

Spirit of the times and flesh collide
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Fat-headed politicians should wake to the reality that power leads a vampire-like existence.

It pumps up the ego to a bloated level, blinds the eye and stuffs up the ears until the delusion of being monarch of all one surveys becomes an all consuming passion.

And its power's nature to take its own sweet time to pull the plug and go on the prowl for other willing victims.

When that happens, the experience is always shattering - sucked dry and spat out.

This is has been so since the story of mankind began.

So, allow me to rudely switch tracks to a seemingly unrelated topic.

My calling became my higher education augmented by regular attendance at my favourite pubs.

It goes without saying, of course, that for the former I was paid and for the latter I paid.

And that was a price well worth paying in my days as they were treasures houses of the human species.

I met such a variety of patrons professing such a variety mental skills that learning was never boring.

The pub-goers were from practically all levels of society drawn from all races, including women.

The glass levels all

The grand mixture embraced academics such as professors and lecturers; government servants, lawyers and businessmen, among others.

You slapped down your ringgit and were the equal of all there with your pinta.

In other words, the watering holes levelled the playing field.

They were also where one absorbed character study lessons and the 'spirit'.

Such places, considered by many to be dens of iniquity, were also prime targets for the intelligence community.

For the edification of the holy ignorant, alcohol has the sly habit of uncorking what's hidden in the heart to pour out of the mouth.

And by the way alcohol also has this amazing talent to dissolve the walls that divide the various races that politicians continue to beat their breasts about as if they are such innocent parties.

So such drinking joints were goldmines for the intelligence services of the responsible branches of government as well foreign embassies which of out necessity want to keep a finger on the pulse of the host nation.

For journalists they were prime areas for developing networks of contacts as well as striking up firm friendships.

A major attraction was that drinking amidst the spirit of camaraderie was a great way to relax after a hard day's work.

Naturally there'll be those who take great umbrage at me for waxing lyrical over such evil places.

Political insobriety

Let me say this. There are other forms of intoxication which not just destroy families but whole nations or flatten them so badly and when if they recover, they can never be the same again.

That's right we are talking about political drunkenness in its multifarious forms.

Take our own country for instance.

There are sin taxes on tobacco products and the various types of liquor.

But neither tax nor court action can curb political inebriation.

Here, we now see how this disease has taken on a really serious aspect when political intoxication hides weakness in the highly demanding practical exercise of faith.

This was succinctly put by Robert M.Pirsig in his book entitled Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance published in 1974:

"When people are fanatically dedicated to political or religious faiths or any other kinds of dogmas and or goals, its always because those dogmas and goals are in doubt."

The case of part-time model and mother Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, 32, illustrates this point.

The mother of two was charged with drinking beer in a public place and received a fine and caning sentence.

Her fault was not being a member of any exclusive club where the rich and mighty can get gloriously drunk with the only consequence being a stabbing hangover.

Caught with pants down

What the relevant authorities did not bargain for was the way the case blew up in their face.

For one thing women's non-governmental organisations rallied to her cause and the nation earned the condemnation of the world for such extreme measures in a so-called secular state.

Here, the push was led by the Sisters-in-Islam joined in by other non-Muslim NGOs dedicated to the cause of women.

This particular version of the global sisterhood appears to be a revival of the original born in the late 1960s as the female liberation movement and is a growing power worldwide.

Politicians everywhere ignore them at their cost.

Kartika has already shown the type of mettle that the female is made up nowadays.

That she willingly admitted her offence must have surprised the authorities.

But when she insisted on being caned publicly, their reaction was of those caught with their pants down.

What was left unspoken was if you want be like the Taliban then go the whole hog. No half-measures please - a judo move of the finest order.

David vs Goliath ala Malaysia with a twist rich with political implications for the future.

Then they find out that they've no trained personnel to carry out the canning as it's not meant to hurt but humiliate and the sentence has to be carried in secular Kajang prison.

From here to eternity

And that the law does not provide for that -the secular and the religious divide, you see.

So now the whole world, particularly the cyber variety, is rolling over with laughter.

Oops, along comes another problem. Time has slipped into the Ramadan month. So, the sentence is postponed for after Hari Raya Adilfithri.

All that over a glass of beer and Kartika has been inadvertently turned into a sisterhood icon.

And if you peek behind the curtain, you might spy power doing a victory jig, waxing fat with all the soaked up emotion.

Power was also lapping it up when PAS youth so filled with self-righteousness demanded yet again that a rock concert be banned.

They might as well pick on all Bollywood shows on TV with those scantily dressed women indulging in highly suggestive moves in their dancing.

They also called for liquor to be banned in all Pakatan Rakyat held states as though other urgent issues affecting the community are not worth their attention.

As they go about with their publicity seeking stunts they should take time out to seriously mull over the third of the Ten Commandments which at the relevant part reads:

"Take not the name of God, thy Lord in vain."

If they believe that they are the Almighty's right hand, they had better watch it.

Take great care that they're spotlessly pure in the eyes of the Lord.

In the afterlife, it is said one stands alone as the decision is made on your upstairs or downstairs destiny.

Soul or ego?

So some self-scrutiny for these self-appointed guardians of public morality would be advisable.

Is this religious zeal really about caring about the soul of the devoted or about the male macho showing off to the orbiting followers?

Can any politician honestly claim to be leading a holy life?

How to gauge the depth of one's faith in absence of temptations?

There's already a palpable sense deep disgruntlement running through society.

Those politicians unable to cut out the crap and get real with what's happening around them are more than just likely to land up politically castrated at the next general election.

The time is now to acknowledge that a common thread runs through all religions - the vital guide to the conquest of oneself.

There's no power greater than the power over oneself with which rises compassion.

Meanwhile, the slicing of the BN's two-thirds majority in the last election tipped the coalition into the iron maiden where they are still twisting and turning in agony.

On the Pakatan Rakyat side, the pain is one of adjustment to the sharp-edged differences in ideology.

All this leads us to the main political problem afflicting this country - the lack of pragmatism and the art of compromise.

They act as if the rising power of the cyberspace-connected generation is of no consequence.

And meantime, power, the red-eyed monster of a mischief maker, waits licking its chops as the fatheads continue with their antics completely unable to get themselves unstuck from their tired old routine.

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