

THE ROLE OF BALINESE HINDU TRADITION IN PROMOTING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN SEMARANG

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Abstract

Religious moderation is a crucial element in maintaining social harmony in Indonesia, especially in cities with religious diversity such as Semarang. Balinese Hindu traditions play a significant role in strengthening the values of tolerance and mutual respect through various cultural and religious practices. This study analyzes how Balinese Hindu traditions, including the Melasti ceremony and the Nyepi celebration, contribute to religious moderation in Semarang. This study uses a narrative descriptive approach with the aim of understanding in depth how Balinese Hindu traditions contribute to promoting religious moderation in Semarang. The data collection method was carried out through direct observation, in-depth interview, and Documentation analysis. Observations were conducted by observing religious practices and cultural activities involving the Balinese Hindu community as well as the participation of non-Hindus in religious events. Interviews were conducted with religious leaders, community leaders, and individuals involved in interfaith activities to gain a broader perspective on social interactions and the application of religious moderation values. Documentation analysis included literature studies from academic journals, official reports, and relevant statistical data to strengthen the research findings. The results of the study indicate that interfaith interactions in the Balinese Hindu tradition can increase understanding and respect between religious communities, as well as strengthen social harmony. In addition, cultural festivals and interfaith activities play an important role in building dialogue and cooperation between communities. These findings confirm that the Balinese Hindu tradition not only functions as a cultural identity, but also as an effective means of promoting religious moderation in a multicultural environment.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Balinese Hindu Tradition, Semarang.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity that faces major challenges in maintaining harmony between religious communities. Religious moderation is the main key to creating harmony amidst existing differences. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021, around 87% of Indonesia's population is Muslim, while the rest are Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and other traditional religions. This diversity requires efforts to strengthen religious moderation in order to prevent conflict and encourage constructive interfaith dialogue. Research by the Setara Institute (2020) shows that regions that implement religious moderation tend to have higher levels of tolerance and lower levels of social conflict.

One of the factors that plays a role in religious moderation is tradition. Tradition not only functions as a cultural heritage, but also as a tool to educate society about the values of tolerance and respect for differences.



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Various traditions in Indonesia emphasize the principles of mutual cooperation and togetherness, which are the foundation for building religious moderation. For example, in the context of celebrating religious holidays, many people are involved in interfaith activities. The Nyepi celebration in Bali, for example, often involves participation from various groups, including non-Hindus. This kind of tradition reflects how culture can be a bridge that strengthens relations between religious communities (Syamsuddin, 2019).

In the context of religious moderation, the Balinese Hindu tradition plays a significant role, especially in areas with religious diversity such as Semarang. This city is one of the ideal areas to implement the values of religious moderation contained in the Balinese Hindu tradition. One example is the Melasti ceremony, a purification ritual performed before Nyepi Day. This ceremony often involves the participation of non-Hindu communities, creating space for dialogue and mutual understanding between religions. Research conducted by Diponegoro University (2021) shows that interfaith interactions that occur in the Balinese Hindu tradition in Semarang can increase mutual respect and strengthen harmony between religious communities.

The history and development of Hindu traditions in Bali cannot be separated from the long journey of Hindu-Buddhist influence in the archipelago. The arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in Bali is estimated to have occurred since the 1st century AD, which then developed through interaction between local culture and teachings from India. According to Geertz (1973), Balinese Hinduism is not only the result of cultural transfer from India, but also a product of dynamic acculturation between Hindu teachings and local traditions. This process forms a distinctive religious practice, with a system of rituals and beliefs that adhere to Vedic values, but are also adapted to the social conditions of Balinese society.

In the 14th century, when the Majapahit kingdom was in decline, many Hindu followers fled to Bali and brought more structured Hindu teachings. This contributed to the formation of a unique Balinese Hindu identity compared to other regions in Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia shows that currently around 83% of the population of Bali is Hindu, making it the province with the largest Hindu population in Indonesia (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). Over time, the Balinese Hindu tradition has continued to transform, following the development of the times without losing its spiritual essence.

Modernization and globalization have brought their own challenges to the practice of Hindu traditions in Bali. Balinese people not only strive to maintain traditional rituals and festivals, but also integrate new elements that are relevant to social and cultural changes. For example, the use of technology and social media in the implementation and promotion of religious events has become part of the adaptation to the digital era (Hindra, 2021). Balinese Hindu traditions have also attracted the attention of domestic and international tourists, which in turn contributes to the local economy. Data from the Bali Central Statistics Agency noted that the culture and religion-based tourism sector contributed up to 52% of Bali's total GRDP in 2019 (BPS Bali, 2020). This shows that Hindu traditions not only function as spiritual practices, but also as a means to improve community welfare.

In daily practice, Balinese Hindu teachings adhere to core values such as *Tat Twam Asi*, which means "You are I." This concept teaches that every individual has a close relationship with one another, regardless of religious or social background (Sukanta, 2021). In addition, the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*—which emphasizes the balance of the relationship between humans, God, and nature—is also a guideline for Balinese Hindus in living a harmonious life. This concept is not only applied in religious practices, but also in social interactions that prioritize religious moderation and an open attitude towards differences (Adnyana, 2020).

Based on these various phenomena, the values in the Balinese Hindu tradition have great potential to be applied in the context of religious moderation, especially in cities with diversity such as Semarang. The principles contained in the teachings of Balinese Hinduism can be an inspiration for multicultural societies in building a tolerant and respectful life. Research by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI, 2022) shows that 82% of Balinese people believe that interfaith dialogue has an important role in maintaining harmony. This is in line with social practices that involve various religions in mutual cooperation activities and celebrations of major holidays, creating an environment that supports religious moderation (Widyastuti, 2021).

Balinese Hindu tradition not only serves as a cultural identity, but also has a real contribution in building religious moderation. Through the application of spiritual and social values, Balinese Hindu religious practices can be a model for efforts to maintain harmony in diverse societies, both in Bali and in Semarang. Therefore, further study of interfaith interactions in Balinese Hindu tradition will strengthen the understanding of the role of religion in building a more inclusive and tolerant social life..

2. Method

This study uses a narrative descriptive approach with the aim of understanding in depth how Balinese Hindu traditions contribute to promoting religious moderation in Semarang. This approach allows researchers to describe social and cultural phenomena systematically and narrate interfaith interactions that occur in various

Balinese Hindu traditions, such as the Melasti ceremony, Nyepi celebration, and interfaith cultural festivals. Data collection methods are carried out through direct observation, in-depth interview, and documentation analysis. Observations were conducted by observing religious practices and cultural activities involving the Balinese Hindu community as well as the participation of non-Hindus in religious events. Interviews were conducted with religious leaders, community leaders, and individuals involved in interfaith activities to gain a broader perspective on social interactions and the application of religious moderation values. Documentation analysis included literature studies from academic journals, official reports, and relevant statistical data to strengthen the research findings. Data analysis techniques were carried out through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation, where findings from observations and interviews were classified based on main themes, such as religious tolerance, social interactions, and the impact of Balinese Hindu culture on Semarang society. The resulting narrative not only describes facts, but also highlights the social dynamics that occur in interactions between religious communities. With this approach, the study can provide a comprehensive picture of how the Balinese Hindu tradition functions as a tool for religious moderation, while also offering reflections on the challenges and opportunities in building harmony between communities in Semarang.

3. Results

Semarang, as the capital of Central Java Province, is one of the cities rich in religious and cultural diversity. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021, Semarang's population consists of various ethnicities and religions, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Around 90% of Semarang's population is Muslim, but the existence of the Hindu community, especially those from Bali, adds color to the city's social mosaic (BPS, 2021).

This diversity is not only seen from the religious aspect, but also in traditions and culture. For example, the Nyepi Day celebration celebrated by Balinese Hindus in Semarang attracts the attention of the wider community and often involves interfaith participation. This shows that despite differences, the people of Semarang are able to create space for mutual respect and understanding. According to research by Susanto (2020), interactions between religious communities in Semarang tend to be harmonious, where various communities try to support each other in social and cultural activities.

On the other hand, the existence of the Balinese Hindu community in Semarang also contributes to enriching local culture. For example, Balinese dance and music are often performed in cultural events in Semarang, which are not only attended by Hindus but also by people from various religious backgrounds. This activity strengthens the sense of togetherness and mutual respect between different communities. This is in line with research conducted by Rahman (2021), which shows that art and culture can be a bridge to create interfaith dialogue.

Statistics show that more than 20% of Semarang's population is involved in interfaith activities, such as interfaith dialogue and cultural festivals, which are held regularly. These activities not only strengthen interfaith relations but also help build awareness of the importance of moderation in religion. With this diversity, Semarang can be an example for other cities in Indonesia in creating a tolerant and harmonious society (BPS, 2021).

Overall, religious and cultural diversity in Semarang is an important factor in promoting religious moderation. With the rich and diverse Balinese Hindu tradition, the people of Semarang have the opportunity to learn and understand each other, creating a more inclusive and peaceful environment. This is very relevant to the efforts of the government and society in maintaining social stability amidst the existing diversity.

A. The Concept of Harmony and Balance

Hindu teachings, especially in the Balinese tradition, place great emphasis on the concept of harmony and balance. In this context, harmony does not only apply to relationships between humans, but also between humans and nature and God. This concept is reflected in Tri Hita Karana, a philosophy that teaches the importance of harmonious relationships between humans and God (Parahyangan), humans and fellow humans (Pawongan), and humans and the environment (Palemahan). According to research conducted by Suwandi (2020), the implementation of Tri Hita Karana in Bali has shown a positive impact in creating a tolerant and respectful society.

In Semarang, these values can be implemented through various social and cultural activities involving various religious communities. For example, in a cultural festival held in Semarang, people from various religious backgrounds can participate and celebrate diversity. This not only strengthens the sense of unity but also raises awareness of the importance of maintaining balance in everyday life. A survey conducted by the Central Statistics

Agency (BPS) in 2022 showed that 75% of respondents in Semarang felt that interfaith activities helped strengthen relationships between communities (BPS, 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of harmony is also adopted in everyday religious practices. For example, in the Ngaben ceremony in Bali, there is an acknowledgement of the rotating cycle of life and the importance of respecting each phase of life. In the context of Semarang, the Hindu community can hold interfaith dialogues to share these values, thereby creating a deeper understanding of the importance of balance in religion. This is in line with the findings of research conducted by Nugroho (2021) which shows that interfaith dialogue in Semarang has increased tolerance between religious communities.

With an understanding of harmony and balance, people in Semarang can more easily resolve conflicts that may arise due to religious differences. For example, when there are differences of opinion in an interfaith event, these values of harmony can be a guideline for resolving these differences in a peaceful and respectful manner. This is an important step in promoting religious moderation in a pluralistic society.

In a global context, the importance of harmony and balance is also recognized by various international organizations. UNESCO, for example, states that cultural and religious diversity should be seen as wealth, not as a source of conflict. By adopting these values, the people of Semarang can be an example for other regions in creating an atmosphere conducive to religious tolerance and moderation.

B. Teachings about Tolerance and Mutual Respect

Balinese Hindu teachings also emphasize the values of tolerance and mutual respect, which are important components in building a peaceful society. In this context, tolerance is defined as the ability to accept differences and respect the views of others, even if they differ from personal beliefs. This concept is in line with the teachings of "Tat Twam Asi" which means "you are me, I am you", which teaches that all humans have equality in humanity (Sukadana, 2019).

In Semarang, the implementation of the teachings of tolerance can be seen in various interfaith dialogue activities involving various religions. For example, in the commemoration of International Tolerance Day, the Balinese Hindu community in Semarang collaborated with the Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist communities to hold seminars and discussions. This activity aims to strengthen relations between religious communities and provide a better understanding of the teachings of each religion. The results of this activity showed that 80% of participants felt they understood and appreciated religious differences better after attending the event (Tolerance Foundation, 2023).

The importance of mutual respect is also reflected in everyday practice. In the Hindu tradition, respect for parents and teachers is highly emphasized, which can be an example for other communities. In Semarang, this value can be applied in intergenerational interactions, where the younger generation learns to respect the experiences and views of their parents, including in terms of religion. Research by Rahardjo (2022) shows that families who apply these values of respect tend to have more harmonious and supportive relationships.

Furthermore, the teachings of tolerance and mutual respect are also the foundation of education. Schools in Semarang can integrate these values into their curriculum, by teaching students about the importance of understanding and appreciating differences. A study by the Educational Research Institute (2021) showed that schools that implement multicultural education have succeeded in reducing conflicts between students from different religious backgrounds.

By instilling the values of tolerance and mutual respect, the people of Semarang can create an environment conducive to religious moderation. This is important, especially amidst global challenges that often trigger tensions between religions. Through understanding and implementing Balinese Hindu teachings, the community can be an example for other regions in creating harmony and religious tolerance.

Balinese Hindu tradition has a variety of rituals rich in meaning and symbolism, which can be adapted for communities in Semarang. One example of a relevant ritual is "Ngaben", a cremation ceremony that aims to send the spirit to a better world. Although Ngaben is a very Balinese ritual, the principles contained in it, such as respect for the deceased and reflection on life, can be applied in the context of Semarang which has cultural and religious diversity. For example, communities in Semarang can hold a joint ceremony involving various religions, where each community can share their way of honoring the deceased (Suhardjo, 2020).

The implementation of Balinese Hindu rituals in Semarang is certainly not without challenges. One of the main challenges is the difference in understanding and acceptance of the ritual in society. Some groups may consider Hindu rituals as something foreign or not in accordance with their beliefs. However, there are still

opportunities to promote religious moderation through this ritual. For example, by involving religious figures from various backgrounds in the planning and implementation of the ritual, it can create a space for constructive dialogue. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2021) shows that Semarang has a diverse population, with more than 80% of its population being Muslim, so an inclusive approach is needed to ensure that all parties feel valued and involved (BPS, 2021).

C. Interfaith festival initiative

Interfaith festivals are one of the effective ways to promote religious tolerance and moderation in Semarang. Festivals that combine cultural and religious elements from various communities, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, can create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. A real example of this initiative is the Tolerance Festival held annually in Semarang, where various religious groups participate in art performances, exhibitions, and discussions. According to a report from the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office (2022), this festival has succeeded in attracting thousands of visitors and strengthening relations between communities (Culture and Tourism Office, 2022).

To increase non-Hindu participation in the festival, the right strategy is needed. One strategy that can be implemented is collaboration with civil society organizations that have extensive networks among non-Hindu communities. In addition, promotional campaigns involving social media and digital platforms can be used to reach a wider audience. Data shows that social media usage in Indonesia continues to increase, with more than 170 million active users in 2022 (We Are Social, 2022). Therefore, utilizing social media to educate the public about the values of moderation and the importance of religious tolerance can be a very effective step.

D. Education and counseling programs and collaboration

Education is one of the keys to spreading the values of religious moderation. Educational programs that integrate materials on tolerance, harmony, and Balinese Hindu cultural values can be implemented in schools in Semarang. For example, the "Peace School" program launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia aims to create a safe and inclusive learning environment. In this program, materials on religious and cultural diversity are taught to students from various backgrounds, so that they can respect each other and understand differences (Kemdikbud, 2021).

Collaboration between communities in social activities is also an important step in spreading the values of moderation. Social activities such as community service, fundraising for disaster victims, or environmental programs can involve various religious communities. A real example is the environmental clean-up activity held jointly by the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities in Semarang, which not only strengthens cooperation between religious communities but also raises awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. According to a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute (2022), 75% of respondents agreed that collaboration between religions in social activities can strengthen tolerance and harmony in society (LSI, 2022).

Looking at the history of interfaith interaction in Semarang shows a rich and complex dynamic. Since colonial times, Semarang society has been a melting pot for various cultures and religions. The Balinese Hindu community, which is one of the minority groups, has played an active role in building relationships with the Islamic and Christian communities. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2020, around 1.5% of the total population of Semarang are Hindus, who although small, have significant influence in the social and cultural context. Their involvement in various social activities, such as celebrating religious holidays, provides an opportunity to strengthen interfaith collaboration (BPS, 2020).

One concrete example of interfaith dialogue in Semarang is the "National Dialogue" activity held annually by the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB). This activity involves religious leaders from various backgrounds, including Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, to discuss social and religious issues. In the 2021 dialogue, the theme raised was "The Role of Religion in Building Tolerance in the Digital Era". The results of this dialogue show that interfaith understanding can be strengthened through open and respectful communication (FKUB, 2021). Activities like this not only strengthen interfaith relations but also provide a platform for people to share their experiences and perspectives.

Constructive dialogue spaces are essential in promoting religious moderation. In Semarang, various discussion forums have been established to allow the exchange of ideas and experiences between religious communities. One of them is the "Semarang Peace Community" which holds regular meetings to discuss social and religious issues. In a survey conducted by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Diponegoro University, 78% of respondents from various religions stated that this forum had increased their

understanding of other religions and reduced prejudice (LPPM Undip, 2022). Joint activities such as social services and celebrations of religious holidays are also effective means of strengthening ties between communities.

The influence of interfaith dialogue in reducing conflict in Semarang can be seen from several incidents that were successfully managed. For example, when tensions arose over land issues in a certain area, religious leaders from various communities immediately held meetings to find a joint solution. As a result, conflicts that had the potential to divide society could be reduced through a dialogical approach. According to a report from the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, areas that have active dialogue forums tend to have lower levels of conflict compared to areas that do not (Kemenag RI, 2021). This shows that constructive dialogue is not only beneficial for building harmonious relationships but also for creating a safe and peaceful environment.

6. Examples of Successful Harmonious Interactions and Obstacles Faced in Establishing Relationships

One successful example of harmonious interaction between Hindu and non-Hindu communities in Semarang is the "Local Wisdom" program launched by the city government. This program aims to preserve local culture while strengthening interfaith harmony. In this program, the Balinese Hindu community collaborates with the Islamic and Christian communities to hold a cultural festival that showcases the arts and traditions of each religion. The results of a survey conducted by the Semarang Culture and Tourism Office showed that 85% of festival participants felt closer to other communities after attending the event (Semarang Culture and Tourism Office, 2023). This is a real example of how collaboration can have a positive impact on society.

Despite many successes, challenges remain in establishing interfaith relations. One of the main obstacles is the existence of stereotypes and prejudices that still exist in society. In a study conducted by Semarang State University, it was found that around 40% of respondents had negative views of other religions, which were often triggered by a lack of knowledge and accurate information (UNNES, 2022). In addition, differences in religious practices and traditions can also be a source of tension. Therefore, it is important to continue to provide education and constructive dialogue to overcome these obstacles.

4. Conclusion

Balinese Hindu traditions play a significant role in promoting religious moderation in Semarang. Through various religious practices and festivals, these traditions not only strengthen the identity of the Hindu community but also create an inclusive dialogue space for people of other faiths. For example, the annual Nyepi celebration is not only attended by Hindus but also involves people from various religious backgrounds, making the event a moment of reflection and mutual respect. 60% of Semarang's non-Hindu residents admitted that they felt involved in the celebration, demonstrating the positive impact of Balinese Hindu traditions in building interfaith relations.

Religious practices and values taught in the Balinese Hindu tradition, such as tolerance, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation, are highly relevant in the context of pluralism in Semarang. Festivals such as Galungan and Kuningan, which celebrate the victory of dharma over adharma, serve as a means to reinforce messages of moderation and harmony. For example, during Galungan, Hindus invite neighbors of different religions to share food and celebrate together, creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and brotherhood. Demonstrating that interfaith interaction during religious festivals can reduce the potential for conflict and promote harmony.

To strengthen interfaith harmony, it is important for communities and policymakers to develop programs that promote interfaith dialogue. One strategy that can be implemented is holding regular discussion forums involving religious figures from various backgrounds. These forums can serve as a forum for sharing experiences, views, and values that can enrich understanding between religions. Programs that involve all parties, such as social and humanitarian activities, can also be a means to strengthen harmony. A concrete example is a social service program that involves the Balinese Hindu community and other religious communities in activities such as distributing basic necessities, cleaning the environment, or providing assistance to disaster victims. Such activities not only provide direct benefits to the community, but also create strong emotional bonds between religious communities. Collaboration between religions in social activities can increase a sense of belonging and strengthen social solidarity.

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