

Religious Freedom in Indonesia: Worldview of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* for Multicultural Education

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Abstract

This study looks into issues facing Indonesian multicultural education and offers solutions based on the worldview of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. The study tries to clarify how *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*'s worldview applies to the nation's rich history, numerous tribes, nations, races, worldviews, including customs. The worldview is deeply established in the historical background of the Majapahit Kingdom and deeply embedded in Indonesia's identity as the world's largest Muslim nation; it can serve as a foundation for promoting religious freedom and building a peaceful, multicultural society for multicultural education.

Keywords

religious freedom; *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*; multicultural education; worldview

Introduction

The freedom to change one's religion, belief, or worldview, which is mandated by universal human rights law, is under special threat. Although the freedom of religion and the right to practice one's religion is guaranteed by the Indonesian Constitution, citizens are required to comply with legal regulations. To protect the rights of others and, as stated in the Constitution, to meet "just demands based on considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order in a democratic society." They have confronted the principle of universalism and basic international norms of religious liberty. Instead of supporting a kind of "religious narrow-mindedness" according to which different states and different religious communities should be allowed to regulate the religious choices of their citizens and members (Lepard 2011).

Fox documents that over three-quarters of the governments on the planet are involved in some way in controlling religion, extending privileges to superior faiths, or establishing a national religion (Fox 2010, 40). Such concern encompasses a wide range of possibilities – from prohibiting all faiths to requiring an exclusive national religion, from invasive and unequal law to minimal requirements applied uniformly. Societal oppression or hostile acts deeply undermine the free exercise of religion. A number of societies, including some with relatively low legal limitations, tend to discriminate against minorities, ex-communication, intimidation, and mob violence. Such pressure serves as a way of extra-legal control (Allen 2012, 125). Human rights should not lose their most valuable principles and objectives to defend good

relationships with religious communities. Human rights defenders should not assert a division between private religious morality and religiously motivated public policy that violates rights. Public expression and political participation of religious groups or believers on matters of rights are legitimate. When private religious morality enforces itself on society and warns to change public policy, it is, in a way, detrimental to the rights of others. However, the human rights movement ought to speak out and draw attention (Juergensmeyer 2000, 16).

At the intersections of religious dogma and human rights ideology, of personal moral conviction and public health, points of divergence appear to be growing. Attention given by the secular human rights movement to issues linked to freedom of speech, gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation—inherent in the human rights ideal but of growing prominence today—increasingly clashes with the positions taken by many religious groups. While the concept of moral rights can be extended beyond humanity, it is the moral rights possessed by human beings that have preoccupied philosophers. These rights, particularly for political philosophers, have been the most celebrated and are significant (Jones 1994, 72). A number of religious minorities have been accused of the criminal offence of insulting a religion, particularly in Indonesia. Religious freedom will explore the connection between education and religion, a topic that has been discussed and addressed in democratic Indonesia. (Crouch 2011).

In a systematic inquiry into the institutional requirements of democracy, Stepan developed a compelling thesis about the relationship between religion and the state, which he terms the ‘twin tolerations.’ Liberal democracy, he shows, depends on a reciprocal bargain between the institutions of religion and the institutions of the state. The state protects and thus tolerates the freedom of religious institutions to operate in civil society; those religious institutions, in turn, refrain from using the powers of the state to enhance their prerogatives and thus agree to ‘tolerate’ competitors (Stepan 2005, 48). While religious organizations can help promote human rights, at times, religious beliefs and religious associations have violated human rights and caused tensions and controversies (Juergensmeyer 2000, 19).

The tensions between ethnic and inter-religion in some regions in Indonesia indicate that Indonesian people are facing national disintegration. According to Magnis Suseno in Tilaar, the horizontal conflicts show signs of treason against the worldviews of the Indonesian people (Tilaar 2003, 123). The plural in Indonesia must adhere to ethnic diversity and religious pluralism. Multicultural civilization requires an educational approach that recognizes differences and respects particular neighbourhoods. One approach that could be taken is to develop a mastering model that is capable of increasing spiritual intellect and country-wide values. Discourage the younger generation from splitting off due to differences in lifestyle and religion, as they can be divisive and could undermine national unity. (Sariyatun 2015, 116). Grim stated that using our coding of the International Religious Freedom reports, he documented that religious freedoms are consistently promised yet often denied (Grim and Finke 2010).

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as Philosophy of Education

A worldview is an established system of thought about life that has developed through time and is based on specific sources, customs, rituals, ideals, or dogmas (Van der Kooij 2016, 34). *Bhinneka* is a worldview that is accepted by all tribes in Indonesia and makes it the cornerstone of society. *Bhinneka* Indonesia strives for social harmony, which they see in well-organized societies. Religion is important to Indonesians. One element of their identity is their religion. They do not distinguish between relationships in secular life and those in religion (Hartanti and Ardhana 2022). Our analysis of the literature uncovered a degree of cultural parallels and points to *Bhinneka* as an Indonesian worldview's historical and cross-cultural convergence.

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika can be traced back to the Sailendra or Sañjaya dynasty in the eighth and ninth centuries. This period was characterized by a peaceful co-existence and cooperation between Buddhism and Hinduism. This poem is a doctrine of reconciliation between the Hindu and Buddhist religions to promote tolerance between Hindus (Shivaites) and Buddhists (Farisi 2014, 47).

They are indeed different, but how can they be identified?
Because the truth of Jina (Buddha) and Shiva is singular
The differences merge into one; there is no ambiguous truth.

(Tantular 1975, 325)

The philosophy of *Bhinneka* is taken from Sutasoma, Old Javanese *Kakawin* poems written by Mpu Tantular at the end of the 14th century, during the Majapahit Era of East Java (Aghababian 2015, 21). Frans Magnis-Suseno said Indonesian nationality is nationality in the sense of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. The actualization of the *Bhinneka* philosophy is to respect and support the diverse cultures of the nations and always to maintain the order of the nations (Armada *et al.* 2015). *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is a contract with the nation that all citizens of the nation, regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, etc., are both Indonesians and citizens. *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*'s values are nothing but a willingness to accept each other's uniqueness, a willingness to respect and support the diversity of the nation and to always organize the life of the Indonesian nation independently (Armada *et al.* 2015, 166). Discriminatory regional regulations – with religious bias, ethnic bias, and regional bias - can threaten the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia, which is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Armada *et al.* 2015, 167).

Jasper explains that the unity that we call a nation, namely the Indonesian people, is not homogeneous; this is a *Bhinneka* society (Driyarkara 2006, 1014). He stated that Indonesian national identity is complex and multiplex. Indonesian nationality is not a monolith. There are various tribes with various shapes and colours. Nationality is the basis of the nations, but all that leads to unity does not eradicate diversity (Driyarkara 2006, 1021). *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, according to Eka, is an attempt to bring together a pluralistic society with a wide range of cultural backgrounds as the symbol of the Indonesian state. (Dharmaputra 1992, 89).

In the 1945 Statute, Unity in Diversity is described as an Indonesian National Cultural Identity. *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, in the history of the Indonesian statute, has provided an identity as well

as a political resource for the unity of numerous ethnic groups in Indonesia. In the context of socio-culture, unity in diversity as a political source and the cultural identity of the Indonesian nation can be examined in the structure of socio-culture. The reflective form of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* in the formation of national law should be able to accommodate the issue of diversity, both the diversity of elements of customary law, religious law, and international law (Atmaja, Arniati, and Pradana 2020, 62).

In *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* itself, convergence becomes one of the main beliefs. The community should not prioritize only one party separately, but both parties can settle in a good way to have common ground between the two and diminish differences or conflicts that can take place in Indonesia (Farisi 2014, 49). This proves that the standards of tolerance and acceptance are highly regarded and have developed the prototype of Indonesian since the beginning (Fithriyah, Dewi, and Syafiudin 2014, 11).

We further contend that notwithstanding *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, the nation and the state are still hesitant to embrace certain local customs that are seen as being in opposition to the interests of the majority or the dominant group. Aiming at the principle and attitude on life built on *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity originated from the ancient archipelago's original socio-culture, which is still significant for the country's ultimate local wisdom. The foundational idea of religious freedom in theological teachings is a reflection of the concept of *Bhinneka*, which emphasizes that the freedom to follow one's faith is a divine gift that ought to be preserved and honoured as a component of God's design for humanity. (Müller 2020, 24).

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika for Multicultural Education

While a multiculturalist society, Indonesia needs a well-planned system to reduce disparities. The education system can be placed as a mediator factor in the process of reducing differences. This issue is particularly focused on formal education due to scope and regulation. Nevertheless, informal education can also be a means of assistance in micro exposure. The education system is not only a source of pedagogical instruction but also attitudes, values, and behaviour based on the socio-culture of local wisdom (Fithriyah, Dewi, and Syafiudin 2014, 12).

Philpott believes religious freedom is important because it promotes democracy and peace and reduces evils like civil war, terrorism, and violence. Religious freedom is simply a matter of justice – not an exclusively Western principle but rather a universal human right rooted in human nature (Philpott 2019, 228). The term multicultural education has described a wide variety of programs and practices. This program is related to educational equity, gender, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities (Banks and McGee 2010, 3). “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” is not enough only as the national symbol. The implication of these symbols is needed. The school curriculum ought to adopt this issue in classes. The diversity of cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, and languages, i.e. worldviews, ought to be offered to students (Rachmawati, Pai, and Hua-Hui 2014, 323).

Anggrirawan, in his thesis, writes that multicultural education means instruction needs to be tailored to meet students' achievement. Not only for students who are in dominant or majority groups, but also for the minority students in an educational system. This approach to teaching and learning is based on consensus building, respect, and fostering cultural pluralism within societies (Anggriawan 2020, 40). Based on the development of multicultural society and democracy above, the important role of education is unavoidable.

One important strategy that can be applied is multicultural education, which can take place in formal or informal education settings, directly or indirectly. Multicultural education is a concept or idea as a set of beliefs and explanations that recognizes and assesses the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in forming lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and educational opportunities for individuals, groups, or countries (Sudarsana 2020, 5948). The theological dimensions of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, considering how this principle aligns with theological teachings and perspectives of multicultural education. Highlight the unity in diversity as a reflection of divine creativity and emphasize its significance in the theological narrative (Aritonang 2016, 129–30).

Multicultural features should be incorporated into education within a cultural worldview. Efforts to improve local wisdom are necessary to support multicultural education in Indonesia. Themes can be applied like 1. Recognition that we are different, 2. Tolerance, that we honor the different; 3. Adjustment, which takes time and effort, or 4. Socio-cultural combination, mixing different kinds of culture with others. An education program gives teachers the abilities and information they need to design inclusive and culturally aware learning environments. This could involve methods for dealing with religious variety, encouraging acceptance, and avoiding prejudice.

Conclusion

Our research's main objective is that teacher educators require the *Bhinneka* attitude to be defined in three principles, namely recognize, assist, and multicultural. The approach to religious freedom in education should be established on socio-culture and the philosophy of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and its implementation in multicultural education. The multicultural education system, especially when concentrated on formal education, can act as a facilitator factor in the process of decreasing disagreement. Multicultural education should be offered, beginning from early childhood to higher education. By educating distinctions and diversities, learners will consider that insight and open-mindedness are required to appreciate the differences in worldviews. The individual who understands diversity could promote strong competence in the way of thinking, expressing ideas, and socializing with others. Understanding the differences supports freedom of religion based on multicultural education on local wisdom and religious values.

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