

## Multiculturalism in the Quran (Tafsir Siyasy Analysis Q.S Al-Hujarat Verse 13)

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### Abstract:

#### Purpose:

This article discusses multiculturalism by analyzing the contemporary interpretation of Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13, which is the rationale for the diversity of human backgrounds in Islam.

#### Methodology:

The methodology used is descriptive analysis with the type of qualitative research-literature study, which uses references related to contemporary interpretation and multiculturalism thoughts Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13. The theory used in this article is the Contemporary Method of Interpreting the Quran from Abdullah Saeed, a contemporary interpretation method to analyze verses related to the latest social, political, and other societal problems.

#### Findings:

Abdullah Saeed's tafsir theory was chosen because this tafsir is a tafsir that has a contextual and renewable interpretation method in looking at current social problems in particular and universally.

#### Implication:

The result of this article is that two values reflect multiculturalism in the Quran. First is the value of Inclusiveness and Plurality, which is the fundamental value of diversity that humanity must own. Second, Justice and Equality must be applied in life indiscriminately.

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## INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism as an understanding of diversity in life is always interesting to discuss ideologically and conceptually. Human life in a community cannot be separated from diversity. Different ethnic, racial, religious, gender, language, and cultural backgrounds are *sunnatullah* that must be accepted. In terms of ideas, acceptance of the reality of multiculturalism can be accepted logically. However, in practice, openness and acceptance of diversity still need to be improved in various parts of the world. Especially in the political policies of a region or country, injustice against certain groups is still often heard (Huda et al., 2022).

Modern countries today, with all their forms and political systems, cannot deny the diversity in their society. Whether it comes from the country's diversity or outside the country, you can count on your fingers; only a few countries are open to diversity. Especially for countries that implement a democratic system and an open political-economic system, of course, the potential for diversity will be huge. Humans today have limited mobility and connectivity due to time and space limitations. The ease, sophistication, and affordability of transportation and communication media provide equal access for every individual to connect directly or indirectly.

Whether we realize it or not, the unavoidable borderless connectivity has made freedom the basic idea in every human action. The main impact inevitably occurs is the irregular migration that can happen anytime and anywhere. We used to know urbanization, where big cities were the leading destination to make a living and a better life. However, now, with internet accessibility, city jobs and even overseas jobs can be done *work from home*. Many big companies prefer small cities as *branch offices* where the environment is better, there is no traffic jam, and it is cheaper to pay rent and employees. In the corners of small cities in Indonesia, workers



from big cities and even abroad work online in co-working spaces that can be rented daily and moved anywhere.

Examples of these phenomena are events in the modern era that can happen anywhere. Whether we like it or not, pluralism and societal differences have become commonplace. Sooner or later, people must be willing to accept the differences and changes that occur. Especially the acceptance and openness of differences in physical terms, in this case, differences in race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, and even perspectives, must be accepted and addressed maturely. The concept of multiculturalism, which emphasizes tolerance for differences and the capacity for adaptation and cross-cultural interaction, cannot be negotiated anymore.

Rejecting it will only give birth to new conflicts that are counter-productive both for oneself individually and in groups towards society. At the same time, pluralism or eternity becomes a necessity sooner or later. (Shofwan, 2022) In Islam, diversity among fellow human beings must be accepted and should not be differentiated, let alone receive unfair and discriminatory treatment. His devotion measures the best degree for each Muslim, and only Allah can judge the substance of his servant's devotion. It can be said that justice and equality are embedded in the values and breadth of Islam. However, the practice of injustice caused by differences in background and class is still often found in Muslim-majority areas or countries.

The values of justice and equality in Islam are listed and written in the Quran as the primary guide for Muslim life. One of the most famous verses in the Quran that explains God's authority and the diversity of humanity is Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13. This verse explains how God created humans into various tribes and nations to know and respect each other. It is then explained that the differences that exist are created and not to be discriminated against because what God judges are only piety. So, there is no reason to act discriminatively because of physical and group differences.

For Muslims, the Quran is the best text that guides Muslims in navigating their life on earth. Almost all of these fields in this life are discussed in the Quran either explicitly or implicitly because the Quran is a "path" that is *sholihun fi kulli zaman wal makan* from sharia or fiqh issues, aqidah, and muamalat, to contemporary issues, such as economic, social, political, and even household issues. Including problems in society, also discussed in the Quran. We cannot deny that society in particular, and humans in general, are created by Allah in various forms, conditions, characters, and other characteristics of society, especially when looking at today's modern society, where there are no boundaries in interaction, which is not limited by time and space. Heterogeneous societies will naturally form, and then differences in society are inevitable. Physical differences and cultural differences and perspectives will also become commonplace in society. In modern Arabic, it is called *al- ta'adudiyah*. Amazingly, the Quran already discussed this issue 1400 years ago.

This paper will explain the verse in the Quran that discusses differences and plurality in society, which we now know as a multicultural or plural society. Specifically, the 13th verse of Surah Al-Hujarat explains God's creation of the diversity of humanity and how we must recognize each other, how the Quran views this, and interpretations in language and meaning. So that the Quran, which is always said to be *sholihun fi kulli zaman wal makan*, can guide humanity whenever and wherever.

## METHODS

This paper uses descriptive qualitative research methodology, in which data from various sources obtained are analyzed using appropriate theories and then narrated with academic writing systematics. The data sources in this paper are references related to the interpretation of political verses, especially related to politics and multiculturalism in the Quran, such as scientific articles, books, or writings that support the writing data.

The theory used in this paper is the theory of Contemporary Interpretation or *the Contemporary Method of Interpreting the Quran* from Abdullah Saeed. This theory is one of the modern interpretation theories that can be used to analyze political verses to obtain new meanings from the Quran in the current socio-political context. In addition, this theory has detailed and systematic interpretation stages to analyze the Quran verses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the stages of interpretation of Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13 using Abdullah Saed's Quranic verse interpretation method, namely text analysis, the initial meaning of the verse, and the current contextual meaning.

**Text analysis of Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13.** Surah Al-hujarat verse 13 is included in the Fundamental Values. This verse explains the importance of all humans knowing and respecting each other regardless of their background. So this verse has a universal humanitarian spirit. Textually, Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13 in the Al-Quran in Arabic and the meaning in Indonesian is as follows.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَىٰ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: O humanity, we created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing and All-Knowing.

This 13<sup>th</sup> verse begins with *ya ayyuha annas* or O people. Not with *ya ayyuha alladhina amanu*, which means O believers, as in the previous verse 12. The difference between these two verses is evident because the subjects are different. Because Al-hujarat verse 13 is intended for all humans, not only Muslims or believers. (Rifa'i, 2020).

The word *kbholaqo*, which means to make or here to create, means the creation of something that did not exist before, and it is Allah's prerogative, with no human participation in it. The use of the words *inna* and *kbholaqna* (ibnu masrur, lisanul arab) shows the seriousness of Allah in creating men and women. It is proven by mentioning the word *na twice*. Furthermore, the letter *wannu athaf*, which connects *dzakarun* and *untsa*, shows equality or equality between men and women.

The word *ja'ala* has the same meaning as *kbholaqo*, namely making. However, here it means making because *ja'ala* in the Quran means making from something already existing, and humans are included in the process. The word *shu'ub* is the jama' form of the word *sha'b*. This word indicates a group of *qabilah*, usually translated as a tribe that refers to one grandfather. At the same time, the meaning in the Quran is group or team. Qobilah, or tribe, also consists of several family groups called *imarah*.

Furthermore, this imarah still consists of many groups called *bathn*. Under the *bathn*, there are still several *fakhdz*, and it ends with the most miniature set of families. It can be seen from the use of the word *sha'b* that this word does not indicate the notion of nation as understood today. At the same time, the word *akramakum* is taken from the word *karuma*, which means good, noble, and memorable according to its object (Nugraha et al., 2021).

This sequence is found in only three places in the Quran. This verse is one of them. The attributes of *'Alim* and *Khabir* both contain the omniscience of Allah. The difference between these two similar attributes of Allah is what Allah knows. *'Alim* means knowing, or Allah's knowledge covers everything. At the same time, *Khabir* is God's knowledge of a specific thing.

The previous verse, namely in verse 12, explains how Allah guides fellow Muslims in socializing and the importance of manners. It is followed by Al-Hujarat verse 13, which explains the basic principles of human relations. Therefore, this 13<sup>th</sup> verse begins with *ya ayyuha annas* or O man. Not with *ya ayyuha alladhina amanu*, which means O believers, as in the previous verse 12. The difference between these two verses is evident because the subjects are different. Because Al-hujarat verse 13 is intended for all humans, not only Muslims or believers alone (Duller, 2018).

The next verse, verse 14, describes the faith of the Bedouins. Where they only show their faith, but Allah has not considered them not believing. They only wanted to get the spoils of war.

Some other similar verses that support Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13 (Wahyudi, 2019):

1. Surah Al-Maidah verse 48

We have given each nation among you a rule and a clear path. If Allah had willed you, He would have made you one person (only), but Allah wants to test you for what He has given you. To compete in doing good. Only to Allah will you all return, and He will tell you what you have disputed.

2. Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 8

Allah does not forbid you to be just and fair to those who do not fight you for religion nor drive you out of your country: Verily, Allah loves those who are just.

3. Surat Ar-Ruum verse 22

Moreover, among the signs (of His greatness) is the creation of the heavens and the earth, the difference in your languages, and the color of your skin. Indeed, in such things, there are signs for those who know.

This verse was once used by the Prophet Muhammad to remind his people not to be arrogant and always to do good. As explained in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Hibban and at-Tirmidhi from Ibn Umar:

On the day of Fathul Makkah, the Prophet of Allah (SAW) performed tawaf on a camel with a partially severed ear. Then he used a stick with its end bent to touch the Ka'bah's pillar. He carried his camel to the valley because the mosque was too small for him to ride it inside. Then the Messenger of Allah praised Allah and exalted Him; then he said: "O people, verily Allah has removed from you the pride and arrogance of Jahiliyyah. O people, indeed, there are two kinds of people: those who do good, are pious, and begin in the sight of their Lord.

Furthermore, those who are disobedient, wretched, and despised in the sight of their Lord. Then the Messenger of Allah recited the verse: *Ya ayyuhannas inna kholaqna kum min dzakarim wa untsha*. He recited it until the end of the verse, then said, "This is what I say, and I ask Allah's forgiveness for you and me.

**The original meaning of the verse is understood.** QS Al-Hujarat verse 13 has several versions of the verse (asbab an-nuzul) (Tihul, 2021):

- Abu Dawud narrates this verse about an incident that happened to a companion named Abu Hindin, who used to serve the Prophet Muhammad to remove dirty blood from his head by freezing, like a horn. The Prophet told Banu Bayadah to marry Abu Hindin to a woman from among them. They asked, Should we marry off our girls to enslaved people? So Allah revealed this verse so we do not look down on and insult someone or a group because of their position or social status.

- Abu Mulaikah narrated it during the liberation of Makkah in the year 8 Hijri. Then Bilal bin Rabbah was told by the Prophet to call to prayer. Then he climbed the Kaaba and gave the adhan for congregational prayer. Attab bin Usaib, when he saw Bilal call to prayer, said, "Praise be to Allah who has spared my father so that he could not witness this event." Haris bin Hisham said, "Muhammad will not find anyone else to call to prayer except this black crow." Both intended to make fun of Bilal for having black skin. When the Angel Gabriel arrived, he told them what they were discussing. Then this verse was revealed.

- According to Ibn Abbas, this verse was revealed in response to Tsabit bin Qays saying to a man who refused to give him a seat in the assembly with the Prophet, saying, "O son of Fulanah." He reproached the man by mentioning his mother. The Prophet said, "Who said that?" He replied, "I, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Look at the faces of the people." He looked at them. He asked, "What do you see?" "I see white, red, and black." Then he said, "Do not favor anyone except in terms of his religion and piety." Then this verse was revealed. To the one who did not give a seat, the words of Allah, the Almighty, were revealed. (which means): *O you who believe, when it is said to you, "Make room in the assembly," then make room, and Allah will make room for you.* (QS al-Mujadilah verse 11).

From this explanation, Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13 was interpreted in the early days of Islam as a value of mutual respect for diversity, then getting to know each other is the following process. By knowing, we will know more and be more able to respect fellow human beings. Especially respecting the differences that exist, which have become *sunnatullah*. Mutual respect makes humans develop a sense and urge to help each other, which impacts human welfare.

Prosperity and peace are the real deal at the same time; it is the purpose of the Quran as a guide or life guidance for all human beings, not just Muslims. Prosperity and peace together despite differences. The phrase "that you may know one another" said by Allah is a notification of "ways" for humans to get to prosperity and peace. Not as the ultimate goal of the diversity of humanity (Hasanah & Hasanah, 2021). Because by knowing each other, there will be a more intimate relationship, which will lead to interaction and

cooperation. This cooperation is what leads humans to prosperity and peace.

**The current contextual meaning of the verse.** This verse gives us a message that differences are inevitable. The difference here is not only in physical terms such as ethnicity, nation, or skin color, as when the Prophet defended Bilal bin Rabbah who was considered inappropriate to call to prayer by other companions just because he was a black man. In addition, non-physical differences include thoughts, ideas, rich-poor, social status, and even religion. It is evidenced by the Prophet defending Abu Hindin, an enslaved person by social strata, which was considered low at that time. The defenses made by the Prophet all used this verse (Amin & Erihadiana, 2022).

It becomes evident that the Prophet, with this verse, is fighting for the honor of a person as a human being who is equal in the eyes of God. It does not distinguish between physical and non-physical differences that a person has. So that everyone gets their rights. The current context becomes very relevant to the worldwide struggle for equal rights for humans. Especially in the current era of globalization, the role of everyone from various parts of the world needs to get political and democratic rights, anti-discrimination, the right to education, the right to a decent life, the right to express opinions, equality in the eyes of the law and equal opportunities in competition. Of course, regardless of ethnic background, religion, and race, everyone is without exception. Because interfaith peace is the initial capital in creating world peace (Alwi et al., 2020). As a result, the development of the world towards prosperity and peace can be felt by everyone.

The Companions understood this verse as a warning from God through the Prophet Muhammad to respect different others. Both physically and non-physically different. The companions took lessons from the Prophet Muhammad that the differences that exist among humans are a necessity. Whether it is different in ethnicity, thought, social class, or even religion, we must appreciate it as human beings created by Allah. Because in the eyes of Allah that distinguishes not these things but the devotion of each individual, and who knows the piety of each person is only Allah himself. Thus, the Companions who understand the verse well will always respect the differences that exist, both among Muslims and non-Muslims themselves.

In the current context, these values are fundamental to apply to the broader community. There is still much discrimination against minorities because of different ethnicities, religions, thoughts, social statuses, and the rich and poor. Whereas in the eyes of God, all are equal and deserve what should be theirs. Many people cannot get their rights because of different religions, skin colors, and ideas. In Indonesia, many intolerant actions are carried out by a group and even state elements because they cannot mature in appreciating differences, such as the case of the Shia village attack in Madura, as well as Ahmadiyah and other minority sects groups. Bombings were carried out by terrorist groups in the name of religion. Destruction of places of worship, both churches and mosques. It proves that our society has not been able to appreciate the differences that are a necessity in the life of humanity. Not to mention people of different ethnicities or skin colors who do not get the fundamental rights of life carried out by the state, as happened in Rohingya and other parts of the world. It is essential for every human being, especially Muslims, to understand and apply the message of this verse. Differences are inevitable; only piety is noble in the sight of Allah, not our background, and only Allah knows our piety (Hermawan & Mansyur, 2021).

The Companions, obedient to the Prophet, would have understood the verse as direct advice from Allah for every human being to respect each other in differences. Because, in the following explanation, in the eyes of Allah, what is judged is devotion. Although from different ethnic and national backgrounds. Because the Prophet explicitly communicated the message of this verse to uphold the companions who were seen as low by other companions. Because for Rasulullah, racial background or social class, such as Companions Bilal bin Rabbah and Abu Hindin, did not matter to him. The most important thing is their capability and loyalty. So, it becomes essential to be applied by any leader worldwide, especially in Indonesia, where there are many different tribes and cultures (Lufaei, 2019).

Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13 is Allah's expression of the multicultural nature of human beings. Allah clearly says that through His will, he created various types of humans through differences in ethnicity, nation, race, and culture and impact on religious differences. This reality is *sunnatullah*, which we cannot avoid or deny. Whoever wishes to equalize all the existing differences violates *the Sunnatullah* and defies His will. Because the Prophet himself said that "The differences among my people are a blessing." Precisely with the existing differences, we are commanded to recognize each other. Recognizing each other is not the purpose

of the differences created by Allah. However, as a way or an initial path so that every human being, every group, tribe, nation, and religion respect and appreciate each other. In order to accomplish the welfare and peace of all humans, a sense of reciprocal cooperation and assistance must develop because differences cannot be eliminated by simply equalizing them and making them one. Differences will be beautiful if every human wants to respect and appreciate differences wherever and whenever by getting to know each other.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the series of stages of interpretation above from beginning to end that there are at least three fundamental human values from the interpretation of Q.S Al-Hujarat verse 13.

### 1. Value of inclusiveness and plurality

Differences that become inevitable must be understood as the value of inclusiveness and plurality. It is the meaning of the sentence *lita'arfu*, which means recognizing societal differences and opening up to the outside world so that the maturity of society will be formed in facing the differences that exist outside themselves.

This verse also does not mean one of the verses considers all religions the same. It only gives value to the inevitable differences, and a wise human being is a human being who appreciates these differences. They must be treated equally in every aspect of life, whether political, economic, social, or legal.

### 2. Value of equality and justice

The creation of men and women, tribes and nations, shows their equality. No one is superior to the other. Because after that, Allah says the noblest human being is the one who has *taqwa*. Not humans who come from particular groups only. So there is no superiority between men and women; all have advantages and functions. There is no tyranny of the majority against the minority. All must be treated equally in every aspect of life, whether political, economic, social, or legal. However, many citizens of the world still are not treated fairly and have not received their rights, one of which is due to differences in race, skin color, or religion. This injustice is even perpetrated by the state, which should have policies that protect all religions.

Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13 is Allah's expression of the multicultural nature of human beings. Allah clearly says that through His will, he created various types of humans through differences in ethnicity, nation, race, and culture and impact on religious differences. This reality is *sunnatullah*, which we cannot avoid or deny. Whoever wishes to equalize all the existing differences violates *the Sunnatullah* and defies His will. Because the Prophet himself said that "The differences among my people are a blessing." Precisely with the existing differences, we are commanded to recognize each other, as discussed in the interpretation of Al-Hujarat verse 13 earlier. Recognizing each other is not the purpose of the differences created by Allah. However, as a way or an initial path so that every human being, every group, tribe, nation, and religion respect and appreciate each other. So that the welfare and peace of all humanity be realized and a sense of cooperation and assistance emerges. Because differences cannot be eliminated by simply equalizing them and making them one, they will be beautiful if every human wants to respect and appreciate them wherever and whenever.

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