

SAPTA DARMA BELIEF SYSTEM: CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY AND STRATEGIES FOR NAVIGATING SOCIAL CHANGE

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Article history: received 10 December 2024; revised 21 January 2025; accepted 05 February 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v8i3.11632>

Abstract. This study aims to explore the concept of diversity within the Sapta Darma belief system, and the strategies adopted by its adherents to navigate social change. This research employs a library research approach. According to Mestika Zed, library research involves a systematic process of collecting, reading, annotating, and analyzing data from various scholarly sources. It encompasses the examination of reference books, prior research findings, and academic literature to establish a theoretical foundation for the study. Literature review is also used as a data collection technique by analyzing books, notes, and reports relevant to the research problem. The findings indicate that the Sapta Darma belief system upholds a profound understanding of diversity, reflected in its principles of tolerance and inclusivity toward different societal groups. The Sapta Darma community employs adaptive and flexible strategies to respond to social, political, and cultural transformations while preserving the essence of its teachings. These adaptation strategies include modifications in worship practices, societal engagement, and the integration of technological advancements, particularly in the use of social media. This research provides new insights into how local belief systems sustain their existence and remain resilient amid continuous societal changes.

Keywords: sapta darma; diversity; social change

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a wide diversity of cultures, religions and beliefs. In addition to the six official religions recognized by the government, there are also various sects of belief that have developed in the community, one of which is Sapta Darma. This sect emerged in the mid-20th century and teaches the values of spirituality, life balance, and devotion to God Almighty. In a cultural context, the existence of beliefs such as Sapta Darma reflects the complexity of belief systems in Indonesia that continue to adapt to social change. Koentjaraningrat (2002) explains that culture has universal elements, including religious elements, social organization systems, and value systems that govern human life. This shows that the beliefs that develop in society, including Sapta Darma, are part of a cultural heritage that has social and spiritual functions in the lives of its adherents [1].

In a religious perspective, belief in God is the main core of the existence of spiritual teachings. Imaddudin (2015) asserts that the development of religious belief is a form of recognition of the existence of great power, which is considered a source of noble values that govern human life. Meanwhile, Cohen in Ni Made Rasmi Himawari's research (2019) states that spiritual well-being is related to a person's quality of life and its manifestation in social life. This suggests that aspects of belief not only impact on an individual's relationship with God, but also on social well-being and life balance [2], [3].

In a study (Aditya Apriawan Saputra, et.al, 2023), Sapta Darma is explained as a belief based on the principle of *wewarah pitu*, which teaches noble values such as ethics, helping, and benefiting others regardless of background. Although substantively different from officially recognized religions by the government, Sapta Darma still recognizes God Almighty and allows its adherents to practice this teaching side by side with other religions. On the other hand, Sapta Darma is not categorized as a religion, but rather as a spiritual faith that emphasizes the individual's relationship with God. According to Nur Arifin (2017), this belief is still poorly known by the wider community and is often discriminated against because it is considered a teaching that deviates from commonly held beliefs [4].

The existence of Sapta Darma in Indonesia faces various challenges, especially in social, cultural and legal contexts. Social changes due to globalization, modernization, as well as the dynamics of government policies towards *aliran kepercayaan* also affect the existence and strategy of this community in maintaining its teachings. Its adherents must navigate the changing times while fighting for their right to practice their beliefs in a society where the majority adheres to major religions. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how Sapta Darma interprets diversity and the strategies used by its community in the face of social change. Through this study, it is hoped that greater insight can be gained into how local cults

adapt and survive in an ever-evolving social environment. In addition, this study also contributes to the discourse of pluralism and religious freedom in Indonesia, as well as how the state and society can accommodate the existence of aliran kepercayaan in an inclusive national framework.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a *field research* method with a sociology of religion approach to understand the concept of diversity in Sapta Darma teachings and the strategies used by the community in facing social change. This research is conducted by direct observation in the Sapta Darma community, in-depth interviews with community leaders or members, and documentation of the various religious activities they carry out. In addition, this research also refers to literature review from various sources, such as academic journals, theses, books, and official documents related to the development of aliran kepercayaan in Indonesia. The sociology of religion approach is used to analyze how Sapta Darma beliefs interact with the social, political, and cultural dynamics that develop in society [5].

In terms of data analysis, this research applies descriptive qualitative techniques, where data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents are analyzed thematically. Primary data obtained from field research will be combined with secondary data from the literature review to gain a more comprehensive understanding. The analysis process is carried out with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction aims to sort out relevant information in accordance with the research focus, while data presentation is done in the form of narrative descriptions to describe the social reality experienced by the Sapta Darma community. Furthermore, conclusion drawing is done by connecting research findings with theories in the sociology of religion to understand the pattern of adaptation and sustainability of the Sapta Darma sect in a dynamic society [6].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. History of Sapta Dharma

The Sapta Darma sect was born out of the spiritual experience of Hardjosapuro, a man from Pare, Kediri, East Java, in 1952. Hardjosapuro, who worked as a barber, felt a deep anxiety on December 26, 1952. That night, on Friday Wage at 01.00 WIB, he had a mystical experience in the form of strong vibrations that moved his body without his own will. In his conscious state, he received a revelation that later became the basis of Sapta Darma's teachings. This spiritual experience did not happen once, but continued for 12 years until Hardjosapuro's death. This event became the starting point for the formation of Sapta Darma teachings, which later developed into a sect of belief embraced by some Indonesian people. (Abdi Afrianto, 2016)

The name Sapta Darma itself comes from the terms "sapta" which means seven and "darma" which means obligation or guidance in life. This teaching emphasizes seven

main principles that must be carried out by its adherents, known as Wewerah Suci. In its development, this teaching was originally called Agama Sapta Darma, but after the issuance of PANPRES No. 1 of 1965 concerning the prevention of abuse and religious guidelines, the name was adjusted to Kerohanian Sapta Darma or Aliran Kepercayaan Sapta Darma. This teaching teaches the concept of divinity and emphasizes the importance of purity to achieve happiness in the world and life after death [7].

As an organization, Sapta Darma was officially established on 27 December 1952 with a leadership structure headed by Panuntun Agung Sri Gutama, a title given to Hardjosapuro. In addition, there are spokespersons and panuntun staff who are tasked with spreading and explaining the teachings to the public. The place of worship for adherents is called Sanggar Agung, which serves as a center for spiritual and social activities. To this day, Sapta Darma continues to exist as part of the diversity of beliefs in Indonesia, despite facing various challenges in maintaining its teachings in the midst of social changes and state policies that are more accommodating to official religions.

B. Core teachings of Sapta Dharma

Sapta Darma is a spiritual teaching that has its roots in Indonesian mysticism and has principles that direct its followers to live their lives with moral and spiritual awareness and concern for others. The word "Sapta Darma" itself means "Seven Truths" or "Seven Good Deeds," which form the main basis of the teaching. Prophethood in Sapta Darma In Sapta Darma, the person who receives revelation is not called a prophet, but Panuntun Agung. This is because the founder of Sapta Darma, Mr. Hardjosopoero, refused to be called a prophet, because according to him a prophet is a figure who is truly perfect in spirituality and morality [8].

The first revelation in this teaching was received by Mr. Hardjosopoero on December 27, 1955, after doing sujudan worship. From this revelation, the term Sapta Darma emerged, but the concept is different from major religions such as Islam, Christianity, or Hinduism. Sapta Darma is more of a spiritual path than a formal religion. The teachings in Sapta Darma focus on self-development and inner purification through meditation, prayer, and the practice of living in accordance with noble values. Although there is an element of divinity, this teaching focuses more on human wisdom and awareness in living life, not on the prophetic aspect that is often associated with God's revelation in the heavenly religions [9]. Thus, the prophetic concept in Sapta Darma refers more to the role of a spiritual leader who guides his followers to find self-awareness, live life with high morality, and achieve spiritual balance through the teachings that have been passed down.

There are seven main teachings in Sapta Darma called Wewarah Pitu or Seven Sacred Teachings. Here is the explanation in simpler language:

- a. Belief in God Almighty: Every Sapta Darma follower is required to believe in the existence of an Almighty God, who is eternal, just, and loving. God in this teaching is described as the source of all life and wisdom.

- b. Obeying the laws of the country with honesty and a pure heart: Sapta Dharma followers are taught to obey the laws and regulations of the country with honesty and sincerity. Adherence to the law aims to create peace, order and prosperity.
- c. Contributing to nation and state building: this teaching emphasizes the importance of each individual's sense of responsibility in maintaining unity and striving for the nation's progress. Followers are expected to participate in efforts to build a prosperous and just country.
- d. Helping others selflessly: in Sapta Dharma, helping others must be done with sincerity, without expecting anything in return. This principle instills an attitude of compassion and concern for others, whether in the form of material or spiritual support.
- e. Relying on one's own efforts and beliefs: this teaching emphasizes that every human being has been given the gift of reason, energy, and ability by God to live life. Therefore, one should work hard, be self-reliant, and not rely entirely on others in facing life's challenges.
- f. Living a life of politeness and good manners: in social interactions, followers are taught to always be polite, humble and not arrogant. They should be able to respect others and build harmonious social relationships.
- g. Realizing that the world is always changing: life in the world is not eternal and is always changing. Therefore, one should be prepared to face various situations, be it happiness or hardship, wisely and mindfully [10].

C. The Concept of Diversity in the Sapta Dharma Faith

Sapta Dharma is one of the beliefs that developed in Indonesia with the main principle of respecting diversity and upholding universal spiritual values. Diversity in Sapta Dharma can be seen from the way its teachings do not limit its followers to certain religious rules, but rather provide freedom to practice beliefs according to their respective consciences. In this teaching, humans are taught to live in harmony with God, fellow humans and nature, thus creating harmony in social life. This process is in line with the concept of social construction, where diversity does not simply exist naturally, but is also formed through ongoing social interaction. Thus, Sapta Dharma followers can practice their beliefs while still respecting other beliefs, reflecting the high value of tolerance in social life [11].

In practice, the diversity within Sapta Dharma is also evident in the form of rituals and traditions that develop dynamically in different regions. Despite having the same basic teachings, each community of followers can have variations in the way they worship or practice their spiritual values. This shows that diversity in Sapta Dharma is not just a doctrinal aspect, but also part of a social reality that continues to adapt to the times. This belief does not close itself to social change, but rather accommodates differences and makes them a strength in maintaining its existence. In this way, Sapta Dharma is able to be part of the cultural and spiritual diversity in Indonesia, contributing to social harmony amidst the plurality of society.

According to Eva Setia Ningrum (2018) in her research explained that the Sapta Dharma faith is one of the forms of spirituality that developed in Indonesia, which does

not bind its followers within certain religious boundaries. In the perspective of social construction, diversity in Sapta Dharma can be understood as the result of social interaction and the process of meaning that continues to develop in society [12].

a. Externalization:

Diversity in Sapta Dharma is formed through the process of externalization, which is when its followers adjust to the surrounding social and cultural values. Sapta Dharma does not reject differences, but rather embraces them as part of a harmonious life. This is reflected in its teachings that teach harmony between humans and God, fellow humans, and nature [13].

b. Objectivation:

The Sapta Dharma belief becomes part of social life through the process of objectivation, when its teachings and practices are recognized and institutionalized in the community. Rituals such as meditation and prayer together become a tangible form of the value of diversity practiced by its followers. Although not part of an official religion, Sapta Dharma has gained a place in society and has survived various social changes [14].

c. Internalization:

In the process of internalization, the values of diversity in Sapta Dharma are accepted and lived by its followers as part of their spiritual identity. They not only understand the teachings of Sapta Dharma as a personal belief, but also as a life guideline that shapes their worldview. Thus, they can interact with the wider society without feeling alienated or having to abandon their spiritual identity [15].

Diversity in Sapta Dharma shows that belief and spirituality are not static, but continue to develop in accordance with social dynamics. The dialectical process between individuals, beliefs and society creates a social reality that allows Sapta Dharma to remain relevant in the midst of Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity [16].

D. Strategies for Facing Social Change in Sapta Dharma

The strategy of dealing with social change in the Sapta Dharma faith focuses on adaptation and renewal of the teachings while maintaining the essence of the original teachings. In dealing with the dynamics of rapid social change, Sapta Dharma utilizes an approach that is inclusive and open to differences, and emphasizes the importance of dialogue between individuals with different backgrounds. This is in line with the basic principles of the teachings that value diversity and unite differences in a harmonious whole [17]. For example, in the face of technological progress and globalization, Sapta Dharma invites its followers to utilize technology wisely, without losing deep spiritual values, so that they can still interact with the outside world without being eroded by the flow of modernity that is not in accordance with the value of belief [18].

Another strategy is to prioritize education and counseling to improve followers' understanding of Sapta Dharma's teachings and values, so that they can more easily adapt to social changes. This teaching is not only done through conventional approaches, but also by using social media and online platforms as a means to spread the teachings more widely [19]. Through this strategy, Sapta Dharma seeks to

ensure that its followers not only survive, but also thrive and contribute to a changing society. By combining tradition and innovation, Sapta Darma faces the challenges of social change more flexibly and effectively, maintaining a balance between preserving spiritual values and addressing changing times constructively [20].

According to Abdi Afrianto (2016), the strategy to face social change in the Sapta Darma faith focuses on strengthening the principles of tolerance, social harmony, and respect for diversity. As a mystical sect that has been recognized as equal to the official state religion, Sapta Darma tries to build a more open communication bridge between its followers and the wider community [21]. One of the strategies is to prioritize the teaching of mutual respect among fellow human beings regardless of differences in religious backgrounds or beliefs. In this case, Sapta Darma followers are taught to continue to maintain social harmony, both at the individual and community levels, by fostering a high attitude of tolerance towards differences [22].

In addition, Sapta Darma's strategy also emphasizes the importance of virtue, which is the foundation of local wisdom in interacting with society. In the face of rapid social change, Sapta Darma seeks to prioritize local wisdom values that encourage wisdom and peace in everyday life. Through this approach, Sapta Darma focuses not only on accepting change, but also on character building that prioritizes goodness and morality. It aims to create sustainable social harmony in an evolving society, so that Sapta Darma followers can contribute to social development without losing the identity of their teachings.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of this study shows that the journey of Sapta Darma, which began with the teachings received by Hardjosapuro in 1955, has developed into a sect that not only reflects the value of spirituality, but also emphasizes diversity and tolerance in Indonesian society. The main teachings contained in Sapta Darma, such as faith in God Almighty, honesty in carrying out state laws, and concern for others, are principles that shape the character of its followers. Despite facing various challenges, including rapid social changes and changing state policies, Sapta Darma has maintained the essence of its teachings while adapting to the dynamics of the times. In the face of social change, Sapta Darma adopts a strategy that is inclusive and open to difference. Its teachings, which prioritize tolerance and social harmony, enable followers to live their lives wisely and harmoniously. By introducing local wisdom values and emphasizing education and counseling, the sect seeks to maintain its relevance in a society that is increasingly plural and open to change. Through a balanced approach of tradition and innovation, Sapta Darma has managed to survive and thrive, becoming part of Indonesia's spiritual diversity.

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