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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

RELIGIOUS MANUSCRIPTS IN MULTICULTURALISM FOR A BETTER LIFE (HUMANITY AND PEACE)

SEPTEMBER, 4TH & 5TH 2015



Institut Hindu Dharma Negeri Denpasar
2015

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR PROCEEDING ON:
Religious Manuscripts in Multiculturalism for a Better Life (Humanity and
Peace)**

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Publisher : Institut Hindu Dharma Negeri Denpasar
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Cover's Picture : White Whales and Bugis Books

Printed September 2015

ISBN: 978-602-72630-2-4

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HINDU CONCEPTS IN DEVELOPING MULTICULTURALISM

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1. Introduction

Essentially, religion intends to be guidance for human morality and hence human will find and uphold their humanity values. It is expected that awareness to embrace religion can stimulate awareness of the importance and the value of the presence of others who are probably different and unique. The awareness of the importance of the presence of others enables self to exist and the growth of individual good manners and social piety and precisely it is the objective of religious education.

Religious education is considered to be agent of change that helps human find their image as civilized human. It is expected that through the religious education human is able to uncover their humanity potentials and to raise self awareness of how noble their humanity values are. Such awareness plays an important role in Indonesian multicultural society.

However, it is point out that in fact religion has triggered conflicts and violence in recent Indonesian society. Sincere service to God often results in the fact that human do not pay a good attention to themselves and the faith of their fellow men. For the shake of God, human are required to sacrifice themselves and others' life. Superficial and wrong understanding of religion and God has triggered various kinds of violence in a society. Ironically, religious truth is believed to be sacred and absolute one (Mulkhan, 2005).

Using the aforementioned condition as point of departure, it is necessary to establish a new paradigm in religious education that was expected to strengthen multicultural spirit in Indonesia, of course through exploration of religious concepts for that purpose.

2. Rationales

According to Liliweri (2005) multiculturalism relates to doctrine or "ism" of raising individual or collective awareness of cultural diversity that subsequently results in the attitude of tolerance, dialogue, cooperation among ethnics and races. There are two important variables or the multiculturalism, viz. (1) the process of raising individual and collective awareness of cultural diversity that aims at (2) urges the emergence of the attitude of tolerance, dialogue and cooperation among various ethnics and races.

Relationship with fellow men must be considered as interactionism that sees the relationship between self and "others" as dialectic. This concept denies that certain identity has the same meaning and at the same time has different meaning for those who are the bearers of the identity. Even, it confirms that the self identity closely relates to the identity of "others" (and the contrary), that both self and "others" constantly change and that they are the same and at the same time different. The interactionism is convinced that both cultural and social exchanges are not necessary to result in the abolition of the difference or

the preservation of the difference, but they pose challenges to the self, including continuous learning and growth (Fay, 2002).

One of the forms or the process of raising individual and collective awareness of cultural diversity is religious education. It is expected that cultivation of humanity values through the religious education can engender human beings with tolerant attitude. When there are various riots and violence with religious nuance it is pointed out that religion has failed in teaching human beings how to have good manners and social piety.

New Paradigm in Religious Education

Biku Parekh, the proponent of the theory of multiculturalism as quoted by Budiman (2005) recommends that multiculturalism does not serve as political doctrine with programmatic content and does not serve as philosophical school of thought with typical theory of the place of human beings in the world, but serves as a perspective or the way to see human life. There are three basic opinions of the multiculturalism that are according to Parekh misunderstood.

First, human beings are culturally related. It means that they live and grow in a world that is culturally structured and that they lead their life with its social relations in a system of meanings and in culturally meaning giving. However, it does not mean that human beings are completely determined by their culture. It means that human beings can not grow on the categories of their thoughts that critically evaluate values and meaning system. On the contrary, human beings are formed by the values and the meaning system, can overcome a part and not all of the impacts, and consequently see the world in a culture.

Second, different cultures represent a system of meanings and vision of a good and different life. Since each has been aware of its capacity and emotion and able to capture only a part of the existential totality of human beings, it needs other cultures to help better understand itself, suppress its egocentrism and prevent the power of its ego from considering itself as absolute.

Third, each culture is internally plural and reflects a dialogue between tradition and a combination of different thoughts. It does not mean that it is without any identity, but its identity is liquid, plural and open. It means that it grows from various interactions with other cultures both consciously and unconsciously, identifies itself through other cultures. Therefore, each culture brings elements of other cultures in itself (Budiman, 2005).

In contract to Parekh who considers multiculturalism not as political doctrine, Liliwari assumes that it is a set of central government policies designed in a way that all people can pay a good attention to the culture of all ethnic groups. The rationale is that all of the ethnic groups have contributed to the establishment and the development of a nation. Additionally, in majority of nations multiculturalism is a social concept introduced to government that the government can use it as government policy. The rationalization of the introduction of the multiculturalism in the policy making is that the government is considered to be representative and put in the position above the interests and the cultural practices of all of the ethnic groups of a nation. Consequently, it is expected that each government policy is able to urge the emergence of

the attitude of appreciation, tolerance, and equality among the ethnic groups, including the equality among languages, religions, and other cultural practices (Liliweri, 2005). For example, the concept of the multiculturalism in the United States of America is introduced in university curriculum for the students coming from various ethnical and racial backgrounds all over the world to pursue its political interest.

Meanwhile, the concept of the multiculturalism is in Indonesia still limited to discourse among elites and academicians and has not been formulated in a government policy. The vagueness of the approach in the multiculturalism in Indonesia is found in the question of the point of departure whether it is *ius solis*, *ius sanguinis* or *melting pot* that aggravates the condition of future social cohesion. The condition will be worse because the existing legal system that is not conducive and the extraordinary strong pressure on minority groups. Therefore, the apprehension of the conflict that results in violence is reasonable.

Therefore, the religious education still gives hope though many people question it (Heelas, 2003; Kimball, 2003; Supono, 2003). It is reasonable to question the powerless religious education when pluralism is not appreciated by many people of Indonesia, when so many people involve in the act of killing their fellow men because they follow different belief system—in order not to call it different religion—and when people easily commit violence for ethnic reasons and so on.

Religious education as an important part of humanity education is considered to be fail because it only transfers religious knowledge to students and not translate the religious knowledge into real actions in daily life. Up to the present it is limited to scriptural religious teachings (i.e., following doctrines contained in sacred books) and does not involve contextual religious teachings that are implemented in real world situation. Religious teachings contained in sacred books should be manifested in social religion, which is the internalization of religious teachings that are practiced in the real life as behavioral guidance (O'Dea, 1985; Nottingham, 1985; Scharf, 1995).

The recent emergence of various kinds of anarchism results from the mistakes in translating religious teachings that consider certain religion is the only true religion while other religions are considered as less complete and even wrong (Hendropuspito, 1986: 152). Religion has become theodicy that does not enable dialogue process whereas the religion in the recent situation should warrant individual participation, liberate, and warrant multiculturalism (Halim, 2002).

In other hand, as pointed out by Berger society is now experiencing anomie (Nashir, 1999; Triguna, 2005), which is a condition under which each individual human loses bonds that give him or her sense of security and stability with other human beings that he or she loses mutual understanding for guidance to pursue the goal and the meaning of life. Various concepts of human essence of human beings result in various views of what should be done and how to do it, which enter domestic sphere through sophisticated information technology in global era.

Globalization has resulted in increasingly high intensity of contact of local

cultural values and global cultural values. The existing local value system that is considered as behavioral reference often experiences transformation. The globalization process also takes place in the area of religious and sacred life and turns it into secular life. Consequently, it can stimulate tension for those embracing religion (Ardika, 2005). Modernization at certain level actually causes religious degradation both in public sphere and private sphere. Some religious institutions have lost their power and influence in various societies. However, both new and old religious belief and practices continuously develop in individual life and sometimes they form new institutions and raise religious spirit. Therefore, modernization gives birth to various societies and trigger quantum leap in intercultural communication and serves as the driving power of the emergence of pluralism and not the establishment (or the re-establishment) of religious monopoly (Berger, 2003).

In other words, the present era is not the era of absolute truth claim of certain religion that negates other truths. Therefore, comparative education of religions plays a very important role in preparing students for future social life in a society with various belief systems. The comparative education of religions does not intend to compare existing religions and establish one and only religion as absolute truth but it intends to provide students with dialogical comparative education of religions (Khan, 2003).

Dealing with the religious education in the multicultural society it is necessary to take a closer look at Durkheim's suggestion that religion can be understood only by considering its social role in building social cohesion (Turner, 2003). In other words the religious education must serve the function of building social cohesion. It is only possible if there is a growing awareness that religion is autonomous cultural phenomena that could not be reduced into merely economic interest and political demand in the multicultural society.

Hinduism and Multiculturalism

It is necessary to make systematic and planned effort to enter the core of a civilization, especially in learning hidden ideals of its religious concepts. From the beginning religion has supported human culture. It is great achievement and magnificent experience of human race. It is the deepest form of life that reflects difference, complex and contradictive stages of human life. Therefore, "new world order must have spiritual urge to provide social program with good manners and rational foundation." The emergence of various social problems, violence and the development of various spiritual sects amidst modernity products was indicative of the presence of spiritual need of human beings that has not been satisfied. Spirituality can be satisfied not only by worldly success or achievement in materialistic knowledge but also by creating ideals and prepared to struggle for them and to make willing sacrifice through prayers and worships.

The prayers and worships in ritual forms represent the greatest human effort to achieve divine attributes. Religion is a discipline that touches conscience and helps struggle against darkness power (*bhuta*), contempt (*nista*), save human beings from greed (*tamas*), desire (*kama*) and hatred (*dwesa*) and gives moral

power (*susila*) and braveness in the effort to save the world (*dira purusa*). As mind discipline, it has basic and important instrument in overcoming evils that threaten human existence in a civilized world. It implicates in surrendering mind and acts to *Pararatman's* truth.

In fact, religion that is up to the present expected to give solution has been fatally reduced. Dogma that used to be the way to divine world now becomes obstacle and even religion is considered to be barrier between human being and God and has destroyed the basic simplicity of spiritual life. Religion has to be considered as cohesion-building power that strengthens the solidarity of Indonesian people though there are historical weaknesses. It represents an invitation for spiritual adventure. It is not theology, but practice and discipline. The essence of religion does not end in dogma and creed in rites and ceremonies, but it is the deepest wisdom of all ages, *sanatana dharma*.

Spirituality represents ethos for Indonesian social and cultural life. The spirituality represents basic endurance in welcoming globalization era. There is not any single space in the spirituality for human being to play God, to determine and to play with the life of other fellow men. The obligations of religious human are to practice *yadnya* and to create the vision of collective welfare in term of brotherhood and not kinship. Since the vision of human welfare is the one that emerges naturally, there is not any obligation for human being to spread it using coercion or even using new kind of imperialism.

Some Hindu concepts may be offered in the effort to develop multiculturalism. Followings are some *slokas* that refers to the spirit of multiculturalism:

Yajur Weda 36.17

"Peace in heaven, peace in sky, peace on earth, peace in water, peace in all plants, peace over trees, peace for all gods, be peaceful in God. May god bless me with such peace."

Fully comprehending the *sloka* above, human beings essentially hope for peace in all aspects of their life. This hope will come true if communion was established in a society. The problem is that it is not easy to establish such communion and peace.

Introspection plays a very important role in developing multiculturalism. There are in Hinduism six enemies in human beings that must be controlled. They are referred to as *Sad Ripu* (*Sad* = six, *Ripu* = enemies) and consists of *Kama*, *Lobha*, *Krodha*, *Mada*, *Moha* and *Matsarya*. They are enemies in creating communion and peace. They originate in mind and hence if one wants to control them, he or she has to be able to control his or her mind. It is the mind that plays an important role because it determines everything, including conflicts and communion.

Sarasamuccaya sloka 79 says:

"the conclusion is that mind controls everything. If heart determines feelings, people say and do. Therefore, it is the mind that is the main source."

Subsequently, there is a metaphor in *Katha Upanisad I 3*:

"Know that the self is the Master of the cart

Body is the cart. Know that wisdom is coachman and mind is the bridling ropes.”

It is clear from the two quotes above that if human beings want to create communion and harmony among people of different religions in the spirit of multiculturalism; they have to be first able to control their mind for collective goodness and to avoid any possible cause of conflict because the mind is the source.

Especially, concerning with communion Atharwa Weda Kanda 3, sukta 30 says:

1. With this prayer I create and establish communion colored with wholehearted sincerity, unwavering mind, and far from hostility, between you and me. Of course, you respond it with mutual love and compassion as inseparable relation between female cow and its newly born calf.
2. Hopefully, the relation between you and me is like that between a child and his father, a mother and her child, a wife with her husband colored with sweet words as sweet as honey and sincere heart and wholehearted love and compassion.
3. With this prayer, there will be no quarrel because communion prevails and spoken words become bless to each other.
4. Hopefully, this prayer can give benevolence so that communion also prevails among Gods. Also hopefully, this prayer can create communion and peace condition among family members in this home.
5. Your superiority increases, your glory is achieved because you are not shattered. You have accomplished duties collectively. You move and move everything collectively with this prayer. Hopefully, you come here and lead harmonious life and hopefully, the communion becomes increasingly stable.
6. The place where you drink is one, the place where you eat is also one; I place you in a single working place. Worship God Agni that you can be in harmony as spokes of a wheel that converge in its axis.
7. With this prayer I reconcile and unite you as bananas of the same bunch. With the communion sooner or later the One will bless you strength, as strong as Him in defending His Amerta.

The book Reg Weda X. 191.2.3.4 also gives the guidance in raising the spirit of multiculturalism. It says:

1. Come together and organize a discussion, unite your ideas just like gods came together in days of yore, united, together in dedication.
2. Hopefully, your goal is the same; your discussion meets an agreement.
3. Make your mind and intention the same in the union. The same goal I have determined for you. Your mind is one and hence you can live together happily.

In addition to the slokas above there are many Hindu teachings that refer to the development of multiculturalism. Some of them are:

a. Tat Twam Asi

Literally, Tat Twam Asi means That is you. Tat Twam Asi teaches

decency and morality as human noble character such as fond of helping **others** who need help. It also teaches that the suffering of others is part of the suffering we experience, and happiness and peace and safety of **others** also make us happy. Fully comprehending the teaching we will be guided to always make any possible effort to make others happy and to lend a hand to those who are being afflicted by sufferings. The attitude of tolerance, mutual help and mutual assistance are attitudes necessary to develop for established multiculturalism in a society.

b. Tri Kaya Parisudha

Literally, Tri Kaya Parisudha means three limbs that have been purified, which are”

- Kayika parisudha
- Wacika parisudha
- Manacika parisudha

Kayika Parisudha is all behaviors related to purified body. Waciká parisudha is to talk in a good manner and truthfully. And, manacika parisudha is to think in a right and good manner. These are all Hinduism commands that must be practice in life for the purpose of getting well-being for self and others.

c. Yama and Niyama Brata

This teaching deals with self control at higher level. At beginner level (Yama) it is applied as guidance of good behavior and conduct in leading social life. Subsequently, Niyama level represents the preparation to establish relationship with Hyang Widhi Wasa.

These are all of the concepts in Hinduism that teach its followers to develop good manners in daily life for the purpose of establishing harmonious relation with fellow men, God’s creature.

3. Closing

Based on the description above it is necessary to pay a good attention to religious education that serves the function of establishing communion in a society. It will be materialized if there is a growing awareness of the fact that religion is autonomous cultural phenomena and can not reduced into merely economic interests and political demand in multicultural society. The present era is no more the era for claiming absolute truth of a religion and denying other truths. Therefore, comparative education of religions plays a very important role in preparing students for social life in a society with various belief systems.

In raising the spirit of the multiculturalism Hinduism offers the concepts of *ahimsa*, *trikaya parisudha*, *sat riphu*, and *yama niyama brata* to develop social cohesion in a society.

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Multiculturalism is a term used to describe one's view of the variety of life on earth, or the cultural policy which emphasizes on the acceptance of diversity, and a wide variety of cultures (multicultural) that exist in society in terms of values, systems, culture, customs, and politics. Every country has its own cultures. This fact can be seen from the socio-cultural and geographical sides which truly diverse and widespread.

The International Seminar under the theme of "Religious Manuscript in Multiculturalism for a Better Life (Humanity and Peace)" is intended as a researchers means to present their research research results, as well as exchange of information, deepening problems in various areas of expertise, as well as strengthen and mutually develop the beneficial academic cooperation on an ongoing basis and as an advice to the government in the form of the results of research and application of science and technology for the development of world sustainable development.

ISBN 978-602-72630-2-4



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