

Pre- and Post-Sudhi Wadani Guidance for the Hindus in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

Sudhi Wadani is a ceremonial rite performed for individuals who intend to embrace Hinduism. This ritual is commonly conducted prior to a marriage ceremony or for those who voluntarily choose to convert to and embrace the Hindu faith. In accordance with Article 2, Paragraph (1) of Law No. 16 of 2019 on Marriage, a marriage is considered legally valid only when performed according to the religious principles of the parties involved. The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony serves as a formal declaration and affirmation of one's sincere commitment to Hinduism, undertaken voluntarily and without coercion. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct both pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance programs to provide fundamental knowledge about Hinduism before and after the ceremony, as well as to prevent reconversion after the ritual. Based on this phenomenon, three main problems can be formulated in this study, namely, first, why is it necessary to carry out pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance for Hindus in Medan City? Second, how is the process of pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance for Hindus in Medan City? Third, what are the implications of pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance for the social, cultural and religious life of Hindus in Medan City? The theories used in this study include phenomenological theory, constructivist theory, and reception theory. This research was designed using a qualitative descriptive method and conducted in Medan City.

The results of the study indicate several reasons for the need for pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance: marriage, religious diversity, and religious reconversion. The guidance process includes pre-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance, implementation, and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance. Furthermore, several aspects related to the implications for society, social life, cultural life, and religious life in Medan, are highlighted. The findings demonstrate a change in the challenges faced by Hindus and non-Hindu communities in Medan through *Sudhi Wadani*. Theoretically, this research reinforces Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, Jean Piaget's constructivism, and Hans Robert Jauss's (1921–1997) reception theory.

Keywords: *Sudhi Wadani, Pre- and Post- Guidance*

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a significant event in human life, not merely as a physical union between a man and a woman, but also as a manifestation of sanctity and spiritual responsibility before God Almighty. According to Law No. 16 of

2019 concerning Marriage, the legality of marriage in Indonesia is determined by each party's religious law and its official registration. Consequently, interfaith marriages are not legally recognized, making religious conversion the only way for a marriage to be

considered valid from both religiously and legally.

Within the Hindus in Medan City, numerous cases of conversion to Hinduism occur as a result of marriage. This process is carried out through the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony, a ritual of self-purification and formal declaration of becoming a Hindu, conducted under the guidance of a *Pinandita* and the supervision of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI). Theologically, *Sudhi Wadani* signifies the purification of the heart and mind (*citta śuddhi*) and the commitment to live in accordance with *dharma* in pursuit of worldly happiness and *moksha* (liberation). However, in practice, the ceremony is often treated merely as a formality preceding marriage, lacking deep understanding and spiritual preparation. As a result, many who convert to and embrace Hinduism later return to their original faiths due to insufficient religious guidance and limited understanding of Hindu teachings.

This phenomenon is influenced by several factors, including insufficient pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance, limited foundational knowledge of Hindu doctrines, social and familial pressure, difficulty in adapting to new cultural traditional, and a lack of support from spouses and religious communities. In Hindu philosophy, however, marital harmony is founded on spiritual and moral balance grounded in devotion to God Almighty. Therefore, pre-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is essential for instilling foundational religious knowledge and values in prospective converts, while post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is crucial for strengthening faith and ensuring the consistency of new adherents in practicing Hinduism.

Data from PHDI Medan City indicate a steady increase in *Sudhi Wadani* ceremonies over the past four

years (2021–2024), with a total of 132 participants, 95 women and 37 men. The majority originated from Buddhism (89 individuals), while the fewest came from Christianity (11 individuals). This trend suggests that *Sudhi Wadani* has become an increasingly preferred avenue for both legal and spiritual conversion to Hinduism, particularly in the context of interfaith marriages. This situation presents a challenge for religious institutions, especially PHDI Medan City, to ensure that every new adherent gains a profound understanding of Hindu teachings rather than perceiving *Sudhi Wadani* as merely an administrative ritual.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance in Medan City, including the reasons for its importance, the process of its implementation, and its implications for the social, cultural, and religious life of Hindus. The primary objective is to identify an effective model of religious guidance that post-*Sudhi Wadani* Hindus are not only legally and ritually recognized but also able to internalize, practice, and maintain their beliefs.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the fields of anthropology and Hindu religious studies, particularly in understanding religious conversion and spiritual formation through *Sudhi Wadani*. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as valuable resources for the Hindus, scholars, and researchers as a source of empirical and academic reference. For PHDI Medan City, the results may provide a foundation for formulating sustainable guidance policies to prevent reconversion and to strengthen the faith of new adherents. Ultimately, this research seeks to enhance religious life and contribute to

the advancement of Hindu studies in Medan City.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach within a constructivist paradigm, viewing knowledge as a result of human experience and interaction. The method aims to explore in depth the processes of *Sudhi Wadani* guidance, before and after the ritual, among Hindus in Medan City from religious, social, and cultural perspectives. The research proceeded through several phases: proposal development, preliminary observation, data collection, analysis, and conclusion drawing. Medan City was chosen for its sizable Hindu population and the frequent interfaith marriages associated with *Sudhi Wadani*.

Data were primarily qualitative, gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation, and supported by quantitative information such as the number of *Sudhi Wadani* participants. Primary sources included Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), religious leaders, and *Pinandita*, while secondary data came from literature, documents, and online sources. Techniques used involved non-participant observation, snowball interviews, and document study. The researcher directly observed the rituals and explored participants' experiences. Acting as the main research instrument, the researcher utilized field notes, interview guides, audio recorders, and cameras. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification through source and method triangulation to ensure validity. This study is grounded on three interrelated theoretical foundations that collectively explain the pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance of Hindus in

Medan City: the Phenomenological Theory, the Constructivist Theory, and the Reception Theory. Each of these frameworks provides a distinct yet complementary perspective in analyzing the experiences, understanding, and interpretations of individuals undergoing the *Sudhi Wadani* process and subsequent religious guidance.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is essential to provide converts with a solid understanding of Hindu teachings and to prevent reconversion. Before the ceremony, participants must meet administrative requirements set by the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI). *Sudhi Wadani* represents a *yadnya*, a sacred act of self-purification and reaffirmation of faith, preparing individuals to live according to Hindu values with the ultimate goal of *Moksartham Jagadita Ya Ca Iti Dharma*, achieving both worldly welfare and spiritual liberation (*moksha*). Post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is equally crucial, as new converts often face challenges such as adaptation difficulties, family pressure, and limited learning resources. Therefore, continuous and coordinated support is needed through formal, informal, and non-formal means, involving families, PHDI, and educational institutions. The converts' motivation and commitment to learning Hindu teachings are key to their successful religious practice. This study thus examines the importance of continuous guidance for new Hindus in Medan City.

The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony is a formal ritual for those who voluntarily embrace Hinduism (Lestari, 2014:20), usually conducted before marriage or as a personal declaration of faith. Participants must submit necessary documents and a statement of their

decision, while minors require parental consent. The ceremony, led by a *Pinandita* appointed by PHDI Medan City, is witnessed by *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*. Upon completion, participants are formally recognized as Hindus both religiously and legally and receive a *Sudhi Wadani* Certificate from PHDI Medan City, marking the beginning of their spiritual life guided by Hindu principles.

3.1 The Importance of Pre- and Post-Sudhi Wadani Guidance for the Hindus in Medan City

Pre- and post-Sudhi Wadani guidance is essential in preparing the spiritual, mental, and emotional readiness of Hindus in Medan City, ensuring a deep understanding of self-purification. The pre-Sudhi Wadani stage focuses on explaining the ceremony's meaning as a process of cleansing the mind and heart, while also teaching the correct procedures to perform it consciously. In Medan's multicultural context, this stage helps preserve the purity of Hindu teachings and strengthen faith in Vedic values. The post-Sudhi Wadani stage emphasizes applying Hindu principles in daily life, transforming spiritual insight from ritual into *dharmic* behavior that nurtures moral character and religious awareness. This guidance sustains spiritual commitment, prevents reconversion, and encourages compassion and harmony in social life. Beyond individual growth, such guidance fosters unity and strengthens the collective identity of Hindus in Medan, promoting mutual support, preserving traditions, and maintaining cultural heritage. Ultimately, it serves as a vital means to deepen faith, uphold interreligious harmony, and realize a peaceful, meaningful life in line with Vedic teachings.

a. The Implementation of Hindu Marriage

The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony in Hindu marriage holds both legal and spiritual significance. Based on Article 2(1) of Law No. 16 of 2019, a marriage is valid only when performed according to the couple's respective religious laws, thereby prohibiting interfaith unions. For Hindus, conversion through *Sudhi Wadani*, a sacred ritual of purification and affirmation, is required before marriage to ensure both legal and religious validity. In Hindu belief, marriage (*pawiwahan*) represents the *Grehastha Asrama* stage within *Catur Asrama*, emphasizing purity, responsibility, and spiritual harmony. It is a *wiwaha samskara*, symbolizing the sacred union (*sakala-niskala*) of man and woman to build a virtuous and lasting family. This aligns with national law, which defines marriage as a physical and spiritual bond grounded in belief in God Almighty.

In Medan's multicultural setting, Hindu marriages often face challenges due to differing cultural and religious backgrounds. The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony thus becomes vital to uphold marital sanctity while meeting legal requirements. Pre- and post-Sudhi Wadani guidance helps converts understand marital vows, internalize *dharma* values, and prevent reconversion. The Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) plays a central role in supervising ceremonies, issuing legal certificates, and providing continuous spiritual guidance. The Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) holds a central role in ensuring that marriages are performed according to the *Vedic* scriptures. The organization is authorized to issue official certificates of marriage performance and to provide continuous religious guidance. As noted

by Mr. Chandra Bose, S.Sos, a religious leader and *Pinandita* in Medan:

“A marriage must be conducted in accordance with each individual’s religion. If either the bride or groom holds a different faith, a *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony must be performed. According to the law, interfaith marriage is prohibited. Therefore, the role of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia in Medan is crucial in providing ongoing pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance to prevent religious reconversion.”
(Interview, August 22, 2024)

As the explanation above, guidance is essential to ensure lawful marriages and prevent reconversion among converts. Within the Tamil Hindus of Medan, marriages are usually held in temples led by a *Pinandita* appointed by PHDI. The groom ties a *Mangalsutra* around the bride’s neck as a symbol of their sacred bond. Vegetarian meals are typically served in temple weddings, while non-vegetarian dishes may appear in other venues, reflecting both devotion and cultural tradition. In essence, *Sudhi Wadani*, along with continuous guidance before and after marriage, ensures the sanctity and legality of Hindu unions, strengthens marital harmony, and reinforces faith amid Medan’s pluralistic society.

b. Religious Diversity

Indonesia’s religious diversity, officially encompassing Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, reflects the nation’s cultural richness and pluralistic identity. However, such diversity can also generate social and spiritual challenges when not accompanied by tolerance and mutual respect. In the multicultural context of Medan City, interfaith interaction,

particularly in the sphere of marriage, often becomes a sensitive issue. For Hindus, the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony serves as a vital purification and conversion ritual for those embracing Hinduism prior to marriage. This process not only fulfills legal requirements in accordance with Article 2(1) of Law No. 16 of 2019 but also carries deep spiritual meaning as an affirmation of faith and commitment. Yet, conversion in marriage remains a complex and delicate matter due to societal perceptions and cultural pressures, despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. As noted by Mr. Wijaya Kumar, a Hindu religious leader in Medan:

“Most individuals who embrace Hinduism do so because of marriage. There are those who leave their previous religion out of love and mutual consent, and thus willingly convert to Hinduism. The majority of converts come from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds. Most are adults, though some minors have converted with parental consent.”
(Interview, August 19, 2024)

The above statement indicates that most individuals who convert to Hinduism in Medan do so voluntarily for marital purposes, primarily from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds. They emphasize that *Sudhi Wadani* must be conducted without coercion and followed by consistent religious guidance to strengthen the converts’ understanding and prevent reconversion. The Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) of Medan City plays a central role in this process by organizing *dharma wacana* (religious discourse), *dharma tula* (dialogue), and distributing Hindu religious literature. These continuous programs aim to deepen spiritual knowledge, enhance religious practice, and ensure that new adherents

remain steadfast in their faith within Medan's pluralistic society.

c. Religious Reconversion

Religious reconversion refers to the process by which individuals return to their original faith after adopting another religion. In Hinduism, this process is manifested through the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony, symbolizing spiritual purification and reaffirmation of belief in Hindu teachings. Reconversion occurs among former Hindus wishing to return, non-Hindus drawn to Hindu values, or children of interfaith marriages choosing Hinduism. Mukti Ali (2001) notes that conversion arises from internal factors such as spiritual crisis and the search for meaning, as well as external influences like social pressure and environmental change. Similarly, Respianto (2016) explains that conversion may result from weak early religious education, peer influence, or interfaith marriage. In Medan, marriage remains the main catalyst for conversion, as some individuals change religion to marry a partner of different faith. Once perceived as familial betrayal, reconversion is now viewed as a lawful individual right. Zakiyah Daradjat (2005) adds that conversion is a deeply personal spiritual process, though publicly expressed through formal declarations. In the context of Hindu marriage, this raises questions of whether conversion stems from true conviction or administrative necessity.

Field interviews reveal three main patterns of conversion. The first is pragmatic conversion, where religious change is performed solely to meet marital requirements. As Pinandita Murgesen explains:

“A person converts to another religion to marry someone of a different faith, often to please their parents. However, their

inner belief remains tied to their previous religion, and they rarely practice the new one.”
(Interview, August 21, 2024)

This reflects superficial conversion without genuine faith transformation. The second is liberal conversion, where individuals view all religions as paths to the same divine truth, as seen in couples like Rawi Bater (Hindu) and Juliana (formerly Muslim), or Syamsul (formerly Muslim) and Sawitri (Hindu). The third is spiritual conversion, characterized by sincere understanding and deep reflection, exemplified by Rohit (formerly Buddhist) and Jiwika (Hindu), who underwent serious contemplation before marrying.

Carrier SJ (2000) describes conversion as a gradual process, from tranquility, inner conflict, and crisis to enlightenment and eventual peace, depending on one's spiritual maturity. The reconversion phenomenon in Medan thus reflects diverse motivations: some driven by social or pragmatic factors, others by authentic spiritual realization. Ultimately, the freedom to convert or return to one's faith is a constitutional right. Therefore, comprehensive pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is essential to strengthen belief, prevent reconversion, and promote interreligious harmony within Medan's pluralistic society.

3.2 The Pre- and Post-*Sudhi Wadani* Guidance Process for Hindus in Medan City

a. Pre-*Sudhi Wadani* Guidance Process

The pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance process in Medan aims to help new converts understand, internalize, and sincerely practice Hindu teachings. The pre-*Sudhi Wadani* phase serves as preparation to ensure candidates possess

adequate comprehension before the purification ceremony. Since Hinduism prohibits interfaith marriage, non-Hindu individuals wishing to marry Hindus must first undergo *Sudhi Wadani*.

In Medan, the ritual is administered by the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) of Medan City following established procedures. According to Mr. Vijaydra (Interview, July 20, 2024), Secretary of PHDI Medan, candidates must provide a written declaration of voluntary conversion, a formal application to the sub-district PHDI, recent photos, ID and family card copies, and witnesses. Once approved, PHDI appoints a *Pinandita* (religious officiant) to lead the ceremony, prepare offerings (*banten pejati*), and set the auspicious day. The ceremony usually takes place at a *pura* (temple) and concludes with signing the official declaration and issuance of a *Sudhi Wadani* certificate as legal proof for civil registration.

The *pre-Sudhi Wadani* program involves several elements: sincerity and awareness, the formal declaration of conversion, doctrinal instruction, administrative preparation, family support, physical and spiritual purification, and counselling. Candidates must embrace Hinduism freely and sincerely as devotion to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*. Training sessions organized by PHDI cover the *Panca Sradha*, *Tri Hita Karana*, *Catur Purusa Artha*, and daily prayers like *Tri Sandhya* and *Gayatri Mantra*. These sessions emphasize that *Sudhi Wadani* is not a mere formality but a renewal of one's path toward *dharma*.

Physical and spiritual purification (*melukat*) ensures readiness in both *sekala* (physical) and *niskala* (spiritual) dimensions. Prior to the ritual, candidates attend counselling with religious leaders to assess their

understanding and motivation. Participants wear clean attire and receive holy water blessings prepared by the *Pinandita*.

Post-ceremonial guidance, also supervised by PHDI, supports new adherents in maintaining their faith and practicing Hindu values in daily life. Further details were explained by Mr. Selwa Raja, Vice Chairman of PHDI Medan:

“Individuals from other religions who wish to embrace Hinduism are required to visit the office of the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia of Medan City to obtain information regarding the administrative procedures and requirements for conducting the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony on the scheduled date.” (Interview, July 22, 2024)

Prospective converts must visit the PHDI office, submit notarized intent statements (especially for those under 21), and receive doctrinal instruction on Hindu fundamentals, *Panca Sradha*, *Vedic law*, *Sila* and *Sadacara*, and *Tri Hita Karana*. All verified documents are then submitted to the PHDI Secretariat before scheduling the ceremony. In essence, the *pre-Sudhi Wadani* process in Medan represents not only administrative preparation but also a transformative educational and spiritual journey, ensuring genuine understanding, faith, and readiness to live by the values of *Sanatana Dharma*.

b. The Implementation Process of *Sudhi Wadani*

The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony marks the culmination of a person's spiritual journey and formal acceptance into Hinduism. It represents both a legal and sacred affirmation of faith, conducted through purification rites, vows of devotion, and official

recognition by the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) of Medan. After administrative and preparatory steps are completed, PHDI schedules the ritual, appoints a *Pinandita* to officiate, and prepares ceremonial offerings (*banten*) along with other sacred items. The ceremony is usually held in local temples under PHDI's supervision.

The ritual begins with *melukat*, a symbolic purification of body and soul, followed by prayers and the chanting of mantras. The central moment occurs when the participant solemnly declares their acceptance of Hinduism, pledging to uphold *Dharma* and the five core beliefs (*Panca Sradha*). Afterward, participants sign official documents in the presence of witnesses and PHDI officials. The *Pinandita* sprinkles holy water (*tirta*) as a sign of divine blessing and offers moral teachings on righteous conduct (*tata susila*) and living according to Hindu principles. According to Mr. Selwa Raja, Vice Chairman of PHDI Medan City:

“Each stage of the ceremony is carried out with administrative precision and intensive spiritual guidance to preserve its sacredness.” (interview, July 22, 2024)

According to PHDI Medan, every stage of the ritual combines precise administration with deep spiritual meaning to maintain its sanctity. The ceremony is often held in Tamil temples such as Shri Mariamman Temple, led by religious figures like *Pinandita* M. Chandra Bose, Dewadas, and others, who stress that *Sudhi Wadani* is not merely a formal conversion but a profound spiritual renewal.

Following the ceremony, PHDI records the convert's name and issues an official *Sudhi Wadani* certificate, which serves as the legal proof for updating civil religious data. Post-ceremonial

guidance is then provided through doctrinal classes, prayer activities, and moral mentoring to help new adherents integrate into the Hindus and remain steadfast in their faith. Ultimately, *Sudhi Wadani* embodies purification, rebirth, and devotion to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, the Supreme God. Its rituals, such as the sprinkling of holy water and mantra recitation, symbolize spiritual awakening and commitment to the eternal truth of *Sanatana Dharma*, marking the beginning of a conscious and sincere Hindu life.

c. **Post-Sudhi Wadani Guidance Process**

The post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance process is a vital stage in strengthening the faith and understanding of individuals who have formally embraced Hinduism. While the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony represents initial spiritual consecration, the subsequent mentoring phase ensures that converts internalize and practice the core values of *Dharma* in daily life. Continuous spiritual mentoring encourages them to deepen their knowledge of Hindu philosophy, participate in religious activities, and remain steadfast in their new faith.

This guidance begins with advanced instruction in Hindu philosophy, covering concepts such as *Karma*, *Moksha*, and *Samsara*, alongside ethical teachings that promote truth and purity. Converts are introduced to daily worship rituals, symbolic offerings, and the philosophical meanings behind them. They are also encouraged to engage actively in temple ceremonies and community life to foster belonging and solidarity among Hindus in Medan.

The process includes ongoing counseling and spiritual instruction led by *Pinandita* and members of the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) of Medan City through *Dharma*

Wacana (lectures), *Dharma Tula* (discussion forums), and personal counseling sessions. These programs deepen both theoretical and practical understanding of Hinduism. PHDI's role is central, particularly in teaching *Panca Sradha*—the five fundamental beliefs in *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* (God), *Atman*, *Karma Phala*, *Punarbhawa*, and *Moksha*, as well as moral concepts such as *Tri Kaya Parisudha* (purification of thought, speech, and action) and *Sad Ripu* (the six internal enemies).

Post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance also functions as non-formal religious education aimed at developing knowledge, emotional devotion, and behavioral integrity. This holistic approach helps converts overcome conceptual and cultural challenges stemming from previous beliefs. Dialogical and participatory methods are emphasized to foster both spiritual and social adaptation.

Religious leaders such as Mr. Chandra Bose, highlight that post-*Sudhi Wadani* mentoring is a collective moral duty of Hindu institutions and communities:

“After the *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony, the individual should not be left unattended merely because the ritual fulfilled the requirements for marriage. The Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia bears moral responsibility for ongoing spiritual guidance through regular visits or scheduled mentoring.” (Interview, August 22, 2024)

Following the ceremony, PHDI continues supervision through home visits, invitations to temple activities, and distribution of Hindu scriptures. Books and resources are made available at temples such as Shri Mariamman and Sri Parmeswari Amman, as well as at PHDI's library for continuous study.

Through systematic post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance, new adherents are expected to grow into spiritually resilient Hindus who live in harmony with *Sanatana Dharma*, practice *Dharma* in daily life, and contribute to interreligious harmony in Medan's multicultural society. This structured mentoring ensures that *Sudhi Wadani* signifies not an endpoint but the beginning of an enduring spiritual journey.

2.3 The Implications of Pre- and Post-*Sudhi Wadani* Guidance on the Social, Cultural, and Religious Life of Hindus in Medan City

The pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance process for Hindus in Medan City carries significant implications for the social, cultural, and religious dimensions of the community. This process not only transforms the spiritual identity of individuals who embrace Hinduism but also generates broader social and cultural dynamics within Medan's multicultural environment.

a. Implications for Social Life

The guidance process surrounding *Sudhi Wadani* not only transforms the spiritual life of Hindu converts but also reflects the complex social and cultural realities of Medan's plural society. Legally, *Sudhi Wadani* is often linked to interfaith marriages, as conversion is required under Law No. 16 of 2019 for such unions to be recognized. Thus, the ritual serves both religious and administrative functions.

Socially, the pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance provided by Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) and temple institutions helps new adherents integrate into the Hindus. Through mentoring, converts learn Hindu values, moral teachings, and community ethics, strengthening their spiritual foundation

and promoting solidarity. Activities such as *Dharma Wacana*, *gotong royong*, and cultural events foster both social inclusion and religious understanding.

These efforts also aid in reducing stigma toward converts and building interfaith harmony, though challenges remain. Some experience rejection or emotional conflict, especially in family contexts where conversion is tied to marriage. From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory, conversion reflects a conscious decision balancing personal faith, marital harmony, and social acceptance.

Post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance thus plays a vital role in maintaining religious stability and preventing reconversion. Continuous mentorship, active temple participation, and inclusive community support reinforce Hindu identity and belonging. Overall, this process contributes to spiritual resilience, cultural preservation, and tolerance within Medan's multicultural environment.

b. Implications for Cultural Life

The pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, strengthening communal identity, and fostering intercultural harmony within Medan's multicultural society. Through this guidance, new adherents are taught the proper performance of Hindu rituals and the underlying cultural values, ensuring that traditions and customs are preserved without losing their spiritual significance. This process safeguards Hindu cultural heritage from external dilution while maintaining it as an integral part of the religious and social life of the Hindus in Medan.

In the context of local culture, such guidance also serves as a bridge of integration between Hindu culture, particularly from the Indian Tamil

community, and the broader Indonesian cultural framework. As a plural city, Medan provides fertile ground for the interaction and fusion of Hindu values with local wisdom. The Shri Mariamman Temple stands as a tangible example of this integration, serving as both a religious and cultural hub that preserves Tamil language, music, and ritual art, while simultaneously enriching the city's cultural diversity. Through religious festivals such as *Thaipusam* and *Deepavali*, Hindu culture becomes increasingly recognized and appreciated by people of various faiths, thereby strengthening cultural tolerance and pluralism in Medan.

The *Sudhi Wadani* ceremony itself holds a strong cultural dimension that reinforces Hindu identity and pride. Formal acknowledgment as a Hindu adherent represents not only a spiritual affirmation but also a symbolic acceptance of Hindu cultural heritage. This fosters communal solidarity and a sense of unity among members in preserving shared cultural values. Additionally, interfaith marriages followed by *Sudhi Wadani* often give rise to a process of cultural acculturation. Although conducted within Hindu ceremonial traditions, the cultural identity of the non-Hindu spouse is not erased but instead merges harmoniously, enriching the existing cultural practices. This process reflects the openness and adaptability of Medan's Hindu community in welcoming new members while maintaining the essence of their traditional customs.

Such cultural adaptation goes beyond external practices, it involves a deep internalization of Hindu philosophical values. Mutual communication and understanding between couples and within the community are key to ensuring the success of this integration. Hence, pre-

and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance not only strengthens the faith of new adherents but also serves as an essential means of preserving Hindu cultural continuity and promoting socio-cultural harmony amid the diversity of Medan City.

c. Implications for Religious Life

The pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance plays a fundamental role in the spiritual and institutional development of Hindus in Medan. Through this process, individuals who undergo *Sudhi Wadani* receive official recognition as Hindus, both religiously and administratively. This acknowledgment not only legitimizes their faith but also grants full participation in Hindu ceremonies, *yadnya*, and other sacred rituals, marking their complete entry into the Hindu religious community.

Prior to the ceremony, candidates are introduced to essential aspects of Hindu practice, including ritual procedures, the preparation of *upakara* (offerings), and the core ethical values of Hinduism. Afterward, they are encouraged to engage in worship, chant mantras, and take part in communal rituals, deepening their *śraddhā* (faith) and *bhakti* (devotion). Through ongoing mentorship, new adherents strengthen their understanding of key Hindu concepts such as *karma*, *dharma*, *punarbhawa* (rebirth), and *moksha* (liberation).

This formation emphasizes the three pillars of Hindu religious life, *tattwa* (philosophy and doctrine), *susila* (ethics and moral conduct), and *upakara* (ritual practice), as well as the five core beliefs of *Panca Śraddhā*: belief in *Brahman* (the Supreme Being), *Ātman* (the soul), *Karma Phala* (cause and effect), *Punarbhawa* (rebirth), and *Moksha* (liberation). These teachings guide converts toward a genuine,

reflective spirituality rooted in awareness and discipline.

Moreover, the *Sudhi Wadani* process redefines religious identity as a personal spiritual choice rather than a mere inherited affiliation. In Medan's plural society, this transformation represents the evolving character of Hinduism, open, inclusive, and responsive to contemporary realities. Ultimately, pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance not only deepens spiritual understanding and devotion to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa* but also strengthens Hindu identity and its enduring relevance as a living faith amid Medan's diverse social landscape.

IV CONCLUSION

This study on *Pre- and Post-Sudhi Wadani Guidance for the Hindus in Medan City* highlights the profound spiritual, social, cultural, and administrative significance of the *Sudhi Wadani* process.

First, the implementation of pre- and post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance is vital for three primary reasons: interfaith marriage, religious diversity, and religious reconversion. In interfaith marriages, *Sudhi Wadani* functions as a legal and religious prerequisite for marriage validity under Law No. 16 of 2019, Article 2(1). Within Medan's plural society, the guidance process promotes tolerance and ensures that conversion occurs peacefully. Continuous post-ceremonial mentoring also strengthens the faith of new converts, helping them remain steadfast and preventing a return to previous religions.

Second, the *Sudhi Wadani* process begins with pre-ceremonial preparation, including the introduction of basic Hindu teachings and administrative verification at the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia

(PHDI) office in Medan. Upon approval, a *Pinandita* is appointed to officiate the ritual at a temple using sacred items such as flowers, coconuts, incense, and holy water. During the ceremony, participants take vows of faith, undergo purification, and receive a formal certificate as proof of conversion. Post-*Sudhi Wadani* guidance then continues through *Dharma Wacana* (lectures), *Dharma Tula* (dialogues), and studies of key doctrines like *Panca Śraddhā*, *Tri Kaya Parisudha*, and *Sad Ripu*, aimed at deepening spiritual understanding and daily practice.

Third, the implementation of this guidance exerts positive influence across social, cultural, and religious dimensions of Hindu life in Medan. Socially, it facilitates the integration of new adherents, fosters solidarity, and minimizes interreligious tension. Culturally, *Sudhi Wadani* acts as a medium of acculturation between Hindu and local traditions, enriching Medan's multicultural landscape. Religiously, it symbolizes purification, affirmation of faith, and spiritual renewal. Through continuous mentoring, converts gain a deeper comprehension of *Dharma*, *Karma Phala*, *Punarbhawa*, and *Moksha*, growing into faithful and harmonious members of the Hindu community.

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