

Javanese Chanting and the Buddhayana Spirit in Preserving Buddha Dharma

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(Received: 25 March 2026, Accepted: 28 April 2026, Published: 30 April 2026)

Abstract

Keywords:

Javanese
Chanting;
Buddhayana;
Buddha Dharma;
local wisdom;
Buddhist ritual

In Buddhist religious practice, Javanese chanting is a manifestation of local cultural adaptation and an essential means of upholding Buddha Dharma within the community. In order to maintain the continuity of Buddha Dharma at Buddhayana Temple, this research seeks to investigate the function of Javanese Chanting as a legacy of the Buddhayana spirit. A case study methodology was used in the descriptive qualitative research. The interactive model of Miles and Huberman was used to analyze the data, which were gathered via interviews, observation, and documentation. This model consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results demonstrate that Javanese Chanting is more than just a ritual; it is also a cultural and spiritual means of promoting faith (saddhā), aiding in the comprehension of Buddhist teachings, maintaining the use of the Javanese language in religious practice, and promoting social cohesion among members of the Buddhist community. Additionally, the practice mirrors the Buddhayana spirit by being inclusive and flexible in response to local culture, serving as a kind of upāya-kauśalya in preserving the continuity and relevance of Buddha Dharma in today's world. By illustrating how local knowledge may aid in the preservation of religious customs in a diverse environment, this research advances the conversation about religion and culture.

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Introduction

Human beings rely on value systems and religious beliefs as guidelines for life. Cultural values are passed down by ancestors in each generation for generations through certain practices based on the values contained in inherited beliefs (Hariandi et al., 2023). Culture is a way of life shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation. In religious life man has a purpose in life that makes him feel calm, happy, and for salvation for his mind and body. In general, Buddhists perform worship by means of devotional Puja, and carry out other activities such as funds to reduce stinginess and selfishness, meditate to be calmer in expressing their soul and mind through religious rituals, namely devotional Puja (Helwig et al., 2018).

Buddhism has become an important religious and philosophical tradition in Indonesian society and culture. In its long history, Buddhism has grown and developed in the country,

influencing various aspects of life, including language and cultural traditions (Miharja, 2015). One tangible manifestation of the influence of Buddhism is in Javanese, where Buddhism has created a harmonious balance between spirituality and daily life.

Devotional Puja is a form of spiritual practice of the Buddhist community. Devotional Puja is practiced by Buddhists since the time when Buddha was alive, when people come and enter the temple calmly, after performing devotional Puja Buddhists usually become calmer when performing worship and their minds become cleaner (Temon, 2021). Perform *namaskhara* or prostrate with the aim of respecting the Triratna. This reverence is one of the real practices of Buddhism.

One movement that reflects respect for Triratna is the Buddhayana spirit movement. Buddhayana is a movement that gathers various Buddhist traditions in Indonesia, both from Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana (Wise et al., 2023). The movement aims to strengthen brotherhood between Buddhists from different backgrounds and traditions, as well as to develop Buddhism appropriate to the social and cultural context of Indonesia. The Buddhayana movement also emphasizes the importance of practicing three main aspects of religious life, namely *sila* (ethics), *samadhi* (meditation), and *panna* (wisdom).

Buddhayana is an inclusive way of thinking about Buddhism, not a synthesis between several Buddhist sects or traditions. Buddhayana supports and facilitates each sect/sect/madhab to implement its religious practices to achieve one Buddhist goal. Buddhayana is also a teaching that instills intersectorian values (not taking sides with any sect such as Theravada, Mahayana, and Tantrayana). Buddhayana can also be called Ekayana because Buddhayana teaches a single, unbranched path. Buddhayana has a great role in the development of Buddhism in Indonesia, one of which is Javanese language devotional Puja which is still preserved, especially in Lampung province, namely at Pesawaran Buddhayana monastery (Ismoyo et al., 2021).

One aspect that stands out in Buddhayana is the use of Javanese language in the implementation of religious ceremonies and rituals. Javanese, as a local language rich in culture and tradition, plays a very important role in maintaining the existence of Buddha Dharma at Pesawaran temple. Javanese is not only a means of communication, but also as a means of conveying Buddhist teachings that allow its adherents to go deeper in spiritual understanding and practice.

The Buddhist community at Pesawaran Buddhayana Temple, located in Sidodadi Village, Teluk Pandan District, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung Province, consists of approximately 23 households. This site was selected because it has consistently practiced Javanese devotional puja for decades. Monastery Buddhayana is one of the places of worship of the Buddhist community that has an important role in maintaining and developing the teachings of Buddha Dharma in the Pesawaran area, Lampung. The temple is not only a place of worship, but also a center of cultural, spiritual, and educational activities that promote Buddhayana values. As a Buddhist community concerned with cultural and religious heritage, the Buddhist community of Buddhayana monastery maintains and strengthens the Javanese tradition of devotional Puja. This practice helps the younger generation remain connected to their Buddhist cultural and religious heritage. In Javanese devotional puja, there is still a very thick culture carried out in the ritual, so that the existence of Buddha dharma in Pesawaran Buddhayana monastery is maintained.

Javanese devotional puja is one of the important aspects of religious life for the Buddhayana community at Pesawaran Buddhayana monastery. The Javanese language, with all its cultural and historical diversity, has become an inseparable part of the identity and existence of the Buddhayana spirit movement in this region. In the context of Buddhayana, Javanese devotional Puja is a form of respect for Triratna which is spoken using Javanese. Javanese devotional puja is a form of respect for Buddha by using Javanese in its implementation, this must be maintained to maintain local cultural heritage (Wintako et al., 2021).

This devotional puja involves translating the Dharma into Javanese, to make it easier for the local community to understand and accept, especially the Buddhist community at Buddhayana temple. However, with time and social changes, globalization, and modernization, this tradition began to face challenges in maintaining its existence and sustainability. Javanese culture and Javanese language began to shift (Bhakti, 2020). Javanese is no longer a common vernacular language used by the younger generation, and religious traditions related to Javanese are beginning to be marginalized. This condition threatens the existence of Javanese devotional puja, which in turn can affect the sustainability of the Buddhist community at Buddhayana monastery in the Pesawaran regency.

Based on these things, this article discusses the importance of Javanese devotional Puja as a legacy of the Buddhayana spirit in maintaining the existence of Buddha Dharma at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. In this context, it is explained the role of Javanese language in religious rituals and ceremonies, and how the use of this language helped maintain and develop Buddhism in the region. In addition, this article will also highlight how the application of Javanese reflects the spirit of diversity and pluralism that is characteristic of Buddhayana in Indonesia. Thus, this research provides valuable insights and enriches the understanding of cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia.

Method

This study aims to explore and describe the meaning of Javanese language as a legacy of Buddhayana spirit in maintaining the existence of Buddha Dharma at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. This research uses qualitative methods with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made to see firsthand the Javanese language devotion activities carried out at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. Interviews were conducted to obtain information from resource persons involved in Javanese devotional activities, such as monastic administrators, and Buddhist communities. Documentation is carried out to collect data in the form of photos, videos, and documents related to Javanese devotional Puja. The data were analyzed by data reduction techniques, data presentation, and conclusions. The source of this research data is documents, artifacts, and in-depth interviews with several respondents involved in Javanese devotional puja activities at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. This research instrument is the researcher himself who acts as a data collector, observer, and data analyzer.

Data analysis in this study took place continuously from the data collection stage until the research was completed. The data analysis model used is the Milles and Huberman interactive model (Miles et al., 2014). This model can be seen as the following diagram.

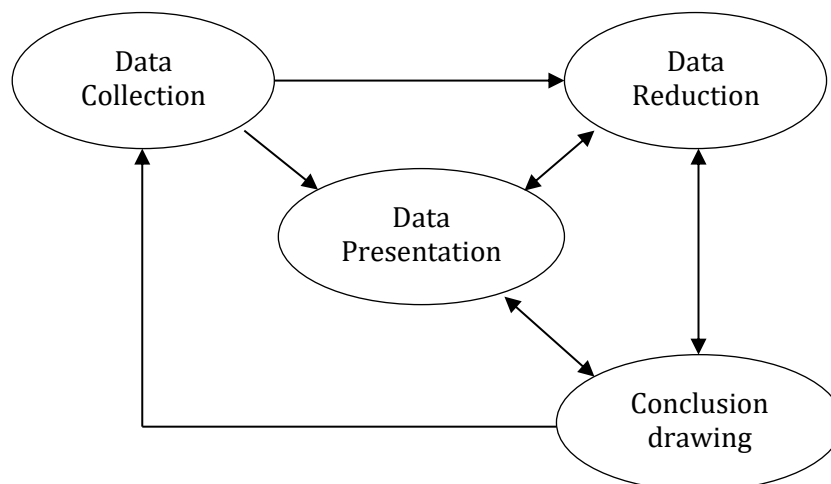


Figure 1. Interactive Data Analysis Model According to Milles and Huberman

Result and Discussion

Result

This study's results come from qualitative information gathered at the Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery through documentation, in-depth interviews, and observations. The analysis reveals a number of important conclusions about the function and significance of Javanese devotional puja in preserving the Buddha Dharma in the local Buddhist population.

Firstly, as a component of the community's religious rituals, the practice of Javanese devotional puja is performed often and regularly. The ritual is performed in an organized way, according to observational evidence, and it consists of a series of steps, including the opening chants (Purwaka Bhakti Buddhaya), the main recitation of paritta, and the closing chants (Ayak-ayak Pamungkas). The continuity of traditional practices throughout generations is demonstrated by the use of Javanese language at every point of the ritual. The community's dedication to maintaining cultural and religious traditions within their spiritual lives is reflected in this continuity.

Secondly, interview findings indicate that participants' comprehension of Buddhist teachings is greatly improved when Javanese is used in devotional puja. Informants stressed that the local language makes religious messages more accessible and easier to internalize, especially for community members who are more at home with Javanese than with other languages. Additionally, the use of Javanese promotes a greater emotional bond throughout the ceremony, allowing participants to engage more meaningfully in the practice. This finding indicates that language is a vital component in fostering spiritual awareness and faith (*saddhā*) as well as a medium of communication.

Thirdly, documentary evidence indicates that Javanese devotional puja integrates different forms of indigenous cultural expression into Buddhist ritual practices. Traditional chanting patterns, melodic recitations, and the use of culturally embedded expressions that reflect Javanese values are among these components. The fusion of these components demonstrates a process of cultural adaptation, whereby Buddhist principles are communicated through the lens of the local culture. By making the teachings more relevant and relatable to the local population, this adaptation helps to maintain religious practice continuity.

Fourth, the study demonstrates that Javanese devotional puja is essential to maintaining a local cultural identity. The use of regional languages has decreased, especially among younger people, in the context of sociocultural change and the impact of globalization. The ongoing practice of Javanese devotional puja, however, serves as a way to keep the language alive in religious settings. This practice aids in protecting cultural heritage and ensures that local knowledge and traditions are not forgotten over time.

The research also reveals that Javanese devotional puja promotes a sense of social unity among Buddhists. Ritual participation as a group fosters a sense of shared identity and fosters positive relationships between community members. Regular participation in devotional rituals helps people feel a sense of community and mutual support, which promotes the stability and continuity of the group.

The entire study ultimately reveals that Javanese devotional puja plays a key role in preserving the existence of Buddha Dharma at the Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. This contribution is seen in three key areas: (1) reinforcing religious belief (*saddhā*), (2) maintaining cultural practices and indigenous knowledge, and (3) encouraging social unity in the community. These results demonstrate that incorporating local culture and religious rituals is a successful method for maintaining religious life in a shifting socio-cultural landscape.

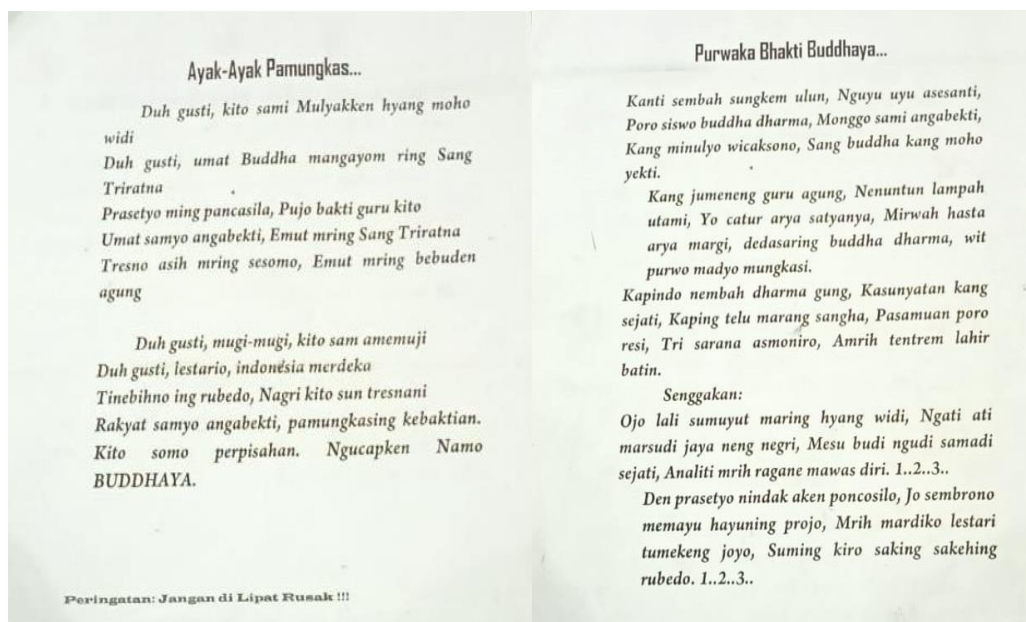


Figure 2. Javanese Chanting Text

The texts used at the start and conclusion of Javanese devotional puja at the Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery are shown in Figure 2. The introductory hymn, *Purwaka Bhakti Buddhaya*, serves as a call for practitioners to get ready in body and mind to worship the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The ceremony begins at this point, setting the tone for reverence and concentration during prayer.

The devotional practice, however, comes to an end with the final song, *Ayak-ayak Pamungkas*. The *Triratna* is shown respect, devotion, and appreciation through this chant. An informant (Informant-PLW03) stated in an interview that the closing chant represents

spiritual fortitude and is a prayer that is directed at oneself as well as at all living things. This is a representation of the overall spiritual aim that is ingrained into the ritual exercise.

Discussion

Based on the results of the study, it was found that Javanese devotional Puja can be a means of maintaining the existence of Buddha Dharma in Buddhayana monastery because of several things, namely Javanese devotional puja as *upāya-kausālya*, strengthening *saddha*, means of maintaining Buddhism, and reflecting the spirit of diversity and pluralism. The roots of existing cultures should not be forgotten because they contain very noble values that need to be preserved. This is local wisdom that needs to be explored while still being able to enjoy modern culture. Forgetting the existing local wisdom means denying the existence of high-value ancestral cultural heritage. One of the local wisdom that exists throughout the archipelago is regional language and culture (Rummar, 2017).

Culture arises in social interactions in the human environment, this is related to their daily activities, namely in daily life and ways of communicating and interacting as well as religion as their beliefs (Purbasari & Suharno, 2019). Examples can be seen from Buddhism born in India with little or much to do with Indian culture itself. However, Buddhists are not synonymous with adherents of Indian culture. The so-called Buddhist culture is in fact a fusion from one region to another, as well as a variety of races, languages, and customs. In terms of doctrinal views, various sects with various cultural containers can be viewed and are particular, because of a view, belief, belief, (Rummar, 2017) and also the approval of a sect if then, harmonious harmony can be established (Vin.IV, 2019).

Culture has a dense context of diversity that gathers itself into social and cultural unity that is able to create, grow, and develop heritage and culture (Kistanto, 2017). Culture is universal, that is, it exists in societies wherever it is, both "primitive" societies (underdeveloped society) and remote (*isolated*), simple societies (less developed society), as well as developing societies (developing society) and developed societies (developed society) or industrial society (*industrial society*) and a highly *complicated and modern postindustrial society*. Therefore, culture is related to reason and always changes with the development of time by going through the process of globalization but without eliminating the existence of the culture and remains stable (Widyastuti, 2021). The description is as follows:

Javanese devotional puja as *upāya-kausālya* strengthening *saddha*

Javanese is a regional language that continues to grow, not only in Java but Javanese language spreads to almost all regions in Indonesia, so it needs to be preserved so as not to lose its existence, the extinction of Jawa language due to the lack of speakers in the community and also the role of parents in teaching Javanese (Puspita, 2022). Javanese language is also a means of communication in most Javanese population. Javanese language is able to strengthen the identity and personality of adults.

Javanese language is one of the cultures and identities of the Indonesian nation, therefore this local culture should not fade and be eroded by the development of the times (Nadhiroh & Setyawan, 2021). Javanese language is also a heritage that must be exemplified and must be maintained local wisdom. Like devotional Puja in Javanese. Devotional Puja is defined from two words "puja" which means to respect and "Devotional" which is to carry out the teachings, the term "Chanting" is often centered on ceremonies as a means to strengthen belief in the Tri Ratna.

Chanting or commonly referred to as prayer can be said to be a ritual and is a routine for Buddhists in carrying out their worship. Performing devotional Puja is an obligation of Buddhists with the aim of carrying out religious teachings through the practice of precepts and morality by reciting sacred prayers, pararita and mantras with full confidence so as to cause abundant blessings for themselves and all beings (Nyoto, 2019).

Javanese devotional Puja, in the context of Javanese culture, is a practice that reflects *upāya-kauśalya*, i.e. proficiency or expertise in spiritual devotion. *Upāya-kauśalya* is the means and vehicle for practicing Buddhism. Through skillful means, one has the ability to adapt dharmic teachings to benefit different people, according to Mitchell, 2002 in (Vu, 2018:7). This practice aims to strengthen and deepen one's belief (*saddhā*) in spiritual values and belief in Buddhism.

In addition, Javanese devotional puja at Buddhayana monastery became one of the local wisdom with the aim of making it easier for Buddhists to understand Buddhism in the language they often used. In the practice of devotional Puja, one demonstrates belief (*saddhā*) in Buddhism through sincere and respectful devotion to the one worthy of respect. It also involves a deep understanding of Buddhism and how it can lead one to a better life.

Javanese devotional puja is a form of worship to Buddha that uses Javanese in its implementation, both from the introduction and the prayers offered. The reverence allowed by the Buddha is natural and based on correct understanding, and refers to "something" worthy of the Manggala sutta (Sn.187). Devotional Puja is important for everyone, especially Buddhists at Buddhist Monastery in Pesawaran district. In its implementation, devotional Puja is not an element of activity aimed at the aspect of asking or asking for Tuhan, but is centered on a ritual to strengthen faith in the Tri Ratna or what is called Buddha, dharma, and sangha (Wulandari et al., 2022).

Javanese devotional Puja is not just a ritual, but also a way to strengthen one's faith in one's religious and spiritual practices. This practice illustrates *upāya-kauśalya* in the development of deep beliefs and understanding of the teachings of Buddhism, as well as how they can lead individuals towards enlightenment and a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. Thus, Javanese devotional Puja is a means to strengthen one's beliefs (*saddhā*) and develop one's spiritual skills in the context of Javanese culture which is rich in belief values and spirituality so that the existence of Buddha Dharma in Buddhayana monastery can continue to be maintained and preserved.

Means of defending Buddhism

The Buddhist community at Buddhayana monastery, Sidodadi Village, Teluk Pandan District, Pesawaran Regency still maintains the legacy of the past and present generations of parents, namely performing devotional puja using the Javanese version. This Javanese devotional puja will not diminish the true essence of the Buddhist faith in the area. Different ordinances, give a different thing from others where, each word gives its own meaning. Like the Buddhas' teachings about beliefs that arise in society and can be accepted by people through local culture.

The media used in carrying out Javanese devotional puja is the same as devotional puja in general, however, the difference is the use of Javanese language and the reading procedure is done by singing. The Buddhist customs of the Buddhayana Monastery are still maintained today in order to maintain the local wisdom of the local people. The reason Javanese devotional puja is still carried out today is because, this is a legacy from previous ancestors,

in order to maintain local wisdom, culture must continue to be developed and must be preserved in every generation.

The noble values contained in Javanese devotional puja include:

1. Elestarian towards regional languages, the nature of mutual assistance for the preservation of religion and culture, the diversity of cultural arts in the form of songs when performing chanting.
2. Regional languages as evidence of local wisdom that Buddhism is in line with the culture that exists in a particular region.
3. The relevance of culture and religion is evidence of doctrinal harmony.

Buddha devotional Puja Javanese language as one of the traditions of local wisdom and is a legacy of the existence of Javanese culture. As happened in Indonesia at this time, Javanese is seen as an ancient language and not in accordance with the times. Therefore, there is still a Javanese devotional Puja ritual at the Buddhayana monastery, Pesawaran regency is one of the places that maintain the existence of Javanese devotional Puja traditions and culture so that the spirit of Buddhayana is still maintained and does not lose its preservation, but still runs and is maintained (Masitoh, 2021).

A reflection of the spirit of diversity and pluralism

Javanese devotional puja also shows intersectorianism, which is an attitude of respect and respect for different traditions or traditions in Buddhism. With *Javanese devotional puja* and intersectorian values, the Buddhist community at Buddhayana monastery was able to maintain the existence and development of Buddhism.

The rapid growth of intersectorian values due to the emergence of monk Ashin Jinarakkhita, he was the first monk in Indonesia in Buddhism, before he became a monk he was known as The Boan An or often known as Su Kong. He was also a pioneer of the revival of Buddhism in 1956 after the independence of the Indonesian nation, so that Buddhayana with intersectorian values could be instilled without a conflict that could cause divisions between Buddhists in Indonesia (Karsan, 2021).

Diversity and pluralism are two principles that inspire a spirit of mutual respect and harmony in a diverse society. It is a reflection of the basic values that encourage cooperation, tolerance, and understanding in the midst of differences. The spirit of diversity speaks of accepting and celebrating differences in society. It recognizes that each individual brings unique experiences, cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. Diversity is a source of wealth in society that allows for the exchange of ideas, deeper understanding, and the development of creativity.

Pluralism is a concrete effort to create an environment where diversity is valued and integrated. It refers to the acceptance and coexistence of different ethnic groups, religions, cultures, and political views in a society. Pluralism encourages inclusion, dialogue, and cooperation across groups. This is a tangible manifestation of the spirit of diversity in action.

A reflection of the spirit of diversity and pluralism is when seeing diverse societies working together to achieve common values without putting aside differences. This is when realizing that in differences can find common ground, and in dialogue can build a better understanding of each other. The spirit of diversity and pluralism is the foundation of an inclusive and harmonious society. In a society that embraces this spirit, peace, justice, and progress can be achieved together.

Conclusion

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that devotional Puja activities are one of the solutions in maintaining the existence of Buddha dharma at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. Javanese devotional puja with the recitation of Javanese parita-parita is the wisdom of local and the heritage of the spirit found in the area, so that its preservation is still harmoniously maintained by Buddhists at Pesawaran Buddhayana Monastery. This happens because of the reflection of *upāya-kauśalya*, which is proficiency or expertise in devotion that is rich in spiritual value. Moral practices aimed at strengthening and deepening faith (*saddhā*) in order to instill the spirit of Buddhayana, by instilling noble values through Javanese religious puja traditions among Buddhists at the Buddhayana Pesawaran Vihara, thereby ensuring the continuity of the Buddha's Dharma. This Javanese version of devotional Puja will not diminish the essence or belief (*saddhā*) of Buddhists in the area. The results of this study show that Javanese language has an important meaning as a heritage of Buddhayana spirit which contains Buddhist Dharma values. Javanese is also a means of communication, teaching, and preservation of Buddha Dharma at Pesawaran Buddhayana monastery. Javanese language helps Buddhists to understand and practice Buddhism more easily and deeply.

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