

Tolerance as Cross-Cultural Communication among Religions in Indonesia

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Abstract Indonesia, without question, consists of various ethnicities, culture, and also religions. This country is so plural that identities may appreciate, correlate, and live together as a nation despite many differences within. They communicate as human beings with different understandings. Differences may be burdens to communicate, but these also indicate potential to shape dialogues between one and another. The dialogues then show tolerance among Indonesians. This paper would like to answer; how tolerance be reflected in cross-cultural communication among religions in Indonesia? By using qualitative descriptive method, this research asserts plural realities of Indonesia, cross-cultural communication, and tolerance among people. Tolerance itself is such an active mode of communication. People do not only talk in language but also speak through their identities towards other in everyday life. It is like constructivism which believes in own identities but also practice its thoughts to others. People are bound in their identities because those are what they believe. Meanwhile, people are related to others' identities because they live respectfully. It is true that tolerance is such an ethical deed of Indonesian people. Despite differences and many restrictions in religions, culture, or even politics, Indonesians respect each other in necessary ways. Even their own identities are used to practice goodness towards others too. In conclusion, tolerance is how to speak cross-cultural communication among Indonesian people. As a nation, people appreciate each other as everyone has the same right. As religious persons, their religions push Indonesians to do good deeds towards others too.

Keywords cross-cultural communication, culture, religion, tolerance

Introduction

Indonesia is rich of differences within. Its vast geographical area shape such various cultural understandings about how people live in their own circumstances. Religions are embraced, ethnicities are believed, and identities are deeply understood in Indonesia. Pluralities in multicultural frames are inevitable in this nation and country both vertically as seen in social structures and horizontally as described in identities (Widiyanto, 2017:109). There is no single dominant identity for other religions. It is true that there are majority and minority as listed in different amount of people. Meanwhile, people still live together. Any identity does not live alone here. It is constructed by others and shapes others too. Any identity, especially religion, lives in such crisscrossed situation with others.

Among plural realities of different identities in Indonesia, the main keyword is communication among people. Communication is both using language and the language itself. People speak towards others in their own identities by facing others' too (Mushodiq, 2017:386-387). It is interaction that indicates cross-cultural communication. It is never one-sided since communication is about giving and taking

as well. In religion matters, tolerance is something between them. Tolerance still holds to own identity while appreciates others' (Mushodiq, 2017:386). The question is; how tolerance is the reflection of cross-cultural communication among religions in Indonesia? Tolerance is such active communication among people in Indonesia. Since Indonesia consists of plural realities of identities, the communication is always cross-cultural. By using qualitative descriptive method, this research asserts plural realities of Indonesia, cross-cultural communication, and tolerance among people. People do not only talk in language but also speak through their identities towards others in everyday life.

Inter-Personal and Inter-Cultural Communications

How to draw tolerance could be started by understanding communication as deeds towards others. It is not supposed to build own selves but to realize such attitudes towards others. Related to verbal, listening, written, and non-verbal as four forms of communication, a person always gets closed to other person. In other words, communication is about inter-personal itself. It may explain itself since it

is well-known. However, it should be understood that communication in this topic is not related to just giving messages, showing things, or gaining advantages, but emphasizing on interpersonal aspects of people.

What is truly important in interpersonal aspect of communication is that subject still remains as subject while seeing others too as subjects. A person is still someone with his/her full identities and knowledge. He/she then sees other people as human beings too. It is a reciprocal interaction by seeing oneself as equal as other selves. This inter-personal aspect shows someone see others not as objects for himself/herself but as adequate subjects. This communication includes equalities as its main ideas which complicate with differences within. Both subjects are interdependent from others and exchanging information based on own and others' knowledge too. By indicating this structure, inter-personal interaction remains in tolerance which understanding own knowledge, exchanging information, and appreciating others.

Inter-personal relations overcome closed communication into more open and equal ways. The relation resolves subject-object interactions into subject-subject understandings. The spirit is not to reduce others as merely objects but to rise knowledge about them. It is not about

talking to own self, but it is an open dialogue. Others are understood in its singular presence in its particular living patterns. Others are not aimed to be reduced in interactions, but enriched through wider communication. Martin Buber stated this condition in I-Thou relations (Zank and Braiterman, 2014). He put out modern logic which see others only as objects as seen in I-It relation. As communication reveals condition of others, others also remain in presence. Therefore, others are Thou which is in equal level of I. There is not adequate concept to reduce inter-human connection at all. Inter-personal relation is actually ontological reality that stays at communication among singular people.

Inter-personal relation also indicate inter-cultural aspects of communication. Main idea of inter-cultural is about communitarian aspect of people. A person is never only consists of single identities but multiple ones. He or she is a process of culture which he/she plays roles in various conditions. Inter-cultural communication then means intersections among cultures even it is just face-to-face meetings. When someone meet other person, it is not just simple interaction but also dialogue of culture. When someone speaks, he/she also reflects his/her culture at the same time. There is never neutral and zero conditions

in interactions but always brings in presupposed cultural knowledge.

Inter-cultural aspect of communication is emphasized by Jurgen Habermas (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). He stated how both micro rationality as stated in everyday dialogues may justify macro rationality as seen in modern culture. Everyday dialogues cannot escape from how structure of culture affect someone's ideas to communicate. For example, people who embraced such religion more or less are affected by his/her religious beliefs and sometimes talk about religious concepts in interactions. Meanwhile, wider mode of communication in modern societies are also rooted in everyday culture. Islam Nusantara and Catholic Indonesia are two sufficient examples to indicate that grass root culture reflects national religious faces. From both micro and macro rationalities, it can be seen that inter-cultural interaction appreciates individualities and commonalities of culture. From this aspect, tolerance is understood in how culture respects each other reflected in everyday communication of people.

Both Buber's and Habermas' concepts assert that communication is not just about sending and receiving messages and meanings. They show that subjects and their culture are as important as the meaningful messages. Buber explains how

someone sees others as equal as him/her but with different names. It is not I-It or even I-I, but I-Thou which still portrays uniqueness of I and appreciates diversities of Thou. Other people are never meant to be only reduced as objects but singular and particular human beings to talk with. It is similar to tolerance which does not narrow down particularities of others but accentuate knowledge and identities of others too. Habermas in his theory of communication try to bridge cultural meanings of micro and macro dimensions. Everyday dialogue and modern societies are two different aspects but always correlate one to another. Someone may always reflect own identities and others too. However, it never restricts them to communicate each other. Communication is the bridge of tolerance itself that underscores particular and world cultural ideas among people.

Tolerance, Cross-Cultural Communication, and Ethical Deeds

How Indonesian people relate to other people cannot be separated from subjectivity and otherness. Subjectivity is about identities embraced by people. People speak to others always in context of their knowledge (Erlewine, 2010:7). The knowledge itself is the reflection of their identities so that being subjective is not such selfishness but understanding of the

identities. Being subjective means speaking in the area of own identities towards others. Meanwhile, it cannot be separated from otherness which seems like object for subjective human beings. People relate to and also interact with others by emphasizing on how others understand themselves too (Erlewine, 2010:7-8). Otherness is not merely object but such consideration for subject to speak to. People could not only relate to subjectivity while neglecting otherness. Others are real too since those relate to other identities too. Own identities then are never enough to answer everything but need to accommodate and adapt to otherness (Findlay, 1998:1-2). These construct and as well being constructed by others. Speaking in religious matters of Indonesians, any major or minor religion never stands by itself but always relates to others (Bakar, 2015:4-5). Major religion like Islam cannot abandon other minor religions because others are also believed by human beings too. Majority does not take all but it should facilitate all, so that what is believed could be realized well too. It is the same with minority which cannot be dominant because other religion also has the same right compared to it. In Indonesia, a religion may be major in an area but be minor in other place (Widiyanto, 2017:111). Islam may be dominant in Java but minor in East

Timor. So does with minor religions which could be major in other region. Bali for example is full of Hindu people with other minor religions living together. The main idea is having togetherness and respect among human beings.

Mutual interaction between subjectivity and otherness above shows that a religion cannot be so dominant in its power in Indonesia. Rights given to religions are not so total at all or even monolithic but so contextual as those are situated (Findlay, 1998:137-38). It is limited in its own identities while also being restricted by others as seen in Syracuse Principles of Human Rights. For instance, Islam can practice its teachings in their own knowledge among its believers but it cannot speak freely about Christian or Buddhism. A religion has its limitation not to speak about others. There are also restrictions from other religions which have different teachings from Islam. The differences are still intact because any religious teaching does not stand for itself but being realized towards others (Casram, 2016:188-189). It is always limited by own knowledge and restricted by others' understandings of religions.

Religions in Indonesia are living together in interactions within the same country. Indonesians live between specificity and commonality in everyday

life. People's specificity lie in their identities including religions they believe in (Erlewine, 2010:9). They speak, preach, and practice their religions based on its own teachings. The teachings only apply to those who believe in it. It is such a must for religious believers to practice their own religions. It is only specific to believers of such religions. On the other hand, Indonesians also live commonality as a nation and country. As people would live together under the same umbrella, it is also a must to appreciate others by letting others practice their religions (Casram, 2016:190). Besides, Indonesian people also practice own religions to do good deeds to others. Living differently in a common nation makes people move for others (Barker, 2013:44). People do not neglect or abandon others because their religions also tell them not to do so. Identities then also reflect specific and common ideas about people. Religious ideas are actually understood inside and practiced outside. Religions never tell their believers to hurt others but to conserve goodness among people. Religions as identities do not only mean in esoteric way but also push the believers to practice good deeds.

Religions in Indonesia both speak in itself and to others. They do communication inside known as religious practice and cross-cultural one towards other religions. In interactions among

religions, perception is important as somehow it can shape better or even worse understanding. Differences are more usually seen rather than similarities. Cross-cultural communication expands one-sided judgments and closed prejudices towards recognition of others (Hurn and Tomalin, 2013:15). In the frame of religions, it is like suspending own identities by still putting attentions to others. Other identities are not better or worse, only different. Own religion is certain but there are other truths in public sphere which result to ambiguity of everyday life. Accepting differences to see wider perspectives from other human beings, recognizing ignorance to minimize cultural bias, filling in missing contextual information, taking responsibilities of own identities and others' are necessary in communication with other religions (Hurn and Tomalin, 2013:15). Those action will never cancel, omit, or neglect own identities but enrich more understandings.

The explanation about Indonesian religions above cannot be separated from tolerance in Indonesia. Tolerance is one step ahead from communication. It is like agree in disagreement (Yunus, 2013:6). While communication relates only speaking in messages and receiving them, tolerance also concerns cultural aspects of them. Tolerance appreciate how others talk and understand the messages and any

meaning within (Barker, 2013:45). Being tolerant means both understand own identities while still appreciate others'. It is not being dominant by eliminating others or making others only as object. Tolerance make others as subjects too. It also means endurance, acceptance, or support, in the term of multiculturalism (Barker, 2013:181).

Tolerance is also ethical deed. It is what most Indonesian think about tolerance. Tolerance is about doing good things to others without any restraints on differences among people. Doing good things is only good to be done without questions. It is good because if everyone does it, then it is also good for society (Barker, 2013:181-182). Many people doing good will also build such harmony within society. It is good because religions teach people to do good things based on its teachings. Religions in Indonesia do not teach conflicts but correlations through dialogues among people. Once again, it is good because it is such appreciation to others as human beings. It is top of humanity which puts attention to otherness with various identities. Tolerance does not omit own identities but enriches them. It does not erode principles in religions but widens understandings of own religions towards others. Tolerance as ethics open up possibilities for others to move freer (Hurn and Tomalin, 2013:14).

Moreover, tolerance as ethics also means that anything people do will return to them. It is the essence of interactions. If people appreciate others, they also will be appreciated. If people correlate with others through dialogues, openness among people will appear to erode suspicions among others (Yunus, 2013:7-8). Tolerance then is also a way to know other better which make people to understand themselves better. As religions teach good things then humanity may rise too. Self will not be selfish but gets its purpose towards otherness. Identities are not for their own believers but to realize better world for others too. Tolerance as ethical deeds then reflect cross-cultural communication too. To communicate is not only making others understand the messages but also modifying those aspects based on others conditions. What is known then is said by individual but based on commonalities in tolerance. Religions are not shaped to be dominant but to appreciate other culture too. Culture is never ignorable in religions but they walk together within everyday life.

Realities of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia

Plural religions is inevitable in Indonesia (Yunus, 2013:7). Therefore, living together with many religions is also unavoidable in this country. It is such

natural condition of individuals and society of this nation. People may ignore others but they could not omit that absolute reality. People may only let others do their religious practices in rituals and it already reflected openness and tolerance as well (Salim, 2017:3-4). Letting others to pray by their own religious teachings is also the main idea of religious tolerance in Indonesia. There are some modifications of the tolerance such as understanding others' truth, minimizing crucial differences, underlining similarities, cultivating togetherness, and evading horizontal conflicts, but the essence is still the same (Salim, 2017:6).

Tolerance in Indonesia can be divided into two type; passive and active ones. Both of them are totally tolerant but stay at different levels. The differentiation does not want to conclude or even judge which one is more tolerant than the other. Passive and active ones are done by Indonesian people frequently, significantly, and even reciprocally. Sometimes, it is so difficult to say whether one is included as passive or active. Both actions are so mixed in everyday life. Both are also good in society. Both can be clearly seen through examples in everyday life. Everyone has own role to do good things to others (Salim, 2017:5). What are explained later are not based on either constitutional or citizen rights, but what

naturally happen in Indonesia right at the heart of people's everyday life.

Passive tolerance means letting others do religious practice or prayers. Letting means does not restrict or close any chance for others to do regular prayers. It also means letting others do religious rituals based on their own teachings. Moreover, it is also tolerance to let others celebrate their important religious big days. For example, people let Muslims do five times prayer and sound *adzan* call for prayers in all regions of Indonesia. *Idul Fitri* and *Idul Adha* are also permitted to be realized anywhere. Others let Christians go to churches every Sunday, toll the bells for daily signs, and do devotions they used to practice. Easter and Christmas are also allowed to be done. People let Hindu people to pray in *Pura* and celebrate *Nyepi* and *Galungan* especially in Bali and other places. Some Buddhist temples such as Borobudur and Mendut Temples are allowed to be used as place of rituals within *Waisak* ceremonial days. *Imlek* and *Cap Go Meh* are allowed to be celebrated and commemorated by *Kong HuCu* people within Indo-Chinese culture.

Those passive tolerance indicate how Indonesian people care to others' religions. Letting others do prayers and celebrate important days also reflect tolerance as not hurting others. It is true that every religion has own truth and

sometimes relate to others too. Sometimes, holy books even said bad things about other religions. However, tolerance means not saying things that may hurt others. For the sake of being together as a nation and equal as human beings, bad sayings should be put aside (Salim, 2017:6). Letting others do religious practice also shows that others may keep their truth of dogma as it is written for them. Others may not interfere others' teachings since it is limited to own religions and restricted by others' too.

Active tolerance is more advance than passive one. These active doings not only let others but also help them to realize religious practice, congratulate others' religious important days, feel the same joy and happiness as others celebrate feast day, and even study other religions to understand them better. All of those actions never erode own identities but enrich them. Those actions are also actual implementation of own teachings to do good things and to improve knowledge of others. Some churches changed their weekly mass hours, such as in Cathedral Jakarta and Protestant church in Solo, so that Muslims could do *shalat Idul Fitri* and *Idul Adha* and use churches' parking places for Muslims (Ayuningtyas, 2019, www.liputan6.com). Some Muslims people help other religions to guard worship places, such as what *Banser NU* and *Pemuda Muhammadiyah* usually do in

Surabaya and Bandung, so that others can do religious practices safely. Muslims and Christians in Bali guard surroundings when Hindu people do *Nyepi* ritual (Utami, 2019, www.suara.com). Tourists are restricted to go to *Prambanan* and *Borobudur* temples within Buddha and Hindu religious ceremonies. Some people congratulate others in having feast day for example *silaturahmi* in *Idul Fitri* in Yogyakarta and exchange gifts in Christmas in Kupang and Manado (Rahman, 2018, www.idntimes.com). Many people used to give food on Christmas or *Imlek* day and others receive it well in Bangka and Semarang. People feel the same joy and happiness as others celebrate goodness. Some Muslim scholars study in Christian universities and in reverse, such as what some pastors do, not to eradicate own religions but to widen understandings about others' religions (Kurniawan, 2017, www.kompas.com).

However, there are still problems of tolerance in Indonesia. Most of the problems are rooted from closed religion's teachings. Some Muslims are not allowed to congratulate others in their important days since it may erode own faith (Bakar, 2015:2-3 and Rahman, 2018, www.idntimes.com). Some Catholics are so closed to keep their religious purity. Many worship places are prohibited to be built because major religions do not allow

them. Students with minor religions do not get religious lessons well compared to majority one. Religious restrictions be the main reasons why tolerance is not allowed. Many hateful speeches are spread to shape constant stereotypes about other religions (Mushodiq, 2017:399-400). Even some of them led to terrorism as seen in some suicide bombings in Indonesia, for example what has been done in some churches in Surabaya in 2018. Cultural prejudices sometimes become common idea to value others' religions. Individual egoism and esoteric teachings also restrict people to take care of others who believe in different religions.

Conclusion

Tolerance is cross-cultural communication among religions and religious people in Indonesia. By being tolerant, people also take care of others. Doing something for others also being done something to ourselves. Appreciating others means others will appreciate us too. Tolerance does not eliminate own identities but enriches them. Religious teachings even tell people to do good things to others and not hurting them. Even some tolerant doings are realized because religious identities push them to do so. In Indonesia, people let others do religious practice, feel the same joy in religious big days, and even study other religions to

widen understandings. Tolerance also reflects ethical deeds since it is doing good for other human beings. It is also good to shape harmony, togetherness, and also stability among people in Indonesian society.

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