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SUFISM AND SOCIAL HARMONY BRIDGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Salman Faris Dalimunthe[1], Anggi Sahputra[2]

harismunthe323@gmail.com , anggisahputra719@gmail.com

[12]State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Sufism can play an important role in promoting social harmony and bridging cultural differences in a pluralistic society. A pluralistic society consisting of various cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds requires efforts to promote social harmony and bridge cultural differences. In this context, Sufism can play an important role in promoting social harmony and tolerance. Sufism, with its emphasis on spiritual and moral values, can help individuals and communities to understand and appreciate cultural differences, and promote cooperation between individuals and communities from different backgrounds. This study is a literature study that aims to analyze the contribution of Sufism teachings in building social harmony in a pluralistic society. Using a qualitative approach and content analysis methods on various classical and contemporary literature, this study explores Sufi values such as universal love (mahabbah), tolerance, simplicity, and empathy as the foundation of social ethics that can bridge cultural and religious differences. The results of the study indicate that Sufism not only plays a role as a personal spiritual path, but also as an effective social instrument in strengthening cohesion between groups of people with different backgrounds. This study emphasizes the importance of revitalizing Sufism values in the context of education, preaching, and the development of a multicultural society as an effort to maintain peace and social harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Pluralistic societies consisting of various cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds require efforts to promote social harmony and bridge cultural differences. In this context, Sufism can play an important role in promoting social harmony and tolerance. Sufism, with its emphasis on spiritual and moral values, can help individuals and communities to understand and appreciate cultural differences, and promote cooperation between individuals and communities from different backgrounds.

Sufism has long been an important part of spiritual and social life in various societies. Sufism values such as tolerance, empathy, and compassion can help promote social harmony and tolerance in pluralistic societies. Therefore, research on Sufism and social harmony can help understand the role of Sufism in promoting social harmony and tolerance in pluralistic societies.

In this study, we will discuss the role of Sufism in promoting social harmony and bridging cultural differences in pluralistic societies. We will analyze how Sufism can help promote tolerance, appreciate cultural differences, and promote cooperation between individuals and communities from different backgrounds.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method, which is a method that relies on an in-depth study of various relevant literature to understand, interpret, and analyze the research theme. The library study was chosen because the topic of Sufism and social harmony is more theoretical-conceptual and requires an exploration of the thoughts of Sufis, both classical and contemporary, as well as an understanding of the socio-cultural context of pluralistic society. A qualitative approach is used because this study does not focus on quantitative or statistical data, but rather on the meaning, values, and understanding of the teachings of Sufism in relation to social harmony. This study is included in the category of descriptive-analytical library research, which describes concepts and analyzes them critically to gain an in-depth understanding

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Understading Tasawuf

Understanding the concept of mysticism in Islam requires a deep understanding of the definition and relationship of mysticism teachings to the teachings of Islam itself. Therefore, an explanation of this is very important. When discussing Islamic mysticism, the author emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning and relevance of Sufism in the context of Islam. This explanation is very crucial.

Sufism has many definitions expressed by experts, but it is not possible to include all the definitions completely in this article. Therefore, the author will trace the origin of the word Sufism and several definitions that are considered important by experts.

Various opinions regarding the definition of Sufism were found, including seven different views regarding the meaning of Sufism from an etymological perspective. Sufism is often associated with the term Ahl al-Suffah, which describes a simple life and diligence in worship.

Ahl al-Suffah was a group of individuals during the time of Rasulullah SAW who spent a lot of time in the mosque verandas. They tend to dedicate their lives completely to worshiping Allah SWT.

According to Muhammad Labib, the term ahl-Shuffah has a slightly different meaning. He explained that ahl-Shuffah refers to people who migrated with the Prophet Muhammad SAW from Mecca to Medina and experienced loss of property and lived in poverty. They lived in the Prophet's mosque and slept on stone benches using saddles as pillows. Despite living in poverty, ahl-Shuffah had noble and good hearts. This attitude of not prioritizing the world and having a noble heart is what characterizes the Sufis.

Tolerance In Suspicion

Tolerance etymologically comes from the Latin tolerare, which means 'to restrain oneself'. In a social context, tolerance means an attitude of respecting and accepting differences in beliefs, views, and identities. In Islam, the concept of tolerance is rooted in the principles of la ikraha fi al-din (there is no compulsion in religion)

[QS. Al-Baqarah: 256] and lakum dinukum wa liya din (to you your religion, and to me my religion) [QS. Al-Kafirun: 6].

Sufism is an inner dimension of Islamic teachings that focuses on purifying the soul, a spiritual approach to Allah, and achieving moral perfection. Sufis base their spiritual journey on love (mahabbah), fana' (melting away the ego), and spiritual stations that lead to harmony with creatures.

The phenomenon of intolerance in the name of religion is still a major problem in modern society. In this context, Sufism is present as an offer of spiritual solutions that emphasize aspects of compassion (mahabbah), respect for differences (ta'āruf), and the elimination of self-egoism (fana). Sufism views that all creatures are manifestations of God's creation that deserve to be respected. Therefore, tolerance is not only a social value, but also a spiritual value on the journey towards God.

The concept of mahabbah (Divine love) is the core of Sufism teachings. Love for Allah is the main reason behind all the practices of a Sufi. However, this love is not limited to God alone, but also leads to love for all of His creation. This concept is reflected in the teachings of Jalaluddin Rumi who said:

Sufis emphasize that without love for God, it is impossible for a person to truly love his fellow creatures. Therefore, in Sufism, love for fellow human beings is not merely a feeling of empathy, but also a recognition of the essence of the spiritual unity between humans and God.

DISCUSSION

Understanding Social Harmony

In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, the term harmony is defined as a state of harmony or harmony (Meity, 2001:165), while social refers to things related to society, including attention to public interests. Enda MC defines social as a way for individuals to establish good relationships and respect each other. Based on this understanding, social harmony can be understood as a condition in which individuals live in line and in harmony with the values that apply in their society.

This harmony is usually marked by solidarity and a sense of belonging among members of society (Wahyu, 2017:20).

Social harmony reflects a balanced and stable state in community life. This term combines two words that are interrelated and inseparable from each other. In a social context, harmony can only be realized if there is an attitude of mutual respect and affection, both in the family environment and in society at large. Therefore, social harmony reflects the ideal aspiration in a peaceful, inclusive, and mutually respectful community life.

The diversity of Indonesian society's backgrounds—from ethnicity, culture, religion, tradition, education, to economy is an unavoidable reality. However, behind these differences lies a social beauty that can grow if society is able to establish harmonious relationships, understand each other, and develop values of tolerance and empathy. In practice, this diversity often becomes a source of prolonged horizontal conflict. Various factors can be triggers, including economic inequality, lack of education, and cultural differences. Ironically, conflict can also arise in ethnically or culturally homogeneous communities, such as rural communities who tend to resolve problems through physical violence rather than dialogue (Benyamin, 2014:247).

Conflict can occur anywhere, regardless of social background, religion, or level of education. Every individual has the potential to be involved in social conflict, except those who have clarity of thought, broad-mindedness, and the ability to control emotions and desires. Differences in culture and tradition between regions also give rise to unique community characters. If not managed properly, this diversity can be a source of conflict. However, on the other hand, if used as a shared strength, diversity will become an invaluable national asset.

Understanding Culture

Culture is a complex and dynamic concept, which is learned and passed down from one generation to the next through the process of socialization and social interaction. Culture can also adapt to changes in the environment and technology, thus forming a coherent and systematically integrated system of beliefs and behaviors in society. By understanding these characteristics of culture, we can better appreciate the complexity and dynamics of culture in society.

The concept of culture encompasses several important aspects, namely lifelong learning, intergenerational transmission, social interaction, continuous adaptation, and consistency and integration. By understanding these aspects, we can better appreciate the complexity and dynamics of culture in society.

According to Taylor (1989), culture has several key characteristics that shape the identity and behavior of a society. First, culture is learned throughout life through experience and social interaction. Second, parents play an important role in transmitting cultural values to the next generation. Third, interaction with others can enrich and develop culture. Fourth, culture continues to adapt to changes in the environment and the needs of society. Finally, cultural elements tend to be consistent and systematically integrated, forming a coherent system of beliefs and behaviors.

Cultural differences can be a source of conflict in community life. Conflicts between ethnic groups caused by differences in values have occurred in several cases, such as the conflicts in Poso, Ambon, and the Sampit tragedy. Therefore, to achieve Indonesia's goal of being a united country, efforts need to be made to overcome divisions and promote understanding between ethnic groups. One way to achieve this is by increasing openness and awareness of differences in views between ethnic groups, so as to reduce the potential for conflict and strengthen unity.

In this context, intercultural education and communication can play an important role in promoting understanding and tolerance between ethnic groups. By understanding and appreciating cultural differences, we can build more harmonious relationships and strengthen national unity. The government and society can work together to develop programs aimed at promoting intercultural awareness and understanding, thereby reducing the potential for conflict and strengthening national unity. In this way, we can create a more harmonious and peaceful society, where cultural differences can be a strength and wealth for the Indonesian nation.

Cultural awareness is very important in managing cultural differences in society. This is because cultural differences often cause conflicts that can divide society. People often forget that each group has unique and different cultural patterns and styles. Therefore, it is important for us to understand and appreciate these cultural differences.

Some ways to accept cultural differences are:

1. Accepting that every human being has uniqueness and differences that cannot be changed.
2. Realizing that we cannot choose the tribe or nation we are born into
3. View differences as wealth and strength, not as shortcomings.
4. Communicate well and openly if there is a dispute or difference of opinion.

With high cultural awareness and open attitude, we can promote social integration and maintain harmony in a diverse society. Therefore, it is important for us to continue to promote cultural awareness and tolerance in our daily lives.

The Role Of Suspicion In Bridging Cultural Differences In A Pluralistic Society

Discussions on interfaith relations in the discourse of religious pluralism have attracted much attention in recent decades. This is inseparable from the fact that religion is a topic that is never exhausted to be studied, especially when associated with religious expressions that in some cases raise concerns. Religious pluralism is interpreted differently by Indonesian Muslim scholars, both from a sociological, theological, and ethical perspective. Sociologically, religious pluralism is a social reality that society consists of adherents of various different religions. This is a reality that is inevitable and cannot be denied (Wahid, 2006:51).

However, religious pluralism often intersects with the claim of truth in the teachings of a particular religion. This claim strengthens a believer's belief in his religion. However, a critical question arises: which religion is the most correct? Due to human limitations in understanding the absolute truth of all religions, the idea was born that all religions contain values of goodness and therefore deserve to be respected. In this view, a person does not have to state that only his religion is correct, but he needs to acknowledge that other religions also have noble values that deserve to be respected (Hidayat, 2004:89).

M. Rasjidi explains that religion is something that cannot be negotiated or replaced like a house or clothes. Belief in religion is one with a person's identity. Therefore, it is difficult for religious people to be objective in religious matters because they are emotionally and spiritually involved. A Muslim, for example, is consciously fully involved in Islamic teachings. However, Rasjidi also recognizes religious plurality as a historical and social reality that must be faced with a wise attitude (Rasjidi, 1992:101).

In line with that, A. Mukti Ali differentiates between social pluralism and theological

pluralism. He put forward five approaches to fostering harmony between religious communities. First, syncretism, which is the view that all religions are basically the same. Second, reconception, which is reviewing one's own religion in encounters with other religions. Third, synthesis, which is creating a new religion from elements of various religions. Fourth, replacement, which is the belief that only one's own religion is true and the effort to invite others to embrace it. Fifth, agree in disagreement, which is sticking to one's own beliefs while respecting the beliefs of others (Mukti Ali, 1992:227).

Mukti Ali chose the fifth approach as the ideal way to build religious harmony. According to him, a person needs to believe that the religion he adheres to is the most correct, but at the same time, he must also respect other people's beliefs about their own religion (Mukti Ali, 1992:229).

In the context of the diversity of multicultural Indonesian society, this approach is very relevant. This is where the role of Sufism becomes significant in bridging cultural and religious differences. With a spiritual approach that emphasizes love, tolerance, and awareness of the oneness of God, Sufism is able to reduce fanaticism and strengthen human values. Values such as empathy, sincerity, and self-control taught in Sufism provide space for the creation of social harmony in a culturally and religiously diverse society.

Sufism also places the values of sincerity and universal brotherhood as the basis for treating fellow human beings. The teachings of Sufi figures such as Jalaluddin Rumi and Al-Ghazali emphasize the importance of love and inner awareness as the foundation for relating to others, regardless of differences in background. This approach indirectly opens up a space for more honest and respectful dialogue between religious adherents. Therefore, Sufism is not only a personal spiritual practice, but also a real contribution to strengthening an inclusive and peaceful social order (Nasr, 2001:143).

Sufism, then, is not only a personal spiritual path, but also a collective means to build a society that respects, loves, and lives side by side. If Indonesian Muslims are able to revive this Sufi spirit, then they can be an example in building true tolerance based on universal spiritual and humanitarian values. In a world filled with tension due to differences, Sufism is present as a light that shows that peace is not a utopia, but something that can be pursued through the path of love, wisdom, and self-purification.

CONCLUSION

Islam brings a message of compassion and tolerance for all humanity, and in Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population, it has proven that Islam can be interpreted in an inclusive and peaceful way, with diverse and tolerant spiritual wealth, Indonesia can be an example for other nations in building harmony and peace, and showing that Islam can coexist with humanitarian values and social harmony, thus becoming an inspiration for the global community in building a better and more harmonious life.

In a religious context, the spiritual path taken by Sufis offers a unique and profound perspective on tolerance and harmony between religious communities. Through intense spiritual experiences, Sufis are able to view religion as part of an inner experience that is not limited to dogma and ritual alone. This allows them to build harmonious relationships with others, regardless of religious background and beliefs. Indonesia, as a country with great religious and belief diversity, can utilize this spiritual wealth to build a more effective and down-to-earth dialogue on tolerance. In this way, Indonesia can be an example for other nations in building a more harmonious and peaceful society, as well as promoting the values of tolerance and harmony between religious communities at the global level. Through this spiritual experience, we can build bridges between communities and foster a sense of mutual respect and appreciation.

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