

THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND HARMONY AMONG THE PEOPLE OF SASAK TRIBE IN LOMBOK ISLAND, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper reveals the principles of religious tolerance and harmony among the people of Sasak Tribe, one of the tribes in Indonesia living in Lombok Island. This paper is the result of empirical research using juridical and sociological approach. The research found several principles of tolerance and religious harmony that live and thrive among Sasak people in Lombok Island. These principles are the principle of mutual respect, appreciating differences, keeping togetherness, fraternity, love of peace and abstinence to spread the disgrace of others. For the Muslim, the principles of religious tolerance and harmony are reinforced by arguments contained in the Quran and Hadith.

Keywords: Sasak, Tolerance, Harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Sociologically, there are various religions embraced by the people of Indonesia. From the time before the independence of Indonesia until now there are at least 6 (six) religions embraced by the people of Indonesia, namely Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestant, Catholic and Confucianism.¹ (Presidential Stipulation, 1965; Law, 1969). In addition to the six religions, there are also a number of beliefs that live and thrive in Indonesia. Some of the beliefs that still exist today are Subut, Pangestu, Sapta Dharma and Sumarah². Although there are a number of religions and beliefs, in reality, Indonesians can coexist peacefully. Good relationship exemplified by the Indonesians is driven by the principle of religious tolerance and harmony that exist among them.

Religious tolerance and harmony in the life of nation and state in Indonesia is very urgent. Therefore, Indonesia embraces the principle of freedom to religion. This principle is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in Article 28 E, which states in part:

“Everyone is free to embrace the religion and to worship according to their religion”.

The guarantee of religious freedom is also confirmed by Article 29 paragraph (2), stating that: “The state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his/her religion and belief”. The right to religion, according to the provisions of the Indonesian Constitution, is one of human rights that cannot be reduced under any circumstances as defined in Article 28 I Paragraph (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (1945), which among others states that the right to religion is a human right that cannot be reduced under any circumstances.

Although the Constitution has guaranteed the right to religion, this right, under the Indonesian Constitution, cannot be done at will. There are certain conditions to avoid interference with the right of other people, security and public order, state and nation. In other words, there are limitations that must be considered by people. The restrictions are in Article 28 J Paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution and Article 28 J paragraph (2) which determine that in the run of rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject to the specified restrictions by law with a view solely to ensure recognition as well respect for the rights and freedoms of other people and to satisfy fair demands accordingly with moral considerations, religious values, security and public order within a democratic society.

In connection with the guarantee of freedom to religion by the Constitution of Indonesia, the principle of religious tolerance and harmony is developed in daily life which includes religious tolerance and harmony between intra and interfaith people. Religious tolerance and harmony are an attitude of mutual respect for adherents of other religions. Among them are: a). Not forcing others to embrace a certain religion; b). Not denouncing/insulting other religions for any reason; and c). Not prohibiting or disturbing other religious people to worship based on their religion/belief.³ Inevitably, the growth of tolerance and harmony leads to peaceful living and avoids enmity.

Living in the midst of a pluralistic community of various religions inevitably makes Indonesian citizens apply religious tolerance and harmony both in the life of nation and state and society. In this circumstance, it is important for every believer to think about his/her relationship with other believers to avoid friction, clashes and chaos that will ruin the peacefulness of living together (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

Religious tolerance and harmony among the Indonesian nation have been imprinted long before the independence of Indonesia. According to the history of Indonesia, the principle of religious tolerance has been implemented in the Age of Majapahit. One such principle of tolerance is illustrated in the *sasanti*, which states “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” which means unity in diversity. The *sasanti* or slogan is contained in the Book of Sutasoma by Mpu Tantular. The *sasanti* at that time was directed to the people of Majapahit who embraced Hinduism (Shiva) and Buddhism, which essentially taught the believers of both religions still feel united despite different beliefs.⁴

The principles of religious tolerance and harmony have been implemented by the Indonesians, including Sasak people in Lombok Island. There are many interesting phenomena that appear in Sasak community that show the existence of tolerance and religious harmony, such as the short distance among each worshipping place, i.e., Mosque, Pura (temple), Church, Vihara, etc. Another interesting phenomenon is the sculpture that characterized Islam, China and Java located in the area of worship of the Hinduism. Religious harmony in Lombok presumably has been going on long time ago and is still maintained by the followers of religion in Lombok.

Due to the fact, the author is interested in examining the values and principles of religious tolerance and harmony that live and thrive among the Sasak people in Lombok Island.

METHODS

This paper aims to explore and discover the values and principles of religious tolerance and harmony developed among Sasak communities in Lombok Island. The data were obtained by conducting observations and interviews with traditional and religious figures in the Sasak community. The data were analysed using qualitative analysis method.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study through observation of the behaviour of Sasak community and interviews with traditional figures and religious leaders, it is found some values and principles of tolerance and religious harmony among Sasak people in Lombok Island, as follows:

The Principle of Mutual Respect

The first underlying principle of religious tolerance and harmony is the principle of mutual respect. Sasak people highly uphold mutual respect. This principle is expressed in the saying of the sasak who says:

“Solah eakm gawek-solah eakm dait, lenge eakm gawek - lenge eakm dait, ye gawek ye eak dait”.

It means good deeds will direct to good results. On the contrary, bad deeds will direct to bad result and whoever does an action will reap the rewards. In terms of tolerance and religious harmony, Sasak people will let a person worship based on his/her belief and will not bother him/her, for Sasak people believe that if someone's belief is wrong, he/she will reap the consequences. For Sasak people who are generally Islamic, the principle is based on the Islamic teachings contained in the Quran; Surah Al Kafirun verses 1-6 which states: (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945).

“Also his word, say: O disbelievers. I will not worship what you worship. And you are not a worshiper of God whom I worship. And I have never been a worshiper of what you worship. And you have never been a worshiper of the God whom I worship. For you your religion and for me, my religion”.

The Principle of Keeping Togetherness

The second principle in relation to religious tolerance and harmony in Sasak beliefs is the principle of keeping together. This principle is illustrated in everyday behaviour where if there is a traditional ceremony or family event, the community will invite friends or family despite their different religions. In daily life, they also always visit and help one another.⁵

The Principle of Fraternity

This principle is one of the most important principles in maintaining religious tolerance and harmony among Sasak people. The sense of fraternity among the sasak tribe is highly respected. Fraternities in the sasak tribe society include:

First

Brotherhood due to blood relationship, for example born from the same mother or having the same parents or grandparents and so on;

Second

Fraternity due to marriage relationship, despite the different religions, for instance, A is married to B, then A will regard the whole family of B as his family and vice versa;

Third

Fraternity due to similar region (origin), such as A and B who come together from Tapanuli region;

Fourth

Fraternity due to having the same place of residence, for instance A and B who reside in the village of Sengkol;

Fifth

Fraternity because they come from the same country, Indonesia; and

Sixth

Fraternity because of religion.

In terms of tolerance and religious harmony, Sasak community considers people who embrace different religions as their brothers in case they are categorized into one of previous fraternity classifications. Therefore, they will be careful to act to avoid offensive acts that will disturb the fraternity.

The principle of fraternity is also caught in their proverbial words as follows:

“Gitak laguk tendek serep, dengah laguk tendek ending”

It means look but do not pay attention or hear but do not pay attention (ignorance). For instance, in a meeting or discussion if there are harsh words or painful behaviour that is directed to us, it should be ignored. We should pretend to notice it. In this way, a sense of fraternity and peace will be maintained.

The principle of fraternity for Sasak people who are Muslims is contained in the Quran, Surah Alhujurat paragraph 13 stating:

“O mankind, we created you from a man and a woman and made you nation and tribe so that you may know one another.”

The Principle of Love of Peace

Another principle that supports religious tolerance and harmony among Sasak community is peace. This means Sasak people do not like to cause disturbance and fighting. They prefer to concede rather than to confront. This principle is revealed in their adage:

“Kalah-kalah pokok menang”

It means better to give up than fighting. Sasak people believe that conceding does not necessarily mean losing, but often in an attitude of conceding, what is expected is achieved. In terms of religious tolerance and harmony, this principle means it is better not to confront if there are things that offend, since giving awareness about the teaching of certain religion to others gently provides more benefits.

Another expression related to the principle is:

“Aik Meneng Tunjung Tilah empak bau”

This means that in solving the problem if there is a conflict of interest then better solved by consensus not by confrontation or demonstration. In other words, this principle means resolving the problem without any problems. This principle is also contained in the proverb that says:

“Betungkem isik ime jarang”,

which means ignorance. That is, if there are things that are not desired in daily life, someone should pretend not to see it.

Abstinence to Spread the Disgrace of Others

This principle can be found in Sasak *pantun* (traditional poetry, each verse of which consists of two couplets) which read:

“Talet nyiur sedin pelepe Tiup baraq lek dalem gueDendek girang iur batur lenge Sengsare awak sak tanggung dose”

It delivers the message to avoid talking about the disgrace of others. Those who talk about other's disgrace will get karma someday. In Islam, the *pantun (lelakak)* is the same as the prohibition of talking about the disgrace of others.

The principle of the Sasak people regarding religious tolerance and harmony is very clear as has been explained. Different religion does not hamper cooperative relationships among fellow citizens. Tolerance in interreligious life for Sasak people stems from the appreciation of the religious teachings of Islam. In order to maintain religious harmony, Sasak people are aware that tolerance needs to be developed to avoid conflict.

CONCLUSION

The above description concludes that:

1. The principles of religious tolerance and harmony among people of Indonesia have been created since the golden era of Majapahit empire;
2. The principles of religious freedom and tolerance are contained in and guaranteed by the Indonesian Constitution as written in several chapters and *Sasanti* “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”, inscribed in Garuda.
3. The principles of religious tolerance and harmony are also found in Sasak community in Lombok Island. Some principles of religious tolerance and harmony are contained in proverbs (*sesenggak*), *pantun* and everyday behavior in social interaction.
4. Some of the principles of religious tolerance among Sasak community are the principle of mutual respect, appreciating differences, keeping togetherness, fraternity, love of peace and abstinence to spread the disgrace of others.

ENDNOTE

1. The existence of six religions in Indonesia has been recognized by the state since 1965 through the Presidential Stipulation (1965) and reinforced by Law (1969).
2. http://arwaniilyas.blogspot.co.id/2014/06/aliran-pangestu-sapta-darma-subud-and_11.html
3. <https://www.hisbah.net/jangan-ada-intoleransi-diantara-kita/>
4. <http://jasapengetikancibinong.blogspot.co.id/2015/11/asal-usul-penemu-dan-makna-bhineka.html>
5. The observation of daily behaviour of Sasak people who coexist with other religions in several *kampung* (villages) in Mataram City such as in *kampung* Karang Tatah (Islam) which is in conflict with *kampung* Gubuk Batu (Hindu); *kampung* Pengempel in which there are people who are Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist; also in *kampung* Karang Bagu (Muslim) and Sindu (Hindu).

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