

“ARE YOU TRULLY INDONESIAN ?”

Unplanned writing, here I am to celebrate the 75th Independence Day on my way.

Look at the title,

A deep question.

I am Indonesian. I was born and raised in Indonesia.

I will tell you my little background. Of course, you can already guess from my surname that I am a Bataknese.

Since childhood I used to move often because of my dad's job. Starting from Medan, then to Semarang, Pontianak, and Yogyakarta. Born in Medan and raised in a Batak culture, which is known for being the most straightforward and strict. Then I moved to Semarang and Yogyakarta where the Javanese were the majority there. You all know that the Javanese are known for their gentle, calm and let-it-flow attitude. Up until this time I settled in Pontianak with a majority population of Malays and Dayaks. Malays are known for their polite, implied speech and high self-esteem. The Dayaks are known friends with nature, not hypocritical, and wary of new things. I am grateful because I got a chance to understand the diversity in Indonesia since childhood.

Obviously we do not forget our national motto that we have heard continuously since we are still in elementary school which is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* means 'Unity in Diversity' or, 'We are of many kinds, but we are one'. In fact, Indonesia's founding fathers established *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, to promote tolerance among the country's many different groups. The motto, which is inscribed on Indonesia's national symbol, Garuda Pancasila, has recently been contested.

Lately, a conservative Islamic group in Karanganyar regency, Central Java filed a complaint to the local administration over its dubious claim that a banner celebrating Indonesia's upcoming Independence Day featured a cross-like design element. “The people of Islam must be vigilant towards covert attempts at

Christianization through symbols of the cross in public places,” AUIK (Karanganyar Islamic People Alliance) leader Fadhlun Ali said.

The design of the banner was released nationally by the central government to celebrate Indonesia’s 75th Independence Day on August, 17. The design features white abstract boxes, which represent nationalistic values, that were stacked on one side of the banner against the red backdrop.

In fact, the government clarified that in accordance with the visual logo usage guidelines of Indonesia’s 75th Independence Day, the logo resembles the symbol of the cross, called it was 'supergraphic'. Supergraphic consists of 10 elements taken from a 75-year-old logo deconstruction that is broken into 10 parts. These fractions represent the commitment and noble values of Pancasila. For its application, this supergraphic is said to be quite flexible because it is abstract, which is an assembly of 10 fractions into a single shape. This means that the logo supergraphic installation, it can be arranged 10 fractions corresponding desired model.

It is such a concern that conflicts based on religions and beliefs may occur at any moment in Indonesia and may potentially harm the harmonious and united lives of its people. They control or suppress other groups which are considered unaligned with their ideology. Conflicts based on religious and beliefs may even be accompanied with socioeconomic conflicts, insubordination of the law, bureaucracy and other types of conflicts caused by disagreement between groups.

It’s undeniable that unifying various groups with different values, behavior and attitude in their daily lives - at least those related to their religion and beliefs - is no small task. Furthermore, "Indonesia has approximately three hundred sub-ethnicities with around two hundred fifty local dialects throughout its entire territory" (Geertz 1981, 86). However, there’s no absolute segmentation in the relationship between ethnicities and religions in Indonesia. It’s quite possible for a number of different groups to share the same religion or same perspectives, different from the one followed by their majority.

In view of such diversity, religions, beliefs, or other differences should not have been the root of conflict in Indonesia. Through diversity, individuals would learn to be

larger in terms of their capacity and more open of mind than they thought they could be. Since diversity includes ideas and perspectives, individuals will learn that other lens might better examine their perspectives. In doing so, the skills of why and how individuals perceive ideas and perspectives will be sharpened.

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika should be the foundation for an environment where people of different ethnicities, cultures and religious backgrounds can come together, challenge each other's ideas, learn new perspectives, be enriched, grow as individuals, and eventually come to understand that their differences are their strength; that diversity in Indonesia should be celebrated as a source of excellence.

So, have you understanding about “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” ?

Are you trully Indonesian ?

Sincerely,

Manurung, W.A