.

## Results and Discussion

### Indicators of Religious Moderation in Buddhism

#### 1. National Commitment

National commitment is an expression of nationalism, affiliation, loyalty, and dedication that an individual possesses toward their country or nation. It entails the duty to adhere to the laws, conventions, and values acknowledged by a nation's society or government. National commitment encompasses the dedication to promoting the collective interest and well-being of the country or nation. National commitment serves as a primary indicator of how an individual's perspectives, attitudes, and convictions influence their allegiance to core national principles. This pertains to the adoption of Pancasila as the governmental ideology and the promotion of nationalism. The national principles codified in the 1945 Constitution and its associated rules are fundamental to this dedication to the nation. This national commitment is essential when novel concepts arise that may jeopardize the integrity of the Indonesian nation-state (Nasrudin et al., 2024, p. 157).

Buddha taught about building peace, both within individuals and in society, as explained in the *Kutadanta Sutta*. In this sutta, Buddha emphasized that peace cannot be achieved through bloody sacrifices or violent practices. Instead, it is attained through actions such as *dana* (generosity), *sila* (morality), and *bhavana* (meditation). It further states that to create a peaceful society, leaders must possess the necessary virtues to guide the community toward harmony and well-being (Thi et al., 2019, p. 215).

National commitment exemplifies exemplary human behavior within a nation, reflecting responsibility, empathy, generosity, resolute determination (*addhittana*), and a profound spirit of sacrifice (*paricagga*) in the defense of one's nation and homeland. Humans have numerous benefits, particularly superior intellect and wisdom relative to other beings. Humans are perceived as logical entities capable of dominating other beings. Humans can fulfill a valuable function due to their varied skills. The utility of a person is contingent upon their behaviors. To embody virtuous conduct and ensure one's acts yield positive outcomes, individuals must exhibit two fundamental qualities: a sense of guilt for wrongdoing (*hiri*) and apprehension regarding the repercussions of malevolent actions (*ottapa*). These should be intrinsic to each individual as a conscious awareness in national and state affairs, hence promoting societal harmony. This is significantly pertinent to the *Bahitika Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 2013, p. 297) which explains actions that harm oneself and others, as well as their opposites. Such conditions can encourage the creation of harmony in societal life.

In Buddhism, a comprehensive understanding of mankind transcends mere compliance with governmental norms. It prioritizes exemplary moral behavior. As elucidated in the *Kandakaraka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* (Horner, 2000: 4) a person who practices social moral principles is considered valuable and good. From a Buddhist perspective, a truly holistic human being is an individual who has eradicated all mental defilements, reaching a state of purity. Nevertheless, extending this concept of "holistic human" to the realm of nationalism would be excessively

demanding. In this discourse, a holistic human being, for laypersons or regular individuals, denotes someone who attains well-being in all physical and mental aspects. This indicates that their mentality is resolute with impeccable *sīla* (morality), and they diligently execute all their obligations as an individual, family member, community member, and citizen. They consistently endeavor to fulfill their responsibilities in accordance with Buddhist principles. This endeavor entails comprehending, assimilating, and applying the Buddha Dhamma through adherence to the Tripitaka scriptures. By implementing Buddhist principles, an individual can act ethically within the national and state community, thereby becoming a citizen who supports the nation's philosophy and adheres to all governmental norms, ultimately striving for collective prosperity.

## 2. Tolerance

Tolerance is an attitude that permits individuals to maintain their ideas, articulate their viewpoints, and convey their perspectives without interference. It signifies an embrace of diversity through an open, tolerant, accommodating, and compassionate disposition. Tolerance is inherently linked to a good outlook, respect, and acceptance of individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. Religious tolerance includes intra-religious and inter-religious tolerance, along with tolerance in social and political contexts. Although religious tolerance is frequently emphasized, it does not imply that tolerance for non-religious matters is of lesser significance. One can see the interactions of individuals with adherents of different faiths: their communication, collaboration, construction of places of worship, and cultivation of relationships within an interfaith framework.

Throughout Indonesia's extensive history, numerous religions were introduced and embraced by a culture that predominantly adhered to existing beliefs. Throughout this historical epoch, inter-religious exchanges transpired without considerable turmoil. This resulted from the active tolerance of religious devotees, facilitating mutual acceptance and harmonious coexistence. This concord is inextricably linked to the moderate position steadfastly maintained by adherents of each religion. Moderate organizations regard individuals of different faiths as creations of God deserving protection and respect. Moderate communities perceive diversity as a component of divine destiny, hence emphasizing tolerance and appreciation for difference to foster societal harmony.

The *Upali Sutta* exemplifies the Buddha's tolerant disposition towards other faiths. In this sutta, the Buddha counsels Upali against making impulsive decisions regarding the transition from one faith to another. It is preferable to conduct thorough investigations and engage in profound contemplation initially, while also respecting and refraining from disparaging other groups (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2013). Buddha underscored and strongly advocated for endeavors promoting a healthy inter-religious social existence. The Buddha personally exemplified this harmony at the behest of his potential disciple, Upali, who desired to become his follower. Despite Upali's adherence to Buddhism, he remained obligated to respect, honor, and support his previous instructors. This demonstrates the Buddha's profound tolerance for other religions.

## 3. Non violence

King Asoka practiced a harmonious interfaith social life. Asoka was a renowned Buddhist monarch who exemplified the principles of loving-kindness, compassion, and nonviolence. Asoka promoted interfaith societal harmony, as recorded in his edicts: "Whoever extols their religion and denigrates another's merely diminishes and entombs their own religion." Non-violence grounded in loving-kindness serves as the essence for attaining *saraniyadhamma*. An individual who adheres to these ideals will be esteemed and cherished by others. The social ideal of Buddhism is to attain the ultimate objective, which is complete spiritual freedom (*Nibbana/Nirvana*). In the interim, material prosperity is regarded as beneficial. All effective methods to attain a favorable outcome are termed good deeds (in thought, word, and deed), signifying behaviors that are advantageous for the welfare of both others and oneself.

There are six ways of life based on loving-kindness that lead to harmony (*saraniyadhamma*), which can be used to foster interfaith social cohesion. These are written in the *Saraniya Sutta*: (1) Spreading loving-kindness through actions towards others, whether they are present or not (*mettākāya kamma*). (2) Spreading loving-kindness through words towards others, whether they are present or not (*mettāvācī kamma*). (3) Spreading loving-kindness through thoughts towards others,

whether they are present or not (*mettāmano kamma*). (4) Giving opportunities to religious leaders to also enjoy the benefits rightfully obtained, and not monopolizing what has been gained. (5) Always maintaining moral purity when communicating with their leaders and not doing anything that hurts their feelings. (6) Living harmoniously together and not quarreling due to differences in opinion and views (Thanissaro, 1997).

The fundamental principle of fostering interfaith social harmony from a Buddhist viewpoint is the assertion that individuals must adhere to their different duties and responsibilities as dictated by their social roles and interactions with fellow community members. This should be grounded on ethical principles of non-violence and imbued with loving-kindness (*mettā*). Only then will individuals attain well-being, prosperity, and pleasure within society. Non-violence develops inside individuals as they nurture Brahma Vihara, namely loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic delight (*muditā*), and serenity (*upekkhā*).

In the *Angulimala Sutta*, the Buddha imparted the principle of non-violence to Angulimala, who was then known as Ahimsaka, signifying "*he who does not harm*." Ahimsaka was on the verge of murdering his mother to meet a predetermined quota of one thousand fingers when the Buddha roused him by stating:

*"Angulimala, I do not kill any living being. I have laid down weapons like staffs, spears, and swords. Therefore, I will not have to run in the cycle of rebirth. But you still hurt and kill people. That is why you still have to run in the cycle of rebirth..."* (Kusaladhamma, 2022)

The Buddha asserted that acts of killing and harming others merely extend the cycle of reincarnation and suffering, illustrating that violence fails to yield peace and instead exacerbates conflict and injustice. This doctrine is pertinent to radicalism, which can incite social fragmentation, as acts of violence frequently stem from extreme and intolerant ideas.

#### **4. Accommodative towards local culture**

An individual's receptiveness to religious activities that integrate local culture and traditions serves as a key sign of their religious moderation. Individuals with a moderate disposition typically incorporate local customs into their spiritual activities, provided these do not contradict the core tenets of their chosen religious doctrines. A adaptable religious tradition incorporates activities grounded in beneficial local values, as long as they conform to fundamental religious doctrines, rather than solely emphasizing rigid normative truth. Conversely, certain groups oppose the incorporation of local customs, apprehensive that it may undermine the integrity of their beliefs.

In the *Sigalovada Sutta*, the Buddha instructed the youth Sigala to honour the customs and traditions inherited from his forefathers. This reverence for local culture entails safeguarding and comprehending the significance of those traditions. Sigala was conducting a ritual, venerating the six cardinal directions: east, south, west, north, above, and below, as per his father's instructions prior to his demise. Upon seeing him, the Buddha promptly approached Sigala and questioned him over his deeds. Sigala highlighted that his actions were intended to pay tribute to his father.

Buddha subsequently emphasized that genuine devotion transcends simple bodily routines. He asserted that each direction possesses a profound significance and ought to be respected through tangible actions in everyday life. The east represents parents, the south represents educators, the west represents spouse and offspring, the north represents companions, the nadir signifies subordinates and employees, and the zenith denotes ascetics and brahmins. The Buddha asserted that authentic respect is manifested by acts of compassion and accountability in all aspects, rather than via simple ritualistic practices. Sigala recognized that to respect ancestral culture and customs, he must embody moral and ethical ideals in his everyday existence (Kusaladhamma, 2022).

### **Buddhayana Principles in Religious Diversity in Indonesia**

#### **1. Non-Sectarian**

Sectarianism denotes a fervent allegiance to a specific religious, political, or intellectual faction, characterized by animosity and repudiation of other groupings. Nagle (2009) asserts that sectarianism employs inflexible demarcations between groups. Sectarianism transcends basic belief differences; it constitutes a social identity that exacerbates segregation and frequently incites overt confrontation. Sectarian identities are established and sustained by quotidian social behaviors,



illustrating the intricacies of social realities in multicultural cultures (Renne, 2024). Nurcholish Madjid (2008, p. 225) defines sectarianism as a manifestation of religious exclusivism that opposes the essence of universalism. Sectarianism arises when a group believes it owns absolute truth and isolates itself from the truths held by other communities. Bhikkhu Piyasilo (2008) contends that sectarianism reflects an intolerance towards the doctrines and practices of other Buddhist schools. Comprehending sectarianism necessitates an approach that examines the interplay of forces that establish and reinforce borders between groups.

Non-sectarianism denotes an inclusivity towards all, rather than rigid allegiance to a specific sect, religion, or ideology. John Hick (2004) elucidates that it underscores the equivalent significance of all religious traditions, devoid of any exclusive perspectives. A non-sectarian approach creates a shared environment that surpasses religious or ideological distinctions, promoting unity. Non-sectarianism in religion denotes the recognition that a sect represents only one selected path among other alternatives (Dharmawimala et al., 2012). A follower of the Theravada route in Buddhism may regard it as one avenue to enlightenment while recognizing the existence of alternative paths such as Mahayana or Vajrayana.

Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana represent distinct pathways to comprehensively understand the Buddha Dhamma. Buddhayana perceives the prevalent, clichéd perspectives of these institutions as contradictory. Although they may appear different superficially, a thorough and precise comprehension uncovers their essential unity: they collectively represent the Dhamma, or Buddhism itself (Sudhamek, 2012). Buddhayana posits that all Buddhist sects are legitimate, contingent upon a proper comprehension of their doctrines. This ethos promotes harmonious coexistence among all schools, embodying Buddhism as it existed prior to the *Buddha's Parinibbana*.

## 2. Inclusivism

Inclusivism is a perspective that recognizes and appreciates the presence of different religions while upholding one's own beliefs. It refutes assertions of singular truth and promotes concord among followers of various religions. Inclusive religious disposition encompasses receptiveness to diversity, facilitating folks to comprehend, value, and cooperate notwithstanding their disparities (Larassati, 2020). This method is crucial for promoting piety and fostering interreligious harmony. Inclusivism fosters harmony and peace by eschewing assertions of absolute truth and promoting discourse and collaboration. This corresponds with essential Buddhist doctrines that highlight the principle of interdependence. The Buddha, in the *Khama Sutta (Anguttara Nikaya 4.16)*, said that intolerant individuals with limited perspectives and animosity impose mental anguish upon themselves (Thanissaro, 2012a).

Thich Nhat Hanh elucidates inclusivism about *upekkha* within the *Brahmaviharas*. Thich Nhat Hanh explains this with the analogy of a flower's beauty (Sudhamek, 2012). A flower comprises elements like sunlight, soil, clouds, fertilizer, a gardener, water, and many more. Without these elements, the flower would not exist. The flower is, in fact, inseparable from these elements. Similarly, for individuals, at the level of ultimate reality, there is no self separate from non-self elements. Looking deeply at life's phenomena will lead to an understanding of inclusivism. Inclusivism encompasses openness, respecting diversity, and overcoming hatred and ignorance within individuals to create a more harmonious and compassionate world.

Inclusivism recognizes shared principles that can be acknowledged despite divergences. An individual can recognize truth beyond their own beliefs, provided they do not assert that absolute truth is exclusively confined to their selected doctrines. Buddhayana embodies an inclusive principle: practitioners of Theravada remain receptive to the insights found within Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. A Mahayana practitioner is also receptive to the teachings of Theravada.

## 3. Pluralism

Pluralism is a perspective that recognizes and appreciates the different components of society, encompassing religion, culture, ethnicity, and worldview. Religious pluralism posits that many religions possess distinct values and truths, indicating that no singular faith monopolizes absolute truth. Pluralism posits that different religions provide equally meaningful truths and avenues to salvation (Nendissa et al., 2025, pp. 165–166). Nurcholish Madjid asserted that religious plurality

can be achieved by openness, mutual respect, and tolerance among religious communities. The essence of pluralism is to integrate religious variety through openness, reciprocal respect, mutual tolerance, and collaboration in the pursuit of justice. Religious plurality is associated with the objective of fostering open-mindedness and broad-mindedness among religious individuals (Setiawan, 2019). Gus Dur also stated that religious pluralism is very important for religious freedom (Marjani, 2023, p. 127).

Pluralism in Buddhism is defined as the acknowledgment and valuation of difference in religion, culture, and perspectives, integral to a social reality that necessitates acceptance and tolerance (Sardi et al., 2021). Buddhist teachings emphasise the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious coexistence despite differences. Buddhism advocates for tolerance, understanding of diversity, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their religion, race, or culture, while opposing coercion and striving for global harmony. From a Buddhayana perspective, pluralism beyond mere recognition of difference; it entails the active implementation of attitudes and values that promote happy coexistence within a diverse society.

#### 4. Universalism

Non-sectarianism, inclusivism, and pluralism operate within the realm of relative truth (*samutti sacca*), which is affected by dualism. Universalism exists in the realm of absolute truth (*paramattha sacca*), transcending dualistic perspectives (*advitha*) (Sudhamek, 2012). Universalism is a philosophy that views every human being as possessing universal elements and the seeds to become an enlightened being (*bodhicitta*). Moving towards enlightenment means cultivating these seeds of goodness within oneself. This goodness cannot be claimed by one religion, as it is universal and found within the teachings of various religions. These good qualities include loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, non-violence, generosity, and other forms of goodness.

Universalism perceives all occurrences in a non-dualistic manner. It is a viewpoint that recognises uniformity amid diversity and diversity within uniformity. Fritjof Capra examined the parallels between the tenets of quantum mechanics and Eastern mysticism, including Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism. Capra asserted that via profound contemplation (meditation), one will comprehend the ultimate unity of the universe (Keraf, 2013). This aligns with D.T. Suzuki's assertion on understanding universalism in Buddhism: the fundamental idea of Buddhism is to transcend dualism. To reach the spiritual world, one must be free from dualism and achieve an essential view.

Universalism is also evident in the *Kakawin Sutasoma*, authored by Mpu Tantular, a Buddhist figure from the Majapahit period. This literature encompasses tolerance and universal principles found within the religious teachings of the times, specifically Shiva and Buddha (Dharmawimala et al., 2012). Quote from *Pupuh 139*, stanza 5:

*Rwāneka dhātu winuwus Buddha Wiswa,  
Bhinnêki rakwa ring apan kena parwanosen,  
Mangka ng Jinatwa kalawan Śiwatatwa tunggal,  
Bhinnêka tunggal ika tan hana dharma mangrwa.*  
(Buddha and Shiva are two different substances.  
They are indeed different, but how can they be recognized?  
Because the truth of Jina (Buddha) and Shiva is one.  
It is indeed divided, yet it is also one.  
There is no confusion in truth) (Mastuti & Bramantyo, 2009)

The quote from *Kakawin Sutasoma*, "There is no confusion in truth," clearly demonstrates universalism. The Buddha taught that Dharma is a universal truth, not confined by ethnic or religious lines. This universal truth (*paramattha sacca*) is not exclusive to any particular religion.

#### 5. Belief in Sanghyang Adi Buddha

In contrast to Abrahamic monotheistic religions, Buddhism lacks a personal deity. This does not exclude believing in a transcendent reality typically linked to the divine. Buddhism largely emphasizes moral difficulties and the ontological question of human being, which it defines through

the lens of suffering, rather than engaging in supernatural discourse about God (Sumedho, 2007, p. 28). The historical evolution of Buddhism in Indonesia is recognized as a religion, with one of its stipulations being devotion to Pancasila, particularly the first principle: Belief in the One Supreme God. Ashin Jinarakkhita developed the notion of a paramount divinity known as *Adi Buddha*. During the 1979 Buddhist Congress, it was affirmed that Buddhism in Indonesia acknowledges the reality of a singular Supreme God (Fattah & Utomo, 2023, p. 33).

The Pāli Tipitaka does not explicitly mention God, but the concept of God is alluded to by the Buddha in *Udana VIII.3*, which states:

*Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ, no cetāṃ bhikkhave abhaviṣaṃ ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ, nayidha jātaṃsa bhūtaṃsa kataṃsa saṅkhataṃsa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyetha. Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ, tasmā jātaṃsa bhūtaṃsa kataṃsa saṅkhataṃsa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyā'ti.*

("O monks, there is an Unborn, an Unoriginated, an Uncreated, an Absolute. If there were no Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Absolute, then there would be no escape from the born, the originated, the created, the conditioned. But because there is an Unborn, an Unoriginated, an Uncreated, an Absolute, there is an escape from the born, the originated, the created, the conditioned.")

The Pāli Tipitaka literature contains discussions about God, similar to Abrahamic religions. Buddhism refers to it as "that which cannot be conceived" or "beyond words."

*Adi Buddha* is also known as *Dharmakaya*, symbolizing the ultimate reality, which transcends verbal expression (Sudhamek, 2012). *Dharmakaya* etymologically denotes the ultimate result of dharma. *Adi Buddha* is omnipresent, neither arriving nor departing. Every sentient being possesses the capacity to actualize the essence of *Dharmakaya* within themselves. The invocation of *Sanghyang Adi Buddha* has emerged as a crucial component in the developing Buddhayana ritual in Indonesia.

## Conclusion

This Research indicates that Buddhist teachings, especially within Buddhayana, possess values aligned with religious moderation. Indicators of religious moderation are also found in Buddhism as directly taught by the Buddha, recorded in the Tipitaka Pāli Canon. National commitment is found in the *Kutadanta Sutta*, where the Buddha taught that the government and citizens of a country are responsible, sympathetic, magnanimous, possess strong determination (*addhitthana*), and have a great spirit of sacrifice (*paricagga*) in defending their nation and country. The Buddha imparted the principle of tolerance, as documented in the *Upali Sutta*. The Buddha counseled Upali to refrain from precipitous conclusions regarding his conversion to Buddhism, urging him instead to conduct a thorough investigation and contemplation, while also advising him to honor and not disparage his former affiliation. The Buddha advocated for non-violence, underscoring that every human activity should avoid inflicting suffering on others. Non-violence constitutes a core principle in Buddhism. The Buddha asserted that non-violence is nurtured inside individuals via the cultivation of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic delight (*muditā*), and serenity (*upekkhā*). The Buddha instructed on the adaptation to local culture in the *Sigalovada Sutta*, asserting that receptivity and the safeguarding of local traditions should be grounded in accurate comprehension. The ideas of Buddhayana align with the practice of religious moderation, reflecting a non-sectarian, inclusive, pluralistic, and universal perspective, as well as faith in *Sanghyang Adi Buddha*.

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