

Start by upholding Madani values in little ways

MADANI was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Jan 19, with the aim of "restoring Malaysia's dignity and glory" both locally and globally. It is a framework meant for all of us to "build a sustainable and prosperous Malaysia based on care and compassion, mutual respect, innovation, and trust, where inclusiveness and equality are embraced by the whole nation"

Madani is an Arabic word, meaning "civilised" Etymologically, it means the people of Medina, which historically is an important city in Islam. Madani is the Malay acronym for SCRIPT, which stands for sustainability, care and compassion, respect, innovation, prosperity and trust. These six key values will be used to "shape and build a thriving, dynamic future for Malaysia."

Hence, it is crucial we harness a constructive line of thinking in that we have a lot more work to do to make this country better. Because to make Malaysia better is not just a destination, but a journey.

For example, the recent Thaipusam celebration. How many of us know that Thaipusam is celebrated mainly by the Tamil community? And since a majority of Malaysian Indians are Tamils, most of them celebrate Thaipusam. It is also celebrated by Tamils around the world, from Canada and Singapore to Seychelles and Fiji.

How many of us understand the significance of body piercing and carrying kavadi during the procession? The word "celebration" can be misleading since we, in a multiracial country, have always related celebration to activities that bring joy and happiness.

How can we relate body piercings and other acts of self-mortification to joy? But if we understood that Thaipusam is a day of penance and atonement for Hindus in honour of the Hindu God Murugan, then we would have looked at the word "celebration" and "festival" in a different perspective.

By the same token, some devotees opt to carry milk pots and kavadis in processions from one temple to another i.e. the grand procession that starts at Mahamariamman Temple in Kuala Lumpur and ends at Batu Caves as an act of offering devotion and



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thanks to Lord Murugan.

Madani may have been launched two weeks ago but the key to upholding it lies with us, on how we look and treat each other. As with all important changes in life, we can do this by starting small.

Perhaps it is time that we start realising and be proud of our Thaipusam, which is the largest celebration of its kind outside India. Batu Caves attracts hundreds of thousands of devotees from across the country and around the world during the celebration. Apart from the grand procession, tourists also through the temple to see the second tallest Lord Murugan statue in the world, standing at 42.7m.

Accepting that this is part of us and what makes us unique will help promote respect, inclusiveness and harmony.

According to deputy director of Centre for Civilisational Dialogue at Universiti Malaya Dr Alwani Ghazali being respectful helps in building trust and creating a supportive environment.

"This can lead to greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures, and reduce prejudice and discrimination. Respectful behaviour can include acknowledging and valuing different cultures, avoiding negative stereotypes, and being open to different perspectives and ways of life. It also involves listening to and valuing the experiences and opinions of those from different cultural backgrounds.

"In a multicultural society, it is important for individuals to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural norms and customs of others. By being respectful, individuals and communities can work together to create a society that values diversity and promotes inclusiveness for all."

Let us start doing our part in building a Madani society by wishing our Hindu friends "A blessed Thaipusam."

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