

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, INDONESIAN CINEMA AND RELATIONAL DIALECTIC

Amin Shabana

University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

amin@ladangmedia.org

Abstract

Religious tolerance being disturbed at today's life. The banality of violence intensely seen in our society. Various intolerant events can be witnessed from media portrayals, including films. With its specificity, film has a great power in raising communal problems as depicted through its elements. Some movies discussing tolerance life among religious believers has been produced both by professional and independent filmmakers. It becomes an interesting subject to reveal the messages behind those films. Using the paradigm of critical theory, this study analyzes two film produced after the year of 2000, namely (?) and Indonesia is not an Islamic State. Relational dialectics shown in the films. The questions emerge are how the two films raised problems and offered solutions to the audience. Qualitative approach of this research using content analysis techniques through scenes, dialogue and atmosphere of the whole films. As results, there is a strong representation of reality, social practice and moral concerns of religious life among the characters to fight for tolerance life among believers in the film discussed.

Keywords: *Religious Tolerance, Indonesian Cinema and Relational Dialectic*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a heterogeneous nation, it is an unavoidably fact. According to Koentjaraningrat and Melalatoa in Nurcahyo Tri Arianto, Indonesia has about 577-660 tribes, especially from the distinguishably languages across the islands. Therefore as a multicultural country, it must be seen as a blessing. That great source supposed to be wisely developed for its people. Though neither a secular nor a religious country, Indonesia also has religious diversity throughout the provinces. The diversity of tribes, languages and religions has put Indonesia as one of the most diverse nations in the world.

To ensure carrying out beliefs life among the believers, State gives honor and respect through the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945) and Law no. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as the Human Rights Law). There are several articles that become references, namely Article 28E paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution jo Article 22 paragraph (1) of the Human Rights Law, which determines the freedom to embrace a religion or believe in belief. Another Article is Article 28I Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution jo Article 4 of the Human Rights Law concerning the right to religion as one of human rights which should not be reduced under any circumstances. Finally, Article 29 Paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution and Article 22 Paragraph (2) of the Human Rights Law which stipulates that the State guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his religion and belief. In addition to positive law, all the religions recognized by the state also teach their people to respect each other as revealed by each scripture.

Abd al-A'la (2005: 114) interpreted Qur'an by underlining that there is a principle of coexistence, namely the willingness of majority group to give freedom of existence to other believers to manage their livelihood using their own rules and later living in harmony with their beloved Muslims. While Syamsul Maajrif quotes Catholic scholar Frans Magniz Suseno (in Dean Giroth, 2012) by revealing that pluralism in education is an approach encouraging people to broaden horizon

of mind, across ethnic boundaries or cultural as well as religious traditions to make more "humanitarian" as one family. Though diverse, yet one vision.

Unfortunately, state guarantees and religious doctrine unsuccessfully create freedom of religious practices required by all parties. Interaction among believers have sometimes end up with problems. Many cases occur in various regions, either horizontal conflict between different religious partisans, as well as believers with the state. The Wahid Institute report (2011: 1-3), revealed that state often carry out violence toward freedom of religion and belief most. Relational friction among religious people has been familiar portraits for public as seen through various mass media, including movies. The film uses audio-visual elements that are proven to have a strong influence to disseminate particular messages.

We look at the *role of film* in society and how it has grown to transform in accordance with the changing times. From a mere form of documentation turned into a means to entertain and educate community. Aep Kusmawan (2004: 94) asserted that in its development, film is not just to satisfy the entertainment need for audience, but has become a vehicle of information, education and value transformation. Since years ago film has even been a political tool of propaganda by the state to influence people. Gotot Prakosa (2004: 43-44) asserted that what common is that films are mastered and become government propaganda to deliver government programs, achievements and objectives that deserve people appreciation.

Nevertheless, filmmakers openly or secretly has utilized film in raising important social issues for public. In some theories, film stated as social archives capturing the spirit of times (*zeitgeist*) of its society (Imanjaya, 2006: 29), and is also influenced by the creator's ideology. For that reason, film build community's construction for something (Sobur, 2006: 127). This includes intolerance issue of among religious believers in which currently threaten the harmonization of our livelihood and nation life.

At least, there were two films produced in post new order era in Indonesian cinema discussing interreligious interaction issues, namely film of "?" (Production 2011) by Hanung Bramantyo and the documentary of Indonesia is not Islamic Country (2009) by Jason Iskandar. Having the same theme, these two films used different approaches in raising issue of tolerance among religious followers. This study analyzed the films content based on the paradigm of critical theory with the relational dialectical framing presented in it.

Horkheimer states (in Bohman, 2005; 1) that the critical paradigm theory can be sufficiently applied when it meets three (3) criteria as follow:

1. Explanatory, is to explain what is wrong with the existing social reality. The definition of this criterion refers to the content of judgments in theory, such as what is right and wrong, what should and should not, which is natural and unnatural.
2. Practical, explains social practices and social actors capability of transforming and correcting an existing and undeserved social reality.
3. Normative; This category reinforces the former two dimensions in which a critical theory must present clear norms, or moral concerns, both used as a basis for criticism of a social reality, as well as presenting practical goals that can be achieved through a social transformation.

Meanwhile, according to Adrianto (2010), basically when people communicate in relationships, they try to reconcile these mutually contradictory desires. But they never abolished their need for the two opposing sections. This is what ultimately forms the relational dialectic of non-linear human relationships, the existence of change, there is always a contradiction of tension between two opposites and communication in managing and negotiating contradictions in relationships.

Film as the disclosure of social reality

Hanung Bramantyo is one of the brave film director playing the paradox into some films he produced. The film (?) seemed to expose our social reality in religious beliefs and relate to other faiths. He took us to the disclosure of social reality which depicted in the interfaith family who became the central figures throughout the film. The interfaith family comes from Buddhists, Muslims and Catholics. For

people who adhere to ethnocentrism, seeing the pattern of interaction of the characters will surely contrary to the values and norms prevalent in society. Social reality that is considered wrong in this film for example depicted when a Muslim woman who works at a restaurant owned by Tjong Hoa serves pigs food containing. While pigs for the Muslim is a forbidden animal to consume.

Another courageous is how one of the characters named Rika decided to convert her faith through self-righting process. Every religion teaches such dogma that anyone who converts will get negative judgment as a Murtad or apostasy. In Islam, the word *murtad* is used to describe a person who converted to another religion or to atheism after being a *Muslim*. Another contradiction that is considered wrong in this (?) film is when the Muslim cleric figure plays the role of Jesus in a theatrical performance. This scene is certainly not considered justly by audience whose level of religious understanding as fanatical believers.

Of all the things that are considered false and unreasonable events in the story of (?) is later answered by social reality facts that really occurring in today's life undertaking our society. In this case, Hanung opted to attack a group against the Tjong Hoa family for selling illicit food such as pork. The selection of this story line is based on fact there have been several cases of raiding stalls in some places that sell forbidden foods.

While in the documentary film of Indonesia is not an Islamic State (IBNI), there are some things that are considered to violate the propriety and fairness that existed in the majority of religious adherents in this country. The approach used by IBNI is different from (?). The existing strength is the use of black and white photographs that seem much more meaningful in conveying the message content. Throughout the movie, the story is packed with a black and white photo slide shows captured by Jason himself.

In accordance with the acknowledgment of the Director, Jason Iskandar that the film was made by accident by him. At that time, he invited a friend to cover the grand event of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief (AKKBB) commemorating the birthday of Pancasila at the National Monument (<http://studioantelope.com/projects/ibni/>). The first thing to be in the spotlight is the courageous of director's decision choosing a film title that is most likely considered provocative for majority group of Indonesian people as Islam believers. The next story that is considered wrong is to put FPI mass organizations as an antagonistic group that in the film as tolerant to carry out violence act to other groups. This social reality is of course denied by the Muslim communities that have same vision with FPI.

Another sequence that is considered to cause public cynicism is represented by 2 Muslim students who study in non-Muslim schools. Moreover, director added photos of the two Muslim students running prayer services in a place that mostly considered by Muslims as not an appropriate place. Some of these erroneous social realities cause the film to be considered provocative and inappropriate in describing other religions, in this case Islam.

Film as an attempt to change the misleading of social reality

Hanung Bramantyo's film with the intriguing title of (?) actually offers a tolerance shaped by logical thinking based on his point of view as a filmmaker. Hanung not only tries to present the polemics of the various clashes reached our social reality, but also *provides* information of the problem solving process - finding possible *solutions* to problems of intolerance. The idea is it's important to *respect* the *religious* autonomy of *others*. In this film for example told us how the owner of the shop Tan Kat Sun (Tjong Hoa) respects Menuk as Muslim to pray. He also willing to cover up his shop with cloth during the month of Ramadan and gives lebaran holiday to Menuk for five days. Lebaran or Idul Fitri is the popular name for Eid al-Fitr in Indonesia and is one of the major national holidays in the country. *Lebaran holiday* officially lasts for two weeks. Not until there, Hanung also shows how the figure of Tan Kat Sun separates kitchen utensils used for cooking pigs with other equipment.

For Rika character who has converted from Islam to Christianity, Hanung also wants to convey that although she is no longer a Muslim but Rika still guides her son to perform the obligations of prayer and reciting Koran as a Muslim. The message from this story is that there is no religious coercion from anyone including a mother to influence her child to embrace a religion that she

believes. As for the character of Ustadz Wahyu, through this film Hanung wants to deliver that vertical relationship with God is not easily influenced by socializing activities in any form with other religious followers.

Whilst in the film of Indonesia is not an Islamic country, through this film Jason Iskandar wants to change the misplaced social reality that he thinks is undergoing. Values to be voiced through this film is that there must be establishment of recognition of the personal rights of each human being. The real threat to *the life of the nation* nowadays is in the sense of a people *living* in accordance with its beliefs and values. Law must protect all believers in running their ritual religion and the importance of social security for each individual.

While on the character of two Muslim students who study in non-Muslim schools, Jason wanted to convey that not always the minority should be treated badly. Non-Muslim schools where these two students are studying proved to provide a religious worship space for different faiths. Through this film also Jason wanted to show that the radical face in a group of mass organizations is not a good choice in respecting humanity.

Film as re-enforcement of collective moral concerns

Moral concerns that want to be built by Hanung Bramantyo in the film (?) is to create critical thinking of the menace of tolerance condition amid various ideologies and religious beliefs in our nation. What film (?) teaches us is about how to create mutual respect between believers. The ultimate message is being tolerance must come from both sides, either majority or minority groups. Lesson learned portrayal of this film is that religion is a very personal matter and no one should impose their personal beliefs on others.

One criticism that Hanung tried to convey through the film "?" is various practices of violence on behalf of religion against people based on their race, ethnicity or belief must be seriously taking care. Every believers has the same rights and obligations to carry out their expressions and practices without any fear or threat by any parties. As individuals, each individual must have the same level of tolerance to organize togetherness in a plural society. Government must enact laws to protect all believers and punish those who breaks the law.

Meanwhile, through the film Indonesia is not an Islamic State, Jason wants to invite us to give and create a guarantee of sense of security, peace, harmony, and peace in accordance with the foundations set in the values of Pancasila philosophy. On the next interpretation, this film invites public to be more critical for all forms as intolerant hallmarks as raised in this film.

The film also clearly views *social ethics* as crucial to the picture it portrays of what human life is meant to be among people. Through religion, God is passionate for equity and harmony *among people*. Cooperative relations, mutual understanding between people, and harmonious and peaceful relationships can be maintained in our daily life. For that reason, state must be responsible improving the security guarantee for people. Through this film also, Jason wanted to confirm all forms of violence committed by religious organizations that intervene have created insecurity in religious livelihood among believers.

To realize the common ground of moral concerns as depicted by the two films, clear norms are needed as guidance in establishing a religious life with full of tolerance. These norms can be an enforcement of positive law by the state to anyone who gives fear to religious people. As the demands conveyed by the film "?" Nor Indonesia is not an Islamic State, the enforcement of inter-religious tolerance should be applied to all believers without exception. Both "?" And Indonesia is not an Islamic country has a message and the same goal of religious tolerance is dream of all people in our community.

CONCLUSION

Films have a relationship with art, and today is still one of popular works by Indonesian people. Films are made for many purposes. Great films are a balance of entertainment, art and fully inspiring messages. Therefore, it can also be used as a means of learning to convey a good ideology in society, including creating tolerance life among religious people. Nevertheless, filmmakers must be prepared

for any controversies when their films raise sensitive issues such as faith, religion, rituals and beliefs of majority groups in public.

A subjective perspective is open to greater interpretation based on filmmaker's experience and personal feelings. Filmmakers may examine their critical thought of current situation in which there is a disruption in the country. The theme of religious tolerance is one of the important themes that can be developed by Indonesian filmmakers. Hanung Bramantyo and Jason Iskandar simply tried to make good movies that reflected the relational dialectic of the world of religious life through film (?) And Indonesia is not an Islamic State. Despite having different genres, the two films tried to showcase the real picture of the religious tolerance life in Indonesian society through the relational dialectics of the story being raised.

In both the films raised in this study, both Hanung Bramantyo and Jason Iskandar have obviously presented their critical thinking in revealing, changing and bringing moral concerns out of our religious life. Although some of us may disagree, but the social reality has been captured by the filmmakers.

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