

Religion, Education, and Pluralism

Relevance of Sufism Morality Education in Developing Character of Pluralism in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relevance of Sufism morality education in developing character of pluralism in Indonesia. Through the library research methodology with a historical-philosophical approach, the results show that someone practicing Sufism morality has a high level of tolerance while dealing with the issue of diversity. Internalizing Sufism moral values in modern life strengthens spiritual, personal and social intelligence. In pluralism, Sufism morality teaches two clear and explicit principles. This includes exclusivity in theology and the principle of inclusiveness in the social-interactive aspects. These principles guide how to socialize with community members having different backgrounds. In the context of Indonesia, the noble values of Sufism can be developed to strengthen various pillars and build harmony among religious communities, raise historical awareness and cultural maturity.

Keywords: Education, Indonesia, character of pluralism, religion, Sufism morality

1. INTRODUCTION

Harmony among religious communities in Indonesia is quite challenging due to a strong desire of people to maintain their identity when dealing with different groups. This is shown by the conflict based on tribal, religious, racial, and societal group (SARA) issues, radicalism, vandalism, and terrorism. The existence of religious diversity is a problem which is not easily solved in Indonesia. It is not surprising that religion is perceived as a barrier to societal progress (Nafis & Najib, 2017). The recent sentiment of identity was triggered by the helplessness of facing economic, scientific and technological progress. Therefore, humans lose control over what they create. Modernity has succeeded in making spectacular progress, especially in the fields of science and technology, as well as physical prosperity. However, it presents a blurred face of humanity, characterized by the lack of spirituality values (Nasr, 1991; Nashir, 1997). This is attributed to the loss of objective common sense and replaced by the instrumentalist common sense (Shindunata, 2019). Therefore, humans lose control over what they create.

Many discussions on this issue have concluded that religion has anything to do with it. Many argue that the

community had lived side by side peacefully and had mutual respect for their fellow believers. The disputes occurred are not related to religion. In fact, the dispute between religions is used by people as a basis for fighting, driving out and killing their opponents. Modern humans are plagued with environmental destruction, famine, prosperity disparity, demographic explosion, racial discrimination, inequality in technological and knowledge development, world polarization, economic crisis, the dominance of powerful nations, and the threat of nuclear war (Syukur, 2003). This is an aspect of the Aufklarung movement, referred to modern reason, which was developed in Europe (Karim, 2019). Despite making significant progress, the modern world can destroy human dignity and various aspects of life (Nata, 2011; Nugroho, 2016).

In general, a dispute, enmity, or conflict of SARA is deliberately blown up by parties with hidden agendas (Nata, 2011). Handling conflict-related problems in the community is a challenge for religious leaders. It also affects astute scholars, including stakeholders in religious education attempting to build a pluralistic society into harmony, tolerance, democracy and strengthening synergistic cooperation relations. Therefore, religious education plays a significant role in

shaping civilized societies, especially for students in schools, madrassas, or Islamic boarding schools and campuses. Additionally, religious education must have an inclusive paradigm emphasizing contextual, tolerance, respect for differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and between groups. This encourages people to work together and tolerate one another. In a pluralistic national life, it is vital to abandon the exclusive paradigm characterized by intolerance and failure to acknowledge the positive impacts of diversity (Kuntowijoyo, 1991; Zamhari, 2013).

Inclusivity creates a pluralistic community life where people live in peace and cooperation. With this aspect, there is tolerance, harmony, and democracy and therefore, people remain united and intact. Today, humans are confronted with serious ethical issues, necessitating the need to emphasize the importance of Sufism morality are reappears. It is therefore vital to determine the relevance of Sufism moral education in developing pluralism. This study examines how Sufism and the pluralism character can be interconnected.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pluralism discourse is very critical since it relates to sensitive matters, specifically in theological issues. Not all religious communities agree that there is another truth apart from theirs and what they advocate. The teachings of the scriptures of each religion make adherents believe that they are correct. In general, the homogeneity of belief in each adherent does not necessarily need to be there (Yahya, 2010). Pluralism consists of two words, including "plural" meaning diverse and "ism" implying understanding. For this reason, pluralism means an understanding of diversity. It also means a willingness to accept diversity (plurality) and living tolerantly with different ethnicities, groups, religions, races, customs, and beliefs. It influences actions that lead to freedom of thought, religion, or seeking information. Therefore, achieving pluralism requires the maturity and mental readiness of one's personality or group of people, communities, and groups.

In social science, pluralism means a framework where there is the interaction between groups showing mutual respect and tolerance for each other. Importantly, the groups coexist without assimilation conflicts. Religious pluralism is considered special in the study of religions. As a special terminology, it cannot be interpreted carelessly, for example, equated to 'tolerance' or 'mutual respect'. As an understanding discussing the perspective of religion, religious pluralism has been comprehensively discussed by scholars.

Geographically, Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of 17,000 islands, stretching from Sabang to Merauke. Each island is inhabited by communities with different social, cultural, values, beliefs and religious

characteristics. More than 300 ethnic groups are scattered in Indonesia, making it the nation with the most cultural diversity in the world. Due to various racial, ethnic and cultural groups, social integration is a significant challenge in Indonesia.

Pluralism in Indonesia is not the same as in America or other nations. For example, in America, pluralism appears realistic and successful. In contrast, the concept of inclusion is only slightly in Indonesia, where pluralism is segmented and fragmented (Howell, 2001; Howell, 2010). For example, in East Nusa Tenggara there are islands with 100% Catholic population, 95% Protestant population and 75% Muslims. Indonesian population is made of different cultural, religious, and ethnic segregations. Therefore, perceptions of truth within each group are different, unmixed as many think. For example, in Bali, the majority of the population and language is Balinese with the Hindu religion. In case individuals were born there and never left, they might never have a minority feeling until they come to Java, for example. This is the plurality of Indonesian society, which is meant as segmented and fragmented. With this social structure, it is possible for the island nation to always face conflicts between ethnic groups, social inequalities, and the difficulty of establishing permanent integration.

3. METHODS

This article uses religious and social theory and concept. It also uses library research with a historical-philosophical approach (Kartodirdjo, 1993). The initial stages involve the collection of sources based on the research problem both primary and secondary sources. This stage searches and collects activities, data and historical sources of pluralism in Indonesian society from literature studies, including library other reference books. A radical-fundamental criticism of the source assessing the condition and authenticity of archival and literary sources found both externally and internally is examined. This is followed by fact formulation and reconstruction of events (Garraghan, 1995; Wasino, 2007). The events are considered sufficient to be used as a reference in this study once analyzed in-depth to examine the relevance of Sufism moral education in the development of pluralism.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Pluralism in Indonesia

It is necessary to examine the cultural values of ancestors bridging the socio-cultural transcendental disparity among people. The value contains an interaction framework showing mutual respect and tolerance based on brotherhood and togetherness. It was conducted productively, encouraging assimilation and cultural acculturation. Culture itself is studied and experienced socially by members of the community. It is

not only an accumulation of habits and a code of conduct but also an organized system (Koentjaraningrat, 2007). Exploration of national culture is not directed at cultural conformism, but rather at the totality of values and behaviours that reflect the desires of the Indonesians. Therefore, it has two main functions: preservation and development. The preservation function is meant to introduce and deepen the universal cultural noble values, fostering a sense of patriotism and national pride. The development function is directed at the embodiment of national culture, which blends traditional cultural diversity and new values. Importantly, they do not conflict with the universality of values prevailing in the nation's culture and serves as a strengthening of national identity and personality.

Indonesia is known as a plural nation where people practically live together. However, they are separated into political units due to social differences (Nafis, 2014). Indonesia's pluralism is also supported by the country's motto of Unity in Diversity. The problem often faced by a plural society is the existence of disputes and disconnection between local and national culture. The occurrence of horizontal conflicts is usually caused by the strengthening of the ethnocentrism of each community group. Ethnocentrism is the view that a certain group is the centre of everything with standards used to judge others. It makes a certain culture a benchmark for measuring the merits of others.

Amid nation-building, Indonesia has been challenged by community's plurality. The socio-political stability that was relatively maintained throughout the New Order government had led to the belief that the nation-building project was almost over. However, the process is currently reversing due to centrifugal forces. Democratization and post-reform decentralization increased anti-pluralism sentiments. The religious harmony trilogy campaigned by the New Order did not have a profound impact on religious life. Harmony in religious life in Indonesia still faces many problems. According to the Annual Report on Religious Life in Indonesia, published by the Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies (CRCS) of Gadja Mada University in Yogyakarta, two issues are challenging the creation of harmony and freedom in religion, such as the houses of worship (Nafis & Najib, 2017).

The concept of multiculturalism is considered suitable in Indonesia since it maintains the identity of each group and promotes mutual respect. The first president of Soekarno through romantic nationalism and Suharto with discipline concept did not achieve positive results on pluralism. With globalization, the movement for democratization, human rights and emancipation expected to uphold diversity or pluralism now reinforce individual identity. Pluralism was strong in the past when the state occupation of the people was in absolute power, embedding the uniformity of politics in society. Pancasila

as an open ideology should be a shield for maintaining the plurality and heterogeneity of the nation, politically, ethnically and culturally. Harmony between religious plurality, multiculturalism, ethnic cultural diversity, and social-political ideology should be found through Pancasila to avoid all forms of segregation that lower human dignity. Constitutionally, the Indonesian state was built to realize and develop a religious, humanist, and united nation. There is a need to continue creating an advanced and creative socio-cultural life with a cosmopolitan and pluralist cultural attitude, democratic social-political order and a just and populist socio-economic structure.

4.2. Sufism Morality as a Foundation of Pluralism

Sufism morality the implementation of one of the three main pillars of Islamic teachings, specifically the *ihsan*. It teaches spirituality that needs to be realized in people's lives. Realizing a peaceful society, good relations and providing a conducive space to practice religious teaching is one of the ideals of all humanity. This is one of the primary goals of religious teachings. Through Sufism morality, Islam seeks to invite people to practice all kinds of virtues in life. From a sociological perspective, humans often display religion in an untrue, frightening, and violent form. This eventually creates conflict; unwittingly tarnishes the image of humanity and religion itself. It is not surprising that religious conflicts are increasingly witnessed in the community. The conflict may not be due to religion, political and economic interests. People with consciences and religious values easily commit violence, even though all religions teach goodness.

The main requirement for achieving good relations between people with various identities, including religion, is to have a broad insight. This is the main goal of pluralism education, specifically to build broad insights in each individual. Without a broad insight, personal or group egotism increasingly grows (Polat, 2017). To gain broad insight, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) perceived pluralism as "education without limit". The purpose of limits relates to three things, including unlimited to material/information as a source of education, personal educators or parties with educational material, and existing texts (Anam, 2019). Teaching pluralism to students from an early age is important because children easily are directed, and the concept might be embedded until they are adults. However, teaching children requires patience and caution since they cannot fully accept the things taught, especially abstract values.

Sufism moral education teaches respect for one another, especially from an early age. The attitudes and behaviour of parents and adults around students should encourage them to understand that differences are

inevitable. Everyone has a different way of achieving goals and living. Pluralism is not meant to sacrifice one's beliefs and principles, but also reflects a strong attitude and *istiqamah* in holding individual principles and beliefs. It is a way of being grateful for Allah's blessings that humans are born with differences. In Islam, pluralism is demonstrated through the exemplary story of the prophet Muhammad while building the Medina country. Historically, the encounter of Islam with other religions can be traced to the time of the prophet Muhammad. Islam comes amid the context of Judaism and Christianity. In forming a new society in Medina, the Prophet did not deny the existence of groups outside Islam. However, their interests were accommodated and were invited to cooperate. This step is recorded in history, it is commonly referred to as the Medina Charter. The principles of freedom declared by the prophet including egalitarian, deliberation and justice, cooperative togetherness, and solidarity, a spirit of brotherhood and non-violence (Waskito & Rohman, 2018).

The Medina Charter is the first official political document to discuss the principle of religious freedom. It contains an affirmation of religious tolerance to respect each other, and not to harm but protect members bound in the Medina Charter. Furthermore, helping each other without considering their faith and religion also occurred in the era of the Prophet. Sheikh Salim bin Hilali divides the attitude of tolerance into characteristics, including (1) a willingness for glory and generosity; (2) a willingness for cleanliness and piety; (3) meekness for convenience; (4) a cheerful face; (5) inferiority in front of the Muslims not because of humiliation; (6) easy to develop social relations without being deceptive and negligent; (7) Ease the preaching to Allah's way without camouflage; and (8) Be bound and submit to Allah without any objection or force.

There is a theological justification related to pluralism is the word of God in QS. Al-Mumtahanah (60): 8-9. This verse explains that God does not forbid human beings from doing good and be fair to people not fighting with each other due to religion. The Qur'an's acceptance of pluralism is based on at least two reasons, including historical and objective. Historically, the birth of three celestial religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, originated from one prophet, namely, Ibrahim the objective reasons are based more on the Islamic perspective on the concept of God as the creator and regulator on the movement of the universe, including the system of human history. He created all religions from the Prophet Adam to the Prophet Muhammad, and therefore, no should be opposed.

4.3. Sufism Morality and Character of Pluralism

Pluralism is an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation between different groups, whether, racially,

culturally, politically or religiously. There are implications on the implementation of Sufism moral education in developing character of pluralism in Indonesia, including the following, namely (1) tightening friendship strings; (2) avoiding divisions and disputes; (3) strengthening faith and piety; (4) development acceleration; (5) mutual respect; (6) strengthening humans relations; (7) increasing the kinship and brotherhood sense; (8) restraining emotions and anger; (9) increasing patriotism and nationalism; (10) not feeling the most righteous. Apart from avoiding divisions, pluralism strengthens friendship between individuals. Undeniably, differences are the reasons for clashes between groups. Without humans understand the meaning of tolerance, then hospitality cannot be established. Self-implementation of pluralism character should be conducted by every human being and applied in everyday lives. It is better in case it is applied in environments that adhere to various ethnic, cultural and religious beliefs.

In general, most religions teach kindness to their adherents. No religion teaches people to be hostile to others. They instruct their adherents to have a high tolerance for respecting fellow human differences. These tolerances will create a beautiful and peaceful community life. High tolerance levels motivate the establishment of places as a symbol of tolerance and might heighten peoples' faith in God Almighty. A nation truly understanding the importance of pluralism creates a safe, orderly, peaceful and prosperous state; this is because it is the key to the success of development programs in a country. Conversely, if a country does not understand its meaning, then there will be riots, disputes and various kinds of disasters, both from nature and people-related disasters. These problems hamper the development acceleration program planned by the government.

Pluralism is a concrete manifestation of mutual respect for one another. Tolerances between people influence and train themselves to learn to acknowledge that each human being has a different religion, ethnicity, and culture. Tolerance between religious people is important in life. In case there is no mutual respect between religious communities, problems arise, including riots related to SARA. Pluralism also strengthens human relations in a nation. It is a pleasure to avoid shirk (polytheism) in Islam and mutual tolerance between people. People with pluralism take the time to discuss with each other in making decisions. If this can be done repeatedly, the relationship between people can be stronger.

If a pluralist strengthens relations between people, kinship and brotherhood sense among religious people can be nurtured. In case everyone fosters a sense of tolerance, then every friendship and association in religious life can be maintained properly. In essence, humans cannot accept differences as expected. The

difference is often used as an excuse to contradict and pit one another. Therefore, the implementation of pluralism through Sufism moral education is needed to strengthen friendship and bring about peace. Pluralism is a willingness of heart and sincerity, often perceived as evidence of good heart and soul. It can only be achieved by holding back anger and always being patient. In case people open blessing from Allah, they can succeed in resisting anger.

Indonesia consists of various ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, making it a diverse society. Therefore, to unite these differences, all communities should have a high sense of tolerance. If tolerance can be applied in people's daily lives, nationalism increases in every community. Islam has taught various benefits of tolerance for fellow human beings. For example, during discussions, the tolerant character is needed in responding to various opinions from various groups. In case tolerance is developed, the agreement or consensus can be easily obtained. Living can be beneficial in case each group accepts differences and solve disunity, dissension, quarrelling, and misunderstanding.

Character of pluralism believes that every human being has made mistakes or has many shortcomings and limitations. However, some often feel they are the most righteous and consider others wrong or even heretical. With the pluralistic character, a person can avoid selfish reasoning. Pluralism makes individuals think more wisely and positively and help those with the authority to lead fairly and wisely. Islam also teaches that tolerance is not only applied to fellow human beings but also tolerance to the universe, animals and the environment. By implementing a tolerant attitude, life becomes more peaceful and national unity can be maintained and development realized. Pluralisms acknowledge that there are differences in belief and limit hostility.

5. CONCLUSION

Iman, Islam, and Ihsan are the main pillars of the Islam. Iman is related to the belief moving the heart and Islam focus deeds. Ihsan is related to the perfection of realization and the purpose of the combination of *iman* and deeds. Sufism morality is ranked the highest virtue after Ihsan, having the potential to solve spiritual crises. It fosters human morals, leading people toward peace and perfection of life. Many people ignore the teachings of Sufism morality because they too prioritize worldly affairs rather than *ukhrawi*. Today, many people only use rational-empirical thinking rather than contemplative. Outward pleasure and ease of life as a result of the development of science and technology do not make humans happy. Some individuals even consider it a cause of the disaster. Material satisfaction has not satisfied the inner needs of humans. In essence, humans have spiritual (esoteric) and physical (exoteric) needs that should be

fulfilled. Spiritual needs unfulfilled make people restless, worried, anxious and unease in life.

To overcome anxiety, restlessness, and other negative feelings, humans usually turn to religion. The main purpose of religion is to lead the adherents to peace, safety, and happiness of life in the world and the hereafter. In Islam, this is specifically known as Sufism moral, which relates to the esoteric dimension of humans. The development and interest toward it seem to increase among ordinary people educated and economically well-established people. It reflects the failure of modernization and modernity, and the progress of science and technology in the current era that has not fulfilled the esoteric needs of humans. Sufism Moral Education is considered an important means of living in the era of ethnic, religious, racial and intergroup pluralism (SARA). This is because it teaches tolerance in the community and the entire nation. Pluralisms create a harmonious and peaceful community life. It encourages mutual respect and appreciation for differences in society, which is the key to happiness in the world and the hereafter.

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