

พหุนิยม และ สัจจनิยมวิทยา : สายใยแห่งชีวิตทางศาสนา กับ สันติภาพโลก

Pluralism and Perennialism: The Vein of Religious Life and World Peace



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บทคัดย่อ

การสร้างสันติภาพและความสัมพันธ์กลมกลืนระหว่างศาสนาอื่น เป็นหนึ่งในประเด็นปัญหาที่สำคัญต่ออารยธรรมและชีวิตมนุษย์ ศาสนาที่มองเห็นในมุ่งมองที่ขัดแย้ง ในด้านหนึ่ง มุษย์ถือว่าศาสนาเป็นความจำเป็นต่อวิถีชีวิตให้คดิ แนวทางในการดำเนินชีวิต แต่ในอีกมุมหนึ่ง ศาสนามักจะถูกนำไปเกี่ยวข้องหรือคุกคามต่อชีวิต และในบางครั้งศาสนามีบทบาทในการทำให้ความขัดแย้ง แตกแยก ความหวาดกลัว และแม้แต่สังหารในมุมทั้งหมดของโลก แต่ในวิธีอื่นๆ ศาสนาเชื่อกันว่าเป็นคำตอบสำหรับการสนับสนุน และทำให้ความสงบสุขในชีวิตมนุษย์ เรายังคง บันดาลใจจากมุ่งมองชีวิตทางศาสนาเหมาะสม รวมถึงมีสุขภาพดีจะทำให้โลก สวยงามดี

คำสำคัญ: พหุนิยม สัจจนิยมวิทยา สันติภาพโลก

Abstract

Making peace and harmonious relation among different religious adherent is one of problematic issues that have been haunting the civilization and human life. Religion perceived in contradictory perspectives. In one hand, human being perceived religion as a need of a set of value that would guide them to a good

life, but in another, religion often led to threaten the human life. Indeed, religion has been playing roles in making conflicts, disharmony, terror and even war in the entire corner of the world. But in other way, religion is believed as the answer for supporting and making peace on human life. We need inspiring perspectives for proper and healthy religious life to make a better and peaceful world.

Keyword: Pluralism, Perennialism, World Peace

I. Introduction

Indonesia has been founded on a basis of plurality. Since the founding fathers of this country made agreement to build a brand new nation after independence proclaimed in August 17, 1945. Indonesia consists of thousands of islands, several religious groups and local/indigenous beliefs, hundreds of ethnic groups, and ten thousands of local language stated in its national ideology, Pancasila that includes five principles, with core idea is “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity). Clearly, Indonesian has experienced a culturally, ethnically, religiously diverse society.

Unfortunately, Indonesia has suffered some clashes that often led to the tensions and even conflict within society. Religious based tensions frequently occurred from local to the national level. At this point, I would say that religion matters and contributes to the insecurity for certain groups, particularly minority groups. What is wrong? In my idea, people in some religious groups are lack of awareness to tolerate other beliefs/ religions differs from their own. Several Islamist hardliner groups emerged along with the idea of fundamentalism that came up mostly in the post Suharto era (post-reformasi 1998). Religious intolerance then became threat to the Indonesian struggle for peace. Fortunately, we have two large Muslim Organizations namely Nahdhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, with their moderate teachings they helped to keep Indonesia in peace. Besides, we are also happily having some prominent moderate and progressive Muslim intellectuals like Nurcholish Madjid who promoted the

compatibility of Islam and democracy and urged Muslims to support democratisation. He declared a well-known slogan “Islam, Yes, Islamic Party, No!. Former leader of Muhammadiyah, Buya Syafi’I Ma’arif is another one who actively promoted the interfaith dialogue. Madjid who has passed away in August 2005 has founded an institution hoping could maintained and continued his ideas, Paramadina Foundation, that run Paramadina university. While Ma’arif is doing the same way by declaring Ma’arif Institute. There are many more scholars, clerics and Kiayis in pesantren (Islamic boarding house), and Islamic colleges who play great roles in promoting the ideas of moderate thoughts.

I would say that tolerance is one of keys to eradicate the living tensions and potentials within interreligious relation besides campaigning multicultural ideas in a diverse society such as Indonesia. The government of Indonesia (GOI) concerns very much in managing religious affair under legacy of Minister of Religious Affair. Although, there are many policies of this ministry have been criticized dealing with some crucial issues related to the religious movements within fatwas (guidelines) on minority religious groups like Ahmadiyah, Syi’l, and other local beliefs.

To tolerate is to recognize that there are “the other” live around us who might differs culturally, ethnically, socially, politically and religiously. But as mentioned, recognizing otherness is inadequate to maintain the harmonious relation among different groups. We believe that we find “the other” lives out there. We only have to appreciate, respect each other, share many things, and might live together. The pluralistic worldview is needed and to be practiced. We (ICRP) are promoting pluralism, multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue as main agenda through education, social activities, and many more.

I came to the idea that besides pluralistic ideas to be promoted, at the same time I went beyond with promoting and spreading the perennial teachings. In philosophical thoughts, perennialism helped explaining the complex ideas of paradigms, values, religions, spirituality and dogmas. In researching religious studies, as long as I do, surely term “The Many” in term of God’s calls and names, ultimately goes to The One. God has many names, the source of everything,

emanates wisdom in many ways of belief. Allah, Yahweh, God, Ghoda, Elohim, Yahweh, Tuhan, Sang Hyang Widhi, and Gusti are names belong to The One, The only Truth. Each religious teaching offers the spiritual appeals that ultimately bring to the same One, The One.

I always introduce these three principles; tolerance, pluralism and perennialism, into teaching materials for my students in some universities in Jakarta regarding religious studies, morality (philosophy of ethics) and business ethics, instead of teaching specific religion as basis of morality in curricula. Just to know, religious education was introduced since early beginning of formal education/schools. I have been suggesting, with my colleagues in ICRP, to reach a broader area, audiences and stake holders not only in universities but also in civil organizations, high schools, religious propagator, and Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools) in promoting those principles. In classes, I suggested specifically in multireligious classes to open dialogue with more open mind and heart to touch the heart of being religious, being a pious personally and socially.

II. Tolerance in Indonesia under threats?

The promotion of peace education in term of interreligious relation was increasingly challenged particularly after the downfall of Suharto regime in 1998. The rise of the politic of identity inspired the religious groups to come up to the surface including “radical” groups who brought flags of religious fundamentalism, Muslim hardliner groups in particular. They successfully attracted followers (jema’ah) and made movements during the democratic transition until recently. We noted these groups frequently acted and supported the religious intolerance in many ways, some of them use the violence against minority.

The threats for promoting peace and tolerance within religious relation came internally and those from outside. Internally, we are facing so many people in certain religious groups who are lack of proper understanding of the essence of their religious teaching. They were stuck in symbolic rituals and ignored the spiritual parts which were the heart of being religious. I can say they are similar to

be called the conservative groups who come with textual and literary interpretation of the religious texts.

In some senses, the religious intolerance also can be traced from the inheritance of the impact of the “Cross-war” of mediaeval age. To some extent, the Muslim world felt sorry for losing and inferior then they construct the imagination of golden age of Islamic victory of Islamic chalifath (khilafah islamiyah) that won several wars against the “cross” warriors. The spreading ideas of building an Islamic nation (negara Islam) by some organizations and codifying the shari'a law for some groups are assumed as ways to the religious conservatism that threat the tolerance. Recently, several local/district governments have implemented the shari'a based acts. In fact, the formalized sharia law in many cases has harassed human rights for instance the law just regulate how women to dress properly according to sharia.

From the External one, the religious leaders, Muslim leaders in particular such who lead the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majlis Ulama Indonesia) responded to the rise of religious activism that is assumed tending to be deviated or misled in conservative paradigm and literal approaches. For instances, in replying to the growing of Syi'i community and Ahmadiyah sect the MUI released fatwa (guidelines) declaring these groups were misled from mainstream Islam (not part of Islam), and many other fatwas which called controversies among the ummah. Instead of reducing intolerances, such fatwas pushed the conservative groups more escalated, even provoked the “radical” groups do violence. Once, Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) has declared forbidding the ideas such as liberalism, secularism, and pluralism (Moch Nur Ichsan, 2013 : 82).

However, the rise of religious conservatism was leading the radical groups to grow with global influence and transnational ideas such as wahabis thoughts. “Radical”, reflecting from Greg Fealy’s definition, with many labels of militant Islam, is often used to connote disapproval or censure. “Radical Islamic groups” are defined as having several interconnected characteristics. First, they believe that Islam must be implemented in its full and literal form as set out in the Qur'an and

Sunnah (tradition based on the Prophet Muhammad's example), free of compromise. They usually give particular emphasis to those sections of the Qur'an dealing explicitly with social relations, devotions, and criminal punishments and assert that these must be carried out to the letter. Second, they are reactive, whether through language, ideas, or physical violence, to what are seen as corrosively secular, materialist, or deviationist forces. They tend to be hostile towards the status quo and see the fundamental teachings of Islam as providing the basis for rebuilding society and the state (Greg Fealy, 2004 : 104-121). It is a legacy that, while dominant, is also religiously and philosophically peculiar (Michael Levine, 2009: 63).

In contemporary Indonesia, there are many dozens of groups that fall within the above definition of radical. Most are small, localized, and little studied, they are: Darul Islam (Domain of Islam) and Negara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic State), the two organizations often referred to as DI/NII; Jemaah Islamiyah (JI, or the Islamic Community); Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI, or Indonesian Islamic Warriors' Council) ; Front Pembela Islam (FPI, or Islamic Defenders' Front); Forum Komunikasi Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (FKAWJ, or Communication Forum for the Adherents of the Prophetic Tradition and the Community) and Laskar Jihad (LJ, or Warriors of Jihad); and Hizbut Tahrir (HT, or Party of Liberation). Lately, some of these groups had separated and made new cells like Jemaah Ansharu Tauhid (JAT) etc.

The global influences are also brought as there economic and Social Injustice that, which is for many, immolated and hatred the Muslim world. It is not surprising there would be so many and fast reactions of Muslim Indonesia responding the global issues related to the Muslim world such as conflict in middle east, Palestine, and so on. Another threats in campaigning tolerance are coming from government bodies and security officers. For some cases on religious issues, the government implements less law enforcement.

In my experiences, to spread tolerance, I suggested my congregation and followers to study more and comprehend the root of theology of each religion, as

the essential teaching of religions and faiths includes good things. People is to consider and get knowledge of melting pots and essential features among religions, terminate the religious fanaticism and subjectivism, knowing world as shared space and synergy among all humankind, transform from narrowed ideology to the open and more aware of difference and religious diversity. Besides, we have to change from exclusivist to be more inclusive. That's all, we need to know perennialis teachings. The interactions in multi-religious society is quite complex and need much concerns of any stakeholders. We need also to release short interests politically, economically as some cases of religious intolerances came along with these short interests.

III. Models and Tolerance Project in Indonesia

ICRP has been struggling for campaigning tolerance, ideas of pluralism, interfaith dialogue and advocating issues on religious violence's and discriminations. Spreading tolerance is done through formal and informal education, workshops, training, youth camps, visits to the various worship sites. We invite religious leaders, civil organization activists of different religious background to gather in youth camp, making interfaith dialogue and training on human rights. We engage the pluralist based NGO and assist them to be more active. Particularly, we invited the religious clerics or propagator (penyuluh agama) to attend the workshop and training on human rights and democracy. It is necessary because of their roles which are directly connected to the people and each congregation regarding religious issues and government policies as they work on the name of the government (civil servant).

We are also developing the multicultural based curricula to be conducted in universities, where some have been adopted. We have collaborated so far with some universities and religion based schools or colleges to introduce religious studies with emphasizing on phenomenology and social studies approaches replacing the study on particular religion where the classes are attended by students of multi-religious background.

“While there have been numerous efforts at various community and governmental levels to address and promote cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, people’s beliefs and religions have received relatively less attention and resource support.” (Kunz and Sykes) (Inspirit Foundation, 2013 : 3)

IV. Interreligious Marriage

To marry someone of different religious background in Indonesia is quite complicated. It is due to the government’s law on marriage, number 1, 1974 chapter 2:1. This regulation requires the couples who want to get marry must be in a same religion or belief. The marriage is legal if it is conducted under law or acts of each couple’s religion. While most of interpretation on marriage law in Islam requires the couples are Muslim. If not, civil authority and office of religious affair would not permit marriage letter, and it means the marriage is illegal.

In my idea, through this regulation the government has humiliated one aspect of human rights where people of different religious background “not permitted” to get married. At the same time, loving, caring and to live together between beloved couple are parts of basic needs of human life. Contrary to the most moslem scholars who don’t allow the interreligious marriage, I find different interpretations on qur’anic verses about marrying other woman/man of different belief. Based on my readings, so many texts and cases of Muslims marrying someone of another background, even in time of prophet Muhammad SAW. Means, theologically and morally, interreligious marriage basically is allowed in Islam. If it is not allowed, there would be more illegal couples who live together that would imply much worse in social life. So far, I have advocated and facilitated hundreds of couple who get interreligious marriage. I think, this kind of marriage could be part of dialogue process between two different beliefs. I think the government should not forbid its citizen who love and care each other to live together in a happy family. The government should protect the rights of all

citizens. In fact, so many families where their members hold different religion/beliefs. At this position, I found each members of the family are more tolerant and develop their respect each other.

Currently, some law students of a university in Jakarta and human rights activists raised a judicial review to the constitutional court on this marriage law. They already researched that the law which does not allow a couple of different religious background is not compatible with the laws on human rights. They also argued that they might be victim or potentials to loss rights having happiness and love as they do not know whether would marry someone who hold religion differs from their beliefs in the future. At this point, I will stand for this judicial review and advocate them into the court.



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