

# Multiculturalism in the Perspective of the Quran and Sunnah

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## Abstract

*Multiculturalism is understood as a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the existence of all different groups in an organization or society, recognizes and values socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution in an inclusive cultural context that empowers all in an organization or society. Philosophically, this multiculturalism departs from the assumption of human dignity and honor. And this principle is found in all the major world religions. Because humans have a noble position, the rights attached to them must be respected and maintained. Defamation and violation of these human rights is an oppression of universal humanity. For this reason, there are several ways put forward by the Al-Qur'an and Sunnah to respect differences and avoid conflict in the midst of a multicultural society. This paper aims to reveal the solutive efforts of the Qur'an and Sunnah in creating harmony in the midst of a multicultural society, so that prolonged social friction does not arise.*

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, Quran, sunnah

## A. Introduction

The Indonesian nation is a nation that is touted as a plural nation. Even said to exceed most other countries. Because Indonesia is not only multi-ethnic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, but also multi-cultural. Indonesian society is a society with a very complex level of diversity. Societies with various diversity are known as multicultural societies.<sup>1</sup>

Pluralism and multiculturalism imply differences. If managed properly, pluralism and multiculturalism can generate positive forces for nation building. On the other hand, if not managed properly, pluralism and multiculturalism can become destructive factors and cause catastrophic disasters. Conflicts and social violence that often occur between community groups are part of pluralism and multiculturalism that are not managed properly.<sup>2</sup>

Islam has actually taught its adherents to respect differences. Basically, diversity (ethnicity, culture, religion, etc.) of humans is sunnatullah. Long before orientalist thinkers introduced multicultural education, Islam had known it clearly as explained in its holy book (al-Qur'an). Multicultural education is not an attempt to find a new syncretism, but rather to find common ground between differences

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<sup>1</sup> Nurdin Roswati, 'Multikulturalisme Dalam Tinjauan Al-Qur'an', *Al-Asas*, III.2 (2019), 1–23  
<[http://nurainiajeeng.wordpress.com/2013/01/%0Ahttp://repository.iainambon.ac.id/906/1/Jurnal Multikulturalisme dalam Tinjauan Alquran.pdf](http://nurainiajeeng.wordpress.com/2013/01/%0Ahttp://repository.iainambon.ac.id/906/1/Jurnal%20Multikulturalisme%20dalam%20Tinjauan%20Alquran.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, Pendidikan Agama Berwawasan Multikultural, 1–25.

in these backgrounds, and make differences a blessing for the unity and integrity of the people, so as to create an Islamic symphony within the framework of nationalism and pluralism.<sup>3</sup>

Several main principles that need to be put forward before discussing multiculturalism in the Al-Quran and Hadith, are that Islam is a universal religion. Islam is not intended for one particular ethnicity or ethnicity but as rahmatan lil alamin as Allah says in QS al Anbiya: 107

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

It means :

107. We did not send you (Prophet Muhammad), except as a mercy to all the worlds.

Dalam (QS. Al-Kafirun: 1-6) Islam menghargai agama dan kepercayaan lain

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

It means:

1. Say (Prophet Muhammad), "O disbelievers!
2. I will not worship what you worship.
3. You are also not a worshiper of what I worship.
4. Neither have I been a worshiper of what you worship.
5. You have never (also) become a worshiper of what I worship.
6. For you your religion and for me mine."

Islam also teaches that there is no compulsion in religion as said by Allah in (QS. Al-Baqarah: 256)

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

It means :

256. There is no compulsion in (adhering to) religion (Islam). Verily, the right path has been clear from the misguided path. Whoever disobeys God and believes in Allah has indeed held fast to a very strong rope that will not break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

Islam is also a religion that is open to be tested for its truth as stated by Allah in (QS. Al-Baqarah: 23)

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

It means:

23. If you (remain) in doubt about what (the Qur'an) that We sent down to Our servant (Prophet Muhammad), make a surah similar to it and invite your helpers besides Allah, if you are people of truth.

<sup>3</sup> Tejo Waskito, 'Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Islam', *Journal.Uinsi.Ac.Id*, 1–21  
<<https://journal.uinsi.ac.id/index.php/el-Buhuth/article/download/3585/1505/>>.

Islam also emphasizes that diversity in human life is natural, these differences range from gender, ethnicity, and diverse nations. Differences exist in order to know each other (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

It means :

*13. O mankind, verily We have created you from a male and a female. Then We made you nations and tribes so that you might know one another. Verily the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Seer.*

And Islam has a fairly clear history related to a pluralistic life as shown by the Prophet himself when he built a civil society in Medina.

These basic principles need to be used as a reference in discussing multiculturalism in the Al-Quran, Hadith, and the Medina Charter. Some of the basic principles mentioned above show that Islam provides the widest possible space for multiculturalism.<sup>4</sup>

#### A. Problem Formulation

The problem formulation of this paper is

1. What does Multiculturalism mean?
2. What is the perspective of the Koran on multiculturalism?
3. What is the perspective of the Hadith on multiculturalism?

#### B. Purpose

1. Understand the meaning of multiculturalism
2. Explaining the Qur'anic perspective on multiculturalism
3. Explaining the hadith perspective on multiculturalism

### B. Discussion

#### 1. The definition of multiculturalism

Multiculturalism or multiculturalism consists of two words, multi and cultural. Multi means various or varied, while cultural comes from the word cultural which means culture. So according to multicultural language is a variety or variety of cultures. Meanwhile, according to the term, multiculturalism is cultural diversity on a fairly broad level including ideology, politics, democracy, justice, law enforcement, employment and business opportunities, human rights, community cultural rights and minority groups, ethical and moral principles, values culture and ethos, togetherness in ethnic differences, ethnic culture, religious beliefs, and other relevant concepts.<sup>5</sup> So that multiculturalism is an understanding or thought about it.

Multiculturalism is one of the main realities experienced by society and culture in the past, especially now and in the future. Multiculturalism can

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<sup>4</sup> Hanafi, 'Multikulturalisme Dalam Al- Qur'an, Hadits Dan Piagam Madina', *Saintifika Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 3.2 (2016), 1–6.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Sosial Scince: A Multikultural Approach* (Oxford University, 1996).

simply be understood as an acknowledgment that a country or society is diverse and plural. Conversely, no single country contains only a single national culture. This diversity should not be interpreted singly and furthermore a commitment to recognize diversity as one of the main characteristics and characteristics of society and the nation/state..<sup>6</sup> So simply multiculturalism means "cultural diversity".

The term multiculturalism is often used to describe the condition of a society consisting of different religions, races, languages and cultures..<sup>7</sup>

It is further said that multiculturalism originates from the phrases multi (many), culture (culture), then gets an ism accent (flow, understanding) which means a view that emphasizes the multiplicity of interactive cultures and one culture, but internally manifested from elements different. Multiculturalism then becomes a cultural strategy that develops in countries that face ethnic and cultural plurality against a background of racial and gender discrimination, as well as the problem of multi-ethnic migrants and migrants of color. Multiculturalism is a philosophy that is sometimes interpreted as an ideology that requires the unity of various groups with equal rights and political status in modern society. The term multiculturalism is also often used to describe the unity of different ethnic communities within a country. For the Indonesian context, religious differences are usually added, which are social and cultural entities that often transcend the boundaries of class, gender and political ideology. Lawrence A. Blum, a professor at the University of Massachusetts, explained that multiculturalism includes an understanding, appreciation and assessment of one's culture, as well as respect and curiosity about other people's ethnic cultures. The various understandings of multiculturalism can be concluded that the essence of multiculturalism is about acceptance and respect for a culture, both its own culture and the culture of others. Lawrence further stated that multiculturalism includes an understanding, appreciation, and assessment of one's culture, as well as a respect for and curiosity about other people's ethnic cultures. It includes an assessment of other people's cultures not in the sense of agreeing on all aspects of those cultures, but that the original can express values for its own members..<sup>8</sup>

## **2. The perspective of the Koran on multiculturalism**

The diversity of religions, ethnicities, languages and customs is the nation's wealth. As a multicultural nation, Indonesia has the opportunity to live in peace and harmony in society. The differences that exist, can not be categorized as a factor of dispute. New differences become a serious problem when accompanied by blind fanaticism. Islam itself, as a religion that has the largest adherents in Indonesia, teaches tolerance for various differences among its adherents. Islam's respect for differences was born from the belief that differences are not a hindrance to the creation of unity.

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<sup>6</sup> Hanafi.

<sup>7</sup> Roswati.

<sup>8</sup> M. Basman, "Pengembangan Pendidikan Multikultural di Perguruan Tinggi" (Makalah yang disajikan pada Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Multikulturalisme di Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Ambon, 11 Maret 2014)

In the Qur'an there are a number of verses that explore multiculturalism. The epistemological basis for multiculturalism in the Qur'anic discourse is human dignity, from which a set of human rights emerge that must be respected and protected, which is the ethical foundation for multiculturalism. In interpreting the Koran regarding multiculturalism, there are two important things to note. First, the Koran does not only speak to Muslims but speaks to many people, both Christians, Jews, and others. In the Koran there are expressions such as O believers (yā ayyuḥa alladżīna āmanū), O people (yā ayyuḥa al-nās), O disbelievers (yā ayyuḥa al-kāfirūn), and so on, which proves that the Koran in at that time it was not only talking to one side, the Muslim community, but also talking to many parties. Second, the Koran talks about things that are multiculturalistic. Many voices are reflected by the Koran, speaking to many representations, there are voices for Muhammad, there are voices conveyed by Allah himself, and there are also voices conveyed to other human beings. In essence, the Koran has recognized the idea of multiculturalism in the sense of cultural diversity based on religion, ethnicity, and others. Even normatively, the Qur'an recognizes that humans are made into nations (syu'uban) and tribes (qabāil) so that they know and respect one another, as stated in Q.S.al-Ḥujurāt (49): 13,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

*Meaning: O mankind, verily We have created you from a male and a female. Then We made you nations and tribes so that you might know one another. Verily the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Seeing.*

This verse emphasizes that Allah created humans from the same origin, then made them into the syu'ub and qabail groups. All humans are equal in glory as the descendants of Adam and Eve who were created from the ground. They become more noble than others just based on the level of their religion. Namely the extent of their obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Meanwhile, the purpose of such creation is for each to know each other. According to Abdurrahman bin Nashir bin Abdillah al-Sa'di, the function of ta'aruf in the context of this verse is to foster a spirit of mutual assistance, mutual inheritance, and safeguarding the rights of relatives. This can only be realized if there are differences in primordial identities and conditions of knowing each other. Ibnu Katsir added that differences in primordial identities should not be used as a basis for unhealthy competition, such as putting one another down, blaspheming and being arrogant (Tafākhur).<sup>9</sup>

In the Qur'an besides the word syu'ub which represents the meaning of nationality, the word qaum can also be considered to have a synonymous meaning. The words qaum and qaumiyah are often understood to mean nation and nationality. Arab nationality is expressed by today's Arabs with the term

<sup>9</sup> Al-Imām al-Jālil al-Hāfidz Ismail al-Quraisy al-Dimasqi Ibn Katsir, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Adzīm Jilid VII (Beirut; Dār al-Fikr, 1401/1981), h. 385

Al-Qaumiyah Al-'Arabiyah. Likewise, the word ummah has the connotation of national unity and unity. However, according to M. Quraish Shihab, the word ummah cannot be immediately justified as national legality, because even though ummah is repeated 51 times, the meaning it contains is different..<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Hadith perspective on multiculturalism

Related to multiculturalism in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. He stated that all the servants of Allah are brothers. As explained in the hadith below:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ  
اللَّهُ عَنْهُ

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ فَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ أَخَذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ وَلَا  
تَحَسَّسُوا وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا تَنَاجَشُوا وَلَا تَنَاسَدُوا وَلَا تَبَاغَضُوا وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ  
إِخْوَانًا

*Meaning: Has told us Abdullah bin Yusuf, has told us Malik from Abu Az Zinnad from Al A'raj from Abu Hurairah radhiallahu'anhu that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Avoid prejudice, because prejudice is the most lying speech, and do not you silence one another, seek fault with one another, deceive one another in buying and selling, envy one another, are enemies to one another and do not turn your back on one another, and be all of you slaves of God who are brothers."*

From the hadith above, we are commanded by Rasulullah SAW not to silence each other, seek faults with each other, deceive each other in buying and selling, envy each other, be hostile to each other and do not turn your back on each other. And we are warned that we are all brothers and sisters.

### C. Conclusion

From the explanation above, we can understand that multiculturalism as an understanding of acceptance and respect for a culture, is a set of values that need to be continuously developed in order to create a harmonious life in a society. In the Qur'an there are a number of verses that explore multiculturalism. The epistemological basis for multiculturalism in the Qur'anic discourse is human dignity, from which a set of human rights emerge that must be respected and protected, which is the ethical foundation for multiculturalism. In essence, the Koran has recognized the idea of multiculturalism in the sense of cultural diversity based on religion, ethnicity, and others. Even normatively, the Qur'an recognizes that humans are made into nations (syu'uban) and tribes (qabāil) so that they know and respect one another, as stated in Q.S.al-Hujurat (49): 13. To realize security and harmony in a multicultural society, efforts are needed so that conflicts can be minimized as early as possible. These efforts have of course

<sup>10</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhui atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat (Cet. I; Bandung: Mizan, 1996), h. 215.

been made so far, bearing in mind that the same efforts have also been stated in the Qur'an as a book of guidance for Muslims. It is hoped that the active role of every community will continuously improve the quality of dialogue/deliberation and peace in any perspective, so that violence, conflict or other humanitarian disasters can be minimized as early as possible..<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Roswati.