

## **No peace in religion**

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"What are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty in order to reform our social system, which is full of inequality, discrimination and other things, which conflict with our fundamental rights." - BR Ambedkar

COMMENT What I detest more than two vacuous sex bloggers becoming the poster children for Umno's double standards, is the fact that once again Islam - or the kind practiced by this regime - has trumped any other secular principle(s) that would lead to us out of this racial and religious quagmire we find ourselves in.

By now the couple must realise (considering their "butt hurt Muslims" tweet) that those same Islamic forces concerned with hegemonic interest are running the show in this country and like most Muslim countries everywhere are content to parrot the phrase "religion of peace" but condone the most unjust practices to those who supposedly mock their religion.

I could never understand why some Malaysian Muslims would reference countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Indonesia who have shown zero tolerance to those "mocking Islam" as an example of how tolerant Malaysia is when it comes to the practice of Islam.

The implication of this is that non-Muslims should be "grateful" for living in a country where they would not be exposed to some unjust or worse barbaric state sanction if they ever crossed the line when it comes to Islam.

NONE If Malaysia is a moderate Muslim country, then we should be used as example by those countries of how a country that is supposed to be an Islamic state is governed by the rule of law and not rule by law. As usual in typical Malaysian fashion, some aim for the crudest moral argument.

Instead of the "religion of peace", I much prefer the honesty of someone like Malcolm X (left) who said, "I am a Muslim because it's a religion that teaches you an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It teaches you to respect everybody, and treat everybody right. But it also teaches you if someone steps on your toe, chop off their foot. And I carry my religious axe with me all the time."

Understand now, that I do not think any religion teaches its adherents to "respect

everybody" and "treat everybody right", but as far as making a case for your religion (in this case Islam) it is far more honest than babbling on about the so-called religion of peace, then warning anyone who transgress that they would be kicked in the cojones.

Of course, as far as Islam as practiced in this country, Muslims in control conveniently leave out the "teaches you to respect everybody, and treat everybody right" aspect of Malcolm X's quote. This is probably why some Muslims get confused if they are 'Malays' first or 'Muslims' first. I do not blame them. The concept of constitutionally created 'Malays' does muddy the racial waters when it comes to swearing allegiance to God.

Civilisation studies won't help

Abim president Amidi Abdul Manan argues that the teaching of Islamic Civilisation and Asian Studies would "avoid any incidents which can be deemed offensive to Muslims, such as the controversial posting by bloggers Alvin Tan and Vivian Lee".

NONE Does Manan (left) really think that Alvin Tan and Vivian Lee do not know they would be offending Muslims? Does Manan think that the cow-head protesters did not know they would be offending Hindus with the cow-head protest?

Do Ibrahim Ali and Zulkifli Noordin not know they would be offending non-Muslims with their polemics? I have no idea how stupid people like Manan thinks Malaysians are but we must be very stupid if courses like these are needed to inculcate a sense of community amongst Malaysians.

I have no idea what Manan thinks Islamic civilisation is but any credible academic would tell you that any civilisation is filled with the complexity of people attempting to control their cultures or raging against it.

Perhaps Manan hopes that only the "acceptable", sanitised elements would be included in this course, to which I say, the distortion in our history syllabus is the reason why we have people "wanting to drive away anyone or attempt to degrade or belittle any particular race."

Think about this, Manan. So far, all our moral lessons, history lessons and whatever hypocritical nation-building nonsense we shove down the throats of Malaysians has resulted in a couple of sex bloggers posting inappropriate comments about breaking fast and a group of thugs who decided to allegedly defend Islam by kidnapping and assaulting an individual who did no such thing.

Chinese community 'sexually open'?

However, underneath it all is the war with the Chinese community which Umno thinks has abandoned BN or rather Umno. These sex bloggers are used as a stand-in for the Chinese community.

The grossest stereotypes of the Chinese community as being sexually "open" (sic), the harlot origins of this 'pendatang' community or the money crazed at the expense of morality meme is paraded about as legitimate cultural differences to the pious Malay community.

Nothing of course could be further from the truth. Malay tabloids are obsessed with sex and intent under the guise of Islamic morality to expose the seething underbelly of the sexual lives of the Malay community.

Moreover, when they cannot discover anything new, shocking or lurid, they make stuff up. The targets are mostly other communities as when a local tabloid ran a story about the accepted 'incest' practice of the Penan community that in the end was discovered to be fabricated.

Of course, the Chinese community's reaction would be to disavow these two idiots but in the end all this is pissing in the wind. Most right-thinking Malaysians would understand the double standard at play. Numerous examples of how Muslims mock the religious or cultural sensitivities of others have passed unnoticed or even encouraged by the establishment.

NONENot granting bail on the grounds of public interest is strange considering the numerous other people who are routinely granted bail even though they are charged with committing 'hardcore' crimes. Clearly, a message is being sent here. This message would serve some sort of utilitarian value if all those who mocked religion were treated in the same way.

During the cow-head protest for instance, then home minister Hishammuddin Hussein, sat with the protesters and demanded we "understand" their grievances. In other words, we as non-Muslims, should always be mindful of Muslim sensitivities, which also includes Muslims mocking, disparaging and condemning those concepts we hold as sacred.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin in his extremely compassionate dismissal of any kind of forgiveness said, "We don't want people to accuse us of selective prosecution when we mete out the punishment," but offered no examples to support his argument.

Indeed, when reporters of a Malay tabloid spat out the Holy sacrament, all Khairy could muster was the weak platitudes of acknowledging that Muslims should be more sensitive of the feelings of others. There were no calls for punishing those reporters to the full extent of the law.

Keep in mind that it was former de facto law minister Nazri Abdul Aziz who said that the "terrain" had changed concerning provocative comments on the Internet. Obviously, the terrain has changed only for the non-Muslims.

Enough of political correctness

In a Malaysiakini news report, "Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim also said there should not be any delay in acting against those who make irresponsible statements against any religion." This has been the reaction of most Malaysians - "punish these two but also all those who insult other religions" line of argument.

However, you know what? I am sick and tired of non-Muslims prostrating themselves on the altar of political correctness that more and more smells like political expediency. Every time something like this comes up, especially when it comes to Islam, we have to qualify our dissatisfaction.

NONE Until the establishment can demonstrate that it can apply the law equally on all its citizens, I do not think we should even attempt to qualify our arguments when it comes to issues like these. Here is what most politicians and "pragmatic" people say when it comes to this issue, that "anyone who insults any religion should be sanctioned".

This is a cop-out because for politicians and those who support them, they are merely pandering to their Malay/Muslim demographic at the same time attempting to accrue some much needed secular credibility, all of which does nothing for the cause of real change.

What I hope politicians would say is that these two idiots should not be sanctioned because (obviously) certain laws of the land are applied selectively. Until there is a change in thinking in how these laws are applied, I say the only truly moral stance, would be to not qualify our statements as to the nature of these selective prosecutions.

This will never happen of course because as we all know everything revolves around Muslim sensitivities. As long as these sensitivities are used as political capital, we will always be at the mercy of those who claim to speak on behalf of a

religion which claims to be compassionate and just and those who are afraid to oppose them even though they know the reality of it.

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