

Poetic justice
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Wikipedia defines poetic justice as a literary device in which virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice punished, often in modern literature by an ironic twist of fate intimately related to the character's own conduct. The structure of poetry, prose, and drama to have justice originates in Aristotle's Poetics.

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Aristotle says that poetry is superior to history in that it shows what should or must occur, rather than merely what does occur. Notably, poetic justice does not merely require that vice be punished and virtue rewarded, but also that logic triumph.

As per the definition above, this type of justice is different from legalistic justice. It is also different from spiritual justice; often considered to be delivered at the ends of time. Aristotle thought it higher than actual history and happenings as it postures the normative and the ideal. Poetic justice therefore normally happens in literature, but must obviously have basis in life experiences. While living life on earth such poetic justice usually happens, when, as they say, "the stars become aligned to honor one of God's creations."

abdullah ahmad badawi 2008 cabinet line up 180308 06To me, the announcement by Pak Lah about his administration's public policy to undo and make good the damage done by the judicial crisis of 1988 is what I would call poetic justice. And the one man who was at the epicenter of that crisis, Tun Salleh Abas' spoke the following words, which to me, say it all:

"I feel vindicated. I'm a very happy man. I don't want to make comments but I will say that I had prayed to Allah. Alhamdulillah (praise be to God) for being so merciful and kind to me. I have been waiting 20 years for this. In the end, my prayers have been answered. I know I couldn't win legally in the previous government but my prayers were that I should be given a moral victory. Tonight everyone can see that moral victory was given to me."

The other actor in the same story denies any wrong-doing. Yes it is a moral victory for Tun Salleh and a spiritual victory for truth and justice; but even more so, it was poetic justice for all ordinary Malaysians who were not only silent observers to this injustice but also inadvertent and colluding participants. As someone has said, for evil to prevail in the world, all it takes is for good and ordinary people to keep quiet about it. I was one of those who kept quiet. In fact, although my family and I were overseas at the material time and did not even follow the events leading to this tragic event in the sad history of Malaysia, I still do feel guilty about the wrong done ever since I first fully understood the significance of the events.

Courage to do what is right

It is always poetic justice when "kairos time" (nature's time) and "kronos time" (chronological time) come together to make for a human miracle or a conceptual impossibility to happen. Would any Malaysian, for that matter even Tun Salleh himself, have ever imagined, even one year ago, that the Pak Lah administration would begin or start this process to reinvent the judiciary, but to begin it with the admission of the wrong-doing before the very judges or their families? I salute Pak Lah, that he had the courage to do

what is right, good and true. And that he received a standing ovation for it from this very critical and much abused audience of the judicial fraternity of Malaysia was itself full credit to the PM. He even personalised the pain experience and empathised with feeling of wrong-done; but, it was so cleverly done that he even avoided implicating the entire government of Malaysia of legal liabilities.

The PM even went one step further; to substantiate and make his real intentions known using the exact phrase deployed by Raja Nazrin when he called for the "Judicial Renaissance." And we all know that the father, the Sultan of Perak, has also spoken out on this need.

bar council judiciary dinner 170408 zaid ibrahim speechFor that matter, could anyone in Umno have ever imagined that Zaid Ibrahim would even become the defacto law minister after he was dropped from the elections? Did the Bar Council ever imagine that their postponed meeting with the prime minister "after the Bar walked and raised the bar on justice," would now provide the platform and occasion for the beginning of the mending of the broken judicial fences? The broken fences even allowed crooks to influence the blind lady of justice; sadly, by way of writing judicial decisions! Would even the perennial Mr Opposition, Uncle Kit have ever imagined that during his lifetime he might see the day when "his idealised concepts and virtues for justice, mercy and democracy were being revisited by his own federal government, and his arch nemesis?"

I say, let us give credit where it is rightly due: Pak Lah has become the man of the moment; in terms of poetic justice, and at least in terms of rebuilding the vision for the Blind Lady of Justice in Malaysia.

My own views are that, if he could have started with a cleaned-up Cabinet and with some of his promised initiatives like this one four years ago, the ordinary people like me would have given his governance even much more time. But, he did not, and the people voted against his unfulfilled governance. But, I would also be the first to argue that we the people can give him more time if he can sustain the momentum of new initiatives like this one and really become the real prime minister of all Malaysians.

Frankly, for far too long we have only had a pure Umno-minded president as prime minister and every one of them have overstayed their welcome to undertake what is really needed for a true Bangsa Malaysia. Crying over spilt milk does not help either. Frankly, in my view, if the current president of Umno can simply do the right things right; the same people who gave Pak Lah 92% the last time, will do the same again. As I wrote in my previous column, if Pak Lah can give a speech of great promise at the new Parliament and get a standing ovation from all the MPs, he will again get more than two-thirds support in Parliament; but now from two sides.

Truly sorry

True justice on earth requires recognising human frailty but also acknowledging the sovereignty of God Almighty. To me, Pak Lah appeared to be truly sorry for the wrongs done to the judicial officers and their families; after all everyday many wrongs are being done in the name of so-called good governance.

He felt personally sorry and apologised as the prime minister without dragging the entire government into the apology. Any such real and true personal apology would constitute two basic elements: confession of the wrong actions and reformation of the heart of

wrong-doing; implicitly with a promise of no repeat of the same offence. But, Pak Lah even went one step further to make good some of the wrongs; via ex-gratia payments to the families. It is only a token for the wrong done; although it is our monies being used

Maybe the more pertinent question is whether such piece-meal resolution is all that is needed or, as I have suggested earlier, we really need is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

judiciary forum lingam tape 171107 salleh abbasI even "naughtily suggested" that Tun Salleh be invited to head it and many other "relevant and qualified Elders could sit on it." The mandate would simply be to bring healing and reconciliation for all the wrongs done in the name of "expedient political governance and in the name of accelerated development of the nation to achieve a 2020 vision."

No compensations are really needed but to listen and accept that certain wrongs were done to one and many which need to be acknowledged and corrected so we can move on as an united nation. Am I too much of an idealist, dear new Parliamentarians? May true justice roll in Malaysia wherever wrong has been done! May God Bless Malaysia.

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