

Marriage in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions: Exploring the Differences in Concepts and Practices in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the similarities and differences in perspectives on marriage within Hinduism and Buddhism, focusing on their spiritual concepts and social functions in the Indonesian context. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through observations at the Vipassana Meditation Center Graha Vihara Bandung and the Wira Loka Natha Grand Temple in Cimahi, West Java, interviews with religious figures, and reviews of sacred texts and relevant literature. The findings reveal that in Hinduism, marriage is a sacred religious duty that integrates spiritual and social dimensions, where couples fulfill Dharma Bhakti to achieve higher life goals. In contrast, in Buddhism, marriage is viewed as a worldly, optional bond, not bound by religious duties or directly connected to the attainment of spiritual enlightenment. This study enriches the literature on interfaith comparison, particularly regarding marriage in Hinduism and Buddhism, and offers insights into the differing roles of marriage as both a spiritual and social institution in these two traditions. The research provides an understanding of how religious beliefs shape marriage practices and their broader implications on social and spiritual life within a diverse religious context.

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Introduction

In modern society, phenomena such as cohabitation without marriage (Setyatmoko & Supriyanto, 2017), increasing divorce rates (Sholeh, 2021), and declining views on the importance of marriage have become increasingly common (Anisyah, 2020; Jaro'ah, 2023). According to data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS), divorce cases in Indonesia rose from 400,000 in 2015 to over 500,000 in 2021. Cohabitation trends have also increased, particularly among young people in urban areas, with a 2022 survey showing that 12% of couples aged 20–30 in Indonesia opted to live together without official marriage (Suryanti & Muttaqin, 2023). These phenomena reflect a shift in the social and religious values underpinning the institution of marriage.

For example, a 2022 report revealed that many civil servants were cohabiting without legal marital bonds (Rachman, 2022). Meanwhile, celebrities who often trivialize the meaning of marriage further complicate societal perceptions of this institution (Paningskat, 2024). These changes not only affect social structures but also challenge religious values, which traditionally view marriage as a sacred bond that must be respected and preserved. In religious traditions, marriage is not merely a social contract but also a spiritual and moral commitment with profound implications for both individual and societal life (Kelley, Marks, & Dollahite, 2020).

This phenomenon has also directly impacted Hindu and Buddhist communities in Indonesia. In Balinese Hindu tradition, marriage serves as a symbol of spiritual and social integration, involving sacred rituals such as *Sapta Padi* (seven steps around the sacred fire) and other customary ceremonies aimed at maintaining familial and communal harmony. Conversely, in urban Buddhist communities, marriage tends to focus more on social aspects, such as *gotong royong* (cooperation) in building a shared life, without the pressure to observe highly sacred rituals. Thus, modern social changes, such as cohabitation and rising divorce rates, present new challenges for these communities in maintaining the relevance of their religious values.

Previous research has extensively discussed marriage traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. For example, Harman (1987) and Sharma et al. (2013) explored marriage in the Hindu tradition, emphasizing the social and religious roles of marriage for Hindu women. Meanwhile, Das (2018) and Roy (Roy, 2019) studied marriage in Buddhist teachings, highlighting the social and spiritual roles of marriage for Buddhist women. In the Islamic tradition, research by Akhtar (2018), Yamani (2021), and Al-Sharmani (2018) examined aspects such as legal legitimacy, gender rights, and the influence of religious interpretations on marriage practices.

However, although these studies have provided deep insights into marriage within each tradition, there has been no detailed comparative analysis of how Hindu and Buddhist traditions influence marriage concepts and practices in Indonesia. Such direct comparisons are important as they can reveal how religious values from these two traditions shape social, spiritual, and cultural practices, particularly in the face of modernity. In a country as religiously diverse as Indonesia, understanding these differences and similarities is crucial for analyzing how religion contributes to social norms related to marriage.

Additionally, Hindu and Buddhist traditions in Indonesia have unique characteristics influenced by local customs. For instance, in Balinese society, marriage often serves as a social mechanism for maintaining community harmony, while Buddhist communities tend to emphasize emotional harmony between couples without the sacralized rituals typical of Hindu traditions. This analysis is expected to provide new insights into how religious values interact with local culture in marriage practices and how both traditions adapt to rapid social changes.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the similarities and differences in perspectives on marriage in Hinduism and Buddhism, focusing on their spiritual concepts and social functions within the Indonesian context. Specifically, this research will examine how adherents of these two traditions understand marriage as a mechanism for achieving spiritual and social harmony and how differences and similarities in these concepts affect their lives in Indonesia.

This study argues that marriage in both traditions holds significant roles and benefits. In the Hindu tradition, marriage plays a sacred and spiritual role, while in the Buddhist tradition, it emphasizes social aspects and optionality. In Hinduism, people view marriage as a spiritual obligation closely linked to the concepts of *dharma* (duty) and *karma* (action), which they believe influence the couple's future lives. In contrast, in Buddhism, marriage is considered a worldly choice with no significant spiritual consequences, but it plays a role in maintaining the social and emotional stability of the couple.

Method

This research focuses on comparing the concepts and practices of marriage in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The selected locations include two main sites: Vihara Pusat Meditasi Vipassana Graha in Bandung, West Java, representing the Buddhist tradition, and Pura Agung Wira Loka Natha in Cimahi, West Java, representing the Hindu tradition. The researcher chose these locations based on their religious and cultural significance as centers of religious activities and community. The researcher examines various wedding ceremonies and related rituals through direct observation. The primary focus of this study is to investigate marriage processions and celebrations as a reflection of the religious and cultural values embedded in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The researcher chose a qualitative research method to explore the views (Melong, 2007), practices, and lived experiences of participants, as well as the symbolic meanings behind marriage rituals. The researcher selected this approach for its ability to capture the nuanced cultural and spiritual dimensions of marriage practices, which quantitative or mixed methods may not adequately address.

The researcher collects data from two main sources: interviews and direct observations. The researcher conducts interviews with 20 participants, consisting of 10 religious figures and 10 adherents from each tradition. The researcher chose religious figures due to their authoritative roles as officiants and their deep understanding of marriage teachings within their respective traditions. The researcher included adherents to provide diverse perspectives on how these teachings influence daily practices and marital decision-making. Participants were

selected based on criteria such as active involvement in marriage ceremonies and availability to participate.

Meanwhile, the researcher carried out direct observations during marriage ceremonies at the Pura and Vihara. These observations focused on documenting the sequence of rituals, the roles of officiants, and the interactions among participants. To systematically collect data, the researcher used observation checklists designed to capture key elements such as symbolism, communal participation, and the spiritual significance of the rituals. These observations complement the interviews by providing contextual understanding and visual documentation of the ceremonies.

In addition to primary data, the researcher obtained secondary data through a review of religious texts and academic literature. Key texts analyzed included the *Manavadharmasastra* (Hindu legal text) and the *Tripitaka* (Buddhist scriptures), which were analyzed to understand doctrinal perspectives on marriage. The researcher also reviewed academic sources to place the findings within broader scholarly discussions on Hindu and Buddhist marriage traditions.

The data collection process was rigorous and iterative. The researcher developed the interview guides to ensure that the questions aligned with the study's objectives, covering topics such as the spiritual and social roles of marriage, the influence of local traditions, and contemporary challenges to traditional practices. The researcher recorded the interviews with participant consent and transcribed them verbatim to ensure accuracy. The researcher also recorded the observational data in detailed field notes, which the researcher later integrated with the interview data during the analysis stage (Sugiyono, 2009). The researcher then applied thematic analysis to process and interpret the collected data.

The analysis began with familiarization, where the researcher repeatedly reviewed transcripts and field notes to identify initial patterns. The researcher then performed coding to label significant data segments related to marriage concepts, ritual practices, and cultural influences. The researcher grouped these codes into broader themes, such as the sacredness of marriage, the integration of local customs, and the evolving role of marriage in modern society. The researcher iteratively refined these themes to ensure that they accurately represented the data and addressed the research objectives. Finally, the researcher interpreted the findings by comparing themes across Hindu and Buddhist traditions, concluding their similarities, differences, and implications for social and cultural contexts.

Result and Discussion

Buddhist Perspectives on Marriage

In Buddhism, marriage is considered an optional and worldly bond rather than a sacred or religious obligation. The Buddha neither explicitly advocated nor prohibited marriage, emphasizing personal freedom and choice for individuals (Dhammananda, 1998). Marriage is seen as a means to establish emotional and physical bonds founded on principles of loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), and empathetic joy (*mudita*). These virtues guide the relationship, ensuring mutual respect and happiness.

The Tripitaka Anjutura Nikaya II:65 outlines four primary goals of marriage: material sufficiency, social respect, happiness, and harmony in this life and the next. Observations of Buddhist weddings in Indonesia reflect a preference for simplicity, with rituals adapted to local customs. Common ceremonies include the sprinkling of *paritta* water, offerings of flowers and incense, and blessings from monks, symbolizing mental and spiritual cleansing.

According to Suddhasilo Bhikkhu, “Marriage in Buddhism is about mutual understanding and compassion. It is not bound by rigid rules, allowing adaptation to local customs” (Suddhasilo Bhikkhu, Personal Communication, July 22, 2023). Observations of Buddhist marriage ceremonies in Indonesia reflect this flexibility and simplicity. These ceremonies often feature symbolic offerings of flowers, incense, and candles, representing purity and good intentions for the couple's future. Parental blessings are a central component, symbolizing familial support and continuity of values. The chanting of *paritta* verses by monks further enriches the occasion, invoking harmony, mental well-being, and spiritual protection for the newlyweds. Together, these elements create a meaningful yet modest ritual that aligns with Buddhist principles while adapting to the local cultural context.

Table 1. Goals of Marriage in Buddhism

Goals of Marriage	Description
Material Sufficiency	Ensuring basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare are met.
Social Status	Building mutual respect and earning social recognition for the couple.
Happiness and Longevity	Promoting physical and mental health for a fulfilling relationship.
Harmony in Life and Afterlife	Cultivating virtues and generosity to achieve happiness and shared joy.

Buddhist teachings emphasize marriage as a personal choice, focusing on mutual emotional and psychological support rather than religious compulsion. Simplicity in rituals aligns with the Buddhist ethos of adaptability, allowing for integration with local cultural norms (Dyck, 2014). Marriage serves as a medium for achieving happiness and harmony, guided by core values of compassion, kindness, and mutual respect.

The data reveals several significant patterns in the Buddhist approach to marriage. First, Buddhism regards marriage as a personal choice rather than a compulsory religious obligation, reflecting its inherent flexibility. This perspective allows rituals to adapt seamlessly to various cultural traditions, accommodating local customs without losing their spiritual essence. Additionally, the emphasis in Buddhist marriage lies not on strict adherence to religious doctrines but on fostering virtues such as loving-kindness (*metta*), generosity (*caga*), and compassion (*karuna*), which serve as the foundation for a harmonious relationship. Emotional and mental well-being also take precedence, as teachings prioritize mutual understanding, respect, and shared happiness over material wealth or elaborate ceremonial grandeur. Finally, the incorporation of local traditions into

Buddhist marriage ceremonies ensures their inclusivity and relevance, enabling communities to maintain their cultural identity while embracing the universal values of Buddhism.

The Buddhist perspective on marriage reflects a pragmatic and inclusive approach, prioritizing individual well-being and mutual respect. By emphasizing virtues like compassion and adaptability, Buddhist marriage practices align with modern societal values, such as gender equality and cultural inclusivity.

The simplicity and flexibility of Buddhist marriage ceremonies demonstrate the religion's ability to adapt to changing societal norms while preserving core spiritual values. These practices encourage harmonious relationships that contribute to social cohesion. Additionally, the lack of rigid religious requirements for marriage provides an egalitarian framework that accommodates interfaith unions and promotes understanding across cultural boundaries.

This perspective supports Buddhism's relevance in contemporary society, where individual choice and mutual respect are increasingly valued. The teachings on material sufficiency, compassion, and harmony resonate universally, making Buddhist marriage ideals adaptable to diverse cultural and social contexts, including those found in Indonesia.

Hindu Perspectives on Marriage

Hinduism regards marriage as a sacred and indispensable duty (*dharma*) deeply rooted in spiritual and social responsibilities. The *Manavadharmasastra* outlines three primary objectives of marriage: *Dharma Sampatti* (fulfillment of religious and spiritual duties), *Praja* (procreation and continuation of lineage), and *Rati* (enjoyment of life's pleasures within the bounds of *dharma*). The couple sees marriage as both a sacred and lifelong commitment, one that involves fulfilling their obligations not only to each other but also to their families, ancestors, and community (Attwood, 2023).

In Bali, Hindu marriage ceremonies prominently feature rituals like *Sapta Padi* (seven steps around the sacred fire) and *Mekalan-Kalan*, symbolizing the spiritual and social union of the couple. Observations of Hindu weddings in Bali reveal an intricate blend of religious and customary practices. Offerings to deities express gratitude and seek divine blessings, while blessings from elders reinforce familial respect and unity. Ritual acts, such as the tying of knots and reciting of mantras, underscore the couple's commitment to fidelity and mutual responsibility.

Hindu wedding ceremonies in Bali are rich with symbolic acts that reflect the spiritual and familial significance of marriage. Offerings to deities are a central element, symbolizing gratitude and a request for divine blessings to ensure the prosperity and harmony of the union. Elders accompany these acts with blessings, which underscore the importance of familial unity and respect across generations. Rituals such as *Sapta Padi*, where the couple takes seven steps around a sacred fire, and the symbolic tying of knots signify the spiritual unity of the couple and their commitment to shared responsibilities in life. These ceremonies blend profound religious meanings with cultural traditions, emphasizing marriage as both a sacred bond and a foundation for societal harmony.

Table 2. Goals of Marriage in Hinduism

Goals of Marriage	Description
Dharma Sampatti	Fulfillment of spiritual and religious obligations.
Praja	Ensuring lineage continuity and ancestry through procreation.
Rati	Enjoyment of life's pleasures in harmony with <i>dharma</i> .

Hinduism deeply entrenches marriage in spiritual, familial, and societal responsibilities. Rituals such as *Sapta Padi* and *Mekalan-Kalan* hold profound significance, symbolizing unity, fidelity, and adherence to *dharma*. These ceremonies integrate sacred teachings with local customs, facilitating the couple's acceptance into their religious and social framework. Hindu marriage is thus a sacred covenant that upholds spiritual obligations while promoting familial and societal harmony.

The data in Table 2 reveals four significant patterns that characterize Hindu marriage practices. *First*, Hindu marriage rituals reflect dual obligations: the fulfillment of spiritual duties (*dharma*) and the continuation of lineage (*praja*). Ceremonies such as *Sapta Padi*, where the couple takes seven sacred steps, and offerings to the deities highlight these responsibilities. *Second*, marriage in Hinduism is considered a sacred and lifelong commitment. Fidelity, mutual respect, and shared responsibility form the foundation of this serious bond, emphasizing its enduring nature. *Third*, Hindu marriages, particularly in Bali, demonstrate a seamless integration of religious teachings with local customs. Ritual actions such as blessings from elders and symbolic offerings to the deities ensure that these ceremonies resonate deeply with both spiritual and cultural values. *Finally*, Hindu marriage extends beyond the couple, emphasizing the importance of incorporating them into a broader familial and spiritual framework. These rituals reflect a focus on unity and shared spiritual aspirations, illustrating the interconnectedness of individual, familial, and societal obligations.

The findings underscore Hinduism's highly structured and sacred approach to marriage. The emphasis on *dharma* and familial roles reinforces the religion's traditional social structures, ensuring societal harmony and continuity. The meticulous rituals and integration of local customs, as observed in Bali, highlight Hinduism's adaptability while preserving its core spiritual values (Jayendra, 2021). Marriage in Hinduism functions as a cornerstone for nurturing cultural identity, sustaining spiritual practices, and fostering community cohesion.

The dual focus on spiritual and social dimensions demonstrates the multi-faceted role of marriage in Hindu society. While deeply sacred, Hindu marriage also adapts to practical and cultural needs, making it a dynamic institution that remains relevant in contemporary times. This integration ensures that Hindu marriage rituals not only fulfill religious obligations but also strengthen familial and societal bonds, contributing to a stable and harmonious community.

Comparative Analysis of Marriage Practices

The comparative study reveals significant distinctions and commonalities in the marriage practices of Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhism views marriage as a personal choice for mutual happiness and emotional well-being, while Hinduism considers it a sacred obligation closely linked to spiritual, familial, and social responsibilities. Both traditions emphasize the importance of respect, unity, and shared virtues, but their approaches diverge significantly in terms of rituals, societal roles, and interfaith flexibility.

Table 3. Comparison of Marriage Practices in Buddhism and Hinduism

Comparison Aspect	Buddhism	Hinduism
Purpose	Happiness and well-being	Fulfilling dharma and procreation
Rituals	Adaptable to local customs	Rooted in sacred texts and traditions
Societal Obligations	Minimal	Extensive
Flexibility in Interfaith	Permissive	Restrictive

Marriage practices in Buddhism and Hinduism reflect their underlying religious and philosophical doctrines. Buddhism prioritizes personal happiness, flexibility, and emotional harmony, presenting marriage as an optional and worldly union. Hinduism, on the other hand, frames marriage as a lifelong sacred obligation essential for fulfilling spiritual duties, maintaining lineage, and upholding societal norms. Despite these differences, both traditions uphold the ideals of mutual respect, understanding, and the cultivation of virtues within the marital relationship.

From the comparative analysis, four key patterns emerge, reflecting the differences and similarities in marriage practices between Buddhism and Hinduism. In terms of ritualistic flexibility, Buddhist marriage practices exhibit high adaptability to local customs, ensuring inclusivity and cultural relevance. Conversely, Hindu marriage is deeply structured, with rituals prescribed by sacred texts such as the *Manavadharmasastra* (The Laws of Manu, a foundational Hindu legal text). Key Hindu rituals like *Sapta Padi* (seven steps around the sacred fire) and offerings to deities emphasize the sanctity and permanence of marriage.

In relation to personal and societal roles, Buddhism focuses on the couple's personal happiness and emotional well-being, placing minimal emphasis on societal obligations. In contrast, Hinduism integrates marriage into a broader social framework, highlighting the continuation of lineage (*praja*, procreation) and the fulfillment of *dharma* (spiritual and moral duties) through familial roles and religious responsibilities. Attitudes towards interfaith marriage also reveal fundamental differences. Buddhism adopts a permissive stance, reflecting its inclusive and egalitarian principles, whereas Hinduism imposes stricter boundaries, often discouraging interfaith unions to maintain religious and cultural homogeneity.

Despite their differing approaches, both traditions uphold the values of harmony, respect, and mutual understanding in marriage. However, their priorities diverge: Buddhism emphasizes adaptability and individual happiness, while Hinduism prioritizes the fulfillment of collective spiritual, familial, and societal responsibilities.

This analysis highlights the unique ways in which Buddhism and Hinduism shape marriage practices according to their theological and cultural frameworks. The flexibility of Buddhist marriage practices, with their adaptability to local customs and focus on individual happiness, makes them highly compatible with modern societal changes, such as gender equality and the acceptance of interfaith unions. Conversely, Hinduism's structured rituals and emphasis on dharma reinforce the sanctity and permanence of marriage while also preserving cultural identity, lineage continuity, and social stability.

In a broader context, this analysis reveals significant socio-cultural implications. Buddhist marriage practices exemplify cultural adaptability, fostering inclusivity across diverse communities. Hinduism, though more rigid, also demonstrates flexibility through the incorporation of local customs into its structured rituals. Buddhism's focus on equality and mutual respect aligns with modern movements toward gender equity, while Hinduism reinforces traditional gender roles within the household. Hindu marriage rituals, rooted in *dharma* and societal roles, strengthen communal ties and maintain social cohesion. The Buddhist approach that focuses on individuality reflects a more egalitarian vision, offering flexibility in adjusting to social and cultural changes.

This study provides valuable insights into the evolving relationship between religious practices, cultural identity, and societal transformation. The findings demonstrate that both Buddhism and Hinduism, despite their divergent approaches, continue to play vital roles in shaping the social and cultural fabric of their adherents in Indonesia and beyond.

Buddhist marriage practices are characterized by their flexibility and adaptability to local cultural contexts, reflecting the religion's emphasis on individual freedom. The philosophy of *metta* (loving-kindness) and personal happiness positions marriage as a worldly and optional relationship rather than as a religious obligation. Conversely, Hindu marriage rituals are deeply rooted in the teachings of the *Manavadharmasastra* (The Laws of Manu, a foundational Hindu legal text), which underscore the importance of *dharma* (religious duty) and *praja* (procreation and lineage continuity). Rituals such as *Sapta Padi* (seven steps around the sacred fire) and offerings to deities highlight the integration of spiritual and social obligations in Hinduism.

These findings align with earlier studies. McMahan (2012) emphasized the adaptability of Buddhist marriage rituals, demonstrating how they retain their spiritual core while accommodating local customs. Similarly, Narayanan (2018) highlighted the structured nature of Hindu marriage rituals as a means of preserving cultural and social values. What sets this study apart is its focus on the Indonesian context, providing empirical evidence of how these global traditions adapt to local cultures. This research further reveals how marriage practices reflect the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, particularly in multicultural societies like Indonesia.

The findings underscore that marriage practices in Buddhism and Hinduism are more than religious rituals—they mirror broader social and cultural dynamics. Buddhist marriage practices, with their flexibility and responsiveness to social changes, embody values of inclusivity and gender equality. Hindu marriage practices, on the other hand, act as cultural anchors, preserving lineage continuity and reinforcing societal stability amidst modernization. These observations suggest that marriage serves as a mechanism for both personal fulfillment and the reinforcement of community identity.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, the flexibility in Buddhist marriage promotes inclusivity and adaptability but may lack mechanisms for reinforcing broader social roles. Conversely, Hinduism's structured approach strengthens familial and communal bonds but may restrict individual freedoms, particularly in interfaith marriages. These contrasting approaches provide valuable insights for multicultural societies seeking to balance individual autonomy with collective cultural preservation. This study also contributes to the discourse on how religious practices shape societal norms, offering a framework to understand how tradition can coexist with modernity.

Adaptation of Rituals and Social Values in Buddhist and Hindu Marriages within Indonesia's Multicultural Context

This study explores Buddhist and Hindu perspectives on marriage, highlighting fundamental differences in their religious and social approaches. In Buddhist traditions, marriage is regarded as a personal choice aimed at fostering emotional happiness and well-being, with ritual flexibility allowing adaptation to local cultures. Conversely, Hinduism emphasises marriage as a sacred duty that encompasses spiritual, social, and familial responsibilities, supported by structured rituals deeply integrated with cultural and religious values. In the Indonesian context, findings reveal that both traditions have adapted to local cultures, creating unique variations that reflect the multicultural identity of Indonesian society.

The flexibility of marriage in Buddhism can be explained through its core philosophy, such as *metta* (loving-kindness) and *karuna* (compassion), which emphasise individual freedom and worldly balance. These values facilitate the adjustment of rituals to local norms, such as the use of *paritta* (protective chants) and parental blessings, reflecting respect for Indonesian traditions. In contrast, Hindu marriage, rooted in the *Manavadharmasastra* (the Laws of Manu), embodies spiritual responsibilities and social continuity. Practices like *Sapta Padi* (the seven steps ritual) and offerings to deities illustrate the integration of Hindu religious and cultural values to enhance social stability. Local adaptations are evident in ceremonies like *Mekalan-Kalan* in Bali, which blend traditional Hindu elements with local customs, underscoring the importance of community harmony.

This study aligns with McMahan (2012), Das (2018), and Mahatthanadull (2019) in recognising the flexibility of Buddhist rituals that enable local cultural adaptations, as well as Bhattacharyya (2020) and Shanmuganathan (2021), who highlight the significance of structured Hindu rituals in preserving cultural and social values. However, this research offers a novel contribution by focusing on adaptations in Indonesia, where Buddhist values like simplicity and inclusivity are

manifested through the use of local symbols such as flowers and candles. Meanwhile, Hindu values are observed in elements like collective prayers involving extended families. These adaptations strengthen Indonesia's cultural identity while maintaining the core values of each religion.

The deeper meaning of these findings illustrates how marriage practices are not only religious rituals but also a medium for building social and cultural identity. In Buddhism, ritual flexibility enables the application of values such as gender equality and inclusivity in modern contexts. For example, simple ceremonies that respect local traditions without incurring significant costs align with the norms of urban Indonesian society. On the other hand, the structured Hindu marriage, which emphasises spiritual obligations and familial continuity, remains relevant in traditional Balinese communities where marriage is considered the foundation of social harmony.

The flexibility of Buddhist marriage provides opportunities to embrace diversity and interfaith acceptance, as seen in the common practice of interfaith marriages in Indonesia. However, this flexibility may place less emphasis on strengthening broader social roles within the community. Conversely, the structured nature of Hindu marriage enhances familial and communal cohesion but can limit individual freedoms, particularly in the context of interfaith marriages. In Indonesia's multicultural society, these differing approaches have distinct impacts but complement each other in contributing to social harmony.

Based on the findings, several policies can be implemented to strengthen social harmony through marriage practices. First, interfaith education programmes could be developed, such as workshops or school curricula, emphasising universal values like compassion, respect, and tolerance in interfaith marriages. Second, revitalising local traditions could be supported by encouraging communities to integrate local cultural elements into marriage rituals, such as the use of traditional symbols in Buddhist and Hindu ceremonies. Third, promoting gender equality could be achieved through community training and revising rituals to be more inclusive of women's roles. Fourth, a multicultural approach could be adopted through government policies that facilitate interfaith and intercultural marriages, such as regulations supporting inclusivity in marriage administration. These measures would not only strengthen social harmony but also ensure the relevance of marriage practices in an evolving modern society.

Conclusion

This research highlights the significant differences and shared values in the concept of marriage within Buddhism and Hinduism, shedding light on the intricate interplay between religion, culture, and societal norms. Buddhist marriage practices are characterized by their flexibility and adaptability, reflecting a philosophy rooted in individual freedom and happiness. Marriage in Buddhism is seen as a worldly, optional relationship guided by values such as *metta* (loving-kindness) and compassion, prioritizing emotional harmony over rigid obligations. In contrast, Hindu marriage practices are deeply structured and rooted in the sacred teachings of the *Manavadharmasastra* (The Laws of Manu), emphasizing *dharma* (religious duty) and *praja* (procreation and lineage continuity). Rituals such as *Sapta Padi* (seven steps around the sacred fire) and offerings to deities highlight the integration

of spiritual and social responsibilities, portraying marriage as both a sacred covenant and a mechanism for societal stability.

This study provides a new perspective on marriage, presenting it not only as a religious rite but also as a reflection of evolving social structures and cultural values. The findings align with McMahan's (2012) emphasis on the adaptability of Buddhist marriage to local customs while retaining its spiritual essence, as well as Narayanan's (2018) view of Hindu marriage as a tool for preserving cultural identity and social values. However, this research extends existing knowledge by focusing on the Indonesian context, offering empirical evidence of how global traditions adapt to local realities in a multicultural society.

The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse. Buddhist marriage practices, with their emphasis on inclusivity and responsiveness to social change, reflect broader societal movements toward gender equality and interfaith harmony. Conversely, Hindu marriage practices, with their emphasis on lineage continuity and societal roles, act as cultural anchors, maintaining traditions and reinforcing social cohesion amidst modernization. These observations suggest that marriage serves as both a personal bond and a communal institution, balancing individual fulfillment with collective identity.

While this study offers valuable insights, its limitations lie in its narrow scope, focusing solely on Buddhism and Hinduism within Indonesia. This specificity limits the generalisability of findings to other cultural or global contexts. Future research could expand on this by conducting cross-cultural or cross-national comparisons to explore the universality or contextual uniqueness of these practices. Additionally, further studies could examine the implications of flexibility and rigidity in marriage practices on family dynamics, gender roles, and social welfare, providing a deeper understanding of their broader societal impact.

The findings underscore the importance of recognizing marriage as a dynamic institution shaped by religious, cultural, and societal forces. By understanding the nuanced practices within Buddhism and Hinduism, this study contributes to a broader appreciation of how traditions adapt to contemporary realities while preserving their spiritual and cultural essence.

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