

Exorcising the demons of 'devilcracy'

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In a paper democracy like Malaysia when dissidents are deemed traitors, what will we call this strange system of governance at odds with a fundamental tenet of democracy - the freedom of dissension?

There is credence to the notion of a 'devilcracy' since former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes the country is better run by the 'devil we know.'

If the oracular Mahathir thinks the 'devil we know' is running the country who should know better?

Malaysians however know what it is like to live under the shadow of a 'devilcracy' especially after 55 years.

The era of the 'foreign devils' had long past since the winds of change blew across Asia but the colonial flags could not flutter after their humiliation by the yellow peril that was the catalyst to countries seeking national independence.

The government while promising transformation and boasting about attaining the status of 'the world's best democracy' appears to be wavering as Malaysians see it heading in the opposite direction, with the latest denunciation of dissent.

It may be that they don't know the meaning of democracy like the country's electoral commissioners who think 'apolitical' means siding with the government and stifling Bersih.

The word democracy, derived from the Greek words 'demo' (people) and 'kratos' (power), implies a democracy is governance of the people, for the people and by the people. In theory, at least.

Thus in a democracy, power belongs to the people and a government acts as trustees and servants of the nation not as owner and lord of the manor. They are altogether public servants, the only difference being their election to their jobs.

More Malaysians are making this liberating discovery and standing up for their rights and this augurs well for the future of democracy unless 'devilcracy' wins the day.

The fightback will see a watershed election in GE13 and it will be a match between the incumbent government and the opposition as much as a tussle between democracy and 'devilcracy.'

It is panning out to be a war between good against evil with the opposition taking the high moral ground and the incumbent government caught with its pants down as one scandal after another exposes its downright dishonest political tricks.

A 'devilcracy' alludes to the power of the devil- from the Greek word 'diablos' - and pertains to the notion of self-vested and self-seeking power in contradiction to the ideal of a people-centric democracy.

So we should not be surprised if a country run by the 'devil' even if we use a metaphor, is riddled with diabolical plots when the script is inspired by the devil, known as Apollyon - the destroyer, who is like a roaring lion looking for prey and wreaking havoc everywhere.

How else can we explain the incessant gruesome killings? How do we explain the deeds of darkness such as lying, cheating, rape, murder, theft, corruption, plunder, slander, and other acts of the sinful nature?

Where there is chaos usually there is a chaos-maker - the conspirator, but after evil has run its course, the conspirator is exposed, shamed and even punished.

How different is Teoh Beng Hock's or A Kugan's deaths from an Afghan young woman who faced a trumped-up charge of adultery, was found guilty, and executed within the hour in public to shouts of 'Allahu Akhbar' from an all-male audience against society's values of justice and the revulsion of sane Muslims?

When murder happens there may be truth in the saying, 'the devil made me do it,' after all we are told the devil is the 'god of this world' and can make people do strange things and the devil knows he has a limited time to create chaos.

Behind every sickening power structure of injustice and evil be sure the devil works through it.

Whatever our hypothesis, the truth remains that when evil reigns and power is abused, the people suffer. We may not agree on the cause but we agree on its effects and that evil is bad for democracy.

We may not know how much a corrupt politician has stashed away but we know a poor widow has no money to feed her family even with a bowl of beef gruel on the festive day.

But things may get worse before they get better. We are not to fear evildoers but to be wary of their schemes for if our lives are governed by fear then evil has total control over us. And the fear of man brings a snare but not to those who dare dissent.

Imran Khan, the famous Pakistani ex-cricketer, has set out to change the status quo in his country because he does not fear political retribution, even his own death.

This remarkable man has single-handedly - being the only elected representative of his fledgling political party in parliament - changed the face of Pakistani politics.

He vows to bring corruption under control in 90 days if he becomes Pakistan's next leader in elections in 2013.

Undaunted by the real prospect of being assassinated, he leaves his fate in God's hands. He proved his convictions by holding a rally where thousands gathered to hear him in the country's most dangerous region, run by corrupt feudal lords that he blames as leftovers from colonial times.

Once thought of as politically inconsequential, Imran Khan, anti-US foreign policy and anti-corruption is the bright star of Pakistani politics and even powerful feudal politicians, once ministers, have joined his march to power.

If Malaysians feel a sense of *deja vu*, it is because they are familiar with the story of the rise of their own opposition politicians, Anwar Ibrahim's political resurrection, and the determination of reform-minded citizens from both sides of politics to save their country.

Just as there are degrees of democracy there are degrees of 'devilcracy' and greed. Some may consider Mahathir's 'devil' comment as a gaffe but it can also be like a Rosetta Stone that unlocks the mystery why a democracy like Malaysia is seen displaying signs of a 'devilcracy.'

It explains why some politicians in power think they are untouchable and can get away even with murder.

It was never meant that any democratic government should become the enemy of the people through acts of injustice and abuses of power and skullduggery, not to mention abject moral failure unless it has fallen into a state of 'devilcracy.'

Mahathir playing radical dissident against the government he once led, broadcast that Malaysians were living in a dysfunctional 'police state' under 'a rotten administration'.

Not content with that he boycotted the political party that made him premier for 22 years.

So is Mahathir a traitor for damning the government and not being coy about his hatred for some of his former colleagues and vice versa in government then?

And I hope we haven't forgotten that when the printed mainstream media had an embargo on his prolific views, he turned to *Malaysiakini* - the 'devil' to the government then and still is, officially.

In a 'devilcracy' you may speak out and be damned.

Even the embattled Syrian dissidents would agree with Perak DAP chairperson Ngeh Koo Ham as they decry their fellow Muslims who forget their plight but are prepared to take to the streets over a film no one would have known about but for the tumultuous publicity.

That Ngeh could have offended so many speaks more of the intolerance of his detractors than any fault of Ngeh's and proves that dissidents who take to the streets to protest

anti-Islam films and cartoons, can sometimes be the most unreasonable 'dictators' and why many Muslim leaders think it is also a waste of time and counter-productive.

If being a dissident is being a traitor many perhaps even including Mahathir must be proud to be one because who wants to be a patriot who sells out his country to foreign illegals, who go abroad to bad-mouth his own government, and who bastardises every public institution in the country?

The point is when a government calls anyone a traitor who speaks the truth, who is outspoken in his conviction against corruption, and who is prepared to stake his life in what he believes, then such a government must be afraid of the truth and be unworthy of holding the office.

But a politician who is honest will not fear criticism and expects people to dissent in a democracy.

When the 'devilcracy' has turned our world upside down and calls good evil and evil good then traitor is a good word, we are not to join the crowds in doing wrong, and dissident is a concerned citizen answering a nation's call to perform a national service just like the time Malayans of all races united to boycott the British who called them 'traitors' in the unforgettable day of 'Hartal' ten years before 1957.

History is on the side of the 'traitor' when a country is overrun by a bully.

The famous American Mark Twain wrote:

"Each of you, for himself, by himself and on his own responsibility, must speak. And it is a solemn and weighty responsibility, and not lightly to be flung aside at the bullying of pulpit, press, government, or the empty catchphrases of politicians.

"Each must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, and which course is patriotic and which isn't.

"You cannot shirk this and be a man.

"To decide against your convictions is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let man label you as they may.

"If you alone of all the nations shall decide one way, and that way be the right way according to your convictions of the right, you have done your duty by yourself and by your country- hold up your head!

"You have nothing to be ashamed of."

Make me a dissident

Make me a dissident for I am no coward, make me a traitor for I am no fool, make me a believer for I am no infidel, and make me a citizen of change for I am the watchman over my country and I will not surrender it to the thieves while I am on watch.

That ought to be the cry of those who want to see a better country under a better government. And the traitor is the one who destroys the democracy born out of nationhood for once we were serfs of another nation but we shouldn't be serfs to anyone any more, especially to your own people.

The traitor plunders his nation and slanders its citizens and wants to transform them into serfs while they hold power.

The 'devilcracy' demonises every public spirited entity - Tenanganita, Hindraf, Bersih, Suaram, and a host of other civic-minded NGO's and individuals, thus the government faces a gathering storm of more and more Malaysians who want to exorcise their country of demons.

He or she is no traitor who acts against a corrupt government but the traitor is the corrupt government that acts against the people.

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