

# Tolerance Discourse among Religions in Indonesia

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**Abstract-**The intolerant attitude developing in the contemporary Indonesia becomes a problem that must be immediately solved because this can threaten the religious life and the unity of the nation and the state. This paper aims to discuss the problematic concept of tolerance-intolerance by applying the sociological perspective with the expectation that the result will provide contribution in the moderate religious way of life in the Indonesian perspective. This research concludes that if the differences and diversity are not managed well, intolerance will be the result. The differences and diversity existing in Indonesia must be considered as uniqueness and cultural richness for the purpose of unity. Through this understanding, the seeds of exclusivism, radicalism, and fanaticism can be erased. **Research Contribution:** The research result will provide contribution toward the establishment of tolerance practical values among religious followers in the grassroots level and form the moderate attitude in the middle of the society so they accept pluralism as the living standard of a healthy state.

**Keywords-** religions; fanaticism; Emile Durkheim; tolerance; discourse.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the post reform era, Indonesian people are under the threat of disintegration with the issue and behavior of radicalism among the religious followers. The main cause is the rigid understanding on religious teachings allowing violence as part of faith expression. Such a fact has deviated religious teachings that should bring peace and spiritual welfare for its followers to change to become the spear and legitimation that attack and discredit the faith of other religious followers [1]. The terror on behalf of religion and various destructive behaviors have become part of the contemporary Indonesia. Religion is present no longer as a

dialogue space that is full of openness, tolerance, and peace, but it appears as the legitimation for the actors to feel more righteous and more superior than the followers of other religions. It is obvious that violence on behalf of religion has become the radicalism indicator that keeps strengthening [2]. As it is mentioned in the research of Nasrudin, all those happen due to identity politics that has taken over the democratic values and changed them into a group hegemony [3].

In the radicalism era, it is seen that religion has shifted God as the normative-transcendent arrangement to become a doctrine. In other words, there has been reduction of the idea of God and the values following it. All that used to be tolerant and moderate have changed to become intolerant and discriminatory. The situation becomes worse with the presence of political interest which makes use of religious followers and makes religious teachings as political commodity. Hence, what happens is religious teachings can be manipulated according to the interest of the interpreters.

The research of Nurjannah has proven that. Religious teachings that are actually neutral have been exclusively interpreted by quoting only certain verses having violence connotation and disregarding the context. As a result, the followers of a certain religion can be provoked psychologically because they feel they have the justification from a holy book [4]. Therefore, one issue appears at the level of grassroots, namely the bias toward diversity and the claim toward pluralism values. Tolerance becomes vague and is considered destructive toward the order of faith and creed. Then a big question requiring an answer will be analyzed in this paper: how can the tolerance among religion followers in the contemporary Indonesia still be

supported as the covalent bond to maintain the unity of Indonesia?

## II. METHOD

The three main points of discussion and analysis in this paper are, first, the explanation on the violence phenomena on behalf of religion. Then the thinking of Emile Durkheim becomes the perspective to analyze the phenomena. The result is the theoretical hypothesis on the development of tolerance values. The approach applied to analyze is descriptive qualitative [5] by using the literature review sources that are relevant. As Levy explained that this step can be used to read the empirical phenomena contextually in the framework of critical analysis [6].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Religion, exclusivism, and fanaticism

Destructive behavior is the result of the lowest human awareness or it is known as the term sub human. In the perspective of Canetti, sub human is described as a terrifying element because inside of this element there lies the banal instinctual impulse, and it always negates or dismisses the existence of other people not included in their group. In this concept, someone outside their group is considered as an enemy having the potential to be a threat. The thinking of Canetti becomes the basic idea that encourages the birth of a group identity, on one hand, but on the other hand this becomes a harmful way when the identity is used as the reason to deny the existence of other people [7].

Accepting other people with all the differences is not an easy thing to do in the diverse society like in Indonesia. However, it has to be understood that the differences cannot become the reason that has to be dealt with the sub-culture awareness as explained above. The concept of *homo homini socius* firmly does not accept human lives individually. Humans are social creatures that need a group because it is the way of categorial thinking that puts forward the differences that are not very proper in a group. On the contrary, humans are demanded to see the differences in their community as a way to build tolerant culture. Only with that way, the unity in diversity can be created and survive.

### B. Sociological perspective

The issue of religion and its various phenomena in the society can be explained through the perspective of Emile Durkheim. According to her, the social phenomena happening in the middle of the society always bring an impact to the religious life because both are inseparable. Both are mutually influential [10]. Therefore, Durkheim agreed that religion cannot be separated from its social trait, and it forms sacredness in the middle of the society [10]. In realizing the sacredness, the social role of the society is seen from the emergence of the collective reality in the rites,

Tolerance requires struggle and hard work to make it happen. There are two main enemies that have to be dealt with, namely exclusivism and fanaticism. Exclusivism is a wall creating boundary that can only be entered by certain people. According to Simon, this attitude can create an 'enclave', which is a protected and sterile area built for the interest of a certain group [8]. The people who are intolerant generally build 'enclave' in the middle of the community and are very uncomfortable when other people who are not part of their group attempt to cross the boundary. Moreover, the people trapped in the 'enclave' will see the people outside their group as the part that needs to be eliminated for the sake of the group unity. This is a dangerous attitude born from exclusivism, no respect and having no attitude to respect other people, particularly those who are different from them.

The second enemy is fanaticism as the direct product of spiritual selfishness. Mangunhardjana explained that selfishness is an attitude that is centralized on oneself, only paying attention to oneself needs without caring about others or even tending to dismiss other people's needs. In a certain condition, the behavior of selfishness can be an act taking advantage of other people as objects or facilities to achieve the interest of oneself. Other people can be considered valuable when they are capable of fulfilling the demand and interest of the sectoral group [9]. In the relation to the diversity, fanaticism does not provide a space for everything outside the faith of the group. It means the belief system, rites, and rituals of other people are wrong, misled, and misleading. The way of doing religion like this only sees the truth from their own group's point of view radically and refuses other faith outside the faith of their own group. Therefore, exclusivism always becomes one side of a coin of fanaticism. Both walk hand in hand.

It can be concluded that when religion is implemented with fanaticism and exclusivism, the followers will find it difficult to put themselves in the discourse of harmony with others. On the contrary, one of the fundamental ways to erase the intolerant attitude is by building a moderate religious life that is opened and dialogical toward the followers of other religions. In this case, the diversity of every different religious follower exists in the parallel concept without anyone feeling more righteous than others. rituals, and religious behavior that very much depend on the responses of the followers. There lies the root of the problem. When the religion followers tend more to the social situation, then religion will be controlled to follow the wishes developing in the society.

Among a number of sociological issues developing in the middle of the society, there are three concepts that oftentimes become the religious behavior indicator sociologically. The behavior can be brought into two extreme forms, namely capability to encourage tolerance and on the contrary having the potential to cause intolerance to happen. If the following three elementary points can be

managed well, then exclusivism and fanaticism as the triggers of intolerance can be suppressed.

*First* is the issue of doctrine. Every religion has a different doctrine. The problem occurs when doctrines collide with each other. The doctrine differences already create social distance in the middle of the society, moreover if those differences are brought up in the competition of truth. If the social distance is carried out not in the spirit of tolerance, then each of the religious followers can be trapped in the theological prejudice toward the followers of other religions. Even though basically religion does not teach the attitude of intolerance, the mentality of the followers will become the root of intolerance in the middle of the society. Doctrine can herd the followers to build selfishness and high subjectivity [11].

*Second* is cultural differences. The habits of a society depend on the cultural color developing in the middle of the society. Emphasizing too much on the cultural aspect in the middle of diversity can trigger the emergence of horizontal issues related to social behavior. If one religious community group measures other religious community groups from the point of view of their own cultural faith, then the clashes can occur. Diversity surely produces different perspectives. In addition, cultural changes also become the indicator of tolerance-intolerance. The contemporary world nowadays is different from the era of ignorance. Technology has developed and the democracy system has replaced the kingdom system, authoritarian behavior, or prophetic leadership. Forcing the culture of the past into the contemporary culture also certainly will produce horizontal conflicts. Therefore, when religious followers carry out their religious life in the culture that is considered right contextually, cautiousness is required so that clashes will not happen as those can threaten the unity in the diversity of the religious followers [11].

*Third* is the dialectics of majority-minority. The problem triggering intolerance happens when religion is always brought into the dialectics of majority-minority. Such a problem will make it more difficult to accept the followers of other religions. The dialogical communication will be jammed and there will be prejudice underlying the social relationship. This is actually a myth that is oftentimes taken advantage by various interests, particularly political interests. The diversity should not be seen and measured from the aspect of majority-minority. The spiritual quality is determined more by the way some people carry out their religion with full awareness that there are also other people who carry out their own religion with different ways and faith. The religious truth does not lie in the quantity of majority-minority, but it is built from how religious followers understand, interpret, and implement their own holy book so that those will bring benefits to everyone [12]. Bringing the relationship of religious followers in the dialectics of majority-minority will only erase the appreciation toward diversity.

It can be concluded that if those three elements above are managed for the purpose of intolerance, then the result is disunity. If those are managed for the purpose of tolerance, unity will be the result.

### *C. Reflection of Indonesia*

According to Ali, historically, the nation founding fathers have provided the legacy of a very strong foundation on the essence of the Only One Almighty God as the basic value to maintain pluralism and tolerance [12]. The foundation becomes the very strong binding to maintain NKRI (the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) until today and it should be the main essence in the implementation in the contemporary Indonesia [13]. The spirit of unity in diversity as proposed by Mpu Tantular in his book *Sutasoma* is meant as the encouragement for every citizen of Indonesia to become proactive to guard and maintain pluralism. Only with that way, the tough and strong foundation for the Indonesia's nation state can be established. It is actually simple that the framework of unity in diversity is the tolerant living attitude among the citizens [14]. Unfortunately, due to wrong understanding toward sociological perspectives as explained in the previous subheading, tolerance is accused to sacrifice religious values. This reason is seen to have no ground whatsoever because it is built from exclusivism and radicalism.

Tolerance is the key word to realize civilized Indonesian society. Tolerance is also the characteristic of psychologistic humans where they have been bound in togetherness since birth. Through tolerance, the relationship among humans is formed in the vessel of togetherness, friendship, and other social relationship forms. Only with this way, humans discover their nature as social creatures. With the similar way also, the way of sectoral thinking underlying identity politics can be diverted into appreciation toward pluralism issues [15].

Robinson and Widianoro explained that the purpose of being a nation and a state is the welfare of the citizens of the state because the primary part of a nation is the citizens. The thinkers of Ancient Greece were aware that the existence of a city is not merely to legitimize the power but also as the vessel that protects the citizens from many threats. That is why in the context of Indonesia the existing diversity has to be seen as the potential of wealth and excellence that differentiate Indonesia from other nations. Therefore, Indonesia can become the world laboratory on the moderate way of life among religious followers who are all the citizens in the very diverse cultural aspect.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Religion and its followers are the agents of peace. They are not the actors of disunity and violence. Therefore, the holistic attitude is required to build the tolerant religious life. The tolerance discourse among religious followers can only be formed when all religious followers realize that they

become part of the nation-state existing in diversity and do not stand alone in carrying out their spiritual activities as a hegemony. The wrong understanding on diversity can trigger intolerance and hostility to happen. On the contrary, the correct understanding will create the moderation among the religious followers that will lead to the strengthening of the unity and harmony of the nation.

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