

## **Cak Nur Pluralism: Criticism Of The Phenomenon Religious Intolerance In Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses the phenomenon of religious intolerance in Indonesia through Cak Nur's perspective of pluralism. Pluralism, which is the main framework of this article, is the basis for revealing the complexity of the challenges faced by Indonesian society in understanding and appreciating religious pluralism. Cak Nur, a contemporary Islamic thinker and intellectual, provides a rich perspective on religious diversity and the importance of tolerance in religious dialogue. This article aims to highlight a number of factors that influence the emergence of intolerance in Indonesia. In this article the author uses a qualitative method, namely exploring and studying themes that are relevant to the theme of this article. Even though this country is rich in religious diversity, some groups still experience inequality and there are still tensions between religions. Within the framework of Cak Nur's pluralism, this article presents solutions based on dialogue and education from the perspective of Islamic teachings to overcome misunderstandings about the nature of religious diversity. This analysis also includes the role of social media, especially the Instagram account @jaringangusdurian in shaping public opinion regarding religious tolerance. By understanding Cak Nur's views, this article invites readers to understand and reflect on how Indonesian society can form a shared awareness of the values of pluralism, so that acts of intolerance in the name of religion no longer occur in the archipelago. This article uses Cak Nur's inclusive approach as a key step to reduce tensions and build a solid foundation for religious discourse.*

**Keywords : Pluralism, Tolerance, Intolerance, Cak Nur, Islam**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is the most pluralistic country in the world. This is characterized by the diversity of tribes, races, customs and religions in Indonesia. On the one hand, this diversity brings benefits, one of which is a wealth of socio-cultural resources, but on the other hand, this diversity has the potential to create conflict between groups or groups of society. One type of conflict that has recently occurred frequently in Indonesia is conflict between religious communities (Pektas, 2021).

Religion is a social reality that has a major contribution to humans in determining their world view ((Corresponding Author) & Stevanus, 2023). Religion becomes a person's lens in seeing and understanding the complex reality of the world, including plurality in religion. Religious communities should act more tolerantly towards the condition of religious plurality, because in fact, doctrinally normatively, religion always teaches goodness, love and brotherhood. So, someone who is religious must be a better and more tolerant person in responding to the plural reality of religions. However, the reality on the ground shows the opposite, many religious communities carry out intolerant actions towards people of other religions, so that conflicts and disputes in the name of religion have been rife since the beginning of 2023 until now (Yusa' Farchan & Rosharlianti, 2021).

According to a survey conducted by the Setara Institute, throughout May 2023 alone there have been approximately 4 cases of religious intolerance in Indonesia. This does not include other cases of religious intolerance that have occurred since early January 2023, and other cases of intolerance that were not published or went viral. In fact, there is not a single religion recognized in Indonesia that teaches or approves of its followers to be tolerant and unfair towards fellow humans from other religious groups (Makin, 2019).

Inter-religious conflicts that occur in Indonesia are often considered by some people to be small "ripples" that are a consequence of religious plurality. It is true that in a plural community like Indonesia, friction between groups is inevitable, but the small number of intolerant cases that occur cannot necessarily be tolerated. This is because an intolerant attitude by one community group towards another community group can disrupt the social order. Likewise what was conveyed by Prof. Dr. Nurcholish Madjid or usually called Cak Nur; "The understanding of societal pluralism [pluralism] is a very important part of the order of an advanced society. In this understanding, among other things, the health of democracy and justice are at stake. Pluralism not only implies an attitude of willingness to recognize the right of other groups to exist, but also implies a willingness to act fairly to other groups on the basis of peace and mutual respect..." (Al Qurtuby, 2015).

According to Cak Nur, without a good understanding of the concept of plurality, society in a country will find it difficult to achieve the ideals of a more harmonious nation. Understanding plural concepts includes mutual respect and justice. Without understanding the plural concept, the ideal societal order will be difficult to achieve (Sulaiman et al., 2022). In line with the above idea, the internalization of human rights values is an important priority in the implementation of multicultural-based education in Indonesia. The internalization of human rights values aims to strengthen the formation of the human spirit. Multicultural Islamic education provides equal space and place for the interests of individuals and cultural groups, without prioritizing/overriding the rights of individual interest groups.

So, what is Cak Nur's style of thinking when looking at religious pluralism? What are the negative impacts if intolerant "ripples" continue to be accepted as normal by society and the state? In this article, the authors want to review the phenomenon of intolerance between religious communities that has become widespread recently through Cak Nur's view of religious pluralism. This article is also intended to make readers more aware of the importance of a tolerant attitude and understanding of good religious pluralism from an Islamic perspective (Baihaki, 2017).

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this article, the author uses a qualitative method, namely, exploring and studying themes that are relevant to the theme of this article.



Figure 1. Qualitative Method Research Design

Document study, in-depth interviews, and observation are the methods used to collect data. Purposive sampling is used to take or delete informants (Madrianah, Kausar, Muchsidin, & Verawaty, 2023). Examination of information uses the Miles and Huberman model starting from selecting information, deriving information, presenting information and determining achievements carried out during the exploration cycle . The sources used by the author come from various books, relevant journal articles, and several articles from the internet (van Es, Laan, & Meinema, 2021).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Cak Nur's Views Regarding Religious Plurality

Prof. Dr. Nurcholish Madjid or better known as Cak Nur is an Islamic thinker who is very moderate and nationalist. Cak Nur was born on March 17 1939 in Jombang, East Java. Since childhood, Cak Nur has been very familiar and close to Islamic boarding school culture. This was influenced by his father, H. Abdul Madjid, who was an alim from the Tebu Ireng Islamic boarding school, who had close relations with KH Hasyim Asy'ari , the leader of the Tebu Ireng Jombang Islamic boarding school and a founding figure of NU. Cak Nur's mother, Fatonah, is the daughter of Kiai Abdullah Sadjad , an activist at Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI) in Kediri. Fatonah was also a student of KH Asy'ari (Muhammedi, 2017). It was this NU culture that colored Cak Nur's family life, and became the forerunner to the birth of his brilliant thoughts (Yusa' Farchan, 2019).

Cak Nur passed by education in various Islamic boarding schools , among others Boarding school Darul Ulum Rejoso in Jombang, and Boarding school Gontor in Ponorogo. Cak Nur then pursuing undergraduate studies in the department Literature Arabic at the Syarif State Islamic Institute (IAIN). Hidayatullah Jakarta (Muhammedi, 2017). He No only focus on major, however plunge direct in extracurricular And in internal discussions And outside campus. Because activeness , He become chairman common in the Association Islamic Students (HMI). Then, Cak Nur finish program doctoral degree at the University of Chicago, America Union on in 1984 (Woodward, 2017).

As a scholar, Cak Nur own lots of experience Work And devotion on country . He Once Work as researcher at the Institute Study Economy And Social (Leknas, Lipi , 1978-1984), senior researcher LIPI ( Institute Knowledge Indonesian Knowledge, 1984-2005), during the New Order era become members of the MPR ( Majelis Deliberation People ) during two period , become an expert And member of the Research Council National as initiator establishment Committee Independent Monitor Election (KIPP). So big his services so that on in 1998 he awarded Star Mahaputra by Government Republic of Indonesia ( Muhammedi , 2017). Cak Nur exhale breath last on 2005 as a result disease cirrhosis heart. He buried in the Garden Grave Hero Kalibata Because great service on country, though He is inhabitant civil (Kasdi, 2018).

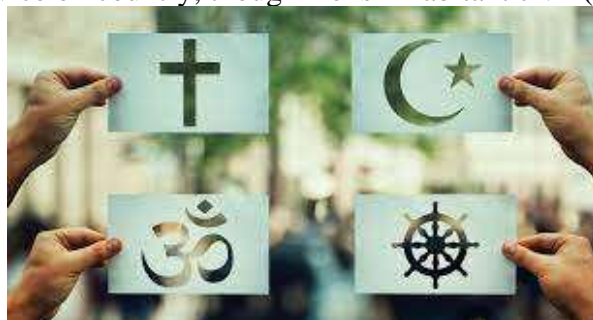


Figure 2. Religious Pluralism Reality

Cak Nur's thoughts revolve around Indonesianism, Islam and modernity. His ideas always try to reconstruct Islamic thoughts in Indonesia which he considers to be stagnant, stagnant and going backwards so that many Muslims have lost their ability to adapt to an increasingly complex pace of life. One of Cak Nur's thoughts that has generated a lot of discussion is around the concept of religious pluralism. Cak Nur looks for the basics of religious pluralism in an Islamic perspective so as to present an Islam that is full of egalitarianism, openness and justice (Suseno, 1993). There are two basic points for Cak Nur in formulating the concept of religious pluralism, namely, philologically and historically.

First, philologically, Cak Nur defines the term "Islam" in the Koran etymologically, which means "surrender, surrender" (Madjid, 1992). The meaning of "surrender or surrender" here is directed to Allah. Allah is believed to be the One who created everything, including the condition of religious plurality. Therefore, humans (read: Muslims) must surrender and surrender to every creation and the power of Allah because, after all, according to Cak Nur, pluralism is Allah's will, sunnatullah (Karim, Purnomo, Fikriyah, & Kardiyati, 2020). Secondly, historically, Cak Nur considers that awareness of the history of "interaction" between religions in the past is what really determines the understanding of the meaning of religious concepts today, therefore historical awareness must be seen as an example of the possibility of real realization and implementation of a value in the demands of a place. and time (Madjid, 2005). The consequence of this view is to avoid subjectivity in understanding history and avoid attempts to absolutize the meaning of history (Hamzah, Akbar, & Grafiyana, 2021).

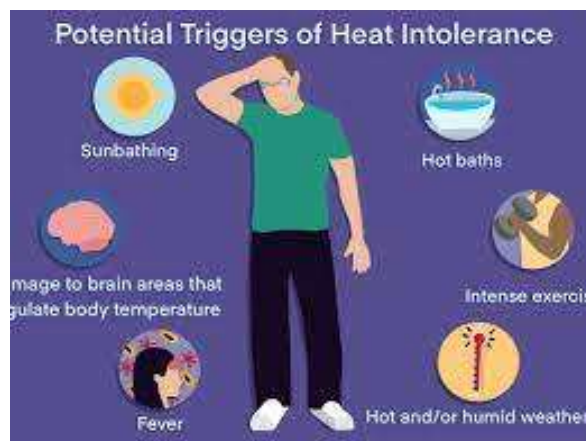
Cak Nur's views are in line with the views of the fourth President of the Republic of Indonesia, Gus Dur, who views inclusive Islam as an Islam that is open and accepts various existing differences. Cak Nur views that an important agenda that needs to be interpreted together is how the objective reality of religious pluralism itself is able to become a force of love between religious communities (Sukidi, 2001). Cak Nur believes that religious plurality is a reality that cannot be denied or erased. Because of these conditions, humans are required to accept and understand this reality as what God desires. Plurality can be a means of realizing acts of love towards others, including between religious communities (Setiawan, 2022).

Even though Cak Nur is always criticized for his thoughts, he still always sounds the tone of tolerance. One of them is what happened on January 3 1970, at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Cak Nur had the opportunity to deliver a speech entitled "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and the Problem of Community Integration" (Janah, 2017). A speech that drew a lot of criticism and protests from various circles, especially coming from traditional Islamic groups. In this speech, Cak Nur stated that the renewal of Islamic thought must begin by freeing Muslims from the shackles of traditionalism and being more open to the process of liberalization (Sabrina & Ahmadi, 2021). According to Cak Nur, restrictions on traditional Islamic teachings have triggered many Muslims to become intolerant towards people of other religions. Even Muslims sometimes place temporal values as transcendent values, and vice versa (Effendi, 1998). This rigidity within the body of Islam is what makes it difficult for many Muslims to accept the fact that religions are always pluralistic. Finally, many Muslims are very exclusive in their religion. They think that the truth only exists within their group (read: the Islamic religion), while they consider other religious groups to be wrong and even heretical. This condition often triggers conflict and strife between religious communities (Meslec, Curseu, Fodor, & Kenda, 2020).

### **Cak Nur's views on the phenomenon of intolerance**

Cak Nur is an intellectual figure who is very aware of the pluralistic situation in Indonesia. This can be seen from his view of the concept of religious plurality which has been explained above. However, how does Cak Nur view the phenomenon of intolerance that occurs in Indonesia?

The Islam practiced by Cak Nur is substantive Islam , non-symbolic Islam, non-violent Islam, and Islam which is more tolerant and loves differences. Through his life example, Cak Nur has set an example for Muslims to preach a friendly Islam, not an angry Islam. Islam that embraces, not Islam that likes to hit. Islam is ready to provide help, not Islam which is full of calculations of profit and loss. According to him, Islam with Indonesian traditions is not the Islam of Saudi Arabia . Meanwhile, the phenomenon of intolerance that occurs in Indonesia certainly reflects a style of Islam that is not in accordance with what Cak Nur practices. The acts of intolerance carried out by Muslims towards people of other religions really hurt Cak Nur's ideals, who dreamed of a more tolerant Islam (Sabrina & Ahmadi, 2021).



**Figure 3.** Phenomenon Of Intolerance

Cak Nur said that a society that is happy with its freedom and independence is a society that is supported by the existence of a relationship of holy Divine love (rahmah, agape), which is a continuation of love of horizontal human wisdom (mawadda , philos ) and initial level love based on consideration. -consideration of external forms ( mahabbah , eros ) (M. Zidni, 2018). Acts of intolerance certainly do not reflect a happy society, according to Cak Nur. Intolerance does not contain a loving relationship with others, but rather hostility. Intolerance does not show respect for humanity, but rather contempt for humanity. Intolerance does not contain eros as the most basic love between humans, but rather hatred (Faqihuddin, 2023).

### **Potential for Religious Exclusivity to Give Birth to a Culture of Intolerance**

Each religion has different styles of thought and ideological teachings. This difference is a reality that cannot be changed, so everyone is required to accept, understand and interpret it as part of God's will. If these differences are not addressed wisely, conflict and division within a heterogeneous community cannot be avoided. Including when someone views their religion exclusively by claiming the teachings of their religion as absolute truth (Ridwan, 2020).

In a study conducted by several IFTK Ledalero lecturers entitled " The Seeds of Radical Islamism Ideology Among a Number of NTT Students " (Bernard, et al., 2020) clearly narrates the consequences of truth claims that can disrupt the life of the nation and state. Why is that? First, because they claim to have absolute truth, radical fanatics claim the right to determine the laws that society must obey based on the indisputable divine truth. Therefore, they firmly reject the existence of other religious groups and the religious doctrines they adhere to (Alam, Lahmi, Alam, & Aminah, 2022b).

Second , the claim to have absolute truth has serious consequences for a realistic understanding of politics. The concept of politics is no longer understood as about good and bad but rather about right and wrong. As a result, society will be divided into two groups, namely, the right group and the wrong group. Furthermore, groups that legitimize themselves as the right group will ignore and tend to oppress the wrong group (Burhani, Waseso, Atieqoh, & Hamidi, 2021).



**Figure 4.** Culture of Intolerance

Third, the confusion between the absolute truth of God and the conclusion that the interpretation of it is also claimed to be absolute. This view is the first step in the emergence of acts of violence in the name of Allah. In fact, the Word of God in the Holy Bible contains absolute truth, but interpretations of the contents of the Holy Bible are only limited hypotheses.

Fourth, demands for radical change with the aim of dismantling unjust structures. As a result, gradual change and compromise have no place. Radical changes must be implemented so that people can live according to the desired standard of living. In a radical change like this, the government and political system will be based on the teachings and laws of a religion that is dominantly lived by the community (Imronudin & Muhammad, 2023).

Fifth , the tendency to reduce the complexity of reality into a scheme of right and wrong. In order to achieve the victory that a religion aspires to, every group that is considered wrong must be fought. This "crazy" behavior is carried out in order to achieve a world consisting of only one religious group that legitimizes itself as the right one.

Sixth , the radicality of an ideology lies in what is called a closed identity construction. The efforts of exclusive Islamic groups to maintain the purity of their Islamic identity by

avoiding influence from other religious groups. The exclusivity of Islam that they believe in does not allow them to accept the existence of other people (Islamy, 2018).

Hendropuspito put forward four points that have the potential to trigger intolerant attitudes in a society. One of them is differences in doctrine and mental attitudes (Hendropuspito, 2000). Differences in doctrine and ideology within a religion will certainly influence the appreciation of the faith of its followers. If every religious community remains adamant or adamant about the teachings of their religion and does not respect the teachings of other religions, then this will have great potential to give rise to intolerant attitudes. In fact, viewing religion exclusively and acting intolerantly does not have a positive impact in any way, on the contrary, it can create negative and counter-productive impacts. This is in accordance with Hendrikus Maku's view that hardline groups will definitely fail to contribute to the progress of civilization for all of humanity and the universe (Maku, 2023).

### **Gusdurian Network : Efforts to Spread Tolerance Through Social Media**

In the current era of digital revolution, Indonesian society is faced with a complex and challenging phenomenon, namely, the spread of ideological content from various religious groups through various social media platforms. The service of sharing and receiving information offered by social media is an opportunity to disseminate religious ideologies. Witnessing how religious ideologies can easily spread everywhere and influence many people without being limited by time and space is worrying. On the internet, everyone can act as a producer and consumer of information (Danar, 2020) considering that there are no rules or restrictions regarding who can use social media, there is concern about the development of religious fundamentalism groups, which use social media to spread information. understand fundamentals through cyberspace. For this reason, everyone is expected to be wiser in accessing information, disseminating information, and being critical before trusting information from social media.

The echo of religious tolerance is only widespread in the academic realm, even though the problem is so close to people's daily lives. Via smartphones or personal computers, issues of diversity, religious moderation, human rights and religious tolerance should be promoted more intensively. However, reality shows the opposite. Only a few moderate religious narratives and calls for tolerance towards other groups can be found on social media (Nasution, 2021). In fact, now religious conservatism is increasingly dominating cyberspace in reconstructing religion-based narratives on social media (Halimatussa'diyah, 2020). Conservative narratives often present issues of the environment, politics, health, relations between countries and their communities, as well as groups from various sects of society. Dissemination by conservative groups generally uses issues that are currently being discussed by society, using stereotypes attached to a group with the aim of revitalizing the group's religious understanding (Alam, Lahmi, Alam, & Aminah, 2022a).

Efforts to utilize social media as a medium for spreading moderate values and messages of religious tolerance are slowly starting to gain attention, one of which is through the Instagram account @jaringangusdurian. Gusdurian is a term applied to an inclusive community that lives the spirituality or spirit of life of Gus Dur, the 4th President of the Republic of Indonesia (Danar, 2020). The @jaringangusdurian account concentrates on practical non-political work synergies in the four dimensions that Gus Dur previously focused on, namely; Islam and faith, culture, state, and humanity. By prioritizing these four dimensions, @jaringangusdurian seems to be campaigning about the urgency of tolerance through social media, as an embodiment of human values and unity among a plural nation. The campaign with the theme of tolerance has consistently attracted and inspired healthy and intelligent thinking from so many Instagram users. The significant influence of this account is evident from its followers which has reached 148,000. This means that the nation's ideals for Indonesian people to be more tolerant towards each other are starting to come to light (Ali Halidin, Zakiah, Ishak, & Hasbi, 2022).

The @jaringangusdurian account is relatively young, however, it has attracted the attention of many followers . This account remains focused on voicing ideas of tolerance between religious communities. Therefore, it is important to see how tolerance is campaigned for and constructed through social media accounts so that they can become a shield for society in fighting the propaganda of intolerance by fundamentalist groups who are "drunk on religion".

On Sunday, November 12 2023, @jaringangusdurian posted a flyer captioned " #1MILLION TOLERANCE CAMPAIGN ". This post consists of seven slides containing an invitation for the social media community to come together to commemorate International Tolerance Day which is celebrated every November 16 throughout the world. In this post, information was also added about the aspirations of the world community, including Indonesia, to create a more peaceful and harmonious world, through people who accept and respect each other's differences, including religion (Anshori, Suwarno, & Kasbani, 2022). From this post , the author assesses that @jaringangusdurian pays more attention to the importance of creating humans who can respect each other, without questioning religious differences in order to achieve an ideal nation, namely, a nation whose people can live side by side despite their differences. This is in line with what Father Mangunwijaya narrated about tolerance (Yanto, 2021). According to Mangunwijaya, what must be paid attention to in religion is not to have religion but rather being religious . Because, in to have religion what is important is the formalism of religion as a noun, meanwhile, in being religious the main thing is the appreciation and actualization of noble religious values (Ahmad, 1994). If a nation desires a peaceful and harmonious situation, it first needs to form its people so that they understand equal religious rights and obligations in their being. Religious (Amali, 2019).

The spirit of tolerance promoted by the @jaringangusdurian organization through social media should be appreciated and emulated by many parties. Voicing aspirations about the importance of being tolerant today is not enough to simply take to the streets or bring them up in limited discussion forums (not involving the wider community) (Madakir, Firdaus, Hajam, & Hidayat, 2022). More efforts are needed than that, namely, by utilizing social media as a means to spread the spirit of religious tolerance, so that more and more people (read: Indonesian people) are moved to appreciate differences and uphold the culture of religious tolerance (Huda, Tsani, Syazali, Umam, & Jermisittiparsert, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

From the brief description above, the author wants to make readers aware of the importance of upholding the principles of religious tolerance amidst religious plurality in Indonesia. By exploring the intelligence of Cak Nur, as expressed in his views on religious plurality with all the ethical demands that every religious person must comply with, it is hoped that more and more Indonesians will build awareness to accept, acknowledge and appreciate the reality of religious pluralism in Indonesia. Even though small ripples due to differences in religious ideology will always exist, Cak Nur hopes that everyone will be able to build awareness about religious tolerance as early as possible and stay away from intolerant attitudes. Apart from that, the spirit of religious tolerance can also be campaigned through social media. If the spirit of tolerance is promoted only through taking to the streets (read: multiple demonstrations) then the impact will be very limited. On the other hand, if the spirit of constructive reform is spread widely through social media, it is not impossible that it will have wider impacts and benefits. With such creative methods, the public's longing for a harmonious and peaceful national life will be realized.

Finally, if we believe that Islam means surrendering ourselves to Allah, then we should appreciate the reality of pluralism which is sunatullah. This means that attitudes and behavioral

patterns that are intolerant of (religious) differences are a form of denial of God's will. Because, if Allah willed, He would have made humans one people (only). But that's impossible. That is why Cak Nur believes that Indonesia can still be one, without having to be the same.

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