

GOD

IS EVERYWHERE

Reflections on Spiritual Passages

through Sacred Spaces

in Java



 **Globethics.net**

Elis Z. Anis (Editor)

Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund 2013

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

Reflections On Spiritual Passages
Through Sacred Spaces In Java

Editor: Elis Z. Anis

Globethics.net

TO THE PARTICIPANTS:

Though we have to say “goodbye”, “see you again,” “selamat jalan” at the end of the 10 days of IYP program, the spirit built during our time together continues undiminished. Memories and feelings of visits to spiritual centers of various religions burn bright in each participant’s mind. The spiritual crossroads of the participants are recorded in the stories they have written. Whatever anxiety and fear they first felt when exposed to different worlds is gone; and at this journey’s end they have found happiness and peace.

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FOREWORD

This collection brings together reflections from the participants in the *Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP)*. Twenty-eight youths from various religious and ethnic backgrounds came together for ten days to learn from each other and to share about interfaith reconciliation success stories throughout the nations. With the theme “Experiencing the sacred spaces of the others”, participants were invited to visit the sacred spaces of other religions. Together, they learned about concepts of God and the teachings of other religions in order to cultivate a deeper sense of appreciation towards other religions and minority groups in Indonesia.

The Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage was one of the winners of the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund in 2013, a prestigious competition held by the Embassy of the United States of America for alumni of programs organized by the U.S. Department of State. Two projects from Indonesia (Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage and Play Plus) were awarded grants out of seven hundred applicants in 2013.

The theme of “experiencing the sacred spaces of the others” was taken due to the multicultural context and mutual vulnerability that leads to local conflicts throughout Indonesia, including inter-ethnic conflicts, interreligious conflicts, and conflicts among different sects within the same religion.

In religious conflicts, one could easily imagine how emotions factor into the “blind faith” of the communities. Pew Research

Foundation, a United States-based research institute, had issued research on Indonesian society in which polling found more than 90 % of Indonesian respondents stating that religion is important or very important in their lives. This certainly could trigger both positive and negative values. For example, in an interview in the late 2005, a religious leader in Poso said “I can be patient if someone insults me, but if someone insults my religion or my prophet, then my built-up rage will soon come out.” This fatalistic view of loving religion more than anything else leads us to imagine how easily rage will burn if provoked during dangerous times of religious conflict.

Religious conflict is frequently divided between inter-religious (different religions) and intra-religious (single religion) conflict. Lately, intra-religious conflict is resurfacing in Indonesia. For example, the ongoing discrimination faced by Shi’a and Ahmadiyya are serious problems in Indonesian society, exacerbated by government irresponsiveness in addressing the problem as one among many factors.

Programs of interfaith dialogue such as Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage are an effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance to learn about roots of social conflicts and religion in Indonesia. In addition, IYP is expected to be a means to build and strengthen the inter-religious peace networks among participants who came from various regions in Indonesia. In addition to inter-religious dialogue and visitation to various sacred places from several religions, the participants also attended a “live-in” program, where participants Muslims living in the homes of church members, while the non-Muslim participants stayed in Islamic boarding schools. They interacted with each other, exchanging thoughts and some of the participants felt a very profound experience.

I would also like to thank the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) for their generous help from providing a full team, both as a facilitator, speaker and executive committee. Not to forget, I would like to also thank all those who have collaborated in the implementation of this program: Peace Generation Bandung, UKDW, Interfidei, Big Family of GKJ Sido Mukti, Pondok *Pesantren*

Al Urwatul Wutsqo & Edi Mancoro, ISJN, and GKJ Dagen Palur, MAKIN Solo, STIHD Klaten, STAB Syailendra Salatiga, Mertoyudan-Magelang Seminary and Percik.

I feel sincerely grateful and proud to have encountered the “colorful” IYP program participants as a miniature of Indonesia in all its diversity. These ten days were very meaningful to me and have left a deep impression. I hope sharing these written reflections will provide inspiration in the long and significant effort to build inter-religious peace in Indonesia.

Thank you very much to all of IYP team: Siti Syamsiyatun, Jeanny Dhwayani, Dicky Sofjan, Syamsul Maarif, Anwari Muttaqien, Muhammad Wildan, Leo Epafaras and Melanie Nyhof, for all the contributive thoughts and possible sources to make this IYP successfully ran. Thank you to all friends in the executive committee: Erich Kaunang, Mazia Rizqi Izzatika, Golddy Jadmika, Handa, and Yaniv, who have provided exceptional support and companionship to participants during the ten days’ program, and have made this program well organized. A great contribution was also delivered from the facilitators: Haryani, Irfan Amalee, Gus Hanif, Mustagfiroh Rahayu, Marthen Tahuun, Endah Setyowati and Akbar.

Editor

Elis Zuliati Anis

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PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE: SACRED SPACES, SUSPICION, AND EMPATHY

ELIS Z. ANIS

S*acred spaces* are commonly interpreted as the private spaces of religions or beliefs, bound spaces separated from their surroundings, used to perform various rituals, worship, prayer, and other activities in order to get closer to God. Those who make the effort to visit the spaces of others are often seen as strange or out of order. I still remember clearly when I and my friends from the Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies (CRCS) UGM were trying to conduct an observation at a church in Yogyakarta around year 2000, I received a notice from the parking attendant when I parked in front of the church because there was a sign board reading ‘parking space for congregation members’. He seemed puzzled to see my head scarf when I told him I wished to go inside the church.

In some places, non-Muslims are not allowed to enter mosques, while in other places, they are allowed as long as they are in a state of cleanliness (having performed ablutions). Even one of the Islamic adherents explicitly stated they only permit their own members, and prohibit other Muslims from different kinds of Islam to

enter their mosque. This would of course contradict the concept of mosque as the house of God, because there are many obstacles and partitions to enter the house of God.

Hindus have family temples and larger village temples, which are of course sacred places, surrounded by walls with the aim of separating from the environment are not sacred. Women in their period are not allowed to enter a temple. In the Hindu tradition, it is very hard for a family to leave its house, because it means the family can no longer be able to carry out the obligation to take care of “sacred space” of their family.

Recently there are several cases in which a holy place has become a commodity resulting in several ethics-related problems. At Vesak at Borobudur in 2013, we saw some ‘amateur’ photographers clearly forgetting their ethics by standing on top of the temple to photograph the monks who performed worshiping ritual. Imagine this event in Muslims’ Friday prayers, if a tourist suddenly took a photo from a very close range. Or imagine the Christians who are fervently praying in front of the holy altar with a sudden sound of camera shots several steps from their space of worshiping.

Each religion and belief has its respective sacred space. It is interesting to further examine how a place transforms into a “sacred space” and who decides it to function as sacred space. Does it become one because of its historical value, uniqueness, simplicity, aesthetics, or whether there are other determinant factors.

In all religious traditions and beliefs, sacred spaces are always associated with God. The mosque is known as the house of the God, and the same is the significance of the Church, temple and monastery as a place for everyone to come together and pray to God. These sacred spaces have been able to grow in an atmosphere of religious emotion and full of solemnity. Even the devotees of other religions, too, often come to feel the peaceful atmosphere of the holy places.

Experiencing the Sacred Spaces of the Others

The fundamental question within this discussion on sacred

spaces is what is the importance of a person to know and enter the sacred realm of other faiths? What happen when a Muslim enters the temple and sits between Hindus people who attend a prayer? Also what about the Christians who enter the mosque and spend the whole night in discussion with the students at an Islamic boarding school? Or Muslims who stay in the homes of church members?



IYP Participants visit MATAKIN Solo

Twenty-eight young people from various religious backgrounds and beliefs shared their remarkable experiences during the Inter-faith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) course, which themed “*Experiencing the Sacred Spaces of the others.*” For ten days, they opened themselves to explore the values of other religions and started a dialogue with friends from different backgrounds, including those who experienced the bitterness of prolonged conflict and minority issues which led to disappointment, even hardship, threats and mental pressure.

Each religion has a pilgrimage as sacred traditions. Almost all religions believe that pilgrimage to sacred places will bring believers closer to God and they will become enlightened after completion. In Islamic tradition, Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) is a divine call that legitimized the submission of the fifth pillar of Islam. This ritual is

also considered to develop one's faith into perfection.

Pilgrimage is commonly performed by adults and older age groups. However, this IYP pilgrimage was carried out by young people who have a passion and high enthusiasm for peace building. They left their comfort zone to share and understand "the others" (adherents of other religions or beliefs), which often times in proportion and unilaterally, misinterpreted.

Prejudice, Dialogue and Values Transformation

The interfaith dialogue effort has been long initiated since the 1970s. Yet in reality, Indonesians are constantly facing many problems and both within-and-inter religious affairs. Prejudice emerges and evolves, spiraled up by the rapid media coverage. One participant from Poso who lived in the conflict for many years, stated that for him and for many people in the community, Islamic boarding schools are often associated with terrorism and religious violence. This was confirmed by other participants who have a negative standpoint against religious boarding school once he heard the news on TV that one terrorist was arrested at Islamic boarding school or *pesantren*. In the inter-religious issues, one example of the growing prejudice in society is that the teaching of Ahmadiyya as Islamic cults, also the recent resistance from large Muslim devotees against Shiite community.

Ignorance of one group or particular religion or belief has lately rooted a lot of misunderstandings. Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage has become an effective dialogue model for young people in transforming prejudices to value empathy and respect for "the others." Dialogue created within program had not only been through series of lectures and in-class discussions, but also through the process of pilgrimage to sacred places, of sitting among the congregation, from learning tambourines together, collaborating in art performance (cultural night) and home-stay program in communities with different faiths.

It seemed reasonable when the sense of insecurities and other

related concerns emerged when they were informed about an over-night home-stay program in the host family/community from different religions. Prejudice continued to grow, like what happened with Dian, a student from UIN NTB (Islamic State University of West Nusa) who grows up in a homogeneous community. She expressed her intention to cancel the participation in the program after reading the event's rundown. This program allowed her to make a first direct interaction with host family from other faiths. She felt anxious that the church family would try to convert her. However, such prejudices were gone when Dian found the church family greeted her in a very good manner and very respectful upon her faith. The family even instilled this tolerance basis to their youngest family member, Duta. He was innocently asked, "Why is Dian pray different with what I'm doing?" His mother answered in a heartwarming manner, "That's the way she prays, Duta. It is different from your ways of doing it, but it's all equally good and a praiseworthy deed." Cahya Mustika, experienced her first interaction with Islamic boarding school's community through this program, and she latter expressed her admiration over the students' austerity there who living in a cramped room along with five other roommates. During this moment, they shared and eagerly listened to Cahya's explanation of her beliefs, the Sapta Dharma. She shared on how, even among the well-educated people in her community, she often treated unfairly because she does not belong to any of the six official religions of Indonesia.

Rizkia also shared moment of discussions during the IYP program that really left a great impression on her, especially regarding the religion and minority belief in Indonesia. Becoming a minority is certainly not an easy thing in here. In her opinion, in order to steer away from the religious conflict, limits between the majority and the minority should be obscured. During her home-stay at the house of church member, Rizkia felt amazed on how thoughtful they were of preparing her prayer's equipments. Such kindness had made her "forget" of becoming a minority in this church family. Rizkia said:

“Perhaps the Fajr (dawn) prayer was my most memorable, since the chant of choral songs floating through the room early in the morning and it actually made me cry when I recited verses from my mini, holy Qur’an I brought everywhere.”

Gunawan initially thought that interfaith dialogue was unnecessary because it would only create an endless debate and he chose to be apathetic, even he limited himself to study his own religion for fearing of becoming a religious fanatic. At the end of the program Gunawan said:

“...after I have encountered and spent 10 days with friends from all over provinces in this program, particularly those who came from conflict areas or considered as minority belief groups such as Ahmadiyya and Sapta Dharma, or with my Muslim fellows (as I raised in a relatively homogeny environment), I feel like I am able to reflect within my deepest soul to find how this interaction we have been built through this friendship have lead me to understand why I could interpret differences as harmonization.

In her concluding paragraph, Hajar wrote:

“Perhaps this is the process I got during a trip to the holy places where we do not need to shut down other religious teachings just because we’re afraid that our own faith will become unsteady.”

The similar tone was expressed from other participants, who felt to have an increasing sense of faith because they felt to better understanding on their own religion. Hajar added:

“Their God would inevitably lead you to your God, and I’ve experienced it from an incredible spiritual journey in the sanctuaries we have visited.”

From their experiences, we could witness the values’ transformations of that have altered their views so far. Prejudices initially existed had been invalidated by the reality they’ve been facing once they had established a direct dialogue with IYP’s fellow participants and religious groups they had been encountered.

The pre and post assessment during the program also have proven the existence of values’ transformation in terms of how they

viewed other faiths and beliefs. For instance, there are 13 (out of 28 participants) who expressed the lesson learned about other religions and an increasing sense of respect for other faiths. Another example is none of the participants expressed their objection to visit the sacred spaces of other religions, although previously only a few of them who have experience the visitation of other religions' sacred spaces. They also had successfully formulated a peace petition as a first step to demonstrate their seriousness for sowing the seeds of peace in Indonesia.

God is Everywhere

God is everywhere is a reflection of the overall program. The title is taken from one of the essays written by the participants. They believe this nuance of Godly presences exist everywhere. Reflections on the God existence is reflected in the many writings in this book, which is divided into several sub-themes: On God, On Being Human, Sacred Spaces, On Dialogue, and On Peace. These pieces also reflect the journey of those who feel the presence of God while visiting sacred spaces of other religions. The participations on a whole process of this inter-faith pilgrimage has actually made them feel closer to God in their faith, in addition to gaining a better self-awareness and better familiarity with the teachings of other religions and respect the religious teachings and beliefs of others.

ON BEING
HUMAN

LIFE LINE: TIKA'S STORIES FROM HEART TO HEART

HADJAR HANDAYANI

Monday morning, Gajah Mada University Post Graduate School Building in Yogyakarta. It was our very first visit, the participants of *Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP)* Indonesia throughout an essential ten days' passage. We have met Ms. Etty, a very cool facilitator. The first session started with everyone composing mutual ground rules, which consisted of our own hopes and anxieties while following the program, by filling in the questionnaire distributed by the committee and then drawing a lifeline graphic after that. It was what made us sad and happy, starting from our early life to adulthood.

The lifeline should be depicted in graphical form. It was a unique and meaningful method that showed particular coordinates of our happiness and sadness. It led to an understanding where life was dynamic, and we could observe our life narration sequences simply by looking at the stretched line graphs, leaving us with that diminishing moment, or that time when we were struggling for a better life, or most bitter and miserable moment ever.

Before starting, we were divided into groups so that each lifeline story telling could be delivered to a peer group. Each group must consist of those from diverse religious backgrounds and different origins. I was assigned to a group with Tika, Halimah, Agus, Bagyo, and Miekson. After sitting in the group, everyone started working hard, transporting bitter sweet memories to a group of new friends.

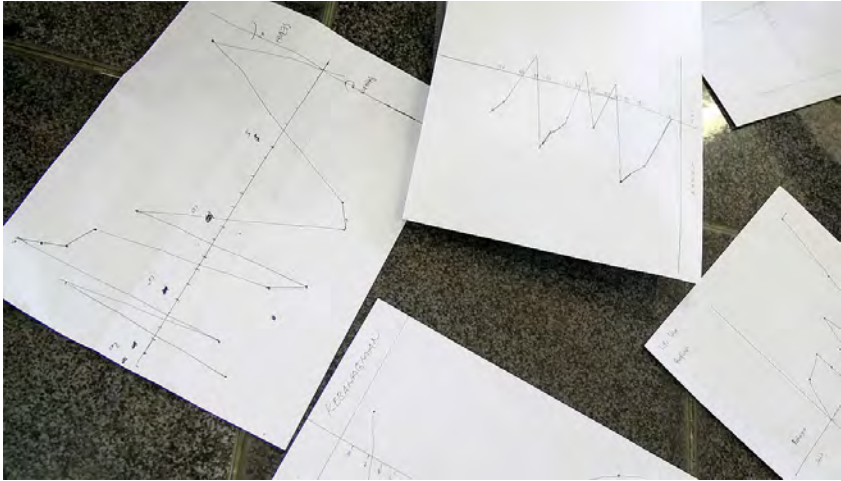


ETA from UKDW, IYP facilitator

Indeed, extra energy was needed just for remembering and looking back on our pasts, including bitter memories. I was a bit confused to draw my life graphs. It seemed my time was too crowded in a wide variety of events filled with fun and heartbreak and the story sorting was even more difficult. So sometimes I looked at other friends in my group, only to find out whether they were also as confused as I am. Sometimes their faces lighten up, maybe a sign of wonderful memories' recall. Sometimes their face seemed to shrink, maybe they were remembering the bitter memories. Perhaps they, too, were as confused as I am or their "boats" were fully packed with heartbreaking and fun events.

It was not a new scene for me to interact with people who were coming from various religions and beliefs. Even during the sharing,

I personally would not mind to hear and open up with my friends here. For me the issue of bitter sweetness of life was a universal thing everyone would encounter in their life.



Life line

But this time, when I and four other participants heard stories from Tika, my conscience was wounded. In each story, I felt how she must bear the bitterness, let alone to keep it for myself only.

Tika is in fact a Sapta Dharma adherent, who are active in the community and youth organizations of Sapta Dharma.

Sapta Dharma is a teaching that has continually fought to be legally recognized as a religion by the government of Indonesia. They also believe in existence of God as well as the teachings of other religions in Indonesia. But until now Saptha Dharma has not received official recognition as an official religion and still remains under the authority of Department of Culture.

As a child, Tika had no friends. Her family was shunned by the neighbors, and she was often scolded by the religion teacher in school because she could not comprehend the subject taught. It was even hard for her to get KTP (Citizen ID card) in the area where she lived, because she did not belong to any of the six official

religions recognized in this country. Finally she chose the Catholic religion as the religious identity on her card.

To listen for her story, I ended up thinking why so many people in this country claim to be committed to the “*Bhineka tunggal Ika*” (Unity in Diversity), but the reality experienced by Tika is “Isolation in Diversity.” Not a few people who actually pulled away and denied the fact that ‘we’, the ‘Indonesians’ within this context, are culturally and religiously diverse. Sapta Dharma and other faiths and beliefs do exist as part of Indonesia. If I could put this frankly, maybe this entire time people have been deliberately turning a blind eye when meeting someone like Tika, and pretend that they do not exist.



Tika, IYP Participant (Saptha Dharma)

For a while, I could feel how terrifying Tika’s desolation might be. My eyes wandered to the whole room. I saw my friends were sharing their life chart in their respective groups. It was such a relief to witness this sight. In this room, a mini Indonesia manifested in

everyone's mind. When I and Halimah who are coming from Islamic backgrounds, Agus who is a Hindu, Bagyo a Buddhist, Miekson a Catholic, and Tika from Sapta Dharma, as well as other friends in their respective small groups gathered, we started to share openly with each other and to give and to take sympathetically. Then one by one, we could begin to internalize the diversities reflected within.

Perhaps, this is the Indonesia that we really longing for. Or maybe this is how it feels to embrace diversities. When Tika is no longer a girl with Catholic identity as a disguise while in truth she embraces a Sapta Dharma teaching which is illegitimate from the government's perspective, maybe it should be what our friend in Bantul experienced, instead. He who is freely voicing his own belief as an adherent of Sapta Dharma without fear of resentment. From today on, I will remember what Tika said, "differences in beliefs and religion need not be a barrier to nurture friendship among human beings."

ELLIE'S BALL TOSS

HALIMAH GARNASIH

Early in the morning I was already awake. Perhaps I was too excited to wait for the day when I will study with others from all over Indonesia and from various religious and ethnic backgrounds.

My dream came true. The first day, we have gained a lot of knowledge and new experiences. In fact, there was a session where that successfully overturn my point of view ever since I was born, shattered my self-centeredness that unwittingly took hold of me as a person for years.

Let's called it "Ellie's Ball Toss", if I may. Ellie was an exchange student from America whom during that time registered in the Luce program at Gadjah Mada University. During the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage, she was an observer and also an energizer.

That day, Ellie might have observed a certain fatigue in our face. As a responsible energizer with impeccable sensitivity, she quickly proposed an ice breaker. Ellie asked us, the 28 participants of IYP, to gather in the middle of the class. A little tired, we quickly clustered in the middle of the room.

Ellie explained in English that she had four balls with different colors. I saw the red, yellow, green, and blue balls in her hand.

First of all, Ellie tossed a green ball. As instructed, one boy in the group managed to catch it. Ellie threw the ball in the next

round, and suddenly it swift from hand to hand, until a girl in this participant circle caught it. Then, Ellie instructed us to get out of the circle and divided group based on gender. Soon the crowd was split into two groups, one consisting of thirteen girls and another of fifteen boys. We still did not understand what Ellie's game even meant at that time.



Elly from USA, IYP observer

Ellie then asked us to cluster ourselves based on the religion. It was not hard for me as a Muslim to identify friends from similar background. Of course, because of the striking religious symbols, most girls wore on their heads.

Soon, other friends were looking for each other. Sometimes they hesitated to encounter one another. There were these two guys on the other end just stood in silence. I later learned they were Buddhists named Subagyo and Susanto. Three others were getting together as well. Soon, I knew them as Puji from Bali, Agus from Kediri, and Marsini from Klaten — three of them were Hindus.

I was with sixteen other Muslims. “Are you the only Christian in here?” Ellie asked in English to a girl who I later knew as Vino from Ambon. I was still feeling comfortable in my largest grouping. The

biggest cluster.

“No other Christians here?” Ellie asked again with her funny attitude yet radiated intellectuality. Simultaneously, four raised their hands and made jokes with her—and made Vino smile happily.

I could catch a glimpse of relief in Vino’s face. Ellie invited her to join with other Christians. Vino went joyfully, and so the other four Christian boys. Two of them appeared to welcome Vino with outstretched arms and sang a song they all knew. Everyone in the forum was influenced by this joy and everyone smiled.

I was still in the middle of a large group. The biggest one. “What about you?” Suddenly Ellie’s voice made us all turn to her source of curiosity, and there stood a girl with glasses and without a veil.

The woman nodded slowly. I wonder what she felt at that moment. Clearly, if I were in her position, probably I would not be strong. I might feel insecure, embarrassed, and otherwise inferior. However, she was a strong figure in my eyes, stood up straight without being distracted by the presence of other groups that surround it.

Ellie asked about her religion and I, as a member of largest group, could only stare. Every now and then, I heard my conscience.

All of us could hear all when that girl replied Ellie that she came from the beliefs adherence. A belief unrecognized or considered illegitimate by the definition of religion from our government.

“*And you alone?*” Ellie asked.

“Yes,” she replied.

Suddenly Ellie hugged her and repetitively said *sorry*.

“It’s okay,” said this girl with a resilient smile, on her embraces.

There was something that shook me deep within. A sense of conformity that once covered us in this group, suddenly bothered us all.

The fact was that when I saw Ly, a Vietnamese facilitator, hug Vino, it stunned me. Scenes when she eventually met her Christian fellows somehow reoccurred to the point where it became annoy-

ing. I started to think to myself that when I felt at ease unbothered by a sense of worry and anxiety, Vino was there on the other end.

My imagination was drifting on a larger scale and I was wondering to myself, “Do the rest of Christians in Indonesia feel anything like Vino?” I gasped and found myself stood among the largest group. Ellie continued her probing on who have ever felt the religious violence directly. No one raised a hand. Moreover, I never even bothered for my status as a Moslem. I embraced Islam because of my parents.

Ellie asked again whether anyone among us who had been in direct conflict cycles. Obviously, I have not experience this, either. I think the same about the rest of us there. I thought that religious violence only occurred on TV screen.



Elly gives hug to a participant who experienced conflict in her community

Then Ellie asked whether anyone among us have experienced trauma because of religious conflict. I gasped as suddenly five people among us surged forward. Tirta, Hadjar, Gunawan, Firman, and Ade stepped forward unsteadily. Like with the chicken lost its mother, I was distraught at the fact. “It’s not like that on television - news channel, right?” I wonder to myself in disbelief, denying the

fact.

Tirta, Hajar, Gunawan, Word, Vino, and Ade shared several descriptions of religious conflict they have witnessed. The trauma lingering, like a ghost haunted their life.

“You’ll never know how painful and traumatic religious conflicts could become, don’t you?” Ellie’s eyes immediately gazed us one by one. Somehow I could not bear her stares. I threw my eyes to the floor. “Well I did” Ellie said. “Things related to such issues always made me feel sentimental. Flicked my past time and my emotions,” she continued while hugging one of our friends who have experienced the trauma of religious conflict.

My presence, which had been already begun uncomfortable, started to shake even harder. As if there were something that squeezed my hearts and emotions. I felt bewildered on the ground beneath me. In addition to my conformity to the majority, citizenship, and my safe-peaceful-tranquil life, I learned that out there are my brothers and sisters in other areas living quite the polar opposite. They feel threatened and haunted, overshadowed by anxiety, agonized, and afraid to live in their own home, Indonesia.

If at that time I was very embarrassed because nobody knew my comfortable position, then if it was not to the Lord, to whom else—besides my own—I could hide from shame?

Dim lights and white canopied beds

Tembi, 19 November 2013

LIFE LINES

MARSINI

This morning I hurried to climb into the bus that would take us to Gadjah Mada University Graduate School Building, one among many locations where the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) was held.

I never thought that I would get together with many friends from different religions, ethnicity, regions, who had open hearts and filled the IYP with laughter.

During the first session, me and my friends met with Endah Setyowati which is often called as Ms. Etty, as a facilitator for first day. Ms Etty was so enthusiastic and excited to guide us.

Ms Etty immediately opened the first session with introductions among all IYP participants. Every one of us required to introduce name and to add a positive meaningful word most describing the name bearer. After completion, Ms. Etty gave an instruction for games we would play. Participants were required to form a group consisted of seven people with mixed genders. After all groups were formed, it would be further subdivided into smaller groups consisting of five people. On that occasion, I was in one group with Puji, Jons, Susanto, and Dian.

Ms. Etty continued with the game instructions. “Group members must hold the shoes of another member, then with the other hand holding the other shoe in a squat position.” I immediately

grabbed someone's shoe standing in front of me. We were very excited to follow her directions and turned back to the initial position.



IYP Participants visit UGM Graduate School

Sheets of white papers were distributed to us. Then, Ms. Ety asked us to recall our memories, to draw it onto happy - sad graphic.

I tried to remember my past moments of life since I was a child up to recent times, and slowly drew it on the white paper, until it formed a fluctuation graphic of life .

Me and the rest of my friends in my group spent around 20 minutes to have a storytelling on each graphic. We found out how hard it was to share the meaning of each line. Especially, when I had to open up myself and be brave to share the very personal ones. It was my first time I encountered these people and I had to share my life journey from childhood until now. Everyone had experienced the ups and downs in life, including me.



Etty, IYP facilitator during the introduction session

All the stories of my friend in one group had made me realize that by sharing stories about life experiences we could learn to open up, no matter how recent we were in encountering one another. However, no one could deny how sharing the story of your life would lighten your burden afterwards.

“By getting to know and understand each other we can be thankful with what you have, even if it’s a simple moment, not everyone has what we’ve been through in life. Happiness comes from ourselves and someone else that makes us aware how we need to appreciate the differences by being grateful for everything we have, instead of keep complaining about our Nation.”

Time passed by quickly during the storytelling time, Ms. Etty asked everyone to immediately return to the seats. Then she asked about the lessons learned from the stories we had heard earlier. Some of us had different opinions. I kept the insight of stories about persistency in life, how to keep up your resilience when you are falling, and keep trying. We had to be sure that God would give what we needed, not what we wanted.

The ups and downs of life depend on our efforts.

A PATH OF TEGATEN

TIARA FATIMAH



We had been through these interfaith activities for several days. When asked about the experience, of course, lot of things that were very exciting and memorable came at once. On Thursday, November 13, 2013, something got me so excited. Since the first time I read the event's rundown, I have realized that we would stay with a church family.

Everything felt even more thrilling. I wondered what a church family would be like. How would they treat me? Would it be awk-

ward since we were alone? My head was full with bursting questions. If people could hear it, I bet it would be very noisy.

Television was often becoming a main visual reference about evangelist missionary or apostasy. As someone who had never been in touch with Christianity, I swallowed such information without any screening. “I was so paranoid, but I was not brave enough” so I said when a friend asked me in front of Sidomukti church sacred altar. I looked at the faces of the congregation who stood and sat down on benches row. Among this people, who would be my “father and mother” tonight?



Maya from the Sidomukti Church in Salatiga

Priest Maya began to read out the list of the name in the church family. “Tiara Fatimah will go home with Mrs. Ida” she said. A figure

of a woman with white complexion and shoulder-length hair came up to me who stood still in a chair in front of the altar. "Hello, there" was the first sentence she spoke with a very warm smile. Please do not ask how I felt like about it. Sometime things were indescribable. A little bit relieves? Well, it could be.

The talks continued. She asked about my origin and my basic information. I started to feel comfortable with her presence. When we finally reached her home, her husband Mr. Hartono and their child, Krisna, welcomed us. A plate with colorful sponge cakes and a glass of Coffeemix were served at the table, and I started to adapt. For dinner, I was treated to *rawon* and *balacan*. I felt fulfilled, both psychologically reassured, and physically full.

Mr. Hartono and I had the same interest with history, so often talked about this subject quite a lot; starting from the history of Christianity, to *Petrus* (*Penembakan Misterius* or mysterious shooting) during the New Order. Mr. Hartono gave his family an ultimate freedom to choose their beliefs according to their own conscience. Not only in Mr. Hartono's family, Mrs. Ida as well. In fact, the eldest child in her family is a Moslem.

At last I could say that I was comfortable staying on their house. There was not a single slight of intimidation regarding my status as a Moslem and I did not feel like I was treated like a "lost sheep." Being human was the right word to say. We lived under the same roof, and we believe in God, respectively. Mrs. Ida was even willing to wake up very early in the morning and accompanied me to conduct a Sabah (dawn) prayer.

It had definitely changed my thinking about the difference. Often, we were too absorbed and became a judgmental in order to justify anonymous opinion about certain thing without even try to finding it out. I did it, but now I am not. Thank you Tegaten for "accommodating" me in a family that filled with affection in life. I'm so grateful, Dear God, for such a blessing. "Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Ar-Rahman)

INTERFAITH MARRIAGE: A SLIPPERY SLOPE FOR MUSLIM WOMEN

HALIMAH GARNASIH

Since the first day, inter-religious marriages had been quietly disturbing my thoughts and concise. This anxiety (if I may call it that way) had been continuously clinging on my mind during IYP's ten-day trip. On a sixth day, everything started to culminate, particularly an event occurred in Sidomukti Church and continued by Q & A sessions with Gus Hanif in Edi Mancoro Islamic boarding school. This question kept on repeating since I felt a lack of understanding over an argument made by Ms. Yani (which in my view — is a progressive and critical Moslem woman figure) in a discussion regarding the issue. Such anxiousness followed me back to Jogja, even until now when my fingers typing over the keyboard.

It was an afternoon at Gadjah Mada University Home Stay N53 where Erich offered three pieces of paper filled with the questions and opinions we should filled in. It was about the relationship and interfaith behavioral. One question that made my pen paused on the air was on the opinion of interfaith marriages. This was not a new thing, but within my experience and hearing space to be questioned so directly as a Muslim personally, I was dazed for some rea-

son.

What I decided that afternoon was considered unwise, particularly for ticking an uneasy answer in a multiple choice that revealed my view on interfaith matrimony. This question haunted my mind until bedtime and at the time I woke up the next day.

I have decided to ask some opinions from my friends via SMS. Among their answers were: *it was all fine to love as long as they stop before marriage; oh so you find someone eye-catching, huh? It's all right, love doesn't care much about religion; different ethnicities often bring conflicts between husband and wife, let alone an interfaith?*

I was further probing the first answer (a similar view with the second answer) and it ended upon *Fiqhiyyah* reason. It is an Islamic branch of knowledge, which contains rules of everyday Muslims.

This was the point where my anxiety had glared back after it was settled for a while. Early morning in Sidomukti Church. When Amel recited a Qur'an verse (Al-Baqoroh verse 221) which stated the prohibition legitimacy of a Moslem to marry idolaters (*musyrikin*) or non-Muslims, in this case.

Gus Hanif replied on a recited verse asked by Amel. "In another verse (Al-Maidah: 5, it is allowed for a Moslem man to marry the *ahli kitab*. So, clearly an interfaith marriage is allowed *Fiqhiyyah*-ly speaking."

I could see a couple of an interfaith couple stood before me. A Muslim man and a Christian woman (probably in Gus Hanif's view, the wife was *ahli kitab*).

"If you want to talk about *musyrikin* (idolaters), we must know what an idolater is? Who could it be? "

Silence fell in this Church.

"It is referred to people without any faith, right? Now, is an *ahli kitab* having faith?"

¹ People of the Book are a term used to designate non-Muslim adherents to faiths which have a revealed scripture called, in Arabic, Ahl-Al-Kitab. The three types of adherents to faiths that the Qur'an mentions as people of the book are the Jews, Sabians, Magians and Christians.



Interfaith couple

Boisterous whispers between participants filled in the Church. I paused and look straight ahead, but my head was no less hectic. Gus Hanif's closing remarks were banging against my head, encouraged me to latter conclude once Gus Hanif could answer and help me shed the anxiety.

This had sent an anxiety within me who had been increasingly wrestling – and ruffling during the journey to Edi Mancoro Boarding School Islamic Boarding School in Semarang.

In the school hall, I collected myself back and tried to suppress the anxiety. Gus Hanif and Mr. Akbar from NU were standing in

front. They introduced the school and explained their programs to us.

I was not sure whether it was because my closeness and familiarity towards an Islamic Boarding School or the thoughts I was having, my mind wandered away even though my eyes looked forward.

After so many questions from other participants, the committee opened another Q & A session, and something was pushing me from the inside—I did not know what, and my hand lifted up.

“You said I could ask the irrelevant subjects?” I asked after permitted to speak.

“That’s okay,” Gus Hanif, who called as *rock ‘n roll Kiai* by many participants, replied.

“It was about the former subject, interfaith marriage.”

Gus Hanif nodded in replied.

“If my Non-Moslem friends are even wondering about the difference between *ahli kitab* and *musyrikiin*, the two couples are not seem problematic to me, since the woman is *ahli kitab*. Such matter is explained within the interpretation of Al - Maidah verse and specified within Al - Baqoroh verse and on its jurisprudence, so it’s perfectly clear and it is free from problem. Now, what if one of them including a *musyrikiin*? And what is actually the ultimate definition of *musyrikiin*? If Gus Hanif’s previous answer were taken that idolaters means not a believer, I think all of my friends here have faith (while stretching left and right hands). Which means, me as a Muslim can marry one of them? Is that right?”

Classroom instantly felt so noisy. There were some guys agreed upon my statement.

“Or put it this way, we want to know what the real meaning of faith in Islam is?” I continued after reading Gus Hanif’s “careful” response since he did not want to get a backfire. Too bad I did not catch Gus Hanif answer that clear. He did not explain about the meaning of faith through Islamic perspectives. He also did not say “yes” or “no” about interfaith marriage. That was very unfortunate. I really needed to get a clear answer since on this discussion; it were

Islamic laws and regulations which were considered as more strict.

Gus Hanif even brought me back to *ikhtilafiyah* (arguments on several tolerable domains) of the Scholars to the extent of a Muslim leg of legitimating the interfaith marriages.

Before my dance training for evening performance with Puji, I was rushing to Ms. Yani whom I considered as a progressive and critical minded woman.

“Ms. Halimah, may I ask something?”

“Oh yes, of course”

“I’m still not satisfied with Gus Hanif’s answer. My final conclusion is that he considered scholars’ opinions in the scriptures are ‘transforming’ and ‘transformed’ the legitimacy of a Muslim to justify their plan? “

Ms. Yani paused and responded, “in general, that is Muslims common view, especially in Indonesia.” I frowned while she smiled at me. He told his acquaintance with Muslim and non-Muslim friends across the globe. She said that the perspective on Muslim majority in Indonesia tended to be negative.” According to them, such attitudes and the Muslims phenomenon in Indonesia are due to poor knowledge of Islam severed by many followers.” I thought this answer was logical to my brain. I continued, “what about your personal view on interfaith marriage?”

Ms. Yani paused for quite some time then looked straight into my eyes, “for me, interfaith marriage is an emergency road. If we still can say no, why should we do it?” Yes, even after reading three *ikhtilafiyah* (comparative views) among scholars on interfaith marriage last night, I still could not comprehend. Even right this time, when I am pressing the keyboard.

The first view clearly prohibited Muslim woman to get married with Non Muslim man. This view mandated by majority of scholars in’ Indonesia. The second was that Muslim man was allowed to marry *Ahli Kitab*. I thought this view contained gender bias because Muslim woman was forbidden to marry *Ahli Kitab*; and the third insights freely allowing any Muslims to marry non- Muslims. In In-

donesia, it was carried by at least two intellectuals namely Musdah Muliah and Nurcholis Madjid.

When trying to understand any of these three views, a Muslim woman might have an interfaith marriage wide open offered to her. However, given the scholars in Indonesia (that widely represent majority of Muslim community) had been steadfast on the first opinion, the Interfaith marriage became a slippery slope for a Muslim woman in Indonesia while she was trying to embodied her life reality on the third view.

God is Everywhere

ON GOD

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

HADJAR HANDAYANI



Something was different this morning. For some reason, I was sure this was not about the geographical location between Yogyakarta and Ambon, or earlier than my regular morning, here the sun came up rather sooner. I felt something very meaningful in this morning. There were turmoil that had been haunting and shook my conscience since yesterday evening, the day we— a group of participants of the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP)— returned, from Jaganatha Temple, the center of all the temples in Yogyakarta.

Today we returned to Hindu Dharma College in Klaten, Indonesian Confucian Religious Council, and Vihara Dharma Sundara. Still, and as merciless, I felt a great turbulence that getting stronger at every time I stepped my foot at these places.

Yesterday, during our visitation to Pura Jaganatha we had conducted a ritual observation led by Mr. Budi Sanoto, the temple guardian. Assisted by three IYP's Hindus participants: Puji, Agus, and Marsini. Just like a child who started to learn to pray, I was awkwardly followed their prayer. A lot of questions banging on my head, mercilessly.

“Will Allah The Almighty gets angry with what I'm doing with the rest of us now?”

“Are my friends with the same religion questioned the same thing as I'm feeling now?”

“What if God were irritated, would we classified as the *shirk*?”

Such questions kept haunting me after we returned to the UGM N.38 home-stay. I was feeling the same turmoil today, after a visit to a Buddhist and Confucian temples. Everyone was so preoccupied dealing with their God. They also introduced their Lord so fervently. I was reminded of the figure of a man who was praying fervently regardless our noisy arrival at Jaganatha Temple yesterday. Secretly, I felt embarrassed.

I felt ashamed at large Buddhist statue at the Vihara Dharma Sundara, I felt ashamed of the gods' symbols in Pura Jaganatha, I felt ashamed at Confucian statue, and I felt ashamed to my own Lord, the Almighty God.

“Have I humiliated my God?”

Buddha, Gods of the Hindus, and Gods of the Confucian were possibly laughing at me who got over excited to learn their teachings while I had reluctantly learned my own Islamic knowledge.

² Refers to the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism, i.e. the deification or worship of anyone or anything other than the singular God.

Perhaps this was a hard blow for me. Maybe all these Gods were trying to remind me of my own God. During this time I simply knew Him, as a mere reminder that I am a Muslim, therefore my God is Allah the Almighty. But do I really know Him, God? Buddha, the Gods of the Hindus and Confucian really had evoked my yearning for Allah, Most Gracious, Most Compassionate, the Most Forgiving, and All Merciful.



The people I met in sanctuaries visited we visited today and yesterday probably had the humility to know his Lord, full of peace and tolerance and accepted us there.

And now, all my guardedness of whether yesterday's contemplation on my inability to know Allah meant that I did not deserve to be able to patronize the entire process at Temple Jaganatha and that it was wrong and inappropriate—have been answered. How did I express tolerance toward other religions while I had not fully comprehended my religion's teachings? How did I voicing out peace when today, during a number of sanctuary visitations, I felt far from peace?

Perhaps this was the process I got during a trip to the holy

places where we did not need to shut down other religious teachings just because we were afraid of awaken faith. Their God would inevitably lead you to your God, and I had experienced it from an incredible spiritual journey in sanctuaries. However, quoting Dewi Lestari, “Do not easily believe what I tell you here, because the story is a medium to express something through the words.” Then let’s show that this spiritual journey for the sake of knowledge would be for nothing if it was not complemented with experiences.

GOD WISHES US TO LEARN

BAIQ DIAN HURRIYATI

There were so many great moments that I went through during IYP-Indonesia's ten days activities, together with friends all over Indonesia from various ethnicities and inter-religious. Besides getting a lot of stories shared in the sessions, whether sad, happy, funny, I even had to encounter my own ego and discrediting my selfish narrations for some truly great stories like Tirta, a friend of Ambon who spent nearly 13 years of her life witnessing violence and living in the shadow of insecurity. All because of the prolonged clash came out of nowhere and labeled as a religious conflict. No matter how I listened to her stories during breakfast and she, I solemnly believe, did not have the slightest intention to offend or ask for our sympathy from us who had never tasted life under a constant "nightmare." But I must admit that she managed to strip away my selfishness and questioning my convenient easy life to this point.

Listening to Tirta's childhood stories was far from what I could imagine as a child. Conflict-triggered violence in her region had built a certain trauma for her, and perhaps for all her friends in Ambon. Moments of affection and happiness that should be filled in a child's memory was, instead, replaced by series of cruel memories caused by unabridged differences. Perhaps, Tirta and the rests of her friends finally created an essential thought where differences

would only lead to trouble and violence. It raised unhappiness for them all.



Dian stays with a Christian Family in Salatiga during the Live-in program

If comparing my childhood to Tirta's, perhaps I would be very embarrassed. I had been accustomed to live in a homogeneous environment without conflict ripples caused by religious or ethnic differences. I was living as an ordinary child, with parents' unconditional love, with environmental safeties and conformity within the homogeneous majority. This activity was my first experience to encounter with diverse friends across religions and tribes. I felt compelled to try to get out of my golden cage and started to learn to feel the reality outside comfy majority group. And so it was, everything I had in this program had wrecked my comfort zone and false aware-

ness so far. Indeed, I was a very selfish girl. Tirta's story is just one of the many stories I got— there were many other 'Tirta's out there. Many in Poso, Palu, Aceh, Maluku and East Nusa Tenggara had to bear the stories alike. Happiness faded so quickly just because of a religious conflict.

I remembered the opening remarks delivered by Regional Secretary of Yogyakarta who represented Sri Sultan during a welcoming dinner on our first day. He said, "Religion is a passage to God." I agreed. Religion would lead our way towards happiness and fulfillment of our innate instinct, 'the Divinity'. Everyone would choose their own passage according to their concise. If religion was a 'passage of the Lord', then why did people contaminate the holy road, ruin the happiness with unhappiness and make it as an excuse for attacking and torturing each other. I was stunned by a data given by Mr. Leo, facilitator at our first session. The world's population was at 7 billion, and 230 million people died from violence cases. Religious conflicts were also included in this violence cases. Wasn't it ironic?

Among many great moments I had experienced during the IYP 10-days trip, there was the most touching moment that gave me a new insight. On the fourth day, we enjoyed a home-stay in the Christian community. The concept was to get Non-Muslim participants stay at Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School, while Muslim participants would experience a home-stay with a family from the Sidomukti Church congregation. We, the Muslims participants, would each get a new family. This had startled me once I read the overall rundown. I even thought about possibilities to cancel my participation within this program when scan-reading the rundown of activities delivered by the committee. It would be my very first experience to live with a non- Muslim family, let alone the Church congregation's family. I was feeling erratic, between fear and curiosity. My heart worried so much. Would they accept me? Would they cook the meals in a *halal* ways? Would I ever get to pray in their house? Would it be awkward since I would be alone there? But the most ridiculous question and it actually annoyed me so much was

whether they would try to convert me?

My nervousness vanished when I finally met my host-mother. She greeted me with a smile and hugged me tightly like a mother who had just met her daughter after all these years. My new family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Wasito, three children, and Ms. Erlin, Mrs. Wasito's nephew. I was very touched by the kindness of this family. First impression was because of their acceptance of me. When arriving at their home, they immediately asked whether I wanted to take a bath or prayer first. They even set up a prayer rug for me. Ms. Erlin boiled hot water for my bath. "Salatiga is cold, don't you think," she said with a sincere smile. The next day, I just realized that they even had boiled my hot water earlier in the afternoon because I was expected to come during that hours. These kindnesses made me feel so guilty against my lifetime prejudices. They were very respectful about my faith. We would live together with love and tolerance without overpass other people's faith in our sacred space we believed in.



Duta from a Christian Family in Salatiga

After completing my dawn prayer, the family's youngest child named Duta came to me who was still sitting on the prayer rug, he was just three but very active and playful. We had become very close after one night.

"Miss, what are you doing?" he curiously asked me while sitting

in my prayer rug and wearing my prayer's dress.

"I had just finished my praying" I replied with a smile.

"Why is it different from my praying?" he continued with a quizzical face. I paused, try to look for a proper answer. It would be easier to explain that I am a Muslim, I have a different God therefore we have an unusual ways to pray, if only he were not a three year old child. Ms. Erlin who happened to be there helped me with a very moving answer.

"The way Ms. Dian praying is different from you, Duta. But it's all equally good and exemplary deeds." I was not sure whether Duta could understand what she said, but somehow I was deeply moved. In a beautiful way, this family had taught and instilled a new tolerance within me, and triggered a new understanding for neither me to view differences as not a bad thing at all, nor something that should generate hatred. Let us live in diversity; let us also live in peace, and kindness that would lead to happiness.

Indeed, if all parents in this world taught their children as Ms. Erlin did to Duta, there would be no trauma experienced by people like Tirta. If only everyone tried to deeply understand and appreciate the teachings of their religion and to acknowledge that every faith actually taught the similar values namely mutual respect, honor, and compassion. This world would be so beautiful in diversity because it actually reflected God's benevolence to us.

Jogja, 28 November 2013

For all of my prodigious IYP friends and my brothers and sisters out there:

The world is a beautiful place to live. God has generously endowed us with all the diversities of life as our learning media, in so many ways. It is one way so we can learn how they perceive us, and how we perceive them. To learn how we can understand each other better. To learn to become a person who is not selfish and intolerant. And learn to interpret the difference. God just wants us to learn....

PLURALISM: BETWEEN REALITIES AND EXPECTATION

ERA PURNAMA SARI

Staying with the church congregation's family was the most effective method in building pluralism awareness and later altered the consciousness into religions & beliefs peace movement. To witness, to discuss, to share experiences, and to directly involve with the church family would provide an opportunity for IYP participants to ask for explanation and clarification in order to overcome their prejudices that, both consciously and unconsciously, had been formed and accepted as a single truth. I was lucky to meet Mr. Amin Suyitno. This family was like a miniature diversity tolerance.

Hospitality

Unlike the other participants who were picked up and immediately reunited with their host parents in the Church, mine was an elderly citizen. Since he could not pick me up, I became even more curious to figure out what my foster parents would look like. "Mr. Amin was a former lecturer at Satya Wacana University, who taught Pancasila and Criminal Law if I'm not mistaken. He's very old now." That's the information I had successfully collected in congregation. My heart cheered "we certainly would be a compatible companion."

Bu Dewi, the pastor's wife took me to Mr. Amin's house since it was located just across her house. I got there around 19:00 o'clock. Smiles from an elderly couple made me feel warm within. We ate together and discussed various subjects until 20:00 pm, I did not forget to hand them special culinary from Padang I had prepared—"Rendang and Spicy Chips." They accepted it with excitement, since both were Padang's food lovers and knew tidbits of Minangkabau culture. Mr. Amin even knew some of Minang song lyrics. It felt like a close relatives' reunion.

My feeling was right, we were just so matched in all respects, such as views concerning the general situation of Indonesia with crisis of tolerance and views on freedom of religion and beliefs. He said, "The world was created by God for to be lived by everyone." His view certainly did not come by itself; his mother played a great role to teach him tolerance towards pluralism of religions and beliefs. This family mesmerized me.

Lifetime Experience "A Journey of Finding Faith"

Amin Suyitno was born from a Muslim family and like most people, he embraced Islam as his inherited religion. He was studying in Christian high school in a Christian school in Yogya, perhaps because he had spent most of his time to get acquainted with Christian environment, he felt the call to embrace Jesus teachings. He expressed such desire to his mother who lived in Purwokerto while at that time, his father was deceased.

He still clearly remembered the moment when he expressed his conversion wishes to his mother. At that time her mother was praying, and he said "Mom, I wanted to be Baptized." His mother replied "do it wholeheartedly, but leave me alone with my own faith, all right", then Amin was eventually baptized in 1955 and has been embracing Christianity until now. At the same time, his cousin whose age was close to Amin became a Nun in a church, but her decision was challenged by her Moslem mother. Her mother said it would cut their biological ties "I don't care, you're not my only

child, we have no further relationship from now on.” Amin’s mother mediated the feuds by saying “she’s trying to be a better person, so stop crying about it! It’s not like she’s going into prostitutions.” So they both broke through the sacrilegious of inherited religions and set up as starting point of pluralistic religions life commencement in the family until now. The difference was Amin got a Christian education in Yogya, while his cousin in Purwokerto, Amin chose Protestantism while his cousin embraced Catholicism.



Era, IYP participant from Padang

The Life of Pluralistic Family

After completing his study at the University of Satya Wacana, Amin became a professor assistant of Criminal law and eventually a permanent lecturer at the same University. He met his wife there, who happened to be his junior in college and later became a teacher at Christian High School in Salatiga. Amin (78 years) and his wife Listyati (75 Years) were blessed with two children and four grandchildren. The first daughter is now married and became a psychol-

ogy teacher in State High School in Salatiga, while the second now living in Bali with his wife and two children. Amin completed his Postgraduate in Germany and was awarded with the Honorary Professorship from Satya Wacana University.

They were still active in various religious activities and other civic organizations despite the ages. For ages, they had devoted their time for it, and both were once the members of Church Assembly. Amin Suyitno said he was the first to initiate a forum of cooperation between church and religious communities, which involved not only the church religious leaders, but other religious, too. He even once invited an Islamic religious leader to discuss in a church and he did not mind to come to others' sacred spaces such as mosques. For him, it had nothing to do with faith violations since you could take a pray anywhere and the church was merely a place. Since 1953, he had been living in Salatiga and no religious conflict had occurred ever since, they simply did not interfere people of different religions.

Pluralism through Amin's Viewpoint

There was no religion that taught the ugliness, all religions calls for good deeds and welfare of mankind. So for the sake of humanity, religious differences and beliefs should not be pushed with bulk-head limitations. The crucial matters were to talk to the public at large, to support the construction of public facilities, and to hand a humanitarian assistance for disaster recovery.

According to Amin, within the context of living in a nation state, the State must stand before class, religion, and belief. Our National Constitution Article 29 clearly states "religion and belief." Assurance and respect should involves beliefs, not only religions. Everyone should be given the freedom and respect for religions and beliefs, and should not be prosecuted. In fact, the belief also covered the Atheists.

Unnecessary contestation over different beliefs and religions distracted us from a significant action required that was a dialogue to live in coexistence for the sake of the whole community because

the Earth belongs to Allah, and He never distinguish it. Hostility would not make a person getting richer but poorer instead, poor of friendship based on humanity. Yet God loves every human being, whoever, whatever their religions and beliefs.

Amin's life journey, experiences, and views represented a miniature of what it was truly like to live in the middle of pluralistic religions and beliefs. These had eventually strengthened my understanding that religion pluralism should be attitude framed with mutual respect and mindfulness. It would be a fundamental starting point of the birth of harmonious pluralistic country as an idealistic concept.

YOUTH AND NOVELTY

CAHYA MUSTIKA RINI



Cahya (with green t-shirt) with IYP Participants

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) was one of the programs awarded to the Alumnus of Engagement Innovation Fund 2013. It was followed by 28 participants from various regions all over Indonesia with diverse religious backgrounds, beliefs, and youths coming from conflict areas such as Poso, Ambon, Aceh, and Madura.

The program was a ten days' passage to various sacred spaces in Yogyakarta, Solo, Karanganyar, Semarang, Magelang, and Salatiga. Every participant would mutually learn from each other and try to open up all our senses to accept and understand differences. This event was supported by several local partners, namely the Indonesian Consortium for Religion Studies (ICRS), CRCS UGM, Dian Interfidei, PERCIK, GKJ Sidomukti, Dagen Palur Church, *Pesantren*³ Al Urwatsqul Wutsqo Karanganyar, and *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro.

Salatiga was one among many destinations to visit. When we reached *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro, my heart was touched and my mind worked harder than usual.



Students at the Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School play rebana music

We, as non-Muslim participants, were placed in the *Pesantren*. One thing we did there was learning the tambourine; I did not join them but talked to a female student named Asya instead. Asya asked me from Sapta Dharma as my belief, to my role in the community. At first I was hesitant since I doubted she could accept my explana-

³ Islamic boarding school

tion. However, her enthusiasm enforced me to open up and share my stories from within. Asya openly told me how she had been living in this place for 3.5 years and continuously happy to learn about Islam, and this situation sparked a natural curiosity within her to know more about belief group.

Asya came from Purbalingga, and she shows not even a slightest hesitation to walk me to the girls' dormitory. While carrying newly bought fried rice, we walked together to girls' dormitory. I was surprised to see how modest their lives there, how they learned a rudimentary life, their spirit to share, to learn and understand, and empathize. Some rooms filled with 4-5 girls and furnished with cabinets, this was where they learned about values of sharing.



Women Students of the Edi Mancoro Boarding School share stories with Vino, IYP Participant

Another female student about my age welcomed me in a friendly way and tried hard to join us in a fully-packed room. It was my very first time to enter a new school with a bunch of open-minded girls and enthusiastic about other believer. This was an opposite of what I had experienced with my campus friends who showed antip-

athy with “human” with different identities, they often considered me as unclean, loathsome akin.

The students in Edi Mancoro were embracing pluralism that well I was triggered to ask “how come you take us so casually while we’re so different and you are a *Pesantren* student?”

Asya and Aulia said, “Why not? We’re Indonesians, and we take everyone as sisters.” They asked whether they could stay over in my house once they visited Jogja, while cheering me up because my eyes started to get wet.

“You have to drop by for sure,” I said determinedly as I hugged them.

It takes logical maturity to deeply learn about one religion. Let’s learn to the root and collaborating with Indonesian culture. Unity in Diversity. Regards.

SEIZE THE PEACEFULNESS

RUDIANTO



IYP participants visit Mertoyudan Seminary in Magelang

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage 2013 program had passed and left millions of precious memories to me. My spirit was everything but deflated for carving every experience I had been through with other participants.

When I tried to describe the meanings word by word, my concise called back the days during Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage 2013. Exploring and telescoping the diversity in Mother Earth had taught me about the essential meaning of togetherness.

Later I understood that it was a school to educate Catholic religious leader. Perhaps the term that fitted for me was “Catholics *Pesantren*.” This was where the priest candidates studying and exploring values taught by Catholic.

Since my first stepped in this seminary, my eyes had indulged with beautiful and green scenery. The buildings majestically and firmly erected with a unique architectural style. Statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary were in every corner, and some more statues hardly recognized.

We were greeted warmly by the Head of the seminary and several students at the main church located in front. Several students accompanied me to tour around the seminary after.

Although I had never been to a place like this before, I felt a commonality with *Pesantren* students in South Sulawesi. At that time, I happened to be accompanied by a student named Adit. Adit was so straightforward to explain and provide information about life in the seminary; the dormitory dynamics, dining with a modest menu, praying activities, and study time.

It brought back my memory when I was a student in *Pesantren*. The dynamics were so alike. It was just that we had mosques while they had a church. But it had a same goal that was to create an intellectual and religious generation with good codes of moral and ethics.

There was a subject that leave me a huge curiosity, so I asked it on Adit, “By the way, I’ve heard that priest could not get married, and since you’re about to be one, does it mean you don’t want to get married?” He spontaneously replied:

“I’m not saying that I don’t want to, but it’s a form of devotion for our religions and beliefs. Anyway, wife and kids will make it complicated. Our responsibilities as a priest could be distracted. Indeed

married is a necessity for most people, but we sacrifice the needs for a spiritual devotion.” (Conversation between Adit and Rudianto)

Suddenly I was touched and moved to hear this boy’s answer who talked about his dream to be a priest and sacrificing for services, and he was not even fifteen. Meanwhile, I was a little older than him but it never came to my mind to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of public interest. For me, it was not just an answer, but sacred pledge and a promise from future priest candidates who would create world in peace in the days to come.



Before leaving the seminary, I also asked Adit, “according to you, what is the meaning of diversity and religious diversity? How do you as a prospective pastor addressing these differences? Since I’m a Muslim and you are Catholic, surely it sets us apart?”

“For me personally, such difference and diversity is our identity and I never segregate people based on their religion and belief. I believe that all religions teach goodness, the only different laid in the ways we achieve goodness. Religion obliges us to behave well at all times, but there are rules limiting us not to do evil. You can say

with different wordings, but that's the point. Later, when I become a priest, I will spread the words of peace to everyone. I will promote mutual respect and appreciation within the diversity." (Conversation between Adit and Rudianto).

This was my Seminary spiritual journey. I was grateful that God arranged our meeting. Hopefully there would be another Adit born into this world that would fill it with wisdom.

Through Adit, God taught me the meaning of a sacrifice. Through Adit, I learned about the love between human beings regardless of differences. Through Adit too, I was determined to become agents of peace in resolving conflicts due to failure to understand the differences.

Makassar, 5 December 2013

ON
SACRED
SPACES

WE ARE NOT DIFFERENT, BUT DIVERSE

TIRTA TRIANA

Today was a very exciting day for me since the IYP Participants would travel from Yogyakarta to Central Java. We would visit some places along the route such as Hindu Dharma College located in Klaten, Religion Council of Confucian in MAKIN, Buddhist Vihara, and the last participants would stay over at *Pesantren Al - Urwatul Wutsqo* in Karanganyar. It would be a long yet meaningful journey. The first place we visited was the College of Hindu Dharma and I got a lot of information about Hinduism as the first religion that had been influencing Indonesian cultures and historically affecting the Archipelagic Kingdoms.

Before arriving, I and other participants perceived with an interesting view about religion tolerance. Here I could see the Catholic Church, Mosque and Temple in the same location and located only a few meters away. While we were walking, observing, and greeting people on the street, we could see how incredibly harmonious the neighborhood around Hindu Dharma College (STHD) was. I gained a new knowledge about God from the Hinduism perspective, whereas God is a substance beyond human mind's reaches, it is a substance that does not resemble anything. But the thing is, Hindus need symbols to remember their God and to worship it. In

addition, God in Hinduism means the Rays and each have their own role in this world. Another remarkable universal value within their core philosophy was “one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself⁴, and, this world need not to be ruled if humans were ruled themselves well.”



From STHD college, we visited a Confucian temple where I found similar concept about worshipping God — an invisible substance, and unattainable by logic. Confucianism focuses about teachings of the human virtues in this world, about doing good deeds to others. They also have many symbols to further relate with God. The statue standing firmly in their temple was the Confucian Prophet as a messenger of virtuousness. Later on, we got to know that in the beginning of Confucianism; it did not have a system of propaganda or missionaries, which caused a small numbers of Confucian devotees in Indonesia. Confucianism is more about spreading the virtues, not a ritual or religious symbols.

⁴ Trans. Note: derived from *Mahabharata* 5:1517. This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.



Al-Urwatul Wutsqa Islamic boarding School in Karanganyar

Time passed by and the sun was setting. IYP journey continued Buddhist Vihara where it looked magnificent from the outside and we would find the magnificent Buddha statue when we entered. In this temple I sensed the similarity to Hinduism, Confucianism, particularly on the subject of the God they worship. God for Buddhist is indescribable substances by human beings, and the Buddha is not a God they worship but actually resembling an act of respecting holy figure with Nirvana as the final destination. Some of the sanctuaries we have visited have brought a new insight to me where God is an indescribable substance, there are diverse ways of worshiping, and symbols are used to vary one religion from another. In short we were not that different, but diverse.

Due to long journey to reach Karanganyar as next destination, we only visited this Vihara in a relatively short time. After hearing some brief explanations about Buddhism, we continued to *Pesantren Al-Urwatul Wutsqa* boarding school located on a hill with a beautiful scenery and somewhat chilly air.

Since the road was so steep, we had to climb a small public transportation car. We were having Isha (Night) prayers in the mosque and relax for a bit right after we arrived, then were friendly

greeted by the manager. The air was getting colder and we went for a dinner served. Some friends chose to get some rests while others discussed with *Pesantren* students.

MOSQUE IS MY SECOND CHURCH

ROBERT LARSON NEHE

About three weeks after leaving the Yogyakarta city, I brought home various experiences to my interfaith communities, campus circle, and close relatives. I was starting to throw away my prejudices against Moslem people and their activities in mosque because I had experiencing a prayer in their sanctuary, and also lived in *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro. Before I attended the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP), I had many questions about Islam. For example, about their activities in mosque, what they talked about and heard there, and who could enter the mosque. Now I had a basic understanding and all above questions had been answered. IYP had facilitated us on their best effort, especially to accommodate various questions as what I had before.

It was a beautiful afternoon for Muslims, especially male students in *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro because they would perform Friday prayer in congregation. I heard the sound of the Adzan (prayers' call) very loudly, since our room was close to the mosque. Gus Hanif as *pesantren* leader allowed us (IYP non-Muslim participants) to become an observer and to join the Friday prayers. I was surprised to know that the Kyai allowed us to pray in the mosque. Sponta-

neously, I asked him why we were given the precious opportunity. He replied that everyone, both Muslims and non-Muslims who had good intentions and respect God, could enter into the mosque and pray there. He also added that Muslims who had malicious purposes could not go to the mosque, since this was a sacred place. I decided to enter the mosque and satisfy my curiosity about what Moslem people actually do when they are praying.



IYP participants visit Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School

My non-Muslims fellows seemed to fit to wear the Islamic boarding school clothing. One of the students there lent me his best clothes as the Prophet Muhammad gave the best to everyone regardless of their faith. That was the first act of the Muslim people to show me their tolerance based on their religious values. During my participation in other program, I was wearing the similar clothes when staying with students at *Pesantren* Tebuireng and it was comfortable for me. Most of my friends felt uncomfortable with the kind of clothes, since it was their first time. With the rest of the students, we went to the mosque. Whether we were *Pesantren* stu-

dents or Non-Muslim participants of IYP was no longer distinguishable since we wore the same clothes.

Before praying, we must first perform an ablution. Muslims believe that it is one way to cleanse and refresh the body because it is mandatory before a prayer. I was told by the one of the student named Firman to perform it in the right manner and sequences. He said that every person who had finished ablution could not be touched, excepts by his *mahram* (one who is an opposite sex and close member of the family in which the person could not legally marry, such as children, brother, father, uncle, etc.) and must maintain their body in hygiene. Everyone should take off their footwear or something dirty outside the mosque sacred boundary. They believed that cleanliness is part of faith.



Constantly intrigued with feelings of fear and shameful, I thought that I would become a Muslim after Friday prayers. I was with Firman as the only Moslem teacher stood by me during that specific time. We took the last row in the room because I did not want to make a scene and become the focus of attention during the activities. First of all we performed Sunnah (non mandatory) prayers and I stood on his right side. I followed every movement Firman made because I did not know what I should do when pray-

ing. I saw him very seriously and paid attention to his mouth because I was curious about his whispered sentences. However, with all due respect, since I did not understand Arabic it made me laugh a little. But then I saw how seriously he performed it, so I became conscious to pray too. My movements followed the way Islamic people worshiping their God but I chanted the Christian wordings during the prayer.



IYP Participants observe the Friday Prayer

I asked the Moslem participants what was the meaning of every movements involved in *Shalat*. First I thought it was merely a repetitive habit, monotonous rituals that blatantly copying the Middle East and they could not change any prayer movement forever. They said that when they raised their right index fingers during the last prayer movement, it meant that Moslems were worshiping only one God as the Most Holiness. After that, the Friday prayers began, still no one realized that we were non-Muslims. Bagyo and Santo were Buddhist; Agus was a Hindu; Ade, Jons, Mikson, Edwaer, and I were Christians; and we were just like Moslems. Just like a church habit, everyone shook hands after worship prayer. Gus Hanif also said that some of the other activities performed in the mosque were reciting the Quran and listen to sermons.

I heard a lot of new explanations when I spent an overnight interaction in *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro. I also learned that Muslims accepted greetings from non-Muslims, had lunch together, and stayed together. First I thought that we, non-Muslims, could stay for a few days more because our mandate was to have a discussion, research, and observations, but apparently *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro always opened their door anytime for anyone who wanted to learn about Islam. Now I am convinced that the true Muslims do not have such evil thoughts such as terrorism and anarchist conducts. They provide an opportunity for everyone wishing to learn again and again without intervene and judge other religions.

A Friday prayer at the mosque was one of the valuable opportunities for me. I believe that true Muslims sincerely accept other people's existence and welcome us to pray in the mosque. I eliminated my suspicion that I would be converted to Islam after Friday prayer and I learned that they were tolerant of all religions and showed their affection towards them. I felt sorry for unbalanced information from the media about Muslims which were very different with what I obtained from the Kyai and students of *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro.

Now I understand what Moslem communities do in the mosque and anyone can actually pray there. They worship God through others' perspectives, but with the same goal. They always strive to do well, study the scriptures, maintain the cleanliness of the mosque, and religious tolerance. I appreciate fellow Muslims to allow different religions to learn and follow their rituals.

PERSISTENCY OF KYAI MAHFUDZ, THE RELIGIOUS LEADER

SUBAGYO

The misinformation over *Pesantren* which was mostly associated as sources of violence, fanaticism, was nowhere to be found in the *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro led by KH. Mahfudz Ridwan.

On Friday (15/11) several IYP (Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage) participants followed a live-in program in *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro. It was established by a lifetime struggle and hard work of the Kyai, even by selling rice fields and other lands. According to Gus Hanif (son of the founder), “Edi Mancoro was proposed as a name for his future son, since all his children were female. ‘Edi Mancoro’ was derived from Javanese words, Edi resembles goodness, beauties, and Mancoro means shining,” he said.

This boarding school located in Bandungan Rt. 02/1 Gedangan, Tuntang District, Semarang. Although the location was quite far from the city, but visitors who wished to see the prudent Kyai would easily find it. In addition to their well-known works, “Edi Mancoro Student’s Boarding School” was, without a doubt, sounded catchy.

Kyai Mahfudz reputable eloquence when delivering a sermon

and prominent religion knowledge had made him to be very open public figure. He never set any limitation to get acquainted with everyone, regardless of their, social, economic, racial, religious, social class background, he even welcomed the fundamentalists. His personalities often made him invited to various interfaith activities, or dialogue between religious leaders in various places. His humbleness and openness as a religious leader became examples to be applied in daily basis in today's society.



KH. Mahfudz Ridwan, the founder of the Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School

KH.Mahfudz widely spread the insight to his congregation about the life of a pluralistic nation and state. His religious propaganda was undertaken by a constant call to do goodness, in a soft and sympathetic ways. It was very different from a common opinion in which *pesantren* was known as the hard-line Islamic education institutions, sources of terrorism, and so on.

His non-profit and independent principles to form the policy vision have created a long-lasting religious education center, which accommodate various communities. This was one among many

success stories from KH. Mahfudz Riwdan to alter the negative perspective in common people or a public unbalance assumption about *Pesantren*.

The Bitter Sweet of his Struggles

His mission and passage to promote a pluralistic Moslem views were not run smoothly, despite the fact that he never harmed other groups with a peaceful approach. As other common people and intellectuals' perspective on his time, Kyai was considered a religious figure that must never leave his people 24/7, succumbed in religious propaganda, and limited their acquaintances only with religious circles. KH. Mahfouz had challenged this assumption and as the effect, was not allowed to preach because he was hanging out with other religious leaders. His openness was narrowly interpreted by most of people and considered to damage his name as Islamic religious leader. Although he never experienced such controversy, he did not have the desperate passion in living his life as a plural Kyai and to this day he still had too many good friends, and friends from various backgrounds.

In his role, he also became one of the initiators of an interfaith organization movement, PERCIK (the abbreviation of Love for Humanity Nursery) in Salatiga. These two institutions consisted of *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro and PERCIK, where he had devoted himself to create a harmonious, peaceful, and prosperous interfaith community.

Hopes from a Kyai

As stated by Kyai Mahfudz, such vision & mission led this boarding school to shape students with deep insight about their religiosity, within the social and national paradigm in a pluralistic Indonesian, and also to educate, accommodate, and train the capable students in order to be able to assist the wider community. By attempting to guide students to the path of goodness (*al-birr*), and trying to direct students to the path of self glory (*karimatu an-*

nafs). Settling the morals of the students even became a top priority, as a human being based on Pancasila stated that each of our daily behavior could be based on humanity, he said “If every man were considered themselves as Pancasila person and nationalists, they should have embraced the Principals, then supposedly they show themselves as men who know the meaning of a religion and recognize as citizens of Republic of Indonesia.”

“CHURCH HAS TOUCHED THE DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITIES”

JONSWARIS SINAGA

Have you heard that Catholic Church was universal? That was what you would find in Gereja Hati Kudus Yesus Ganjuran (Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Ganjuran). It was located in Ganjuran Village, Bantul, around 20 km from Yogyakarta.

From the information obtained from Mr. Martin, one of IYP facilitators, Ganjuran Church was established in 1912 by two Dutch descendants' brothers. This church had a very different construction of any general church that I had known before. A touch of Javanese cultures was strongly presented in this church, as stated by Mr. Martin from a *tajug* (cone)-shaped roof that characterized the Javanese architecture, and supported by four teak pillars that symbolized Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as four Gospel writers. The holy altar was also built with Javanese style, and a statue of Jesus being held by the Javanese-dressed Virgin Mary.

In addition to this the temple-resemblance church building, we could see it as Prambanan miniature, with statue of Jesus in Javanese features. The temple was named after the temple of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, because the statue itself depicted Jesus while point-

ing at his own heart. From this image, we could see how the church was accommodating differences and diversity. On one side it acculturated the Javanese culture, and on the other side it also touched other religions, such as Hinduism in the presence of the Temple of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



Hati Kudus Church Ganjuran, Yogyakarta

On the left side, there was a holy water site sourced from the spring water, this holy water was also believed by the Catholics and surrounding communities to cure various diseases.

Temple of Sacred Heart of Jesus

When I visited this church, there was gamelan rehearsal. It turned out that gamelan was used to accompany the Mass song within Javanese language. A mass in Java was conducted in the church from Thursday to Sunday at 05:30 am.

Voices around the neighborhood felt very contrasting in terms of quietness and silence. Outside, motorcycle noises passing by, but as I entered the church environment, there was serenity and

quietness surrounds the atmosphere. The people having a pilgrimage in this place were not only coming from Catholics, but various faith communities. Either they were there just to look around or to pray. It had once again showed the universality of the church as an open space to welcome any visitors regardless of their personal background.



Marteen, IYP facilitator gives explanation about the Ganjuran Church



the Holy water

Not to mention, after you finished the pilgrimage rituals or visits, many sellers would offer various affordable spiritual goods very close to parking lot.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Ganjuran Church showed that the spirit of difference was something beautiful and should not be a reason for separation. With enculturation and tolerance made in this church, people in the surrounding area and even wider public were inspired to live side by side within the differences and diversities across cultures and religions.



Jesus in a temple

TEN DAYS FINDING FOR PEACE WITHIN DIFFERENCES

SUSANTO

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) was a long journey to study religions in Indonesia as well as Javanese local beliefs such as Sapta Dharma. This event was a full ten-day journey to understand the meaning of religious differences that often triggered feud and violence. The ten day trip to nurture a pluralist attitude among Indonesian youth's minds was started from Yogyakarta and moved to Klaten, Solo, Karanganyar, Salatiga, Semarang, Magelang, and back again to Yogyakarta.

At last the pilgrimage participants arrived in a small town and went to a small kampong in Salatiga suburb. Local youths and people in the neighborhood called it Kampoeng PERCIK. It was situated in the sidelines and surrounded by shady trees where many youths gathered in this place and participated to develop peace (the program called SOBAT Muda or Youth Friends).

Kampoeng PERCIK was a host as well as discussion place for IYP participants on November 14, 2013. We would discuss various real actions against violence that often occurred in the community. This was a real action that showed small groups' contribution to improve pluralistic attitude towards other religions. Groups such as SOBAT Muda (Youth Friends), Kaum Hawa (Girls Association), and

SOBAT Anak (Friends for Children) were having their own concern in a specific field to facilitate the management and regulation of the activities held. We learned a lot from a small kampong real action in society.

Living a life in a very diverse society could be a beauty but often causing the feuds when we were unable to understand it. Everyday experiences from IYP's participants from Ambon, Aceh and Poso as area of conflicts over religious differences may have resulted in the bitter experiences and made it hard to deal with the difference as feud sources. Fear to interact with others of different religions might continue to appear in every step. Through this small group, I had become aware and able to exchange stories with friends from such backgrounds.



Discussion at the Percik Salatiga

Such anxiousness to face the violence caused by religious differences in Java might be small in quantities if compared to other conflict areas in Indonesia, since people in this island allowed a free interaction with others from different religions without raising suspicion or feeling anxious about negative things. However, several cases in Central Java have shown how prejudice and fear of violence

when blending with different religions had currently emerged. For example, terrorist ambushed in Temanggung around 2009, had made my point against the Islamic religion negative. Concluding information through media broadcasting and various forms media about violence under a false accusation to certain religion was the basis of the poor judgment.

My fear and prejudice came to my mind when we entered this *Pesantren*. Negative images were shadowing me about terrorism that always triggered by the Muslims. Under an anxiety I visited two *Pesantren* in a slightly different condition namely *Pesantren Al Urwatul Wutsqo* in Karanganyar on November 12, 2013, and *Pesantren Edi Mancoro* which I visited on November 14, 2013. I and my other IYP participants spent the night in two places. Although I had through night time with worries, it faded after following various activities in the boarding school. Started from listening Al-Quran recitation, played together, and joined them in Friday prayers congregation. In addition, I could have an open discussion with the scholars and students. It had diminished my prejudice against Islam. The warmth of togetherness to share mutual stories and experiences as well as discussion forum on the issue of terrorism with friends provided a better picture of Islam.

This pilgrimage trip was not only to build a pluralistic youth with other religions, but also an interfaith passage that could build up and strengthen the faith of each IYP participant. "Studying other religions has somehow strengthening my faith" said several IYP participants in the reflection night. Learning from another religion did not bring an objective to be converted someone from their respective beliefs. From this Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage, I got to learn about various religions from primary sources, not only from books. Moreover, we could mingle and mutually shared stories with friends from other faiths free from any fear.

A ten-day journey suddenly felt like a very short trip in order to understand religious differences. Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage was a journey to fix one's viewpoint against other religions. This was an exciting journey to build peace among religions in society. Inter-

religious conflicts' reoccurrences was a mirror for us to seek peace in diversity and corrections to our inner self.

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage trip ended with peace petition arrangement voiced by young people as a proof that we love peace. The petition contained the statements about understanding the difference, elimination against violence, and perpetual love. We as young people through IYP played role in fostering peace to make Indonesia a peaceful and non-violent nation. A country with diverse cultures, races, languages, and religions into one peaceful Nation was everyone's objectives.

Regards, in Peace.

THE ‘MABRUR’ PILGRIMS

MAZIA RIZQI IZZATIKA

I still remembered vividly at the time I, together with the organizing committee and IYP team, conducted a meeting at the ICRS office around mid-November to commence the preparation of Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) program. That afternoon, we discussed all sorts of things that might happen in conducting the program. Several concerns appeared, ranging from possible topic such as Interfaith Marriage that considered excessively complex for youth group aged 20 to 28 years old, other concern was related to possible resistance and participation cancelation that might occurred from participant because we were worried they would consider this program as too ‘deviate’ from what they believed, to culmination of anxiety of what if suddenly there were some sort of radical group such as FPI (Islamic Defender Front) who would attack and disperse our activities. All of this turmoil came out due to some reasons. Activities under the theme of Interfaith or Inter-religious affairs were certainly not an issue that lightly taken for granted by certain religious groups, although during the Reformation momentum, there were many groups of people who aggressively broadcasted similar activities as a form of struggle for peace building or undertaking inter-religious harmonious communication.

Personally, there was another question lingered in my mind re-

garding this program, particularly when we looked upon the main objectives and programs' tagline; *experiencing the sacred spaces of the others*. A major question that echoed in my mind was; what one would acquire after experiencing the 'sacred spaces' of other religions? The answer of course might vary; each person definitely narrated a different interpretation based on their own experience — it depended to the extent of sense of cautionary, anxiety, suspicion and prejudice, especially for those who had been living under a homogeneous environment or had experienced a religious conflict.

The word 'pilgrimage' could connote with religiosity-spirituality soulfulness and inner faith. Each and every one of us decided to take a pilgrimage to certain sacred places because there was a deep conviction that by performing it, we would be able to enhance our qualities of faith and belief. For pilgrimage could be a powerful spiritual and religious experience, enlightening and edifying. Because of its enormity, it became singular and unparalleled, as though it was difficult to put into words; that was the feeling of experiencing the 'sacred space'. The pilgrims were called to be '*Mabrur*' once he/she had successfully achieved the expected virtues after conducting the pilgrimage. In Arab-Indonesian Al-Munawwir dictionary, it derived from the word *albirru*, meaning obedience, piety, or goodness. While terminologically, *mabrur* means the *haji* or pilgrimage's reward is accepted by Allah SWT. So how this pilgrimage process could be manifested once we were visited the sacred spaces of other religions we were so uninformed about, and without the soulful faith within it? It might result as mere spiritual vacation, just to satisfy our curiosity. Then along the way, there would be a change or shift from the pilgrimage purposes experienced by someone. Within this process, I was trying to probe the answers of such huge inquiry.

In this case, a pilgrimage to visit the 'sacred spaces' of other religions was comparable with giving a new space in someone's hall of life. For instance Zulfirman who was overshadowed by inter-religious conflicts that had occurred in his family then chose to become a man of religious tolerance. By visiting the Church, he was able to

understand that Christianity also taught kindness, unlike what he had imagined earlier. A tremendous spiritual-religious experience had taken place here.

Indeed, inviting someone from a different religion to join a pilgrimage to the sacred spaces of other religions clearly aimed different objectives compared to an individual pilgrimage based on personal preferences of faith, it was like sharing experiences with one's religiosity-spirituality. New experience could change individual perception or point of view, since it would take them from a passage they previously never felt or experienced. If someone felt the enlightenment or harvest the virtues after performing the pilgrimage, then he/she could be called as a *Mabrur* pilgrim. It was necessary to bring positive values and lessons learned from this meaningful ten days' trip such as tolerance, empathy, mutual understanding, peace, and mutual respect.

Another interesting point was the participants came from different regions with different beliefs, which came together in the same bus for ten days to visit various sacred spaces. A pilgrimage with people from different faiths had been a new experience for them. Personally, it was my first encounter with Sapta Dharma adherent, her name happened to be Tika. The experience of becoming the part of this IYP program had opened the wide a new knowledge regarding diversity of religions and beliefs that existed in Indonesia.

This program clearly underlined one verse in the Qur'an; *Lakum Dinukum Waliyadin*, the 6th verse of *surah* Al Kafiruun that means: "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." Our concern stopped within the realm of beliefs and faiths, as if the two had perfectly veiled the concern to acknowledge humanity. Buya Syafii once stated that pluralities were part of the statutes of God (*sunatullah*). Therefore, there was a great need to recognize plurality of cultures that foster awareness to integrate minority groups within the society.

As a conclusion, the pilgrimage within IYP program had created a sanctity side of the religiosity-spirituality experiences that distinct it from overall implications of pilgrimage. In the process, it

God is Everywhere

enabled the participants to develop the powerful objectives of performing pilgrimage, as well as revealing the other side of religious experiences for those who experienced it.

ON
DIALOGUE

PEACEFUL KISSES FROM A CHRISTIAN BOY

AHMAD RAFUAN ^{5*}

On one occasion, Gus Dur, The Father of the Pluralism who was also the Third President of the Republic of Indonesia, once stated, “It does not matter any religion or ethnicities, if you can do something good for everyone, people never ask what your religion is.”

I was one of 28 young people selected to participate in the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) program. It was a program that offered valuable experience for young people to make a pilgrimage to the sacred places of various religions. This program was the initiative of some of the scholarship alumni who won the United States Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund competition in 2013 sponsored by the U.S. government and worked with the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) as well as other stakeholders. Participants of this program were young people having interest in the field of peace who came from various regions in Indonesia. Unlike the other participants, who were mostly from conflict areas such as Poso, Ambon, and Manislor Kuningan. I was from Palangkaraya, a peaceful town rarely exposed by the National Media.

^{5*}Student in Islamic Civil Law Program Department Hukum of STAIN Palangka Raya, Alumni of Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage 2013

As the name suggests, Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage, further highlighted the inner reflections from experiencing the sacred places of various religions' visitation in Indonesia. The youths were invited to enter the "sacred spaces" of other religions to be able to understand the others. Given such experiences, these young people were expected to better appreciate individual differences and to respond wisely to it.



IYP Participants listen to the Buddhist leaders at Syailendra Buddhist College Salatiga

Entering the "sacred spaces" of other religions were not limited mere activities like visiting the sites, but direct interactions toward the others from different religion. This interaction took place whenever the participants interacted during the day-to-day togetherness in this program. Since the beginning of my participation, I had started to practice my interaction models when I shared a room with Agus, a Hindu, during the home-stay at Gadjah Mada University. Also when we started traveling and visiting sacred places of various religions spread across several cities. We repeatedly had to live in different places, and that was also my chance to start a dialogue and to share the experience with friends of different religions.

The success of this program envisaged at the time when barri-

ers of limitation melted down in our friendship. We no longer saw religion of others to establish friendships. It could even be said to be among the participants IYP had established the basis of human brotherhood. I found my comrades, my friends, my brothers from different faith through this program. Catholic Jons and Edward, a Protestant Ade, a Hindu Agus, a Buddhist Susanto, Tika from Sapta Dharma, even an Ahmadiyya Abdullah, as well as other friends whom I could not mention one by one, they were always faithful to share joy and sorrow during the ten days following the IYP program.

A sense of community and kinship grew across faith while we spent ten days full of adventurous yet meaningful experience to seek the meaning of peace in diversity. I and the other participants already considered each other like family. In fact there was one situation where we really had a new family. During live-in, or live in a new family's house from GKJ Sidomukti's member. On our fourth day since my arrival in Yogyakarta, 14 November 2013, we were visiting the Salatiga, where we built interfaith family relationships based on humanitarian grounds. IYP Muslim participants stayed for a day at the family's home of church Sidomukti's member, while the non-Muslims lived in *Pesantren* Edi Mancoro.

On that chilly Thursday afternoon, we were headed to GKJ Sidomukti to meet new family that would take us through knowledge's boundaries, which was a new family of different religions. This was not my first experience of having a new host family of different religions, a few months earlier I had also lived in a Christian host family. However, there was an event that eventually would make me finally understand the meaning of kindness and sincerity, regardless of their religious background. This was the insight I had been trying to look for in my pilgrimage.

When we arrived at GKJ Sidomukti, the committee determined that I would stay in the home of Mr. John Sutimin's family. Mr. Timin, that was how I called him, came to GKJ Sidomukti by himself. Before we went to his house, we talked a few things first in order to try to adapt to each other. His house was located in Kenteng Village, in the corner of Salatiga town. At 6 pm I arrived there escorted by

other GKJ Sidomukti church members by a car since he asked me to, while he went home first. I did not know what his reason was.

The house was simple, but full of meaning. I was greeted by Mr. Timin who lived with his wife, two sons, and an in law, and three years' old grandchild. They were all good people. First thing they asked me was whether I had taken a bath. Since I said I had not, he told me to take a bath first. After I finished, he had prepared a room for me, even they also prepared the praying tools there! Really I was very impressed with the nice treatment that they gave.

That night we spent a lot of time discussing various subjects. The subject on Palangkaraya and Salatiga city got most portions in our talks, ranging from geographic background to the main livelihood of the people. We did not talk about religion that much, just a few basic things. It was clear for them since we did not have any interest to interrogate the religious contents of our counterparts. Even with Daniel, Mr. Timin's second son, we turned out talking much about football.

Mr. Alih is Mr. Timin's first son, and the older brother from Daniel. He was married with a 3-year-old son, a small boy named Kristo. There was a special memory when we talked about Kristo.

From the beginning of my arrival, Kristo was the most enthusiastic. When we first stepped our feet in their house, Kristo began to build his curiosity about me. I gave my best smile while greeting him at our first meeting. Soon enough, Kristo became close to me. He always sat on my lap every time I was home. While having an occasional chat, he would run here and there, hugged and kissed my cheek. My, my, what a sweet little boy. Kristo always asked a lot of things about me. I answered his question as I hugged him while sitting on my lap. This situation was certainly weird enough for some people, because it was the first time we met, including with Mr. Timin, Kristo's grandfather. Until at one point, he asked Kristo, "son, don't you afraid of this uncle?" Instead of moving away, Kristo gave me a hug and kiss on the cheek, and said "no, Grandpa." His wife continued, "but you just met him." And he ensured them, "do not be afraid anyway Grandma" in a cute way, a typical of little boy. "Why

won't you be afraid?" she continued. "He is good, not a bad person" Kristo said, getting up from my lap and took his toy. "Kristo, where did you know if this uncle is not a bad person?" his Grandma returned to ask. Kristo came up to me and touched my face, "uncle, uncle, are you a bad person?" he asked with a straight face. "What do you think, Kristo?" I said diplomatically. "You're really good, Uncle" he said and once again showered me with kisses on the cheek, and I kissed his cheek repeatedly. It was a strange feeling that was raised when he said that. "Am I a good person? Is it true that I'm a good person" such question kept recurring in my heart.

That night, I kept on pondering my last conversation with Kristo. An innocent child who did not look at me based on my religion. If he were aware that I was a Muslim, would he stay that way? Would he even care if he knew I was a Muslim while he was Christian? He did not ask even once about what my religion was, but whether I was a good person, instead. I was drowning in my fantasy as if I were flying throughout various parts of the earth, reminded me of many conflicts occurred in the name of religion, and the discriminations executed in name of religious differences. But that night, a young man reminded me that I was a good person, good enough to get a peaceful kiss from a Christian child.

THE TIME WHEN BEING DISTINCTIVE IS BEAUTIFUL

RIZKIA AMELIA SANIA

Recently, the Jakarta Post released sad news for anyone who considered themselves as minority. Civil Administration Amendments Act of 2004 which was predicted to provide a solution to religious diversity in Indonesia turned to bring an institutionalized discrimination in a country that admitted having a foundation of living within the principle of unity in diversity. This showed that intolerance in Indonesia did not only appear among its citizens, but was also increasingly strengthened by six official religions which were approved by the Government, and completely neglected the group of beliefs.

Such act of intolerance supported violence in the name of religion, and generally performed by the religious majority against minority group. Setara Institute (an NGO focused on religious freedom and pluralism) recorded a sum of 243 religion-based violence cases had been occurred until November. Meanwhile, the Wahid Institute founded by former President Abdurrahman Wahdid, reported that religious intolerance had escalated for the last four years. In 2012, 274 cases of violence were recorded, increased from 267 cases in 2011. Even though I am a Muslim, inevitably I have to admit that radical Islamic groups, with or without the government-

tal interventions, performed most destructive and violent action.

A few days ago, I tried to recall vivid memories happened on November 10 to 20 where I have gone through a meaningful 10 days program in Indonesia Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage 2013 (IYP). With the rest of 27 selected participants from various representatives of religions and beliefs group all over Indonesia, we were joined together, engaged in a dialogue, and visited various Indonesian religions' sacred places. Surprisingly, no gap existed even though we were not coming from the same religious background. In fact, I became acquainted with one Ahmadiyya friend, which obviously had been announced as a forbidden cult by Suryadharma Ali, Minister of Religion Affairs.



Amel, IYP Participant

Honestly, I was a Muslim who had the same view with Muslim majority who considered Ahmadiyya as a forbidden cult. But my curiosity beat the ego to finally break the wall when we followed *Padang Bulan* (Moonlight) sermons delivered by Cak Nun, a prominent religious leader, with interactive discussions after the session.

We were both not alone in this event, four other friends (one is Sapta Dharma follower) also joined in.

That night left a very deep impression in my mind, and it even stroke me more now to the second I read news from the Post. What they wrote there had assured me that being a minority was not free and easy to live with. I could not imagine how it felt to be shunned and raided by a group of people while conducting a religious meeting. However, hearing their stories truly disturbed my sense of “humanity”, and I believed everyone would feel the same way if they heard the story.

Indeed, power was inevitable when we became part of the majority. Ironically, we sometimes forgot that majority depended on our embedded identity. We would not be a majority in every time and place. There would always be moments when we would be a minority with the same identity we wore. As a consequence, a minority could not demand the equal power as easily as what the majority did.

That was what I felt when I followed IYP’s second day trip, where we visited 4 religious sacred places in a day. There were the Hindu Dharma College in Klaten, Li Dang Pagoda, Dharma Sundara Vihara in Surakarta, and finally *Pesantren* Al ‘ Urwatul Wutsqo in Karanganyar.

The sun was setting, and for us, the Muslims, there would be no other opportunities for prayer except in the Vihara Dharma Sundara. We did not enter Klaten during noon, and we could not pray at the temple for the scarcity of space. Meanwhile, it took more time to reach for the boarding school. Finally, we prayed in the sacred Buddhist building complex, Vihara Dharma Sundara. There was no mosque or prayer mat, for sure. We only found a bare floor tile, approximately 3 x 3 meters on the second floor that was under construction.

Heavy rain, lightning, and strong winds blew my praying clothes and wetted the floor since there was no wall there. Finally, we decided to move on a quite spacious surface on the stairs. With a customized position, narrow and dusty, we tried fervently to per-

form a combination of both midday and late noon prayer.

My lifetime experience of becoming a minority did not just stop there. I also went for the live-in program with Church congregation's family. Church songs played in a stereo tape filled in very corner of the house where I lived, even if it was only for one night. Unexpectedly, my Church family host was kind enough to give me a bedroom and prayer tools, and a set of turquoise prayer clothes and a mat. I swore it made me "forgot" that I was a minority in this house. Moreover, it has broken my assumption that making pray in a non-Muslim house with so many different religious symbols would distress the depth of my rituals. Perhaps the Fajr (dawn) prayer was my most memorable, since the chant of choral songs floating through the room early in the morning and it actually made me cry when I recited verses from my mini, holy Qur'an I brought everywhere.

From there, I really learned a lot to feel the position of becoming a "minority" in certain places with my background as a Muslim. I was fully aware since I had been living in Java as an island with largest Muslim communities in Indonesia; I remained as "majority." But on a certain level, I could feel how hard it was to stay afloat and keep my faith as a "minority." Left alone to "force" them to follow wills of my minority group (such as providing a decent, clean place for prayer) since I had to takes extra effort for merely conducting my rights to perform religious ritual, compared to when I was in my casual neighborhood.

Perhaps my short experience was 'nothing' compared to other people's experiences when living in secular countries, especially with Muslims as a minority such as Myanmar or Angola where Muslim women became the "object" of discrimination. But the point was that the opportunity to feel the minority position had created wider spaces for tolerance in my heart than ever before. Additionally, I learned to further appreciate other people's considerations and to think clearer on what sort of actions I should take in addressing the differences in various circumstances and conditions.

Nobody wished to be discriminated against, and everyone wanted his or her aspiration to be fulfilled and heard. So, suppos-

edly, there was no one who wanted to become a minority, but it was given instead of a personal choice, and it could not be avoided from any social environment. The clash appearing between the two gaps would be easily triggering a conflict. Conflict emergence could be prevented with breaking the boundaries between majority and minority. All these good deeds and mutual understanding as shown by the church family could make me “overlooked” my position as a minority in the house.

Thus, discrimination and violence would never bring any benefits to any parties. Unconsciously, we choose which identity to wear in various places. For the majorities, there is nothing wrong with getting out of the comfort zone every once in a while, and try to be in the shoes of minority with perceivable identities. There are always lessons to be learned for addressing the differences that should not be by force. Becoming a majority does not mean that they have to show the power and making the minority filled with constant fear. With this kind of understanding, it will come to a mutual understanding where the real difference is beautiful and to have a more colorful life should not forced us to be equal.

For my closing statement, I would like to quote a sentence from Turkish Muslim Minority lived in Wina, Austria, in *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (99 Lights in European Sky) novel written by Hanum Rais:

“one day you will learn a lot about how to behave in a country where you have to be a minority. But, from my own experiences through the years, I don’t have to be driven by my emotional drive when I’m facing unpleasant moment in my heart.”

With peaceful regards,

05.00 WIB

Yogyakarta, 5 December 2013

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE UNITES US (ME AND THE OTHERS)

ZULFAHMI BACHTIAR

Enrolling as a participant of the Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) back then, I was preparing myself to follow the whole series of events. One of the agenda, and my first-ever, was home-stay at the church's family. With my background as a Muslim, a home-stay program in church members brought all my distinguishable traits— ethnicities, racial, cultural, and religion. This was not a casual situation for me, a lot of things stirred up in mind and conscience before we finally left for Javanese Christian Church (GKJ) Sidomukti located in Salatiga, Central Java.

Everything felt like a mystery for me— started from thinking about what would I experience at their house, and I was filled with worries since I did not recognize who they really were. What would happen afterwards was a real moment in my life and many things were going through my mind. I was wondering about the ways they would provide the meals. My mind was alarmed, wondered whether the food is halal or haram, let alone the utensils usage. Although I did not understand many things about Christianity, one thing for sure was they did not have any prohibition against ham consumptions or keeping a dog inside of their house. On the contrary, what

my religion had taught me as a Muslim was resulted from childhood teachings and religious preaching, and it shaped my anticipation on how dogs and pigs were included in the category of “*Najis Mughallazah*” (Heavy Impurity).

This was written in the Scripture very clearly.

“Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars...”{Al-Maidah: 3}

From the above verse, everything related to pigskin, meats, oils, fats, and other forbidden substances were not to be eaten and utilized for any purposes. Another Hadith upon this matter was also narrated by Imam Muslim from Abu Hurayrah who ordered to wash the vessel from dog licks for seven times, and one of the washing process had to be mixed with soil, as an indication of the dogs’ classification as heavy impurity.

While pondered about this verse and hadith, more things were coming up in my mind and stirring up there, and I tried to ask on this volatile matter to other IYP participants. Masduri from Sumenep, Madura, who would also stay in the congregation family, commented “we may eat what is given by them even though there will be a slight excess of pig or dog substances left in their cooking or eating utensils, as long as we are not aware or see it.” Apparently I was not satisfied with his answer, so I went back to ask another Muslim friend named Malik Aminatus Sariroh from Borneo a.k.a. Sari. She argued that “we are certainly forbidden to use utensils with swine or dog’s excess, so better give them a good reason so they won’t be offended, like just tell them that we are fasting.” After her statement, I started to calm down.

I was hoping time would run fast, even though clockwise clicked on their regular rotations. Finally, Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) participants from Muslim background arrived in Javanese Christian Church (GKJ) Sidomukti. I started to walk and enter the church;

some parents were ready to pick up their host children from different beliefs, to be brought to their house. Each participant would be called one by one, along with the names of their host parents. Shortly thereafter, my name was summoned along with my host name, Mrs. Sutardjo. But Ery, the son of Mrs. Sutardjo, picked me up instead.

Before leaving the church, we took time to pray according to our own beliefs. In our journey back to the mysterious house, many things were raging and pushing inside of me. The house of Mrs. Sutardjo was not too far from GKJ Sidomukti so it took a short time to go there. They greeted me in a very friendly ways, and it was the thing that made me start to feel calm though I remained concerned about their treatment later on. They told me to sit and asked me to introduce myself.

In a brief introduction, they then asked me, “do you want to get a shower first or eat?” I answered, “I want to take a bath.” They continued, “do you want warm or cold water?” I replied “I want a warm bath.” Mrs. Sutardjo immediately rushed to her kitchen. Shortly, Ery came to me and said hot water is ready.

Before entering the bathroom I was asked by Mrs. Sutardjo, “what do you want to eat, Son?” Before I answered to that question, she continued to probe, “do you want *soto* or fried rice?”, and I spontaneously replied, “fried rice, please, Ma’am.” In the bathroom I tried to calm myself and grow my fearlessness, and hoped that my words and actions did not offend her.

After a shower and changed my clothes, I walked out of the room and met Ery that had been waiting for me. My heart was beating for my curiosity, whether Mother used the kitchen appliance to cook swine or dog before, and in my heart I prayed, “God, please keep me away from unclean food and beverage, and keep me from the deeds you dislike.”

Finally, I gathered my courage to ask things that made me feel uncomfortable. I tried to convey it carefully so they would not be offended. I began with a prologue that Islam did not forbid us to eat meat, but there were some animals that we were forbidden to eat,

namely dogs and swine. We could not even eat from plates, spoons, and kitchen appliances that formerly utilized to cook dog or swine, and it should be clean according to Islamic law as described in the last verse.

With soft tone and a humble smile, Ery answered that their family did not like to eat pork, though sometimes they eat dog. Hearing such statement, it made me shock again with mind bounced to and fro like chicks who were confused to find the hen. However, shortly afterwards, he went on his word, "Don't worry, we understand that and we never ate dog by using our own plate because it was usually take away package and we eat it immediately from its wrapper, that we no longer need to cook and using our kitchen equipment." His answer relieved and extinguished these burning queries inside of me.

Chicken fried rice is ready to serve. Reciting "Bismillahirrahmanirrohim", I tried to cast away the doubts and started the dinner with Ery. It looked really good, but somehow my stomach could not agree with it and felt nauseous. I tried to hold back and kept it unexpressed. My worries had been strongly attached in my mind and no matter how hard I tried to remove it, it was still difficult to get rid of the uncomfortable feeling.

The dinner with Ery was somehow run in a very frozen situation, and I tried to melt it down with a conversation on Islam and Christianity. We exchanged knowledge and understanding of our respective religion starting from theological concepts, to perception of inter-religious tolerance in Indonesia. Time passed by and it showed 22:00 pm where I had my permit to leave the room. I was very grateful to pass that worrying dinnertime quite well, although I was wondering what about breakfast moment.

The ambience of quietness made it easier for me to contemplate over my fate at that moment, and to be aware that I had actually lived in the church family and stayed with them. However, I was sure that wherever I was, God would always be with His true devotees.

The clock showed 04.30 am and I rushed out of bed to perform

my dawn prayer as an obligation of a Muslim, while the rest of Sutardjo's family members were still having their sweet dreams. After conducted the prayer, I heard the sound of cutting knife from the kitchen, I immediately came towards. I stood about 4 feet behind Mrs. Sutardjo who apparently was making breakfast menu and boiling a hot water on a pot.

I went back to the room after watching her for a while, and picked up my bath supplies. Later I knew that she boiled the water for my bath. After got out of the shower, I was quickly freshen up and packed up my stuffs. Mrs. Sutardjo's distinctive voice called me from the outside and invited me to have a breakfast, she was there, too. Then I got out of the room while carrying a traditional cake (*putu kacang* and *bannang-bannang*) with typical souvenir from Makassar (Phinisi boat). After enjoying the noodles made by this middle-aged woman that was very warm-hearted, I tried to reciprocate by giving my presents I had prepared from home to Mrs. Sutardjo and Ery. I realized it was nothing compared to their kindness. Not to forget, we were also capturing some moments with my pocket camera.

It was 07.30 a.m. (West Indonesia Time) and it indicated that I should say goodbye and probably would never come back to a house that was no longer mysterious to me. Mrs. Sutardjo gave me plenty of foods and even prepared a lunchbox. Before leaving, she hugged and kissed me. She shed her tears and I was suddenly feeling blue for this farewell.

It was only a night for us, but a brief dialogue with Ery had made us better understand the intricacies of each religion, so my worries had turned into convenience. So many lessons learned. Mrs. Sutardjo and her family treated me very well like their own son. This was a very memorable experience in my life. I considered her as a Mother, and I took Ery as my uncle. I felt indebted and feel guilty for holding prejudice against them.

The home-stay program had really taught me to be a wiser person, to understand more and accept diversities. I thought the differences between religions, namely Islam and Christian or another

religion was nothing to be feared of. Instead, we should consider it as things that must be mutually understood or accepted the differences. By becoming aware of the changing understanding within me, I had come to the point of what it meant as interfaith dialogue and real action of tolerance that should be practiced and through first hand experiences.

Therefore, let us stop prejudice and discard negative thoughts before really understands what we actually feared for. Let us put interfaith dialogue as a tradition in the life of the nation for the sake of harmony between *Me and the Others*.

It is better if we take difference as something we should understand to be able to accept one another, and take it as something to be conceived for mutual acceptance and understanding the difference.

AN INTERFAITH PASSAGE: HARMONY IN DIFFERENCES

VINO RUHUNLELA

Our ten day program had finally arrived at the seventh day. There were lots of valuable experiences gained while I participated in this activity. The journey back to my hometown was not only occupied with a sense of fatigue, but also brought so many meaningful memories of my Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) colleagues. At the seventh day, we visited one of the Catholic Church in Yogyakarta. Green rice fields and a blue sky accompanied us on the way to Ganjuran Church. Shelia on 7 (famous band from Yogyakarta) songs played to accompany our way there.

This Roman Catholic Church was known as the Church of Jesus Sacred Heart located in Sumbermulyo village, Bambanglipuro, Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It looked very much accentuated with Javanese design elements with site compositions that resemble the *Pura* (Temple). I was suddenly interested to immediately go there and to look into the Church area and Temple of Jesus Sacred Heart Ganjuran, Semarang Bishopric. This building which was established by Dutch architects van Oyen J YH looked so great, and it symbolized the Church spirit of social-oriented and to love humanities (*rerum Navarum*), which was also valued by the Smutzer

brothers.

Looking at Jesus with a Javanese Face

The church complex was enhanced by the construction of a temple called the Temple of Jesus Sacred Heart with reliefs of lotus flower and statues of Jesus Christ wearing Javanese attires decorated the terrace. We could see a statue of the Virgin Mary with her Son Jesus Christ in similar suits. Aside of becoming a place of pilgrimage mass execution, it also offered a Javanese style interior that was very much attached to its culture.



In the area of the Church and the Temple, we could see a building that designed with a blend among European, Hindu, and Javanese style. European influences could be viewed from a cross-shaped outline when viewed from the air, while a touch Javanese style could be seen in *tajug* (cone) shaped roof as a site for praying. Four teak pillars that symbolized four Gospel writers support the roof: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Meanwhile Jesus himself was described as having a similar hair to a Hindus priest. We could find

the place to have holy water, which was located on left side of the temple. Some IYP participants also had a holy water and kneeled or sat in cross-legged position in front of the temple and the statue of Jesus Christ to pray and to recite their wishes.

Interfaith Harmonization

I was instantly falling for admiration to see how diverse IYP participants were, such as Jons and Erich who were Catholic, Puji and Agus as Hindus, at that time they were in the middle of raising their graces and wishes to God Almighty in various different ways. For instance, Puji chose to meditate since the air and the soft wind-blown were very fresh. Agus chose to sit cross-legged and to pray; Jons and Erich chose to kneel and to pray.

I had never seen such stunning scenery before. This site of pilgrimage was appropriately prepared for a variety of religious pilgrimage and prayed to the God the Creator. To maintain harmony among different faiths, it did not necessarily have to be carried out by lengthy dialogue that requires careful preparation and complicated phases. It was also unnecessary to consider creating peace through provocative message from the streets with mass people as a passive listener. Seeing how friends of different faiths could pray in the same place on a firsthand was really touching to our inner concise towards interfaith harmony.

Perhaps my very first memorable, sweet, experience during the IYP activities scenery was somewhat far from normality to some people. To observe how some of the participants prayed together on their own way would not just teach us about tolerance, but would also educate us to establish a perspective to view pluralism as a unity. Sarcastic, but it reminded us how special our life was.

Signs of cultural tradition degradation that included religious moral values to outline the considerate assertiveness and spirit to transform various conditions were needed to be addressed. But reflecting from pilgrimage processions among different religions and cultures had provided me new hope to grow back the values of love

and practice it when we returned to each respective region. If we were living the harmonious community life, Indonesia would be featured through its prettiest side. Indonesia required a long-term contribution of dialogue and impartial cross-cultural space.

A Consensus within the Differences

Currently, religion-based violence was relatively increasing where no one could reach a consensus within the differences as the source of problem. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you* (John 15:12). A piece of Biblical verse reflected the importance of love amongst differences. The difficulty of accepting differences distracted this nation away from future advancement. We were stuck in zero mutual respect behavior with inter-religious violence as an inevitable proof.

Indeed, the difference had been destined by God, for us to love one another. *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him* (1 John 4:16). Religion was not about believing something, but how to mutually behave in an ethical demeanor. With love, there was no excuse for those in power to hurt the weak.

A HOME WITH(OUT) WALLS

GERALDI DWI RIZNDI KONGKOLI

I had decided to choose this topic with a clear reason and consideration. What would be an interesting point to be presented in this article? About making new friends? Experience in a new place? Or maybe even a glimpse of romance? These topics were all very interesting to be written, indeed! However, this time I chose a different topic, departing from a question, whether we ever momentarily thought about shifting our focus from the important things - (which was classical/pragmatic) and gave a little bit of space (appreciation) to something that also had a significant value, but for some people was less valuable? Many of us, including me every now and then, tended to forget these “little things”, when we were in a situation or encounter something bigger, or something with more advantages.

Double Functions: between Functions and Realities

This writing would stand from a point of relations between the emerging function and the occurring realities. I realized it might sound odd to some people to realize that I used a car or a bus rather as a perspective. Bus was widely and essentially functioned as public transportation, but the unique fact here was the bus we rode through *Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage* (IYP) trip was functioned more

than that, it had a dual function. This bus turned out as our resting place from very dense routines, and the most important and very interesting function was a space for dialogue among participants who came from diverse backgrounds. For me, personally, this bus was very important!

When I was on the bus, I could directly interact and communicate with my brothers and sisters of IYP participants, considering that we spent a lot of time on the bus. The bus was my home! In fact it became a home for all of us.



Ade, IYP Participant from Poso

Function and the reality of taking places could be an undeniable event, and I interpreted it that way. Although I and the rest of participants had chances to rest in various places and stopover provided by the committee, but we spent a lot of time together on the bus and that was the reality that happened! More than just a single aspect, but also the function of fact that adjustment occurred on the field.

A Communal House; Leaving the Comfort Zone

An ideal home concept was a building utilized as a residential

space. A home was functioned as a place to live, work, eating, sleeping, and so on. As a building, house was expected to be bounded by walls and a roof, and equipped with door as entrance and exit ways, and windows that served for air exchange, as well as decorations and furnishings that made it increasingly appealing (depends on owner's taste and needs). Once it was understood, an ideal residence would be convenient enough to be a home.

The hardest thing for me personally, was when I had been constructed and patterned in such a way that the house was as described as an ideal space as abovementioned definition. The concept of ideal home consisted of comfort. It was common that sometimes that we faced a certain hardship to leave our comfort zone. I sometimes even wondered whether I were courageous enough to move or stay according to the program agenda, with all these diverse background and the house atmosphere we had been living all these times?

Although it was very difficult, it had now become a logical consequence to adapt with. To leave our ideal home and to accept the fact that it was now a "home" that we lived in—and it was everything but a concept we had accepted as a comfort zone. Our current home had no wall made from a mixture of stone and sand, our current home was made of iron frame designed as a bus. We were trying hard to "attempt" in order to be comfortable and survive within in, and the evidence was we were able to undergo any process, proven by what we were in a current situation. Now, was it true that an ideal home should be as described above, or should it have more functionality and even contain a very different one or even multifunction?

An important point that turned out to be the final conclusion is that we were all capable of leaving the comfort zone for very meaningful and useful purposes.

ON
PEACE

FAREWELL STEREOTYPING, WELCOME TOLERANCE FOR PEACE

ANNUR INDAH SARI

I did not know since when I had a negative stereotype, but this hatred within me when hearing other religion than Islam, had been growing inside of me. But if everyone was just willing to keep their ego, peace was only a dream away. We needed to open our eyes once in a while to understand the meaning of religious tolerance in life that could spread over peace viruses throughout Indonesia.

With my IYP participations, I could feel how my soul grew a bigger tolerance with non-Muslim devotees. Through IYP, I was given the opportunity to be able to visit the sacred spaces of other religions as well as to get an understanding of their teachings. One of these teachings was Confucianism, which always encouraged others to do good starting from family as the smallest societal unit. Any teaching to encourage human doing good deeds would surely harvest good fruits. If people did evil, then surely only bad effects would come from his bad deeds. That was my ultimate insights from Confucianism.

In addition, I felt disturbed by a Christian evangelist; I was

burned in anger to hear that word, let alone the victim of this missionary usually came from Islam. Sometimes I blamed myself for failing to help them and to spare my time to get together with my lower to middle class' brothers and sisters. I felt ashamed to lose a competition against them, who always practiced the Christianity values by doing good deeds regardless of who and what religion one might have. From all that, I had learned tolerance, and to understand that what we considered as bad thing, was not necessarily bad as a whole.

From various field visits agenda, I found an important lesson on how every religion teachings encouraged human to do good deeds, none taught doing bad deeds. But sometimes we saw a contradicting reality in a wide range of religion-based conflicts. Meanwhile, if we further explored it, everything merely came from a creature called the devil. As Qur'an stated that Satan would always create hostility among humans until doomsday came. We could compare this to a wedding which main objective was to achieve happiness. In reality, we could found domestic violence cases took place. Though the husband said he never meant it that way, devil constantly tempted the sons of Adam with no exception, to be hostile to one another, mutually suspicious and ultimately triggered a conflict, until bloodshed occurred everywhere.

From this point, we could take a lesson on how we should be practicing tolerance and mutual respect for one another regardless of who he/she was. We lived in a world solely to create and to spread kindness and peace as God's messenger, a *Kholifah* (leader) mandated to preserve the earth and to worship God. Eliminate the negative stereotypes against other religions, and create your peace among religions and beliefs regardless your background, because we are equally human in natures.

IYP (Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage): Peace Revitalizations in Indonesia

IYP which stands for Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage was an in-

ter-faith dialogue among Indonesian youth with Elis Anis Zuliati as the team leader and she was also the staff who worked in the ICRS (Indonesian Consortium for Religion Studies) at the University of Gadjah Mada Graduate School, Yogyakarta. IYP activity was held from 10 to 20 November 2013 in four cities; Yogyakarta, Solo, Salatiga, and Magelang. The particular activity was various visitations to religious sanctuaries including churches, temples, monasteries, pagoda, and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). It was expected that this program would function as Hajj (pilgrimage), or the spiritual passage to the sacred spaces that would make a person finds enlightening meanings of religious tolerance. The event was attended by 28 youths from Sabang to Merauke who had been through the selection process. Selected participants were assessed based on their applications and preference was given to applicants from conflict areas such as Ambon, Poso, and so on. These youths came from various religious backgrounds, namely Islam, Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, and Beliefs Group.

IYP revitalization activities could generate peace revitalizations among youth because lately there were a lot of conflicts between one another in the name of religion. It was actually inappropriate to address this conflict as religion-based, because religion itself had the goal of bringing peace missions and kindness instead of mere conflict and violence. It was men who was misdirected from essential teachings and finally put the blame over religion.

Indeed, if everyone could experience spiritual passage through one sacred site to another, then they would surely feel peace and tranquility as the essence religion mission instead of violence and conflict. By experiencing various spiritual passages, we were more likely to become more tolerant than someone who simply understood the teachings of their own religion without even comparing it to other religions' teachings. That was why they became radical and fanatical about their own religion. In other words, experience could alter someone's experience to become tolerant, while a sole understanding would only make someone radical.

IYP activity clearly brought a positive impact on peace missions

in Indonesia through selected youths who had been carefully assessed and it was expected that they could be the real “Agent of Peace” within their respective areas after program completion. O, youth, be you the “Agent Of Peace” which widely spreads the peace viruses that will make Indonesia become a country of love, peace, tranquility, safe, and a role model to other countries.

THE POWER OF DIALOGUE: **SPREADING OUT PEACE DEBUNKING PREJUDICE**

GUNAWAN

I felt very proud to be selected as one among 28 participants of IYP, which came from various provinces in Indonesia—from Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Java, Ambon, Bali, and South-east Nusa. I remembered vividly one night when I received the first information on IYP from Facebook group, and I filled in the form with all my hearts overnight. As a local youth living in the central point of Tomini Strait, Poso, there was a certain non implied responsibilities for me to always share, learn, and exchange experiences with new people in various different places. So my life would not be wasted for me, for other people, and my beloved native land Bumi Sintuwu Maroso Poso.

Nearly half of my lifetime, I had been living in the middle of conflicts in the name of religion, when a horizontal conflict between Moslem and Christian communities sparked a Decade ago in Poso, I also grew up with the complexities of such situation, even though it all had started long before that, when I had to went through my parents' divorce because of different religion background. My Moslem mother and Christian father were separated because for common people, marital bond between two people with different reli-

gion was forbidden. It then grew my antipathy against any religion affairs and I had this state of mind whereas interfaith dialogue was such a waste of time since it was impossible to bring it to discussion forum, for it would leave nothing but disagreement. Human who considered themselves as religious being would relentlessly looking for the truth to legitimate their faith, and tolerance values could not be built by mere cognitive comprehensions. Instead, there should be a massive awareness building that every individual was free to exercise their freedom of religion, and my inclinations of apathy had blocked me to further learn about my own religion since I was afraid that I would become extremely fanatic and would not open up myself towards other identities, or even to challenge the existence of other human beings. However, after I had encountered and spent 10 days with friends from all over Indonesia in this program, particularly those who came from conflict areas or considered as minority belief groups such as Ahmadiyah and Sapta Dharma, or with my Muslim fellows (as was I raised in a relatively homogeny environment), I felt like I was able to reflect within my deepest soul to find how this interaction we had been built through this friendship had led me to understand why I could interpret differences as harmonization.

I remembered when I and some friends always felt upset in any discussion or Q & A session during a meeting at a time when we visited some sacred spaces, we felt terrorized by the time constraints that sometimes made us feel quite unsatisfied with the described answer to each questions we had raised on forum. I was aware because it was really just the actual dialogue established among our fellow participants with laughter as an interlude when we passed round the time machine that brought us moving from one place to another. Now I could have a clearer concept of nirvana, reincarnation, and karma from our Buddhist friend Susan, or Agus, a Hindu from Kediri, or to understand the silver linings on Protestant and Catholic given by Ade, the priest candidate and Edward as East Nusa natives, or through woman's perspective in Islam and culture from Era, a girl from Padang, and Amel from Sumbawa. Flexibility and initiative to start out the interactions then became the strength

of dialogue that had produced more than an understanding, but further, a sense of individual consciousness as part of an important element in life cycle's complexities. That was harmonization.

The power of dialogue was thriving every time we exchanged ideas with great, new, people particularly Brother Irfan Amalee as founder of Peace Generation who gave us loads of new lesson learned that kept buzzing in mind. First value I received was how could we understand the difference if we never even recognized our own self? That statement prompted my self-examination and made me further understand my life issues. It was not religion that became a fundamental problem of my parents' divorce, but social factors and mental unpreparedness of my parents' extended families to receive this kind of relationship. Sounds simple, but I realized that was my turning point for stop blaming on religion as the culprit, but rather to understand that we were stuck in the narrow mindset of religious values' interpretation. Moreover, a chance to meet with interfaith couples in a dialogue session in GKJ Sidomukti had strengthen me that the loving couple between two different religion was a consequence of life diversity, and our challenge was to get people to realize that it was actually the greatest graces, as what I had quote here from a movie cin(T)a *"why there is difference if God wished to be worshiped in a single way? That's why God made LOVE. To unite the difference."*

Another value that I obtained was how we should love peace between religions if we were not even capable of recognizing our own religion? Felt like I had a hard slap on my cheek, my life experiences had been leading me to become an apathetic persona against religion. I had to stop coping with a blunder mind, I had to have a strong faith in order to understand each other's religions, and this 10 (ten) days process was actually had encouraged me to get steady as a Muslim and I became convinced to choose ISLAM as my truly way of life. While in the context of Poso, I saw that we had overcome the context of inter-religious problems because the current problem had been developing to a different level, though it was inevitable that the violence victims' experience and trauma

along conflicts period had become an inherited sub consciousness among Poso communities as either direct or indirect impact of inter-religious violence. This, in particular, had made the power of dialogue between religions and faiths as a pivotal role to eliminate any prejudice, in order to continue the keep and strengthen peace process that had been happening in Poso.

When I and other IYP participants pledged to spread the “Peace Virus” upon our returning to each community, I realized that we had come to form a new consciousness and initiative, constructed from our learning process and dialogue that could overcome taboo and highly secretive things about interfaith and religious beliefs on the IYP program to answer a lot of anxiety, eliminat negative prejudices, and also shape the participants’ characters towards diversity of identities, tolerance, and peace. It all started from a very personal point of view, to a very large social context. At last, allow me to send my gratitude for the hard work from a marvelous team, especially the Committee, Mrs. Elis as Program Leader, our host parent in Salatiga, religious sites, colleges, and NGOs we had visited, as well as the American Embassy in Indonesia, which had fully supported the program implementation. I am very optimistic that major changes will take place immediately, since I am the part “peace virus” that will be spread out by 28 committed young people as peace actor in society.

“Understanding tolerance is more than a theory, but a true interaction”

7th Semester Student in English Department, University of Sintuwu Maroso Poso
IYP year 2013 participant from Poso, Central Sulawesi.

REINVENTING THE MISSING PEACE IN A GODLY NATION

ZULFIRMAN RAHYANTEL

I wanted to start this writing piece by expressing what I felt about IYP, a program that had helped me to finally reinvent my peace in this Godly land. I had crossed from a distant land, Ambon Manise (Sweet Ambon), Moluccas, and left all my classes and other activities on Pattimura Ambon campus to come to Yogyakarta, with a faith that I would reinvented the trusts between us: the Indonesian youths from various religions and ethnicities. I expected that in the end of this program, I would actually find a true peacefulness in my life. That I would become a person free of prejudice and from false stigma against other devotees than my own religion (Islam) and the summit was how I finally found my identity in diversity of religions.

To me, these ten meaningful days had been a very worthwhile passage. But I had this particular moment (14 November, 16:00) when I (as a Muslim) had to go through an overnight home-stay with GKJ Sidomukti church's members. At first I felt a tremendous turmoil within me. How could I not, my background as a person who lived in a (religion-based) conflict area had been shaping my view where Muslims and Christians were enemies (a stigma within my community). Now, in GKJ Sidomukti, I was faced with the real-

ity that required me to stay at home with the family of churches that had been stigmatized by my Muslim community, as our enemy. I felt my steps were heavy when I met the church family, while trying to free my mind from shadows of the past-time conflicts.



Zulfirman and IYP participants walk down from Stumbu Hill, Magelang

The warm welcome from Mr. Yoga and families as my one-night host made me feel peaceful and suddenly detached from a prejudice that always overshadowed my mind due to the impact of 1999's horizontal conflict in Maluku. Soon as we arrived at his house, we sat in the living room. I looked at the walls where a picture of Jesus hanging here and there. I was a little confused to start our conversation. Maybe Mr. Yoga, who was a lecturer, understood my psychological condition. Finally he was the one that begin our conversation with a question about Moluccas. I said it was filled with different religions groups, which by my community called as the enemy. He opened a long discussion on how the Moluccas conflict had actually not generated by a religious conflict, but rather a conflict of interest.

In the middle of our conversation, I tried to reflect within me

and asked, was this how it felt to be in peace? The time when I finally could be in one home with my so-called enemy in Ambon riots? So if this was it, the next question would be, had I forgiven those who killed my family in riots? I found the answer here, after the home-stay program, where I started to talk to myself; “Fir, don’t you ever again put the blame on the past Ambon riots to justify failure (lack of harmony, mutual suspicion) that has been shadowing the religious communities in Maluku today. That happens because they do not understand yet, and feel how it feels to coexist with different religions the way you feel today.”

A one-night home-stay at Mr. Yoga’s house was the shortest time for me to learn to understand the others. However, I tried to maximize every second I had at night to really feel their attitude, which was very illustratively different from my past time history (Ambon riots). After dinner, Mr. Yoga invited me for sightseeing, and dropped by at the Christian University of Satya Wacana (SWCU) where he lectured. Then we went on a trip around Salatiga town, enjoyed a unique culinary of Salatiga, the *Wedang Ronde*. Along the way, Mr. Yoga shared a lot about religions harmony in Salatiga.

After arrived at home, Mr. Yoga seemed eager to continue our conversation, but he seemed to understand that I looked weary from a daylong activities. When I approached towards the bedroom prepared by Mr. Yoga, I prayed in my heart so that morning would come too late so I could stay longer Mr. Yoga and his family. Yet, time was running so fast and refused to compromise. When the morning came to pick up my precious day, I came out of the room was greeted with a familiar sound to my ears, even though we had just met last night. Mr. Yoga’s mother also greeted me with a smile in the morning as she asked what I wanted for breakfast. Hearing that question, I felt that this family spoiled me very much. I replied that I wanted to eat anything she prepared. She smiled while saying, “anything as long as it’s halal, right?” For me it was more than a warm joke, but I realized that she really understood and respected the concept of halal food in Islam.

Mr. Yoga appeared when I had my talk with his mother. Then,

he invited me to go out and got a morning walk while enjoying the fresh air in the neighborhood. I felt jealous when Mr. Yoga started again the stories about religion harmony in Salatiga, which was so different from my hometown area (Ambon, Moluccas). In my region, the community was still fragmented due to past time riots. This was the unavoidable reality as a consequence of what had happened. I felt challenged to renovate Moluccas into harmonious and peaceful as what I found in Salatiga.

After a morning walk, we returned home and had a breakfast. I asked for permission to get a shower in the morning and was surprised by the kind offer from Mr. Yoga's mother to boil a hot water for my bath. This treatment then changed my mind against Christians. Tolerance was formed not just through dialogue, but it should be through direct and deeper interaction, like this home-stay program.

The clock showed 08:00 a.m. and I had to say goodbye to get together with other participants at GKJ Sidomukti. Maybe for some Moslem people living at congregation's member house was normal, but for me that was extraordinary. For me it was more than a matter of being respectful to the host family, but how I longed for such treatment to present among religion communities in Ambon, Moluccas. I named this feeling as "the return of peace in this Godly nation." So at least we could eradicate any suspicion and nurtured mutual respect and understanding, instead.

Upon arrival at the GKJ and met other Muslim friends who also went through a home-stay with other church members, I caught there was a different expression present, and it was different from before we departed to each houses. Then I sat and pondered at the events that occurred in Mr. Yoga's house last night and reflected upon my inner thoughts when I did pilgrimage to various religious sacred sites before. At the corner of the church I felt peace and started to repeat to myself "I'm not a communist, not a Catholic, not a socialist, I'm not a Buddhist, not a Protestant, not a Hindu, but I am everything. Hopefully this is what a Muslim is, I want people to look at and judge me as an absolute without even connecting me

with which group I belong and from what source of discourses I'm coming from."

Before closing this article, I would like to thank IYP, which had led me to rediscover the lost peace in a home of church family members, within this Godly nation. One new hope has risen, may we be able to redefine our ways of living religiously, which tends to become a righteous and considers other devotees as wrong. Religion is not the source of violence but rather a source of peace for one another, and the universe.

YOUNG PEOPLE SHAKES THE WORLD: PEACE VIRUS AS WEAPON

FRANSISKUS EDWARD ANGIMOY

Indonesia: Prone to Conflicts

Indonesia was very prone to conflict. This thesis was supported by pluralistic facts that consist of diverse religions, languages, ideologies, and various other identities. It was natural when each identity group was self-righteously claiming as the most superior. Such claims most likely presented a conflict of interest between groups, such as religious groups.

As had been described earlier, religion was one of group identities enriching various diverse forms of pluralism in Indonesia. Next to the 6 formal religions legitimated by Government law, Indonesia was actually very rich of belief groups with a number of devotees. Not to mention the fact that within the formal religions, multiple courses emerged as a result from various interpretation from the conventional teachings.

If we talked about diversity within the context of religious identity, historically, there had been long lists of religion-based con-

flicts, for instance, Islam versus Christian in Ambon, Poso, Kupang. Conflicts between Shia and Sunni in Madura, between Muslims and Ahmadiyah followers in several regions, and the marginalization of several church congregational members that further extended this record. Not to mention, the latent conflicts in various regions such as Aceh, West Sumatra, and so on.



Irfan Amalee, IYP facilitator, the co-founder of Peace Generation Bandung

Regardless of the actual substance of the issues, historical description had a very long track record on the escalation of religion vulnerabilities as source of conflicts. Therefore, it was important to be aware of the critical position of religion in the social structure of Indonesian society.

Preventive Efforts

Through a very long timelines, curative efforts always became the center of effort in order to find alternative conflict resolutions. Conflicts were always assessed through perspective of post-conflict,

with priority focused on short-term resolutions after it happened. Conflict resolutions, for instance, decided as the most effective way towards conflict resolution. While we were actually aware that it was not the most important issue here.

It was time for us to focus our paradigm on preventive efforts as an alternative recommendation to avert and anticipate various conflicts. It must be a vital point given the complexity of the conflict issues in Indonesia.

Peace Viruses: Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) & Peace Generation

Preventive efforts as alternative towards conflict resolutions, and it would even more appropriate if it was presented in the form of movement. Essentially, the intended movement should involve a massive awareness that considered it as a shared issue. In this case, it could be formulated through a keyword: peace movement.



Slide presentation of Peace Generation

Peace movement would be very effective if it were transformed into contagious viruses, the virus of peace. In practice, it had a tendency towards negative connotation since it transmitted bad diseases. However, if the core content were filled with positive enforcement, such as peace, it would be positively transmitted. Furthermore, if this were the case, then the following effect would touch a deeper sense than the conflict resolution.

It is time for young people to be the core of movement within this peace virus context. Recruiting youths as agent of change is very important, since these groups are still very open to new ideologies, including the matter of peace concept. Moreover, as a group, young people are more dynamic to be involved in the movement.

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) and Peace Generation were the real example of an attempt to spread the peace virus youth involvement as a movement focal point. By utilizing attractive concepts and do it the youth “ways”, these two movements would prepare Indonesian young people to become agents of change.

IYP with pilgrimage to various religious sacred places and live-in concept had successfully opened a space for dialogue between youths as participants and religions’ leaders as well as people coming from almost every religions and belief groups in Indonesia. This space of dialogue then became a place to understand the fact about interfaith issues. Nevertheless, various differences situated within intensive interaction and dialogue had been slowly altered to acceptance as an inevitable character. Furthermore, the interaction and dialogue were expected to foster empathy towards participants with different faith background. Let’s hope that this program would continue its efforts to create a safe, comfortable space for interfaith interactions.

In contrast to IYP, Generation Peace initiated by Irfan AmaLee and Erik Lincoln were focused on formulating peace education material through fun and interactive approaches. This movement was targeting young people and children in their programs. Currently, educational materials designed by Peace Generation have been implemented throughout 15,000 participants by more than 500 fa-

cilitators.

Both IYP and Peace Generation occupied a similar pattern within their movement spirit: involving young people as the spearhead, the agent of change. We can also find it in peace virus transmission. This last pattern has a special effect because it works with multiple systems such as two, three, and so forth. One person “infected” by peace virus is expected to pass it on to one, two, three people, and so on. With this kinds of approach, try to imagine the changes that could possibly occurred.

Quoting Bung Karno in one of his speeches: “Give me 1000 old people; and I will pull out Semeru Mountain from its root. Give me a youth; and I will undoubtedly shake the world.” This is sort of prediction about what young people can do. Just imagine if millions of young people have been “infected” with peace virus. I wonder what would hold back young people to shake the world, even the universe.

LOOKING FOR THE SAME PAGE WITHIN DIFFERENCES

HENDRIKUS PAULUS KAUNANG

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage program had finished, and there were too many sweet memories and impressions came from each participants to express their personal experience in this program. In general, everyone was happy and proud to be able to participate in this program. Of course this was predictable, since in this program, participants could have an opportunity to meet other friends with different religion backgrounds and for several days they should be lived together to follow the program agenda. Usually, when meeting a new people, we tended to be awkward, and tense with preliminary prejudices with other people. However, IYP participants could cope well with this situation, since at the very first of this program, everyone tried their best to become friendly for one another.

This program ran for ten days throughout several regions in Yogyakarta and Central Java, such as Yogyakarta, Klaten, Solo, Salatiga, and Magelang. The main objective was to build a deeper understanding among participants regarding roots of religion-based conflicts in Indonesia, and to create relevant strategies to counter it. According to this, participants were selected from various identities' background — ethnicity, religion, and race. Such decision was

made in order to enable the participants to mutually sharing their experiences towards diversity, and to find the most appropriate strategy variants when they were involved within diversity management and religion-based conflict resolutions.

As one of the committee member who was fully involved in this activity, I felt very proud to be able to get this chance and to join these youthful participants, even though my status was different with the rest of them. But, still, as program committee, it did not mean that our knowledge around religion affairs was way much better than the rest of them, instead, it was a great opportunity for me to observe and to directly study the interfaith relationship in Indonesia. While assisting the IYP participants for ten days, I felt honored to be involved with these youths while sharing their “wild ideas” about what should be done in order to create a better nation from this point forward.

This program included visits to various religious sites to enhance the understanding among participants to other religions. More than just site visit, these participants also received new opportunities to conduct a dialogue and discussion with religious leaders from each religion’s representatives. Next to this point, they also experienced a *Live-In* program in a *pesantren* and homes of church congregations’ members during a visit to Salatiga. There had been a lot of impressions occurred from this program, where most of participants described their transformation experiences within themselves, particularly tolerance to other devotees.

Yet, from all these sites I had visited, there was one place that stork the deepest impression within me, who basically participated in all the process in these meaningful 10-days trip. That place was our tourism bus as our main transportation for activities’ mobility. When people reading this article, they might wondered “why the bus?” instead of topics on sacred sites or other places that generated a new awareness in everyone. For ten days, I had stayed with participants to observe the dynamics inside the bus, which for me was a starting point for IYP program’s achievement. How was that even possible? The answer was simple, for as long as they traveled in the

bus, participants were in the process of building true collectivity.

A tight bonding among participants had raised a new question to me, how was that even possible? All of them were coming from different backgrounds and never meet one another before, yet they had successfully become good friends in a relatively short time span. How was that even possible? These questions kept bothering me. The more I tried to ignore it, the more I drown into bigger curiosity. Finally, I decided to look for my own answer, even though the question would only satisfy my personal desire. This curiosity made me decided to remain staying on the bus until the program reached the finale. Inside of the bus, I was trying to look for answer to my question, while kept paying attention to the dynamics among participants on the bus. There were a lot of stories, jokes, laughter, and sing along. But there were also whining, unsatisfactory, sadness, and sickness. This situation became a connection in a quest for the answer inside of my mind.

Through various events happened on the bus, I later concluded (which might sounded a little reckless) that the mutual feeling towards a shared experience could become a chain of bonding between participants that overcome their various identities' background. I thought that within so many differences, they (although some might not aware of it) had successfully found the same page that bonds their togetherness. What is that page, anyway? The mutual feeling, that they all followed a program with the same objective, to become agent of change for peace in communities. For me, the same objective to follow IYP activities had made this participants putting their best effort to build a good cooperation in order to achieve the collective goal. For instance, participants were told to design the common rules or codes of conducts on a first day. When the spirit of collective works surfacing, the barriers vanished and they were replaced with what was considered as useful and good for each individual.

After a bonding was created among participants, activities were implemented smoothly. All forms of dialogue and discussion that occurred during bus trip had become a good foundation for partici-

pants to prepare themselves for the activities that had been listed in the “yellow book” (contains guidelines and schedule of IYP activities). Each participant often shared experiences from the respective religions every time we moved from one destination to another.

When participants felt too tired or exhausted, some decided to sleep inside, but some also kept silent as if they were rethinking about what had just been discussed with other friends on the bus. For me personally, that was the turning point when they learned the acceptance and existence of different entities, the others. I thought that the changes in the participants that occurred primarily through interaction with other participants. It was all started at time they encountered the shared values through intensive interactions. Acceptance towards diversity had also occurred when they were confronted with a different reality to them once they got out of the bus, so it was no longer a surprising thing for them since they had faced it along the road and they had been able to prove to be adaptable.

After carefully observed and took a closer look on interactional patterns among participants, I think that their ten days on this bus was a beginning of the acceptance process. Their imagination, fantasy, and wild perceptions towards the others that often led them to suspicion and hatred slowly disappeared by the presence of “the others” beside them, who also fought for a common goal. This otherness was later altered as fellow “soldier” that bridging the individual with the “others” located outside of the bus. In other words, activities that occurred outside of the bus were basically a complement to and a confirmation of what they had previously internalized along the road. Changes in each participant raised when they had managed to find differences and similarities and able to find a common thing within the differences and able to manage it in order to achieve their goals or dreams, as previously summarized when they formulated code of conducts during the introduction course and at the end of the program when they had to formulate a peace petition.

Taking a lesson learned from this program, I was inspired to connect what I had found during IYP— particularly to connect the

realities of interfaith engagement in Indonesia. These were two different subjects, but there laid a silver lining in terms of the objectives from interfaith engagement, which was to create harmony and peace. I think all this time, people had been too busy managing the existing differences among them while, on the contrary, I think this would further exacerbate it and thus would be difficult to find a common ground where people could come together and join in a collaborative works to reach for something useful for the community. The number of religion-based conflicts that kept escalating lately was a legit evidence how differences became a main focus, until public increasingly fragmented within the identity boundaries with their self-righteous claims. Society was busy taking care of their own interests of their respective groups regardless of the presence of other. Suspicion and stigma against other communities have been increasing. The terms usage between majority and minority was a clear picture on how Indonesians had missed a common idea that could be fought together for public benefits and common good.

It was possible to consider IYP activities as a prototype to evoke a solidarity spirit within differences. If we were tracing back the National history, these types of conflict were almost non-existent at the time when we were fighting for nation's independence. Why was that so? Because at that time, colonization had caused a tremendously negative impacts to every Indonesian people (no matter what their identity background was) and independence was then a common issue that must be fought by every Indonesians. They had united, stepped out of selfishness barriers and collectively fought to reclaim the independence from colonial government. They believed independence was the only way towards a fulfillment of freedom and better future. It was true what Bung Karno had once said: "you should never forget history. "We could learn from our own history that united us strongly, towards a prosperous nation.

To nurture a common ground within diversity did not mean to make everything equally flat. This term was trying to illustrate that no matter how different we were, there were things that could

bind us together as brothers and sisters. Maybe this time we were not able to find it just yet, but through various efforts such as IYP, and being equipped with a strong desire to reflect upon our nation's history, to encourage the start of this movement was possible. It was certainly not an easy thing, but with a strong desire and clear awareness, we could start it and surely we would prevail someday. There was certainly no reason for not starting it since we had actually slowly taken a footstep. The requirement was simply the realization of what we had started. For me personally, this could be a basic foundation in the process of creating peace in the community.

Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage program should be able to act as a starter point in long-term efforts to nurture common grounds within the differences. We had already started it, and now our task was to spread the same message in each respective area. IYP's activities would remain as an "empty box" if we never delivered and spread the positive values that we had obtained. We had yet to reach this goal as we finished this program, but at the time we had successfully managed to instill the fulfillment values in every participant's communities. Thus, this activity could echo a clear voice that could be heard by every Indonesian people, especially to foster peace in the community. For me, the true meaning of peace was when we were able to see ourselves in our counterparts.

God is Everywhere

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

GOD, TOLERANCE, AND PLURALISM

DICKY SOFJAN

Between Tolerance and Pluralism

I have always felt conflicted about the term “tolerance” since years ago. Etymologically, it is derived from Latin word, *tolerantia*, which does not always implying a positive meaning. The word tolerance connotes with an open attitude towards something that is still within the limits of subjective appropriateness. This would certainly trigger new problems, particularly when it came to the matter of religiosity since such interpretation requires certain maximum and minimum limits to the extent of faith variations standards believed by common people.

In practice, tolerance is build upon narrow logical binary, where people are categorized based on the law of numbers that resulted the great numbers of people as ‘majority’, while the rest of small quantities are classified as ‘minority’. Herein lies the problem of tolerance that assumes a collective consciousness to dominate other groups in order to seize and monopolize resources they possessed. If such binary logic is consistently maintained, only two possibili-

ties that might arise — majority tyranny over minority groups or ‘majority tyranny above the minority.’ Whatever happens, such logic persistently culminated on the tyranny, which is clearly against the *raison d’être* of religions. In the meantime, every religion is very frequently instigated among various social inequalities or social injustices, out of any fundamental issues such as divinity, faith, worships, morality, or ethics.

Moreover, the identity self-awareness and group affiliation are factors that characterized tolerance since it is based on some basic assumptions that ought to have reconsideration. This is vital due to national boundaries are no longer capable to block the rapid flows of information, movement of goods and services, and ideas spread through technological usage, such as social media. Some basic assumptions are: *first*, every religion are enforcing fanaticism to their followers an inevitable truth where every religions believe that their teaching is the only salvation in this world and hereafter. *Second*, fanaticism is required by religions in order to balance the worldly invasion and temptations, as well as market fundamentalism that tend to lead human astray to hedonism and materialism. *Third*, fanaticism is a modern response from spiritual communities in order to maintain the purity of the teachings or to purify religion from all forms of deviance and heresy or religious practices that are innovative, creative, and somewhat inspiring.

I often hear a statement that all Muslims should be “fundamentalist” — concept that is based on the Christians’ historical events in the West that filled with dark moments, since Islam defined that we must live according to the teachings of Qur’an and Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, the two fundamental teachings in Islam. This is certainly ridiculous, and ignores the role of time, collective memory, and the wide array of human potential and possible achievements of to expand their horizons, understandings, and experiences.

Thus, at the time someone is being tolerant against anything they’re displeased at, they should have been persistently accept it, no matter how uncomfortable their heart feels. If that is the truth,

tolerance will not bring a peace of mind, happiness, let alone sincerity in religious conducts. Even worse, such attitude would not create a healthy *mua'amalah* (social interaction but instead generating selfish attitude and tendency to assume and monopolize the ultimate truth and claim to be known God's 'heart's feeling'. They did not hesitate to think, "I'm the one who will go to heaven, while the rests will going to hell!" With such a monopolistic attitude, many of them caught up in intimidation, coercion, and even violence. Meanwhile, it is clear that such pattern is a contrary to religion basic principles that tends to have a soft persuasion and anti - violence. Qur'an (2:256) explicitly mentions: *Laa ikraha fid-diin*. There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. This holly book of Moslem people also taught Prophet Muhammad and the followers to deliver the *dakwah* (religious propaganda) in the ways that are soft, sympathetic, and wise (16:125).

Ironic, indeed. But this is a fact that occurs among society and religion communities in many places I have been visited and lived in. Even the slightest intention of upholding the ethic to give the benefit of the doubt, is rarely exist. As a consequence, no matter how the truth sounds logical, there are many who denies it just because it comes from the other groups. They hit the arguments and against any opinion from the opposition parties, as if they retained the truth. Imam Ali once said, "Should you pay attention to what someone says, not who said it." A very wise principle that taught us to always be prepared to accept the truth from anyone, regardless it might come from someone we're less-favored at. This principle is based on the premise that the ultimate truth is coming form a singlesource, namely God the most Knowledgeable. God has the prerogative to decide to whom the ultimate truth will be conveyed among the common people. Just like waves that hitting seashore, the truth resembling a scattering wave along Divine Wisdom coast. The spilled sea water of truth is then collected by the righteous people committed to seek for the ultimate truth.

I believe that all the religions in the world always call to do good deeds, despite how the approaches, methods, and expressions may

vary. However, all religions tend to claim they have the most universal morality teachings for all mankind everywhere and everytime with a small omission. The problem is, once confronted by choices, most people are more inclined to particularism than universalism in developing their thoughts on theology, cosmology, and daily practices of religion. Therefore essentially and practically, concepts and principles of tolerance is the opposite of universalism or even humanism, which was commonly applied as propaganda strategies, especially for the acknowledged Semitic religions. One illustration, for instance, can be read over Qur'an scripture structures, in which the preambles opened with the introduction of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense, and Who Guide us to the straight path. While An-Naas (Mankind) as a postscript verse implied a human character that occupied by "anxiety" caused by the oscillating heart.

Pluralism is not an ideology per se, although the "-ism" affixes giving such impression time and again. In Indonesia, pluralism is a fact or an undeniable reality. That's why the National motto is none other than *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), which bears witness to the recognition and appreciation of diversities in Indonesian human, either physical, language, culture, or religion. Denial against this fact is similar as declare that Indonesia is not an archipelagic or maritime country, which is indeed ridiculous. Even funnier are those who claim that pluralism is based on the principle of: "All religions are the same!" This claim obscures the real meaning of pluralism and buries its noble reason, which consists of respecting differences over one another's opinions and beliefs in honest and sincere ways.

The scholars distinguished between passive and active pluralism within the subject of diversity in academic reference. Passive pluralism refers to the attitude and mindset of mutual non - interference or an attitude of allowing others for being distinctive. It is based on the rights of people to be different and take a stand apart from others. Unfortunately, such omission often leads to apathy or indifference against other human beings, as if human and their

entities could create separated islands on the ocean of worldwide community. Meanwhile, active pluralism implies a more aggressive and dynamic implication. This model rests on the awareness of the importance of engaging different people, the importance to conduct a healthy interaction. Active pluralism requires everyone to participate against all forms of discriminations and differentiations (rather than differences) in various issues that not intertwined with identity, ethnicity, and ideological orientation as well as religions of others. This model is also a promotion and celebration of diversity on based on a view that differences is more than just an asset, but a *Sunnatullah* or the fixed rules of God

As believers, an important inquiry that required to be answered: If we were assume that differences between people exists, certainly it is within the will of God. If it were His will, what would He says about the difference? And how do we, as the servant, duly addressing this?

The God of Human beings

“He who knows himself, knows his Lord”, as expressed by Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger from chains of prophets consecutively sent is very relevant to contemporary human life. Although breakthroughs have been performed in the fields of science such as microbiology, astrology, sociology, technology, and so forth, humans are remain attached to their primordialism, tribalism, and nativism. It implies how small human attitude is amid the awareness of the God’s knowledge breadth. Various humanity problems such as war, ethnicity and religious conflicts, excessive economic exploitations, environmental degradation, and global warming are all instinctively prioritizing greediness-that is formally regarded as a necessary evil. Whereas this approach patterns utilize market mechanisms, which in fact more often creates distortions and inequities.

In line with that, almost every aspects of human life is commercialized and commodified nowadays, including religion. The

clergy made religion as merchandise glossed with trivial advices in order to achieve a better life in Divine heaven. Again, man is just an engine for the production of civilization that upholds the values of hedonism, materialism, and consumerism. Truth and honesty is a scarce material. All aspects of life covered by the interests of the capitalists and those who intend to monopolize the power of economic, political, social, and human culture. As a result, the most disadvantaged people are those who are the weakest and have no capital possession.

Racism - as a form of crimes against humanity that should be vanished in the 21-Century, has facing an extermination failure. Resentment against 'the others' manifested through various forms, and state policy patterns that often held hostage by narrow and short-term interests. Although modern science of genetics and anatomy teaches us that every human being is essentially equal regardless of our skin color, ethnicity, social status or education level, most people are sometimes still allergic to each other. In turn, this phenomenon makes humans obsessed with exclusivity, so they are busy erecting the separation walls, in both actual and imaginary ways. The religious communities also applying this kind of logic, by making the barriers divided by constructing an ideology of 'the chosen few' who will receive a privileged to get the guidance and salvation from the Lord. In the end, equality, and mutual respect is stand as a mere rhetoric, devoid of meaning and manifestation. The Holy Quran (49:13) states this very clearly:

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.

There are two important lessons that can be drawn from this verse at the very least. *First*, God created human beings with diverse features so they could get to know each other (*li ta'arafu*). It is based on the universal principle of opposite's attraction, just like magnets. In Verse 42:8, the Qur'an mentions, 'And if Allah willed, He could have made them [of] one religion.'" However, based on the premise

and grammar of the verse, God obviously does not aspire to this because humans have given the freedom to choose between good and evil, between the straight (*shirat al-mustaqim*), and misguided path. This freedom and the availability of option is what makes humans become God's special creatures, and distinct it from other species.

Second, the variations and differences among human primordial features turned out to be insignificant and irrelevant, from God's standpoint. What is considered as precious and crucial features for God is human's faith, not a false and fake worldly attributes. This verse also reminding human on how Divine Justice and any endowed traits will not help them to achieve the status of devotion. It all depends on the choices made by men on the available options. Thus, it is clear that the essential objective of human life is to reach the faith that was initiated from our self-awareness as His creation. Furthermore, a variety of potential, intellectual, and the capacity of human beings should enforce us to think that God, indeed, created us through His images, as His prerogative to have a will, to decide, and act.

The problem is, human beings were in too deep and lulled by worldly life, and it hinders them until they don't know who they really are, let alone the Creator. This world filled with noises and frenzies has blinding and deafening us against the ultimate Realities of Divinity. Related to this view, Imam Ali once was asked regarding his 'vision' of God. He stated the following statement:

Eyes cannot see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He molds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him. (*Nahjul Balagha*, Sermon

No.178/239).

Herein lies the nature of God that ineffable. It is hard to explain since God is Holy, and nothing resembles Him. However, according to the sayings of Imam Ali above, clearly God was everywhere, and even more closely than the most vital organs in human's neck. Qur'an (50:16) describes this in a very beautiful verse, "And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein." One of the vital functions of the jugular vessel in our neck is to pump and circulate blood flow to the brain, head and face, which clearly determine the direction, orientation and human perception to life, and the environment.

From this point, our knowledge on self-awareness will direct human being to the essential acknowledgement of God. Good self-awareness will, in turn, lead human to understand which religion that will truly be the *arahmatan li'l aalamin* or grace to the whole universe or multiverse (forget the term universe!) with the extent that is unattainable for any human's mind, and will continue to expand. If we recognized and realizes this well, human beings would always respect others and appreciate all forms of life existence in this universe — no matter how large, small or microscopic— that, in fact, is part of the perfect divine masterpiece.

God is Everywhere

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Coming from Boyolali, Central Java, he is currently a student in State Islamic University (STAIN) Salatiga. Grow up in a pluralistic environment has aspire him to become “agents of peace.” Live with 3 brothers, he was born on July 2, 1993. Actively engaged in various organizations such as JQH (Jamiyyatul Qurro wal Huffazd), Darul Amal Campus Da’wah Institute, and active in sororities YABISMIL-LAH (Limardhotillah Scholarship Awardee Youth Association) in STAIN Salatiga. He is one of the students from International Special Class Program (PKKI) STAIN Salatiga. He can be contacted through email: annurindahsari@gmail.com

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Coming from Ruteng - Flores, East Nusa, he was born on March 15, 1985 with a Bachelors Degree from University of Surabaya majoring in Accounting. Has been actively involved in several organizations such as the Coordinator of Academic Affairs in Naka Cama Community, the Association of Indonesian Economic Student Senate, Student Leadership Management Training “Becoming a Better You” (Directorate of Career Assistance Center in University of Surabaya). Currently active in several organizations and engaged in several social issues. He could be contacted through email: era.ps87@gmail.com

GERALDI DWI RIZANDI KONGKOLI, S.TH.

Born on 2 April 1990, he holds a high respect for peace and dream to make it happen in the land of his birth, Poso. His experience to live in a potential conflict area makes him to choose Theological Studies to better understand the importance the spirit of mutual respects. He was served as Chairman of the Commissariat GMKI STT Intim in Makassar. A second son of three brothers, he also been struggling as Chairman of the BEM-PM STT Intim Makassar (2012-2013) and has obtained a degree in Bachelor of Theology at the same college. To be able to communicate with him, please email: geraldidwirizandi.kongkoli@yahoo.com

GUNAWAN

Born in Poso, October 17, 1987 from an interfaith couple. It has make him grow into a figure who is aware of love among human beings. The soft touch of his mother have taught him the importance of respecting differences, and it has inspired him to be active in

several organizations such as the Church World Service, children psychological assistance in Muslim territory, and Community for Women and Children Care (KPPA) in Central Sulawesi as a coordinator for “Banoa Ananggodi” creative home In 2010. He had the opportunity to participate in the School of Peace in India for 4 (four) months with 20 other people from various countries in the Asia - Pacific. You can contact Gunawan through his email: wzn_zero@yahoo.co.id

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This State University student was born in Medan, 17 September 1994. A first child of four brothers who recognized the importance of inter-religious tolerance as evidenced by participation in the program of the Sumatra Student Interfaith Peace Camp 2013 & Young Interfaith Peacemaker National Conference 2013. Additionally, he had attended several organizations such as: Scout Frontline 10_035, Student Christian Movement of SMK 1 Medan, Young Peacemaker Interfaith Community (YIPC) SUMUT, English Debating Society (EDS) UNIMED, and Members of the Protestant Student Activity Unit (UKMKP). Reach him through: robertnehe@yahoo.com

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SUSANTO

Susanto was born in Temanggung on February 5, 1992, and live in the middle of communities with different religions and traditions in Java. Currently a seventh semester student in Syailendra College of Buddhism since 2010 and majored Acarya Dharma. He was active in Buddhist Student Association Temanggung from 2008 to 2010. Next to this activity, he was member of the Student Executive Board in STAB Syailendra since a freshman.

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Originally from Lasem City, Rembang, Central Java, Born on April 13, 1991. Currently studying at STAB Syailendra Semarang, majoring in Acarya Dharma. Active in the Student Executive Board, PATRIA, and Peace Cottage Salatiga (PERCIK). Life within the difference is the color of life itself.

TIARA FATIMAH

Student of Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Aceh, was born on January 2 1991 and came from one of the conflict areas in Aceh. She was through a special training on Journalism and Youth Leadership Camp. She has been active in several organizations, such as Secretay of Public Relations of EDSA, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Chairman of Youth Development Division at the The Leader Community and Volunteer at Tikar Pandan, a community engaged in human rights, conflict resolution and culture.

TIRTA TRIANA

Born in Ambon, October 12, 1989. Currently a student in Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Pattimura University. Actively involved within the Non Violent Study Circle, Mapala Kewang Unpatty (Faculty level), and the Penyala Ambon. She wished to establish religious peace that proven by her participation in Coffee Badati, a youth community in Ambon established by traumatized youths to the impact of the 1999's elongated conflict.

ZULFAHMI

Currently active as a student at Alauddin State Islamic University, Makassar. He was involved in various activities such as Baruga Hill Youth Camp in Makassar, the International Seminar on "Tracing The History of Indonesian In South Africa: The Role of Sheikh Yusuf Struggling Towards Colonization in South Africa", Hasanuddin University, Makassar; and the International seminar, International Festival Writer "Fort Rotterdam in Makassar. In addition, he is also actively engaged in several organizations such as Tanabangka Muhammadiyah Student Association, and a Communication Board of Indonesian Youth Mosque Agency in Bajeng District, Pakrampunganta Art Collectives in Gowa, and Global Peace Festival Indonesia Foundation.

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Student in Department of Forestry, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Pattimura, Ambon, was raised in a homogeneous environment. He is currently active as a member of the Non Violent Study Circle (NVSC) who introduced her to the values of peace among religions. Once became the program participant of Jenesys programe, 2010 in Japan, and actively engaged as Chairman of Advocacy and Socialization Division in Non Violent Socialization Study Circle (NVSC), Pattimura University, as well as the functionaries of Islamic Students Association (HMI) Unpatti in Agriculture Commissioner.

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About the Editor



Elis Z. Anis is an alumnus of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) Year 2002, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. She obtained her Master of Arts from Ohio University, USA in 2006 with the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program. Currently, she is working as a Financial Development Executive at the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), located at the Graduate School of Gadjah Mada University. Previously, for 5 years, she has worked as a Media and Communications Officer at the same institution. Elis is also a part-time lecturer at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta and teaches courses in communication research. Her research covers the media, conflict resolution, and disaster.

