

# The True Leaders and Leadership: From The Narratives of Emha Ainun Nadjib

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**Abstract**— This study aims to describe Emha Ainun Nadjib's concepts of leader and leadership. This research uses qualitative methods with a narrative approach. The subjects of this study were Emha Ainun Nadjib and the people closest to him including his eldest son and coordinator of several maiyah communities. In addition, the researcher read the works of Emha from the 1980s to the present and tried to juxtapose all of these works in order to achieve a thorough understanding. Data from this study were collected through interviews, field observations, online videos and audiovisual, and a reading into Emha's works. The data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman data analysis technique and a three-dimensional space approach of Clandinin and Connelly mapping analysis which includes interaction, continuity, and situation. Firstly, a leader is an inspirational upstream that maintains the spatial atmosphere so that anything or anyone in it is comfortable, safe and fosters creativity, a leadership he often calls a spatial leader. For Emha everyone is a leader on their own, has sovereignty over themselves to lead and be ready to be led. Meanwhile, leadership according to Emha is channeling inspiration from with so that he can connect with each other and understand each other

**Keywords**— *leaders; spatial leadership*

## I. INTRODUCTION

A leader becomes one of the key people highly considered in a community or organization. A leader becomes the direction of the road towards one goal that has been set through vision and mission. A leadership attitude that provides comfort for staff and followers is the key to a leader's success, especially in communities and organizations engaged in social affairs such as Maiyah community, because there is no clear source of funds for its implementation. The community houses people of diverse groups for example, the local government, police, TNI, students, and pedicab drivers. This was seen when the Maiyah program was held in various major cities in Indonesia such as Gombang Syafaat in Semarang and Mocopat Syafaat in Yogyakarta (August 2018 field survey).

A more fundamental question to ask is how Emha Ainun Nadjib, who didn't even finish his formal education, was able to mobilize the Maiyah community, the simple answer would be because it is based on a very good leadership attitude. There are many studies and books that cover Emha Ainun Nadjib, his works, the style of language and his engagement with the communities across several major cities. For example, a

research by Triasmoro in 2017, who studied the communication characteristics of Emha Ainun Nadjib in cultivating educational values Islam [1]. Also, a study by Triasmoro in 2016 who studied the Style of Emha Ainun Nadjib Speech in "Merajut Kembali Nusantara" which discusses the cleverness of Cak Nun in composing words to form one sentence that is easy to understand [2]. However, no specific studies addressing Emha Ainun Nadjib leadership has been carried out so far. Therefore, it is necessary to study more about Emha Ainun Nadjib's concepts of leader and leadership, which would contribute to enrich the development and the knowledge of good leadership within a multicultural context of Indonesia.

## II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a narrative approach. The research was conducted at meetings directly to the research subjects and explains what will be obtained or needed from Emha Ainun Nadjib so that the data can be explored comprehensively. Furthermore, the researcher approached the additional informants personally, namely the closest circles of Emha and the coordinator of the Mocopat Syafaat Maiyah community in Yogyakarta and the Gombang Syafaat in Semarang, as well as the Suluk Maleman community in Pati to identify the ideal leadership concepts. This research was also carried out at the Maiyah House at Kadipiro to explore the literary works of Emha Ainun Nadjib. Linking these three dimensions of time (past, present and future) with three important dimensions in human experience includes significance, value, and purpose [3].

In qualitative research the main instrument is the researcher. Data collection activities include: determining places or individuals, gaining access and building relationships, purposeful sampling, collecting data, recording information, solving field problems, and storing data [4]. The data collection techniques carried out by researcher include interview techniques, observation techniques, documentation techniques, document review, and reviewing audiovisual materials.

To avoid data inaccuracy, the validity of the data needs to be tested in several ways as follows. First is triangulation sources (Emha, family and close friends), triangulation of data collection techniques (interviews, observations, and documents) and triangulation of time (past, process, and

present) of various data that can be accounted for. Second is using reference materials, and third is holding member checks.

The researcher uses data analysis from Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman and uses the Spradley model data analysis, which is inseparable from the entire research process, in which data analysis corresponds to data collection techniques[5]. The researcher also uses a three-dimensional space approach in mapping analysis from Clandinin and Connelly including the data analysis for three elements: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present and future), and situation (physical place or place of storyteller).

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher will begin this discussion by describing what will be explained in this research report. First, the researcher will briefly describe the findings of Emha Ainun Nadjib's profile from his family's life and Emha's childhood to the present. Second, the researcher will explain the concept of the community of Maiyah, Jamaah Maiyah and the teachings of purity of life in it. Finally, the researcher will analyze and describe the what, the why and the how of Emha Ainun Nadjib concept of leader and leadership with the validity of the data in the form of a verification code from each interview results appended at the end of the research results

Emha Ainun Nadjib (hereinafter Emha) whom people often call Cak Nun or, especially among the Maiyah community, Mbah Nun, was born in Jombang on May 27, 1953 to a quite respected family in Menturo [6]. Continuing from his family tradition, Emha is also a figure very close with the community and is seen as a multidimensional human being thanks to his works in various fields such as Religion, Art, Culture, Politics, Education, Economics, Law and so on [7]. So, it is not surprising that people portrayed him as a multi-minded man with a myriad of achievements and works.

The researcher will start with a straightforward sentence written by Emha in a compilation of article discussion the leadership in the 1990s, *Mencari Ideologi Alternatif, polemik agama pascaideologi menjelang abad 21*, in which writers such as Arif Budiman, Kuntowijoyo, M. Amin Rais and Y.B Mangunwijaya were also contributing. Emha wrote

This debate does not rely on a concrete boundary of space and time. For the scale of what we say, as well as the limits of which welfare position determines the relevant dose or not, the ideas we make. For what reason do we argue about planting soybeans in the middle of the desert, for why discuss how to build flats in the middle of the ocean where our boat is shaking [8]

The statement illustrates that the scale taken in solving humanitarian problems, especially in Indonesia, is very broad from the time scale, space and the achievement of the objectives of these three points is the core of management and the last two sentences are the analysis of the problems faced.

Emha's attitude at that time was to build from the bottom of the way of thinking, analyzing, searching for truth, and so on, which in essence is to build a clear and clean atmosphere so

that the ecosystems in it can grow and develop in a stable manner. In the words of his son Sabrang:

Basically, they give up their liberties to the leader. So, what is submitted is human sovereignty. Maiyah wants to build human sovereignty. So cak Nun did not build leadership on Cak Nun himself, because what was built in Maiyah was that humans could lead themselves, even if they believed in others, the surrender of the liberties was surrendered consciously. (SD1.1.1.2)

Emha's leadership is a sovereign humanitarian leadership of oneself who already has knowledge and ways of thinking in determining everything including the knowledge they get from Emha during recitation in a forum. Emha said that his leadership in the Maiyah was as if it had existed or did not exist at all, even Emha had no wish to become a figure or whatever he was proposing. Emha said everything he did was pure from God and did not dare to say that everything that was done was from him. He stated as follows.

If I was the leader of Maiyah, clearly it contradicts the fact that there is no leader but sovereignty among the members to lead themselves before God, both in the world and in the hereafter. My leadership in Maiyah could be as if it were there. (MH2.1.1.1)

Emha has maintained that commitment since he was a child until today in various ways and methods according to the times that he passed.

I am like running water, I am the air exhaled by Allah, I am only dripping dew, as simple as that, I am the space that is spread out but I am not creating myself and I am not able to control myself except with God. (MH2.1.1.5)

Although the Maiyah communities consider Emha both a teacher and a leader, Emha does not want to be considered as either teacher or leader. Because Emha chose to be an ordinary human who helped solving problems, whether it is in the corridors of education, economics, culture, art, politics etc. Emha is like dew dripping, space that is spread by Allah and can be achieved and studied by anyone who wants to learn about the knowledge of Allah. In the words of his son Sabrang:

when he finds himself his sovereignty will be automatically sovereignty awakened. Mbah Nun only runs as an Islamic person, let's learn from each other together, build yourself to find your own sovereignty. As simple as that. (SD1.1.1.5)

A real leader cannot become a structural officer, if he talks about management he must be able to talk about priorities. So, he can't talk about Indonesia's priorities. It can't be like that. The scale of him is humanity, so humans are equally important. (SD1.1.2.2)

Emha tries not to be regarded as a leader in the Maiyah because in the Maiyah all are leaders who will be responsible for themselves. Emha is simply flowing water, the air exhaled by Allah, Dewdrops dripping and the space spread by Allah . The language is an expression pinned to the purity of attitude.

Next is the leadership concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara which has not really been interpreted and carried out correctly. As Emha stated.

Ki Hajar Dewantara eloquently described the transformation process of human role in leadership. The true leader according to Javanese philosophy is the one who *tut wuri handayani*, meaning that he has no intention to lead the people as a president, for example, but he inspires, he encourages, he is a source of energy, he is ready with wisdom, he is ready with science and solution, he is the one who is encouraging from behind. (MH2.1.1.9)

In practice, not everyone can see the concept of leadership as embedded in the teachings of Ki Hajar Dewantara materializes, should a leader lead the people in front of them or should a leader encourage the people from the back. So, the true leader according to Emha is a leader who basically has no intention to be charge of being a president, but those who inspires the people, encourages them, and becomes a source of energy, wisdom, knowledge and solutions, and then finally guard the people from the back. Furthermore, still in the concept of traditional leadership, Emha also interpreted the concept of *punokawan*, which many people consider as clowns. Emha gives the following illustration.

Semar is both a man on the street and the highest deity, so the two points should be one. So, if we combine those two points into a bigger dot, into a circle. So semar is a complete democratic aspiration (MH2.1.1.11)

*Punokawan* gives a picture of perfect democracy, that laymen and kings must connect at the right meeting point. Semar is symbolized as the supreme deity and at the same time ordinary people who accompanied the Javanese kings, who helped to determine the decisions asked for advice when the king was confused. Emha gives an understanding to the *Maiyah* community members that a leader is not always on the throne high above but occasionally has to go down to ensure what is experienced and felt by the lay people under his leadership

There are two fields of works carried out by a leader, namely formal and informal leaders [9]. Emha cannot be categorized in formal or non-formal leaders, although in this category Emha falls into the category of non-formal leaders. In practice, Emha often resolves formal leaders' problems in the community. Leaders who should maintain a wider space and be able to be accepted in all fields, institutions, are now experiencing a shift in such a way as a structuralistic manager. Emha Ainun Nadjib offered a broad and profound understanding of leaders. Leaders set the ethical tone of an organization and are instrumental in encouraging ethical behavior and reducing interpersonal conflict from their subordinates [10]. A leader is not just a position but a process that is continuous in time and vulnerable to unlimited space [11].

A leader must have a leadership spirit, and the leadership spirit possessed by a leader cannot be obtained quickly and immediately but a process that is formed over time until finally crystallizes in a characteristic [12]. Emha gave a picture on a national scale as a leader who had a range of time which was relatively long from the beginning of 1980 until now still filling formal and informal forums, so Emha is beyond the formal and informal categories. This made Emha a unique leader and was able to be accepted in various levels and circles

and was able to resolve several conflicts at national and local levels, for example the Kedung Ombo reservoir, Lautan Jilbab in protest of the ban on headscarves by the New Order government [13].

In the results of several Emha's sentences about leaders, it can be seen that the leader is from leading (in front of the people) to encouraging (behind the people). However, in its implementation it is from back to front. From the front back means that the more backward the level of leadership becomes wider and the more diverse the level and scale, the more the scale of his leadership will become increasingly conical and can be categorized as a manager. In accordance with Hughes et al (2012) theory which explains that managers implement, if leaders innovate, managers maintain; leaders develop, managers control; leaders inspire, managers think short term; long-term thinking leaders, managers ask how and when; leaders ask what and why, and managers imitate; the leader creates something original, and the manager accepts the status quo; leader challenged him [14].

There are many leadership categories that have been explained in theoretical studies, there are eight types of leadership, namely charismatic, paternalistic, militaristic, autocratic, *Laissez faire*, populist, executive or administrator and democratic type of Machali & Hidayat [15]. Yulk also revealed related theories of authentic, spiritual and service leadership [16]. Emha Ainun Nadjib can be categorized in charismatic leadership but in its implementation, it is clearly situational spiritualist in which is stored an attitude of service and authentic leadership. From all of these categories Emha gives an overview of the treasures of leadership, namely spatial leadership.

Operationally the leadership function can be divided into five functions: intrusion, participatory, delegation, control and consultation functions [15]. The concept of leader and leadership has experienced a remarkable narrowing of meaning to be so realistic and rigid [17]. The leader who is supposed to guard and care from behind, now begins to shift to the forefront and does not want to be replaced when he is in office. Leaders are not structural positions, leaders are also not always the foremost or always above, leaders are liquid and can be accepted in various fields and are able to provide positive energy to move good, creative and innovative people.

In this study, the researcher found a new concept of leadership through various literatures and interviews directly with Emha Ainun Nadjib and people close to him. Emha reported that the concept of leadership that should be understood by the present era is spatial leadership. The concept of leadership in this space has a far wider dimension and a much longer time because it is not bound by institutions, institutions and practical politics. The following picture delineates the spatial leadership.

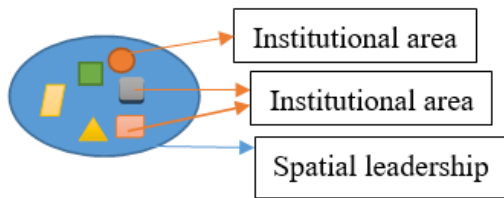


Fig.1. The concept of spatial leadership

Spatial leadership is leadership that covers everything and provides a broad space of thought. Not everyone can implement this leadership because basically what is built is not the physical form of the person but the way of thinking. This can be proven by reading various works of Emha which tend to provide an alternative style of thinking that is detailed and considers everything. Not only through the writing of similar things can you also listen to the recitation on YouTube, which he offers does not only contain applicative theory but about why to do it on the basis of consideration and when it has determined something from himself without discrimination from other parties. Management in leadership as an activity in the form of a process of managing a collaborative business group of people who are members of an educational organization, to achieve educational goals that have been previously set, to be effective and efficient [17].

Leaders are defined as people who are given trust to care for and or manage an organization [18]. Spatial leadership provides a broad scale of thinking with careful consideration. This leadership can be done when the person has reading material and has access to information from many things. Good leaders of the strategy-making process have a number of key attributes: vision, eloquence, and consistency [19]. Emha always gives examples and descriptions when deciding what to think with the scale of space and time also deepening. In the room there are fields and lines and even points of trouble also present in the space. When the space is sown with hatred and incitement, the distrust of one another will be polluted and the seeds of good thinking or products of the community will die. But when the space is clean sprinkled with mutual trust, the problem is immediately resolved, harmony and help as a means of love for fellow humans, then the seeds of thought and productive products from the community will grow and develop so is the concept of Emha space leadership. Good leaders are not necessarily good managers, and good managers are not necessarily good leader and effective leadership requires affective managerial skills at some level [20].

One of Emha's books entitled *Arus Bawah* gives an illustration of how a Semar as a form of leader who is able to protect, receives input from various parties. The character also represents a humble leader without any ambition for power, cyclical thinking and leaders who are able to make new plans to be alternatives to solving various problems in the world. The researcher found Emha's *Arus Bawah* full of illustration on how a leader should be holistic, universal and multi-talented. A holistic leader who is able to absorb the value of various aspects in solving problems or behaving in one particular condition. The spiritual leadership of top Turkish managers depends upon their wisdom and altruism. In addition, their spirituality is comprised of their approach to immateriality and

their spiritual awareness [21]. In *Demokrasi La Roibafih* books published in 2016, Emha implies a picture of a true leader emerges from three high-quality requirements. a superior nation leader must be satrio: competent, development manager and commander of solutions but also more than that: he must be pinandhito, not fascinated by wealth and position, because his life philosophy is mature and profound. But that is not enough. He must be sinisihan wahyu (guided by revelation, the exploration on the revelation is discussed in the book entitled *Jibril Tidak Pensiun*) [22].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A leader is an inspirational upstream that maintains the spatial atmosphere so that anything or anyone in it is comfortable, safe and fosters creativity, a leadership he often calls a spatial leader. For Emha everyone is a leader for himself, sovereign over himself to lead and ready to be led. Meanwhile, leadership according to Emha is channeling inspiration from within to others so that he can connect with each other and understand each other to understand their respective goals and are smooth and capable of penetrating all lines of life and penetrating all spaces and dimensions from formal and non-formal institutions from companies to within the community domain. A leadership is so pervasive in all aspects of life that all values and norms are good, beautiful, and capable of being accepted by everyone. Spatial leadership has a wide range and an infinite time scale. For Emha, maintaining a space of creativity and an atmosphere of stability is the upstream and downstream of the success of a country, and for Emha the structural position will drag him into a narrow field and it is impossible to control the space that is spread out

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