

**Ibrahim Ali and Ijtihad**  
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Ibrahim Ali apparently has made a statement stating that he is not about to have a debate with Nurul Izzah Anwar on the question of Malay rights. It's already in the constitution, he apparently has said, so, wherefore the need for any debate?

This curt dismissal should largely be ignored, not only the statement, but its originator Ibrahim Ali himself. I was tempted to if not for the fact that this guy is the head of Perkasa, the institution that has sworn to protect Malay rights. I can see that whatever he says might have great impact on the welfare of the country in the short and long term. I have to register my concern.

My worry against him is not the question of Malay rights per se, although I have my views on this.

The issue to me is that anybody can claim he is sincere and committed to any principle or philosophy he holds dear. This being so he should be responsible for it be able to account for his commitment and be willing to share it with the community at large. Then people will say, yes he has sincerity and commitment, now let's see whether we can support him on this issue.

NONEBut sincerity and commitment are subject to test. So if Ibrahim (right) truly believes in the correctness of Malay rights, come on then, defend your stand. Go meet up with Nurul and fight it out. If you really have the commitment and solid rationale over this issue, be accountable and be responsible with it. This is the only honourable and moral thing to do.

But no, Ibrahim Ali did nothing honourable or moral. Instead he runs behind something vague like 'the constitution says so.' This shows he has no courage of his conviction. He has been shooting his mouth around, yet when one young person tells him "Hey, instead of shooting around, why don't we talk and see what's your grouse about?" he stops in his tracks, and says "Because the sheriff says so".

In this one single swoop he has shown no sincerity, accountability, responsibility, honour, decency and commitment to the cause. His integrity, in short, is short. He is an uncouth, spineless, unprincipled individual. He can easily be manipulated by people (his sheriff) who have the motive to use or abuse his questionable mouth-shooting skills; people who have might, and think that they are right all the time.

Consequences of closing the mind

On a more philosophical level, I worry in another sense. There is a case in Islamic history when the prestige and power of Islamic civilisation was at its peak. This was at around the early centuries of the first millennia.

The Islamic Empire was at its widest, which history books tell was bigger than the Roman Empire. Arabic was the common lingua franca. Internally all Islamic jurisprudence had been codified by the four Imams Hanafi, Hambali, Maliki and Shafie and later 'refreshed' by Imam Ghazali.

If securing knowledge is like a race then the Islamic scholars had reached the finishing line first and declared the winners. If it was a mountain then its top has been conquered. The Muslim mind had the perception that it had conquered its conceptual Mount Everest. The

Islamic world was in euphoria.

Comfortable with this perception and completely on its own volition the Islamic civilization closed the doors to Ijtihad or discourses sometime after the demise of Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111). Since then the Islamic world had refused to be involved in any intellectual development and advancement!

This show of supreme achievement has an unfortunate consequence. It's easy to talk with hindsight, of course, but even as a layman I'd argue without fear that this has been a disastrous and a suicidal philosophy.

After the point when Islam closed the doors of Ijtihad, two features in human history developed;

One, that man's intellectual, material and secular development expanded by leaps and bounds. The level of human knowledge exploded with the advent of the scientific revolution, starting in the fifteenth century, the Industrial Revolution and the modern world.

The knowledge explosion accelerated as the years went by so much so that in our post-modern world philosophers contend that the level of human knowledge doubles every eight to ten years;

Two, perhaps due to the self-imposed non-involvement the Islamic civilisation was still basking in the glamour of its past. It has little or no contribution in mankind's march forward.

teoh beng hock memorial night 160710 nurul izzahIn a minute, mini scale, Ibrahim Ali seems still behind the closed doors of Ijtihad. This sorry situation could be the real reason why he dare not take up Nurul Izzah's (left) challenge - he has nothing to defend himself with.

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