

Gus Dur and Le Petit Prince

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One of the most memorable literary gem ever written on earth is *Le Petit Prince* (the Little Prince) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. This relatively thin novel opened with an intriguing scene: six year old “Me” was fascinated to see a picture he found in a book about wildlife, in which a boa constrictor was devouring a beast.

Inspired by the picture, the boy drew something. He showed the result to adults around him, who thought that he was drawing a cowboy hat. Because as far as they can see the picture looked like a cowboy hat, seeing from the side. But the boy was furious, he said that wasn't a hat, that was a gigantic phyton with an elephant inside his stomach.

All along the length of this absorbing novel we would be enthralled by the fresh and

wonderful wit of a child. And after finished reading it we would be made richer by one enlightening lesson about point of view: how we see a thing could alter everything. And this, in the end, would remind us of the late Gus Dur.

The humorous [Teacher of the Nation](#) gave ample lessons about point of view. One of his famous humorous wit is his comment about how close members of the Parliament resembled kindergarten kids.

If we see only with regular eyes, yes, it looks like members of the Parliament are respectable people. Smartly dressed, with suits, neckties, paid extremely well, and proudly representing the people of the Republic of Indonesia. Cool, impressive. But with his unique point of view Gus Dur labeled them “kindergarten kids”. Later when we pondered his statement, those honorable people demanding the title of “his excellency” when addressed, are actually loud and spoiled, fractious, always seeking for attentions, just like kindergarten kids are. It is indeed proven that Gus Dur was a man of unique, anti mainstream point of view, he thought outside the box all the time and always hit the target right on the crucial point.

His unique, eccentric point of view also shown when he needed to leave the Palace and “stripped off office”. With a very calm air, wearing only a t shirt, a pair of bermuda shorts and slippers, he stood in front of the Palace, smiling widely and waving his hand. There was no President like that in the whole world, not before, nor after.

Stories about Gus Dur’s unique view on myriad of problems are inexhaustible. What we need to ask ourselves is that why the moderate, peaceful and impartial like that is greatly eroded lately? Our society are teeming with people following a narrow point of view. It becomes so easy for them to say that it’s forbidden for Muslims to say “merry Christmas”, blowing trumpets including the cardboard ones is forbidden because trumpet is a Jewish instrument, and many more pathetic sayings like that.

What a sad fact. We should ask ourselves, why don’t they see an expression [of merry Christmas](#) from a Muslim toward his Christian brother as a sign of brotherhood? Why do they treat Christians as “aliens”, even enemies, just because they are “different”? Like the adults in the book “Little Prince” who saw the picture of “a boa constrictor swallowed an elephant” as merely a picture of a hat, why do people became so annoyingly narrow sighted? Is it true that they are all infected by the lazy-brained, pig-headed disease?

“Religious behavior” accompanied by narrow-mindedness is actually very alarming. Muslim intellectual Abdul Munir Mul Khan observed a fact that people who tend to be radical (and prone into doing terror acts) are inclined to a black-and-white point of view. According to them, there are only two ways that people could choose: live nobly or die as a martyr (*isy kariman au mut syahidan*), win the battle in destroying Allah’s enemies or die and go to Heaven.

“Terror-theology” followers consider all people—other than themselves and their

group—are legitimate to be demolished, especially those who had done them wrong by catching and murdering their companions, whether or not those people are of the same religion with them. In this primitive, two-sided verbal logic (as in ‘heaven-hell’, ‘legal-illegal’, ‘devil-angel’, ‘right-wrong’, ‘merit-sin’) that is continuously planted could easily drive the people into the trap of “live nobly or die as a martyr”.

It makes me shudder to think that the number of people who know only heaven-hell, legal-illegal and merit-sin are staggeringly increasing each day. What a terrible place this world would become if it is full of people who put anyone other than their groups as enemies and obligatory to be destroyed. We need lots more people whose attitude toward religion is like Gus Dur. Holding faith in a relaxed manner, not stiff-necked and easily get panicked.

<http://wahidfoundation.org/eng/index.php/news/detail/Gus-Dur-and-Le-Petit-Prince>

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