

From cow-headed to level-headed education
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How must we re-educate those who protested in such a style against the relocation of a Hindu temple? What gross deficiencies in our educational system contributed to the creation of beings that displayed such hatred?

What then must we do to reverse the evolution of hate groups sponsored by those who wish to sustain the dying ideology of ethnic politics?

These are the difficult questions Malaysian children will inherit. In the cow-head protest there were children involved; those tender young minds who will hopefully understand what respect for race, ethnicity, and religion means. Hopefully they will be strong enough to release themselves from the shackles of hatred, after 52 years of Malaysia's independence.

We must blame the continuing survival of communal politics for the creation of hate-based groups. Because our Independence is an illusion and Malaysia is an imagined community that is thriving on rhetoric and slogans, we have a fragile system of in-breeding of hyper-modernised politics of hate.

Because the insatiable urge for wealth and power necessitates the maintenance of 'politics of divide-and conquer and rule through racial annihilations', we are heading towards a brink of destruction. We will see more 'cow-head' antics orchestrated from time to time in order for organized chaos to reign.

We must blame the contradictions and the hypocrisy in the translation of our national educational philosophy for the display of the cow-head politics we are witnessing. Though the philosophy, mission, and vision of our educational system is elegantly worded and loudly trumpeted, we have hidden hands orchestrating the game of divide and rule and segregation. Underneath the canopy of the elegance of the rhetoric lie structural violence; a base and superstructure of politics of race that has come to a breaking point.

The way Malaysians school their children - from pre-kindergarten to post-graduate levels - is characterised by the insistence that race-politics must be propagated by all means necessary. Narratives on what Malaysia is - drawn from kampong folks to retired professors - oftentimes reflect the same theme: maintain race-politics and let this or that race dominates.

We must blame the mainstream media as agents of race-based and racist socialisation for shaping race and class consciousness in a Malaysia badly in need of a way out of racial intolerance; a path charted wrongly for the sake of glorifying greed over virtue, wants over needs, and indoctrination over education guised in the name of blind patriotism.

The media as an extension of the state now has life of its own profiting from the manufacture of chaos and the production of conflict. In time of economic troubles when the masses are suffering while the elite are still conspicuously consuming, the media will have a ball of a time translating repressed emotion into a reason to project mass anger against this or that race.

The British colonials did a wonderful job in perception management - divide and conquer the

natives and create perceptions of this or that superiority amongst them so that they will not see the bigger picture. Hitler did a good job at this too. Stir up emotions during that time of economic depression, tell repeated lies, and create an enemy of the state, and next get those millions of young Germans to join the Nazi party.

'Indoctrinated nation'

We must also blame ourselves for not educating our children enough in matters of racial and religious tolerance. We have failed to tell our children that the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Sikh, Kadazan, Iban, and hybridised groups they see in their classrooms and in the neighborhood are fellow-Malaysians and part of what our country has evolved into.

How could our children be taught to hate this or that group when their teachers - the managers and transmitters of virtue - are of this or that race?

The cow-head politics we saw in Selangor last week is a grim picture of how our educational institution is failing to create a citizenry that celebrates diversity and willing to learn about each other's religious belief. In essence, we have become an 'indoctrinated' rather than an educated nation, a furious 52-year-old rather than a forgiving one ready to meet its Maker.

As a nation we are drowning in dangerous waters; from a flash flood we created. *Bahtera Merdeka* is sinking. How do we save ourselves? How do we evolve out of this cow-head politics we are witnessing.

Again, we must turn to education and the radical restructuring of it. Education as a gentle profession and a powerful enterprise for social and personal progress must be restructured. Its philosophy must be recaptured.

But what philosophical orientation must we embrace? Social reconstructionism and education for spiritual capitalism perhaps. For too long we have been trumpeting 'human capital', 'educational for national development', 'education for nation-building' and all those fancy words we blindly borrow from the pages of work of modernisation theorists and post-industrialist theorists.

These have become meaningless. We are living with the contradictions of the manifestations of these words that have been translated into policies.

What we need is not a better educational philosophy that will make our children more sophisticated racist and aspiring robber barons. We have a generation of these already. What we need is a philosophy sound enough to create a powerful generation that will care for fellow human beings and ones that understands that the Earth's resources are enough for one's need and not for one's greed, as Gandhi said.

Ah, we have made a wrong turn in history. But education is still about hope and love. Evolve we must - from cow headed to level-headed education.