

TABLIGHI JAMAAT: AN ISLAMIC REVIVALIST MOVEMENT AND RADICALISM ISSUES

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Abstract

This article discusses Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic transnational movement that emerged in the early 20th century and attracted great attention post 9/11 in America. One of the interesting points that invite debate among scholars is whether Tablighi Jamaat is a part of radical movements or terrorist groups or simply an Islamic missionary movement. These debates relate to the existence of Tablighi Jamaat around the world. Moreover, it can be said that Tablighi Jamaat has settled in every country of the world. The report of the American Foreign Council shows that the tablighist is estimated to have between 50 and 80 million people. The numbers have led to suspicion of policymakers from many countries, particularly on the issue of radicalism. Discussion of this article based on basic questions on who are Tablighists, their aims, and their activities. However, the main purpose of this article to show how scholars argue about the existence of Tablighi and the possibility of Tablighi Jamaat's involvement in radical actions. In general, this study is based on library research.

Keywords: Islamic transnational movement; Radicalism; Tablighi Jamaat.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mendiskusikan Tablighi Jamaat sebagai gerakan Islam transnasional yang muncul pada awal abad ke-20 dan menyita perhatian setelah peristiwa nine eleven (9/11) di Amerika. Salah satu hal yang menarik dan mengundang perdebatan di kalangan ilmuwan adalah apakah Tablighi Jamaat merupakan bagian dari gerakan atau kelompok radikal atau bahkan teroris, atau sebatas gerakan keagamaan belaka. Perdebatan-perdebatan tersebut terkait dengan keberadaan Tablighi Jamaat di berbagai negara di seluruh dunia. Bahkan, dapat dikatakan bahwa setiap negara telah terjamah oleh keberadaan Tablighi Jamaat. Dewan Amerika Luar Negeri menunjukkan bahwa diperkirakan ada 50 hingga 80 juta tablighis di seluruh dunia. Jumlah tersebut tentu mengundang kekhawatiran para pembuat kebijakan di berbagai negara, khususnya terkait dengan isu radikalisme. Diskusi dalam artikel ini berdasarkan pada pertanyaan-pertanyaan mendasar tentang siapa sebenarnya Tablighi Jamaat, tujuan dan aktivitas mereka. Namun, tujuan utama dari artikel ini adalah untuk menunjukkan argument-argumen para ilmuwan mengenai keberadaan Tablighi Jamaat dan kemungkinan Tablighi Jamaat terlibat dalam aksi-aksi radikalisme. Secara umum, kajian ini didasarkan pada kajian kepustakaan.

Kata Kunci: Gerakan Islam transnasional; Radikalisme; Tablighi Jamaat.

Background

Tablighi Jamaat might not be a popular Islamic movement before nine eleven (9/11) bombing in 2001,¹ because of the silent movement in the global world. Other Islamic transnational movements such as Jamaat Islami, Ikhwanul Muslimin, or Hizbut Tahrir

are more popular than the Tablighi Jamaat movement. Followers of Tablighi Jamaat called as Tablighist² are more than the other Islamic transnational movements.

American Foreign Council³ claims that Tablighi Jamaat members are around 50 to 80⁴

¹ Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs' in *ISIM 2002*. <<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/10068/?sequence=1>> {accessed 7 April 2019}.

² In this article, Tablighist refers to singular and Tablighists is for plural.

³American Foreign Policy Council, 'Tablighi Jamaat' in *almanac.afpc.org* 2010.

<<http://almanac.afpc.org/sites/almanac.afpc.org/files/Tablighi%20Jama'at.pdf>> {accessed 7 April 2019}

⁴ Shireen Khan Burki, based on some reports, states that the number of Tablighi Jamaat 70 to 80 millions in more than 150 countries. See Shireen Khan Burki, 'The Tablighi Jama'at: Proselytizing Missionaries or Trojan Horse?', *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 8.1 (2013), 98-117 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2013.738407>>.

million and outspread in almost every country around the world.⁵ The movement has established branches as a coordinative center (*markaz*) in more than 200 countries. Tablighists now exist in developed countries as well as in developing countries. They have high mobility to disseminate Tablighi teaching, as a main mission of the movement, not only in local communities but also in other countries. Their efforts called *dawah* (Islamic missionary) have accelerated Tablighi Jamaat diasporas throughout the world. In addition, other factors are encouraging the spread of Tablighi Jamaat movements, such as their *dakwah* system and good relationship among Muslim and non-Muslim.

Barbara D Metcalf states that the 9/11 moment has popularized Tablighi Jamaat as a global Islamic movement.⁶ The terrorist incident had shaken not only American but also international communities. Tablighi Jamaat is confronted with Islamophobia and panic by international communities that have linked Tablighi Jamaat with terrorist issues and other Islamic radical movements. It is logical and rational due to its emergence and its center in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, where the Taliban movement from Pakistan tends to link some radical and terrorist to nine eleven bombings.

Even though Tablighi Jamaat has not been proven to be involved in the 9/11 bombing, some efforts associate that Tablighi Jamaat has a connection with the radical movements. This article analyses the issues from any perspectives from some researches

and works. It will begin with the history of the emergence of Tablighi Jamaat, the background of the movement, ideology, and doctrine, as well as the main objectives of Tablighi Jamaat. The main discussion will analyze the Tablighi Jamaat diaspora in the world and the polemic of Tablighi Jamaat's involvement in radical movements.

Tablighi Jamaat's Name and the Emergence of the Movement

Tablighi Jamaat does not have an official name as we are recognizing at the moment. However, the name was used by many people to call the movement founded by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Al-Khandalawi (1885-1944). Tablighi Jamaat emerged in Mewat, North India in the 1920s⁷. Maulana Ilyas, the founder never named the movement, except people gave the name due to its characteristic and main goal to do Islamic missionary (*dakwah*). Tablighi Jamaat contains two words, *tablighi* means delivering the religious message, preaching, and inviting people to follow religious paths. While *Jamaat* means congregation. Historically, Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad mentioned many names referring to the movement, such as *jamaat* (party), *tabrik* (movement), *nizam* (system), *tanzim* (organization), *tabligh* (*dakwah*), and *tabrik al-iman* (faith movement).⁸

All of these names, the movement is also called with other important names, such as Jamaah Ilyasiyyah or Ilyas' follower (associated with the founder).⁹ Some people called Bhopali Jamaah (Bhopali congregation), where Tablighist held annual assembly after the death

⁵ See also Joshua W Hedges, *Tablighi Jamaat: The Premier Latent Network* (Washington: The Fund for Peace, April 2008), p. 1; Diana Wong and Peggy Levitt, 'Travelling Faiths and Migrant Religions: The Case of Circulating Models of Da'wa among the Tablighi Jamaat and Folangshan in Malaysia', *Global Networks*, 14.3 (2014), 348-62 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12063>>

⁶ Metcalf, 'Traditionalist Islamic.

⁷ Jan A. Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat: a Transnational Movement of Islamic Faith Regeneration', *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies (EJEPS)*, 3. Special

Issue (SI) (2010), 103-31; Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Boston: Brill, 2000), p. 12.

⁸ Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad, 'The History of Jama'ah Tabligh in Southeast Asia: The Role of Islamic Sufism in Islamic Revival', *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 46. 2 (2008), 357.

⁹ M Ridwan Qoyyum Said, *Membongkar Kedok Jaulah Jamaah Tabligh* (Kediri: Mitra Gayatra, 2004), p. iii.

of Maulana Ilyas in Bhopalo, Madya Pradesh.¹⁰ Maulana Ilyas preferred *tabrik al-iman* (faith movement) as a name of the movement.

In Indonesia, the movement is recognized as Jamaah Tabligh,¹¹ even though there are some popular names to call Tablighi Jamaat. At least, there are five popular names in Indonesia.¹² *First*, it is *Jamaah Jenggot* (beard congregation) due to their willingness to allow beard growing. *Second*, some people call *jamaah conkrang* because tablighis tend to cut their pants higher than common pants. *Third*, it is *jamaah jualah* (itinerary congregation), because of their missionary activities from house to house and door to door. *Forth*, Tablighist is called Jamaah *Dakwah*. This name is similar to Tablighi Jamaah or Jamaah Tabligh, a congregation that delivers religious messages. Finally, Tablighi Jamaat is associated with the name *Jamaah Kompor* (stove congregation) due to their daily activities in a mosque, such as sleeping, cooking, eating, taking bath, and other activities. Even it has many names, Tablighi Jamaat is the most popular name around the world.

The emergence of Tablighi Jamaat tends to relate to political, social, and cultural problems during British rule in India.¹³ Politically, Tablighi Jamaat emerged as the effect of the collapse of the Indian Khilafat Movement.¹⁴ Many Islamic movements wanted to re-enlarge the Islamic caliphate. Tablighi Jamaat was established in such context, although Tablighi Jamaat did not intersect with politics directly and did not campaign for the establishment of the Islamic

caliphate. Its political movement was more directed through education and reform of faith. This effort is seen by Masud as a missionary technique and the establishment of a *dakwah* method in modern society. Muslim leaders learned the skills of a modern organization, publicity techniques, mass contact, and the use of the printing press from khilafat.¹⁵

The Islamic global political situation after the fall of the Ottoman Turkish khilafat in 1924 prompted clergy in India to think about Islamic politics. While clerics incorporated in Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind (JUH), Khwaja Hasan Nizami, Sufi attached to the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya, Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal Madras, and Maulana Muhammad Ilyas saw negatively to politics and thought for the benefit of Muslims. Ali saw that from these three scholars only Maulana Muhammad Ilyas who then seriously struggled to build Muslims by the establishment of Tablighi Jamaat. Ilyas dedicates himself fully and became the architect of Tablighi Jamaat.¹⁶ Tablighi Jamaat, itself concerned more with educational movement than on politics.

Socially and culturally, Muslims in India were exposed to Hindu militant groups in purification (Suddhi) and consolidation (Sangatan) efforts that occurred in 1922. This Hindu revivalist movement, also known as Arya Samaj Sect threatened Islamic groups so that Muslims would be vulnerable to Hinduism or forget and neglect the true teachings of Islam. At that time, many Indian Muslims were still attached to Hindu tradition,

¹⁰ Bustamam-Ahmad.

¹¹ For this article, I used Tablighi Jamaat as a name of the movement as many scholars refer to the movement and internationally people regard the movement. See also Abdurrahman Lubis, *Tabligh 'Genggam' Umat Lima Benua* (Jakarta: Pustaka Billah, 2009), p. 34.

¹² Abdurrahman Ahmad Assirbuny, *Kupas Tuntas Jamaah Tabligh Jilid 1* (Cirebon: Pustaka Nabawi, 2010), p. 1–5.

¹³ Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Travelers' Tales in the Tablighi Jamaat', *The Annals of the American Academy of*

Political and Social Science, 588.1 (2003), 136–48 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203588001009>>.

¹⁴ Jan Ashik Ali, *Islamic Revivalism: A Study of the Tablighi Jamaat in Sydney* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2006), p. 51; Bustamam-Ahmad.

¹⁵ Bustamam-Ahmad.

¹⁶ Jan A Ali, 'Islamic Revivalism: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23.1 (2003), 52 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000305935>>.

while the teachings of Islam were no longer run. Maulana Ilyas wanted Indian Muslims to return to the pure teachings of Islam as exemplified by the Prophet and his companions.¹⁷

Maulana Ilyas took the initiative to teach Islam to the younger generation in Mewat by establishing a *madrasah* (Islamic school). However, this effort seems to lack the hope of Maulana Ilyas, this could not be separated from the socio-economic conditions of Mewat people, Meos. There were still many common people who had not gotten the true teaching of Islam. Finally, Maulana Ilyas invoked to learn Muslim to preach. Ilyas argues that the *dakwah* task is the duty of all Muslims, not only scholars.¹⁸

Moreover, Ahmad explains that the emergence of Tablighi Jamaat was the result of the spread of Sufi, including the *thariqat* group (mysticism sect) in Asia. Tablighi Jamaat is an offshoot of Deoband school, reformed Hanafi Sunnis which eschew the cult of saints but accepts a purified form of Sufism. Ahmad notes that Maulana Ilyas was a member of the Chistiyah Sufis in India. This Sufi group did not intend to make conversion non-Muslim to Muslim. The objective of the group was to provide spiritual guidance to people as the result, the pattern of the Tablighi Jamaat movement tended to focus on spiritual reinforcement rather than politics.¹⁹

Besides these problems, the economic crisis on Meo farmers, dwellers of Mewat, North India, triggered the emergence of the Islamic identity movement constructed by Maulana Ilyas. Meos living in poverty caught in

debt from Hindu people, Banias. They must return the loan interest 5% per month or 60% per year. As result, Meo Muslims had to lose their land because of incapability to pay the debt. This situation caused a riot in Mewat during 1932-1943, and that was recognized as riot-interest.²⁰

Tablighi Jamaat pioneered by Maulana Ilyas succeeded to inject religious awareness into Meos to return to the right track, Islamic teaching, and to leave mundane. Ali²¹ states that Maulana Ilyas persuaded and inject Islamic teaching that had been forgotten by Meos. Moreover, Maulana Ilyas built Muslim confidence in *dakwah* movement and invited Muslims to back Islamic missionaries. Meo farmer misery might be caused by their ignoring of Islamic teaching and they tended to pursue worldly pleasure

The Root of the Movement

As explained above, Tablighi Jamaat emerged in complicated situations that were faced by Indian Muslims, particularly in Mewat. The condition shaped the future Tablighi Jamaat movement character including influenced its ideology and doctrine. Another fact that could not be denied was the founders of Tablighi Jamaat were alumni of madrasah Deoband.

According to Barbara D Metcalf,²² madrasah Deoband, Dar al-Ulum was an Islamic education institution or seminary founded in the late 19th during the British rule in India. The madrasah was founded by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanavuti and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi in 1866.²³ As an

¹⁷ Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat.

¹⁸ Abdul Aziz, 'The Jamaah Tabligh Movement in Indonesia: Peaceful Fundamentalist', *Studia Islamika*, 11.3 (2004), 475 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i3.596>>; Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat.

¹⁹ Bustamam-Ahmad.

²⁰ Rameez Ahmad Lone, 'Tablighi Jamaat: Ideological Structure', *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8.1 (2018), 1002.

²¹ Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat.

²² Metcalf, 'Traditionalist Islamic.

²³ Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat. The two ulama (Islamic scholars) involved in resistance movement on the British government in India. They also founded Islamic school (madrasah) at the Chattah mosque that then became a fundamant of Madarash Deoband. See also Farish A. Noor, 'The Spread of the Tablighi Jama'at across Western, Central and Eastern Java and the Role of Indian Muslim Diaspora', in *RJIS Working Paper, No. 175*) *Nanyang Technological University*,

Islamic education institution, Islamic subjects were thought, such as al-Qur'an, hadith, *tafsir* (interpretation), jurisprudential, and Arabic language. The madrasah was an uncommon education institution as other formal education institution, because there were not grade classes, paid staff, and systematic curriculum, as a British education institution. Additionally, the madrasah was not supported by the modern system, such as appropriate office, limited infrastructure, and limited access road to the madrasah.

Most Deoband students seemed from poor families and they lived modestly around the madrasah. Both Metcalf and Ali state that most Deoband teachers and students followed Sufi paths that emphasized spirituality and modest life.²⁴ They used Urdu as a lingua franca, a common language used by Muslim communities to show their identity.

Madrasah Deoband had a special character in education, teaching hadith. Moreover, Ali claims that besides teaching hadith as a core of the Deoband curriculum, the madrasah followed Hanafi School as one of the Sunni Islamic jurisprudence.²⁵ Deobandist was also inspired by the Wahabi movement, a religious sect founded by Abdul Wahab in Saudi Arabia. As a result, Deobandist hardly attempted to purify Islamic teaching from Hindu influences in Mewat.

Many alumni from the madrasah initiated emerging Islamic movements both in India and Pakistan.²⁶ As one of Deoband alumni,

Maulana Ilyas where he was influenced and inherited the religious system and tradition of Deoband. He was learning from two prominent leaders of Deoband, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Maulana Khalil Ahmad, thariqat Naqshabandiyah followers.²⁷ Ahmad also states that Maulana Ilyas affiliated with thariqat Naqshabandiyah, then he was also influenced by Thariqat Qadariyah.²⁸

Ali²⁹ claims that most Deobandis followed Sufi ways including Maulana Ilyas. They focused to implement pure Islamic teachings including and to incorporate Islamic tradition in early periods. That would also affect the religious model and teaching of Tablighi Jamaat. Hence, Barbara D Metcalf called Tablighi Jamaat Islamic revivalism, meanwhile Bulbul Siddiqi categorized it as a reformist group and Jan A Ali addressed it as a traditionalist.³⁰

However, an interesting one that differs Tablighi Jamaat from other Islamic movements is that Tablighi Jamaat focuses on Islamic missionary as the main goal, not on Islamic education as madrasah Deoband. Maulana Ilyas saw that education had a limitation on spreading Islamic teaching and values.³¹ Tablighi Jamaat also did not directly involve in resistance toward British colonial, but Tablighi Jamaat efforts were to organize Muslim to return on articulating Islamic teaching purely. Perhaps, it was due to Thariqat Qadariyah's influences as a Sufi group. On another side, the Sufi path tends to

2009<<https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10220/6100>>. {accessed 7 December 2019}.

²⁴ Ali, "Tablighi Jamaat. ; Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic.

²⁵ Ali, "Tablighi Jamaat.

²⁶ As recognized that colonial British region involved all India land, Pakistan dan Bangladesh that after India independence also declared their independence. Since India independence on August 15, 1947, there were conflicts between Mulsim and Hindu.

²⁷ Ali, "Tablighi Jamaat; Jan A Ali, 'Islamic Revivalism: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23.1 (2003), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000305935>.

²⁸ Bustamam-Ahmad.

²⁹ Ali, "Tablighi Jamaat. ; Ali, 'Islamic Revivalism.

³⁰ Bulbul Siddiqi refers to some arguments that claim Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic reform group, such as Muhammad Khalid Masud and Yoginder Sikand. See Masud. ; Bulbul Siddiqi, 'Reconfiguring the Gender Relation: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat in Bangladesh', *Culture and Religion*, 13.2 (2012), 177-92 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2012.674956>>.

³¹ Muhammad Amir Rana, *Tablighi Jamaat: Discourse and Challenges* (Pakistan: The Institute for Peace Studies, 2009), p. 2.

compromise and harmonize conflict. This view influenced Tablighi's ideology and doctrine that are less in conflict and accepts many schools in its movement.

Ideology and Doctrine

Ideology refers to a basic concept of ideas or notions that underlie how to think and acts in communities. Jary and Jary³² add that ideology can legitimate dan justify one group to another. Ideologically, Tablighi Jamaat is rooted in the same ideology as all Muslims generally. Tablighists believe in five fundamentals of Islam (five of *rukun Islam*) and six faith principles (six of *rukun iman*). Both of the basic principles is fundamental that tablighist believes. That is a part of Tablighi commitment to implement Islamic teaching purely. Maulana Ilyas, the founder of tablighis invited Muslims to return to Islamic teaching consistently and purely.

Tablighi Jamaat's basic ideology then directed shaping on tablighi differently from other Islamic movements. Barbara D Metcalf states that Tablighi Jamaat's ideology and doctrine were divided from Al-Quran, Hadith, and some textbooks written by Islamic scholars such as *Riyadusshalihin*, *Fadhailul A'mal*, *Hikayatun Shababat*, and others.³³ However, ideology and doctrine are a form of dialectic among ideology with social, political, and cultural realities. Particularly, Tablighi Jamaat's ideology might also correlate with social and religious communities in Mewat, North India.

Regarding Tablighi Jamaat's ideology, two basic aspects have to be referred to. *First*, the basic Islamic ideology aspect believed by every Muslim is *tauhid* (God is one). *Second*, it is a

religious moral aspect such as interrelationship among human beings. The aspect might greatly influence tablighi's ideology and doctrine that then articulates to be six principles. The six principles are duties for every Muslim, such as believing in one god, Allah and His messenger (*shahadat*), praying five times a day (*shalat*), respecting other Muslims (*ikram al-Muslim*), having sincere intentions (*ihlas al-niyat*), and sacrificing and sparing time for *dakwah*.³⁴

The six principles are a system of thought and mode of thought that guide every Muslim to do religious activities. The principle is very fundamental for Tablighi Jamaat and every Tablighist believes and implements the six principles as his/her ideology and doctrine.

Based on the six principles, tablighists enlarge to their 'rule of law' that regulates tablighist's attitudes and behaviors. In Tablighi Jamaat teaching, 28 important points must be followed by tablighists³⁵. The points divide into seven doctrines. *First*, every Muslim should do more in four points. These are da'wah *ilallah* (inviting to Allah's rule). It can be done by discussing the greatness of God and his creator; *ta'lim wa ta'allum* (studying and teaching), both moral excellence of human being and religious excellences; *dzikir ibadah* (thinking on religious services), such as prayer together, most suggestion prayer (*shalat sunnah*), reading Qur'an, praying in every time, praising for the prophet (*shalawat*), and asking forgiveness to Allah in the morning and evening; and *khidmat* (servicing) to the internal congregation of Tablighi Jamaat, society around, and him/herself.

³² David Jary and Julia Jary, *Collins: Dictionary of Sociology* (Glasgow: Harper Collins Manufacturing, 1991), p. 295.

³³ Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at', *The Journal of Asian Studies; Ann Arbor*, 52.3 (1993), 584-608.

³⁴ Abdurrahman Ahmad Assirbuny, *Kupas Tuntas Jamaah Tabligh Jilid 2* (Cirebon: Pustaka Nabawi, 2010), p.

84; Zulkhan Indra Putra, 'The Tablighi Jamaat Movement Its Ideological Concept and Organizational Structure', *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9.1 (2013), 1-21.

³⁵ Mulwi Ahmad Harun Al-Rasyid, *Meluruskan Kesalahpahaman Terhadap Jaulah (Jamaah Tabligh)* (Temboro, Magetan: Pustaka Haramain, 2004), p. 22; Lubis.

Second, Muslims should do less on four points, such as too much eating and drinking; too much sleeping. It is recommended to sleep six hours only in a day. Muslims should be in a mosque, except for missionary work. Lastly, Muslims should not talk more about a property or something relating to business. Third, Muslims should leave on four points, such as praying to another god, asking another god, *isyraf* (copious), and *ghashab* (using something belonging to other people without permission).

Fourth, Muslims should keep on four points. Muslim should obedient and loyal to the religious leader (*amir*); keep in honor of mosque, such as not talking about politic in a mosque, because the mosque is to pray and *dzikir* (always thinking about god); give priority in *ijtima'i* ritual (collective) than *infirodli* ritual (individual) and be patient and calm. *Fifth*, Muslims should avoid on four points. There are avoiding *masail khilafiyah* (pluralism in scholarship paradigm, both in belief and Islamic jurisprudence); avoiding talking about politics, talking disgrace of societies and scandal in societies and differing on social strata in societies. *Sixth*, the Muslim should keep a relationship with four persons. Those are ulama (Islamic scholar) and their followers; mursyid (thariqat leaders) and their teachings; mushanif (writer of Islamic books) and *da'i* (Islamic cleric and Islamic priests). Finally, Muslims should remove four points, such as criticizing, discriminating, humiliating, and debating.

Tablighi Jamaat's ideology and doctrine have influenced *dakwah* systems, such as *keburuj* (preaching tour), *ta'lim* (learning on religious teaching), *janla* (preaching visit), and *bayan* (religious lecture or talk). Every tablighist implements four *dakwah* systems in most daily religious activities and the systems are

integrated activities. For instance, when a tablighist is joining *keburuj* for some days, he will also join on *ta'lim*, *janla*, and *bayan*. The four *dakwah* systems are daily activities for every tablighist, and the activities are meaning as *dakwah*.

Dakwah, itself is the main goal of this religious movement. *Dakwah* means the invitation to every Muslim to do his/her best in articulating religious teaching. *Dakwah* is not only for tablighist but also for every Muslim everywhere.³⁶ The founding fathers of the Tablighi Jamaat movement emphasized *dakwah* as a Muslim duty. For tablighi, every tablighist or Muslim must do a religious missionary and preaching tour (*keburuj*) a minimum once during his/her life. However, every tablighist has to join *dakwah* a day in a week, seven days or a week in a month, 40 days in a year, and during 120 days during entire his/her entire life³⁷.

Tablighi Jamaat Around the World

It is irrefutable that Tablighi Jamaat developed rapidly across to whole of the world. During Maulana Ilyas's leadership, he might never think that Tablighi Jamaat would spread to other countries, except India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. During his leadership, Tablighi Jamaat was slowly spreading only in West and East India. However, after the death of Ilyas in 1944 or before India's independence, Tablighi Jamaat disseminated rapidly. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf (1917-1965), a son of Maulana Ilyas led the Tablighi Jamaat movement. He did not only expand the movement on the entire India, but also many countries in Asia and Africa. One of the most important doctrines is *dakwah* (Islamic missionary) not the only duty for ulama (Islamic scholars), but every Muslim. This doctrine is supported by teaching that all

³⁶Abdurrahman Ahmad Assirbuny, *Kupas Tuntas Jamaah Tabligh-1* (Cirebon: Pustaka Nabawi, 2012), p. 102-3.

³⁷ Metcalf, "Tradisionalist Islamic.

Muslims are one unity, it means that every Muslim around the world should do religious missionary as tablighist did.

Tablighi Jamaat spreads across the whole countries and all continents, such as Asia, Australia, Europe, and America. These diasporas can be traced through the internet by a search engine.³⁸ There are many reports from government authorities or scholars around the world. The existence of Tablighi Jamaat is easily recognized due to their physical identity and some missionary activities, particularly when tablighis do *khuruj* and some activities in mosques. Even though we can not identify that every Muslim has a similar appearance physically and have activities in mosques as tablighis. We have to investigate deeply to identify Muslims as tablighist or not. However, based on my experience tablighists are an inclusive person that can show their identity.

Tablighi Jamaat is now spreading in almost every country, both western countries and Islamic countries. Ali states that Tablighi Jamaat has developed in Europe, America, as well as in Australia. In America, at least 50.000 tablighists reside in most countries, such as California, Texas, New York, and others. They have an annual assembly called *ijtima'*. In Canada, Tablighis held an annual meeting since 1997 that attended around 4000 tablighis.

Even though Tablighi Jamaat was established earlier in the United State of America than in Europe, Choudhury³⁹ claims that the growth of Tablighi Jamaat in European countries spread faster than in America. There is no clear information when

Tablighi came to European countries. Tablighi Jamaat was massively spread during the 1970 and 1980s. For example, in France since the 1980s, the representative of Tablighi Jamaat was involved in the French Council of the Muslim Faith. Tablighist was doubled before 2006, estimated to 50.000-100.000⁴⁰. British tends to be the center of Tablighi Jamaat movement in Europe. In the 1960s and 1970s, Tablighi Jamaat came to Britain, and now Tablighi Jamaat has a representative in 600 of 1350 mosques in Britain. In the 1980s, Tablighist established a center of the Tablighi Jamaat as well as a mosque in Dewsbury, New Yorkshire⁴¹. It seems Britain is a center of the Tablighist movement in Europe due to a large number of Tablighist living in the country. Tablighist also spread over some European countries such as Germany, Belgium, Italy, and other countries.

In Africa continental, Tablighi Jamaat got a great response and spread rapidly. American Foreign Policy Council⁴² claims that Tablighi Jamaat has established 35 *markaz* (center office) in 50 countries. Marloes Janson⁴³ states that Tablighists from Asia mainly from Pakistan disseminated tablighi ideology. They taught Islam in English due to the same language. Tablighi Jamaat spread the tablighi teaching to Gambians in the 1960s. Recently, it is estimated that 13.000 Gambians joined Tablighi Jamaat.⁴⁴ From Gambia, Tablighi teachings are spreading in some countries in West Africa such as Morocco, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. In North Africa, for example in Morocco, Tablighi Jamaat was

³⁸ Barbara D. Metcalf, 'Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablighi Jama'at', *Stanford Humanities Review*, 5.1 (1995), 51–59.

³⁹ Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, 'Tablighi Jamaat: Wolf in Sheep's Skin' in *Blitz* 2018. <<https://www.weeklyblitz.net/world/tablighi-jamaat-wolf-in-sheeps-skin/>>. {accessed 3 May 2019}

⁴⁰ Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat.

⁴¹ Jan A Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat. ; Choudhury.

⁴² American Foreign Policy Council, 'Tablighi Jamaat', in *Almanac on Islamism*.

<http://almanac.afpc.org/sites/almanac.afpc.org/files/Tablighi%20Jamaat_0.pdf> {accessed 24 April 2019}

⁴³ Marloes Janson, 'The Prophet's Path Tablighi Jamaat in The Gambia', in *Open Access Leiden University* 17, 2006. <<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/17063>>. {accessed 7 April 2019}.

⁴⁴ Marloes Janson, 'Renegotiating Gender: Changing Moral Practice in the Tablighi Jama'at in The Gambia', *Journal for Islamic Studies; Rondebosch*, 28 (2008), 9–36 ; Janson, 'The Prophet's Path.

known as Jama'at al-Tabligh wa al-Da'wah (JTD). In other countries such as Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, the three majority Muslim countries, Tablighi Jamaat got a good response from local Muslims in those countries. Additionally, in South African countries, Tablighi Jamaats have influenced Muslim communities.⁴⁵

In Asia, Tablighi Jamaat has disseminated in most of the Asian countries. Most Muslims in Southeast Asia have recognized Tablighi Jamaat well, and some of them have been involved in the *dakwah* movement. In Central and North Asia, it is believed that Tablighi Jamaat played an important role in 're-Islamization' in those countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, particularly after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁴⁶

Tablighi Jamaat penetrated the Southeast Asia countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines in the 1950s. According to Farish A. Noor Indian descent was an effective medium to introduce Tablighi Jamaat to Muslim communities in those countries. In Indonesia, Tablighists from India came to Jakarta in 1955. They did not have any relationship with Muslim Indonesia. The eight tablighists from India landed in Cengkareng, Indonesia international airport, and hired a taxi without a certain destination. They asked the driver to escort them to Indian people in Jakarta. Finally, they got Haji Zaristan Khan, of Indian descent that obtained Indonesian citizenship.⁴⁷ In Malaysia and

Singapore, Tablighists came to Indian communities in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore. They were supported by Indian descents in the two regions.⁴⁸

In Indonesia and Malaysia, as two majority Muslim community countries in Southeast Asia, Tablighi Jamaat has shaped large attention. Tablighi teaching has influenced some Muslim communities in Indonesia, such as in Masjid Kebun Jeruk Jakarta, Bandung, Mangkang Semarang, and Temboro, East Java. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Tablighi Jamaat has strongly influenced Islamic missionary organization, such as Darul Arqam, YADIM (Yayasan *Dakwah* Islam Malaysia), JAKIM (jawatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia), dan PERKIM (Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia).⁴⁹

As an Islamic transnational movement, Tablighi Jamaat seemed to be accepted by Muslim communities in many countries. There are some reasons why Tablighi Jamaat is easily accepted by many Muslims, even though the reasons are relatively debatable based on social, political, and cultural issues. In Indonesia for example, As'ad Ali Said⁵⁰ states that there are four reasons for easily accepting Tablighi Jamaat. First, Tablighi Jamaat minimalizes debatable and differences in Islamic law (fiqh). Tablighi tend to accept all Islamic scholars in fiqh. Second, Tablighi Jamaat tends to follow Sufi teaching that accentuates worship rituals. Third, Tablighi Jamaat missionaries tend to be more positive than radical. Tablighists are concerned about

⁴⁵ American Foreign Policy Council.

⁴⁶ Bayram Balci, 'The Rise of the Jama'at Al Tabligh in Kyrgyzstan: The Revival of Islamic Ties between the Indian Subcontinent and Central Asia?', *Central Asian Survey*, 31.1 (2012), 61–76 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2012.647843>>; Bayram Balci, 'Reviving Central Asia's Religious Ties with the Indian Subcontinent? The Jamaat Al Tabligh', *Religion, State and Society*, 43.1 (2015), 20–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2015.1020140>>; Emil Nasritdinov, 'Spiritual Nomadism and Central

Asian Tablighi Travelers', *Ab Imperio*, 2012.2 (2012), 145–67 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2012.0062>>.

⁴⁷ Farish A. Noor, *Islam on the Move: The Tablighi Jama'at in Southeast Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 33–34.

⁴⁸ Tablighist came to Malaysia and Singapore in 1952 as Nizamuddin representative, headquarter of Tablighi Jamaat in India. See Bustamam-Ahmad.

⁴⁹ Bustamam-Ahmad.

⁵⁰ As'ad Said Ali, 'Jamaah Tabligh' in *NU Online* <<https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/32537/jamaah-tabligh>>> {accessed 7 April 2019}.

inviting Muslims to do goodness (*amar ma'ruf*) than fighting evil (*nahi munkar*). It implies that they focus on building a good Muslim character. Finally, Tablighi Jamaat spreads between *dakwah* (Islamic missionary) and politics. Additionally, they refused to talk politics.

Another important factor in spreading Tablighi Jamaat is Indian descent networks between Indian tablighists or Pakistan tablighists and Indian descent communities around the world. That occurred in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, as a research report done by Farish A Noor and Kamaruzaman Bustaman-Ahmad.

Radicalism Issues on Jamaah Tabligh

As an Islamic transnational movement, Tablighi Jamaat received a negative spotlight, particularly post terrorist attack in some countries. Tablighi Jamaat is connected to the terrorist action, even there was rarely evident. The debates invite some scholars to discuss whether Tablighi Jamaat is a radical religious movement or even a terrorist movement. Discussion on radicalism is also related to the meaning of jihad as a measurement of radicalism. Jihad tends to be understood as a holy war to fight against other religious communities recognized as enemies or fight evilness. Jihad in the meaning of holy war is connecting on radicalism and terrorism issues.

Regarding the issues, according to Barbara D Metcalf⁵¹ spotlight on Tablighi Jamaat as a radical group is soared after 9/11, the terrorist attack in the USA. This was due to Tablighis' physical appearances that are similar to Arabian people. In America, Barbara D Metcalf⁵² claims that it is difficult to differentiate between Tablighists and Taliban. Both of them have the same appearances physically as well as have a historical

connection rooted in Madrasah Deoband.⁵³ The physical appearance of tablighist might invite suspiciousness of western people that Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic militant group or jihadis.

Based on these views, it is logical if scholars debate who is Tablighi Jamaat, radicalize movement, or missionary religious group? Regarding these debates, there are three groups of scholars. The first group identifies Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic missionary group only. The second group tends to be more analytic than Tablighi Jamaat might be as a *dakwah* group and radical movement. The last group claims firmly that Tablighi Jamaat is a radical movement and has a strict path toward radicalism and terrorism.

The first group identifying Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic missionary movement and the emergence of the movement is as a social, cultural, and religious phenomenon. Many scholars research Tablighi Jamaat as this phenomenon such as Barbara D Metcalf, Muhammad Khalid Masud, Farish A Noor, Jan A Ali, Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad, Abdul Aziz, and many more. Barbara D Metcalf studies some aspects of Tablighi Jamaat, such as women's role in Tablighi Jamaat and the root of the Tablighi movement. Metcalf sees that Tablighi Jamaat is a unique Islamic revivalist movement.⁵⁴ Muhammad Khalid Masud studied was quite similar to Metcalf's works. Even though Metcalf and Masud study many aspects of Tablighi Jamaat, they tend not to identify Tablighi Jamaat as a radical group. Moreover, Metcalf finds that there are significant differences between Tablighist and Taliban. Taliban tends to involve in politics, meanwhile, Tablighi tends to be a-politic and focuses on Islamic missionary.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Metcalf, "Tradisionalist Islamic.

⁵² Metcalf, "Tradisionalist Islamic.

⁵³ Metcalf, "Tradisionalist Islamic.

⁵⁴ Metcalf, "Islam and Women. ; Metcalf, "Travelers' Tales.

⁵⁵ Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic.

Research from Farish A Noor and Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad have the same location setting in Southeast Asia. Farish A Noor conducted data in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. He analyzed the growth of Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia and found that Tablighi used the Indian descent network in introducing and spreading Tablighi teaching. While Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad studied Tablighi Jamaat in Aceh Indonesia and Malaysia. According to him, Tablighi Jamaat did not only preach Muslims but also affect Islamic organizations, particularly in Malaysia⁵⁶. Besides Noor and Ahmad, the same research was also done by Abdul Aziz,⁵⁷ where he stated that Tablighi Jamaat is a unique religious movement. Another scholar doing research is Jan A Ali who classified Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic transnational that has a high survival in the world. Even Ali classified Tablighi Jamaat as an Islamic traditionalist movement, tablighi survives in modern and western communities. Moreover, Tablighis is less affected by modernity. These scholars state that Tablighi Jamaat is not a radical movement, even the movement can be classified as an Islamist movement. Additionally, Aziz classifies Tablighi Jamaat as a peaceful fundamentalist.⁵⁸

The second group tends to be careful to classify Tablighi Jamaat as a radical movement or Islamic missionary group only. The group attempts to analyze comprehensively Tablighi Jamaat in all dimensions, the emergence, and growth of Tablighi Jamaat, its involvement in many societies. Marc Gaborieau⁵⁹ states that

basically, Tablighi Jamaat differs from radical groups because Tablighi Jamaat tends to use Sufi practice in their missionary. Even Tablighist believes that every Muslim has to join the jihad, Tablighist tends to mean that jihad is not to join a holy war (by a sword). Notwithstanding, Gaborieau in another of his writing states that some *tablighists* are supporting the Taliban movement associated as a radical group.⁶⁰

Muhammad Amir Rana in the report of Pak Institute for Peace Studies 2009⁶¹ states that Tablighi Jamaat is not a terrorist group. Even Rana did not also deny some facts correlating Tablighist in some terror actions. Rana claims that some young *tablighists* join tablighi to study basic Islamic knowledge, after the process Tablighi Jamaat can not control where they are and what they do. This is caused due to a weak organizational structure or even the absence of the Tablighi Jamaat organizational structure.

The last group claimed Tablighi Jamaat as a fundamentalist movement that has a connection to radicalism and terrorist networks. Ameer Ali⁶² identifies that Tablighi Jamaat has similarities with Hizbut Tahrir, a political Islamic transnational organization. Even Ameer Ali states that Jamaah Tabligh and Hizb ut-Tahrir are different organizations but one goal (divergent path to convergent goal). While Hizb ut-Tahrir is associated as a radical Islamic political movement, Tablighi Jamaat is seen as an encouragement to radical movements.

Ali discusses the difference between Tablighi Jamaat and Hizbut Tahrir and also

⁵⁶ Bustaman-Ahmad.

⁵⁷ Aziz.

⁵⁸ Aziz.

⁵⁹ Marc Gaborieau, 'What Is Left of Sufism in Tablighi Jama'at?', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 2.1 (2006), 53-72 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/assr.3731>>.

⁶⁰ Marc Gaborieau, 'Transnational Islamic Movements: Tablighi Jama'at in Politics?', in *ISIM Newsletter*, 1999,

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277096388_Transnational_Islamic_Movements_Tablighi_Jama'at_in_Politics/citation/download> {accessed 4 October 2019}.

⁶¹ Rana.

⁶² Ali Ameer, 'Tablighi Jama'at and Hizbut Tahrir: Divergent Paths to Convergent Goals, Education to Counter Extremism', *Dialogue & Alliance*, 20.2 (2006), 51-66.

states that Tablighi Jamaat is also a radical group like Hizbut Tahir.⁶³ They're both different on the way to achieving the goal. Indeed, he argues that Tablighi Jamaat, with its ideology and doctrine, creates a mindset, especially among its young followers, that has the potential to drive youngsters either towards a life of lethargy and exclusion or to become more radical and violent. In either case, these youngsters seek to achieve through their commitment to the elusive heavenly benefits of the hereafter. While the first option makes them less active and indifferent to the economic, political, and social issues confronting Muslim societies, thereby making them a class of social parasites. The second option prepares them to become martyrs in the hands of jihadis.⁶⁴

Alexiev states that Tablighi Jamaat believes that jihad can be done by reforming his/herself (*jihad bi nafs*) and jihad by fighting against other religious followers (*jihad bi saif*).⁶⁵ Tablighists prefer to *jihad bi nafs*, reforming the faith and personal quality.⁶⁶ However, according to Alexiev, Tablighi adopts Wahabi-Salafi jihadi, the radical group. As result, it is difficult to differentiate between Tablighi's "jihad ideology" and Wahabi-Salafi jihadis. Moreover, Alexiev notes that Tablighi Jamaat has been involved in the sponsorship of terrorist groups.⁶⁷ Harakat ul Mujahidin, a jihadis group founded in 1980 at Raiwind, was sponsored by Tablighist. More than 6000 Tablighists have trained in Harakat ul Mujahidin camps. Many fought in Afganistan in the 1980s and readily joined Al-Qaeda after the Taliban defeated Afganistan's anti-Soviet Mujahidin. Zahid⁶⁸

corroborates the Alexiev argument that Jamaah-e Islami has close interaction with Tablighi Jamaat. Many of their activists have overlapping membership.

The interconnection of Tablighi Jamaat with some radical groups is still debatable. Hedges stated that the dearth of open data on linkages of Tablighi Jamaat with radical (terrorist) groups is problematic and they are more the product of Islamophobia than scholarship and investigation.⁶⁹ Additionally, Haedge states that Tablighi Jamaat tends to reform individual faith than to encourage people to be jihadis. In the words of Metcalf, the preeminent American scholar on Tablighi states: "Deobandi movement was, in fact, alike in one crucial regard that set them apart from other well-known Islamic movements. What they share was an overriding emphasis on encouraging a range of ritual and personal behavior practices linked to worship, dress, and everyday behavior".⁷⁰

However, the thing that cannot be denied is the social situation, politics, and culture living in a place where Tablighi Jamaat exists. The involvement of Tablighi Jamaat members in various cases of radicalism may be casuistic, not in movement, as the involvement of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar in various cases of radicalism in Indonesia. Both of them had participated in the early movement of Tablighi Jamaat in Solo.⁷¹ Further, both Ba'asyir and Sungkar had radical thought that differed from Tablighi Jamaat. Both of them were then involved in some terrorist activities in Indonesia.

⁶³ Ali, 'Tablighi Jamaat.

⁶⁴ Ameer.

⁶⁵ Alex Alexiev, 'Tablighi Jamaat: Jihad's Stealthy Legions', in *Middle East Quarterly*, 2005. <<https://dev.meforum.org/686/tablighi-jamaat-jihads-stealthy-legions>>. {accessed 7 December 2019}.

⁶⁶ Abdurrahman Ahmad Assirbuny, *Kupas Tuntas Jamaah Tabligh Jilid 3* (Cirebon: Pustaka Nabawi, 2010), p. 169.

⁶⁷ Alexiev.

⁶⁸ Farhan Zahid, 'Tablighi Jamaat and its Links with Islamist Terrorism' in *Centre Français de Recherche sur le Renseignement* <<https://cf2r.org/foreign/tablighi-jamaat-and-its-links-with-islamist-terrorism-2/>> {accessed 7 April 2019}.

⁶⁹ Hedges.

⁷⁰ Metcalf, 'Traditionalist Islamic.; Metcalf, 'Living Hadith.

⁷¹ Noor, *Islam on the Move*.

Tablighi Jamaat may not encourage the growth of radicalism; however, certain groups take advantage of the revivalist movements driven by Tablighi Jamaat into the radical side of politics. For example, the totality of a Muslim is to practice religion properly following the demands of religion, to be 'kaffah' Muslim in various sides of life or other teachings. The less-Islamic life is considered a danger or an enemy that must be resolved soon. However, it can be seen from some 'bayan' (religious sermons) in Tablighi Jamaat activity, a suggestion to crush 'munkar' by violence is never taught. 'Bayan' in Tablighi Jamaat is filled more with the suggestion to do good (*amar ma'ruf*) than to prevent evilness (*nahi munkar*). The reform of individual faith becomes the main target of religious lectures (*bayan*) which was conveyed by Tablighi Jamaat ulama (scholar).

Tablighi Jamaat as a religious movement still focuses on the reform of faith to create a morally solid Muslim. But it does not close the possibility of deviation by members, especially in certain areas, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, or others.

Conclusion

As the largest transnational movement in the world, Tablighi Jamaat faces challenges in crucial issues like radicalism. Moreover, the background of its emergence as an Islamic revivalist movement is close to the madhhab of Wahabi. It is undeniable that the background of Deoband School also inspires the birth of radical groups.

The emergence of transnational political Islam groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Jamaati Islami, Harakah al-Mujahidin, Taliban groups, and others give the allegations to Tablighi Jamaat as a radical movement. However, certain facts and notes of scientists group have not supported that Tablighi Jamaat produces radical groups. In some cases, the revivalist spirit of Tablighi Jamaat may inspire the

emergence of radicalism, but the thought that religious teachings and practices of Tablighi Jamaat lead to radicalism still needs deeper analysis. Perhaps Tablighi Jamaat, as Hedges⁷² states, only emphasizes daily ritual and the equation of devotion with discipline personal practice.

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⁷² Hedges.

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