

Communication Study of Dharmaduta in Socializing Religious Moderation in the Buddhist Environment

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening religious moderation is one of Indonesia's priority development programs. This study explores the role of Dharmaduta in socializing religious moderation in the Buddhist environment of East Lampung Regency. This research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were obtained using observation, interview and documentation methods. Furthermore, the data obtained was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results showed that Dharmaduta has an effective role in spreading religious moderation. In the context of communication studies, Dharmaduta in socializing religious moderation in the monastery environment shows the importance of carrying out informative, educative, consultative, advocative communication functions and communicator competencies which include source credibility, personality, cosmopolitanism, empathy and sympathy to strengthen interfaith harmony and build a harmonious and tolerant society.

Keywords: dharmaduta, dharmadesana, communication function, religious moderation.

INTRODUCTION

Inter-religious conflict is not a new issue in the world. The existence of personal and political interests of certain parties often makes religion a tool to seek political support. Not a few radical ideas that are influenced by political interests from irresponsible parties, bring religious extremism. In the end, religious extremism without the basis of humanity and love, more often leads to violent conflict.

Indonesia itself has great potential for inter-religious conflict when viewed from the population, ethnicity, language and religion, Indonesia is more pluralistic. The 2020 population census shows that Indonesia has a population of 270.20 million [1]. These millions of people are spread across 38 provinces with different ethnicities, languages, customs and cultures. Each of these cultures also adheres to different religions and beliefs. Currently, there are six official religions, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

The diversity of ethnicity, culture and religion can be a wealth and also a threat to Indonesia, if not managed properly. Diversity can be an "ingraining force" that binds society but it can also be a factor that influences clashes between cultures, races, ethnicities, religions and values [3]. Based on the data obtained, there is an increase in blasphemy cases every year.

In the social order of society, this is caused by several substantive factors including, 1) Narrowing of encounter space caused by social segregation; 2) Low literacy about internal and external identities among citizens, causing so much denial and rejection of the existence of other groups; 3) Strengthening the identity of religious conservatism; and 4) Strengthening the coercive capacity of citizens (Setara-Institute, 2023).

The effort to strengthen the understanding of inter-religious harmony is an important element that can support the development of the nation towards the achievement of a just and civilized humanity and support the achievement of social justice for all Indonesian people. Development is not only in concrete physical form, but development in the field of human resources is a program that must be prioritized, especially in forming a

moderate society amid the plurality of Indonesian society.

In line with Indonesia's diverse religions, ethnicities, races, cultures and languages, strengthening religious moderation in the life of the state is an obligation that must be carried out. (Huda, 2021). Religious moderation itself is one of the efforts to strengthen and strengthen a safe, harmonious and peaceful religious and national life.

This effort is prioritized by the government as outlined through the policy of Strengthening Religious Moderation. This program is outlined in the Ministry of Religious Affairs mission number two, namely "strengthening religious moderation and religious harmony". Furthermore, it is also emphasized in the strategic plan, that the optimization and socialization of regulations on religious harmony legislation requires the participation of all components of society including religious leaders (Direktorat Jendral Bimbingan Masyarakat Buddha, n.d).

Strengthening religious moderation is the right and appropriate program for the very diverse nation of Indonesia. Religious moderation itself is a perspective related to the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a balanced manner. In essence, the principles and characteristics of religious moderation are fair and balanced in their perspective on existing problems.

The benchmark of religious moderation is to make humanity the core of religion itself, so that it can embrace excessive perspectives into a moderate position by not getting rid of, blaming or disbelieving. [2]. Religious moderation can also be understood as a religious attitude that is balanced between one's own religious experience and respect for the religious practices of others with different beliefs (Parwadi et al., 2021a). Therefore, religious moderation is very important to be taught, socialized, instilled and also practiced in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

One of the main programs of the Directorate General of Buddhist Public Guidance in 2023 is to increase the intensity of resolving Buddhist intra-religious conflicts through a religious moderation approach. In addition, it also improves the quality of religious moderation coaching. The above conditions are certainly not in line with this Government program. So there is still a need for more intensive guidance and strengthening of religious moderation in this area.

In accordance with the Ministry of Religious Affairs Renstra mentioned above, the person in charge and implementer of the religious moderation program is the General Secretariat, Directorate General of Pedis, Directorate General of Islamic Guidance, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Balitbang & Diklat (Kementerian Agama RI, 2020a). In this study, researchers focused on the fostered areas of the Directorate General of Buddhism Bimas Lampung Province, especially program organizers, both the Assembly, Religious Leaders and Buddhists in East Lampung Regency. This target includes religious leaders, Dharmaduta, civil servant and non-civil servant religious instructors, the Assembly Management has a major role in the success of religious moderation in an area that is directly adjacent to Buddhists.

The program is in line with the Dharmaduta's function as a religious instructor, namely, informative, educative, consultative and advocative. In the implementation of this function, both Dharmaduta and Buddhist religious instructors will certainly not be separated from the communication process. According to Sikumbang dkk (2019) Communication itself is the basis of all human interaction. Without communication, human relations between individuals, groups, and organizations are impossible.

According to Liliweri (2011) Good communication is communication that can establish / place one's position appropriately in communication with communicants so as to achieve the stated communication objectives. Furthermore, Liliweri also mentioned that there are five purposes of communication, namely to inform, motivate, educate, disseminate information and support decision making.

These five goals are in line with the Dharmaduta function mentioned above. If these goals and functions are implemented properly, they will bring and provide an understanding of Religious Moderation so that harmony between Buddhists and also between religious communities can be achieved. This makes researchers interested

in digging deeper related to the role of Dharmaduta in socializing religious moderation in East Lampung Regency.

METHOD

This research focuses on the role of Dharmaduta in socializing religious moderation in the Buddhist environment of East Lampung Regency. The approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The researcher chose this approach and method because this model was felt to be in accordance with the chosen research focus. With this method, researchers can more deeply explore the conditions that occur in the field and then describe them in the form of research reports [13]. The main subjects in this study were four Dharmaduta, four Buddhists and four non-Buddhists in the monastery environment in East Lampung Regency.

The data collection methods used in this research are observation and interviews. Researchers made direct observations at the monasteries that became the research site. Interviews were conducted to Dharmaduta as key informants and for data analysis used by researchers, namely the Miles and Huberman data analysis model.

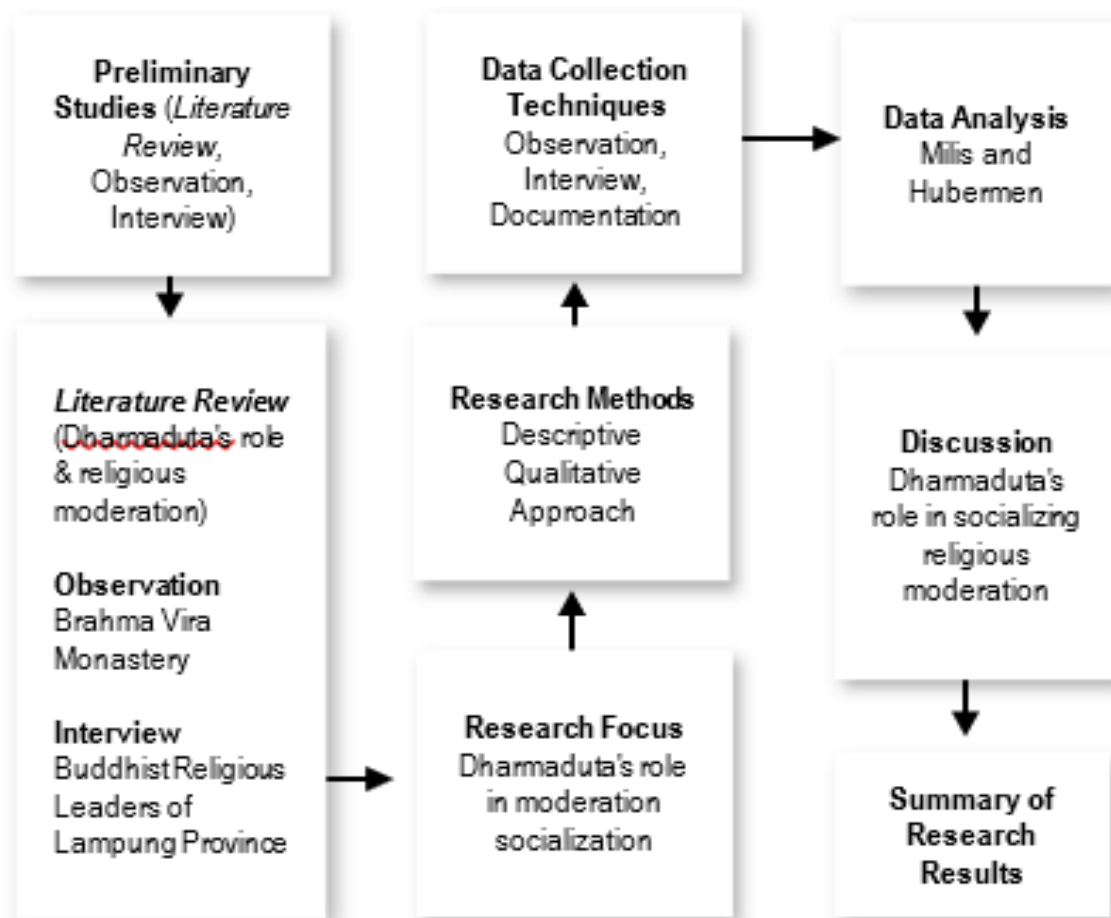


Fig. 1. Research Flow

FINDINGS

A role is the behavior of a person or group in carrying out various tasks. Roles can also mean a series of behaviors that are caused by a certain position or social status. This is also inherent in the Dharmaduta in the monastery which is the place of this research, especially his activities during the socialization of religious moderation. The role of Dharmaduta in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists can be categorized in two activities, namely to Buddhists and also to the community in the monastery environment.

Dharmaduta has an important role in socializing and providing direct examples of religious moderation practices to Buddhists. The efforts made are not only to convey messages of religious moderation but also to actively engage in social activities and try to build harmonious relationships with people of other religions. In full, it can

be stated that the Dharmaduta's role in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists is by conducting Dharmadesana, direct discussions with the congregation, inviting and providing direct examples of religious moderation practices by initiating interfaith holiday worship security activities, assisting in the construction of houses of worship of other religions, organizing social service programs and conducting individual counseling services for Buddhists who have personal/family problems.

Research Focus	Dharmaduta's role in the socialization of Religious Moderation
Research Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing guidance to live in harmony and help each other between religious communities through Dharmadesana in Wednesday Night and Sunday Puja Bhakti activities at the temple - Facilitating Buddhists by providing printed media in the form of books - Guiding people to actively participate in helping the activities of other religious communities - Actively organizing religious ritual activities to increase the faith of the people - Conducting individual guidance/counseling for people who are not active in religious activities

Fig. 2. The findings of the Dharmaduta's role in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists

DISCUSSION

Dharmaduta is one of the people who can be said to be a religious figure, in Buddhism. In accordance with its own meaning, namely, the Dharma bearer / commissioner / mission, which means the person who has the task of conveying the Dharma, which in the research is Pandita and Buddhist Counselors. With regard to the Dharma that is delivered is religious moderation. In accordance with its meaning, Dharma is the truth, as well as religious moderation, which means a balanced religious attitude between individual religious practice and respect for the religious practices of others who have different religions or beliefs [14, p. 3]. Thus, religious moderation is dharma itself because it is a truth in this life. Without a moderate attitude in religion, it can bring chaos to the order of life.

Buddhist teachings strongly support the practices of love and harmony, therefore if Dharmaduta conveys or socializes religious moderation it is the same as he conveys the Dharma itself. The research results show that Dharmaduta has a role in accordance with the function, purpose and competence of Dharmaduta.

Based on the findings, it can be understood that the socialization of religious moderation carried out by Dharmaduta in these four monasteries is in line with the concept of role theory, the function of the instructor and the purpose of Dharmaduta. Based on role theory, it can be seen that Dharmaduta has performed his role in accordance with his position or status. Soekanto (2013), explains that role is a dynamic aspect of position (status), if someone carries out his rights and obligations in accordance with his position, then he carries out a role.

The focus of the concept of role theory from Soejono Soekanto is on the dynamic position between a person's rights and obligations towards function. Because according to Soejono Soekanto a dynamic position (social status) that questions a person's rights and obligations in accordance with position and position. The research focuses on the rights and obligations of Dharmaduta in carrying out its functions.

Researchers saw the informants' views on the fulfillment of the rights and obligations of Dharmaduta. Although different monasteries, Dharmaduta who became informants in this study have the same rights and obligations. As a pandita who is also or has been a Buddhist counselor, he has the same role in socializing religious moderation. In this case, the four goals of Dharmaduta and the four functions of extension workers are carried out well in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists or non-Buddhist communities in their respective fostered areas.

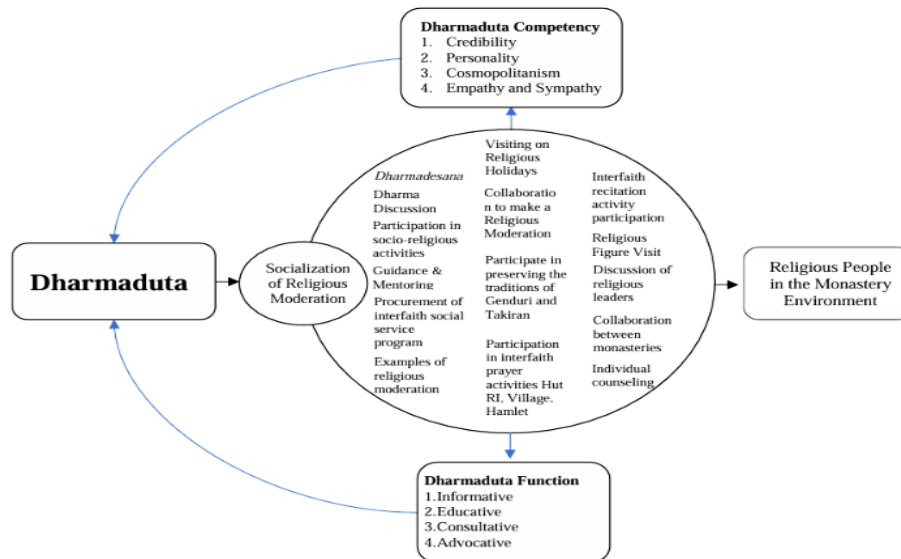


Fig. 3. Characteristics of Dharmaduta's role in socializing religious moderation

Dharmaduta's role in accordance with the functions of religious instructors

The four objectives of the Dharmaduta and the four functions of the religious instructor are part of the principles in carrying out the role of socialization of religious moderation in accordance with the expectations of individuals or community groups related to religious moderation. In the research results, it was found that the experiences of Buddhist and non-Buddhist informants in the four monasteries that were the sites of this research, saw the fulfillment of the rights and obligations of the Dharmaduta in carrying out their functions. The informants have the view that the Dharmaduta carries out its rights and responsibilities to socialize religious moderation.

The following is the Dharmaduta's role in socializing moderation in line with his function as a religious instructor:

1. Informative Function

Four Dharmaduta who became informants in this study carried out an informative function in the socialization of religious moderation to each of their followers. This function is carried out by him through Dharmadesana activities during Puja Bhakti activities in the temple, Anjangsana Puja Bhakti, Pattidana Puja Bhakti and Puja Bhakti rotating across the temple. In addition, this function is also carried out by Dharmaduta through dharma discussion activities at moments of activity after the puja bhakti event, casual chatting in spare time and also when meeting outside religious ritual activities.

2. Educative Function

In addition to providing information, the four dharmaduta also carry out an educative function in the Dharmadesana that he does. In this function, Dharmaduta provides guidance for Buddhists to understand each other, respect each other, respect, to always live in harmony, peace with the environment both with people of one religion or different religions. Informants who are Buddhists in four monasteries also mentioned that Dharmaduta often explains and reminds people to respect each other, visit each other on holidays, not to put each other down, not to discriminate between one another and help each other.

The people also said that the Dharmaduta often set an example and became a pioneer in socio-religious activities, one of which was done by the Dharmaduta of Brahma Vira Monastery and Viriya Manggala Monastery, namely the activity of securing the worship of the Feast Day of religious people in the temple environment. Furthermore, the Dharmaduta also always involves people of other religions in social service activities in the context of the ulambana day he does. Furthermore, the Dharmaduta of Viriya Manggala Monastery and Dipa Asri Buddha play an active role and provide examples of collaborative activities with other religious leaders through the making

of Religious Moderation Videos. In addition, the Dharmaduta of Viriya Manggala Monastery, Dipa Asri Buddha and Giri Saddha actively participated in interfaith prayer activities at hamlet or village birthdays.

3. Consultative Function

As a person who is considered a religious figure, the Dharmaduta is also a place for people to consult regarding the problems they experience. In line with the socialization of religious moderation, the Dharmaduta of the monasteries that are the place of this research carry out a consultative function to the people by providing individual guidance to people who have personal problems related to general problems and also related to religious moderation.

In line with this, among others, the Dharmaduta has conducted individual guidance to Buddhists with children of different religions in terms of differences in views regarding the funeral procession when their parents die. Dharmaduta provides understanding and solutions to overcome this by making a statement in accordance with the wishes of the parent before he dies. This is done to avoid conflict at the time of the funeral procession.

Furthermore, the Dharmaduta also provides individual guidance to people who are not active in the temple. This is done to increase people's belief in religious teachings and to prevent conflicts resulting from people's lack of understanding of religious teachings.

4. Advocative Function

The advocative function performed by Dharmaduta was also found in this study. One of them is the follow-up of consultations carried out by people as in the consultative function above. In this case, Dharmaduta provided assistance to Buddhists with children of different religions in terms of differences in views regarding the funeral procession when people died. Dharmaduta provides understanding on the basis of a statement that has been made by the parents. In addition to this function, the dharmaduta also provides assistance to Buddhists who have family problems and also those who divorce due to differences in belief views. In cases of divorce, the Dharmaduta provides assistance to the processes that are passed.

Furthermore, Dharmaduta also has experience with religious leaders who are members of FKUB East Lampung related to the license of houses of worship. Dharmaduta and the religious leaders provided assistance to Christians in Waway Karya Subdistrict in obtaining permits for the establishment of places of worship.

Role in accordance with the objectives of Dharmaduta

Furthermore, in socializing religious moderation, Dharmaduta has also done so in accordance with the four objectives of Dharmaduta itself. This can be seen as follows:

1. Spreading the Dharma by:

a. Vitharanam (notification)

Dharmaduta in the four research monasteries conducted the Socialization of Religious Moderation by way of Vitharanam, namely through Dharmadesana at the time of Puja Bhakti activities in the monastery, Puja Bhakti Anjangsana, Puja Bhakti Pattidana and Puja Bhakti rotating across monasteries. As well as with dharma discussion activities at moments of activity after the puja bhakti event, casual chatting in spare time and also when meeting outside religious ritual activities.

b. Havanam (nurturing)

In addition to the vitharanam path, the socialization of religious moderation is also carried out by Dharmaduta with the havanam path, namely by providing guidance to Buddhists to understand each other, appreciate each other, respect, to always live in harmony, peace with the environment both with people of one religion or different religions. Furthermore, Dharmaduta also facilitates Buddhists by providing printed media in the form of books related to religious practices and also provides individual guidance to people who are not

active in religious activities.

c. Santaranam (continuity)

Furthermore, in the way of sataranam, the socialization of religious moderation carried out by Dharmaduta includes building harmonious relationships with non-Buddhist communities in the monastery environment, with this practice showing the important role of Dharmaduta's communication both to Buddhists and non-Buddhist communities. In addition, Dharmaduta also provides direct examples of active participation in religious activities, organizing social service programs, actively organizing religious ritual activities to increase people's faith, empowering people in social religious activities and providing assistance to people who have problems.

2. Following the Dharma correctly

This research also found that the Dharmaduta not only provides socialization of religious moderation but also serves as an example for Buddhists in the practice of religious moderation. The Dharmaduta of the four monasteries that became informants in this study actively participated in religious rituals, mutual cooperation and interfaith social activities. Furthermore, he also mobilizes and provides a direct example of the practice of religious moderation by initiating interfaith holiday worship security activities.

3. Protecting the Dharma properly

Religious moderation is part of the Dharma itself, in line with this by socializing and practicing religious moderation Dharmaduta has also protected the Dharma itself properly. This is done by Dharmaduta, among others, by providing guidance and examples to Buddhists to understand each other, respect each other, respect, to always live in harmony, peace with the environment both with people of one religion or different religions.

4. Making everyone happy

This fourth goal is related to the success of the three goals that have been done above. Success in the socialization of religious moderation through the path of vitaranam, havanam, santaranam, following and protecting dharma correctly will bring happiness to everyone. This was also found in this study, as conveyed by four Buddhist informants and four non-Buddhist informants who stated that they live in harmony, peace and harmony.

Role in accordance with Dharmaduta's competence

Furthermore, researchers also delved deeper into the role of Dharmaduta with the theory of Dharmaduta competence written by Jo Pristiana and also with the theory of source credibility. Jo Pristiana underlines that as a good Dharma communicator must have source credibility, personality, cosmopolitanism, empathy and sympathy. In this case, the researcher found that Dharmaduta in the four monasteries that became this research had these competencies, namely as follows:

1. Credibility

The credibility of a communicator determines how the communicant will react to the message conveyed, in this case the credibility of Dharmaduta will greatly affect the message conveyed to Buddhists or recipients called Dharmasavanam. This source credibility theory was formulated by Carl Hovland & Walter Weiss in 1951, then refined by Hovland, C., Janis, I., Kelley, H. in 1953 [18]. Source credibility theory is a well-established theory that explains how persuasive the credibility of the communicator influences communication [19]. Communicator is considered credible if they have ease in communicating with others, have the trust of the audience, and are experts in influencing the audience. This was found from Dharmaduta as follows:

a. Having ease in communicating with others

The ability to easily communicate with others is found in the social religious activities carried out by

Dharmaduta. This can be seen from the good relations between religious communities in the temple environment. One of the social religious activities to maintain security during the holiday worship initiated by Dharmaduta, shows the existence of communication skills with others.

b. Having the trust of the audience

As a Dharmaduta who has more than one role and responsibility. The Dharmaduta of Brahma Vira Monastery has very good trust among Buddhists, not even only in the monastery but also among Buddhists in East Lampung Regency. This is because, in addition to being a Pandita and Buddhist Religious Instructor at the monastery, the Dharmaduta of this monastery is also the Chairperson of the Buddhist Religious Instructor Working Group and Chairperson of the East Lampung Regency MBI Branch Management.

In addition, Dharmaduta also has credibility that is recognized by non-Buddhist communities in the monastery environment. This credibility is strengthened by Dharmaduta with his social and religious programs and activities such as social services every ulambana day, blood donations, procurement of vaccines and health checks. In addition, there are also activities such as helping to build houses of worship and securing religious holidays for Muslims, Christians and Catholics.

c. Expert in influencing the audience

Dharmaduta's expertise in influencing the audience, in this case Buddhists, was found in the religious moderation socialization activities carried out by Dharmaduta. Among them are Dharmadesana activities and Dharma discussions. This was conveyed by the informant who is a Buddhist monastery, that the Dharmadesana and dharma discussions conducted by Dharmaduta can provide motivation and new understanding for people who previously lacked mutual respect to understand and respect each other, so that they become more concerned with the environment. This can be evidence that the Dharmaduta of this monastery has expertise in influencing the audience.

2. Personality

Dharmaduta Brahma Vira Monastery also shows an attitude of openness in the socialization of religious moderation. This can be seen from the discussion activities carried out by him both with Buddhists and with non-Buddhist people and religious leaders. Furthermore, the examples and real practices carried out by Dharmaduta in the socialization of religious moderation, make him a role model for Buddhists. This shows that Dharmaduta has good personality competence in socializing religious moderation.

3. Cosmopolitanism

The messages of religious moderation delivered to Buddhists during Dharmadesana, show the cosmopolitanism attitude possessed by Dharmaduta. These messages include mutual respect between religious communities, as well as invitations to help build houses of worship of other religions and to secure the holidays of non-Buddhist religions. In addition, the practice of social services carried out by not only involving participants from Buddhists but also from non-Buddhist communities, strengthens the dharmaduta's cosmopolitanism.

4. Empathy and Sympathy

The results of the study also found that the attitude of empathy and sympathy in the socialization of religious moderation was also shown by Dharmaduta. Empathy and sympathy can be seen from social assistance and construction of houses of worship, assistance with the security of holiday worship provided by Dharmaduta and Buddhists to non-Buddhist religious communities. In addition, also silaturahmi on holidays or in the local language better known as 'ngelencer' which is done also shows an attitude of sympathy and 'ngelayat' which shows empathy from Dharmaduta.

Based on the results of the discussion it can be understood that in the Socialization of Religious Moderation, Dharmaduta applies the role of informative, educative, consultative, advocative and according to the purpose of the position he also conducts socialization by way of vitaranam, havanam, santaranam, following and protecting

dharma correctly and can make everyone happy. Dharmaduta has an effective role in the socialization of religious moderation.

The four competencies possessed by the Dharmaduta greatly support the Dharmaduta's role in socializing religious moderation by means of Dharmadesana, dharma discussions, initiating and inviting Buddhists to carry out activities to protect religious worship on holidays and also celebrations of religious events, inviting people and helping build prayer rooms, organizing social service programs and providing individual counseling services for Buddhists who have personal/family problems. Dharmaduta has successfully played an important role in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists and non-Buddhist communities around the monastery. This helps to strengthen interfaith harmony and create a harmonious and tolerant environment for all faiths.

CONCLUSION

Dharmaduta has an important role in socializing and providing direct examples of religious moderation practices to Buddhists. The efforts that have been made by Dharmaduta are not only to convey messages of religious moderation but also to be actively involved in social activities. Moderation socialization is carried out by Dharmaduta through activities including Dharmadesana and direct discussions with the community. In addition, they also provide examples of the practice of securing houses of worship, silahturami during Muslim, Christian, Catholic and Hindu holidays, assisting in the construction of houses of worship, organizing social service programs and conducting individual counseling services.

The role of Dharmaduta is very important in shaping attitudes, behaviors, and communities that are harmonious, tolerant, and inclusive in a multicultural society. Each of the research monasteries showed that the Dharmaduta's active participation in interfaith activities, collaboration with people of other religions, and his contribution to the creation of religious moderation content have had a positive impact in building harmonious relations between religious communities and strengthening diversity in society.

In the context of communication studies, the Dharmaduta's role in socializing religious moderation to Buddhists and non-Buddhist communities in the monastery environment shows the importance of carrying out informative, educative, consultative, advocative communication functions and communicator competencies which include source credibility, personality and cosmopolitanism. Communication carried out by Dharmaduta is not only limited to sending information, but also involves active interaction with Buddhists through various social and religious activities.

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