



Indonesian Quranic Exegetes and Multiculturalism: A Comparative Study of Hamka and Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Multicultural Perspectives

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Abstract: This article examines the concept of multiculturalism as understood and articulated by two prominent Indonesian intellectual figures, Hamka and Muhammad Quraish Shihab. Dawam Rahardjo observes that the principle of multiculturalism in Indonesia has not been adequately understood, given that it is permeated by mutual suspicion and apprehension, particularly between majority and minority groups. In practical terms, the idea of multiculturalism has not received sufficient acceptance among Indonesian Muslims in general. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and Kisdi (Indonesian Committee for Islamic World Solidarity) explicitly rejected pluralism in 2005. Multiculturalism as a pluralistic worldview extends beyond merely acknowledging and honoring the plurality of realities; it also entails attending to the dimensions of interaction and to the existence of each culture as equal entities within society. Based on the author's observations, the Quran contains numerous verses that may serve as a foundation for building cooperation, mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation, a readiness to accept diversity, reconciliation among peoples, and peaceful coexistence between cultural groups, grounded in the principles of justice, equality, and other multiculturalism principles. The methods employed in this article are content analysis and the comparative method. Furthermore, this research draws on historical and sociological approaches.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, coexistence, pro-existence, gender equality, human identity.

Introduction

In its general usage, multiculturalism is conceived as a perspective on diversity that recognizes and embraces diversity as comprising entities of equal standing, both individually and culturally, whether in terms of ethnicity, culture, gender, language, and so forth, with the overarching aim of enhancing human dignity and worth (Suparlan, 2022). Multiculturalism is also understood as a worldview that foregrounds the existence of cultural differences as entities possessing equal rights. From this conception of multiculturalism, normative ideas have emerged regarding harmony, tolerance, mutual respect for differences, and cultural rights (Bukhori, 2019). In Indonesia, the value of multiculturalism is explicitly inscribed in Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution, which asserts that "national culture is a culture that emerged as a cultural endeavor of the entire Indonesian people" (Laso & Rahayu, 2022).

The pluralistic character of Indonesian society necessitates the realization of a condition in which all elements of society are tolerant and respect cultural differences on an equal basis. If this is not achieved, the pluralism of Indonesian society will remain trapped within its merely pluralistic nature. J.S. Furnivall (Fedyani & Syaefuddin, 2006) maintained that in a plural society, where parts of the community live side by side yet are separated within the confines of a common political unit, the potential for social conflict is considerable. It is therefore imperative to cultivate a tolerant religious understanding. Tolerance encourages society to mutually acknowledge the existence of other religions, faiths, and distinct identities, thereby enabling the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect within a framework of harmonious social life. The concept of multiculturalism, substantively, does not contradict the foundational teachings of Islam, since those teachings point to universal human values such as justice, equality, and freedom (Q.S. Al-Hujurat/49: 13; Q.S. Al-Maidah/5: 8; Q.S. Al-Nisa'/4: 75). According to Budy Munawar Rachman, Islam is congruent with universal human values; it therefore follows that pluralism and multiculturalism occupy a legitimate place within the Islamic tradition (Munawar Rachman, 2010, p. 42).

Based on the author's observations, the Quran contains messages calling for the establishment of cooperation, mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation, a readiness to accept diversity, reconciliation among peoples, and peaceful coexistence among cultural groups, grounded in the principles of justice, equality, and the other principles of multiculturalism. The Quran explicitly affirms that "humans were created from men and women in tribes and nations so that they may come to know and respect one another; they are equal before God, except for the most devout" (Q.S. al-Hujurat/49: 13). In another verse, it is also affirmed that God has honored the children of Adam without exception, bestowing upon them land and sea, providing them with good provisions, and giving them priority over other creatures (Q.S. Al-Isyrah/17: 70). God has further emphasized that "if God had so willed, God would have made all of humanity a single people, but God chose otherwise; God will examine human beings based on whatever has been bestowed upon them, and they are to compete in virtue" (Q.S. Al-Maidah/5: 48).

From these excerpts from several Quranic verses, it appears that a preliminary conclusion may be drawn, namely that the Quran contains foundational teachings about multiculturalism by affirming that diversity among human beings is *sunnatullah* (an expression of God's will) that cannot be contested. The verses cited above also demonstrate

that no hierarchy of identity exists in this diversity; all human beings are viewed as equal and are equally honored, regardless of their identity, origin, or tribal affiliation. Islam thus calls all human beings toward the common objective of unity without distinction of race, skin color, ethnicity, culture, or religion, meaning that racial domination and discrimination contradict monotheism and are therefore understood as offenses against humanity.

It must be acknowledged, however, that there are also alternative interpretations of Quranic verses relating to multiculturalism. Beyond the verses of the Quran that contain the foundational teachings of multiculturalism, the Quran also contains verses that do not appear to support the principles of multiculturalism. In other words, the Quran also contains certain verses that are frequently invoked by certain Islamic groups as a basis for rejecting pluralism or multiculturalism, such as the verse "Do not take infidels (disbelievers) as allies instead of believers" (Q.S. Al-Nisa'/4: 144), and another verse stating "Muhammad is the Messenger of God. And those with him are firm with the disbelievers and compassionate with one another" (Q.S. Al-Fath/48: 29). From these brief excerpts, it may also be concluded that the Quran contains certain verses that appear to be in tension with multiculturalism.

In order to comprehend the guidance of the Quran, traditional Muslims invariably refer to works of Quranic interpretation written by exegetes in both the classical and modern periods, whether composed in Arabic, Indonesian, or other languages. According to Muchlis Hanafi (Kemenag, n.d.), Head of the Quranic Studies Division of the *Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an*, given that the majority of Indonesians do not have command of Arabic, they rely substantially on Indonesian-language interpretations to access the content of the holy book, such as *Tafsir Al-Qur'an* published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as certain Quranic exegetical works authored in the Indonesian language.

The role of Quranic interpretation (Yasin & Abou El Fadl, 2004, pp. 138–139) is accordingly central and strategically important in constructing Islamic thinking and shaping the understanding of Indonesian Muslims. The "understanding" that represents the meaning of the holy verses as articulated through the interpretive work will significantly influence patterns of public understanding. A Quranic interpretation that presents an open and tolerant reading will relatively shape a tolerant understanding and attitude in its readers. Conversely, interpretations that tend toward a closed and intolerant reading will relatively cultivate an intolerant understanding and attitude in their readers (Foucault, 1972). It is in this context that accusations have emerged from the chairman of the *Lajnah Tanfidziyah Majlis Mujahidin*, Sofwan Awwas, alleging that the Department of Religion's (now the Ministry of Religious Affairs) interpretation of the Quran has contributed to the emergence of violent ideologies in Indonesia, including cases of religious terrorism. Sofwan Awwas argued that the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Quranic interpretation presented an exclusively oriented reading lacking in messages of tolerance (vao-islam.com, 2011). Muchlis Hanafi, as Head of the Al-Quran Study Division, *Lajnah pentashih Mushhaf Al-Qur'an*, refuted this argument.

Religious views that lean toward tolerance or intolerance, exclusivism or inclusivism, thus cannot be separated from the influence of the understanding of religious sacred texts as shaped by interpretive works. The book of *tafsir* consequently exerts a substantial influence on people's understanding of the content of the holy Quran. People continuously seek answers to various social, religious, and other problems, including those of pluralism and

multiculturalism. It is therefore necessary to study and analyze the concept of multiculturalism on the basis of the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Quran, as approached through authoritative interpretive works and the proper scholarly figures, particularly those who inhabit Indonesia. This is intended to observe how the concept of multiculturalism manifests in interpretive works produced by *ulama* residing in a multicultural society such as Indonesia. The author assumes that Indonesia's social setting exerts an influence on the resulting interpretive products, rendering them distinct from other interpretive products, including Middle Eastern interpretations composed by interpreters who inhabit an Arab social setting fundamentally different from that of Indonesia.

In the author's assessment, two Indonesian intellectual figures merit particular attention for the study of their ideas concerning multiculturalism as expressed in their written works, especially their *tafsir* books. These figures are Hamka, whose *tafsir* work is *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, and M. Quraish Shihab, whose several works include *Al-Mishbah*, *Grounding the Al-Qur'an*, and *Insights into the Al-Qur'an*. There are several reasons why the author selected these two *mufasssir* (Quranic exegetes) and their interpretive works as the objects of this research. First, both possess an Indonesian background (Baker, 1989; Parekh, 2008), where the Indonesian social setting is understood to have influenced the interpreter's mindset and interpretive output. Second, both have produced works that Howard M. Federspiel (1996) regards as *tafsir* that endeavors to understand the contents of the Quran comprehensively, meaning that, in quality, they surpass other *tafsirs* from the Indonesian interpretive tradition. They may therefore serve as representatives of other existing interpretations. Third, both are prolific and authoritative figures with numerous works in the Islamic field; their authoritative works in Islamic studies are believed to have strongly influenced the configuration of religious academic thinking in Indonesian society. Fourth, both have works, especially their *tafsir* works, that continue to be used by Muslims as references for understanding the holy verses of the Quran in relation to the life problems they encounter. Fifth, Hamka and Quraish can both be classified as figures who are tolerant and who, in their thinking, respect other religious communities. Syafi'i Maarif stated (Syafi'i Maarif, 2006) that Hamka has a more acceptable approach to dealing with the various conflict situations that occur in Indonesia, one of the triggers of which is religious sentiment.

This argument is grounded in his analysis of Hamka's interpretation of Q.S. Ali Imran, verse 85, which states "Whoever seeks something other than Islam as a religion, it will never be accepted from him," as an erasure (*nasikh*) of verse 62 of Surah Al-Baqarah, which affirms "Indeed, those who believe, and the Jews and the Shabi'un and Nashara people, whoever believes in God and the Hereafter, and does righteous deeds, there is no fear for them, and they will not grieve" (Hamka, 2005).

With respect to the figure of Hamka, Karel Steenbrink argued that Hamka is a figure of great importance in the Indonesian Islamic phenomenon. From a religious standpoint, Hamka is more eclectic and accommodates various tendencies (Steenbrink, 1994). Hamka displayed respect for traditional Indonesian Islamic customs. In his multi-volume exegesis of the Quran, he sought to communicate with readers in an everyday vernacular style (Taylor, 2017). According to Syafi'i Maarif (2006) Hamka's position in viewing verse 62 of Al-Baqarah as having been abrogated (*mansukh*) by verse 85 of Surah Ali Imran reflects the courage of an exegete who yearned for a world safe for all people. If the verse referenced in

verse 85 of Surah Ali Imran is understood as complementary to other verses, it has broad implications, namely the cultivation of an attitude of respect for groups from other religions, tolerance, and the avoidance of extreme fanaticism.

While Hamka does not view Q.S. Ali Imran 3:85 as the *nasikh* of Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:62, Quraish Shihab does not articulate the relationship between the two passages. In his interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:62, Quraish Shihab emphasized that the religions mentioned in this verse cannot be equated, as they differ in their creeds and *shari'ah*. However, Quraish Shihab holds the view that living in harmony and peace among religious adherents is an absolute religious imperative. Muslim people should submit to God on matters of religious truth, leaving it to God's judgment as to who will be granted salvation in the hereafter (Shihab, 2001). Even though there are differences between the two interpretive figures, in the author's estimation both may be classified as pluralists or multiculturalists. This preliminary conclusion, however, requires support from a comprehensive analysis of their ideas as expressed sporadically in their works, particularly in their *Tafsir* books.

Based on the foregoing background, the following problems can be identified. First, multiculturalism is a concept (Bagus, 2000) that remains contested and has become a source of polemic among Muslims, between those who accept it and those who reject it. Second, within the Quran there are verses interpreted as supporting the concept of multiculturalism, and verses understood as potentially rejecting it; acceptance and rejection of multiculturalism are therefore generally grounded in the acceptance and rejection of these respective verses. Third, Hamka and Quraish Shihab are two authoritative figures in the field of Al-Quran interpretation in Indonesia who are worthy of study for their interpretations of verses relating to the concept of multiculturalism. It is strongly anticipated that the interpretive works of these two figures carry implications for the religious life of Indonesian society, both academically and practically.

The data required for this research are qualitative data in the form of thoughts and ideas expressed by two authoritative figures regarding multiculturalism, as articulated in their works. The primary data source for this research consists of the works of these two figures that directly address matters pertaining to multiculturalism. Two methods are employed in this article, namely content analysis and comparative methods. In addition to these two methods, this study also uses a thematic exegetical approach, along with historical and sociological approaches. The thematic exegetical approach is employed to categorize keywords within a single theme, rather than to analyze texts of the Quran as a whole. The sociological approach is used to identify and explain the ideas of the two exegetes in the context of their socio-cultural lives. Simultaneously, the historical approach is used to analyze the historical context of their lives and its relationship to their ideas on multiculturalism. To draw conclusions, both deductive and inductive modes of reasoning were employed.

Definition and Goals of Multiculturalism

Etymologically, multiculturalism derives from the word "multi," meaning plural or many; "cultural," referring to culture or cultural affairs; and "ism," denoting a worldview or school of thought. Culture, according to Taylor, is a complex whole encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, traditions, and the various capabilities and habits that an individual

acquires as a member of society (Taylor, n.d.; Kuper & Kuper, 2000). Etymologically, therefore, multiculturalism signifies an understanding of cultural diversity that encompasses knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, traditions, patterns of meaning, and the various capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of society. In a deeper sense, multiculturalism is not merely an acknowledgment of diverse cultures, but a recognition that carries political, social, economic, and other implications.

In definitional terms, multiculturalism, as articulated by Azyumardi Azra, is a worldview that is subsequently translated into various cultural policies emphasizing acceptance of the realities of religion, plurality, and multiculturalism as they exist in people's lives. Multiculturalism may also be understood as a worldview that manifests in political consciousness (Azyumardi, 2007). Thomas M. Steinfatt defines multiculturalism as the recognition and awareness that several different cultures can coexist in the same environment and derive mutual benefit (Rongers & Steinfatt, 1999). According to Parsudi Suparlan, multiculturalism is an ideology that recognizes and glorifies differences in equality, both individually and culturally (Suparlan, 2022). Caleb Rosado defines multiculturalism as a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context, thereby empowering all within the organization or society (Rosado, n.d.). According to Rosado, at least four elements constitute the core of multiculturalism: first, trust and behavior; second, acceptance and respect for others; third, recognition and appreciation of others; and fourth, support and the provision of opportunities for others.

For Bikhu Parekh, the concept of multiculturalism encompasses three components. First, this concept is related to culture. Second, it refers to cultural plurality. Third, it contains a particular way of responding to that plurality. Multiculturalism, in his view, is therefore not a pragmatic political doctrine but a perspective or ideology in human life. It is not only about differences and identities but also about diversity and differences that are culturally situated. It accordingly constitutes a set of beliefs and practices through which a group of people understands itself and organizes its individual and collective life (Parekh, 2008).

In the arguments of Daniel Sparingga, multiculturalism at the local, national, and global levels generally prioritizes the principles of justice and equality. To actualize the principle of multiculturalism, what is needed is not monoculturalism, not assimilation but renewal, not coexistence but pro-existence, not exclusion but inclusion, and not separation but interaction (Sparingga, 2003). Consistent with Sparingga, Will Kymlicka, a Canadian political philosopher, emphasized that multiculturalism constitutes a special state policy that provides particular recognition and attention to minority groups in order to accommodate their cultural needs (Kymlicka, 2002). According to Kymlicka, the most important consideration in the political application of multiculturalism is that all identities developing within a plural society must be accorded the freedom to practice their cultural traditions (Kymlicka, 2002).

From the foregoing, it can be observed that the definition of multiculturalism is plural in nature, diverse in scope, and ranges from simply respecting and protecting cultural diversity within a framework of peaceful coexistence, to a view that conceives multiculturalism not merely as an acceptance, respect, and protection of cultural diversity, but also as an attitude of mutual support and assistance (pro-existence) within the framework of cultural diversity,

oriented toward the creation of a harmonious communal life. In the context of the Western world, particularly in the United States, the concept of multiculturalism is in essence a revision and continuation of the melting-pot concept derived from the ideas of J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur (1735-1813) (Darity, 2008). Hector's multiculturalism concept is considered irrelevant and racist, as the concept of merging cultures into a single American culture would ultimately assert the primacy of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture as the culture of European white immigrants. As ethnic and cultural composition in America became increasingly diverse and demands for improving the conditions of minority groups grew stronger, the melting-pot concept was subjected to criticism and came to be regarded as no longer relevant. In its place came the concept of cultural pluralism advanced by Horace Kallen (Liliweri, 2009), also known as mixed-identities of culture (Pozzetta, 1991). This notion of cultural pluralism or hodgepodge culture subsequently became known as the concept of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism has thus emerged as a new understanding that creates space for minority groups. It is accordingly not only an understanding capable of protecting minority rights but also constitutes a resistance to injustice committed by the government, particularly against minority groups. The goal of multiculturalism is therefore none other than the embodiment of its concept in policies oriented toward the realization of the aims outlined above.

Jerzy Zubrzycki formulated three goals of multiculturalism, which were later cited in the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council's 1977 document entitled *Australia as a Multicultural Society*. The three formulations of the goals of multiculturalism are, first, relating to ethnic cultural identity; second, relating to social and national cohesiveness; and third, equal access to social resources (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, 1981; Warneke, 1981). This framework was subsequently reaffirmed by Menadue J.L, Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs of Australia, who stated these three principles as cultural identity, social cohesion, and equal opportunity (Menadue, 1981). These three principles have become broadly accepted as prerequisites for a multicultural society.

Mark Lopez elaborates further on the goals of multiculturalism, identifying at least four. First, multiculturalism serves as a social adhesive aimed at enabling diverse community groups to interact in various ways to meet common needs. Second, it entails the realization of guarantees for the freedom of cultural expression, namely the guarantee of the rights of people related to their respective cultural identities to inherit and express them freely, including in the domains of language and religion. Third, it encompasses equality of opportunity and access, where people are given equal opportunities and access in various aspects of economic life and work. Fourth, it encompasses equal responsibility, commitment, and participation, which require minority groups to demonstrate loyalty to the state through a sense of responsibility and involvement in community activities and firm adherence to multicultural ideology (Lopez, n.d.).

Consistent with the views above, Hilda Hernandez, in *Multiculturalism in Educations: A Teacher Guide to Linking Context, Process, and Content* (2003), explains that multiculturalism is oriented toward cooperation, equality, and appreciation in a world that is increasingly complex and no longer monocultural (Hernandez, 2003). In line with this explanation, the aim of multiculturalism as articulated by Suparlan can be understood from his definition of multiculturalism, which he regards as an ideology (Bagus, 2000) that glorifies differences in

equality both individually and culturally, without accounting for differences in identity, culture, ethnicity, gender, or language. The aim of this ideology is to elevate the dignity of human beings and their humanity (Suparlan, 2022).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the goal of multiculturalism encompasses, first, the realization of guaranteed cultural expression so that society can inherit and express it freely, including language and religion. Second, equality of opportunity and access, where people are given equal opportunities in various aspects of economic life and work. Third, the realization of equality and social harmony in establishing cooperation to meet shared needs.

Hamka and Quraish Shihab's Views on Multiculturalism

Views on the Equality of Men and Women

The term "equality of men and women," in the parlance of experts and activists, has its own operational definition known as gender. Gender is an English term that literally denotes sex. What is intended by this term, however, is not biological sex but the social, cultural, political, and religious differences grounded in the physical appearance of women and men (Fakih, 2003). Men and women, from the Islamic perspective in particular and from the perspective of the religious community in general, are not only different in terms of biological organs but also differ in essence, in that each possesses its own characteristics, inclinations, and capacities. These natural differences constitute what is commonly referred to as *fitrah*. The concept of gender equality therefore indirectly challenges and rejects the notion that there exist intrinsically different natures between men and women. (Harris & Muhtar, 2019) However, according to Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), in his book *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, men and women are equal, and husbands are not more powerful than their wives. (Rahman, 1980)

In Quraish Shihab's view, men and women are equal, not only in terms of their creation but also in the acquisition of rights. Even though there are different roles and functions associated with men's and women's rights, this does not render one party superior to the other. If differences exist, they arise solely from differences in the primary functions and tasks assigned to each by God. (Tempo, 2013) With regard to political rights for women, Quraish Shihab stated that there is no implicit postulate in the sacred text of Islam that prohibits women from becoming leaders or engaging in political participation. On the contrary, many religious arguments can be found that support women's rights in the political domain. (Shihab, 1996) Regarding women's right to choose their occupation, Islam, in his view, justifies women being active in various activities or working in various fields, whether inside or outside the home, independently, collaboratively, or within any institution, as long as the work is carried out within an atmosphere of honor, propriety, and the capacity to maintain one's religious commitments. (Shihab, 1996)

Quraish Shihab also equalizes men and women with respect to the right to obtain knowledge and learning. The Quran praises *ulu al-albab*, which is not confined to men or women. The Prophet, in his view, did not restrict the obligation to study only to free women but extended it to enslaved people and those of low social status as well. (Shihab, 1996) Consistent with Quraish Shihab's views, Hamka also regards equality between men and women as pertaining

not only to the domain of creation but also to the realm of rights. According to Hamka, women should also be accorded political rights equivalent to those of men and may appear as leaders so long as they are capable. In his view, based on the Quranic verse al-Taubah 9:71, male and female believers are united in guiding one another in one belief, namely belief in God. Women therefore participate together with men in building the community of Islamic believers. (Hamka, 2005)

Hamka also permits women to choose their work according to their wishes and to obtain property from the results of their efforts. Hamka, however, perceives the appropriate dimension of the work undertaken by women. This means that not all work that women are capable of doing is inherently appropriate for women, as certain work may be more appropriate for men. Driving a truck, for example, is in his view more suited to men than women, even if a woman is capable of performing it. (Hamka, 2005) With regard to the right to education, Hamka does not differentiate between men's and women's rights; each has the same opportunity to acquire knowledge. (Hamka, 2001) From this explanation, it can be concluded that Hamka's views are not substantially different from Quraish Shihab's views regarding the equality of men and women. The equality of men and women, in Hamka's view, extends not only to the level of creation but also to the level of rights. Even though differences exist in the levels of manifestation, they do not render one superior to the other.

Equality of Ethnicity and Nationality

As emphasized earlier, multiculturalism begins from the conviction that diversity and differences are inevitable. Certain identities, ethnicities, cultural affiliations, and gender differences are equal rather than hierarchical. No identity or ethnicity is inherently superior to another. (Fedyani & Syaefuddin, 2006) From the Islamic perspective, all human beings are regarded as equal. Differences in skin color, ethnicity, nation, and the like are not conceived as identities that symbolize levels of superiority or inferiority. No tribe or nation is considered more respectable than others, except for those who attain the highest quality of morality before God. (Q.S. Al-Hujurat/49: 13)

In the view of Hamka and Quraish Shihab, drawing on QS. al-Hujurat (49): 13 (Hamka, 2005) and QS. al-A'raf (7): 70, all human beings are regarded as equal. (Shihab, n.d.) Differences in skin color, ethnicity, nation, and the like are not conceived as identities symbolizing levels of superiority or inferiority. No tribe or nation is considered more respectable than others, except for those who attain the highest quality of morality before God. Shihab explained that human equality is natural. (Shihab, n.d.) In Hamka's view, human beings are essentially of one descent; even though they are separated by great distances, their origins are one, and they are therefore equal. (Hamka, 2005)

From this explanation, it can be stated that the two commentators do not hold divergent understandings of the diversity of human identities related to their origins, ethnicities, and nationalities. In their assessment, the equality of human identity with regard to ethnicity and nationality is a matter that has been clearly addressed in the Quran and hadith. Both more normatively affirm the Quranic verses on this matter.

Cultural Equality

According to E.B. Taylor, culture is a complex whole encompassing knowledge, belief, art, morals, science, law, customs, and the various capacities and habits acquired by human beings as members of society. (Laode Monto Bauto, 2014) On the basis of this view, every culture deserves respect, even though the degree of respect may not be uniform, as there may be varying levels of cultural achievement. When an advanced culture provides many benefits to the wider community, it will gain broader respect. Conversely, cultures considered less advanced and less beneficial to the wider community will receive comparatively less respect. However, in the author's assessment, this does not reflect the existence of a cultural hierarchy. No one can genuinely determine that one culture is superior to others. The high cultural values of certain cultural communities do not necessarily carry high value or functional significance for other communities. Likewise, the cultural values considered low by one community may carry deep significance for the adherents of that culture.

This argument is consistent with Herder's view, which holds that all cultures are equal, not because they are equally good in any universal sense, but because they are significant to their peoples and best suited to their needs. (Parekh, 2008) On the basis of this view, people are called to respect other cultures not because of legal requirements or moral principles, but because culture carries profound meaning for the cultural community that upholds it. (Parekh, 2008) Consistent with this view, Shihab holds that cultural products such as crafts that produce statues created exclusively for the purpose of beauty or other righteous ends, rather than as objects of worship, can be justified from a religious standpoint. Religious prohibitions, he argues, relate to the attitude adopted toward statues rather than to the statues themselves. (Shihab, 1996) Shihab's position is aligned with Hamka's view that works of art, including statues of animals, humans, or any other kind, are not prohibited by religion as long as they are intended for the purpose of beauty or human benefit rather than for worship. (Shihab, n.d.)

In the perspective of Hamka and Quraish Shihab, human culture, encompassing the dimensions of art, knowledge, language, and religion, is equal, with no single dimension considered superior to the others.

Equality of Religious People

Human diversity is an indisputable fact, including diversity in the belief systems to which human beings adhere, namely religions. The diversity of belief systems or religions is not only a manifestation of *sunnatullah* (the will of nature) but also the will of God. The inevitability of religious diversity is reflected in various assertions in the Quran regarding the existence of religions that must be respected, even though these religions do not receive divine guarantee. One of God's words pertaining to this is the confirmation in QS. Yunus (10): 99, (Q.S. Yunus/10: 99) which reads "And if your Lord had willed, all people on earth would have believed, every single one of them. So would you force people to become believers?" Another verse addressing this issue is QS. al-Baqarah (2): 148, (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 148) which means "And for each community there is its own Qibla which it faces. So compete in doing good. Wherever you are, God will surely gather you all on the Day of Judgment. Indeed, God has power over all things."

These verses clearly emphasize the fundamental human tendency to adhere to a belief system based on one's own choices and inclinations without being disturbed or coerced. The Quranic verses also affirm that religious appreciation is a matter of deep intellectual tendency and is very personal in nature. Thus, the belief systems upheld by human beings are highly diverse, proportional to the level of human diversity itself. From this explanation, it can be concluded that Shihab appears to uphold equality among human belief systems, which also implies equality among religious communities, without the propensity to denigrate one another, given the risk that God alone will be the ultimate judge. (Shihab, 2003) While Hamka's explanation is not as direct as Shihab's, Hamka's statement regarding the diversity of human religious law is grounded in *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and individual choices, with the understanding that each person competes in goodness and bears the risks before God's court. This argument also implies equality among these religious communities.

Coexistence of Cultural Diversity

Islam was revealed to the world in order to create peace for humanity and to extend mercy to all people and the universe (*rahmatan li al-'alamin*). (Q.S. Al-Anbiya'/21: 107) This evident vision of Islam renders the coexistence of diverse human cultural groups a fundamental message of Islam as well. Hamka explicitly stated that the Quran contains messages conveying peace and the harmonious and peaceful coexistence between religious groups (coexistence of cultural diversity). (Hamka, n.d.) He further affirmed that the people most proximate to God are those who are able to maintain bonds of connection with fellow human beings and sustain their relationship with God's power. (Hamka, 2001)

According to Quraish Shihab, a Muslim ought not to be angered if non-Muslims judge the teachings of Islam to be contrary to their own teachings, nor should they be angry if non-Muslims judge Islam as an erroneous teaching from their perspective. Conversely, followers of other religions and beliefs need not be angered if Muslims judge beliefs outside of Islam as incorrect teachings. What matters in social life is that we do not blame one another, even though each is fully persuaded from the bottom of their heart that their respective religion is the one approved by God. (Rustandi et al., 2022)

Hamka and Quraish Shihab both affirmed that coexistence among cultural or religious groups (coexistence of cultural diversity) receives strong legitimacy from Islamic teachings. (Shihab, n.d.) This argument is further substantiated by the Quran's affirmation of the principle of Islamic tolerance toward other religious groups, the principle of cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the prohibition on disturbing or insulting one another.

Similarities and Differences Between Hamka and Quraish Shihab's Views on Multiculturalism

The foregoing exposition of Hamka and Quraish Shihab's views on multiculturalism can be briefly summarized as follows.

Hamka tends to employ a deductive approach in understanding general religious teachings and those relating to legal-formal rules, and an inductive approach in understanding religious teachings relating to moral ethics. According to Hamka, certain verses pertaining to

multiculturalism and its supporting elements are relatively more normative-theological in orientation. Muslims should regard multiculturalism more as a principle of coexistence that emphasizes acceptance and respect for cultural diversity, with the principle of mutual respect in togetherness side by side, in harmony and peace. The elements of cooperation and mutual assistance within this coexistence framework are limited to worldly matters that benefit all parties, rather than to religious matters.

This approach differs to some degree from that of Quraish Shihab, who also tends to employ a deductive approach in understanding general religious teachings while using an inductive approach to understand religious teachings pertaining to moral ethics and formal legal rules. Quraish Shihab interprets verses related to multiculturalism with a more comprehensive methodology, namely a combination of normative-theological methods with historical methods. He also understands multiculturalism as a pro-existence principle that emphasizes acceptance and respect for cultural diversity, with the principle of mutual respect. (Hamka, 2001) Furthermore, in Shihab's view, people should also strive to assist and support one another in the context of living together side by side in harmony and peace.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing research discussion, the author concludes that multiculturalism is understood as a perspective on diversity that recognizes and accepts diversity as comprising entities of equal standing, both individually and culturally, whether in terms of ethnicity, culture, gender, or language, with the aim of enhancing human dignity. In the thought of Hamka and Quraish Shihab, the diversity of human identities, regardless of its form, whether culture, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, is equal or equivalent. No single identity is regarded as superior to another. Hamka and Quraish Shihab share the view that democratic principles such as justice, equity, equality, deliberation, and the upholding of human rights and social justice are compatible with the principles of Islamic teachings themselves. The commonalities between Hamka's and Quraish Shihab's interpretations reside in their tolerant, open, and multiculturalist perspectives. On the other hand, Hamka and Quraish Shihab hold differing views regarding coexistence between cultural or religious groups (coexistence of cultural diversity). Hamka regards multiculturalism more as a principle of coexistence that emphasizes acceptance and respect for cultural diversity, with the principle of mutual respect in living side by side in harmony and peace. Shihab, by contrast, views multiculturalism as a principle of pro-existence that emphasizes acceptance and respect for cultural diversity, with the principle of mutual respect.

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