

BUILDING HOPE AMIDST DISASTER THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BANTUL PEOPLE DURING THE MAY 2006 EARTHQUAKE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explain the solidarity of people toward the victims of disasters and the relation between solidarity and the virtues of hope and faith. Solidarity in its various forms does not stand alone, but connects to the virtue of hope, which is based on faith. From the experiences of the Bantul people in the province of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, following the May 2006 earthquake, the material and spiritual support of people from all over the world helped the survivors to rise from adversity. The virtues of hope and faith strengthened them to endure suffering and rise again.

Introduction

Disasters are prevalent in Indonesia since they hit almost every year. Examples include the Tsunami in Aceh in 2004, the earthquakes of Pangandaran, Nias, Yogyakarta, and Central Java, the eruptions of the Merapi, Sinabung, Agung, and Kelud mountains, floods, and landslides. In 2018, there was an earthquake in Lombok and Palu, which left thousands of victims in pain, and trillions of rupiah lost. In such a context, reflection on the experience of disasters is relevant.

This study focuses on the May 2006 earthquake in the provinces of Yogyakarta and Central Java, Indonesia. This disaster left many people amazed at the sense of human unity, which was still very strong, in spite of an increasingly individualistic and selfish spirit. Material and financial support to be distributed to the victims came from all over the world, reflecting God's solidarity with his creation (Kristiaji, 2007). Human solidarity can thus be considered the highest virtue among others, including hope and faith.

Various forms of disaster relief are often temporary, since expressions of concern and consolation generally occur only in the days surrounding the incident. The survivors are then left to face the ongoing reality of the disaster, and their maturity determines their response and recovery. Attention and research should thus focus more on the other virtues shown by the survivors.

This paper studies those virtues that are related to the spirit of unity of people affected by disasters. The survivors demonstrate much courage in their helplessness, by accepting reality, and possessing the hope to bounce back from the suffering. This becomes a good source of inspiration for the community, both physically and mentally and it becomes easier for people to face the worst

disaster that might occur. Does such solidarity have an impact on the hope of the victims that they might be able to return to their normal lives?

Javanese society considers *nrima* (surrender) a virtue, for it symbolizes moral maturity, patience, and sincerity (Magnis Suseno, 1984:142). Through surrender, a person retains the power to respond to difficulties rationally, rather than collapse into futile reactions. *Nrima* gives people the strength to endure the most difficult situations. Additionally, *sumeleh* is another Javanese word referring to the ability to re-discover one's self. A person obtains the qualities of *nrima* and *sumeleh* through sheer belief and hope in salvation. This, by extension, reveals hope influences these qualities and vice versa.

In Christianity and Islam, surrendering to God is a matter of faith. This virtue grows alongside belief and the hope of salvation. In Christianity, faith, hope, and charity (love) are theological virtues. However, "the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

This paper studies the experience of the residents of Caben hamlet in the district of Bantul, Yogyakarta province, Indonesia, during and following the May 2006 earthquake, with a focus on hope. The following questions are raised:

1. What virtues and local pearls of wisdom inspired the community of Caben hamlet to survive this significant downturn?
2. How was hope attained by the people of the Caben hamlet community?
3. What are the obstacles encountered by the survivors in their attempts to hope in the midst of suffering?
4. How is hope built and developed in the midst of a disaster?

This research was conducted eleven years after the disaster occurred. The idea was to consciously reflect on past experiences and not forget what had happened in the past. Since enough time had elapsed between the study and the incident, it was hoped that the survivors would be more accurate and less emotional when sharing, and that this research might therefore draw lessons on building hope and enthusiasm for life amidst a calamity. Given that Indonesia is a disaster area, the results of this study could be very beneficial for other communities, in being better prepared to face any disasters that may come in the future.

An Overview of the May 2006 Earthquake

The May 2006 earthquake took place in Yogyakarta and Central Java Provinces of Indonesia, on May 27, 2006, at 05:52 local time (May 26, 2006, 22:54 GMT). The epicentre was in the Indian Ocean about 33 km south of Bantul district in the Yogyakarta Province (Aloysius Gunadi Brata, 2018). With a strength of 5.9 on the Richter scale, the quake affected five districts in Yogyakarta Province and six districts in Central Java Province. Bantul district (where this research takes place), was most heavily affected, and included Klaten, Kulonprogo, Yogyakarta, Gunung Kidul, and Sleman.

The damage and losses were estimated at Rp 29.1 trillion (US\$ 3.1 billion). Households and private companies were the most affected, with thousands of houses destroyed, and thousands of people losing their jobs. Since the areas affected by the disaster were densely populated, around 6200 people are reported to have died, most of them poor.

The mood was somber and became increasingly so when the news of an impending tsunami emerged. Many people who had broken legs in the fall of the buildings were forced to flee to avoid being hit by the tsunami. Traffic in the disaster areas was chaotic. There was even a case of a family that tied one of its members to a tree to prevent him being washed away by the tsunami, since he was sick and they could not carry him along. Fortunately, the tsunami did not arrive. Nevertheless, a tsunami might be seen as a test of the faith and confidence of the survivors, especially as many of them were not afraid of the coming of the tsunami, since they trusted in and were convinced of God's help.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation after such a disaster requires substantial funding. Interestingly, reconstruction in Java has proceeded faster than it did in Aceh and Nias, which were affected by a tsunami a few years earlier (Aloysius Gunadi Brata, 2018). Although several factors led to faster reconstruction in Java, the general assumption is that the community unity of the Javanese was a decisive factor. For this reason, solidarity is the central theme of this reflection, as mentioned above.

Methodology

The study was qualitative and aimed at discovering the perspective of the survivors upon their experience of the May 2006 earthquake. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and forum group discussions. Observation of the survey location was frequently carried out to gather additional information about the social situation of the people in the area, while a literature review was conducted to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

Caben hamlet in Bantul district was chosen for the survey with some considerations: this hamlet is located about eight kilometers from the center of Bantul district, around the Sacred Heart Catholic Church of Ganjuran. There are a total of 1,177 residents in this hamlet, which has a land area of sixty-four hectares, consisting of thirty-four and thirty hectares of land and paddy respectively, managed by six neighborhood units (*Rukun Tetangga*). Residents in the hamlet are Catholic (507), Protestant (5), Muslim (661), and Hindu (4). At the time of the May 2006 earthquake, there were sixty-three deaths, with fifty-seven reported to have died during the earthquake, and several houses of residents collapsed to the ground. These conditions make this location ideal for this study.

For this research, eighteen respondents were interviewed, and twenty-three participants were involved in forum group discussions. Three of those who participated in the discussion were also interviewees, and therefore, the total number of respondents was twenty-eight.

There were two forum group discussions, with eight Catholics participating in the first, and five Muslims in the second. The grouping of the forum participants based on religion was intended to enable participants to express their opinions without feeling any constraint to do with religion, and also to determine if religion would be a variable in the research.

Of the respondents, seventeen were men and eleven were women. Most of them worked around the Caben village as farmers and breeders. Two worked at the Ganjuran Orphanage, one was a driver, and one worked in the city of Bantul. All respondents bore material losses from the May 2006 earthquake since their houses had collapsed and were flattened to the ground. The two respondents whose houses did not collapse had built them with strong material. They did not calculate precisely how many rupiahs they lost.

Additionally, of the sixty-three who died in Caben hamlet, seventeen were relatives and neighbors of the respondents. This reveals that those selected were deeply affected by the May 2006 earthquake, and their experiences of suffering were shared in the interview and forum group discussions. The table below describes the relationship between the respondents and the victims.

The relation between the respondents and the victims

Children	Mother	Younger brother	Brother	Wife	Grand-Child	Grand-mother	Aunt	Step-father	Niece	Neighbor	Total
4	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	17

The data collected included the expressions and statements of the survivors, obtained through interviews and discussions. These individuals expressed their beliefs and personal attitudes, which manifested their maturity and faith. The data was then analyzed in comparison with theological views and Patrick Shade's theory about the practicality of hope, as described in the following sections.

Theoretical Framework

Hope as a Theological Virtue

Hope is essential for human life and its dynamics. It is what makes humans live, for life only happens once. Humans try their best to achieve and perfect the day after this one, hoping it will come, and that it will be better than the one before.

Thomas Aquinas defines hope as the desire for a good (in Latin, *desiderium boni possibilis ardui*), which is hard, but not impossible to obtain (*Summa Theologiae* IIa-IIae. Q. 17 as cited by Pesckhe Vol. II, 1992: 65). Also, humans can hope for anything: for healthy living, business success, excellence in education, etc. A gambler hopes to win the game, a thief hopes for success in stealing, and a murderer for the target person to be killed. The critical point is, there is a possibility to obtain the desire, although it is hard since there is no guarantee the desire will be fulfilled.

As mentioned by Thomas Aquinas above, hope is a virtue when it is directed towards what is morally excellent and lovable (Pesckhe Vol II, 1994:66), because in essence virtue is a habit that gives humans both the inclination and power to do what is morally right (Pesckhe Vol I, 1994:343). Virtue is a quality that encourages moral good. It is the excellence or superiority someone possesses. Whoever is morally knowledgeable and prudent loves the virtues and strives to do good by them, hence making them a habit.

The virtues are grouped into two, namely: moral and theological. The object of moral virtue is related to human reality, while the object of theological virtue is related to God. The four cardinal moral virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, while the theological virtues are faith, hope, and love or charity, which are referred to in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13:13).

Christian theology considers hope a supernatural virtue, which means it symbolizes the fullness of God's salvation. Many believe salvation will occur in the last days when humans are united in the blessed communion with God, the ultimate symbol of hope. In more inclusive, universal and cosmic terms, the object of hope is formulated as the consummation of the messianic reign, the completion of creation under God's design, the perfection of all things in Christ as the head of the universe, and integral salvation (Pesckhe Vol II, 1994:71).

Christian hope is not only the expectation of redemption, eternal happiness, or eschatological deliverance at the end of time, separate from the real concerns of the world. Hope also relates to the worldly and temporary sphere. The Kingdom of God came to the world and continues to be manifest in the life of the human nation. In this sense, peace, justice, and the better ordering of the world are also the real hopes of Christians. However, temporary and worldly hopes remain the precursors of the ultimate hope, which is eschatological salvation. In other words, "although the final object of hope is the fullness of God's glory and the universal salvation, all which contributes to the realization of this universal, ultimate goal, here and now in man's earthly existence, is equally and with full right the confidence of hope" (Pesckhe Vol. II, 1994:72).

Several factors cause people to have hope, including belief in God's great power, and willingness to help people. This willingness is evident from the history of salvation in which God always keeps His promises to save people, mainly through His revelation in Jesus Christ. Secondly God channels His mercy through the sacraments and the prayers delivered to Him through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the saints, and salvation is granted to humans through the Church.

As stated earlier, hope is the driver in human life. Challenges and suffering are overcome through hopefulness. Therefore, it is important to be optimistic about the future since life does not stop at this time. In a sense, hope is a tool to continue building the world, since human beings are called upon by God to participate in His creative work.

Dimensions of Hope

Hope is experienced in all of life, and this implies its manifestations are very diverse. Children, adolescents, adults, and parents have their hopes, just like individuals, families, organizations, nations, countries, and the wider community.

Additionally, hope causes life to be dynamic, the future more open, and encourages the enthusiasm with which to build the world. However, there is also the danger that hope will not be realized, a situation that makes people frustrated. This is understandable, since what we hope for is totally out of our control. Patrick Shade, in his *Habits of Hope* (2001: 5-6), distinguishes between blind and sensible or practical hope. Blind hope does not rest on real conditions; there is no commitment to realize it, while sensible/practical hope rests in reality, therefore, realization is warranted.

Furthermore, Shade proposes a theory for bridging these two poles of hope. Hope needs to rest on reality to be realized, and not be blinded. Additionally, hope need not be strictly limited to the purpose for which it was intended. Therefore, Shade proposes a pragmatic theory that can empower the practicality of hope. He rejects traditional theories of hope, including the theology that bases optimism in the absolute divine power. According to these traditional theories, hope is lost to human beings. Instead, Shade advocates the use of intelligence to form and pursue this subject, to explore perseverance, and realize hope can be productive in facing challenges and enriching life, and that it is therefore not empty and futile.

According to Shade there are three dimensions of hope: particular hope, habits of hope, and hopefulness. These three dimensions are separated only abstractly, and are related. First, particular hopes are those directed at real objects—recovery from illness, succeeding in business, and studies, for example. Particular hopes lie between plans and dreams (Shade, 2001: 19). A plan has clear goals, while hope does not. However, a target is more precise than a dream since it has clear goals. If someone dreams of becoming a contractor, realization is uncertain. By contrast, for someone who is planning to become a contractor, realization is certain since various steps are taken towards achieving it. Hope has clear goals in comparison to dreams. The specialty of particular hope is that it is accompanied by a commitment to realization, though there might be difficult obstacles to overcome. For instance, if one hopes to succeed in business, the target can be achieved if there is a commitment to achieving it. The second dimension is habits of hope, the essential fostering of a commitment to make efforts to achieve unclear expectations. There are three main elements to the habits of hope; namely, persistence, resourcefulness, and courage. Realization of a particular hope requires commitment, which is manifested in these elements. Habits are associated with the other two dimensions, including particular hopes and hopefulness, and the hinges which connect them are equally essential. The third dimension is hopefulness, which involves positive desiring, even in continuous suffering. If the commitment to achieve expectations is continued with persistence, resourcefulness, and courage, hopefulness grows. For this reason, particular hopes come closer to being achieved. Therefore, according to Shade's theory, the dimensions of hope are practical and productive, and they are particular hopes, habits of hope and hopefulness. This study assesses Shade's theory in light of the experience of the Caben hamlet community after the May 2006 earthquake in the provinces of Yogyakarta and Central Java.

Findings

Faith as the Basis of Hope

From interviews and forum group discussions with respondents, twenty-three statements relating to the hopes of the survivors during the disaster were noted. Of these, twenty stated faith was the foundation that enabled survivors to rise from their suffering immediately. The following expressions or statements show the faith dimensions of the survivors. First, God is seen as the origin and purpose of everything:

Whatever God wants happens, and therefore, there was a belief in restoration.

(Indonesian: Tuhan yang berkehendak semua terjadi, maka saya percaya pasti Tuhan akan memulihkannya.)

The Almighty makes all of these events.

(Indonesian: *semua kejadian ini yang membuat adalah Yang Kuasa.*)

God made everything.

(Indonesian: *semua peristiwa Tuhan yang membuat.*)

Second, God is thought of as a helper. This is illustrated in the following expressions:

They remained hopeful God would help.

(Indonesian: *saya tetap optimis dan memiliki harapan bahwa pasti Tuhan akan menolong.*)

Due to God's help, some were still safe. It was unbelievable

(Indonesian: *Karena pertolongan Yang Kuasa, saya masih selamat. Kalau dipikir tidak masuk akal.*)

Third, God was regarded as the mainstay of everything. Human beings can rely entirely only on God. This can be seen in the following statements:

Life is about following and surrendering to God.

(Indonesian: *Hidup hanyalah sekedar ikut Tuhan dan menjalani hidup ini dengan berpasrah.*)

Human beings belong to God.

(Indonesian: *manusia adalah milik Tuhan.*)

God does anything according to His will.

(Indonesian: *Tuhan bisa berbuat apa saja sesuai kehendak-Nya.*)

God is the owner of this life.

(Indonesian: *Tuhan yang menjadi pemilik kehidupan ini.*)

God wants everyone to live.

(Indonesian: *Tuhan tidak akan mencobai. Tuhan ingin semua orang hidup.*)

Life and death are determined by the Almighty.

(Indonesian: *Hidup dan jodoh ditentukan oleh Yang Kuasa.*)

The above statements of the survivors fall under the teachings of religions about faith. They contain three essential elements, namely (1) faith as total surrender to God, (2) absolute trust, which leads to true loyalty to God, (3) obedience, which is not easy for modern people who strongly emphasize autonomy and freedom (Chang 2015:25-26).

Faith in the sense of total submission is the basis for humanity to have hope. In the letter to the Hebrews, it is stated that only faith can guarantee the blessings which we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities which at present remain unseen (1 Heb. 11:1). According to Thomas Aquinas (cited by Chang 2015:27), the verse emphasizes that faith is the substance and basis of human hope, works of truth, and the proof of the certainty of what is unseen.

This was also the experience of the survivors of the May 2006 earthquake in Caben hamlet. Surrendering to God was the basis of their hope when enduring very heavy suffering. In general, they hoped God would help them and give them the strength to face all kinds of difficulties, wholeheartedly believing that He has ways of fulfilling all their needs. In this context, the main hope of eternal salvation is also manifested in these secondary hopes, which are temporary and worldly. The survivors hoped to receive rice packs, tents, tarpaulins, or financial assistance to rebuild houses. These concrete expectations were based on faith in God, who is the origin and destination, helper, and organizer of life.

Patrick Shade (2001), as mentioned earlier, rejects traditional and theological teachings, which have the supernatural and divine power as the foundation of hope. Instead, Shade proposes to intelligence as the basis for forming and pursuing hope. However, the experience of the survivors in Caben hamlet proves the survivors' particular hopes for food, money, and other support emerged from their absolute submission to God. Their habits of hope in the forms of their persistence, resourcefulness, and courage to face the terrible disaster originated from their strong trust in the Almighty. Also, their optimism to live hopefully is supported by their faith. It should be noted the survivors are all religious, and it is not possible to separate their experiences from their faith. In this context, therefore, Patrick Shade's theory of hope is not suitable for the religious community.

God's Presence in the Love of Others

In interviews and discussions, the survivors confirmed their submission to and hope in God grew strongly when they received overwhelming help. They were humbled by the number of people who generously supported them regardless of religion or group. Assistance in the form of food, goods that could be directly used, money, and labor were manifestations of love and solidarity.

Additionally, this love and solidarity made the survivors aware of God's love and they stated that assistance confirmed their faith and hope. Some said that since the earthquake, they had become aware of the importance of faith and the principle of cooperation. Since then, several have begun to pray and work together diligently. Another said that in similar conditions, they would remain optimistic and have hope God would help them.

It is clear that faith in God is not lived in an abstract void; instead, it continues to grow through human love. That is in line with Paul's assertion that love is the highest virtue. "So these three things are left, namely; faith, hope and love, and the greatest of them is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Love unites and perfects everything. "And above all: wear love, as a binder that unites and perfects" (Col. 3:14).

Love and solidarity encouraged the survivors to care more for their neighbors. By working together and helping others in the same boat, they generated enthusiasm for a better life. Two chairmen of the neighborhood association in the Caben hamlet stated that they prioritized the safety of others before their own interests. They were willing to take care of the funerals of their dead neighbors and provide food and tents for their residents, even though their own homes and families had not been taken care of. It was only on the last day that the chairmen's houses were cleared with cooperation from the residents.

Love and solidarity foster hope and faith, and the former is based on complete belief in God. Two residents shared experiences in which they suffered a similar fate of losing their beloved children. Mr. Wardi and Mr. Warjiyono lost a daughter and son respectively. However, they believed God would bring about a change to their situation. Their hopes came from their faith. It happened that a few years later, Mr. Wardi was blessed with a son, while Mr. Warjiyono had a daughter, even though his wife was in her forties. Mr. Warjiyono prepared for a cesarean section

for his wife and the most expensive medicines for recovery after the surgery when the time for delivery was nearing. However, thanks to God's mercy, his wife was able to give birth normally, and the drugs were acquired for free.

Also, Mr. Warjiono lost a newly-built 40 million rupiahs mortgaged house. Only two installments had been made on its repayment. The loan had to be repaid in full, even though the house had been destroyed. However, there is optimism about debt financing and owning a home due to the faith placed in God, which is strengthened by unity with others.

Patrick Shade (2001) does not state specifically how hope grows. His theory presupposes that these concrete expectations flourish by means of human *intelligence*. From the experience of the Caben hamlet community, concrete expectations develop out of the love and unity of all. They do not grow without concrete experience. Habits of hope in the forms of persistence, resourcefulness, and courage grow when one experiences love from others. Similarly, hopefulness flourishes when one is shown love and solidarity from others. Therefore, Shade's theory of hope is not applicable in the above context of a religious community.

Dishonesty as a Barrier to Hope

Not much was revealed from the interviews and discussions about the factors that inhibit hope. However, cases of looting and aid not reaching the intended addresses were mentioned, and the dishonesty and greed of a small number of residents was highlighted as a possible barrier to hope. There were a number of people who denied receiving aid even though they had done so. Others took advantage of peoples' predicament to loot and steal, causing survivors to lose hope. Fortunately, such cases were not hugely significant. Love and unity was stronger than those few negative incidents.

Understandably, dishonesty and greed are obstacles to growth of hope, hence, they are the opposite of love and solidarity. By crippling hope, trust in others is lost, and fear about one's needs not being fulfilled (especially while suffering), creeps in. As a result, despair arises, and this is the enemy of hope (Peschke Vol.II, 1994:79).

Building Hope Amidst Disaster

This study discovered that love and solidarity, which grow and flourish in disaster experiences, are not lone-standing virtues. Previous research mostly stops at the point at which their findings show unity among the human race to be a source of amazement. This study explains how love and solidarity foster hope, allowing survivors to quickly rise from adversity when they receive assistance from various parties as a manifestation of God's love.

In the wake of disaster and suffering, any form of assistance and solidarity from others needs to be intensified. When support from people to victims is limited, the latter often struggle to meet their needs. Thus, material assistance needs to be supplemented with mental-spiritual assistance and consolation, that the survivors might always remember God's love. Trauma healing, prayers, and worship are critical and remind the survivors of God's mercy.

As a form of protection for vulnerable people, meetings, and gatherings which foster a spirit of cooperation need to be held frequently. The community also needs to become accustomed to doing spiritual exercises to prevent being caught up in momentary needs. If at some point they are hit by a disaster, they will thus be prepared mentally to continue in the virtues of faith, hope, and love/solidarity.

Conclusion

Solidarity and charity correlate with faith and hope, and are not different from other theological virtues. Shade's theory about the practicality of hope is irrelevant to the experience of the Caben hamlet community. Love, care and support from others bring hope. Therefore, building

hope amidst the experience of disaster can be achieved by increasing the attention, assistance, and unity of others not affected by the disaster. Solidarity fosters and strengthens hope, enabling people to rise from destruction and suffering as soon as possible. By contrast, dishonesty, greed, and taking advantage of the suffering of people who are hit by a calamity needs to be eliminated. Such bad attitudes dispel hope and break the spirits of those affected by disaster.

Solidarity and cooperation need also to be encouraged in society in general. Willingness to help one other and work together in society is a shared virtue that continues to grow hope. In Indonesia, which is very prone to disasters, hope is significant, so that a community will not be easily discouraged if at any time a disaster occurs.

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