Interfaith Dialogue: Creating Peace in Indonesia

Bayduri Dinanti Nasution

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara
Email: bayduridinanti616@gmail.com

Abstract

Conflicts between religious communities often arise due to minor problems or misunderstandings, both in words and actions carried out between religious believers. In fact, harmony between religious communities is very important for the survival of the nation. This research discusses how to build relationships that are not limited to one religion only, but also between different religions, so that Muslims, Christians, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians can establish good communication. Religion is not to divide, but to teach noble human values. This study uses a qualitative method to explore in depth the phenomenon of interreligious dialogue in creating peace in Indonesia and is supported by secondary sources through literature studies. The results of the study show that dialogue plays a very important role as an effective alternative in resolving conflicts between religious communities. Every individual has the right to express his or her views, even in matters related to the theology of their respective religions. In conclusion, interfaith dialogue is indispensable to realizing peace.

Keywords: *Religious Studies; Dialogue; Harmonious*

Abstrak: Konflik antar umat beragama sering kali timbul akibat masalah kecil atau salah pengertian, baik dalam perkataan maupun tindakan yang dilakukan antar pemeluk agama. Padahal, keharmonisan antar umat beragama sangatlah penting bagi kelangsungan hidup bangsa. Penelitian ini mendiskusikan bagaimana cara membangun hubungan yang tidak terbatas pada satu agama saja, tetapi juga antar agama yang berbeda, sehingga umat Islam, Kristen, Katolik, Buddha, Hindu, dan Konghucu bisa menjalin komunikasi yang baik. Agama sejatinya bukanlah untuk memecah belah, melainkan untuk mengajarkan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan yang luhur. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengeksplorasi secara mendalam fenomena dialog antar agama dalam menciptakan perdamaian di Indonesia serta didukung oleh sumber sekunder melalui studi pustaka. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dialog memegang peranan yang sangat penting sebagai alternatif yang efektif dalam menyelesaikan konflik antar umat beragama. Setiap individu memiliki hak untuk menyampaikan pandangannya, bahkan dalam hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan teologi agama masing-masing. Kesimpulannya, dialog antar agama sangat diperlukan untuk mewujudkan perdamaian.

Kata Kunci: *Studi Agama-Agama; Dialog; Harmonis*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country that has a very rich religious diversity, with Islamists, Protestants, Catholics, Confucianists, Hindus, and Buddhists, of course it is impossible for every individual to only interact with fellow believers of the same religion. Many individuals of different religions coexist in an environment made up of friends with different religious backgrounds, such as in schools, residences, offices, and various other places. This kind of interaction can be called dialogue between religious people. Dialogue itself involves two or more parties who communicate with each other to build a harmonious relationship, be it in the form of friendship, friendship, or brotherhood. Through dialogue, each individual is invited to learn to listen, understand the views and thoughts of others, and appreciate the various points of view, so that the truth is not only monopolized by one party.

Each religion has its own perspective on dialogue, as well as religious leaders who contribute their thoughts on what dialogue is. These religious leaders generally hope that dialogue between religious communities can be a bridge to prevent conflicts. In short, the purpose of dialogue is to build harmony in Indonesia, so that life does not only focus on what is right and what is wrong. Moreover, dialogue aims to ensure that the truth believed by each individual is not used as an excuse to disbelieve or degrade the beliefs of others.

Every religion contains two doctrinal tendencies that often seem to be opposites. First, there is a view that teaches that the religion that a person adheres to is the only religion that is true, absolute, superior, and capable of providing salvation. In this view, people who follow other religions are considered heretics, infidels, or even cursed, and often they are seen as needing to be shunned or even advised to follow a religion that is believed to be true. Second, many religious teachings emphasize the importance of mutual respect, love for others regardless of differences, and emphasize that there is no compulsion in religion. In this teaching, everyone is encouraged to do good to anyone, regardless of religion, because this kindness is considered the essence of the religious teachings themselves (Daya, 2004).

Some groups who criticize religion often argue that religion actually functions to trigger wars, even becoming the main cause of conflict (Harris, 2015). However, this view is contrary to the basic purpose of religion, which should be present to guide humanity to live better, be compassionate, and uphold human values. For example, almost all religions teach the importance of maintaining harmony between religious communities, and one way that is encouraged is through constructive dialogue and mutual respect.

Indonesia, as a country with a majority religious population, faces religious issues that are the main concern in multicultural social life (Hasan Basri Marwah, 2004). Stating that religion is the main factor causing violence is an unwise view, because in essence, religion is a teaching that has always been synonymous with the values of peace, compassion, and salvation.

Violence, on the other hand, always leads to damage, destruction, and even death. However, some people sometimes try to justify acts of violence in the name of religion, making it seem as if it is a doctrine that must be implemented. Violence in the name of religion not only leads to individuals, but can also penetrate into groups or communities that adhere to different religions. This phenomenon can be found in various parts of the world, such as in India, Ireland, Jerusalem, the Philippines, Iraq, Nigeria, and Indonesia (Thoha Hamim, 2007). In Indonesia itself, riots and tensions triggered by religious sentiments have occurred in a number of regions, such as in Tasikmalaya, Ketapang, Kupang, Ambon, Poso, Maluku, and Situbondo, which led to the destruction of places of worship, such as mosques, churches, and mushallas (Sudarto, 2001).

Pluralism is an undeniable reality in our lives. Rejecting pluralism means rejecting the fact that differences in views and beliefs are an integral part of social life. Pluralism encompasses a wide range of differences, from simple things to more profound ones, and involves different levels of thought. These differences sometimes create tensions that can affect social stability (El-Mirzanah, 2002). However, in our daily lives, we increasingly feel the increasing interaction between religions. It can be seen in the relationship between religious leaders in Indonesia which increasingly shows a sense of tolerance and closeness. They are increasingly active in collaborating in efforts to solve problems arising from interreligious relations in the community.

Before the emergence of new ideas that prioritized an open attitude to differences, Muslims in Indonesia tended to focus on religious teachings that were very oriented towards fiqh. However, at the theological level on which religion is based, confusion arises, especially related to how we should view and define ourselves in the midst of the existence of other religions that also exist and are recognized as true. This confusion often causes tension or even conflict (Sugiarti, 2015). To overcome this, the author offers a solution through dialogue between religious communities. In addition, Hans Küng, a Catholic theologian, stated that in order to solve the global crisis that threatens humanity today, the nations of the world must agree on global ethics, both in theory and practice. This agreement can only be achieved if the world's religions work together, as it is said, "*there can be no peace, unity, dialogue among the nation unless there is peace, unity, dialogue among religions*", (Sugiarti, 2015).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore in depth the phenomenon of interreligious dialogue in creating peace in Indonesia and uses a literature study method. This approach is considered the most appropriate to understand the complexity of social, cultural, and religious interactions involving various actors in an effort to build harmony in the midst of diversity.

This research aims to explore the experiences, views, and dynamics that emerge in interfaith dialogue in various contexts in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Meaning and Purpose of Dialogue

Etymologically, the term "dialogue" comes from the Greek word "dialeghe" which means a conversation or discussion between two parties who have different views. This dialogue involves communication aimed at exchanging arguments and reasons regarding various aspects of an issue. In the dialogue process, both parties correct each other and try to find new solutions or understandings regarding the problems being discussed (Ali, Mukti, 1998). In terminology, dialogue is a form of two-way communication between individuals or groups who have different views on a topic, with the aim of understanding each other's perspectives and delving deeper into the truth of other views. Dialogue can also be understood as an exchange of ideas that are conveyed in different ways, thus enriching the understanding of both parties (Ess, 1996).

Dialogue is the process of exchanging views between individuals or groups who have genuine concern for each other and are ready to learn from different perspectives. Dialogue is not just a way of life or daily habit, but can also develop into a deeper view of life (Majid et al., 1999). Therefore, in a political context, dialogue is not just a conversation, but also an integral part of the democratic process, where various views and interests are exchanged to reach a fair mutual agreement (Noer, 2005).

From the various definitions that exist, it can be concluded that dialogue between religious communities is a meeting between the hearts and minds of adherents of different religions. It is a form of communication that involves people who believe in religion as the same path to seeking the truth. In addition, interfaith dialogue also involves cooperation that aims to achieve common interests, build understanding, and create harmony in the midst of diversity (Burhanuddin Daya, 1992).

Dialogue can be considered as a means for collective reflection that has critical power, both in practical aspects and in terms of thought, both in personal and group religious life. With a constant spirit to seek the truth, interfaith dialogue has a critical function, both internally (ad intra) and externally (ad extra) (Hasan, 2018). In general, the purpose of dialogue is to create harmony, strengthen tolerance, improve common welfare, and cultivate an attitude of openness, mutual respect, and mutual understanding. In addition, the dialogue also aims to facilitate integration and coexistence between adherents of various religions. Furthermore, dialogue can lead to a deeper goal, which is pro-existence. In the context of coexistence, dialogue only focuses on creating tolerance between religions. However, pro-existence goes further, where in addition to seeking commonalities in doctrine, tradition,

and spirit, dialogue also seeks to acknowledge and resolve differences, even those that have the potential to cause conflicts (Hasan, 2018).

Dialogue Between Religious Communities

Dialogue plays a very important role as an effective alternative in resolving conflicts between religious communities. The phenomenon of conflict between religious communities needs to be overcome immediately so that it does not have a bad impact that can damage social life and harmony between communities. Along with its development, interfaith dialogue requires that every individual or group respect the rights of others to explore and practice their beliefs without any suspicion or prejudice (Khoirul Fatih, 2017).

In the context of religion, a dialogue requires each party to respect freedom of opinion. Every individual has the right to express his or her views, even in matters related to the theology of their respective religions. Interfaith dialogue should be a moment of friendly gathering, despite differences in beliefs (Khadijah et al., 2012). Olaf Schumann and Paul F. Knitter emphasized that dialogue is not a place to debate or convince each other of the truth of each other's views. Rather, the purpose of dialogue is so that the individuals or groups involved can understand each other's experiences and religious lives (Subkhi Mahmasani, 2020).

Interfaith dialogue is expected to be a source of illumination that guides humanity towards goodness and peace, which is contained in every religious teaching. Through dialogue, religious people are expected to develop an attitude of tolerance towards the beliefs of other religions, making religion a force that fosters a sense of peace and security, not as a trigger for war or conflict. Every individual has the obligation to reject all forms of discrimination and intolerance carried out in the name of religion, as well as to strengthen the role of religion as a supporter of human dignity and global peacebuilding efforts (Shofan, 2006). Religion, in essence, must serve as a light on human life, providing guidance for a life of peace and mutual respect.

It is important to understand that Indonesia is a country with a very high level of diversity, and its citizens need to internalize the attitude of pluralism. As conveyed by Kuntowijoyo in the writings of Lani Rofiqoh and Aris Suherman, plurality is an undeniable reality, as there are differences between men and women, young and old, skin color, ethnicity, and beliefs embraced by each individual. All these differences reflect the reality of plurality in Indonesia. Therefore, it is wrong to consider differences as something that can be destructive, because it is precisely differences that shape the social and cultural wealth of this nation (Rofiqoh & Suherman, 2017).

One of the real illustrations of Indonesia's population plurality can be seen in the fact that the country is inhabited by more than 740 ethnic groups

or ethnicities, who speak 583 languages and dialects, which come from 67 mother tongues spoken by various ethnic groups. In addition, Indonesia also has a very rich religious diversity, including major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism, as well as various local religions and beliefs that have long been an inseparable part of the nation's culture (Mubarok & Bakri, 2021).

To achieve harmony in a country, it is very important for its citizens to instill an attitude of tolerance. In Indonesia, which has a very wide diversity of religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholicism, tolerance is a key element in maintaining harmony between religious communities. Without mutual respect and understanding of differences in beliefs, existing social harmony can be disrupted, potentially damaging the peace that has been established in society (Izzah et al., 2013).

Dialogue must be accepted as a very important method in building a harmonious and harmonious life among religious people, especially in the midst of increasingly complex globalization and pluralism. Religion should be understood in the spirit of dialogue, both in the form of vertical dialogue (the relationship between individuals and God) and horizontal dialogue (relationships between fellow humans). Vertical dialogue will result in a life that is more sacred, peaceful, and far from suffering, while horizontal dialogue will create peace, cooperation, and harmony among fellow human beings (Izzah et al., 2013). When religious people engage in interfaith dialogue, they will deepen and deepen their understanding of the truths they believe in, while respecting and understanding the views of others. Thus, dialogue between religious communities not only strengthens the faith of each individual, but also encourages cooperation between religious believers, so that they can jointly fight for the values of humanity, justice, peace, and brotherhood (Hasan, 2018).

Bringing Peace to Life

In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), peace is defined as the cessation or end of hostilities and disputes, as well as a state that is free from conflict or tension (Great Dictionary of Indonesian, 2023). Thus, peace can be understood as a condition in which various groups or individuals can coexist harmoniously without any hostility or tension. In addition, peace is also seen as a dynamic process, involving various factors and conditions that affect each other. This process needs to take into account the diversity of situations, backgrounds, and other elements that can accelerate or even hinder the achievement of peace.

Peace in a society can only be realized if harmony between different groups can be maintained properly. In a pluralistic society, this harmony includes many aspects, such as harmony in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Harmony in religious life, for example, can be built through tolerance,

mutual understanding, respect for differences, and respect for the right of each individual to practice his or her religious teachings. In addition, cooperation between religious communities in various aspects of social life is also an important key to creating peace (Local & Kota, 2015). The concept of pluralism, which emphasizes the importance of respecting diversity in beliefs and outlook on life, should be the basis of understanding for every religious person. This aims to create harmony and tranquility in a social life full of differences, so as to realize a peaceful and prosperous country (Local & Kota, 2015).

Interfaith Dialogue as an Alternative to Peace

To achieve peace in the midst of the increasingly rapid flow of globalization, religious people are faced with great challenges. The process of change that occurs on a global scale can affect almost all aspects of life, both social, economic, and cultural. Although there is an assumption that religion is one of the causes of conflicts and wars, many parties also try to show that religion should be a source of peace (Khamami, 2014). In Indonesia, which is a country with a pluralistic society, interfaith relations require special efforts to strengthen harmony. One effective way is through interfaith dialogue. As expressed by Nurcholish Madjid, recognition of diversity is an important first step. This requires us to accept the fact that we live in a heterogeneous society, and in fact this diversity can have a huge positive impact, both in social life and in building harmony between groups.

Nurcholish Madjid stated that dialogue between groups, if done well, will result in a better and constructive understanding. From here, inclusive da'wah plays a very significant role in creating peace in a pluralistic society (Zuhriyah, 2012). As a reform figure and Muslim scholar, Nurcholish Madjid supports the concept of pluralism by acknowledging and accepting the diversity and differences of beliefs that exist in Indonesia. Inclusive da'wah, according to him, is one of the strategic steps that is expected to reduce and minimize the problems that arise, especially related to inter-religious and inter-religious relations in Indonesia which often face challenges (Zuhriyah, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of interfaith dialogue as a means to create peace in Indonesia, a country known for its religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. In the Indonesian context, harmony between religious communities is very important to prevent social conflicts and build harmonious relationships between community groups of different faiths. Interfaith dialogue is not just a formal conversation, but a process that involves a deep understanding of the teachings of other religions, mutual respect for differences, and building a sense of solidarity. This kind of dialogue can reduce tensions between religious

communities, prevent radicalization, and strengthen the values of tolerance and diversity that are the basis of the Indonesian state. Interfaith dialogue is the main key in creating sustainable peace in Indonesia, which is able to unite humanity in diversity without sacrificing each other's identities and beliefs.

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