
Theology of Diversity: A Critical Analysis of Amin Abdullah's Thought

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of the theology of diversity from the perspective of Amin Abdullah and its relevance to strengthening religious harmony in Indonesia. The study is motivated by the increasing socio-religious challenges within multicultural societies that are vulnerable to conflict due to exclusivism and absolute truth claims. Unlike previous studies that tend to be descriptive, this research emphasizes a critical analysis of Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnective paradigm as a theological approach capable of fostering inclusive and dialogical religiosity. This study employs a qualitative library research method using hermeneutical and critical analytical approaches toward Amin Abdullah's works and related literature. The findings reveal that Amin Abdullah's theology of diversity is constructed upon the integration of religious normativity and the historical realities of plural societies. Through the integrative-interconnective paradigm, Amin Abdullah proposes a model of religiosity that is open, tolerant, humanistic, and based on interreligious dialogue. This concept is highly relevant in strengthening religious moderation and implementing the trilogy of religious harmony in Indonesia. This study concludes that the theology of diversity not only contributes theoretically to the development of contemporary Islamic studies but also provides practical implications for building peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious social life within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Keywords: *Theology of Diversity, Amin Abdullah, Integrative-Interconnective Paradigm, Interreligious Harmony*

A. Introduction

The discussion of diversity and religious moderation in human life is highly relevant within the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and multicultural society. The diversity possessed by the Indonesian nation is not merely a component of its national identity but also presents significant challenges in maintaining social harmony and national unity. Indonesia has been blessed by Allah SWT with abundant natural resources as well as extensive cultural, linguistic, ethnic, traditional, religious, and belief diversity. This condition has positioned Indonesia as one of the largest multicultural nations in the world. Behind this richness lies a substantial responsibility to preserve unity so that differences do not evolve into sources of conflict and social fragmentation (Amin Abdullah, 2020, p. 45).

Social realities demonstrate that diversity possesses a dual character. On the one hand, plurality can serve as a unifying force that enriches and beautifies the Indonesian nation. On the other hand, if not managed appropriately, differences may generate intolerance, discrimination, radicalism, and even conflicts based on religious and identity-related issues. Various social tensions that have occurred in Indonesia indicate that narrow fanaticism and exclusive religious perspectives often result in profound humanitarian suffering. Many individuals have experienced fear, mutual suspicion, and the erosion of social solidarity merely because of differences in beliefs and worldviews. This situation illustrates that social harmony does not emerge automatically; rather, it must be cultivated through collective awareness and a moderate understanding of religion (Arhanuddin Salim, ed., 2023, p. 17).

In this context, the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) carries profound significance for Indonesian society. Diversity should not be understood merely as the acknowledgment of differences but as the capacity to accept and appreciate those differences as divine gifts that must be preserved collectively. Variations in ethnicity, culture, language, and religion constitute a divine reality that cannot be avoided. Allah SWT created humanity in diversity so that people may know one another, respect one another, and cooperate in social life. Consequently, diversity should function as a bridge of fraternity rather than a barrier separating human beings (Sila, 2025, p. 88).

This perspective is consistent with Ibn Khaldun's thought in the *Muqaddimah*, where he asserts that human beings are inherently social creatures (*al-insān madanī bi al-ṭabʿ*) who cannot live independently without interaction with others. Social life constitutes the foundation of civilization (*al-ʿumrān*). Therefore, the realization of social harmony requires mutual respect and a willingness to coexist amid differences. In a pluralistic society such as Indonesia, harmonious social relations can only be achieved when individuals prioritize human values above sectarian interests and narrow identity affiliations (Rosenthal, 1967, p. 89).

Furthermore, Pancasila, the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, serves as a crucial framework for fostering moderate and inclusive religious life. The values embedded in Pancasila promote respect for humanity, national unity, and social justice regardless of religious affiliation or cultural background. Religious awareness grounded in Pancasila encourages a moderate attitude in national life—one that rejects extremism, violence, and intolerance. Religious moderation does not imply weakening commitment to one's faith; rather, it represents a balanced, open, and respectful approach to religious practice that recognizes the rights of others to live according to their beliefs (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019, p. 18).

In the increasingly complex social landscape of Indonesia, shaped by globalization, digital media, and the growing influence of identity politics, the

concept of the Theology of Diversity has become increasingly important. An inclusive theological approach is needed to prevent religion from being understood in narrow and exclusive terms and to ensure that it serves as a source of peace and human dignity. One Indonesian Muslim scholar who has consistently developed this perspective is Amin Abdullah. He is widely recognized as a progressive Muslim intellectual who emphasizes interreligious dialogue, the integration of knowledge, and a moderate approach to religious life in plural societies (Moeslim Abdurrahman, 2003, p. 73).

Amin Abdullah's concept of the Theology of Diversity emerged from his intellectual and humanitarian concerns regarding religious conflicts, exclusivism, and the declining culture of tolerance within society. He argues that religion should function as a moral force that promotes peace rather than as a tool for legitimizing mutual condemnation and hostility. Through an interconnected and dialogical approach, Amin Abdullah seeks to develop a theological understanding capable of bridging differences while strengthening universal humanitarian values. His ideas are particularly relevant to efforts aimed at promoting religious moderation in Indonesia (Patora, 2022, p. 121).

Nevertheless, Amin Abdullah's thought also requires critical examination, particularly regarding the extent to which the Theology of Diversity can address contemporary socio-religious challenges in Indonesia. Such critical analysis is necessary to ensure that the concept of religious moderation does not remain merely normative and idealistic but can be implemented effectively in social reality. The study of the Theology of Diversity is therefore essential for understanding Amin Abdullah's contribution to fostering interreligious harmony while also evaluating the relevance and limitations of his ideas within the contemporary Indonesian context (Amin Abdullah, 2020, p. 102).

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative research method with a library research approach. This approach was selected because the focus of the study is the analysis of M. Amin Abdullah's theological ideas and intellectual contributions concerning the theology of diversity and religious moderation. Library research was conducted through an extensive examination of written sources, including books, scholarly journals, academic articles, and other relevant documents related to the research topic. In qualitative research, data are not presented in numerical form; rather, they consist of concepts, ideas, arguments, and interpretations that are analyzed in depth to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the object of study. According to Moleong, qualitative research aims to understand phenomena holistically through

descriptions expressed in words and language within a particular natural context (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

The library research approach is particularly appropriate because the study of the theology of diversity and religious moderation requires an in-depth theoretical exploration of intellectual thought, conceptual frameworks, and the socio-religious contexts that shape them. Through literature review and textual analysis, this study critically examines Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnective paradigm as a foundation for developing a moderate, inclusive, and dialogical understanding of religion. Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to compare Abdullah's ideas with various theories of religious moderation and pluralism that have emerged within contemporary Islamic studies. Library research serves not only as a means of data collection but also as a method for constructing the theoretical framework and strengthening the scientific arguments of the study (Sugiyono, 2019).

The sources of data in this study consist of primary and secondary materials. Primary data are derived directly from Amin Abdullah's original works concerning Islamic thought, plurality, and religious moderation, including *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?*, and *Rekonstruksi Metodologi Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*. Secondary data are obtained from books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and other scholarly publications discussing the theology of diversity, religious moderation, hermeneutics, and Amin Abdullah's intellectual contributions. These secondary sources are utilized to support the analysis and provide broader perspectives on the research subject (Abdullah, 2006, pp. vii–xii).

Data collection was carried out through documentation techniques, involving the systematic gathering of relevant written documents. These documents include books, scholarly articles, previous research findings, and other materials related to religious moderation and the theology of diversity. Documentation was chosen because the research is primarily oriented toward the examination of texts and ideas. Through this method, the researcher identifies, classifies, and analyzes Amin Abdullah's thoughts systematically, thereby generating a deeper understanding of the concept of the theology of diversity within the context of Indonesia's multicultural society (Arikunto, 2006, p. 274).

Several analytical approaches are employed in this study. First, the historical approach is used to trace the development of Amin Abdullah's intellectual thought within the broader contexts of social transformation, educational development, and contemporary Islamic studies in Indonesia. This approach assists in understanding the background of his ideas on the theology of diversity and religious moderation as

responses to the realities of Indonesia's pluralistic society (Kuntowijoyo, 2003, p. 18).

Second, a hermeneutical approach is applied to interpret Amin Abdullah's texts critically and contextually. Hermeneutics is particularly relevant because the study seeks not only to understand the literal meaning of the texts but also to explore the social, historical, and philosophical contexts underlying them. Through this approach, the research examines how Amin Abdullah constructs his integrative-interconnective paradigm in understanding religion and diversity (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2004, pp. 291–305).

Third, a critical approach is employed to analyze the strengths, relevance, and limitations of Amin Abdullah's ideas concerning the theology of diversity and religious moderation. This approach is essential to ensure that the study goes beyond mere description and provides a scholarly evaluation of Abdullah's contribution to the development of tolerant, inclusive, and harmonious religious life in Indonesia (Habermas, 1971, pp. 308–317).

Finally, a phenomenological approach is utilized to understand diversity and religious moderation as lived socio-religious realities within society. This approach enables the researcher to explore how Amin Abdullah's theology of diversity remains relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as intolerance, religious radicalism, and interfaith conflict. By focusing on lived experiences and social realities, phenomenology contributes to a deeper understanding of the practical significance of Abdullah's theological framework in contemporary multicultural contexts (Husserl, 1983, pp. 45–49).

C. Result and Discussion

1. The Terminology of Diversity and the Theology of Diversity

Diversity is one of the defining characteristics of the Indonesian nation, reflecting the reality of ethnic, religious, racial, cultural, linguistic, and traditional differences that coexist within a unified national framework. Etymologically, the term *diversity* is derived from Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which means "Unity in Diversity." This concept emphasizes that differences are not obstacles to unity but rather social assets that enrich national life. In a social context, diversity is understood as the recognition and appreciation of the plurality that exists within society. Such diversity is an inevitable reality, as it has been an integral part of human existence since the beginning of creation. Consequently, diversity requires attitudes of tolerance, respect for individual and collective rights, and a commitment to maintaining social harmony amid differences (Hefni, 2020).

From an academic perspective, diversity is often associated with the concepts of pluralism and multiculturalism. Pluralism not only acknowledges differences but also encourages active engagement among diverse groups in

building a peaceful and cooperative society. Multiculturalism, meanwhile, emphasizes the importance of respecting various cultural identities without undermining national identity. In the Indonesian context, diversity serves as a crucial foundation for national integration, as the nation itself is built upon a highly complex mosaic of differences. Therefore, diversity is not merely a slogan but a paradigm of life that should be actualized in social, cultural, political, and religious spheres.

The concept of the theology of diversity emerged as a response to the realities of pluralistic and multireligious societies. The theology of diversity can be understood as a theological perspective that recognizes differences as part of God's will and promotes harmonious relations among religious communities. Rather than seeking to eliminate distinct religious identities, this theology views differences as opportunities for mutual understanding, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence (Sari, 2022). Within this framework, diversity is regarded as a divine gift that must be managed wisely for the common good.

The theology of diversity finds strong support within the teachings of many religions, including Islam. In Islamic thought, human diversity is explicitly addressed in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which states that humanity was created into nations and tribes so that people may know one another (*lita'ārafū*). This verse indicates that differences should not serve as grounds for hostility or discrimination but rather as a means of fostering mutual respect and understanding. Consequently, the theology of diversity in Islam places tolerance, justice, and respect for human dignity at the center of social life. This perspective aligns closely with the concept of religious moderation, which has become a significant agenda for maintaining social harmony in Indonesia.

In contemporary Indonesia, the theology of diversity holds considerable relevance because Indonesian society consists of numerous religious traditions and belief systems. The presence of such a theological framework is essential for preventing exclusivism, radicalism, and intolerance that may threaten national unity (Sulton, 2023). The theology of diversity teaches that commitment to the truth of one's own faith does not necessitate the rejection of others. Rather, religious conviction should be expressed through respect for the rights of others to practice and uphold their respective beliefs. In this way, the theology of diversity functions as an ethical and spiritual foundation for fostering an inclusive and peaceful society (Maula I.W. et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the theology of diversity is closely connected to the concept of religious moderation. Religious moderation emphasizes the principle of *wasathiyah* (the middle path), which advocates avoiding extreme interpretations and practices of religion. A moderate attitude enables individuals to remain

committed to their faith while simultaneously respecting the diversity that surrounds them (Siahaya, 2025). Within this framework, the theology of diversity serves as a normative basis for cultivating moderation, tolerance, and openness to interreligious dialogue. Strengthening this theological perspective is particularly important in the digital era, where hate speech, intolerance, and identity-based social polarization can spread rapidly through online platforms (Sinaga, 2022).

The concepts of diversity and the theology of diversity are therefore intrinsically interconnected. Diversity describes the social reality of plurality within society, while the theology of diversity provides the theological and moral foundation for managing that plurality constructively. Together, they serve as essential instruments for building a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized society. In the Indonesian context, strengthening the values of diversity and the theology of diversity represents a strategic effort to preserve national unity and realize the vision of a peaceful, just, and prosperous society amidst its rich plurality.

2. Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity

The concept of the Theology of Diversity developed by M. Amin Abdullah represents an intellectual effort to address the challenges of modern pluralistic and multicultural societies. This framework emerged from the awareness that contemporary Indonesian and global societies are characterized by diversity in religion, culture, ethnicity, language, and systems of values. Within such a context, religion can no longer be understood in an exclusive and closed manner; rather, it should function as a moral force capable of fostering dialogue, cooperation, and peace among human beings. Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity is grounded in the belief that diversity is *sunnatullah* a divine decree and an inevitable reality of human life. Therefore, diversity should not be perceived as a threat to be eliminated but as a reality that must be accepted, understood, and constructively managed.

According to Amin Abdullah, one of the fundamental problems in religious life is the emergence of monodisciplinary thinking and exclusive truth claims, which often lead religion to become rigid and exclusionary. Such attitudes frequently give rise to intolerance, radicalism, and even social conflict in the name of religion. To address this issue, he proposes the paradigm of integration–interconnection as an epistemological foundation for understanding religion in a more open and comprehensive manner. This paradigm emphasizes dialogue between religious sciences, social sciences, humanities, and modern scientific disciplines, thereby preventing religious understanding from being confined to narrow textual approaches (Masyitoh, 2020). Through this framework, religion can function as an instrument for solving complex humanitarian problems within diverse societies.

Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity is closely associated with his well-known concept of integration–interconnection, symbolized by the metaphor of the “spider web.” In this model, various branches of knowledge are interconnected rather than isolated from one another. Religious sciences are not positioned as superior disciplines that negate other forms of knowledge, nor are social sciences and natural sciences viewed as separate from spiritual and ethical values (Haidar & Dzulfahmi, 2024). Instead, all fields of knowledge contribute to a holistic understanding of human reality. This approach encourages inclusivity, as every discipline and social group is recognized as possessing valuable perspectives that enrich collective understanding.

Within the framework of the Theology of Diversity, religious plurality is regarded as part of God's will. Amin Abdullah rejects the view that religious diversity represents a deviation from truth. Instead, he argues that plurality is both a social and theological reality that should be embraced as a space for mutual recognition and cooperation. This perspective is consistent with the Qur'anic principle that humanity was created into nations and tribes so that people may know and learn from one another (*ta'āruḥ*). Consequently, the primary purpose of religion is not merely to preserve group identity but also to promote the common good through universal values such as justice, compassion, humanity, and peace.

Amin Abdullah further argues that theological approaches focusing solely on doctrinal differences often hinder harmonious interreligious relations. Therefore, he develops an interconnective approach that places religion in continuous dialogue with social realities (Yusuf, 2025). This perspective extends attention beyond matters of creed and ritual to include shared humanitarian concerns such as poverty, injustice, environmental degradation, social conflict, and moral crises. As a result, interfaith dialogue is not limited to theological discussions but evolves into concrete cooperation aimed at improving societal well-being.

Furthermore, Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity is closely linked to the concept of religious moderation. Religious moderation advocates a balanced and non-extremist approach to understanding and practicing religious teachings. In plural societies, moderation serves as a crucial instrument for maintaining social harmony. The Theology of Diversity provides both philosophical and theological foundations for religious moderation by promoting respect for differences, openness to dialogue, and recognition of human dignity regardless of religious or cultural background. Consequently, diversity is not viewed as a source of conflict but rather as a form of social capital that contributes to peaceful and democratic coexistence (Maulana et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, Amin Abdullah's thought is particularly relevant because the nation itself is founded upon the principle of diversity. The national

motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), reflects the aspiration to maintain unity amid differences. Nevertheless, conflicts based on religion and identity continue to occur. In response, the Theology of Diversity offers a more inclusive approach to strengthening social cohesion. This perspective encourages society to move beyond narrow group sentiments and instead prioritize universal humanitarian values shared by all religions.

In addition, Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity has made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic studies. He criticizes approaches to Islamic studies that are overly normative and textual, arguing that such methods are often inadequate for addressing contemporary challenges. As an alternative, he advocates a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates social sciences, anthropology, history, philosophy, and natural sciences into the study of Islam (Bilqis Nafisah Arini et al., n.d.). Through this approach, religion can be understood more contextually and remain relevant to the evolving needs of modern society. It also facilitates the emergence of more tolerant and inclusive interpretations of religious teachings.

Ultimately, Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity represents a paradigm of religious thought that seeks to bridge the relationship between religion, knowledge, and social reality within pluralistic societies. This paradigm regards diversity as a divine blessing that should be managed through dialogue, cooperation, and respect for human dignity. By emphasizing integration–interconnection, inclusivity, and religious moderation, the Theology of Diversity offers an important contribution to the development of peaceful, just, and harmonious societies in Indonesia and beyond. In contemporary national and global contexts, this framework remains highly relevant as both a theological and ethical foundation for strengthening unity amid diversity.

3. The Integrative-Interconnective Paradigm

The integrative-interconnective paradigm is one of the most significant intellectual contributions developed by M. Amin Abdullah in his effort to overcome the dichotomy between religious sciences and secular sciences. This paradigm emerged from academic concerns regarding educational systems that rigidly separate Islamic studies from modern scientific disciplines. As a consequence, religious knowledge is often confined to normative and textual dimensions, while modern sciences tend to develop without sufficient consideration of ethical and spiritual values. According to Amin Abdullah, such a separation is no longer relevant for addressing the complexity of contemporary human problems, which require multidisciplinary and holistic approaches (Masyitoh, 2020, pp. 81–88).

Conceptually, the integrative-interconnective paradigm does not seek to merge all disciplines into a single homogeneous body of knowledge. Rather, it emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, and interconnectedness among various fields of study, allowing each discipline to complement and enrich the others. In this framework, religious sciences cannot stand independently without engaging with the findings of the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Likewise, modern sciences should not lose their ethical foundation and humanistic values derived from religious teachings (Muhammad et al., 2025).

The paradigm is constructed upon three interconnected domains of knowledge known as *hadharah al-nash* (the culture of religious texts), *hadharah al-'ilm* (the culture of empirical science), and *hadharah al-falsafah* (the culture of philosophy). These three domains must interact continuously in the process of knowledge development. *Hadharah al-nash* serves as the source of religious norms and values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. *Hadharah al-'ilm* provides the space for the development of empirical sciences through observation, research, and experimentation. Meanwhile, *hadharah al-falsafah* functions as a bridge that connects the two through critical reflection and rational analysis. Together, these domains form an inseparable unity in understanding reality comprehensively (Masyitoh, 2020).

Amin Abdullah illustrates this paradigm through the metaphor of a “spider web”. In this model, various branches of knowledge are interconnected through a complex network. No single discipline occupies a dominant position; instead, all fields of knowledge exist within a dynamic and mutually dependent relationship. Through this spider-web model, Islamic studies are not limited to theological approaches but also incorporate perspectives from sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, economics, health sciences, and environmental studies. Conversely, modern sciences can derive ethical orientation and humanitarian values from religious teachings (Haidar & Dzulfahmi, 2024).

In practice, the integrative-interconnective paradigm has become the foundation for academic development at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. The transformation from the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) into a State Islamic University (UIN) represented more than the addition of secular academic programs; it signified a fundamental shift in the understanding of knowledge itself. Curricula are designed to ensure that students not only master their specific disciplines but also understand their connections with other fields of study. This approach aims to produce graduates who possess balanced academic, spiritual, and social competencies (Lubis et al., 2023).

The relevance of the integrative-interconnective paradigm has become increasingly evident in the era of globalization and the digital industrial revolution.

Contemporary challenges such as climate change, poverty, identity conflicts, moral crises, artificial intelligence, and global health issues cannot be effectively addressed by a single discipline. These problems require collaboration among religious sciences, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. The integrative-interconnective paradigm offers a framework that enables the development of more comprehensive solutions by simultaneously considering empirical, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions (Bilqis Nafisah Arini et al., n.d.).

Furthermore, this paradigm contributes significantly to the development of contemporary Islamic studies. Islamic scholarship is no longer confined to normative and doctrinal aspects but also takes into account historical, social, cultural, and humanitarian contexts. Through this approach, Islamic teachings can be understood in a more dynamic manner and remain responsive to changing circumstances. Integration and interconnection serve as mechanisms for facilitating dialogue between normative Islam and historical Islam, thereby fostering a more inclusive and moderate understanding of the religion (Adib, 2022).

Nevertheless, the implementation of the integrative-interconnective paradigm continues to face several challenges. Some scholars argue that the concept often remains at a philosophical level and has not been fully translated into research methodologies or educational practices. Another challenge lies in the persistence of sectoral academic traditions, which hinder effective interdisciplinary collaboration. Consequently, there is a need for the development of curricula, research methodologies, and academic cultures that more effectively support the realization of genuine knowledge integration (Teguh Mulyo, 2025).

In conclusion, Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnective paradigm represents an epistemological framework that seeks to establish a dialogical, critical, and complementary relationship between religious knowledge and modern scientific disciplines. Its primary objective is not merely to eliminate the dichotomy of knowledge but also to cultivate a scholarly tradition capable of addressing contemporary human challenges in a holistic manner. By integrating religious texts, empirical sciences, and philosophical reflection, this paradigm has become one of the most influential contributions to the renewal of Islamic thought and the development of Islamic higher education in contemporary Indonesia (Masyitoh, 2020).

4. Diversity in the Context of Plural and Multicultural Cultures

Diversity is a social reality inherent in Indonesian society. As a nation consisting of thousands of islands, hundreds of ethnic groups, local languages, customs, and religions, Indonesia is founded upon diversity, which is encapsulated in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). Diversity is not merely understood as the existence of differences, but also as a collective awareness

of living together peacefully amidst such differences. In this context, the concepts of plural culture and multicultural culture serve as two important perspectives for understanding how diverse societies can establish harmonious social lives (Mahardika & Saryoko, 2022).

Plural culture refers to a society composed of various social, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups living side by side within the same territory. Plurality signifies diversity as a social fact that cannot be avoided. In a plural society, each group possesses distinct identities and characteristics while remaining part of the same social system. Indonesia is a clear example of a plural society due to its highly complex diversity of ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures. This diversity constitutes both a national asset and a challenge in maintaining unity and national integration (Mahardika & Saryoko, 2022).

Although plurality emphasizes the existence of diverse groups, it does not necessarily guarantee equal and harmonious relationships among them. Consequently, the concept of multiculturalism emerged, which not only acknowledges diversity but also promotes respect, equality, and recognition of the rights of all cultural groups. Multiculturalism views differences as social assets that should be appreciated and preserved. In a multicultural society, every group is given the opportunity to maintain its cultural identity without losing its rights as equal citizens. Thus, multiculturalism represents a further step beyond plurality toward an inclusive and just social life (Ruswandi et al., 2022).

Diversity within the context of plural and multicultural cultures requires tolerance, respect for differences, and the ability to build intercultural dialogue. Tolerance serves as an essential foundation because it enables individuals and groups to accept the existence of others with different beliefs, customs, and worldviews. However, tolerance alone is insufficient. Society must also cultivate mutual respect and cooperation in various aspects of life. From a multicultural perspective, intercultural relations should not merely involve coexistence but should also be collaborative, thereby fostering strong social integration without eliminating the unique identities of each group (Komala, 2025).

In national life, diversity plays a strategic role as social capital for strengthening national unity. Cultural diversity generates various values, traditions, and forms of local wisdom that enrich Indonesia's national identity. Each region contributes to national development through its cultural heritage. Therefore, diversity should not be perceived as a source of division but rather as a strength capable of reinforcing social solidarity. The spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* serves as a moral foundation affirming that differences do not hinder the realization of national unity and cohesion (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, living within a plural and multicultural society also presents various challenges. Globalization, the advancement of information technology, and the increasing flow of digital communication often give rise to social polarization, the spread of hate speech, and intolerant attitudes. Differences in religious, ethnic, and cultural identities are sometimes exploited for political purposes, potentially triggering social conflicts. If not managed properly, diversity, which should serve as a source of strength, may instead become a source of tension and disintegration. Therefore, systematic efforts are required to strengthen the values of diversity through education, social dialogue, and inclusive public policies (Mayya Kholidah Masruroh et al., n.d.).

Multicultural education is one of the most important instruments for fostering awareness of diversity. Through education, students are encouraged to understand that differences are a natural part of human life. Multicultural education is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the development of attitudes that respect diversity and reject discrimination. In the Indonesian context, multicultural education plays a crucial role in strengthening national character, fostering social empathy, and developing the capacity to live peacefully within a diverse society (Herlambang & Dwiningrum, 2020).

In addition to education, interfaith and intercultural dialogue serves as an important means of building a multicultural society. Dialogue enables different groups to become acquainted with one another, gain mutual understanding, and reduce prejudices that often serve as the root causes of conflict. Through open communication, communities can identify universal values such as justice, humanity, and peace that are shared by all. Consequently, diversity becomes more than a slogan; it is realized in everyday life through mutual respect and cooperation (Mahardika & Saryoko, 2022).

Ultimately, diversity within the context of plural and multicultural cultures constitutes a fundamental pillar for the sustainability of the Indonesian nation. Plurality reflects the reality of diversity, while multiculturalism provides a normative framework for managing that diversity in a fair and harmonious manner. By strengthening tolerance, multicultural education, intercultural dialogue, and respect for the rights of all groups, diversity can become a powerful force for reinforcing national unity. In this way, Indonesia can continue to develop as a nation capable of preserving diversity while maintaining national integration in the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Damana, 2023).

D. Conclusion

The Theology of Diversity developed by M. Amin Abdullah represents a religious intellectual framework that seeks to address the challenges of living in a

pluralistic society in the modern era. Through his integrative-interconnective paradigm, Amin Abdullah argues that religion cannot be understood exclusively or in isolation from social realities, cultural contexts, and developments in science and knowledge. Rather, religion should function as a source of values that promotes peaceful, just, inclusive, and respectful coexistence within diverse societies. Within this framework, diversity is viewed as *sunnatullah* (God's divine decree), a natural reality that must be accepted and managed constructively rather than perceived as a threat to religious identity.

Amin Abdullah's thought is highly relevant to the concept of religious moderation, which has become an important agenda in Indonesia's national and social life. Values such as tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), balance (*tawāzun*), justice (*i'tidāl*), and moderation (*wasathiyyah*) serve as the foundation for building harmonious relationships among followers of different religions and among various social groups. In the perspective of the Theology of Diversity, religious moderation is not intended to diminish an individual's commitment to their faith. Instead, it seeks to guide religious understanding and practice toward greater openness, dialogue, and respect for the rights and dignity of all human beings.

A critical analysis of Amin Abdullah's thought demonstrates that the Theology of Diversity offers a significant contribution to addressing contemporary issues such as intolerance, radicalism, identity-based conflicts, and social polarization. Nevertheless, its implementation continues to face several challenges, particularly from groups that maintain exclusive and literalist approaches to religion. Therefore, sustained efforts are needed through education, interfaith dialogue, the strengthening of religious literacy, and the development of public policies that support the values of moderation.

In conclusion, Amin Abdullah's Theology of Diversity can be understood as both a theological and epistemological foundation for strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. This framework not only reinforces social cohesion within a multicultural society but also provides direction for the development of an inclusive, humanistic, and context-responsive Islamic thought. In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society, the Theology of Diversity constitutes a strategic approach to fostering peaceful, harmonious, and civilized religious life.

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