

Tolerance as the Way of Love: An Analysis of the Thought of Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far in the Indonesian Context

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Abstract

This paper analyze the thoughts of Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far regarding tolerance US a way of love in the context of a multicultural and multireligious English society. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which focuses on analyzing the texts, lectures, and writings of the two figures. The purpose of this research is to understand how the idea of tolerance can be applied in facing the challenges of diversity in Indonesia. The results of the analysis shows that Haidar Bagir emphasizes the importance of love as the foundation of tolerance, which must start from individual awareness, while Habib Ja'far invites people to prioritize compassion in interfaith interactions. Although the thoughts of both figures offer constructive solutions, challenges such as radicalization, the spread of hoaxes, and identity politics still hampered efforts to build tolerance. The conclusion of this study confirms that tolerance US a way of love is note just a concept, but a real action that must be realized in everyday life, with the support of various elements of society to create harmony in Indonesia.

Keywords : Tolerance, Love, Haidar Asyari, Habib Ja'far, Indonesia



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Abstrak

Tulisan ini menganalisis pemikiran Haidar Bagir dan Habib Ja'far tentang toleransi sebagai jalan cinta dalam konteks masyarakat Inggris yang multikultural

dan multireligius. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi hermeneutik, yang berfokus pada analisis teks, ceramah, dan tulisan kedua tokoh tersebut. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana gagasan toleransi dapat diterapkan dalam menghadapi tantangan keberagaman di Indonesia. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Haidar Bagir menekankan pentingnya cinta kasih sebagai fondasi toleransi yang harus dimulai dari kesadaran individu, sedangkan Habib Ja'far mengajak masyarakat untuk mengedepankan cinta kasih dalam interaksi antar umat beragama. Meskipun pemikiran kedua tokoh tersebut menawarkan solusi yang konstruktif, namun tantangan seperti radikalisasi, penyebaran hoaks, dan politik identitas masih menjadi kendala dalam upaya membangun toleransi. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa toleransi sebagai jalan kasih bukan hanya sekedar konsep, melainkan sebuah tindakan nyata yang harus diwujudkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, dengan dukungan dari berbagai elemen masyarakat untuk menciptakan kerukunan di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Toleransi, Cinta, Haidar Asyari, Habib Ja'far, Indonesia

Introduction

Tolerance is often seen as an essential element of democracy that plays a role in maintaining the stability of the world order. This is reflected in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, which affirms the commitment of its member states to practice tolerance and live peacefully side by side as good neighbors.¹ UNESCO provides a definition of tolerance through Article 1.1, which states that

“Tolerance is an attitude of respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the diversity of world cultures, expressions, and the way people live their lives. Tolerance reflects harmony in differences”²

In today's increasingly diverse societies, tolerance is often seen as a value to be pursued by both individuals and communities. When tensions arise, leaders often call for “greater tolerance” toward certain groups or advocate for “more tolerant societies.” For example, in 2004, then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that “tolerance, intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more important than ever in an increasingly interconnected world.”³

Tolerance is the main concern of figures from every religion in the world. Indonesia is a country with diverse religions, tribes, languages, and

¹ Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), “Social Statistics,” 2020.

² Central Statistics Agency (BPS).

³ BNPT (National Counterterrorism Agency, “<https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3150245/bnpt-generasi-z-dan-milenial-rentan-terpapar-radikalisme>,” 2022.

cultures. This diversity is evidence of the wealth of a particular nation, but not infrequently it also becomes a boomerang that threatens if religion is misunderstood and only limited to dogmatic issues, in fact there is no religion without dogmatic doctrine, because that is the difference between religion and science but dogma is what sometimes traps religious people into exclusivity so that they are unable to see the truth in other dimensions.⁴

Tolerance is one of the important pillars in national and state life, especially in Indonesia which is known as a country with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. In this context, the thoughts of intellectual figures such as Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far are very relevant. Both have deep views on the importance of tolerance as a path of love, which can overcome various existing social problems. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2020, Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups and more than 6 officially recognized religions, which shows how diverse Indonesian society is .⁵ This article will discuss the thoughts of these two figures and their relevance in the context of tolerance in Indonesia.

Haidar Bagir, as an intellectual and activist, often emphasizes the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. He believes that tolerance is not just an attitude of mutual respect, but also an active act of understanding and accepting differences. In his book entitled "Tolerance in the Perspective of Islam" ⁶he describes how Islamic teachings actually encourage its followers to live side by side with others, regardless of the differences that exist. Meanwhile, Habib Ja'far, a cleric and community figure, also emphasizes the importance of love as a foundation in interacting with others. Through various lectures, podcasts and writings, he invites people to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and avoid extremism.

These two figures contributed to building a narrative of tolerance in Indonesia, which is often faced with challenges such as radicalization and intolerance. According to reports, ⁷there has been an increase in cases of intolerance in Indonesia, indicating the need for further efforts to promote tolerance. In this context, the thoughts of Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far offer constructive and relevant solutions. Through the analysis of their thoughts, it is

⁴ Muhammad Yunus and Ngimanuddin, "The God of the Mystics: His Contribution to Religious Tolerance," *El-Ghiroh: Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 2 (September 2022): 124.

⁵ BNPT (National Counterterrorism Agency, "https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3150245/bnpt-generasi-z-dan-milenial-venantan-terpapar-radikalisme."

⁶ Haidar Bagir, *Tolerance in Islamic Perspective*. (Bandung: Mizan, 2015).

⁷ Setara Institute., "Annual Report on Intolerance in Indonesia,," 2021.

hoped that a way can be found to strengthen tolerance in Indonesia's diverse society.

Discussion

The meaning of tolerance in Islam, according to *Haidar Bagir*, is built on the foundation of love based on a conceptual understanding of God, creatures, good and bad values, and spirituality.⁸ For Haidar Bagir, love is not just a psychological condition, but a form of deep awareness rooted in humans. This view is inspired by the Sufism thoughts of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra, which also form the basis for understanding creatures, good and bad values, and the source of spirituality. In this perspective, love is seen as the core of religion, which in turn becomes the foundation of tolerance.

The main foundation of Islam Cinta is the concept of God as the source of love. Haidar Bagir encourages a paradigm shift in Islam from one that focuses on law to one that focuses on love. The legal paradigm tends to be exoteric, which limits religious thought and practice to rules of prohibition and permission. In contrast, the esoteric approach opens the way to an understanding of religion that emphasizes spiritual values. Therefore, Haidar Bagir is in line with the views of Annemarie Schimmel and Gerrard van der Leeuw, who see Islam as a religion of love and compassion. This view challenges the stereotype that considers Islam as a primitive religion, as understood by some historians of religion.⁹

Haidar Bagir has a unique perspective in the context of Islam. For him, love is the main principle of Islamic teachings. It is the basis for an attitude of tolerance. According to him, awareness of love for God and fellow human beings leads individuals towards an attitude of tolerance that is not only accepted, but also internalized as a state that no longer needs to be attempted. This approach provides a deep dimension to the understanding of tolerance, where tolerance is not just behavior, but a state of mind that arises from awareness of love. Haidar Bagir mentions the basis of love in the Qur'an as follows:

“Among the most frequently quoted verses that describe the closeness of Allah SWT to His creatures, especially to humans, is His statement: “And We are closer to him than his jugular vein” (QS. Qāf [50]: 16). In this verse it is described that Allah is so close to humans, even closer, than their own jugular

⁸ Tiya Sholahiyah., “The Islamic Concept of Love by Haidar Bagir (Immanuel Kant's Ethical Perspective)” (Thesis, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University of Yogyakarta., 2021).

⁹ Haidar Bagir, *Islam: The Faith of Love and Happiness*. (Kube Publishing., 217AD).

veins. In fact, the jugular vein of humans is very close to humans. In fact, not only very close. The jugular vein is actually part of humans themselves. This verse seems to indicate that He is overlapping, or united with humans, and therefore a loving relationship is possible between creatures and Allah, between humans and God. There is intimacy between humans and Allah.¹⁰

Haidar Bagir has a very deep view on the concept of tolerance. In his view, tolerance is not just a passive attitude, but an active commitment to create harmony in society. He argues that tolerance must start from oneself, by prioritizing an open attitude towards differences. In the context of Indonesia, where there are various religions and cultures, this attitude is very important. Haidar Bagir also invites people to understand that differences are a gift that must be appreciated, not used as a reason for conflict.

According to Haidar Bagir, different religions should be treated on the basis of love. Tolerance is considered the most appropriate attitude based on this love, because love views every individual as a valuable creature of God. Thus, tolerance is not merely an obligation, but rather an expression of a deep understanding of the values of love that connect all humanity.

The concept of tolerance in the Islamic version of Love frees individuals from dependence on external factors, such as economic conditions or political situations. By placing self-awareness as the main source of tolerance, Haidar Bagir wants to show that this attitude must grow from within, as a result of a deep understanding of the principles of love and compassion. Thus, tolerance becomes more stable and consistent, not dependent on changes in dynamic external conditions. The approach creates a more solid foundation for building a tolerant and open society. By prioritizing self-awareness obtained through understanding the values of love, individuals are better able to face differences and conflicts with an attitude of tolerance. Therefore, tolerance in the perspective of Haidar Bagir's Islamic version of Love is not just a response to social pressure or environmental demands but a personal commitment rooted in a deep understanding of love and compassion.

One real example of Haidar Bagir's thinking is his initiative in holding interfaith dialogue. He believes that dialogue is the key to building understanding and mutual respect. In a seminar organized by his institution, Mizan, he invited various figures from different religious backgrounds to share their views and experiences. This activity not only strengthens interfaith relations, but also provides space for each individual to voice their opinions without fear of judgment.

¹⁰ Haidar Bagir, *From Allah to Allah, Learning Sufism from Rumi*. (Noura Books., 2019).

Statistics show that interfaith dialogue in Indonesia is still very much needed. According to a survey conducted by ¹¹, around 62% of respondents in Indonesia believe that religious differences can be a source of conflict. This shows that there is still a lack of understanding that needs to be addressed through a more inclusive approach. Haidar Bagir emphasized that tolerance education must be included in the school curriculum, so that future generations can grow up with a better understanding of the importance of living side by side.

In the social context, Haidar Bagir also advocates the need for collaboration between the government and civil society in creating a tolerant environment. He argues that the government should take proactive steps to encourage interfaith dialogue and cooperation. For example, programs that involve young people from various backgrounds to work together on social projects can be a good first step in building tolerance. This is in line with data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs which shows that interfaith programs can reduce the potential for conflict in society. ¹²Haidar Bagir's enthusiasm in moderating religion to be tolerant and based on love is very massive and consistent. Although it is not uncommon for him to receive rejection from various parties. For example, his visit to an Islamic college in Solo for a book review was rejected by an intolerant group because they were accused of bringing Shia teachings.¹³

Thus, Haidar Bagir's thoughts on tolerance provide a constructive perspective in facing the challenges of diversity in Indonesia. Through dialogue, education, and collaboration, he believes that Indonesian society can achieve the desired harmony. Tolerance as a path of love, according to Haidar Bagir, is not just a concept, but an action that must be realized in everyday life.

Habib Ja'far also emphasized the importance of tolerance in a spiritual and social context. In his view, love is the core of every religious teaching, including Islam. Islam is known as a religion of law, but love also sweetens every teaching. To understand the message of love brought by Islam, it is better to study and understand Islam not only from the legal domain but to achieve the

¹¹ Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections.," 2019.

¹² Ministry of Religion., "Interfaith Program for a Tolerant Society.," 2020.

¹³ Khasan Ubaidillah and Abd. Halim, "Mosques as Inspiration for the Practice of Religious Moderation," *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2024): 309.

message of love it is necessary to understand Islam in essence. ¹⁴He often quotes that "Love is a bridge that connects different hearts. Through this approach, Habib Ja'far tries to emphasize that every individual, regardless of their religious or cultural background, has the right to be loved and appreciated. In his lectures, podcasts and YouTube channels, he often invites people to prioritize affection in every interaction they have.

One concrete example of Habib Ja'far's thinking is his participation in various interfaith events. He is often invited to speak in forums involving religious figures from various backgrounds. In these forums, Habib Ja'far always emphasizes that "*despite differences in belief, all humans are God's creations who must respect each other.*" This approach not only strengthens interfaith relations but also reduces tensions that often arise in society.

In addition to efforts to achieve religious tolerance and equality in this Republic based on Pancasila, Habib Ja'far in every forum when starting a greeting in his speech or lecture, he began to campaign not to replace the name of religions outside of Islam with the word " non-Muslim " but to mention one by one the names of the religions of each person present as his audience. Hopefully, with such steps it can create a sense of pleasure and equality for every religious community in public spaces. So that feelings of mutual respect and love can grow in every cross-faith.

Statistics show that Indonesian society is increasingly open to interfaith dialogue. According to a survey conducted, ¹⁵around 70% of respondents want more interaction with other religious groups. This reflects that Habib Ja'far's thoughts on the importance of love and mutual respect are beginning to be accepted by the wider community. He believes that by prioritizing love, society can overcome differences and build unity.

Habib Ja'far also advocates the importance of moderate religious education. He believes that good religious education can shape the character of individuals who are tolerant and loving. On various occasions he has encouraged schools to include the values of tolerance and love in the independence curriculum. According to him, ¹⁶character education programs

¹⁴ Muhammad Haris Fiardi, "The Role of Dakwahtainment on the Jeda Nulis Youtube Channel Account on Lost Youth by Habib Husein Ja'far," *Research by Students of Dakwah and Communication (JRMDK)* 3, no. 2 (2021): 83.

¹⁵ Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI)., "Survey on Religious Tolerance in Indonesia," 2021.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education and Culture., "https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2022/12/strengthen-character-education-in-the-education-environment-of-kemendikbudristek-return-to-heirloom-titles," 2022.

that prioritize tolerance have shown positive results in reducing intolerant behavior among students.

Thus, Habib Ja'far's thoughts on tolerance and love make a significant contribution to building a more harmonious society. Through love and respect for differences, he believes that Indonesia can be an example for other countries in terms of religious tolerance. Tolerance as a path of love, according to Habib Ja'far, is a calling for individuals to contribute to creating a better world.

Challenges of Tolerance in Indonesia

Although Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far's thoughts offer constructive solutions to build tolerance in Indonesia, the challenges faced are still quite large. One of the main challenges is the increasing radicalization among the younger generation. According to reports,¹⁷ there is an increasing number of teenagers exposed to radical ideology, indicating the need for more effective interventions in education and social.

Radicalism and the inability to accept differences are major problems in the spirit of tolerance. Subtly and massively indoctrination is implanted into the minds of generations or individuals who are just enthusiastic about studying religion. The impact is that when they see something different from their views and beliefs, they will spontaneously judge either from their actions or just in their minds. After all, isn't a flower garden beautiful to look at because it is filled with various flowers ?

Changing negative perceptions into positive views of differences is the main capital to achieve tolerance. In one breath with religious teachings, Habib Husein emphasized that in religion there is no compulsion whatsoever to adhere to it and we must not force parties outside of us to believe what we believe, because if we force beliefs on others then it is a form of lack of self-confidence in our own beliefs.¹⁸

Another challenge is the existence of hoax news and misleading information that often triggers inter-religious conflict. Data from Kominfo shows that more than 60% of hoax news circulating on social media is related to SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Inter-Group) issues. (Kominfo, 2023) This shows that the public needs to be equipped with good media literacy so that

¹⁷ BNPT (National Counterterrorism Agency, "https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3150245/bnpt-generasi-z-dan-milenial-venantan-terpapar-radikalisme."

¹⁸ Atyanmajid Syifaashoba et al., "Implementation of Tolerance Values in Religious Moderation According to Habib Husein Ja'far al-Haddar," *Mushawwir Journal of Islamic Da'wah and Philanthropy Management* 2, no. 2 (September 2023): 50.

they are able to filter information and not get caught up in provocations that can damage tolerance.

In addition, the role of mass media is also very important in shaping public perception about tolerance. Unfortunately, not all media prioritize constructive reporting. Some media prefer to highlight conflict and division, which can worsen the situation. Therefore, there needs to be collective awareness from all elements of society, including the media, to jointly build a positive narrative about tolerance.¹⁹

As an effort to be the antithesis of social media accounts that often upload hoax content to divide religious communities, social media jihad needs to be carried out by spreading content that contains messages of tolerance. Of course, the generation that is currently the largest consumer who spends time on social media platforms is the Gen Z generation which is the main target of intolerant preachers. Habib Ja'far through the big preaching mouthpiece, namely the Log In segment on Deddy Corbuzier's YouTube channel, is certainly the right place for generations who are enthusiastic about learning about religion. Through this platform, the spirit of tolerance and the wisdom of love between religious communities are broadcast.²⁰

The political situation can also affect the level of tolerance in society. In recent years, there has been a political tendency to prioritize religious and ethnic identities, which can trigger polarization. According to a survey conducted by Indikator Politik Indonesia, ²¹around 45% of respondents felt that identity politics were getting stronger in Indonesia. This shows that efforts are needed to prioritize the values of togetherness and unity amidst diversity.

Thus, the challenges in building tolerance in Indonesia are very complex and require a holistic approach. Collaboration between the government, civil society, and religious figures is needed to create an environment conducive to the growth of tolerance. The thoughts of Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far can be a guide in facing this challenge, by emphasizing the importance of dialogue, love and respect for differences.

¹⁹ Zakiah, AM, Rizqi Maulana, M., Syahdan, MS, & Rahmawati, N., "The Influence of Identity Politics on State Stability in Indonesia.," 2024, 180-193., <https://doi.org/10.32332/siyasah.v4i1>.

²⁰Nihayatul Husna, "Log In at Close The Door: Habib Ja'far's Digital Preaching to Generation Z", *Selasar KPI: Reference for Communication and Preaching Media*, Vol. 3, No. 1, June 2023, 40.

²¹ Zakiah, AM, Rizqi Maulana, M., Syahdan, MS, & Rahmawati, N., "The Influence of Identity Politics on State Stability in Indonesia."

Methods

The type of research used is descriptive qualitative , which aims to describe, analyze, and understand the views of the two figures regarding tolerance. This study explores how their ideas about tolerance as a path of love are applied in the context of multicultural and multireligious Indonesia. This study uses a hermeneutic phenomenological approach , which focuses on the analysis of texts, lectures, and writings to understand the meaning of tolerance from the perspectives of the two figures. Hermeneutics is used to dig deeper into the understanding of written works or lectures given by the two figures through digital platforms.

Conclusion

In the context of Indonesia, which is rich in diversity, tolerance becomes an urgent need. The thoughts of Haidar Bagir and Habib Ja'far provide deep insight into how tolerance can be used as a path of love to create harmony in society. Through dialogue, education, and love, both invite society to understand that differences are not threats, but rather a gift that must be appreciated. However, the challenges faced in building tolerance in Indonesia are not easy. Radicalization, the spread of hoaxes, and identity politics are some of the factors that can hinder this effort. Therefore, cooperation between various parties is needed to overcome these challenges. By prioritizing the values of tolerance and love, it is hoped that Indonesia can be an example for other countries in terms of peaceful coexistence. In the end, tolerance as a path of love is not just a concept, but a real action that must be realized in everyday life. As Habib Ja'far's dream in his struggle for preaching love and tolerance who wants to see the issue of tolerance between religious communities no longer be something that is noisy when heard, because tolerance itself has been achieved. With the commitment of each individual and support from various elements of society, Indonesia can become a destination to become a more tolerant and harmonious society.

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