



BUDDHIST SOCIETY AND NATIONALITY

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Received: 25/11/2024

Revised: 13/12/2024

Accepted: 20/12/2024

DOI: 10.53565/abip.v10i2.1460

Abstract This study discusses the role of Buddhism in strengthening national insight and national unity in Indonesia, focusing on the contribution of Buddhist values such as wisdom, compassion, and tolerance in the context of a pluralistic society. This study finds how Buddhist teachings, including the principles of peace and non-violence, can support the values of Pancasila and build a harmonious social life. This study was conducted by analyzing the literature. The results show that Buddhists in Indonesia can increase social cohesion by participating in social and political activities that promote diversity and humanity. Buddhist teachings can help guide just and peaceful leadership behavior by implementing principles such as Dasa Raja Dhamma and Dhammavijaya. This study shows that Buddhist teachings can serve as a moral foundation to strengthen the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) by building character and actively participating in society.

Keywords *Nationality, Buddhist Society, Unity*

INTRODUCTION

The moral and ethical values held by the Buddha and harmonious and civilized social life are very important. Wisdom (*paññā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and non-violence (*ahimsa*) are taught about the importance of peace, tolerance, and equality in social relations. Buddhist teachings are very helpful in fostering a sense of togetherness and harmony in Indonesia, which has many different ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Buddhist teachings can help strengthen a sense of togetherness and solidarity amidst the challenges of globalization, modernization, and social conflict (Finnigan, 2022). To achieve the goals of Pancasila and build a pluralistic and democratic society, Buddhist principles that support peace and interfaith dialogue are very important. In the context of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), the universal values contained in Buddhist teachings, such as respect for life, the importance of social harmony, and respect for differences, can help realize national harmony.

Buddhists in Indonesia have an important role in building a social life based on moral and spiritual principles in the social realm (Mappaenre et al., 2023). By using Buddhist

teachings, Buddhists are expected to make a positive contribution to the development of a just and peaceful country. They can also play an active role in social, educational, and political activities aimed at improving common welfare. Due to Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity, the values of peace and tolerance are very important to maintain unity (Chasannudin & Asmani, 2020). It is possible that Buddhist teachings can serve as a basis for creating a balance between individual rights and social responsibilities. In national and state life, principles such as equality, wisdom in deliberation, and non-violence in social interactions can serve as important moral foundations. As time progresses, the major religions in Indonesia, including Buddhism, are expected to provide moral and spiritual guidance to their followers in the religious, social, and political fields. Therefore, it is very important to study Buddhist society and its relationship with Indonesian nationality to see how these values can help build a peaceful nation.

METHODS

A literature review is a collection of written articles from journals, books, and other documents that explain new and old theories and information. It organizes the literature into topics and documents needed. Data obtained from literature research is the type of data used by the author in this study (Habsy, 2017). In searching for articles, this study utilized online database resources through Google Scholar and the Garuda Portal using the keywords Buddhist society and nation. In qualitative research, it is necessary to explain the role of researcher participation, objects, and sources, as well as data collection procedures, and data reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

National Insight from a Buddhist Perspective

In Javanese, 'wawas' signifies a method of analysis, perspective of observation, or way of perception (Akbar & Najicha, 2022). National Insight refers to the self-perception and understanding of Indonesian people about their environment, which is embedded in the philosophical foundations of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, which articulate their identity as Indonesians amidst the complexity of global existence. Understanding the essence of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is paramount because the diverse ethnicities, religions, and languages of Indonesia constitute a tapestry of extraordinary cultural richness that requires gratitude. The principles of Buddhism underline the criticality of fostering unity. The idea of unity and togetherness, summarized in *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, emphasizes the preservation of completeness, in addition to mutual respect and appreciation of the inherent differences that exist, representing a fundamental aspect of national insight (Hadikusno, 2023).

Buddhism encourages individuals to cultivate intelligent perspectives and understanding to perpetuate unity and cohesion, to help one another, to engage in mutual benevolence, to realize tolerance, and to respect and appreciate diversity, especially regarding matters of faith or religious belief. Several teachings of the Buddha, including the *Saraniya Dhamma Sutta*, *Kosambiya Sutta*, *Cariyapitaka*, and *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, exemplify the essentiality of understanding for humanity to develop into future generations

who realize the ideals of the nation as envisioned in the national aspirations (Hadikusno, 2023).

Insights related to nationality in Buddhist education include Brahma-Vihara, Dhammapada, Paritta, gender equality, the narrative of King Asoka, the search for peace in Buddhism, and peace depicted in the Jataka tales (especially the Serivanija Jataka), which discuss the principles of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in addition to prosperity, the exemplary figure of a Buddhist disciple, the narrative of Maha Prajapati Gotami, and R.A.Kartini (Hadikusno, 2023). The core of national insight is also conveyed through Dhamma. Referring to the *Brahma-Vihara*, which summarizes the great teachings of the Buddha addressed to all living beings, the cultivation of love (*Metta*), compassion (*Karuna*), shared joy in the success of others (*Mudita*), and equanimity (*Upekkha*) are proposed as guiding principles for navigating the complexities of existence (Hadikusno, 2023).

Buddhism and Politics

Politics is articulated as a channel to national prosperity. The Buddha's teachings on dharma can be remembered as an effort to liberate all beings from suffering, implying that dharma embodies the path to national prosperity through the reduction of suffering (Tantra, 2021). In Buddhism, three forms of supremacy can be identified that can serve as references for the realization of good governance: *Attadhipateyya* Supremacy, which emphasizes the central supremacy of oneself in terms of career, position, reputation, and status (self-centered); *Lokadhipateyya* Supremacy, which emphasizes the supremacy of worldly values and group interests to achieve community-centered recognition; and *Dhammadhipateyya* Supremacy, which places great importance on the principles of dhamma, such as morality, honesty, cause and effect, factual accuracy (data, research, etc.), and legislation (Tantra, 2021). Among these three forms of supremacy, *Dhammadhipateyya* Supremacy is considered the most suitable reference for realizing the principles of good governance.

Good Governance, according to Cakkavati Sihanada Sutta and Kuttadanta Sutta

In the Cakkavati-Sihanada Sutta contained in the Digha Nikaya, Buddha gives an example of the duties of a king named Dalhaneni. He was a just king who succeeded in conquering the four corners, which ensured security in his territory. He has seven heirlooms, which include the wheel heirloom, the elephant heirloom, the horse heirloom, the gem heirloom, the woman heirloom, the householder heirloom, and the seventh, the advisor heirloom. Dalhaneni ruled after conquering an area surrounded by sea, not by force using sticks or swords, but by enforcing the law (*D.III.59*).

A king must hold fast to the dhamma, to make it his guide, and to acknowledge it as the source of wisdom. He must protect and guard his household, his army, the villagers and townspeople, as well as the ascetics and brahmins, and also protect wild animals and birds in accordance with the principles of the dhamma. The king must not allow evil to threaten the kingdom and must assist those in need. The duties of a wheel-turning Ariya king can be summarized into 12 important points, namely: (1) Relying on the teachings of dhamma as a guideline in governance, (2) Respecting and appreciating dhamma in every action, (3) Making dhamma a symbol/badge and banner that reflects the king's leadership, (4) Upholding the responsibility to protect the household, troops and all citizens in accordance with the principles of dhamma (5) Protection must include brahmins, householders,

villagers and townspeople, and other living beings, (6) Trying to prevent evil from entering the kingdom, (7) Providing necessities for those in need, (8) Being open to listening to advice/counsel from ascetics and brahmins who undergo spiritual practices, (9) Inviting people to avoid evil and do good, (10) The king must understand what is beneficial and what is not beneficial, what is praiseworthy or blameworthy, (11) Appreciating those who try to calm themselves and tame sensual desires, (12) Trying to create prosperity and happiness for its people through wise actions (*D.III.61*).

In the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta, as a leader, there are moral rules that function as a guide to life, including prohibitions against killing, taking something that is not given, having inappropriate sexual relations, lying, and consuming excessive alcohol and food (*D. III.62*). A leader must have four important qualities, as written in the book (*D.III.77-79*), namely: (1) Maintenance of Territory, namely monks are reminded to maintain their ancestral lands and territories, which will bring about an increase in life span, beauty, happiness, their wealth, and strength, (2) The Four Paths to Strength, namely the length of a monk's life is measured through the development of the four paths to strength: concentration of will, persistence, mindfulness, and investigation, which if well cultivated can extend life to a century (3)) The characteristics of beauty and happiness are that a monk's beauty lies in correct behavior and discipline, while happiness is achieved through the experience of pure and balanced *jhāna*, detached from sensual desires, (4) Wealth and power: Wealth for a monk is reflected in loving-kindness and compassion that encompasses the entire world, while strength is achieved through freedom of the mind from defilements and wisdom gained through personal experience.

The characteristics of a leader, according to Kutadanta Sutta, emphasize the importance of the role of a leader as a protector of society and a deterrent to crime in his government. A leader should be a role model for his society and be able to lead himself before leading others. The eight characteristics of a royal leader described through the figure of King Mahavijita in (*D.I.137*) are as follows: (1) Noble birth, namely the king was born from two noble parents, with a flawless birth; (2) Charming appearance, namely the king has a handsome appearance, without any lowly parts, (3) Wealth, namely the king has abundant wealth, with full treasure houses and granaries, (4) Military strength, namely he has four loyal and reliable army units, increasing his reputation among enemies, (5) Generous nature, namely the king is a responsible giver and host, does not close the door to ascetics, brahmins, wanderers, and those in need, (6) Fountain of Virtue, namely the king acts as a source of virtue for the community, (7) Education and knowledge, namely the king is very learned and understands the meaning of what is said, explains it clearly, (8) Skill in utilizing, namely he is competent in enjoying the benefits of the past, future, and present.

By having these characteristics, a leader can carry out his duties well and lead society towards goodness. The eight characteristics mentioned above are important characteristics that every prospective leader must have in carrying out his role. These characteristics are also in line with the teachings of the Buddha, as stated in the Dhammapada. "Though one may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself. Self-conquest is far better than the conquest of others. Not even a god, an angel, Mara or Brahma can turn into defeat the victory of a person who is self-subdued and ever restrained in conduct." (*Dh.103-105*). Regarding the characteristics of a leader in the Kutadanta Sutta (*D.I.138*), the Buddha also explained the four qualifications of

a good royal brahmana, namely: (1) Noble birth, namely a royal brahmana is born from a noble and honorable lineage (2) Education and expertise, namely he is learned and has expertise in mantras, showing deep knowledge in the spiritual field; (3) High morality, namely the brahmin has good character and has morality that continues to increase, reflecting his commitment to ethical values; and (4) Role in the ceremony, namely he is a wise figure, usually the first or second person to hold the sacrificial spoon, indicating his important role in religious rituals.

Buddhism and Nationality

Four Types or Ranks of Human Beings

There are four types of people in the world based on the fruits of their efforts: (1) People who live from the fruits of their efforts but not from the fruits of their karma. This individual reaps the rewards of his hard work but is not attached to good or bad karma resulting from past actions; (2) People who live from the fruits of their karma but not from the fruits of their efforts. This individual enjoys the results of good karma without engaging in any current effort or hard work; (3) People who live from the fruits of their efforts and also from the fruits of their karma. These individuals benefit from a combination of personal effort and good karma accrued from previous actions, and (4) People who live neither from the fruits of their efforts nor from the fruits of their karma. This individual does not benefit from effort or karma, so his life is not tied to these two aspects (*A.II.135*).

Four Types of people in the world based on moral behavior: (1) A blameworthy person is someone who does blameworthy acts through bodily, verbal, and mental actions; (2) A most blameworthy person is someone who does the most blameworthy acts in all aspects (physical, verbal, and mental); (3) A slightly blameworthy person is someone who does acts that are only slightly blameworthy in all aspects; and (4) A blameless person is someone who behaves blamelessly, not doing blameworthy acts in all aspects (physical, verbal, and mental) (*A.II.135-136*). Blameless acts can include negative behaviors done through thought, speech, and physical actions, which lead to poor moral judgment. The judgment of a person as blameworthy, most blameworthy, slightly blameworthy, or blameless is determined based on the severity and frequency of the actions done in all three aspects (physical, verbal, and mental).

Four types of people exist in the world based on moral behavior, concentration, and wisdom: (1) People who do not fulfill moral behavior, concentration, and wisdom. These individuals lack the three essential aspects of a good life: (2) People who display moral behavior but not concentration and wisdom. These individuals value moral behavior but do not develop concentration and wisdom; (3) People who fulfill moral behavior and concentration but not wisdom. These individuals value moral behavior and have concentration but are still lacking in wisdom; and (4) People who value moral behavior, concentration, and wisdom. These individuals value and make the three aspects—moral behavior, concentration, and wisdom—the authority in their lives, showing a thorough and comprehensive understanding of these values (*A.II.136-137*).

Seven Conditions for National Well-being

In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, the Buddha explains the teachings on the conditions for well-being that, if practiced, will bring prosperity and

prevent decline. The seven conditions for the well-being of a nation are: (1) Meeting frequently for deliberation; (2) In every deliberation, always encourage efforts for peace; (3) Establishing new regulations and maintaining existing regulations; (4) Showing respect and devotion to elders; (5) Strictly prohibiting the practice of kidnapping women; (6) Honoring holy places; and (7) Honoring people who are worthy of being considered holy (*D.II.76-77*). The Buddha taught these seven principles to the Vajjians at the Sarandada temple in Vesali. This teaching is intended to prevent decline, and as long as these seven principles are maintained and applied, the Vajjians will prosper and will not decline.

Dasa Raja Dhamma Concept (10 Virtues of Kings)

The Dasa Raja Dhamma theory was implemented by Sri His Majesty King Asoka in India, which proved capable of overcoming various upheavals that emerged at that time and creating peace and prosperity for the people. An explanation of Dasa Raja Dhamma can be conveyed as follows: (1) Giving/charity (*Dana*): Likes helping others, successful leaders are not attached to their wealth and dare to sacrifice their wealth for the benefit of the people; (2) Morality (*Sila*): Having high morality by avoiding actions such as murder, theft, corruption, immoral behavior, lying, and anything that can make a person drunk or lose consciousness; (3) Sacrifice (*Pariccaga*): Maintaining and fighting for the interests of the people in order to achieve prosperity; (4) Sincerity (*Ajjava*): Be honest and clean, without having personal interests in carrying out your duties; (5) Hospitality (*Maddava*): Always show a sympathetic and friendly attitude towards everyone; (6) Simplicity (*Tapa*): Getting used to living simply; (7) Non-anger (*Akkodha*): Free from evil desires, hostility and resentment towards anyone; (8) Non-violence (*Avihimsa*): Maintaining peace by avoiding war and all forms of violence; (9) Patience (*Khanti*) : Able to face various obstacles, difficulties, and ridicule, and forgive the unpleasant actions of others; and (10) Not contrary to the truth (*Avirodhana*): Supporting the welfare of the people and living in unity with society in accordance with the conscience of the people (*J.V.378*). Thus, a successful leader should implement the steps taught by the Buddha to achieve the goal of creating prosperity for the nation or community he leads.

Through the application of the principles of Buddhist teachings that are in line with the values of diversity and Pancasila, Buddhist democracy can play an important role in strengthening the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Some of the main elements of Buddhist democracy that are relevant to strengthening the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are: (1) Equality and Justice. According to Buddhist teachings, every living being has the right to be treated equally. In the context of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, this resonates with the principle of democracy that upholds equal rights and obligations for all citizens regardless of racial, religious, or ethnic background. The values of unity and social justice are important pillars in strengthening the state (Premasiri, 2021); (2) Deliberation and Wisdom. In the Sangha monastic community, important decisions are often made through collective deliberation rather than authoritarianism. This is an example of a democratic process that emphasizes participation, wisdom, and agreement. In a diverse society in the Republic of Indonesia, the principle of deliberation strengthens the foundations of democracy and maintains social stability; (3) Tolerance and Peace. Buddhism places great emphasis on tolerance and non-discrimination.

In the Republic of Indonesia, these values are very important because they are based on the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which means that all people are one (Jamiludin et al., 2023). Social peace and interfaith tolerance are very important to maintain the integrity of the nation. Through its teachings on loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), Buddhism can help prevent religious conflict and promote harmony; (4) The Principle of Non-Violence (*Ahimsa*). The Buddha's teachings on non-violence (*ahimsa*) are an important foundation for a peaceful and prosperous social life. In the context of the Republic of Indonesia, this principle promotes peace and harmony among people by avoiding conflict and resolving problems through peaceful means. Non-violence is an element that supports social resilience and stability in a democratic country like Indonesia; (5) Wise and Compassionate Leadership. The ideal leader, according to Buddhism, is a leader who is wise, compassionate, and responsible to his people. This principle is relevant to Indonesian democracy, where leaders are elected by the people and are expected to serve the public interest. The Buddhist teachings on wisdom-based leadership are in line with this principle: (6) Moral and Spiritual Development. The Buddhist teachings place great emphasis on the development of morality (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). These values can contribute to strengthening the character of a society that is moral and has integrity. In the context of the Republic of Indonesia, the development of good character among citizens will create a harmonious and orderly society, which is a strong foundation for a healthy democratic system; and (7) Active Participation in National Life. Democracy in Buddhism also includes the active participation of every individual in their community. In this case, Buddhists can contribute actively to national life, either through involvement in government, community organizations, or social actions that are oriented towards the common welfare. Active participation from every citizen, regardless of religion, is the key to strengthening democracy in Indonesia.

Implementing Buddhist democratic values, such as equality, deliberation, tolerance, non-violence, and wise leadership, in everyday life can help strengthen the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. They can create a harmonious, just, and peaceful society in accordance with Pancasila and the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. With its universal values, Buddhism provides a strong foundation for strengthening democracy in diverse Indonesia (Soekarba, 2018).

Buddhism and Democracy

The similarity of values underlying the two concepts shows the relationship between Buddhism and the fourth principle of Pancasila, namely "Democracy Led by the Wisdom of Deliberation/Representation." The principles contained in the teachings of the Buddha are in line with the meaning of democracy, wisdom, deliberation, and just leadership, which are the core of the fourth principle of Pancasila. In Buddhism, especially in the monastic community (*Sangha*), deliberation and consensus are often used to make important decisions rather than authoritarianism. Monks gather to discuss various issues, and collectively, they reach a consensus. This is very much in line with the principle underlying the fourth principle, which emphasizes the importance of deliberation and representation in making fair and wise decisions (Syahrani et al., 2022). Deliberation involving all parties in the community aims to reach the best decision for all, not just for the benefit of a few people. This principle supports people's values and democracy (Syahrani et al., 2022).

According to Buddhist teachings, a leader must stand on wisdom (*paññā*) and morality (*sīla*). According to Buddhism, a good leader leads with wisdom, compassion, and responsibility, with the aim of ensuring the welfare of all beings. This is in accordance with the fourth principle, which states that leadership should be based on wisdom rather than power. In situations like this, the Buddha often advised kings and leaders about the importance of being a just, responsible leader who focuses on the welfare of the people, which is part of the Pancasila principle of democracy (Burmansah et al., 2019). According to Buddhist beliefs, all living beings have the same values, regardless of their social status, religion, or race. The concept of equality is the basis of democracy, where everyone has the same right to participate in the decision-making process that affects their lives. This is in line with the principles of democracy emphasized in the fourth principle of Pancasila. According to Buddhist teachings, a wise leader must treat everyone fairly regardless of their background or status. This is closely related to the concept of democracy found in Pancasila, which emphasizes that deliberation decisions must be made based on justice and represent the interests of all people (Ginsburg & Schonthal, 2022).

The concept of deliberation and representation found in the fourth principle is closely related to the principle of non-violence (*ahimsa*), which is the foundation of Buddhist teachings. Ideal deliberation is carried out without using violence, coercion, or control. In Buddhist teachings, deliberation is a process that emphasizes listening to each other, respecting the views of others, and seeking a peaceful middle ground for the common good (Ly, 2021). All parties have the opportunity to express their opinions freely and peacefully. This is the essence of the fourth principle, which advocates wise deliberation to make decisions. Good leadership, according to Buddhism, is that which prioritizes the welfare of the wider community rather than the interests of certain individuals or groups. This concept is in line with the idea of democracy found in Pancasila, which states that leadership must focus on the common good and be based on just and wise decisions made through deliberation. In Buddhism, a leader must have moral qualities such as compassion (*mettā*), wisdom, and fortitude when making decisions that are better for the welfare of all people. This principle is at the heart of the fourth precept, which emphasizes the importance of using wisdom when making decisions for the common good.

CONCLUSION

Buddhism influences society and the nation, especially in terms of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Creating a just, harmonious, and peaceful society relies heavily on Buddhist values such as equality, wisdom, deliberation, tolerance, and non-violence. These principles are in line with Pancasila in terms of strengthening democracy, people's sovereignty, and social peace in a diverse Indonesia. Through active participation in various fields, including social, political, and educational, Buddhists in Indonesia play an important role in maintaining national unity and strengthening social order. Buddhists can help build a better, more prosperous, and just society by implementing Buddhist values. Buddhist teachings can help all Indonesians achieve peace and prosperity through respect for differences and wisdom in leadership.

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