

## **THE CONCEPT OF ZINA ACROSS RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, AND BUDDHISM**

**Muhammad Imam Syafi'i**

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Corresponding e-mail: [imamsyafei2201@gmail.com](mailto:imamsyafei2201@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This study examines the concepts of adultery in Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, as well as their similarities and differences regarding understanding, legal basis, punishment, repentance, and prevention. The research uses mixed methods, with field studies in Yogyakarta through observation and interviews with religious leaders, as well as literature review. In Islam, adultery is sexual intercourse outside a legal marriage, with stoning or flogging punishments for married offenders. Christianity has a broader definition, including divorce, adultery of the heart and idolatry. Buddhism, meanwhile, emphasizes the moral and spiritual aspects, considering adultery as a violation of ethics and karma, with an internal approach to avoiding it. Despite differences in law enforcement and forgiveness, all three religions agree that adultery undermines social and spiritual order. They emphasize the importance of maintaining morality, the sanctity of relationships, and avoiding worldly temptations. This research provides comparative insights into the moral teachings related to adultery in major world religions.

**Keywords:** Zina, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Comparative

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### **1. Introduction**

In the context of social life, the issue of *zina* has emerged as a significant moral concern attracting serious attention across different societies. Commonly understood as unlawful sexual relations outside the institution of marriage, *zina* constitutes a violation of moral and social norms with profound social, psychological, and even legal implications. This phenomenon affects not only the individuals involved but also destabilizes the foundations of family and community life. In many countries, *zina* is even criminalized and subject to severe legal sanctions, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue through multiple perspectives, particularly from a religious standpoint. (Ramadhani et al., 2025)

In scholarly literature, major world religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism offer diverse yet convergent perspectives in condemning *zina* as an immoral act. Islam, for instance, through the Qur'an and Hadith, defines *zina* as a grave sin subject to *hudud* punishment. In Christian tradition, the Bible identifies *zina* as a transgression against God's commandments, explicitly stated in the Ten Commandments. Buddhism, although it does not embrace the concept of sin as understood in Islam and Christianity, includes sexual misconduct—*zina* among them—within one of its moral teachings known as the Five Precepts (*Pancasila Buddhis*). These differing perspectives reflect the moral distinctiveness of each religion while simultaneously underscoring the importance of a comparative approach in understanding the concept of *zina*. (Anshori, 2012)

However, despite the existence of numerous studies examining *zina* from the perspective of individual religions, comparative research that investigates how Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism perceive and regulate *zina* remains relatively scarce. This study aims to fill that gap by conducting an in-depth exploration of how these three religions understand and provide responses to the issue of *zina*. By focusing on their core teachings and relevant religious practices, this research also seeks to uncover universal values that may serve as a foundation for interfaith dialogue in addressing moral issues such as *zina*.

The central argument underpinning this study is that understanding the concept of *zina* from multiple religious perspectives is not only crucial for enriching academic discourse but also practically relevant in formulating multicultural approaches to moral issues in global society. Through a comparative examination of Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, this research aspires to contribute to the development of deeper interfaith understanding while offering ethical insights that may promote harmonious social life.

## **2. Method**

This research employs a mixed-methods approach that combines field study in the city of Yogyakarta with a comprehensive literature review. The field study was conducted through direct observation and in-depth interviews with religious figures representing the three faith traditions under study. The interviews involved authoritative sources in their respective fields, namely Prof. Dr. H. Abdul Mustaqim, a professor of Qur'anic exegesis at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, representing Islam; Reverend Kristi, an active pastor from the Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ) Gondokusuman Yogyakarta, representing Christianity; and Totok Tejamano, S.Ag, a Buddhist religious instructor under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Yogyakarta City, representing Buddhism. These observations were complemented by supporting documentation, including videos, photographs, and audio recordings, to strengthen the validity of the findings. Meanwhile, the literature review focused on collecting and analyzing relevant sources related to the research theme, drawn from scholarly books and journals. The perspectives and explanations from the three religious traditions were then

compared to identify both the similarities and differences in how *zina* is understood and conceptualized within Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **A. The Concept of *Zina* in Religious Perspectives**

##### **1. The Concept of *Zina* in the Islamic Perspective**

*Zina* is defined as sexual intercourse between a man and a woman outside a *syar'i* (legally valid and religiously recognized) marriage. According to Quraish Shihab, an additional requirement must be considered: a marriage can only be regarded as *syar'i* if it is officially registered at the *Kantor Urusan Agama* (Office of Religious Affairs). In *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *zina* is defined as sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without a valid marital contract, specifically the insertion of the male sexual organ into the female sexual organ, at least to the extent of the *hasyafah* (the glans penis). (Mujieb et al., 2002) In Islamic jurisprudence, prohibited intercourse that is considered *zina* refers specifically to penetration within the *farji* (female genital organ), described metaphorically by classical scholars as “like a kohl stick in its container” or “a bucket in a well.” The act is classified as *zina* when the *hasyafah* (glans penis) has entered the *farji*, or an equivalent part if the penis does not have a glans. According to the stronger scholarly opinion, penile erection is not a necessary condition for the act to be categorized as *zina*. (Audah, 2008).

##### **2. The Concept of *Zina* in the Christian Perspective**

The act of *zina* is regarded in Christianity as a wicked, disgraceful, and indecent behavior, explicitly condemned in all versions of the Bible. In addition to this general understanding, *zina* in the Christian perspective can be categorized into several types according to its underlying motives, as follows:

###### **1) Sexual *Zina* and Divorce**

Divorce in Christianity is also considered a form of *zina*, as stated in Matthew 5:32: “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”<sup>1</sup> This verse indicates that divorce between husband and wife is not justified in the Bible, since what God has united, man must not separate. Therefore, divorce in biblical teaching is understood as an act of *zina*.

###### **2) *Zina* of the Heart**

*Zina* of the heart refers to the inner lustful desire for another person, as expressed in Matthew 5:28: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has

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<sup>1</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/verse.php?chapter=5&verse=32> accessed on August 28, 2025.

already committed adultery with her in his heart.”<sup>2</sup> This teaching emphasizes that sin does not only occur through physical acts but also through inner thoughts and desires, highlighting the moral depth of Christian ethics.

3) *Zina* through Idolatry

Another form of *zina* in Christianity is the act of worshiping gods other than the true God, as stated in Leviticus 20:5: “I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut them off from their people, both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molek.”<sup>3</sup> *Molek* (or *Moloch* in Hebrew) refers to the deity worshiped by the Ammonites, associated with fire rituals and condemned as an abomination. In a broader theological sense, the worship of *Molek* symbolizes idolatry — the betrayal of God’s covenantal relationship (Sari, 2022) — and in modern interpretation, it represents the act of worshiping false idols or worldly desires.

### **3. The Concept of *Zina* in the Buddhist Perspective**

In Buddhism, followers are generally categorized into two groups based on their way of life: *Pabbajita* and *Gharavassa*. *Pabbajita* refers to those who renounce household life and live as ascetics — *bhikkhu* (monk), *bhikkhuni* (nun), *samanera* (novice monk), and *samaneri* (novice nun). Members of the *Pabbajita* order do not marry or form families, do not engage in occupations for income, and are fully devoted to spiritual cultivation while serving as moral exemplars for the lay community. A *Pabbajita* is strictly prohibited from committing four major offenses: killing a human being, engaging in sexual intercourse, stealing, and falsely claiming spiritual attainment. The violation of any of these four rules automatically results in expulsion from the *Pabbajita* order. Meanwhile, *Gharavassa* refers to lay followers who live household lives. They may choose to marry or remain single, work to earn a living, and are responsible for supporting the material needs of the *Pabbajita*. For *Gharavassa*, sexual activity is permissible as long as it does not violate the Five Precepts (*Pancasila Buddhis*), which serve as the fundamental ethical code for lay Buddhists.

In Buddhist ethics, an act is considered *zina* (sexual misconduct) when it involves intentional desire, deliberate effort toward sexual intercourse, physical union of sexual organs in any of the three bodily orifices — the vagina, anus, or mouth — even to the smallest extent, and is committed with a person who is not appropriate to engage with sexually. These conditions demonstrate that moral transgression in Buddhism arises not only from the physical act itself but also from the presence of lustful intention and moral inappropriateness. Consequently, *zina* in the Buddhist perspective is regarded as a

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<sup>2</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/verse.php?chapter=5&verse=28> accessed on August 28, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/verse.php?book=Im&chapter=20&verse=5> accessed on August 28, 2025.

violation of self-restraint, mindfulness, and respect for others, obstructing one's spiritual progress and moral purity.

There are twenty categories of individuals who are considered improper to have sexual intercourse with, namely:

1. A person under the protection of their mother.
2. A person under the protection of their father.
3. A person under the protection of both their father and mother.
4. A person under the protection of their elder or younger sister.
5. A person under the protection of their elder or younger brother.
6. A person under the protection of their relatives.
7. A person under the protection of someone of the same ethnicity.
8. A person under the protection of a Dharma practitioner.
9. A person who has been betrothed to a king or a person in authority.
10. A person who is already engaged.
11. A person who has been purchased by a man or pawned by their parents.
12. A person living with the man they love.
13. A person who agrees to marry a man in expectation of his wealth.
14. A person who agrees to marry a man in expectation of clothing or material benefits.
15. A person who has become a man's wife through traditional or customary marriage ceremonies.
16. A person who becomes the wife of a man who has freed her from slavery.
17. A captive who is then married by a man.
18. A worker who is married by her employer.
19. A slave who is married by her master.
20. A person who becomes a man's wife for a fixed period of time.

A person who engages in sexual intercourse with any of the twenty categories of individuals deemed improper for such acts is considered to have violated the *Buddhist Pancasila*, the fundamental code of morality. Violating this moral principle leads to prolonged suffering, both in this life and in future existences. For *Gharavassa* (lay followers), sexual relations are permitted only under proper conditions: at the right time, meaning after becoming a legitimate couple according to legal or traditional marriage; for the right purpose, meaning not merely to satisfy lust but to express love and seek offspring; and with the right partner, meaning only with one's lawful spouse. Sexual relations that are not conducted at the right time, for the right purpose, or with the right partner will result in various problems that ultimately lead to suffering.

## **B. Legal Foundations in the Sacred Scriptures of Religions**

### **1. Legal Foundations in the Holy Scripture of Islam**

The Qur'an is the sacred scripture believed in by Muslims. The term *zina* (fornication or adultery) and its various linguistic derivations appear six times throughout the Qur'an. These occurrences are found respectively in Surah Al-Furqan: 68, Al-Mumtahanah: 12, Al-Isra': 32, An-Nur: 2, and An-Nisa': 24–25. Each of these verses presents a distinct contextual emphasis regarding the prohibition, moral implications, and legal consequences of *zina*, as will be elaborated in the following discussion. (Shihab, 2007)

- **Al-Furqan: 68**

“And those who do not associate anything with Allah, nor take a life which Allah has made sacred except with justice, nor commit *zina* (fornication); and whoever does that shall meet a severe punishment.”

- **Al-Mumtahanah: 12**

“O Prophet, when believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with Allah, nor steal, nor commit *zina* (fornication), nor kill their children, nor bring forth a slander they have invented between their hands and feet, and that they will not disobey you in what is right—then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Indeed, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

- **Al-Isra': 32**

“And do not approach *zina*; indeed, it is an outrage and an evil way.”

From the stylistic perspective of the Qur'an, the expression “*wa lā taqrabū*” (“do not even approach”) carries a stronger and more profound meaning than if the verse had used “*wa lā taznū*” (“do not commit *zina*”). The prohibition against *approaching* already implies a complete ban not only on the act itself but also on anything that could lead to it. Thus, the prohibition expressed through *iqtirāb* (approaching) is far more emphatic and comprehensive in its deterrent force than a direct prohibition of the act of *zina*. Furthermore, Allah provides two reasons why one should not even come close to *zina*. First, it is described as *fāhishah*—a vile and disgraceful act whose degree of indecency exceeds the bounds of moral propriety. Second, it is referred to as *sā'a sabīlā*—a most wicked and destructive path. When viewed through the lens of *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, this verse ultimately points to a higher objective: *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (the protection of lineage). The preservation of pure and legitimate progeny is of essential importance. Although a person may physically produce offspring through an act of *zina*, such lineage is considered deficient from both spiritual and ethical perspectives. The Qur'an

therefore emphasizes not only the prohibition of the act but also the safeguarding of moral integrity and purity within family and society.<sup>4</sup>

- An-Nur: 2  
“As for female and male fornicators, give each of them one hundred lashes,<sup>1</sup> and do not let pity for them make you lenient in ‘enforcing’ the law of Allah, if you ‘truly’ believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a number of believers witness their punishment.”
- An-Nisa’: 24–25  
24. “Also ‘forbidden are’ married women—except ‘female’ captives in your possession.<sup>1</sup> This is Allah’s commandment to you. Lawful to you are all beyond these—as long as you seek them with your wealth in a legal marriage, not in fornication. Give those you have consummated marriage with their due dowries. It is permissible to be mutually gracious regarding the set dowry. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” 25. “But if any of you cannot afford to marry a free believing woman, then ‘let him marry’ a believing bondwoman possessed by one of you. Allah knows best ‘the state of’ your faith ‘and theirs’. You are from one another.<sup>1</sup> So marry them with the permission of their owners,<sup>2</sup> giving them their dowry in fairness, if they are chaste, neither promiscuous nor having secret affairs. If they commit indecency after marriage, they receive half the punishment of free women.<sup>3</sup> This is for those of you who fear falling into sin. But if you are patient, it is better for you. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

## **2. Legal Foundations in the Holy Scripture of Christianity**

The Bible is the sacred scripture of Christianity, consisting of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The prohibition of *zina* in Christianity appears in both parts of the Bible. In the Old Testament, the commandment against *zina* is found in the Ten Commandments contained in *Exodus* 20:14 and *Deuteronomy* 5:18. Meanwhile, in the New Testament, this prohibition is reaffirmed and deepened in *Matthew* 5:27–30 and *John* 7:53–8:11.<sup>5</sup>

- **Exodus 20:14**  
“You shall not commit adultery.”
- **Deuteronomy 5:18**  
“You shall not commit adultery.”
- **Matthew 5:27–30**  
5:27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’. 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 5, 2025

<sup>5</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/dictionary.php?word=zinah> accessed on August 28, 2025.

adultery with her in his heart. 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

- **John 7:53–8:11**

The Woman Caught in Adultery

7:53 “Then they all went home, 8:1 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 8:2 At dawn He appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. 8:3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. 8:4 They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 8:5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?. 8:6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. 8:7 When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. 8:8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 8:10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? 8:11 No one, Lord,’ she said. Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’”

### **3. Legal Foundations in the Sacred Text of Buddhism**

As previously explained, Buddhists are generally divided into two groups based on their way of life: *Pabbajita* (monks or bhikkhus) and *Gharavassa* (householders or lay followers). The legal and moral foundation for the *Pabbajita* is found in the *Tripitaka*, specifically in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, which contains the rules and regulations that govern the discipline of the *Sangha* (the monastic community), including the daily conduct of monks, nuns, and ascetics. In various *Suttas* (discourses), the Buddha explicitly describes sexual misconduct (*kamesu micchacara*) as a deeply harmful act. The *Parabhava Sutta* (The Discourse on Causes of Downfall) identifies adultery as one of the causes of moral and social decline. It states: “He who indulges himself with women, intoxicants, gambling, and squanders what he has earned with difficulty — such a man brings about his own suffering. He who is not satisfied with his own wife, associates with prostitutes, and is seen with the wives of others — such a man causes his own downfall.” Sexual misconduct or adultery is also listed as one of the Four Depraved Behaviors (*akusala-kamma-patha*), namely: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech. Moreover, it is associated with one of the Six Channels of Dissipation, which include: indulgence

in intoxicants, gambling, nightlife and debauchery, association with entertainers, companionship with immoral friends, and laziness.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the moral foundation for *Gharavassa* (lay followers) is established in the Five Buddhist Precepts (*Pancasila Buddhis*). Like Islam and Christianity, Buddhism places a strong emphasis on moral discipline as the foundation for personal and social harmony. These Five Precepts serve as fundamental moral guidelines intended to lead individuals toward the highest state of happiness (*Nibbana*). The Five Precepts (*Pancasila Buddhis*) are as follows:

1. *Panattipata Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from killing living beings.
2. *Adinnadana Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from taking what is not given.
3. *Kamesu Micchacara Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. *Musavada Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from false speech.
5. *Surameraya Majjapamadatthana Veramani Sikkhapadam Samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs that cause heedlessness.

### **C. The Punishment for *Zina* Offenders in the Perspective of Religions**

#### **1. The Punishment for *Zina* Offenders in the Perspective of Islam**

*Zina* is regarded as a criminal act (*jarimah*) that is subject to the *hudūd* or *ḥadd* punishment — a fixed punishment prescribed by Allah for transgressions that violate His divine rights. There are two types of *zina* that warrant mandatory punishment for the perpetrators. The first is *ghairu muḥṣan*, referring to adultery committed by individuals who have never been in a lawful marriage — that is, unmarried men and women. The prescribed punishment for *zina ghairu muḥṣan* is one hundred lashes, as stated explicitly in *Surah An-Nūr* (24:2), which commands the believers to enforce the *ḥadd* punishment firmly, forbidding any leniency or compassion in its execution. The verse also emphasizes that such punishment should serve as a deterrent to others. The Qur'an instructs that the punishment be carried out publicly, in the presence of a group of believers, so that it instills both deterrence and moral reflection among the community. Scholars differ regarding the specific method of lashing, Imam Mālik held that the lashes should be delivered to the back and surrounding areas, with the offender's upper garment removed. Imam Al-Shāfi'ī maintained that the lashes should be distributed across the entire body except for the face and genitals, while keeping the clothes on. Abu Ḥanīfah argued that all parts of the body except the face, genitals, and head may be lashed,

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 8, 2025

without removing the garment. In addition to receiving one hundred lashes, offenders of *zina ghairu muḥṣan* are also banished for one year, as a supplementary punishment aimed at rehabilitation and deterrence.

The second type is *muḥṣan*, referring to adultery committed by men or women who are, or have previously been, in a lawful marital relationship. This includes those who are divorced but were once married. For *zina muḥṣan*, the prescribed punishment is *rajam*—death by stoning—to be carried out publicly. This severe penalty reflects both the social and spiritual gravity of violating the sanctity of marriage, as *zina muḥṣan* is considered a major sin that corrupts both moral order and social integrity.

## **2. The Punishment for Zina Offenders in the Perspective Christiaity**

In biblical law, the punishment for *zina* depends on the marital status of the woman involved—whether she is married or unmarried. Furthermore, within the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament, there is a notable paradigm shift from “the Law” to “the Grace”—from Jewish legalism to Christian ethics that emphasize love and forgiveness. Consequently, the sanctions imposed upon adulterers also underwent a transformation. The discussion on *zina* punishment can thus be divided according to the teachings found in the Old and New Testaments, as follows:

### **1) Sanctions for Zina in the Old Testament**

#### **a) Sanctions for those who are married or betrothed**

In the Old Testament, God established the death penalty for those who committed *zina* while bound in marriage. As written in *Deuteronomy 22:22*: “If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die — the man who lay with the woman, and the woman herself. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.”

#### **b) Sanctions for those who are unmarried**

For those who were unmarried or unbetrothed, the sanction differed. As stated in *Deuteronomy 22:28–29*: “If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, then the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the girl’s father, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he may not divorce her all his days.”<sup>7</sup> The “fifty shekels of silver” (approximately 570 grams of silver) represents both a moral and economic restitution to the family of the victim.<sup>8</sup> The use of the term *holy shekel* implies the seriousness and sacredness of justice in the ancient Hebrew legal system, where even the measurement of penalty was carried out with spiritual accountability.

<sup>7</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/verse.php?book=ulangan&chapter=22&verse=22> accessed on August 28, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/search.php?search=Syikal&scope=all&exact=off> accessed on August 28, 2025.

## **2) Sanctions for Zina in the New Testament**

A notable shift occurs in the New Testament, where the legalistic approach of the Mosaic Law gives way to a paradigm of grace, mercy, and personal repentance. This transformation is vividly illustrated in *John 8:2–11*, where a woman caught in the act of zina is brought before Jesus<sup>9</sup>: 7:53 “Then they all went home, 8:1 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 8:2 At dawn He appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. 8:3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. 8:4 They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 8:5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?. 8:6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. 8:7 When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. 8:8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 8:10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? 8:11 No one, Lord,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’”

In this passage, the accusers sought to trap Jesus: if He endorsed the Mosaic punishment of stoning, He would be accused of defying Roman authority, which reserved the right of capital punishment for the state. However, if He refused to uphold the Law of Moses, He would be accused of rejecting divine law. Instead, Jesus transcended both traps by emphasizing moral accountability and divine mercy—He neither condoned the sin nor executed the punishment, but called the sinner to repentance. His response marked a transformative reinterpretation of justice, shifting focus from retribution to restoration and moral reflection.

In the Christian moral framework, therefore, punishment for zina is contingent upon clear and fair evidence. The testimony of at least two witnesses is required to establish guilt—an essential safeguard for justice and due process. According to biblical interpretation, these witnesses must fulfill three conditions: they must both be men, they must have personally witnessed the act with their own eyes, and their testimony must be delivered verbally, not in writing, to ensure direct accountability.

## **3) The Punishment for Zina Offenders in the Perspective Buddhism**

Unlike Islam and Christianity, which impose physical punishments for acts of *zina*, Buddhism does not prescribe corporal or legal penalties. Instead, it emphasizes the Law of Karma—the moral law of cause and effect that governs the universe. In Buddhist

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<sup>9</sup> <https://alkitab.sabda.org/passage.php?passage=Yoh%208:2-11&tab=text> accessed on August 28, 2025.

ethics, every intentional action generates a corresponding consequence, and thus, acts of sexual misconduct (including *zina*) inevitably lead to suffering and moral degradation. A person who indulges in wrongful sexual desires and actions is believed to experience the karmic repercussions of their deeds, both in this life and in future existences. The karmic consequences of *zina* include the destruction of one's good reputation, deterioration of health, rebirth with distorted sexual orientation or unbalanced desire, difficulty concentrating due to a mind clouded by lust, and eventual rebirth in lower realms of suffering, such as hell (*Niraya*) or the realm of spirits (*Peta*).<sup>10</sup>

In this view, punishment is not externally imposed by divine or social authority but arises naturally from moral causation. The focus lies not on retribution but on inner purification and self-awareness. Through mindfulness, moral restraint, and spiritual discipline, an individual may break free from the cycle of unwholesome desires and attain liberation from suffering (*Dukkha*). Thus, in Buddhism, the ultimate response to *zina* is not physical punishment but spiritual correction—a process of realizing one's moral error, cultivating virtue (*Sila*), and restoring harmony between body, speech, and mind.

#### **D. The Way of Repentance for Zina Offenders in the Perspective of Religions**

##### **1. The Way of Repentance for Zina Offenders in the Perspective of Islam**

If a person alone is aware of having committed *zina*, they should abandon the sin and strive to improve in the future. This should be followed by the three essential steps of repentance from major sins: feeling sincere remorse for the wrongdoing, ceasing the sinful act, and firmly resolving never to repeat it again, while making amends for past shortcomings through increased righteous deeds. If the sin involves the rights of others (*ḥaqq al-ādami*), the person must return what is due, seek forgiveness, and reconcile with those who were wronged. If the individual's act of *zina* becomes known and they are executed according to the prescribed punishment, such a penalty itself serves as their repentance. Thus, in the Hereafter, they will no longer face punishment or torment from Allah.

##### **2. The Way of Repentance for Zina Offenders in the Perspective of Christianity**

In Christianity, repentance from the sin of *zina* involves several essential spiritual steps that aim to restore one's relationship with God and with others. These steps are not merely ritualistic but represent a deep transformation of the heart and moral conduct.<sup>11</sup>

**First, Confession of Sin.** The initial step is to confess the sin of *zina* before God with a sincere and contrite heart. This confession requires acknowledging the wrongdoing,

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 8, 2025

<sup>11</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 10, 2025

taking responsibility for it, and realizing that such sin damages the sacred relationship between human beings and God as well as with fellow humans.

**Second, Repentance.** Repentance means turning away from sinful behavior and committing to a renewed way of life. In the context of adultery, it involves a conscious decision to live in purity, to discipline the mind and body, and to align one's desires with the will of God. True repentance is not only about regret but also about a moral transformation that reflects obedience to divine commandments.

**Third, Trusting in God's Grace.** Through the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, every sinner who comes to Him in faith is granted the opportunity for redemption. This is illustrated in John 8:11, where Jesus forgave the adulterous woman and said, "*Go, and sin no more.*" God's grace thus becomes the foundation for a new life in Christ, characterized by forgiveness, renewal, and spiritual growth.

**Fourth, Seeking Spiritual Support.** Repentance is not an isolated process. Therefore, Christians are encouraged to seek guidance and support from their spiritual community, including pastors, church leaders, and fellow believers. Such communal support strengthens faith, provides moral accountability, and helps individuals avoid future temptations related to lust or immorality.

### **3. The Way of Repentance for Zina Offenders in the Perspective of Buddhism**

In Buddhism, the concept of repentance for those who commit *zina* does not involve divine punishment as found in Islam or Christianity. Instead, repentance in Buddhism emphasizes self-awareness, purification of the mind, and a sincere effort not to repeat harmful actions. It is a deeply personal and moral transformation rather than a juridical process. The following are the main stages of repentance in Buddhist teachings for those who have engaged in *zina*:

**First: Acknowledging Wrongdoing and Genuine Remorse.** The first step of repentance is to recognize that committing *zina* violates the third precept of the *Buddhist Pancasila* (Five Precepts), which prohibits sexual misconduct. The offender must sincerely admit the wrongdoing and feel genuine remorse for the harm caused to oneself and others. In Buddhist practice, such heartfelt remorse marks the beginning of moral purification and inner transformation.

**Second: Making Confession and Apology.** If the act of *zina* has caused suffering or harm to another person, the offender is encouraged to offer a sincere apology to those affected. Within the social and ethical framework of Buddhism, reconciliation helps restore harmony and relieves the emotional burden of guilt and shame.

**Third: Practicing Bhavana (Meditation and Self-Reflection).** Meditation plays a central role in the Buddhist path to repentance. Through practices such as *Metta Bhavana* (loving-kindness meditation) or *Vipassana* (insight meditation), an individual learns to calm the mind, recognize the roots of their misconduct—such as lust, ignorance, or lack

of mindfulness—and cultivate wisdom. This deep reflection aims to prevent the repetition of past mistakes and foster spiritual growth.

**Fourth: Performing Good Deeds to Counteract Bad Karma.** Buddhism teaches that every action has karmic consequences. To counterbalance the negative karma resulting from zina, the individual is encouraged to engage in wholesome actions, such as giving charity, helping others, and participating in religious or communal activities. These acts of merit help purify one's mind and create positive karmic conditions for the future.

**Fifth: Observing *Uposatha* and Renewing Moral Commitment.** *Uposatha* is a regular Buddhist observance day for renewing moral discipline. During this time, practitioners reaffirm their commitment to the Five Precepts, including the vow to abstain from sexual misconduct. By renewing this moral commitment, an individual demonstrates a firm resolution to live a more virtuous and disciplined life.

**Sixth: Seeking Guidance from a Spiritual Teacher or *Bhikkhu*.** Repentance in Buddhism also involves seeking spiritual guidance. Consulting an experienced teacher or *bhikkhu* (monk) can provide practical wisdom, emotional support, and encouragement for maintaining mindfulness and moral discipline throughout the process of moral rehabilitation.

Ultimately, repentance in Buddhism focuses on inner transformation and purification of the mind rather than external punishment. By following these steps, the person who has committed zina not only heals and refines themselves but also contributes to restoring social harmony and spiritual balance within their community.

## **E. Approaches to Preventing Zina in the Perspective of Religions**

### **1. Approaches to Preventing Zina in the Perspective of Islam**

In Islam, there are two main ways to avoid engaging in acts of *zina*:

**Spiritually (*Bāṭinan*)** — through sincere and continuous supplication (*du‘ā*). For instance, Muslims are encouraged to recite the prayers of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) as a means of seeking divine protection from temptation and immorality. These supplications embody the believer's reliance on Allah for strength and purity of heart, acknowledging that true protection from sinful desires comes only through divine guidance.

*Ma ‘adzallāh, innahu rabbī aḥsana matswāyā, wa innahu lā yufliḥu azh-zhālimūn..* He replied, “Allah is my refuge! It is ‘not right to betray’ my master, who has taken good care of me. Indeed, the wrongdoers never succeed.”

*Allāhumma āti nafsī taqwāhā, wa zakkihā anta khayru man zakkāhā, anta waliyyuhā wa maulāhā.* “O Allah, grant my soul its piety and purify it. You are the best of those who can purify it. You are its Guardian and Master.” (Hadith narrated by Muslim)

Meanwhile, from the **external (zāhir)** perspective, the preventive measures are as follows:

**First,** Avoid environments that may lead to acts of zina.

**Second,** Stay away from lifestyles that draw one closer to immoral behavior, such as partying, clubbing, or engaging in nightlife activities.

**Third,** Maintain proper and respectful social interactions with friends.

**Fourth,** If one feels capable—both emotionally and financially—marriage is encouraged; however, if not yet ready, fasting serves as the prescribed solution.

**Fifth,** If fasting becomes difficult to maintain, engage in beneficial and productive activities that can divert the mind from impure and negative thoughts.

## **2. Approaches to Preventing Zina in the Perspective of Christianity**

The following are ways to avoid zina according to Christian teachings:<sup>12</sup>

**First, Building an Intimate Relationship with God.** Strengthen one's faith and dependence on God through prayer, worship, and obedience to His Word. A close relationship with God helps control desires and strengthens moral discipline.

**Second, Filling the Mind with God's Word.** Regularly reading and meditating on the Bible helps renew the mind and align one's thoughts with God's will, as written in Psalm 119:11: *"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."*

**Third, Guarding the Heart, Eyes, and Mind.** Believers are encouraged to maintain purity not only in deeds but also in thoughts and emotions. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, *"Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

**Fourth, Avoiding Situations that Lead to Temptation.** Christians are taught to stay away from places, people, or situations that might provoke lust or lead to sinful behavior, as advised in 1 Corinthians 6:18: *"Flee from sexual immorality."*

**Fifth, Building Holy Relationships.** Develop relationships based on love, respect, and shared commitment to God's principles. In doing so, believers honor their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and uphold the sanctity of Christian fellowship.

## **3. Approaches to Preventing Zina in the Perspective of Buddhism<sup>13</sup>**

**First, Associating with Good Friends (Kalyānamittatā).** Surround yourself with noble companions who encourage virtue and discourage wrongdoing. Good friends play a crucial role in guiding moral behavior and maintaining spiritual discipline.

**Second, Living in a Proper Environment (Paṭirūpa-desavāso).** Choose to live in a community or environment with clear ethical guidelines—one that discourages immoral acts such as sexual misconduct or promiscuity. A wholesome environment supports moral growth and self-restraint.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 10, 2025

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the resource person on Agustus 8, 2025

**Third, Directing Oneself Toward the Right Path (*Atta-sampadā*).** Engage in meaningful and beneficial activities that promote personal development and spiritual well-being. By focusing on positive endeavors, one's mind becomes less inclined toward harmful desires.

**Fourth, Maintaining Mindfulness (*Samādhi*).** Cultivate continuous awareness of one's thoughts and emotions to prevent the rise of unwholesome mental states. Through mindfulness and meditation, wisdom (*paññā*) arises, enabling a person to act with clarity and moral integrity.

## **F. Analysis of Similarities and Differences in the Concept of Zina from the Perspective of Religions**

The similarity in the understanding of zina among Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism lies in their recognition that zina is a highly disgraceful act that brings harmful consequences, both in this life and the hereafter. All three religions emphasize the prohibition of sexual relations outside a legitimate union and regard it as a moral and ethical violation. The differences, however, appear in their definitions and emphases: in Islam, zina refers to sexual intercourse outside a lawful marriage according to *sharī'ah*; in Christianity, zina also includes divorce, lustful thoughts, and spiritual adultery or idolatry; while in Buddhism, it is defined through strict moral and ethical rules that prohibit sexual relations with certain individuals and require that one's actions be guided by right intention and mindfulness.

The similarity in the legal foundations of zina in Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism lies in their shared emphasis on avoiding immoral behavior that destroys personal and social integrity. In Islam, this is explicitly stated in various verses of the Qur'an, which also prescribe physical punishment for those proven guilty of zina. Christianity likewise prohibits zina, both literally and metaphorically, as reflected in the commandments of Exodus and the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and John. Meanwhile, in Buddhism, adultery is considered a serious moral transgression, regulated in the *Vinaya Pitaka* for monks and in the *Five Precepts* for lay followers. The key difference lies in their legal approach: Islam and Christianity emphasize moral accountability supported by concrete sanctions, while Buddhism focuses on inner purification and personal moral discipline without explicit physical punishment.

From the perspective of these three religions, zina is viewed as a grave moral offense with corresponding consequences that reflect each religion's theological and ethical framework. Their similarity lies in the shared belief that zina damages social and spiritual order and must therefore be restrained through guidance or punishment. However, their approaches differ: Islam prescribes corporal punishment such as flogging or stoning based on the offender's marital status (*ghairu muḥṣan* or *muḥṣan*); Christianity shifts from physical punishment in the Old Testament to forgiveness and divine grace through Christ in the New

Testament; while Buddhism emphasizes karmic law as the natural consequence of immoral acts, leading to suffering in this life and the next.

The similarity in repentance among the three religions lies in the emphasis on remorse, cessation of sin, and determination not to repeat it. The difference, however, lies in their doctrines of forgiveness and justice. Islam teaches repentance (*taubah*) through divine forgiveness and sometimes worldly punishment as a form of purification. Christianity centers forgiveness on God's grace through Jesus Christ as the foundation of redemption. Buddhism, on the other hand, focuses on inner transformation and moral purification through meditation, self-reflection, and spiritual guidance without invoking divine punishment or forgiveness.

The similarity in methods of avoiding zina across Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism lies in the importance of maintaining a strong spiritual relationship with the divine or with virtuous principles, guarding one's mind and heart against temptation, and avoiding environments that may provoke immoral acts. All three religions encourage association with virtuous companions and living a purposeful, disciplined life. The difference lies in their spiritual approaches: Islam emphasizes concrete acts such as prayer, fasting, and lawful marriage; Christianity stresses filling the mind with God's Word and living in holiness; while Buddhism highlights mindfulness (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), and cultivating environments that support moral integrity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Although Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism employ different approaches in defining and addressing *zina*, all three share a common stance that it is a reprehensible act that corrupts individual morality and disrupts social order. Each religion emphasizes the importance of maintaining lawful and ethical relationships—both physically and spiritually—while underscoring the destructive consequences of *zina* on worldly life and the hereafter. However, the main distinction lies in how each religion regulates and responds to such transgressions. Islam and Christianity emphasize concrete punishment and the possibility of repentance, whereas Buddhism focuses more on inner purification and the law of karma. Each faith also provides unique preventive measures: Islam emphasizes worship and marriage, Christianity highlights the teaching of God's Word, and Buddhism promotes mindfulness and moral wisdom.

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