



# THE NEW MALAY

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Muhammad Haji Muhd Taib



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*Dedicated to the Younger Generation in the Hope that They Will Forge Forward With the Utmost Determination, Scale Greater Heights and Gain the Highest Respect.*



## FOREWORD

I extend my heartiest congratulations to Tan Sri Muhammad bin Haji Muhd. Taib, who had conceived the catchall, *New Malay*, and, through this book, has ably given form and meaning to it.

The desire to inject the Malay society with a new paradigm shift is in itself not new. Value shifts in the Malay society, like in any other society, constitute a continuous process and have been going on for a long time: for example, the seminal conversion to Islam of the 13th and 14th centuries and the response to the changes brought about with the coming of the West in the 19th century. Today, we are still experiencing and renewing the effects of these paradigm shifts. What is new in Tan Sri Muhammad's concept of the New Malay is the recognition of the particular niche the Malays have carved for themselves in the post-independent and, one might add, the pre-global era in a world both expanding and shrinking as it approaches the next millennium.

Even looking from a detached point, the reformation of the collective Malay psyche in the 35 years of independence seems to be nothing short of a miracle. From the quagmire of an agrarian society bedevilled by poverty, ignorance and a heritage of colonial and feudal traits and traditions, the Malays have potently emerged to assert a strong sense of self-worth. This emergence is reflected in Dr Mahathir Mohamed's *The Malay Dilemma* and Senu Abdul Rahman's *Revolusi Mental*, two books which depict the past plights and future hopes of the Malays. Meanwhile, the forward looking *Vision 2020* plan captures the extraordinary optimism of the post-independence Malay leaders and thinkers. How this optimism is to be translated into concrete plans and actions is the theme behind the

*New Malay* concept. The dream of the Malays to carve a niche for themselves in an open, challenging and ruthlessly competitive world is not without risks, especially when safeguarding the Malay identity is at the very heart of the *New Malay* vision.

No less noteworthy, in these changing times, is the fact that the Malay leadership has seen a changing of the guards from the pre-independence fighters to those who grew up in the post-independence era including Tan Sri Muhammad himself.

The tone of this book typifies that of the new generation: at once optimistic and critical. In giving voice to this tone, Tan Sri Muhammad sounds optimistic when plotting the path for the new generation to follow and critical when evaluating the national and human traits which impede the effort towards achieving the aims of the vision. One interesting feature in this book is the way in which the writer harmonizes the need to reform the Malays, the need to make the nation prosper as a whole and the need to integrate the various races of the country. This is not easy. Although sometimes each chapter seems to stand alone, taken as a whole, they do complement and support one other.

Lastly, this writing shows Tan Sri Muhammad as a thinker with a grounding in education, history and Malay studies of the highest order. His commitment as a political leader is apparent, and, to Tan Sri Muhammad watchers, it is clear that many of the ideas in this writing have been, or are being, translated into actions.

For me, it is exciting to watch the fast changing times and the array of leaders bringing about those changes.

Tan Sri Professor Ismail Hussein  
1st Chairman, GAPENA

## PREFACE

THE effort to sift through the options available to the Malays in their desire for development, and find the best, is a continuous process and ought not to be slackened, whatever the level Malays may have arrived at now.

I regard the *New Malay* vision as a comprehensive concept, although it may not be a perfect one, in the struggle of the Malays in this era of globalization.

I admit that the analysis and exposition in this writing is far from perfect; but I do believe, and hope, that it is an important step in making the effort to create the *New Malay* more serious and aggressive.

This writing adopts a no-holds-barred approach, not with the intention of blaming or belittling any party, but with the conviction that every concerned individual must know all aspects of his role and that he must play that role to the best of his ability.

Muhammad Haji Muhd. Taib  
Bukit Megawati  
Shah Alam





## Concerning the book *The New Malay*

by

Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Awang Had Salleh

*The New Malay* is written by Muhammad Haji Muhd Taib, a *Dato'* and a *Tan Sri*, the chief minister of the state of Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Containing 167 pages, the book is divided into seven chapters, beginning with chapter one which discusses the factors which shackle the Malay mind which must be addressed in order to realise the goal of creating a *New Malay* image, which, in his own words:

As the end product of this endeavour, the *New Malay* will be sought after by other people or countries for advice and guidance and looked upon to lead in politics, the economy, sports and so on. The *New Malay* knows clearly who he is (identity), where he is going (vision) wherever he may be (level and role); is highly adaptable; is a leader who brings about changes in the technology or thinking of his people and who places his religion of Islam as the foundation in all aspects. (pg. 16)

Chapter II identifies the traits of dynamic peoples of the world. These traits, according to the writer, are as follows:

1. tending to operate in networks;
2. tending to have a highly developed sense of racial pride, egotistical, highly ethnocentric;
3. tending to possess a colonial bent of mind – desiring to conquer, to subjugate over other races whether militarily, ideologically or economically;

4. having a tendency to travel or to migrate far beyond their homelands;
5. having commitment to a creed (e.g. Shintoism, Protestantism, Islam);
6. possessing calibre leadership;
7. being highly adaptable (humility, superiority, or combinations thereof);
8. being highly creative;
9. being highly motivated;
10. having a tradition of exploration – of the natural world, of technology and of cognitive and philosophical fields;
11. knowing how to manipulate human and physical resources to their advantage.

In Chapter III, the writer argues his case for urbanizing the Malays as a means of realising the *New Malay* image, meaning, the Malays, it is hoped, will adopt new values and new modes of thinking when they find themselves in an urban milieu which stresses on competition and the spirit of survival. In a traditional kampung setting, the Malays do not feel the need to compete and survive.

Exposure to a competitive world in which the need to survive is most keenly felt, the writer argues, will give birth to a new generation of Malays who no longer depend on quotas and subsidies to survive.

Urbanization in the sense of providing infrastructure only is not enough without a concomitant and parallel process of urbanizing the mind and the removal of the negative thinking which has bedevilled the advancement of the Malays.

In chapter IV, the writer takes his case one step further by arguing that we should look upon pluralism or communalism not as

a millstone around the neck but as an advantage or blessing: that we should elevate ethnic relations from its present superficial, even hypocritical, level to a deeper level by exploiting its potential for national integration. The writer hopes to see a situation in which: "In a situation where all the communities have achieved parity in all aspects, there will automatically be mutual respect. When this position is achieved the Malays do not need quotas any more and the correcting mechanism will probably disappear without any fanfare...." (pg. 102)

The writer describes communalism in this country as being cloaked in hypocrisy. There is no such thing as sincere ethnic relations. Communal leaders say one thing to their own community and quite a different thing to others. The writer points out the dangers of hypocrisy if it is not controlled or eliminated.

Hypocritical communalism should make way for communal integration, in which, according to the writer, the creation of the *New Malay* should be complemented by a parallel emergence of the *New Chinese* and the *New Indian* to make up the *New Malaysian*.

In the fifth chapter, the writer discusses the importance of knowledge and learning in the effort to realise the Malay potential. The writer closes the chapter with a quote from Ibn Khaldun: "The power of knowledge is not only a requisite and a complement of physical power, but it also gives direction and meaning to man's existence."

Chapter VI articulates the need for reformation in Islamic thinking. The writer firmly rejects the idea of separating the holy from the secular, of Islamic teachings in the effort to mould the *New Malay*. If this were to happen, says he: "Any effort to isolate Islam

and Malays in the new image will destroy the Malays and make them lose everything." (pg.126)

In the concluding chapter, the writer asserts that education is the bedrock on which the effort to remould the Malay is based on. Says he: "I am convinced that knowledge and learning is capable of overcoming all the negative aspects of the Malay psyche including attitude, motivation, thinking ability and so on."

All three channels of learning – media, formal institutions and informal processes – should be utilised, while the target groups are identified as leaders (leadership training), parents (parenting courses), social groups (group studies) as well as students enrolled in schools and colleges.

The writer also suggests "experiential learning" as a component of formal education. He explains: "In this context, there are three sources of experience from which we can draw valuable lessons that are beneficial to our national goal and aspiration: the collective personal experiences of the Malays; the example of advanced communities; the lesson from Islamic philosophy."

He also moots the idea of having a subject called "Dynamic Peoples" taught in schools.

The second last paragraph of the book summarizes best the stand and aspiration of the writer:

Clearly, the work of moulding the *New Malay* is not as easy as it sounds on paper. But as I've repeatedly said, if all available resources are assembled together to form a wave of committed effort (incorporating planning, details, work culture, consistency, etc.) with clear, specific goals and direction, then, however high is the ideal, I am convinced that it can be accomplished."

## Observations

I read this book with a keen interest as I wanted to know better the concept of the *New Malay* which was mooted by Dr. Mahathir in 1991 and then used afresh in 1993 first as a political buzz word. I was also keen to know the writer's ideas on how to realise the concept, whether his scheme of approach is feasible or otherwise.

There are a number of things which can be said about the book.

Firstly, the book can be seen as an effort by the writer to spell out the details of the *New Malay* concept. All this while, whenever it is used in political speeches, it seems as though the meaning of the term is shared by one and all. This is certainly not the case. For example, there are people who interpret the term to mean a "rude" Malay. This shocks many Malays. This rudeness is further interpreted to mean being aggressive, not beholden to any rules of proper behaviour or not held back by any sense of humility. Some of us also feel that the *New Malay* is materialistic.

Secondly, the book can be seen as a first draft of a "plan of action" to help bring about the *New Malay* race.

This book is written by a politician who is in a hurry to remould society and his race by political will and means. Politicians cannot afford the luxury of taking too long a time, calmly contemplating about matters of race and state, untrammelled by calls from all sides and strata of society for immediate action. Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhammad Haji Muhd Taib has thus appeared to have hammered out a rough analysis of what's wrong with the Malays and then came out with an action plan to solve the problem. It is on the basis of recognizing the writer's need to juggle between precious time and his resolve to get things moving in a hurry that we should see his line of thinking in the book.

The following are the writer's assumptions or premises underpinning his analyses and proposals:

The Malays need to reform his world view in order to become a New Malay. This is because the inherited world view is no longer compatible with the times. The Malay world view is blurred because:

1. The Malay is not sure of his identity according to the constitution, in the geopolitical context of Malaysia-Indonesia and on the world stage.
2. The Malay is confused in his religious beliefs which are an odd mixture of Islam and leftovers from pre-Islamic Hindu and animistic days.
3. The Malay is uncertain of his future. Pronouncements by leaders concerning the future of the race is seen as idealistic and does not imbue him with the requisite optimism and resolve to achieve it.

The writer's premises can be further interpreted to mean that the Malay mind is constricted by the small world milieu the Malay finds himself in, by the failure to make a clean break between Islamic and non- or pre-Islamic beliefs and practices and by having no or modest aspirations to make good in this world as articulated by Malay leaders and as is the case with dynamic peoples of the world.

So far so good. Now let's throw in a few cautionary statements.

In any analysis of the traits, traditions and world view of a people, and attempting to establish relationships between a diversity of factors, even if it is logically sound, with reasoned premises and conclusions, still, it is extremely difficult to say which relationships are merely correlational and which are causal.

So the lesson for policy makers here is: any major exercise to shift about the paradigms of a whole people through social intervention or engineering should judiciously weigh the many factors involved.

The target areas of change should not be seen in isolation or in a vacuum – removed from its historical, geographical, cultural and linguistic context.

It is not my intention to throw a spanner into the works. As said earlier, the book should be seen as an urging by a politician who is in need to get things moving in a hurry.

My cautionary observations are directed primarily to the policy makers whose job is to translate the writer's ideas and proposals into concrete plans and to the bureaucrats whose job is to implement them.

This is why it is appropriate to see the book as a first draft of a plan of action to remould the Malays, a social engineering exercise of the highest magnitude, involving, as it does, the redesigning of a whole race of people.

As such it would be an act of gross injustice if we were to allow the book to gather dust for want of resolve and professionalism. Through this book, Tan Sri Dato' Muhammad has played the role of a catalyst of social change. His ideas and proposals should be taken up and refined by others who are professionally qualified for each of the disciplines of knowledge touched upon in the book. There is a need to put the writer's ideas and proposals into a coherent theoretical framework to achieve unity of purpose and consistency of effect. This will help to ensure consistency at the implementation stage as well. So that, even if the effort fails, it would not be for want of intellectual rigor, whether at the conceptualizing, planning or implementation stage. In other words, to



do justice to Tan Sri Dato' Muhammad's ideas and proposals, bring in the professionals to refine it.

For example, the term New Malay itself needs refinement. It has created controversy and shocked many a Malay across the land. Some people have suggested other terms such as The Renewal of the Malays or The New Era of the Malays.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding the review of the book, allow me to congratulate Tan Sri Dato' Muhammad on his ability to present an analysis of the reasons for the backwardness of the Malays and a proposal on their reformation.

I'm confident that the book will gain recognition for him as a politician who acts far beyond mere political rhetoric. To ensure that his ideas and proposals are not gone to waste, a panel should be set up to refine them.

I feel honoured to be associated with this noble plan and count myself as among the fortunate to be able to say a few words at the launching of the book. I hope you will enjoy reading the book as much as I've enjoyed reviewing it.

## List of Abbreviations

DBP	– Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka
DEB	– Dasar Ekonomi Baru (New Economic Policy)
Gerakan	– Parti Gerakan Malaysia
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia)
ITM	– Institut Teknologi Mara (Mara Institute of Technology)
KEMAS	– Bahagian Kemajuan Masyarakat
MIC	– Malaysian Indian Congress
MCA	– Malaysian Chinese Association
MTDC	– Malaysian Technology Development Corporation
NEP	– New Economic Policy
PAS	– Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (All Malaysian Islamic Party)
UMNO	– United Malays National Organisation
USM	– Universiti Sains Malaysia
UPM	– Universiti Pertanian Malaysia



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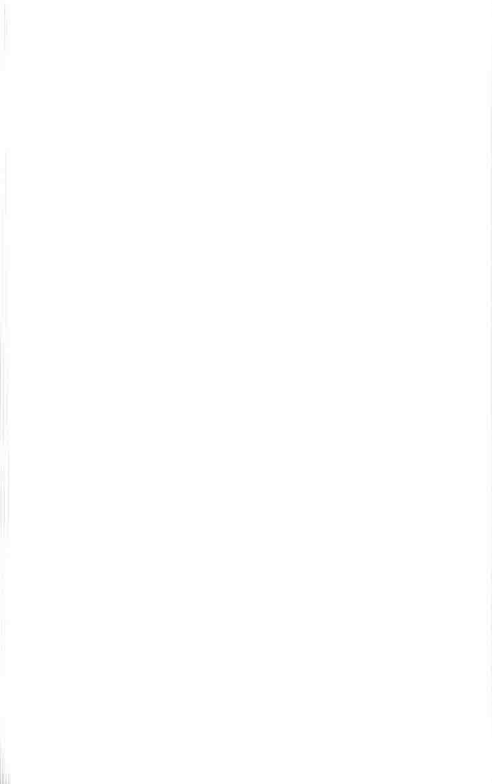


CHAPTER 1

**THE NEW MALAY**

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**THE NEW MALAY:  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
THE OLD MALAY?**



## CHAPTER 1

# THE NEW MALAY: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE OLD MALAY?

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Man is not a static object. He reigns supreme amongst God's creatures. One of the qualities which distinguish man from other life forms is his ability to improve himself whether measured against his old self or against other fellow humans.

In this sense, when we talk about creating a *New Malay*, we are not casting aspersions on the old Malay. Rather, the vision stems from the firm conviction that what is good today ought to be made even better tomorrow. Applied to the Malays, this maxim needs to be carried one step further: what is already good ought to be made even better.

For it to be successful, this exhortation must be translated into a sense of commitment and responsibility by everyone and at all levels of the Malay leadership. Admittedly, this is easier said than done. Even before it can be done, certain negative Malay traits need to be recognised and eliminated.



The *New Malay* vision is not utopian; it can be realistically achieved with an appropriate and comprehensive strategy: appropriate as to what steps should be taken and comprehensive in the sense that every individual must give his full commitment.

It would also help if we have leaders of high calibre: leaders whose thinking, planning and actions are far-reaching. Such a leader is an asset to a people even while their popular demands and current thinking often present problems to the leader.

The leadership factor alone is of course insufficient to mobilise a people to scale greater heights and gain greater respect. Every member of society must share the same purpose and commitment so that the collective effort can roll forward like a wave towards achieving the vision. This way, the effort will be more effective and the achievement more lasting.

Self-knowledge and self-confidence form the basis in building the strength of a people and yet this is what is lacking in the Malay society. These two qualities may not be absolute values but they are important nevertheless.

For a long time Malays have been uncertain as to their identity: Who are the Malays? Who are the Malays as defined in the country's constitution? Who are the Malays in the Malaysia-Indonesia regional spectrum? Who are the Malays on the international stage? Who, really, are the Malays?

To some people, the question of Malay identity may be a non-issue; to academics, and some leaders, the answer or answers are clear. But to the Malays at large, whether they are looking from outside or inside their own society, the question is real and signifies a certain inadequacy or that something is lacking.

From the outside, it is a question of finding an apt image for the identity of the Malay. Inside, it is a question of finding a phi

osophy of and for the Malays, a question of how the Malays think about their own selves, how do they see themselves on the world stage and how do they see their future. These questions must be addressed by the Malay thinkers and leaders and everyone else concerned with the matter.

The element of uncertainty also applies to the question of beliefs and faith. Malays in Malaysia are Muslims, but how convinced and sincere are they in their professed religion? To what extent do they practise the tenets and teachings of Islam?

The truth is, there is still a continuing conflict arising between primitive traditions, animism and Hinduism on one hand and Islam on the other. The majority of Malays find it very hard to eschew (with many still actively practising) such practices as *lenggang perut*, *puja pantai*, *mandi safar*, *keramat* and so on which are actually against the teachings of Islam. Many of them, in fact, think these primitive and animistic rituals are part of the Islamic practice. Added to these non-Islamic elements are various modern practices. The result is that the confusion becomes compounded and the Malays become lost within themselves.

The third uncertainty is the direction the Malays ought to take with regard to their relationship with the other communities. The question of what would life be like in ten, fifty, a hundred years from now exists only in the imagination of the Malay leadership, nothing more than an idealism which has not been truly imbued and appreciated.

There is still no clear and convincing enunciation of what should be the relationship among the Malays, Chinese and Indians in the post-NEP era. How do Malays, in relation to their effort to develop themselves, view the other communities? How should the inter-ethnic relationship be structured to ensure that the peace and prosperity prevailing in the country is maintained?

What exists today is a relationship based on mutual suspicion, often unfounded, which gives rise to many negative fears. The Malays are afraid that the Chinese might resort to something and the Chinese are afraid that the Malays might resort to something else.

The three areas of uncertainty – identity, conviction and direction – may be seen by some as trivial or unimportant, but these are the core problem areas which must be addressed in the effort to construct the *New Malay*.

If these uncertainties are not resolved, the Malays will continue to be trapped in a vicious circle. All programmes and plans will not be fully utilised.

Parallel to the uncertainties, the Malays also carry an "excess baggage" of psychological complexes which weigh them down, wasting their time and sapping their energy in the process of moving towards their destination.

Feelings of inferiority and dependency hamper the Malays. They feel inferior not only physically but also in their thinking and psychology. This inferiority complex robs them of their self-confidence in their relationships and in terms of their competitiveness.

This sense of inferiority leads to dependency on others whom they regard as superior, to provide for their needs. This of course increases the gap between the leaders and the led and between the strong and the weak. For example, they rely on others for capital, technology, information, expertise, initiative and leadership to show them the way in new and unfamiliar fields.

This partnership of inferiority and dependency, if allowed to fester, can kill confidence, motivation and creativity. This is one reason why the Ali-Baba relationship in which the Malay partner is the passive partner should be eliminated.

On the international stage, Malays continue to remain inferior. This is one effect of the country's dependency on the technology and products from advanced countries.

Here we can see how inferiority feeds on dependency and vice versa; for as long as Malays depend on other communities for their contemporary needs, they will remain inferior.

They become passive, uncreative and uncompetitive. In the world of competition and production, Malays become mere spectators and end-users/consumers whose fate and dignity are in the hands of other communities.

Their inferiority ensues from their dependency. They see themselves as inferior and others as superior and this causes them to lose confidence and motivation to make the best of their lives. This results in the Malays idolising those who have power over them.

The question of which one is the cause and which one is the effect between inferiority and dependency is not an issue. What is important is that we recognise that these two elements need to be eliminated.

In the 80s and 90s, efforts to eliminate the sense of inferiority and the need to depend on others were carried out. The active involvement of Malaysia on the international front has the psychological effect of reducing the inferiority of the Malays.

But the ability of the Malay leaders to engage in international crisis management and their willingness to criticise the leaders of the great powers should not be seen at one level only. Like onions, reality has many layers, and to look at it critically, we have to peel the layers away. It is not that easy to eliminate the inferiority which is deeply rooted in the Malay psyche.

For example, at one level, we can see Hitler as cruel, but at another, we can also see the killing of more than six million Jews as having completely wiped out the inferiority of the Germans and

simultaneously build up their ego and confidence. This is because the Jews were, and still are, seen as superior by the Germans and the world. So Hitler's aim was laudable; only his manner of achieving it was inhuman. Anyway, this example shows how difficult it is to eliminate inferiority and build the confidence of any group of people.

Traditions and negative feudalistic beliefs are among the excess baggage the Malays carry. There may be some positive elements in tradition and feudalism, but to lump all traditions and feudalistic values as a source of culture is inappropriate. Negative elements should not be made the norm and value system of a culture.

For example, the way Malay villages are structured, the way the leaders are elected and the forms of social relations need to be reviewed (see next chapter).

The feudal basis in the relationship between royalty and the commoners, the leaders and the people and the mandors and the workers, emphasises the master-servant or superior-inferior dichotomy. This tradition causes an uncritical working relationship to prevail in which there is no room for a useful dialogue between equals to develop. A culture or climate of fearful respect to the higher-ups with its attendant hypocrisy characterises much of this neo-feudal relations. This culture, at its worst, spawns a subculture of servility where there is much currying of favours and court intrigues. This trait inherited from colonial times still characterises working relations today. No less damaging or burdensome to the progress of the Malays are the traits or practices inherited from the times when Malays were Hindus and animists in the long past.

The time-cultural warp in which the Malays find themselves in is further compounded by the all too familiar human failings of scapegoating and betrayals among peers on the one hand and the

need to find heroes or saviours among perceived superiors on the other. Again this shows their lack of self-confidence, self-knowledge and other uncertainties.

Scapegoating usually goes hand in hand with the invention of imaginary or honorary enemies. A personal failure is blamed on others without examining how far one is personally responsible. Even in times of ease, what more in times of crisis, like Don Quixote attacking windmills, Malays are prone to attacking imaginary *momoks*.

For example, we tend to blame the colonial period of our history for most if not all our socio-economic ills and problems. This is an easy way out of the need to face our own weaknesses. History should be viewed not with the purpose of assigning who to blame for present ills but with a view to trigger off fresh responses or think of better solutions to problems and to focus on an analysis of our weaknesses which underlie the problems.

There is a widespread tendency among the communities which make up the plural society in this country to regard one another as enemies. Malays see Chinese as their enemies or rivals and vice versa. The economic weakness of the Malays is blamed on the Chinese for example. The Chinese are made the scapegoat of Malay backwardness and the bugbear of their future.

During crises, when both sides of the communal divide take up a mutually antagonistic stance, communal tensions are the outcome. In truth, the inventing of enemies is a universal human tendency which only serves to fuel the crises and not solve them. This tendency is not only inter-communal but also intra-communal. Even in a largely homogeneous society like Korea or Japan, acrimonious factions develop around conflicting interests such as religious differences or border disputes.

Malays should see the Chinese as their partners or friendly

rivals, not enemies. Friendly and principled competition is not acrimony or antagonism but provides opportunities for all concerned to improve their economic lots.

The need to find heroic figures is both pathetic and deviationary. From the tale of Hang Tuah in the 1400s to the story of the ten instant Langkawi Malay millionaires in 1992, one detects the need of the Malays to have symbols of glory in the absence of the fact. Such tales may give a false sense of pride or are mere entertainment but they certainly cannot be set up as role models for they are too rich in hyperbole and mythology. Such tales, like placebos, may temporarily patch up the inferiority problem, but they do not address root causes.

In the 80s, there was a concerted effort by individuals and small groups which later grew into a populist movement to rid the Malays of their feudal inheritance. How far they succeeded is not important but what is more important is that there was a consciousness and a beginning to divest the Malays of their feudalistic traits.

This concerted movement or awareness could be seen through the 1983 constitutional crisis, the UMNO crisis in 1987, and the royal immunity crisis in 1992 and 1993.

The constitutional crisis led to the sultans, whose credibility was eroded, losing their power to proclaim a state of emergency. The 1987 UMNO general assembly saw a serious challenge to the top leadership for the first time in its history and caused a split in the party whose effects are felt till today. Fortunately, after the dust had settled down, UMNO emerged with renewed strength and stability, with less politicking and the leaders able to get back on track.

The 1992/93 episode saw the sultans once again at the receiving end. The people and the government fought through the media for the withdrawal of royal immunity and succeeded. In the process, for the first time in modern history, the sultans were publicly criticised.

At one level the people's victory may be constitutional, but at another, the Malays have succeeded in removing the feudal yoke of fear of the power of the sultans: the servant-master relationship, remember?

The preceding examples show that Malays have finally emerged from the long shadow of their feudal and colonial past. The way the government and the people handled the crises also show political maturity. One can imagine, if such crises were to happen in some other countries, riots breaking out in the streets even spilling blood. The fact that this did not happen in what was essentially a Malay problem speaks well of their political maturity.

Despite the many negative traits already mentioned, this political maturity augurs well for the *New Malay* vision. In the work place, a Malay is hardworking, diligent and trustworthy. These qualities are not easily found among other races. Unfortunately these qualities or potential could not be utilised fully because of the lack of motivation.

The Malay farmer and fisherman are not inclined to be motivated to work harder because of low returns and low productivity which in turn is caused by the use of low technology or even the complete lack of it. They could not possibly increase their productivity when, in spite of being placed in the commercial agricultural sector, they still practise traditional methods of subsistence agriculture.

The modern irrigation system used in the rice fields of Selangor, modelled from Korea, and known as *Projek Barat Laut*, was only introduced in the 80s; before that, rice growing in the state, as elsewhere in the country, relied on old methods without the benefit of technology.

Where were the Malay engineers then? They should have come forth and help to solve the problem of irrigation so that the Malay



farmers could increase their productivity. Maybe there were not enough engineers; maybe those who were around were not creative enough or perceptive enough to analyse the problems of the Malay farmers.

The answer to this question lies in the country's education system. It is orientated more to produce end-users rather than inventors or creators (this theme will be explored further in the second chapter).

From this we can tentatively say that the effort to reform the Malays requires the review and improvement of all sectors because they are inter-related. In the developed countries, for example, they are advanced on all fronts: industry, economy, education, information technology and so on.

Another reason for the low motivation and productivity of the Malay worker is the fact that no royalty is given for work and diligence. The success of privatisation in increasing productivity and commitment of the worker shows that the problem of low motivation and low productivity of the Malay worker is not because of values or ethics but because of the system. Many now acknowledge that the orientation, structure and work system in the public sector does not lead to high productivity.

The privatisation of many former government departments has resulted in structural and systematic changes and this has proven to be successful in increasing the worker's morale and productivity.

As emphasized earlier, the Malays have a lot of potential to go farther. The right attitude and the right milieu at the work place in which the highest standards are emphasized where there is no room for failure – this is the work ethic held by successful communities like Japan. In the Japanese society, the failure of an individual to play his role in society will result in heavy social sanctions taken against the individual. For example, whenever they fail in any

undertaking or their integrity has been in any way compromised, they know they must relinquish their post so that another more able worker can take his place. In extreme cases, they will resort to the ritual suicide of disembowelling or *harakiri*, so obsessed are they with success and failure. I am not suggesting that Malays should resort to suicide, but they should place resolve and commitment high in their shopping list for success.

The pursuit of excellence in all endeavours should be the motto of the Malays. This is the *New Malay* we want to see. This pursuit would then produce results such as: a Malay farmer should utilise high technology to enable him to process and export his produce by himself; if he is a professional (a doctor, an engineer, etc.), he is capable of coming up with innovations or inventions which could improve the quality of life while being aware of the problems and needs of his society; if he is an academic, he is capable of producing writings and research work which could stimulate and motivate his people to change and modernize; if he is a leader, he knows how to put self-interest aside and possess a high level of commitment, resolve and sincerity to make his community respected in the world.

As the end product of this endeavour, the *New Malay* will be sought after by other people or countries for advice and guidance and looked upon to lead in politics, the economy, sports and so on. The *New Malay* knows clearly who he is (identity), where he is going (vision) wherever he may be (level and role); is highly adaptable; is a leader who brings about changes in the technology or thinking of his people and who places his religion of Islam as the foundation in all aspects.



CHAPTER II

THE NEW MALAY

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DYNAMIC PEOPLES:  
A COMPARISON WITH THE MALAYS



## CHAPTER II

# DYNAMIC PEOPLES: A COMPARISON WITH THE MALAYS

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In order to reconstitute the Malay people into a strong and dynamic race, we have to ensure that this is achieved in a balanced and comprehensive manner. The strength and dynamism must not only be in the collective sense but every individual must be strong and dynamic in order to produce a strong and dynamic society. A single reed is easily broken, but tie a hundred reeds together and you will have a strong bundle. But if each reed is rotten in the first place, even the bundle of hundred reeds will not be strong.

This analogy is by way of illustrating the point that we need to build a strong and dynamic individual before we can have a strong and dynamic society. The Malays have little choice when faced with the network system of the other races.

The Japanese has a trading network throughout the world to serve their interests. When they were given the contract to build the

Dayabumi building in Kuala Lumpur, the Japanese contractors made sure that even a ballpoint pen used in the project was Japanese made.

Europeans build trade blocks and keep out other countries with tariff barriers. The Chinese in Malaysia too are well-known for keeping their businesses among themselves. Their success in the retail trade is ensured when the wholesale trade is also in their hands. In all business sectors the Chinese made sure that the whole supply line is controlled by their network system.

The importance of networking may also be seen in the context of the symbiotic relationship among, say, the management, the administration and the technologist. A good management will motivate a computer technologist to develop software to streamline administrative work further. A productive environment will encourage creativity among the scientists to increase the productivity and quality of the product.

Such a community will have a mastery over a broad range of skills and the individual members will interact to contribute to the common wealth of the community and ensure that the generations to come will be even more productive.

So what is the secret formula behind networking? The answer: the society is made up of individuals who are productive and are interactively helping one another to contribute to the common good.

The trend may appear to be unhealthy if understood universally, but it is a universal practice and is a natural process. We may hope the trend will change but at the same time, the Malays cannot be left behind in the competitive world.

In this matter it is important that we find out why a community is formed in such a way. What are the factors which contribute to their strength.

It may appear as if this analysis implies that we should emu-

late them. Another view may suggest that Malays should forge their own identity.

This analysis will show that successful communities are made up of ordinary people with weaknesses and having a history not much different from that of the Malays. Therefore Malays do not need to feel inferior and become pessimistic of their own chances when they see the success of others.

This analysis may overlap and repeat itself but this is necessary in order to relate each element specifically and comprehensively to the community as a whole. Furthermore, each element does not exist in isolation but is inter-related.

## Ethnocentricity

Virtually all successful communities of the past and present have a highly developed sense of ethnocentricity. This sense of racial identity may be symbolized and articulated by the leaders and then taken up by the people or it may be built into the psyche of individuals because of various factors.

The Egyptian pharaohs are classic examples of leaders or rulers with a highly developed sense of exclusive ethnocentricity and a distorted sense of their self-worth even to the point of crass egotism. They even projected themselves to be gods and required their subjects to worship them. There is no modern day parallel to this. The pharaohs exercised absolute power over their subjects including the learned and the fortune tellers, all of whom functioned to reinforce and maintain the fiction of their godhead. Thus all new knowledge and discoveries were handed over or attributed to them and this reinforced their image as the all knowing and almighty.



This extreme egotism was also shown by the Japanese who in history adopted a policy of splendid isolation, viewing all non-Japanese as inferior to them. The Japanese regarded westerners, in particular, as hirsute barbarians or the devil incarnate.

So did the Chinese. The term *kow tow* perhaps capture the essence of the Chinese attitude towards non-Chinese. With the emperor as a focal point, all Chinese subjects and foreigners were required, on the pain of death, to *kow tow* in the presence of high ranking officials or high born lords. This demand provoked the English and it resulted in the series of wars known as the opium wars in the early era of Sino-British relations.

Like the Japanese, the Chinese were highly ethnocentric and this led them to practise a policy of isolation well into modern times.

In turn, the Europeans thought of non-Europeans as barbarians and regarded the Japanese as the Yellow Peril. The Europeans, particularly the English, saw themselves as the saviour, the policeman, the dispenser of justice and the "Tarzan" of the backward countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Such ethnocentricism may be seen as a mechanism for letting out anger or giving vent to prejudice. It is common and universal; it occurs among all races. But for some reason, among the great powers, or dynamic races of man, it often leads to extreme actions such as war. Among them, ethnocentricism easily slips into xenophobia.

So what is the point of adopting an egoistic, ethnocentric stance towards other races when it is negative in its effect, negative to others and negative in human terms? At one level this haughtiness seems rude and stupid, but at another level, it can be seen as a source of motivation, enthusiasm and self-confidence which can mobilise the people to extraordinary levels of achievement.

The Great Wall of China and the Pyramids, which even modern technology finds a marvel of engineering, are a testimony to the efficacy of racial pride as a prime mover in the effort to mobilise the race to greater levels of achievement.

So now, does this trait of racial pride exist among the Malays? Or is it the opposite trait of humility which characterizes the unassuming Malay? Or is it a case of being *bodoh* and *sombong* – stupidly arrogant, or arrogantly stupid? Odd mixture this, or maybe it is not at all odd. What is clear is that the trait of unassuming humility, and a penchant to compromise and appease, dissipates motivation and confidence.

Should the egotistical model be followed by the Malays? The answer is no. We should not develop enthusiasm, motivation and self-confidence by adopting extreme forms of ethnocentrism, by creating enemies and by derogating others. We should be able to do it in our own way. Maybe we could choose the spirit of patriotism instead of racial arrogance. A strong sense of patriotism will motivate a generation of people who are willing to die for the nation. When the nation has identified its goals and aspirations, the people will become committed and not easily be swayed away.

Patriotism does not invent enemies, find scapegoats or provoke other people but is willing to face enemies and challenges. If a farmer adopts the attitude that he is doing his work not only to support his family but also to contribute towards nation-building and he does it with commitment, surely his commitment will be different.

If the spirit of patriotism holds sway, the feeling of inferiority, lack of self-confidence and a willingness to compromise on one's principle and resolve will be eliminated.

## Colonial Bent of Mind

Another attribute of the egotism of the great powers is their history of territorial expansion by colonialism and conquest.

The need to exercise power over and subjugate other people become their trade mark. Whether this is moral and done with legitimate reasons is irrelevant; an ability to colonise is seen in the eyes of the world as a mark of greatness. Indeed the desire to be great, to bring glory and prestige to the home country, serve as further motivation. As a result there was a mad scramble to gain as much territory as possible in far flung places like Africa, India, Burma and the Pacific islands.

Their position as masters and rulers in the colonised countries made them feel superior not only to the subject peoples but also to other nations. All these made them work very hard to maintain their position.

The colonial bent of mind expressed itself in three modes: economic, military and ideological. Military and ideological conquests by the great powers are characteristic before the second world war and during the cold war era. After that economic conquests and technological mastery became dominant.

The United States of America, for example, either directly or through world bodies such as the United Nations or the World Bank, could make smaller and weaker nations kow tow to their demands.

Small and weak nations have to borrow more money to pay off loans, but the debt makes them weaker still if not exactly smaller. They lose motivation and confidence to recover from their debt. These state of affairs apply to Sudan (US6.3 billion), Zambia (US4.5 billion), Nigeria (US10 billion), Ethiopia (US 1.9 billion) and other

countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and Russia.

In any trade or political negotiation, Japan uses its economic and technological clout to persuade other nations to bow to its wishes. Although Japan is constitutionally barred from having an armed force, because of its economic power, its defence forces are now playing a role in international politics.

Japan's technological achievements make virtually the whole world dependent on Japan as investor, trading partner, or as economic gurus. The management system and work ethics of the Japanese are emulated by many countries of the world including Malaysia. Sony's founder Akio Morita is held up as a role model for thrift and work excellence. As a result, among other things, Japanese culture and language became well known in many parts of the world.

Such is the influence or end result of the colonial mind. The interrelated factors are so comprehensive and meshed so well that it resulted in a great nation. The colonial mind may be a thorn to the colonised but it possesses many qualities useful to the colonial power itself.

What can be concluded from the above analysis is that for the Malays to become a great power, every effort must be made to disseminate the Malay language, culture and way of thinking to every corner of the world. These elements are just as important as technological advancement and competitiveness in the modern economy. This effort can also be seen as the prerequisite to mould the *New Malay* who is more self-confident and able to play a major role on the international stage.

## Travel and Migration

Virtually all great powers have a history of travel and migration for glory, for acquiring territory and for settlement. Whatever the motive, the records of travel and migration contributed greatly in the rise and growth of the great powers. One of the benefits was the building up of self-confidence because it took courage to migrate and migration meant placing oneself in new and challenging situations – the seas, the deserts, the forests, not to forget meeting new and potentially hostile peoples.

To put oneself up against challenges and to acquire skills in facing them is a very effective way of producing people with calibre. The result is a person who is tested, courageous, confident and motivated.

The migration could have been motivated by economic and trade reasons, quest for knowledge, the seeking of experience or for the purpose of gaining new territories. England, Japan, Holland and Germany are some of the people who are known to love travelling to every nook and corner of the earth, and beyond.

The idea of travelling and migrating far from one's homeland is not totally absent in the Malay experience. For example, many Malays had settled in South Africa, Sri Lanka and Australia in past centuries. Even today the number of young Malays who sojourned abroad in search of knowledge is considerable. So why are the Malays not as successful as others?

There is no absolute answer to this question but what is clear is that Malays tend to travel as individuals without any comprehensive plan or nationalistic motive. The kind of exploration shown by the great powers is on a grand scale carried out with the blessing or patronage of the government. There are successful Malay indi-

viduals in America and Australia but they do not affect the Malays as a whole. Also their Malay identity is often drowned in the culture of their adopted country.

The emigration of the Chinese to other countries throughout the world is not merely the result of decisions made by individuals or individual families but is organised by syndicates. The plan to emigrate is well thought out and comprehensive. Today there are little Chinatowns almost everywhere in the world. They keep their culture, are not dependent on the culture of the host country and, indeed, it is often the other way around: the native people become dependent on them.

The Jews too were great travellers. Jewish settlements in Germany were self-contained with their own businesses, schools and services. The Jews mixed among themselves within the community without having to venture out for their needs. Instead it was the Germans who had to venture into the Jewish settlement in order to obtain a service or make a purchase.

The success of the Jews in their enclaves made the natives jealous and aroused their ire so much so that from time to time in history they had been asked to leave as happened in England (1290), France (1394), Belgium (1394), Italy (1540), and Germany (1551 and 1939).

From their history of emigration and persecution is born a much maligned race of skilful, able and tough people who are themselves also capable of perpetuating cruelty.

The movement of the Japanese in a period of their history is no less interesting. From a military power to an economic giant, the Japanese succeeded in making other people respect them. Their wealth and investments are to be found all over the world. During a reformist period in Japanese history, they send tens of thousands

of students to the west to study as part of a plan and vision to transform the country from the feudal backwaters into a modern, industrialised country.

## Commitment to Creed

When we talk about societies we are talking about people. And to understand what makes people tick, we need to look inside their souls and examine his beliefs and creed. And then we have to see how committed is the individual to his creed.

One noticeable feature of the people in the advanced nations is that they are not free-thinkers. Whether they worship idols or the sun, a non-living or living thing, or even the Almighty, all of them show that humans have a deep need for an absolute power to feel protected and motivated to face life's challenges. Although people may err in choosing other than the Almighty as the source of their spiritual sustenance, why do they still become successful in life or become a great nation?

The answer is that they are committed to their creed no matter what is the source. This commitment to creed is almost an unconscious process which results in spiritual strength which then translates into a system of values, norms and ethics.

Even though the creed may be false (here defined as any creed which does not recognise God the Almighty as the ultimate power in the universe), it can serve as a source of inspiration and can lead to greatness all the same because of commitment. Now we see how great is the potential for the Malays to source their religion of Islam as a source of inspiration by being committed to it. (This shall be discussed further in a later chapter.)

The commitment of the Japanese to Shintoism which emphasizes the value of work discipline and sacrifice for the nation, as in the concept of *kamikaze* was pivotal in the rise of the Japanese to become a great power.

The commitment to the Protestant creed results in a disciplined work ethic among their followers in Europe and this helped to bring about the industrial revolution.

In Islam too there are no fewer, if not more, sources of inspiration and concepts such as *jihad*, diligence, trust, sincerity, charity, tithe and so on. These are maxims which are potentially dynamic if translated into a pro-active work stance and given a high commitment.

## Leadership

Rulers like Hitler, Lenin, Napoleon, Mao Tse Tong, the Meiji emperors and the Egyptian pharaohs played pivotal roles in the mobilizing of their peoples. Whether their influence was direct or indirect, whether their leadership was consultative or authoritarian, their effectiveness was the result of a mix of personal charisma, the conditions of the time and their committed stance. Whatever the circumstances, what we are concerned here is the decisive role played by leaders in the rise of their people and the nation.

A community consists of separate individuals. A sense of belonging to the community results in unity, but the strength of the community is only gained when there is a strong feeling of nationhood and patriotism. A leader who is able to bring these feelings to life will be able to lead his people to aspire and achieve the vision which he has carved. This trait is evident in well known leaders in



history such as Hitler who personified the spirit and identity of the Germans and then directed their energies at attempting to conquer the world and suppressing the Jews. The resulting flush of pride facilitated the advancement of the Germans.

The Meiji emperors symbolized the Japanese spirit and launched the Japanese into the modern era. The rise of the Japanese as a military power and, later, as an economic power, with equally devastating effect, can be traced to the leadership of the Meiji emperors.

The initial step or impetus of the rise of the Japanese as a great power can be traced to the formation of the Tengen, a cadre of 3,381 members specially trained and sent throughout the country as agents of social change under a special programme. Trained as leaders, they became the founders of many of today's economic giants in Japan. Twenty of them entered politics including Nakasone who went on to become a prime minister; 80 became professors, 78 became public company presidents, 185 became directors of corporations while the rest head various bodies and departments responsible for the running the country.

Leadership is needed not only in politics or the running of the state but also in the sphere of knowledge and technology in the overall effort to uplift the people. In this matter, again, we may look to Japan. When the Japanese gave up militarism and chose economy as a state policy, they look to the United States for the lead in knowledge and technology and they also received massive injections of capital.

During the reformation era, Japan had thousands of books translated into Japanese and sent even more students abroad to study. The Jews too have a long tradition of learning and knowledge with capable scholars in the various fields of learning. Because of this

and other factors they became successful wherever they settled, often to the ire of locals who were envious of their success.

The Jews, a race denounced by God in the Quran, are known to use Islamic sources in their effort to acquire knowledge, exploiting Islam for their own selfish ends and then taking time off to hit out at Islam. But their commitment to knowledge in the sciences, in economics, physics and medicine are well known. This explains their success.

## Adaptability

There are five factors which interact to strengthen the great powers. The first is adaptability.

Adaptability is the ability or power to adapt to a changing environment. The principle here is that man must harness nature to his service and not let it overwhelm him. This adaptability is a conscious and controlled process which is not haphazard. It does not ruin the reputation or identity of the group.

A high adaptability to technology, competitiveness and the social environment are important in the rise of a people. Together with other factors, it ensures the survival of the group.

The Malays of the past are known to have sailed across open waters for reasons of commerce and trading. The city port of Melaka was widely known and visited by traders from Europe, Arabia, India and China.

In other words, Malays, given the right environment, can become a community of traders. But because of the upheaval to Malay society caused by the aggressive arrival of the Europeans with their superior fire power, the role of Malays as traders was wiped out.

This gap in the history of the Malays affected their ability to adapt to a changing world. The long period of colonialism isolated the Malays from commercial life in towns and made them inferior.

The ability of the Malays to adapt in the changed social milieu and competitiveness of the colonial world became blunted and the effects can be seen even today.

The arrival of large numbers of the dynamic Chinese in this country further showed up, and contributed to, the poor adaptability of the Malays. The Chinese not only monopolised trade but also took over the traditional occupations of the Malays, such as fishing, because the Malays were unable to compete with the Chinese.

History also shows that Malays are poor adaptors in the social sphere. The arrival of the Chinese caused the Malays to move elsewhere. There may be other reasons for doing so but poor adaptability was the main reason. The Malays were overcome by circumstances and they failed to be on top of the situation.

This may be a moot point and subject to discussion to determine the relative importance of the factors as to why Malays moved away. Maybe there was a positive aspect to it.

This is possible because the form of adaptation differs from one society to another and at different times within the same society. The Chinese, for example, adapted by integrating with the native inhabitants as happened in Thailand while the British adapted to their new territories by maintaining their superior life style imported from the motherland, and by being looked upon by the locals with awe and respect.

The Jews, who are known for their creativity and knowledge, would use tactics to manipulate the inhabitants of their adopted country to their advantage. Such tactics include propaganda, public service, charity, and through them, manipulate the locals to depend

on them for goods, services and expertise. That is why, wherever the Jews are driven to, they would soon rise and make themselves indispensable again – again arousing the ire of the local people.

Adaptability is not an isolated factor; it follows from a combination of other factors which have already been discussed. Thus there are no easy ways or short cuts for the Malays to improve their adaptability but to consider all factors.

## Creativity

The ability to find or create opportunities, come up with innovations, improve the quality of products, to stimulate and encourage others to better themselves, is the key for the success of the group.

Before the 80s, there was a serious lack of innovativeness among the Malays. The desire to gain short term profits and benefits from the NEP did not change the overall picture by very much when the Malays shied away from innovation.

Many entered the world of business because they wanted to jump the bandwagon. They did not provide fresh inputs and without proper planning or knowledge, the consequence was failure.

For example, if a number of Malays were to successfully produce soya sauce, then many Malays would also want to try in the same field thus diluting it. The same bandwagon pattern could also be found in other fields. This pattern petered out in the 80s and 90s. The Malays of the present decade are more daring and innovative going into new fields of business and they are succeeding too.

Mastery in varied fields is an asset to society. As mentioned, the success of Chinese retail traders is due to their mastery and monopoly of the whole business line from production, distribution,

retail and after sales service. Indeed, they also monopolise ancillary fields like financing, insurance and construction to ensure their success.

In the West there are many experts in all fields of thought and technology. This huge pool of knowledge enables them to check each other at the highest level to further improve the performance in any particular field of endeavour. A good idea is further stimulated by a considered response by fellow experts. If there is no feedback or criticism, the ideas will be untested or even wrong.

The variety of fields can only be found if there is creativity among the people concerned, that is to say, every individual has a keen sense of wanting to outdo one another and to achieve excellence.

## Motivation

A high level of motivation in any sphere of activity leads to commitment and is the secret of success or excellence of a community.

Motivation in conjunction with conviction can be developed through external factors such as material rewards and prizes and intrinsic factors such as fighting spirit and patriotism, having clear goals and so on.

The exceptional patriotic spirit of the Japanese – its extreme form being *kamikaze* – is among the factors which fire the motivation of the Japanese. They have a clear goal of realising their belief that they are a great power.

It is said that many Japanese leaders read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and apply the knowledge in their social and economic development programmes. One result of this is their adoption of the

dictum: "Work is an endeavour," just as war is.

The fighting spirit in career work is further fueled by competition and the threat from the Chinese and English. Collectively, the fighting spirit strengthened the resolve of the Japanese people to beat the competition and avoid from being overwhelmed by other ethnic groups.

The low level of motivation among the Malays is attributable to the fact that they have no clear goals and direction. The absence of clear goals of a whole community is a very serious matter. It not only weakens motivation but also affects unity. The community would be in a limbo state, inevitably inviting negative elements to fill it in. If this condition is allowed to continue, it will result in the disintegration of Malay society and make them liable to subjugation by others.

It is clear then that vision 2020, the development battle cry of the Mahathir administration, should not only be seen as a commitment to turn the country into a developed nation but also be understood as a programme to motivate and integrate by having common goals.

The Malays know what lies ahead, the Chinese and Indians know their roles; having common goals will create a sense of collective responsibility and patriotism and this will serve to strengthen motivation.

The poor motivation among the Malays also stems from the lack of extrinsic rewards. This happens because of many factors, for example, a Malay fisherman puts out to sea in a small boat and, after spending the better part of a day under the scorching sun, finds his meagre catch not worth the effort. This low productivity is as a result of using the traditional method.

The low returns for his efforts result in the fisherman having a low motivation. He finds that his work does not deliver or live up to his initial enthusiasm. The example of the fisherman may be applied to other traditional work situations many Malays find themselves trapped in.

Although the situation has improved a lot through government policies and action, there is still a lot more to be done.

## Spirit of Exploration

We can see that great nations have a tradition of exploration in all fields of human endeavour – be it the exploration of the physical world to open up new territories or find unusual specimens of nature to be exhibited to the world, the invention of new technologies to benefit mankind or the exploration of knowledge and philosophy which stimulates thinking and is passed on from generation to generation.

The West, for example, had developed nuclear technology and sophisticated communications equipment such as satellites to lead the world.

The heritage of the Greek civilization in knowledge and philosophy is now felt in virtually all spheres of modern knowledge. Philosophy, politics, literature and sociology, which were pioneered by such figures as Plato, Aristotle and Socrates, continue to be read and studied by modern day scholars. In fact many of their findings and thoughts remain unchallenged even today.

How did this situation arise and what were the factors behind the pre-eminence of the ancient Greek civilization?

A combination of factors produced the ancient Greek civilization and thinkers. In every Greek, there was a resolve not only to defend their race but also to lead the world and bring benefit to all of mankind. This resolve was an individual responsibility.

These elements are among the manifestations of the process of globalization which, as a form of feedback, provide a high moral incentive to a people because of their high self-esteem and is sought after by other peoples. The serious participation of Malaysia in the world's political arena, especially in the 90s, and the participation of Malaysian capital overseas represents a big headway in the effort to explore new worlds. As reflected in their thoughts and actions, the Malays are beginning to forge ahead in the pursuit of international goals.

## **The Manipulation of Physical Factors**

By physical factors we mean not only geographical features and natural calamities but also strategic considerations and logistics. Europeans adapt to the climate and geographical features by successfully planting wheat and soyabean and keeping cows.

The Japanese are able to adapt to their less than fertile soil by harnessing their human resources and introducing indoor gardening or hydroponics. They also give more attention to industry. Faced with threats from enemies, the Japanese are forced to increase productivity and quality.

Our country is very fertile. But how do the Malays exploit it? It seems that we have not fully exploited our resources. In many areas, farmers own acres of lands but are still poor.

This situation came about either because the land remains idle



or is worked by traditional methods which lower productivity. The potential of the land is high. There are many factors which create this situation but they are not impossible to overcome. The effort needed to overcome the problem tests the ability of the Malays to exploit their resources.

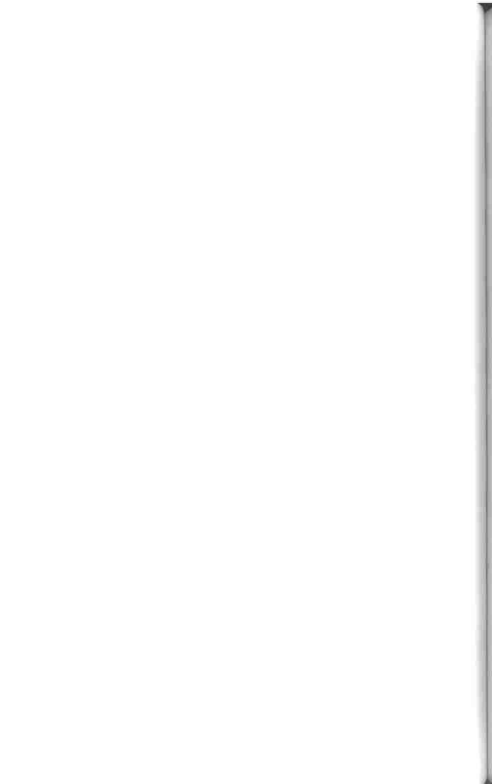
One issue of the 90s is the forecast by world economists that the Pacific rim countries will become the hive of world economic activity in the 21st century. Malaysia is one of the countries. This is a challenge to us. This position or blessing, if not taken advantage of by the Malays, will make them mere bystanders.

Chapter 111

# THE NEW MALAY

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## URBANIZING THE MALAYS: A NEW IMPERATIVE



Chapter 111

## URBANIZING THE MALAYS: A NEW IMPERATIVE

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Urbanizing the Malays is an effort to transform Malay society physically and non-physically. Although work culture seems to be more important, it is closely related to physical amenities. In the past, more emphases was given to the question of physical facilities so more attention should be given to the question of work culture.

Looked at from a different perspective, the main goal of urbanizing the Malays is to change the attitude and world view of the Malays. This constitutes the non-physical or human aspect of the process but inputs from the material and physical aspect play a pivotal role and run parallel with the social or human needs.

The village in the Malay world is not just a concrete entity but also carries a conceptual connotation which implies a settlement of

scattered houses, separate economic sites and coffee stalls (to while away time). The kampung world view is one of calmness, relaxation, simplicity, a low level of productivity and day dreaming.

From such a scenario, we can also picture a world of gossip, petty jealousies, an inefficient and unproductive system of administration and the wasting of time, human potential and land potential.

The Malays living in a traditional kampung are not exposed to, and have no opportunities to take part in, the competitive world. Being placed in a competitive environment is a sure-fire way to ensure a commitment to quality improvement and competitiveness. So the concept of urbanizing the Malays is a matter of transforming the attitude and vesting the Malays with a progressive outlook.

This is not to imply that all things associated with the kampung are negative. There are many positive values at the kampung level such as neighbourliness, a close social support network, *gotong royong* and so on.

A discussion of the urbanization of the Malays does not mean that we are suggesting putting aside the positive village values. On the contrary, such values should be retained by the new generation of Malays. In other words, the urbanization process is also the process of integrating positive kampung values and rejecting the negative ones.

In the 70s and early 80s, there was a programme called "New Directions in Village Development," but the intention was to improve the kampung itself.

As a plan to bring about changes, this programme was not successful and the Malays are still trapped in a mire of negative traditional values. Therefore a comprehensive (physical and human) plan to urbanize the Malays is needed to fulfil the aspirations and goals of Vision 2020.

What is a town? What are urban values? And what is the image or personality of the Malay after the urbanization process?

A town refers to a designated area with a complete infrastructure, an administering authority and structure and an economic base consisting of industries, businesses and services.

A vibrant economic climate will result in a spirit of competitiveness which in turn will result in the spirit of survivalism.

By contrast, in a village, economic activity is confined to primary production with chronic problems, low productivity and subject to fluctuating prices and manipulation by middlemen, resulting in the pessimism and low motivation of the villagers. Competition is hardly ever heard of.

Competition speeds up the process of quality improvement and productivity. With the many infrastructures to help the Malays, and with a serious effort in the last 20 years (since the NEP was launched) to bring about a change in attitude, a competitive environment (especially among the Malays at an early stage) is a step in the right direction.

What needs to be emphasized, however, is the importance of ensuring that the Malays are maximally involved in the urbanization process through a comprehensive and detailed policy and proper implementation. Many of them would get jobs as a result of the process but what is more important is the creation of a class of investors, industrialists, businessmen and professionals.

Certain mechanisms must be instituted to anticipate those who, for whatever reasons, may not be in the best position to benefit from the process. They must be guided to adopt the same principle of survival as the successful ones.

With this orientation, the Malays will gradually adapt to the competitive situation found in an urban setting. Maybe, at the start, a Malay is only in it as a *goreng pisang* seller who takes up the business to offset the rising costs of living, but as a first step to

cultivate a business culture, it is an example to his children that business is a viable means of earning a living and there are many opportunities to become rich and respected. This contrasts with past attitude or practice when the family never even dreamed of doing business as a means of earning a living, let alone inherit it.

Even though the creation of a business culture among the Malays may take a generation to realise, the first step will have been taken by the first generation of Malays to move from an easy-going kampung setting into a competitive urban setting.

If today the parents are *goreng pisang* sellers, their children should think in terms of having a chain of *goreng pisang* outlets and look to supplying their own stock such as frying oil and instant flour, instead of relying on middlemen as is happening now.

The foregoing is merely an example. Certainly there are many more similar cases. The same humble beginnings apply to the rise of the Chinese in business. Many Chinese started their businesses in restrictive conditions in small towns but their businesses grew and expanded as the town expanded and grew. Many a successful towkay today began as a collector of scrap iron, empty bottles or as a construction worker. It is only over a generation that they arrived at where they are now.

In a discussion of the development of the Malays, the role of the other communities cannot be set aside.

What is emphasized here is that the process of urbanizing the Malays should be isolated from previous policies, although the goals and objectives are the same.

If the non-Malays previously voiced strong opinions against the policy to uplift the economic standing of the Malays to be at par with the Chinese and Indians, particularly against the quota system and so on, there are no reasons why they should oppose the idea of encouraging more Malays to live in towns.

This idea is meant to create new opportunities for the Malays and not a redistribution of existing opportunities, which, although it is not without its merits, continues to elicit a negative response from the non-Malays.

The creation of new opportunities is more credible and is more effective than a system of quotas and subsidies, although it is acknowledged that the policy should be changed to a more progressive form. It is common knowledge that the system weakens the motivation and work culture of the Malays.

The truth is the Malays do not ask for the quotas for deep in their hearts, they possibly feel ashamed to obtain an advantage in that manner, but it must be admitted that the Malays do not have much choice.

Actually, the Malays need and must be given those quotas and subsidies; this is not to deny opportunities for other communities but because they must be helped to improve themselves, to become better people, be more self-reliant, more productive and given more roles in national development.

The process of urbanizing the Malays is isolated from the discussion. It is not only based on the excuse of creating more opportunities for the Malays but there are also no reasons why non-Malays should question it because virtually all urban areas are controlled by non-Malay majorities.

In fact, out of respect for the present social structure, the concept of urbanizing the Malays should also include the goals of providing opportunities for non-Malays to be involved in the process of creating new townships as and when the Malays are ready to face competition.

This step has many benefits. The relationship between the Malays and Chinese in such a context will be two-way because both



will need each other, unlike before when their relationship was mutually exploitative or one-way, benefitting only one side.

This two-pronged plan to urbanize the Malays can become an effective integration tool, but the question remains: to what extent can the Malays get involved positively? To answer this question, let us look at the common experience of the Malays.

The Malays who grew up in an urban setting, we find, are hardly affected by the development and opportunities around them; we can even say that they have remained marginalised in the urban growth.

The Malays living in Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur, are a typical example. Competition is a main factor. The Malays cannot compete with the migrant Chinese who not only possess capital and varied skills but also a high level of motivation because of their heritage of migration and travel.

There are also other factors which are not so obvious. For example, Malays should be pulled away from the constrictions of the traditional values and beliefs they carry over from their villages — the cultural excess baggage.

The tendency to group together in the non-stimulating environment of a kampung, isolated from competition and striving, burdened further by a set of negative traditions, an unproductive life style, a negative culture of envy, jealousies, gossip and slandering, characterise their way of life and thinking.

These attitudes and practices should be done away with. Unfortunately, the Malays accept such ways and defend them. Whatever for? They themselves do not know.

This siege mentality, contentment and false pride are not recognised or acknowledged as self-defeating and as a form of self-deception.

The Malays need to get out of this negative traditional world which burdens them. There are proof that those who got out of the circle went on to find new opportunities to make a success of themselves. Those who are not strong enough to fight the influence of the system, but wish to escape, move to other areas. Those who are strong stay on and try to free themselves from the grip. But even moving away does not solve the problem.

Migration by individuals or in groups without a clear goal of changing one's fortune and to free oneself from the burden will see the Malays back where they started. Maybe they have moved to a progressive area, such as Subang Jaya, where there are many Malay middle-class living, but they carry their negative cultural baggage with them.

Migration with potential for success is accompanied by the realisation of the need for a conducive environment and new thinking and the desire to become a new Malay who is capable of competing with others.

They ought to realise that the negative village mentality should be discarded. Unfortunately, the number of Malays who realise this are not many.

There are of course reasons why Malays and kampungs became negative, but there are ways to overcome them. Where there is a will, there is a way.

One reason is the lack of true leadership. This is not to say that there were no leaders in the villages then, or now, but their priorities were generalised and conservative, they were not specific to the issue of burdensome beliefs and practices. This is the issue which must be addressed by the leaders today.

Because of the lack of leaders with the right priorities, the concept of Malay urbanization is a concrete and comprehensive step

in solving the problem. It is specific in terms of location and the peoples involved; it is comprehensive in terms of its analysis of issues and the principle and practice of evaluating it case by case.

The task is difficult and heavy, but it must be carried out as a responsibility, to ensure continuity with the work of past leaders and as a commitment to put the Malays on the same economic standing with others.

Past experience shows that physical development does not do much to help change the mentality of the Malays. Physical development here means infrastructure, urbanization and industrialization.

Their participation in the economy is largely as wage earners rather than as industrialists, entrepreneurs or professionals. Their contribution is maintaining the status quo rather than effecting changes.

Therefore, the second phase on the development of the Malays is to get them involved in important positions in the industries. For example, using specific mechanisms, they should now seriously consider getting involved in relevant business fields and in downstream industries.

Related to the basic issue, they should be moved out from the vicious circle of the village traditions. It must be dismantled. More importantly, urbanization would make the Malays mentally alert and more progressive.

## **The Process of Urbanization**

I am emphasizing the effort of urbanizing the Malays knowing that the process has already begun. But the past and present effort have been haphazard and without the benefit of a master-plan; it is not

based on a comprehensive conception and it does not have clearly stated goals of rehabilitating the Malays.

There may be a few well-planned new townships, but the others are not built with the aim of providing the Malays with commercial opportunities and are not effective in addressing the question of Malay participation. Such towns offer few options to the Malays whose problems need to be addressed with a more concerted plan.

To create a new housing estate from out of a piece of wasteland is not easy but to change a people who are used to living a relaxed pace of life – cycling in their orchard, going to town for a cup of coffee – to become dynamic city workers is even more difficult.

But surely there is a way. Actually the *New Malay* image is a composite of many positive traits and consisting of several social classes. Each social stratum needs to be addressed differently. Too general an approach is not likely to produce results. In fact, this is one of the reasons for past failures.

Breaking them up into specific groups and addressing their particular problems with specific and comprehensive plans is more practical and likely to produce results.

When I suggest urbanizing the Malays, it is not a suggestion to create an ideal Malay township on the basis of blind faith and then hope for the best.

The rationale is that urbanization should be done on the basis of the potential of a particular location and the people themselves. Obviously, different locations have different geographical features and economic potentials which must be considered. Similarly different groups of peoples have different potentials or capabilities.

This does not mean that we do not rehabilitate both geographi

cal and human resources with low or no potential at all. For them we need to have a different set of mechanisms.

In general, the process of urbanizing the Malays can be divided into the following categories:

1. existing towns
2. new towns being developed
3. identifying areas with potential as townships
4. developing new towns in newly opened locations
5. special programmes for locations with low potential

Uplifting the standards of the Malays in existing towns and in new towns being developed looks easier because of the existing infrastructure. But to see them take a meaningful role in the economic life of the towns is not as easy as when you start with completely new towns.

But if all the potential and advantages are fully exploited, I am convinced that the participation of the Malays in this category would be speeded up.

There are many agencies to help the Malays financially. And to provide them with the necessary infrastructure, advice and guidance whether they are government or private.

By putting aside bureaucratic red tape and petty politics, all the agencies should move in concert like a wave, not like a ship without a captain: there is direction but it is not clear because of the fog, and although there is a leak, there is no one to repair it; in the end the ship does not reach its destination and maybe the ship and all its passengers and cargo sink into a watery, unmarked grave.

Actually there are many reasons why we are reluctant to give excuses for the failure of many an effort to uplift the living stan-

dards of the Malays. Lack of infrastructure, capital and guidance are no excuse.

Maybe it is simplistic and uninspiring to return to the basic question of commitment and attitude whether among the leadership or among the ordinary people.

There are a number of options in the effort to vitalise the thinking and involvement of the Malays living in towns. Among them, think of a new economic field or one with little competition. Another is to broaden the concept of sharing and guidance.

It is true that there are many Malays living in towns who have sufficient capital but they do not have the knowledge and capability to venture into industries.

There should be more campaigning and lobbying to encourage joint-ventures among the present crop of industrialists whether they are Malays, Chinese, Indians or foreigners.

True, it is difficult to attract or convince an industrialist to enter into a joint-venture with inexperienced partners who may need guidance. At the very least, the new partner has capital and contacts which can contribute to the expansion of the company.

More than that, such cooperation should be encouraged as a responsibility, as a public relations exercise and as a mark of friendship.

Maybe that has happened, but it is not widespread without serious commitment and not carried out in concert with the broader national goals and aspirations.

Another way is for the Malay industrialists with capital, expertise and ability, but lacking in experience and strength to compete, and if allowed to compete surely would incur great losses, then, it is better to put them in a new locality commensurate with their capabilities.

The move may be permanent or temporary, but the intention is to enable them to return to their original towns after they have picked up enough experience and confidence to compete in the bigger towns.

The second aspect in the urbanization process is to transform kampungs with potential into new townships and to open up new areas for the purpose of developing new towns from scratch.

Villages with potential mean areas with good physical features, a reasonably large population and other advantages. Maybe the kampung is strategically located because it is near a big town, near a port, near an airport or maybe it is sited along a major artery or between two big towns.

Actually we need to build a lot more new townships because such big towns as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Ipoh are becoming increasingly congested.

Taking population size as a criterion, any locality with 15,000 people or more may be earmarked for development as new towns.

One criterion of the potential of a village for development is its having a large number of inhabitants being engaged in economically productive activity or if the area of the village has been earmarked to be the focus of economic activity.

Developing a town from a reclaimed land has already been in practice, for example, Shah Alam and Bangi were developed on former rubber estates and idle *belukar* land.

Whatever the approach and process, the important thing to remember is that the aim is to put the Malay businessman or industrialist, if not at the forefront of industry and commerce, at least at the next highest rung of the ladder.

The creation of the *New Malay* through urbanization is the best way to liberate him from the crippling shackles of the village economy and way of life.

However, with certain mechanisms, in the first place, we must make sure that they are dispersed in a variety of sectors that make up a thriving town. This is important to ensure continuous development and to avoid the creation of a slack or vacuum which would easily be filled by the other communities. This pattern, if allowed to happen, will suffocate budding Malay enterprises. If this happen, the aims and goals of urbanization would not be achieved.

This is not to imply that we look upon other communities as enemies, but, in terms of business competition, we have to guard against their capability to acquire the best sites when the Malays are still not strong enough to compete.

The trend or tendency to focus only on one type of business or industry, in one sense, is good. For example, when you hear of a Malay succeeding in the business of bottling soya sauce, then many other Malays will follow suit. This, in itself, is not bad, for, if we care to note, such trends characterize the early stages of the formation of a business culture.

But the situation need to be controlled, and the Malays need to be told to be more creative and innovative and venture into other product lines. A new town, for example, open up many opportunities in services, catering, transport, education, entertainment, communication and so on. These sectors remain largely unexplored by the Malay businessman.

Mastery over a varied range of skills in the economic, social and academic fields marks the virtue of excellence of a community. This truth needs to be emphasized in the effort to reform the Malays.

Any neglected area or location with potential will soon be grabbed by big non-Malay indigenous capital or even by foreign capital.

In an open economy, if Malays are not capable and do not



acquire the sites with potential, then they only have themselves to blame. Those who purport to defend the Malays ought to take responsibility also and not attribute the loss to the competition from the non-Malays.

Therefore, if there are a number of potential sites which the Malays in the area could not develop themselves, then outside Malays should be brought in to help and share with the locals.

What about areas with no potential for development? For example, remote villages with only a small number of inhabitants and lacking of any attractive physical features. These should be put under special programmes. In the early 80s, attempts to develop villages faced a lot of red tape and attitude problems; this programme can be revived and made more effective if the obstacles could be overcome.

The programme should be reviewed, its weaknesses rectified and then be implemented with more commitment. Among other things, the programme should emphasize modern methods and new technology and progressive thinking to achieve higher productivity.

However they should be encouraged to think even farther of which I am quite sure they are capable of, especially in the mini estates where there is less reliance on traditional methods because of the relatively higher use of technology and efficient work systems.

Estate management should be in the hands of a group made up from among the people involved while others are encouraged to venture into light or small scale industries based on the primary produce or downstream production.

Those with no potential for industries could be given over to the rearing of poultry and so on.

But to be more effective and efficient, each area should specialize. For example, one area could concentrate on oil palm while

the cultivation of other less productive crops is discouraged. Another area may be given over to the rearing of poultry or the keeping of goats, another to the making of furniture or handicrafts so that all related activities are grouped in one locality.

In spite of all these categories, there may still be villages which are not suitable for agriculture or for light industries; then maybe the area should be developed for its attractiveness as tourist spots by providing it with appropriate infrastructure and beautification projects.

Whatever we do, it must be based on humanitarian values, but at the same time, providing Malays with wide exposure to the commercial aspect. Therefore, whatever they plan or do, humanitarian and commercial aims should not be in conflict. If some villagers obstinately continue with their old ways, at least they derive some income from them.

Trade specialization by locality is a modern concept in the effort to modernize the village. There are many obstacles in terms of human failings such as bad attitude, poor administration and costs, but there are a lot of benefits too.

Specialization of a field will create competition among the pool of entrepreneurs involved. Competition will improve quality and make them more creative in finding new ideas in the processing and marketing of their products. In other aspects, they can come together for common benefit because of the shared expertise. The shared experience and knowledge will enhance productivity.

Specialization will also bring together capital, expertise and consultancy which will be focused in one area. For example, if the area is devoted to poultry farming, all advisory services and expertise can operate more easily, intensively and effectively.

Such specialization also facilitate management and government administration and thus enable the government and the country to

be run with a greater degree of order. Meanwhile the Malays will also benefit by being more open to new opportunities and this will make them more confident to venture into business.

## Human Strategy

The urbanization programme, as part of the effort to remould Malay thinking and way of life, can be divided into two strategies – human strategy and overflow strategy.

This division is subjective, not absolute and does not have any particular significance; it is only an attempt to facilitate analysis.

Human strategy is a programme which emphasizes the effort to raise the quality of human resource by direct means in terms of their thinking and involvement. Under this strategy, at least four programmes can be considered.

First, individual programme; in this programme, the focus is on the effort to mould individual Malays. The target group is the individual and the character moulding is in the form of a package covering capital, providing expert advisory service, control and monitoring of performance. This programme should be carried out comprehensively. The participants should be monitored until they are fully matured and capable of meeting the competition. These conditions are necessary as, being new to the game, they are prone to make mistakes whether when making company decisions or personal decisions which affect their business.

This programme should begin by identifying the individuals with potential according to types of economic activity, area and ability. There is no limit in terms of number but each individual is adopted by the programme.

Having clear targets is important to ensure smooth and orderly steps and consistent results with which to set new targets.

There must be a setting of targets of schedules and completions by locality, for example, achieving a target of 50 individuals with a basic capital of RM100,000 and given projects with a cumulative value of RM5 million within a period of five years.

Second is the construction programme which is mutually dependent; this programme is carried out based on the principle of maximum interaction to achieve maximum profit. This mechanism can be formed among primary industries with downstream or principal businesses and their network, or it may also take place between primary and primary, and downstream and downstream.

For example, a big furniture maker will create scores of small businesses, concentrated in one area, which make components to supply to it, directly or indirectly.

The relationship between the large company and the smaller support companies will help the parent company to overcome the problem of labour, capital and factory size so that the growth of the support industries is vital to the growth of the parent company. At the same time, the smaller companies gain from the business provided by the large company. All this need to be planned and the implementation need to be supervised.

Looked at from one perspective, the profit margin may be less because customers have many choices but the effect of the competition itself will improve the quality of the service until it can increase the number of customers. In fact, the introduction of image or specialization of area by industry in itself is an effective promotion.

The public, or specifically consumers, know where they can go and get the goods or services needed. This approach is practised by Chinese traders and is proven to be workable and successful.

Fourth is the sole construction programme. In an area where there are not many Malays with potential to succeed in business or where the area is sparsely populated, then the best way is to choose those with real potential and put them on a construction programme. These people will be trained to run an industry which will provide jobs and spawn off support industries to the main industry in the area.

## Spillover Strategy

Based on the urbanization process, a location which has attained rapid and full development will create a spillover effect into nearby areas. For example, Singapore's economic advancement has spilled over into Johor Bahru and several Indonesian islands such as Batam, Riau and others.

The rapid development in the Klang valley, its importance as a commercial and administrative centre and it being the hub of the country's economy, has made it very congested. As a result, other areas in Selangor as well as in Negri Sembilan, Melaka and Perak have all benefitted.

In fact, the spillover effect is a natural process. Even if the government does play a hand, it is more on an ad hoc basis or in response to local and current needs. I see that if the whole process becomes a big plan for the effort to develop the country and reform the Malays, it may bring in more amazing results. But I also believe that it is not enough to depend on natural processes alone.

It needs to be supplemented by an overall master plan and a statement of purpose. The combination of natural process and master plan will ensure that the spillover effect does not conflict but is in line with it.

This realization or strategy needs to be incorporated in the urbanization effort so that the potential is exploited and not wasted.

In the early stages, the spillover effect may be in the form of job opportunities, but in the second phase of the effort to uplift the Malays, creating jobs is not the main aim. The main aim is to ensure that urbanization and industrialization will create a class of Malay industrialists and entrepreneurs who can compete and stand on an equal footing with others.

The main urbanization process will naturally result in various economic opportunities, downstream industries, light industries, and various businesses in the service sector, retailing, catering and so on. The spillover effect will continue to grow from time to time.

The question is, how far will this spillover effect reach the hands of the Malays? Or would the opportunities be once again taken up by the industrious non-Malays who are always on the lookout for new sites. Thus under the primary urban planning, we need to set mechanisms to ensure that the spillover effect is channelled into Malay hands.

The spillover could even be planned and its rate of growth determined right from the beginning. For example, in the urbanization process, an industry or business with a big potential to create downstream activity, or a network of allied businesses, should be given priority.

The physical spillover could also be considered from a social aspect. At its highest level, the human resource could also create a spillover effect in terms of skills, role models, and know-how. This is a natural process and should be given due attention. A successful person is not only a role model, a source of motivation and inspiration, but is also capable of creating economic opportunities such as jobs and businesses.

One problem in the effort to create a business culture among the Malays is the failure to maintain continuity or heritage between one generation to another. This may even give rise to sabotage or obstruction to the efforts of the preceding generation.

In some cases, years of successful efforts are not maintained by those who take over the responsibility, resulting in failure and loss.

Maybe there are no facts or statistics to support the cases but it is common knowledge. On the other hand, the ability of other races to maintain continuity in their family businesses is well-known. They are able to generate a generational spillover, handing over the running of the business from grandfather to son to grandchild and in the process may even expand and grow.

Thus in the effort to reform the Malays, the problem of continuity must be given serious consideration. We do not want the achievements of one generation of Malays to be squandered away by the next.

One value which should be impressed upon the younger generation is that of survival. This value is not only important in the process of creating a work culture but also for those who are going to inherit it. The younger generation who are in line to inherit the benefits wrought by the present generation must not regard it as having fallen from the sky into their laps and become too complacent and fail to appreciate the value and need for survival.

## Related Issues

The question of the environment frequently crops up in any discussion of development. Because the environment is important to man's survival and well-being, we must think about the environment and include its preservation in any development planning.

Surely we do not want a situation in which, having achieved economic and social successes, we find the environment extensively damaged. All the economic achievements would come to nought if the air is polluted and the land is damaged. Our children will suffer the consequences.

The fish in the rivers and lakes in Taiwan and South Korea are not safe to eat any more because of the contamination.

Taiwan and South Korea share a common fate of having their agricultural produce contaminated and therefore dangerous to human health. The farmers themselves refuse to consume their own produce.

Advanced countries like the United States and Japan too experienced the same fate. Their awareness of the effect of toxic industrial wastes on the environment is only a recent phenomenon. Japan, for example, only in recent years has seriously conducted research on toxic wastes, and then, in characteristic style, turn the idea of toxic waste disposal and environmental conservation into an industry.

The fate of rich nations like the United States and Japan is better off than the rest of the world because they have the expertise and can afford the technology to reduce the extent and seriousness of the pollution, even though what had been destroyed could not be replaced. But such a luxury is something developing countries can ill afford as they seek to find cost effective solutions.

All that should teach us a lesson in our effort to urbanize. That is why, in this concept of urbanizing the Malays, areas with no potential are transformed into towns, preserving their unique features, while at the same time beautifying and developing them into tourist attractions. It is also important to preserve their positive traditions while reaping the commercial rewards.



In the face of rapid global industrialization, any preservation of the human heritage and natural resources is a wise move which will pay off in the future.

Therefore we should not be caught off guard and be too obsessed with industry-based development, when, in the not too distant future, the natural environment will turn out to be one of the sources of wealth for the nation.

Balanced development is important, but our priority for now is definitely social and commercial development. Whatever the programme, social and commercial considerations are the criteria.

Based on the overall picture which has emerged from this discussion, and after considering its pros and cons, it is clear that some questions still remain unanswered, among which are the questions of costs and capabilities.

But I am giving this programme priority because I am convinced that it is not idealistic or utopian. It is a realistic target and expectation and it could be achieved with existing capabilities but with certain conditions, such as commitment, seriousness, consistency and so on.

I believe we need an approach which is semi-revolutionary, such as is proposed in this book, to reform the negative aspects in the Malay thinking and way of life.

Depending too much on an evolutionary approach to change the Malays has proven to be ineffective. The process takes too long and involves leadership and policy changes. In the social and political spheres this will disrupt the continuity of the implementation and the development style in the early stage.

Because of this, a drastic but planned approach would be a better bet. And urbanizing the Malays is a strategy which is effective.

Maybe this discussion is not as complete as the master plan which is being planned, but by putting aside petty considerations and with the reaction and interaction of more active thinking, it would be more matured and capable of being implemented.

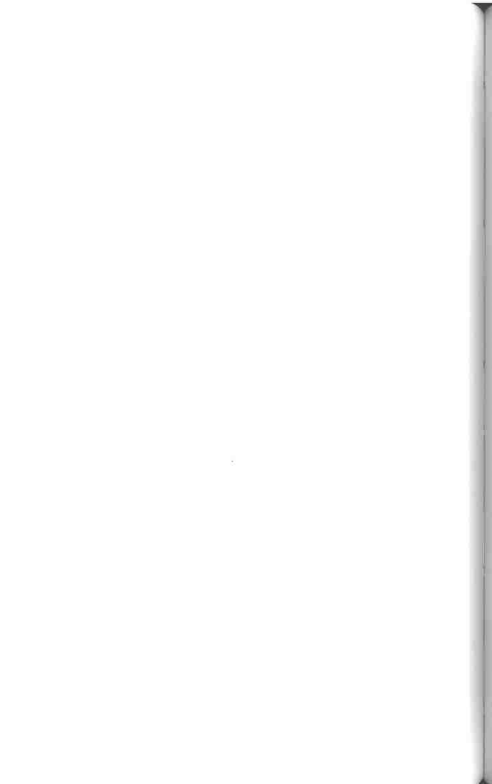


Chapter IV

## THE NEW MALAY

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### PLURALISM AND COMMUNALISM: ESCHEWING HYPOCRITICAL INTEGRATION



## Chapter IV

# **PLURALISM AND COMMUNALISM: ESCHEWING HYPOCRITICAL INTEGRATION**

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Unity remains the basis for the integration of society. Whether to develop the Malays or the nation in the context of a plural society, integration will not succeed if the Malays and the other races are seen as isolated components.

Pluralism ought to be seen as an advantage and not as a hindrance or as a weakness. Unfortunately we continue to allow pluralism to be used as a divisive factor.

Non-Malays are a component of Malaysian society. To develop the Malays, who form the core communal component, also means to develop the nation as a whole. And whatever process takes place, no communal component is free from experiencing its effect or

having to play a role. Accordingly, matters pertaining to race cannot be ignored.

Issues which are interrelated and cannot be separated and cannot be ignored in the effort to develop the Malays are: what is the position and role of the non-Malays? why are Malays given privileges? how sincere are the non-Malays in wanting to see the Malays achieve an equal economic standing with them which is regarded as a precondition in the integration of a plural society? what form of intercation should take place among them in order to achieve national goals?

Of course the questions, or the answers, are very subjective in nature. Anybody can approach the subject and give views from their own perspective or that of their own community. The Malays have their response as to why certain policies are essential to their survival. But the Chinese and other races too have their stand and response which are necessarily different. Such issues are sensitive and loaded with emotion and we have expended a lot of time and energy arguing about them in the past. At the same time we should be reminded that such issues and conflicts are human and universal in nature and not confined to one specific place or time.

In advanced countries like America and Britain, racial conflicts are a common occurrence. In fact, white men who pride themselves as members of the Caucasian race with their implied superiority, generally regard other races whom they refer to as coloureds or blacks or yellows as inferior to them or as second-class human beings.

White men, who are reputedly inheritors of universal human principles and values, actually have the worst record of practising racial discrimination in human history. Practising a perverted form of the white man's burden, they frequently deny the rights of other races with whom they come into contact and whom they invariably

succeed to overwhelm with their wile and guile and superior fire power.

This is reflected in their language which has all kinds of derogatory terms for members of the human race who happen to be of a different skin colour from them: wogs, negroes, niggers, chinks, nerds, gooks, pakis, redskins, chicanos, the yellow peril, the reds, etc.

America has seen scores of racial conflicts in the form of riots and violent demonstrations, resulting in thousands of civilians being killed. The Los Angeles riots, the Rodney King incident, the Chicago riots are but a few examples.

We in Malaysia too have been caught up in such an irrational outbreak of racial sentiment and a breakdown of law and order: the May 13 and October 1987 incidents are tragic and not easy to forget.

Nobody in their right mind or in their rational moments would condone such incidents but such incidents reveal a dark streak in the human psychological make up. It also reveals a universal human weakness or need for an enemy to blame for its own stupidity or weakness.

Wherever man gathers and settles, he soon starts in earnest to find an enemy or enemies. Taking the Quranic story of Adam as an example, we find that his two sons were soon at loggerheads over some no doubt trifling – seen from this distant point in time – matter.

Rationally speaking, racial sentiments merely satisfy a false need for security. It stems from man's perpetual problem of feeling insecure. If there is no racial issue, man will soon find another issue, another enemy, to peg his need to dramatise and exaggerate his dilemma or in order to hide it from his own consciousness.

Largely homogeneous societies like Korea, Japan and Russia – are they free from strife, conflict and confrontations?

Is India, the world's largest democracy and having no large im



migrant populations of a different racial stock, peaceful? Racial, religious, political and class differences are forever at work to produce outbreaks of conflict on that subcontinent. The outbreaks of violence over such issues as Kalistan – the quest for a separate homeland for Sikhs, the Hindu-Islam endemic conflict, the Tiger Eelam's fight for a separatist state in Sri Lanka, and so on, are further testimony of the universal human folly. These incidents, some of them going on continuously or on an intermittent basis, have sacrificed thousands of human lives including that of well-known leaders often in their mid-career.

In Bosnia, the of-called ethnic cleansing by Serbs on Bosnians is another example of conflict based on religious differences. In this case, although there are some Christian victims, most of the injured and dead are Muslims. The ethnic cleansing may, in the eyes of the world, look like an internal matter of one country, but in reality it is a concerted effort to wipe out the last few remaining traces of Islamic communities on European soil and to prevent the possibility of having a Muslim country right in Europe, a theme which harks back to the old days of the Crusade.

Ideology too could be manipulated to start off a major conflict. Afghanistan is experiencing a protracted and complex crisis of ideology and power and until today a solution is nowhere in sight.

Border disputes are common among Arab countries in the Middle East. These have been going on since pre-Islamic days. And all these happened in spite of their having blood ties; whether among the leaders or the people.

Rivalry between rulers can also lead to major wars. Pakistan and the Philippines are two examples. Other issues which could be manipulated to cause conflicts are caste, tribe, class, a difference in goals and so on.

The bottom line here: being a plural society is not a hindrance in the effort to build a strong and prosperous nation. It represents only a small element of human nature which could be overcome or controlled. We know that if there is no communal issue in this country, then people would probably use religion as an avenue for conflict and maybe this would be even more dangerous if the example of India and Bosnia is anything to go by.

It is not easy to eradicate communal tensions in Malaysia given the existing factors. However, all the conflicts of interest between the communities are under control so long as no one party resort to extremes by insisting on having their own stand and view to the exclusion of others and if they go about doing things in a rational and matured manner.

A mature and rational attitude concerning inter - ethnic relations may be developed by:

1. A deep knowledge of history, social background, origins, the early encounters and national aspiration of the various communities that make up the plural Malaysian society. Not knowing history, or having only superficial knowledge and being extreme in setting the aspirations of any one community would create difficulties and must be rectified.
2. An understanding and concern of environmental issues, contemporary social demands/imperatives, elements, ideas and new perceptions.

Man or society does not exist in a static form. It is always changing and evolving into something more complex. The change is not only total but also situational and ongoing. Given such a situation, every member of the

plural Malaysian society, especially the leaders, should react on the basis of understanding and concern of the highest order. Emotional reactions, simplistic thinking, uncritical thinking, and jumping to conclusions when faced with ethnic or other potentially divisive issues, will surely lead to communal tensions and conflicts.

3. Accurate predictions, based on knowledge and experience, of the future course of the country and its people, the continuation of its sovereignty; being independent, respected and capable of setting an example to other countries.

Knowledge and experience are the bases on which a rational stand is built. People who make predictions or speculations without basing it on knowledge and experience are often caught in an escalating bind of ethnocentrism, emotionalism, relying more on manipulations rather than reasoning through the issues. This explains the process of communal conflicts anywhere in the world.

Knowledge and experience not only can build a rational attitude but also produce analytical or critical thinking. A rational mind and critical thinking will produce accurate predictions about the future development and social scenario of the nation.

Prediction/expectation or an analytical approach in whatever form will not lead to frustration or conflict compared to emotional reactions.

The ability to take a rational stand or attitude depends a lot on maturity which in turn is produced by knowledge and experience but it takes a lot longer.

Experience in living in a plural society or observing and analysing a social crisis scenario in other countries can help us to form a positive perception of the pattern and future of communal relations in this country.

This experience is probably gained in a direct way or by personal observation or indirectly through the media, by reading or at schools.

## Communal Hypocrisy

In 38 years of independence, the experience of communal relations in this country has gone through many a twist and turn. It is not necessary here to summarize the history of the migration of the Indians and Chinese to this land. That story is recorded in numerous books and other sources and is common knowledge among those who have attended secondary school.

What frequently happens is the difference in evaluation, perception, point of view to that story, leading to arguments and conflicts. For example what is the definition of a migrant race, *bumiputera* and so on.

It is not the intention here to discuss such issues however important they are. Egotism and ethnocentrism makes such discussion emotional, irrational and lacking in a common ground.

One uncommon view is the question of process of interaction and ethnic relations which is replete with hypocrisy.

It is no secret that ethnic relations in this country are not sincere. Superficial or public social contact between the races looks cordial and harmonious whether taking place within organizations, in public ceremonies or between individuals in every day life. These inter-ethnic encounters between individuals or groups do not stem from the heart but is merely for the sake of putting up appearances. This is clearly shown by the fact that when they are among their

own communities, they speak a different tune usually passing derogatory remarks or using derogatory terms about one another whether openly or in whispers.

This hypocrisy, if allowed to fester in the minds of the people, will become a cancer in the body and insidiously works its poison to destroy the nation. It can be likened to a time bomb. This hypocrisy is capable of exploding into incidents carrying with it a high risk which, combined with other conducive factors like the bursting of the economic bubble, high unemployment etc., is too horrendous a scenario to contemplate.

This hypocrisy stems from several factors: prejudice which has been allowed to spread and take root in the minds of the communities since the May 13, 1969 and October 1987 incidents which saw the two most serious racial conflicts ever witnessed in this country.

We can tell that racial animosity and conflict is a universal human phenomenon. Mankind feels safer to be among their own communities. Close ties and familiarity with one's own community prevent or preclude the need to mix with members from other communities. With a built-in tendency or prejudice to look upon members of other communities as "enemies," exclusive behaviour and avoidance of contact only serve to strengthen the prejudice and convince individuals of their righteousness. Given this blinkered outlook, man ceases to operate and think as a rational being with all its implied consequences.

This lack of interaction beyond the superficial and hypocritical, is further fueled by communal demagogues who champion the narrow interests of their own communities to provide a fertile ground for this massive weight of prejudice to grow bigger and heavier. This state of affairs is the tortuous path that ethnic relations in this country has travelled since *Merdeka* in 1957.

One of the main reasons for the prejudice which underlies hypocrisy is the limited interaction among the three major communities as a result of various segregative policies and tendencies. Some of these are colonial leftovers, some are built-in features of each community.

Among the examples of the colonial leftovers are the divide-and-rule policy of leaving the Malays to stagnate in their villages, giving the Chinese a free hand to develop and prosper in the towns and allowing the Indians to labour for minimum wages in the estates. Another set of segregation is by occupation: Malays with traditional agriculture, Chinese with their trade, and Indians with the labour sector. These occupational patterns cannot be broken up even till today.

Another segregative factor is that of religion. Again the lines neatly repeat the leitmotif of the country's ethnic pattern: Malays-Islam; Chinese-Budhists/Christians; Indians-Hinduism.

Set against these broad segregationist patterns and policies, the various communities then show detailed differences in personal habits of eating, values, attitudes, games, sports, arts, values, outlook, entertainment, films, books, you name it, as they grow up in separate areas, separate schools and separate occupational pursuits.

With such an intractable background of differences, the resulting lack of interaction is no surprise. No interaction means no understanding, no understanding means more prejudice which in turn means more room for animosity. It is not only a vicious circle, it is also classic self-prophecy.

However, every cloud has a silver lining. It is also true that the opportunities and facilities for shared or common experience and motivation for increased contact among the races beyond the superficial and hypocritical have increased and improved. But it is far from ideal.

The May 13 and October 87 incidents show that emotionalism is the main factor which leads to conflict. The 1969 incident shows the Chinese being in a position for the first time in post-independence Malaysian history to take over the government. The Malays, who were economically backward, feared that they were about to lose political power, their last and only bastion against the perceived supremacy of the other races on virtually all fronts. This is further fueled by the extreme stance taken by members of the opposition when celebrating their victory.

Malay dignity was again challenged in 1987 when they were informed that the accomplishments of the NEP fell far short of its goals and aims whereas the duration of the policy had ended. Meanwhile the Chinese community received a different story: the NEP had achieved its targets. For example, Malay equity had achieved its 30 per cent target but the NEP would continue to be implemented beyond its agreed dateline. This threatened the Chinese. They accused the Malays of not wanting to let go of the privileges.

The potential for conflict is further strengthened by demagogery which adds fuel to fire. Demagogues are leaders who manipulate the sentiment of the crowd for their own interests or importance or survival. At the risk and expense of peace and harmony and political stability these Machiavellian leaders would stop at nothing to achieve their ulterior agendas.

They will exploit the dissatisfactions of the people by exaggerating and distorting them until the people believe their version and in this state of high credulity, they will follow the leaders blindly without thought of the consequences. Such issues as education, economy, culture and party politics provide fertile material for the demagogue's bag of tricks. The issues will be twisted and loaded with new meanings which were not there in the first place in order to justify their stand.

The issue of party politics relates to the political rivalry between the Malay parties of PAS and UMNO, between the Chinese parties of MCA, DAP and Gerakan. Opposition leaders tend to play on communal sentiments to gain support.

Malays would feel self-righteous and offended when such matters as Malay dominance, Malay privileges and so on are made fun of or questioned by non-Malays. Meanwhile the non-Malays who are more active in the economy feel they are more deserving of the rewards of the nation compared to the Malays who are less productive. Such things easily rile either side of the ethnic divide.

The education and economy issues debated in the country include the question of quotas, the backwardness of the Malays, the sincerity of the non-Malays in helping the Malays and so on.

Studies show that there is a difference of perception of the issues which make one community angry with another. For example, Malays are committed in standing up for the legitimacy of their privileges in the face of objections from the other communities, while the Chinese aggressively question the advantages given to Malays in education. In general such are the matters which have bewitched ethnic relations in this country since *pre-merdeka* days.

In any plural society, such issues are bound to be the bones of contention. So, if such matters are the raw material of demagogery and such like, and the stuff about which man loves to quarrel about even at the very real risk or cost of lives, why do we in Malaysia follow this blind and futile human folly? It may look as though it will never end until kingdom comes unless we give it a positive and optimistic response.

A rational attitude based on knowledge, experience and committed thinking provides the answer to solve all these protracted problems and this issue should be discussed openly and must be



solved. Maybe it is too idealistic to be achieved by all members of society from all communities, but it is the only liberal choice that we have. So long as we allow ourselves, our friends, the people or our political enemies to manipulate the ethnic issue or discuss it based on emotionalism and with closed minds, then we are going back to the era of "survival of the fittest."

Therefore whatever we do to strengthen ethnic integration, the basic thing which improves the quality of life (education and economy) should be given attention. No less important is that there should be a fair and just distribution among the communities. If it is unfair, the situation will not change, in fact it may get worse.

This requires the responsibility of every community to work together to help the backward community.

My stand is that quality education is capable of making people more rational; and a strong economy or a comfortable standard of living will lessen the psychological stress and avoid the possibility of letting off the stress by blaming it on other communities. The actual situation is not absolute and not so ideal but the effort must be directed towards it.

A study shows that, in the October 1987 ethnic crisis, few members of the intelligentsia, such as academics, doctors, engineers and lawyers, if any, were involved. The most actively involved were politicians and NGO activists.

In education, a number of things could be achieved to improve integration, for example, by introducing a subject or special paper in schools or universities about the Malaysian society which should discuss such issues as the history of immigration, the culture and world view of the communities; the importance of integration in a plural society; a comparison of plural societies in the world and so on can all help to reduce prejudice and strengthen ties and foster inter ethnic understanding.

This is no small problem because since 38 years of independence we are still faced with a society which is ignorant of the culture, thinking and sensitivity among the communities. These ignorance provides a fertile soil for prejudice.

This kind of education will open the eyes and correct the wrong perception of the historical background of the communities and its relationship to the national policies. The wrong perception of one ethnic group towards another would also be overcome. What is important in this process is that the educated individual will not only get the knowledge and understanding but he will also help to spread the new understanding and influence others.

Talking about education, one sensitive issue to the Chinese is the question to what extent national type schools should be continued.

I think we are all agreed that communal integration should be started at an early age. I think primary schools are the right time, place and environment to start the process of integration.

But we have yet to show a comprehensive commitment to integrate our primary schools – the gulf which divides them is insurmountable. The Chinese, Indian and Malay primary schools form separate school systems.

It is time that we think of a pupil exchange programme between the vernacular and the national schools. Maybe in small numbers at first. There will be grouses and dissenting voices but with commitment and determination it can be accomplished.

The existence of ethnic-based organizations is not a healthy sign in a plural society because it is in itself a segregative influence among members. Although the original goals of the organization may be innocent, such as for cultural purposes, it is still potentially divisive because it precludes non-members and could easily be exploited or changed to become a channel for divisive politics or

a front for subversive work. Therefore we should think of a way of reducing the number of such organizations.

This could be done say by encouraging the setting up of organizations based on career, work, business and sports which cross the racial barrier. The communal organizations should be encouraged to hold joint activities with one another.

Joint activities in the spheres of economy, arts, culture, education should be held more frequently. In this way more common grounds will be found to foster understanding.

Another effective step is to set common goals at the national level which are specific and clear so that everyone irrespective of race will have a target or vision to look up to and all will work hard to achieve the common objectives. In this way they will forget the communal differences they see around them.

Some of these have already been implemented, for example, the *Vision 2020* and a foreign policy which puts Malaysia on the world stage.

## The Direction of Integration

The fact of our plural society is a fait accompli. We do not have a choice but to build a united and harmonious nation.

The effort to raise the standards of the Malays should not be seen by the non-Malays as an attempt to dominate them. It is an effort to bring up the living standards of all the communities to be at par as a step in achieving integration. This is a national aspiration without compromise.

Given that we do not have a choice, the effort to mould the *New Malay* is also an effort to mould a new Malaysian race.

The ideal Malaysian society is characterised by harmonious

living and sincere interaction, without prejudice, without hypocrisy and without exploitation.

So we need to ensure that the emergence of a *New Malay* will also see the emergence of a *New Chinese* and a *New Indian*, at least in their attitude and perception towards a plural society.

The fostering of harmony and sincere interaction and elimination of hypocrisy is the second phase of moulding a New Malaysian society. This requires awareness and a collective commitment from all races.

In business joint-ventures, for example, balanced two-way communications, mutual help for mutual benefits, division of role and labour and fair distribution of profits are among the signs of sincerity. There should be no more one-way joint ventures of the alibaba variety which benefits one side only, exploits the other and maximizes personal profits.

As a Malaysian race under one roof, they are like members of an orchestra: every person and every race is an instrument which has a role to play. Each and every instrument is interdependent and contributes to the completion of the whole. The failure of any one of them to play their role will spoil the whole performance of the orchestra. On the other hand, if every component plays its role to its best, we will be rewarded with an extraordinary performance.

One factor which obstructs the integration process is when one party feels that they have been made a tool of another party or when there is an irresponsible party which exploits another group for their own interest. We should guard against this from happening because it will surely lead to prejudice, animosity and hypocrisy.

In the process of moulding the *New Malay* and the New Malaysian society, no one should feel that they are being made use of by anybody if everybody understands and apply the national goals and aspirations.

To continue with the analogy, every individual and group is an instrument. Whatever we do, even in personal matters, will still be related to the national goal and aspiration. If everybody thinks and acts (even in personal matters) in the interests of the nation, it serves the interests of all concerned.

Based on experience, the thing which provokes ethnic relations is uncontrolled communal politicking. Political demagogues, specifically those who are bankrupt of ideas to influence others, use communal sentiment as the easy way out.

These divisive elements should not be given room to do its damaging work. Otherwise all the good effort to create harmony will come to nought overnight.

All communities, especially the leaders, must be made to understand the national aspiration and make the necessary adjustments. Any signs of deviation, personal or collective, should be nipped in the bud.

If there are any groups who are too absorbed or obsessed with their own agenda, as opposed to the national agenda, they should be made to understand that the formation of goals is not as easy as the expression of emotion. In any joint undertaking no member should deviate from the common goals of the larger group.

Any mistake in the formation of goals and the effort to realise those goals will create risks for all, the member group and the larger group. But if all apply the national aspirations fully, the mistakes are not likely to be made.

But having specific goals only does not guarantee the achievement of the goals. For example, if the goals are ideal but their implementation are based on communal methods and sentiment, then no good will be accomplished.

The saying that "the end does not justify the means" is probably apt to describe the situation: wrong means in the pursuit of the

goals may do the trick but the achievement will be a hollow one, without meaning, or more surely we ultimately find that we did not achieve the goals after all. Any effort based on communal sentiment may lead us on the path of destruction. So the whole effort will become futile.

The bottom line from all this is that all communities in this country should work together to mould the *New Malay* and the New Malaysian race. The specific target is to alleviate the economic and educational standards of all communities.

In a sense, the moulding of the *New Malay* is also the effort to give the Malays a place under the sun, as the saying goes. This is to say, the Malays, as the core race, must be capable and have the credibility to play the role and responsibility.

A high and balanced standard of economy and education will elevate the standard of rational thinking and helps to reduce prejudice. Then hypocritical relations will disappear and the process of integration will take place at a faster rate. The combination of the elements will strengthen the nation to face international competition.

In a situation where all the communities have achieved economic and educational parity, there will automatically be mutual respect. When this position is achieved, the Malays do not need quotas any more and the correcting mechanism will probably disappear without any fanfare. From the discussion, this process will proceed naturally without governmental intervention or decree. Even now, signs of this are detectable. Many successful Malays now feel reluctant or decline to receive quotas or subsidy and many of them take pride in their merit-based achievements.

This discussion may conclude on an idealistic note, but I am convinced it is realistic provided there is involvement, effort and comprehensive commitment from all communities and individuals.



CHAPTER V

**THE NEW MALAY**

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**THE INFORMATION AGE:  
WHITHER THE MALAYS?**





## CHAPTER V

# THE INFORMATION AGE: WHITHER THE MALAYS?

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As a nation advances to become a great power, it places knowledge at the top of its list of priorities. The emphasis on knowledge and a tradition of learning at all levels of society is consistently applied throughout the rise of the nation to become a great power.

Paul Kennedy in his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, suggested that the fall of the great powers began when the love of learning and knowledge began to wane and is slowly replaced by a great complacency over past achievements.

In our country, the love of knowledge and learning is at a low level especially among the Malays. The problem affects all levels of Malay society from the low income to the high income groups.

The culture or love of learning is characterised by love of

reading, the types of reading material, the recognition given to scholars and learners, their roles, the availability of public debate whether through the media or at open meetings, their popularity and so on.

A low culture of learning will contribute to a vicious circle of cause becoming effect and effect becoming cause between the thinking capacity of the Malays and their lack of interest in learning.

During its early reformation, realising the importance of knowledge as a catalyst of change, Japan embarked on a programme of translating thousands of books from the more advanced countries. Such a commitment to the importance of learning continues till today. You can find Japanese translations of best-selling books published in the West almost at the same time they are made available in the West.

These translated works in various fields of knowledge from technology to philosophy play a major role in transforming Japanese society from being an orthodox and closed society to being a great power.

Coupled with this phenomenon is the Japanese love of reading. The Japanese readership profile is among the highest in the world if not the highest. An average Japanese reader consumes seven full-length books a year compared to the readership profile in Malaysia: seven pages a year per Malaysian! The newspaper with the highest circulation in the world is found in Japan: 13 million daily.

The Chinese are also known to be avid readers. One traveller was moved to observe that anywhere in the world where there was a Chinatown, a Chinese language newspaper would be published. The love of learning and knowledge among the Chinese is widely known. When Islam urges its own followers to love learning, they include the well known quote: "Seek knowledge even if you have to go to China."

The classical Chinese writings continue to be read and influence modern thinking. The famous book, *The Art of War*, written by Sun Tzu about 4,000 years ago, is read by the world's political and corporate leaders and adapted to other fields of knowledge such as in business and management.

Another ancient Chinese science, Feng Shui, is rendered into modern usage and commands a worldwide interest. The word is that many of the world's leading businessmen unashamedly consult feng shui masters to ensure the success of their ventures.

The pharaoh kings of ancient Egypt were reputedly also keen on the importance of learning. This can be seen in the pyramids, an amazing feat of building, and their practice of mummification which can withstand the passage of hundreds of years and continues to baffle scholars till today.

The pyramids not only amazes as a wonder of construction but also amazes in its location in relation to the sun, the moon and the earth. It is also said to have something to do with the wind and agriculture. All this shows the love of knowledge by the ancient Egyptians.

Another example of a people who has a tradition of placing great importance on knowledge are the Jews. They are masters of diverse fields of knowledge from music, philosophy to physics and modern warfare; in fact they are often pioneers in many fields of knowledge.

In recognising the example set by these races of people, it is not my intention to idolise them but merely to illustrate the importance of knowledge in the making of a great power. It provides ample proof that to become a great and prosperous nation respected by others, the love of learning and knowledge must be put at the top of the shopping list.

This illustration also serves as a reminder to the Malays of what they have to do in order to transform themselves from being a backward race to a successful one. We should raise such questions as how far do Malays love knowledge; is our present level of accomplishment sufficient; where is the Malay tradition of learning in relation to that of the great powers?

In the Malay world, the tradition of learning began as long ago as the 14th century, but the knowledge studied by the Malay scholars did not filter down to the populace. So the tradition did not become popular or spread among the people. Till today the sum of Malay learning is far, far behind compared to that of the great powers.

The basic foundation of a culture of learning is the love of reading whether the materials are books, newspapers, magazines or serious reading materials such as journals, essays, research papers and so on.

Unfortunately the reading habit among the Malays is undeveloped. A study shows that Malaysians read half a page a year the study is based on responses from Malaysians of all races. One suspects that if it is conducted among the Malays only, the result would even be worse, maybe a few lines of a page only.

Compared to the average Japanese who reads seven books a year, the difference is very vast indeed. Newspaper circulation is another indicator. Main Malay language newspapers command between 100,000 to 300,000 daily circulation compared to the Japanese language newspapers whose circulations run in the tens of millions. Even if we ignore the comparison between absolute figures and look at it in terms of proportion between number of readers and number of circulation, the resulting ratio is still impressive or dismal depending on the way you look at it. Even a comparison

within the country show that the circulation figures of the Chinese newspapers far outnumber that of the Malay papers. Looked at proportionately, you get an even more dismal figure.

The obvious conclusion is that the Malays are left far behind the Chinese in their interest in reading and since reading is the foundation of learning and knowledge, the implication is very alarming indeed.

Whatever interest Malays have in reading is largely confined to light reading material such as entertainment, sensational news, trivia and gossip. This is clearly shown by the sales popularity and mushrooming of such materials on the market and the accompanying poor sales of the serious reading materials.

This pattern applies not only among the less educated but also among the highly qualified; from the ordinary man in the street to the leaders, professionals and even academics.

This problem was raised by Za'ba many decades ago but the situation has not changed. Za'ba criticised the habit of Malays who like to seek entertainment and are lazy to think of the fate and future of the Malays. This problem infects the Malays till today.

In Japan, a graduate worker who, after two years at work, do not show any interest in reading, will face great difficulty in carrying on in his work because he would be left behind in new technology and information.

With such a low level of interest in reading and therefore in the culture of learning, how are the Malays going to ride the tide of the country's rapid development towards realising the goals of vision 2020? This is the question which requires immediate attention and solution.

However, I believe the people should not be completely blamed for the problem. There are other factors which do not help to make matters better.

The technology and book publication industry in Malaysia is not efficient or productive in both quantity and quality. The quality of the content, rendition, promotion and effect does not get the attention of those involved in the industry such as author, editor and publisher. The final product is less than attractive, not effective and does not get the attention of the public. As a result the message and knowledge does not reach its intended audience. The publisher suffers losses.

The promotion of books is another neglected area in the book industry in Malaysia. For example, there is hardly any promotion of books on broadcast media – radio, television and film. There is not much in the print media either. Other media such as static and mobile exhibitions are held from time to time but they are not enough.

There is something clearly lacking in the publishing industry in this country which is related to the issue of moulding a culture of learning among the Malays. With poor promotion and advertising, good books are not easily available or are not made known to the reading public.

This may sound a small point but it has something to do with the lack of a culture of learning in this country. In some developed countries, besides various novel methods of promotion and advertising, the book distribution trade has even gone the direct selling way. This obviates the difficulty for the buyer to obtain from the retailer who may not have the book in stock. Direct selling is more convincing and provides more information about the books available to the public.

The lack of quality reading material in Malay is made worse by the dearth of titles in most fields of knowledge. The industry is not productive enough and cannot cope with the country's needs.

This is not only true of original titles but also translated works.

More than 90 per cent of university reference books are in foreign languages particularly English. The effort to translate more works to meet needs is sluggish and many major translation projects have met with failure.

We realise the issue is one of conflict between social responsibility and financial responsibility. This has something to do with the lack of a responsive reading public in the first place. Because there are relatively few readers for certain fields, publishers will steer clear from investing good money in unprofitable segments.

Financial viability is a reality and the government's effort to subsidize the publication of serious but unpopular and therefore unprofitable books is a laudable effort.

However what is not seen in this part of the world is the publisher as promoter of the reading culture. Publishing is a professional field with its own ethics. Publishers who are committed to their profession should resolve to guide the readership to more serious reading materials and not merely pander to their banal interests.

With this in mind, among the early efforts that could be focussed to mould the *New Malay* model is the improvement in the efficiency and quality in the publishing industry. To achieve this objective, we do not have a choice but to bring in the government to oversee the industry. It is not fair to burden the whole task to DBP alone. The DBP also have other tasks such as the development of language, culture, literature and so on.

Another factor to be considered is the question of authorship whether in relation to book writing or essay writing. The moulding of good authorship should be the responsibility of the publisher. As a professional, the publisher should not only be concerned with the



publication of quality material but also with the moulding of good writers.

However because the professional environment and efficiency of the publishing industry is low, that commitment is rarely seen. The choice of writers is made on the basis of profits. Renowned writers are often hired because they sell better and new writers are often offered lower rates of payment.

The production of a quality manuscript and the moulding of a good author as a criterion of professionalism is not a practice here.

When we talk about authorship we cannot but also talk about the position of intellectuals in this country. This is so because they are the people who made up the authorship in the country.

In the 80s and 90s, intellectuals are criticised for not producing enough works which can contribute to nation-building, so much so that universities set the condition that academics must write books before they could be considered for promotion.

But are intellectuals confined only to academics? What is an intellectual? An intellectual is a person who, by using his thinking capacity, can make a comprehensive analysis, find solutions, and offer choices and ideas, theory or inventions and make discoveries when faced with or interacting with any phenomena, crisis, or demands made by universal or specific needs.

A western scholar divided intellectuals into two groups: those who are full-time academics holding teaching jobs at universities; secondly, those thinkers working in various other professional fields. So when we talk about unproductive intellectuals, it is best that we refer to both groups.

Is it true that intellectuals in this country are not productive and do not want to interact with their environment? If this is true, why? Such matters are subjective and sensitive. Subjective because there

is no clear study or statistic concerning the amount of work they must do to be considered productive. Sensitive because the assessment of academics is not objective and is clouded by emotion.

The micro approach is the most suitable for making a specific and detailed analysis of any subject, but in the context of solving the social or human problem, a macro approach is more effective.

The best approach is to look at the problem in its totality by assuming that all factors are important and interrelated. So, the solution is applied to all aspects of the web of relationships and not just because of the problem of one aspect only, but also because of its connection with other questions.

Such is the case with the issue of unproductive intellectuals. It is not a problem which is only related in a specific way and in a total way to the academic world only, but is also related to the whole social system. Let us now look at some aspects of the relationship.

One aspect which is concerned closely with motivation and can affect productivity is appreciation. I find that our society do not appreciate the role and contribution of intellectuals. A singer or footballer could easily command RM10,000 for an appearance or performance consisting of four or five songs lasting several minutes each, or in the case of the footballer, a 90-minute game, but a professor is not sure of getting RM200 after giving a talk lasting more than an hour.

People like to read gossip stories and light entertainment rather than the serious comments or criticisms made by an academician. Here we can see that society itself do not invite or welcome the academics to interact with them and help them. It is society that distance itself from intellectuals, not the other way around.

In the advanced countries, intellectuals are highly respected in

society not just in terms of recognition but also in monetary terms. A respected intellectual will be paid tens of thousands of dollars for a talk. Actually Islam itself places intellectuals highly.

However society criticises intellectuals not because they fail to play their role but because they want to see them play a greater role. This is because of the rapid pace of technology and thinking. Society (those who are aware) want every infrastructure and potential to be fully utilised.

The intellectuals in this country have contributed a lot to nation-building and the making of the modern Malay. Official efforts carried out by universities, congresses and organizations have contributed a lot of ideas or acted as agent of change in society. To give them a greater role, we need to cooperate and give more support to them. For example, we hear that thousands of research papers and theses lie, largely unread and unpublished, in university libraries all over the country. The universities face costs constraints to publish them but surely there must be a way to overcome them. One way which has already been done is the setting up of the Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC) which among its aims is to commercialise academic works. Other than MTDC, there are many more organizations which could help universities and intellectuals.

Another problem which shackles the Malays is the poor command of languages. Given that languages are the vehicle of knowledge, imagine how handicapped the Malays are in acquiring knowledge. The vast majority of Malay students are poor in English, what more in other foreign languages. Unlike Chinese students, most of whom by the time they pass out from secondary schooling, know at least three languages – a Chinese dialect, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia; many of them know at least one more, English.

This is of course very much to their advantage, not to mention credit. For example, in the universities, the Chinese students have little problem in using reference books which are mostly in English or other foreign languages.

Since language competency is a key to knowledge, it would be wise to think of ways and means to ensure that Malay students do acquire proficiency in foreign languages, at least in English or Japanese (because Japan is now a leading economic and technological power whose pool of expertise and knowledge could be tapped if we know their language.)

The heritage of a simple, unhurried, unchallenging way of life in the kampung has moulded the Malay mind which shows an acute lack of interest and curiosity in anything new and unfamiliar. One implication is that Malays are not serious in acquiring knowledge; they never even stop to think of venturing into new fields of knowledge outside their familiar world.

Village life does not motivate them to seek knowledge because it never occurred to the villagers that knowledge is important and that they are supposed to seek knowledge.

The connection is clear. That is why the residential school system is a very good way of taking out good Malay students from the kampung environment.

A study conducted in Selangor state recently shows 90 per cent of Malay pupils in the kampungs show little interest or are not serious in education. This is a serious and challenging problem in our effort to rehabilitate the Malays who have strayed from the straight and true path of righteousness.

That is why, in the last chapter, I emphasize the need to reform the negative kampung way of life. Kampung is not just a physical location but a concept and a way of life.

The Malay kampungs must be urbanized. In the process, one aspect which should be emphasized is the educational infrastructure. In the planning stage, a suitable site must be allocated for the purpose of building educational facilities such as schools, book and computer stores, publications, printing, stationery and so on.

What is important is that we want to see a culture of learning and knowledge among the Malays; we want to see the educational facilities producing a tradition of Malay learning uniquely its own of which they could justifiably take pride in.

Other than its basic function of producing graduates, universities, whether private or public, should also be allowed to play other related roles.

For example, it could make its research findings available to all levels of society according to their needs; second, it could undertake translation works in various disciplines in a more productive way; third, it could increase the research work and discoveries which could solve society's problems and improve the quality of life.

Outside campus programmes conducted by ITM and USM or the non-credit course at UPM are models which can be expanded in terms of participation and effect.

Such efforts to make education available to a wider public who is otherwise unable to enter a university for various reasons will help the Malays in many fields. For example, farmers will get to know of the technical know-how, guidance and technology related to his needs, and to help him increase the productivity of his farms. Other SMIs such as poultry rearing, furniture making, sawmills, boatbuilding and retail businesses too can benefit.

One trend in the modernisation process is specialisation within a specialisation ... to the extent that we are capable of delving into a specialised field, then we will be able to open up more opportunities, gain more exposure and show greater versatility.

If these divisions are carefully managed, whether in academic disciplines, the industry, the business world or other roles and factors in society, we can create an environment in which a Malay is adaptable and can perform in diverse roles but all with one goal. Malays will become active and are full of activities which are inter-related. Then Malays will be ready to produce something outstanding.

The reason for discussing specialization is to emphasize the importance of setting up academic institutions which cater to the specialization for any number of disciplines. Universiti Utara Malaysia with administration, USM with science and so on.

We need to increase the number of institutions and also its areas of specialization should be concentrated and focussed into even narrower areas of specialization so that this maximum interaction would be able to produce outputs of the highest quality. For example, it is high time for us to have a university which specializes in industries, sports and so on.

A university which specializes in industries, for example, is essential for us to be competitive in technology. Many experts and thinkers from various fields can be pooled.

This pool of experts, who may also include those from foreign countries, will contribute technological discoveries which can help to speed up the pace of expansion of the industrial sector in the country and at the same time dispel the image that we are a net importer of foreign technology.

This discussion of the culture of learning, although not comprehensive or perfect, is motivated by the need to emphasize the importance of the tradition of the love of knowledge among the Malays.

The tradition is extended to the effort to put into practice and

to pass the new knowledge to society. The analogy of a *silat guru* who awarded seven jurus out of 10 jurus which he possessed to his pupils so that his pupils would not one day be able to defeat him should not be the basis in the modern practice of knowledge.

In fact the tradition of passing on knowledge or expanding it should be carried out on a broader base and more aggressively, whether it is done through books, essays and so on, or through formal education or informal education.

A word from Ibn Khaldun: "The power of knowledge is not only a requisite and a complement of physical power, but it also gives direction and meaning to man's existence."

Chapter VI

# THE NEW MALAY

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## REFORMATION OF ISLAMIC THINKING





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The Malays in Malaysia are dyed-in-the-wool adherents of the Islamic faith. This wholesale adherence is partly a result of history, partly cultural identity and partly because it is enshrined in the constitution and is taken for granted by others in the country or abroad. This is not to say that Islam is exclusively for Malays and there are no other races who practise the religion, but the Malay identity is virtually a synonym for Islam.

Since its advent in the Malay world some six hundred years ago, Islam has played a major role in configuring Malay thinking, their world view and ethics. In the course of time, Islam has bestowed in the Malays a sense of dignity and identity and maturity even if not totally and perfectly.

Thus the definition of the *New Malay* incorporates and aspires to make Islam the basis in all aspects. Any effort to isolate Islam and Malays in the new image will destroy the Malays and make them lose everything.

However the maturity of the Malay-Islam identity has not reached a perfect stage or at least a stage where the Malays possess the qualities of the advanced people or be even better than them in terms of their performance as a whole and as the substantive ethnic group in Malaysia.

As adherents of Islam, the Malays naturally hold strongly to their own faith and reject other faiths. However the practice of Islam and the unravelling of the many truths in the religion has never been done in a serious way. This problem is not confined to the Malays but is a pattern or phenomenon among Muslims all over the world. Even the Arabs, the earliest adherents of Islam, are not exempted.

If the Malays are having this problem because they are still searching, the Arabs are in a similar situation because they have lost the spirit of the faith. This problem is worrying and a revival is called for.

To say that the problem is not unique to Malays but affects all Muslim countries in the world is not to provide an excuse for the Malays to find comfort in numbers. I am convinced that it is the Malays who have the capability to break the pattern.

The problem with Muslims is not that they are not committed, in fact they are even extreme at times, but they do not interpret Islamic principles properly and try live up to them whether symbolically or substantively.

The vacuum in the life and soul of the Muslims is exploited by other races or people of other faiths among whom many admit the truth of Islam but are too proud to obey its commandments. Jews

and western scholars, for example, derive many ideas from the Quran in their quest for knowledge.

As a result of this scenario, Islam and its adherents are perceived as weak. Muslims are looked down upon by the international community and in Malaysia they are looked down upon by the other races. Thus Islam is no longer and has never been looked up to by people outside the faith. More than that, Muslims themselves are confused and have lost faith in themselves and their religion and many profess Islam only out of social and identity needs.

Muslims also increasingly feel a sense of inferiority in relation to other races who are more advanced in all spheres of life so much so that the Muslims are dependent on the non-Muslims.

This dependency syndrome is keenly felt by Muslims or Malays in this country. For example, even their places of worship are built by the non-Muslims.

This wrong perception towards Islam stems from the presumption that Islam is a religion which is not capable of solving modern problems. And as a result of the poverty and ignorance of Muslims, Islam is regarded as a religion for third-class humans.

This wrong perception is reinforced by the Muslims themselves who are not serious in wanting to liberate themselves from the trap set and manipulated by their enemies. They continue to allow themselves to be dependent on others and let them determine their fate and future. These are some of the negative elements which must be eliminated in the effort to change the Malays, who are also Muslims, in order to mould the *New Malay*.

To change the wrong perception which has prevailed for decades is not easy. It is just as difficult to convince non-believers of the virtues of Islam.

The answers to the problem lie in the capability of Muslims themselves to rise to the challenge and leave the shackles of past

dependency to a new position of equality or even to a position of being better than others.

Therefore I think a comprehensive reformation in the structure, thinking, and the way Islam is practised must be set into motion. The reformation must be done at both individual and collective levels. With all the lackadaisical structure, component and tradition of implementation, I do not believe there are people who feel that revolution is suitable. Given the social environment in this country, I believe evolution is a better way.

If there are people who believe in revolution, they must understand that given a whole structure which is not ready and a complex social environment, the approach will probably not only result in the Malays being destroyed but maybe even all Malaysians. The progressive evolution is a more credible approach in the effort to change the Malays and Muslims.

It is our responsibility to prove to non-Muslims that Islam and its followers can be supreme with brain power and not through terrorism and suchlike violent ways. Actually even now we are undergoing this process of change in the thinking and practice of the Malays whether in the form of inculcation or practice.

In this context, to make this approach moves even faster, all components or factors involved in the effort of nation-building need to be imbued with the spirit and new orientation or practice of Islam, one that is more than just superficial but heartfelt.

All the potentials that are needed can be found inside us or from our history. It is only waiting to be exploited. For example, the golden age of Malay and Islam in the past can be combined with positive Malay values, traditions and Islamic teachings; the combination of Malay complaisance to their elders with the work commitment and trust in Islam are some of the instruments which are

waiting for our resolve and commitment to exploit as the body of values to form the attitudes of the *New Malay*.

However in going in this direction, a reformation is needed towards the false perception, conservative understanding and thinking which is not progressive towards Islam by Muslims or Malays themselves. This change in thinking is not only by individual Muslims but also among the ulamas and other leaders.

Inter alia, the impractical approach during the missionary work to spread Islam to the people; unconsciously, Muslim scholars or missionaries tend to be authoritarian when equipped with knowledge or having power over others in their social milieu. This is a natural human instinct.

When these values are put into practice such as during missionary work, it gives a negative impression on the target audience. Other than being instinctive, this authoritarian approach is also encouraged by the attitude of choosing the easiest way of doing things or when you try to hide the limits of your knowledge. For example, during a discussion of dos and don'ts in Islam, the instinct manifests itself in the form of a dogma: "If you do that, you will be punished."

This dogmatic approach gives the impression of Islam as a harsh religion which, like a court, functions only to mete out punishments. This approach is contrary to Islam which emphasizes diplomacy and discretion. It will also create the impression that Islam is only interested in finding faults whereas in true Islam, punishment is rehabilitative or educational.

What is needed is to widen the scope of education, not being obsessed with meting out punishment which only creates fear in the minds which are unable to think and which are not critical enough when faced with a doubtful situation.

With a shift from emphasizing punishment to education, the mention of punishment should be expressed in educational terms. This should be done in rational and analytical terms, for example, by telling the psychological reasons why such wrongs are committed and what are the proper ways to channel out the human needs behind the tendency to transgress the religious laws; why the need for punishment; what are the social or psychological effects of punishment.

For example, if Islam forbids Muslims from eating pork, the reasons for it must given. Maybe the reasons cannot be found in the Sunnah or the Quran; therein lies the most important injunction in Islam – to find out, to do research, to study and to analyze.

Pigs, for example, causes negative social effects; they are also harbingers of diseases from the way they are reared; the disposal of pig waste is a problem and the life cycle of the pig is hard to manage; the word pig itself connotes something dirty and ugly even in western cultures.

In scientific terms, the virtue of pork as a source of protein should be studied. See if there are side effects or hidden costs. This is only an example. All this widen the scope of knowledge and creativity of Muslims. Muslim society will benefit by getting scientific information and they will think more critically and analytically. This is the most important potential which needs to be developed.

The same logic also applies to the hudud law of cutting the hand of a thief as a form of punishment. One should not emphasize the cutting of the hand but the sociological and psychological factors behind the crime, why the punishment is rational, the effect, the exceptions, the procedures and the need for reliable witnesses.

Ditto in the case of illicit sex. We should analyze the incidence

of illicit sex in the context of the given social values, norms and pressures in society. What are the social effects? Illicit sex implies the act was done without regard to legal, social or even health considerations or the possibility of pregnancy, parental responsibility, registration, and so on.

The same comprehensive and analytical approach should also apply in many other areas of life which need governance and control. I believe that if the leaders and ulamas tackle religious issues holistically, seeing them as wholes as much as in parts, then our work to build an active and progressive nation will be made easier. All Islamic teachings require or invite the thinking dimension or other reactions, opportunities for research and study, or even economic opportunities.

The idea of the holy in Islam symbolically urges Muslims to be active in business and services to provide for the needs and well-being of society because only Muslims know and take seriously the question of the holy or sacred. And in the course of business, they should aim not only to serve the Muslim community but also the non-Muslims.

Asking questions, analyzing and thinking are some of the ways of accentuating the knowledge and maturity of Muslims. But the opposite seems to be the norm: "Do not ask questions." Certain essential matters pertaining to religion have been misinterpreted by Muslims to extend even into the mundane and the fields of knowledge.

Although there are limits to human knowledge, Malays are too quick to use this as an excuse for not trying. They use this excuse in almost all situations, whether mundane or profound. This tendency creates a community which is passive, uncritical and scared to think. All this results from an unquestioning attitude or culture. They think



it is wrong to question what they are told, be it rules or laws or God's injunctions.

Sometimes this unquestioning attitude is extended unconsciously to cover natural tendencies, authoritarianism, taking the line of least resistance and being defensive about one's ignorance.

"Do not ask why God forbids the drinking of alcohol and the eating of pork, that is His matter." Such questions beg to be researched and studied but are dismissed off-hand in the course of missionary work thus encouraging Muslims to accept things at face value. God wants us to think. Most people pass the buck and say that it is the work and responsibility of ulamas who unfortunately do not have the multi-dimensionality of knowledge to provide comprehensive answers other than those already given. Because of this self-imposed limitations, Islamic learning has failed to developed further.

We rarely hear of ulamas who are trained beyond religious knowledge. By right they should incorporate the disciplines of sociology and psychology when dealing with human problem, for example.

Actually, the more diverse the fields of knowledge are used to interpret the Quran, the more beneficial it would be. There is more to the Quran which could be unearthed if we use scientific methods.

An analyst who is schooled in two disciplines such as law and sociology, for example, will not only be able to analyze a sentence (punishment) from the point of law but also from the sociological point of view.

To ensure greater commitment to the work of interpreting the Quran, ulamas should have two or more fields of discipline. Only then could they come up with practical and applicable interpreta-

tions useful to the people. Unfortunately our emphasis on knowledge is low and the commitment among ulamas to diversify their knowledge is also low. This state of affairs is further compounded by the social environment.

The interpretation made by ulamas who do not possess specialized knowledge is too general. Being too general and not concrete, it is less useful to Muslims who want more detailed explanations. These general interpretations have only resulted in increased confusion which gives rise to all sorts of perception and speculation which are then futilely discussed.

The same results manifest when the ulama knows only one discipline. His interpretation will be limited by his knowledge. If he is trained in law, he will look at it from the legal point of view only. Then his interpretation is not critical enough and may even be non-rational.

Imagine the havoc created if such narrow views are followed blindly by Muslims at large. This has been going on for some time on a global scale and Malays are among the unwitting inheritors of the narrow interpretations which are not progressive.

Not only are Malays already confused about themselves, but also the ulamas and missionaries further foist conflicting opinions upon them thus creating a climate of fear causing the Muslims to adopt an unquestioning and uncritical attitude. This combination of negative values conspire to produce the sterile mind of the Malay – uncritical, unquestioning, unchanging, and unmotivated.

Islam, as has been proven in history, is rich in the tradition of learning and philosophy which requires intelligent humans to interpret and apply in all fields of knowledge. This is the challenge of the religion to its followers.

This principle strengthens the essential difference between hu

mans and other species: human capacity to learn and increase his knowledge is far superior to that of any other creature on earth. The more man responds to the Islamic challenge and increases his knowledge, the more human he becomes. Islam looks down on people who do not seek knowledge. But this is the unpleasant fact about Muslims today – they are abysmally ignorant. They do not even know that they do not know!

One of the reasons why Islam has such a bad image is because Muslims are poor in knowledge. Islam rises to banish stupidity and ignorance, but Muslims continue to be so.

Back to the question of interpreting the Quran. Without implying that people who are not well-trained should not read the Quran or appreciate it, it is only with knowledge that the Quran and all its wealth could be understood and appreciated.

During its heyday more than a hundred years ago, Islam witnessed the likes of Ibnu Sina, Ibnu Battuta, Ibnu Khaldun and others; these are the Islamic thinkers who succeeded in showing the greatness of the Quran through their multi-dimensional knowledge.

Ibnu Sina mastered medicine, mathematics, astronomy and so on. So did the others. Not only does the Quran requires of its believers to seek knowledge but it is also a source of knowledge in itself. With a serious multi-dimensional approach, it can lead to more in-depth studies and more branches of the disciplines. All knowledge comes from the Quran but it has been enriched and expanded by human endeavour.

On the basis of this realization, the founding of the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) is a positive step to pool the resources of ulamas, Islamic thinkers and scholars with various background under one roof so that they could interact and focus their attention or give their thoughts, reactions and discoveries from Islamic sources.

Since it is very difficult to produce a multi-disciplinary Muslim scholar, so pooling many scholars of different backgrounds is a solution.

These scholars should be selected not merely on the basis of their involvement in Islamic thinking but also those with professional backgrounds such as medicine, engineering, literature, industry etc. Non-Muslim scholars should also be invited to contribute because such cooperation will benefit not only Muslims but also society as a whole. Islam itself is a universal religion and benefits all creatures.

Such contacts and interactions should be organised on a regular basis including by other bodies other than IKIM. This is important because there is a tendency among ulamas, intellectuals and other Muslim professionals to be engrossed in their own disciplines. In that way many of them become isolated from other disciplines and the social environment.

These people compartmentalize their minds and their disciplines. They become static and they cannot expand their knowledge from other perspectives. Their isolation will make their knowledge fossilized and not beneficial to society. They do not contribute to any change and will be left out from mainstream development.

This attitude has been around for a long time but no concrete effort has been made to overcome it. For example the issue of passive intellectuals and static ulamas is one of the signs of protest against the compartmentalized mind. I am convinced that harmonious interactions, or even intellectual debates or disagreements can contribute positively. If the interaction is intensive, it would be more productive.

Ulamas and intellectuals are agents of change and in many ways are themselves leaders. With their status and influence, they mould the opinions and attitudes of society and become opinion leaders.

This potential should not be left unexploited or be abused. Instead, it should be in line with the overall goals and aims. That is why when we talk about the failure of a community, we cannot ignore the failure of the leadership or of particular groups including ulamas.

The ulamas have in the past contributed to the improvement of society but in my opinion, they can do more to mobilise Muslims. Other than the many weaknesses in the *dakwah* movement, ulamas too have failed to make a strong stand or make their voices heard on many issues.

The issue of usury, for example, haunts the Malays even till today. Modern financial systems and the share system are very new to them. Although they would say that the system smacks of usury and all products ensuing from the system are therefore suspect, they steer clear of the subject.

Another example is the banking system. Bank Islam was instituted only in 1984, 30 years after independence and for that length of time, the Muslims have been living under the shadow of usury without an Islamic alternative.

Sometimes decrees are made legalising the modern system on the grounds of "emergency," the absence of an Islamic system, but the voices are few and far between so much so that they do not reach the majority of Muslims. Such voices fail to answer the doubts of Muslims or change their perceptions.

Fear of usury causes Muslims to stay away from availing themselves of loans offered by banks. Already lacking in capital, how could Malays ever venture into business which require large capital outlays? Their enthusiasm, opportunities and ideas are all nipped in the bud when they realise that it was against Islamic teachings to obtain loans from banks. This, together with other factors, kill Malay

motivation to venture into business or other new fields for that matter even before it was born. The combination of confusion and misunderstanding over Islam and the other factors will cause any remaining motivation to fade away.

Another aspect often misunderstood and therefore needs to be rectified is the wrong perception towards the meaning and image of Islam not only among non-Muslims but also among Muslims.

For example, the perception that Islam is the source or reason why Muslims remain backward and poor. It is said that Muslims do not know how to conduct business and do not understand the operations of the economy. Because Muslims fail to manage their personal lives and their community are in a mess, Islam is not a complete religion to guide its adherents.

All these negative perceptions need to be rectified and it is the collective and individual responsibility of every Muslim to correct the image of Islam. This is also obligatory in terms of *dakwah*. The image of poverty, being dependent on others, being weak and ignorant will make it difficult for them to convince others on the purity of Islam. Therefore correcting the image is also one of the efforts to uphold the truth of Islam.

Verbal persuasion alone will not convince non-Muslims who have a poor opinion of Islam. Muslims therefore have no choice but to rise above the mire of their poverty and ignorance. The most important thing is to base the resurgence on the tenets and teachings of Islam. Only then could it strengthen the case because Islam provides the perfect base and the perfect way of life.

The perception of non-Muslims that Islam is not complete and the inferiority complex and lack of faith of Muslims towards Islamic values and practices, towards its social, economic and political systems, or their failure to delve into these practices are the rea

sons why western or non-Islamic practices and values such as secularism, capitalism and socialism have taken over much of the running of the country and the minds of the people. Not all these systems are bad or bring no benefits to the Malays, but to the extent that they erode the faith toward their own religion and make them ignore Islamic sources, whereas Islam is the best, then Muslims will ultimately lose, if they have not already.

In many cases, western systems are a trap for Muslims because many un-Islamic elements which oppress the weak make it difficult for Muslims to compete with non-Muslims.

Usury in the capitalist system for example has trapped borrowers from the low-income group in a vicious circle. This also traps the Malays who try to venture into industry with loans as capital.

Islam's answer is to eliminate usury and replace it with the *akad* system and so on. The setting up of Bank Islam in 1983 and the decision by seven other banks to offer Islamic banking practices as alternatives in 1993 is a blessing to all Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Another wrong perception that must be addressed is concerning Muslims who are poor and left out of mainstream society. Muslims are poor not because of Islam and in fact poverty contradicts the values of Islam.

Islam's early history is replete with examples of economic activities. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) himself was a trader. Islam teaches its followers that 90 per cent of their earnings is from trade and commerce. But how far do Muslims respond to this teaching? The majority of them are engrossed in being consumers rather than in being economically productive.

We can learn a lesson from Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) who travelled widely in the course of carrying on his trading. To maximise profits, a trader must find a strategic place, invest in new

places, and establish links with other countries. Islam teaches that to increase productivity, the transport and communications system must be improved but what is the response of Muslims?

The relationship between Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and Khadijah which ended in marriage is a chronicle of commitment and sincerity in business. It began with Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) as the model worker and whose trustworthiness finally made him an equal partner in the business. The work and cooperation model provided by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) from early on – do Malays learn from this story?

From this story alone, if we were to think deeply about it, we would reap all kinds of secrets and wisdom and the realisation of how much emphasis Islam gives to commerce and economy.

And in this respect we cannot leave out the point of competition. Islam acknowledges the role of competition. I believe that one of the reasons for the Jews being referred to as the enemies of Muslims is as a sign that God wants Muslims to be alert and to be productive to face any competition or opposition. Lest we forget, it should be reminded that Jews know the truth of Islam; it is just that they oppose and refuse to obey Islam.

However the Jews are known to be smart, tactical and very successful in the fields of learning and the economy. They are among the moulders of capitalism with its financial banking system. In many European countries, Jews play prominent roles and assume high positions in the economy and the universities. They are leaders in many disciplines and have made many important discoveries.

Why then do Muslims play a passive role of being mere observers of the race of people God has designated as the enemies of their own religion? Muslims should be the main competitor to the Jews in economy and learning. Instead they are dependent on the Jews, their enemies!



The practice of paying tithes and alms, if carefully considered, in addition to it being a social and religious obligation and to foster a caring society, is also a strong incentive for Muslims to be active and strong in the economy. Paying alms is an ability if you are economically productive. The bigger is your business and profits, the bigger is the size of your alms (the rate or percentage remains the same). And the bigger the alms contribution, the bigger is God's reward.

Unfortunately how many Muslims really subscribe to the belief of collecting merits on earth in order to win God's grace and mercy here and in the hereafter? On the contrary, the practice of giving alms is perceived as a burden. The understanding and love of earning one's merits is shallow and rare among Muslims themselves. What is more beguiling is material reward. In this way, the secrets and the wisdom behind the practice are lost on Muslims.

Failure to understand this merit point system or holy meritocracy is compounded by the failure to understand the concept of religious obligation or *ibadah*. The wide scope and meaning of religious obligation is given a narrow application to specific forms of worship such as prayers, fasting, paying tithe and giving alms; but such developmental and livelihood questions as character building, career advancement, work culture, altruism, community service and so on is never defined or realised as religious obligations.

As a matter of fact, all good deeds which are not contrary to Islamic values are religious obligations.

The performance of religious obligations earns oneself merit points which qualify one not only a place in heaven but also rewards on earth.

From this we can see that practically every act from big to small is under God's scrutiny and therefore is not to be trifled with. And

by extension, our deeds not only bring us reward or punishment but it also affects the image and *dakwah* of Islam.

Unfortunately, religious obligation is everywhere given a restrictive meaning, while merit points and the penalties for not having collected enough is hardly ever taken seriously by anybody. There is no enthusiasm or seriousness in the pursuit of merits. Those who wanted to are scared that they might be seen as religious cranks. What is most saddening is that there is no serious effort to eradicate this erroneous perceptions or fallacies.

The communication of Islam suffers many weaknesses. It emphasizes only punishment without explaining the need for it as moral cleansing. Islamic communication is authoritarian in nature. This approach cloaks the gentler aspects of Islam, the philosophy, the mercifulness, the love and so on. This in no small way contributes to the malaise of the Muslims.

The concept of time in Islam emphasizes the importance of filling up time with good work and those who do not do so will be counted among the unfortunate. This warning should be taken as motivation for Muslims to work harder and not waste time. In a competitive world which is becoming increasingly filled with many choices, the importance of time cannot be overemphasized and it points to the ever present role of Islam. And what is loss? – to oneself, to family, to society, to the world, to the next generation, to the human race and to the hereafter.

What has been mentioned about Islam thus far is not even one per cent of what can be said about the all-comprehensive religion. The work of interpreting and conveying the teachings of Islam to its followers requires a commitment from scholars, thinkers and leaders. The goal is to render all the teachings of Islam in real world terms whether they touch on social, economic, technological or ethical questions.

Another fallacy concerning Islam is the erroneous impression that it does not enjoin its followers to seek and value knowledge and education. The interest of Malays in education is less than that of other races in the country. Only the Orang Aslis show less interest. Actually the seeking of knowledge and education is a religious obligation (*ibadah*) in Islam. A person of learning has a high position in Islam. To correct the faulty perception, every Muslim must equip himself or herself with knowledge and learning.

The education system inherited from the west should be reformed, many say, because it is materialistic and does not teach moral and spiritual values. How far this is true is hard to say. But one measure is to look at the decadence in the West today. The West is facing a moral and social crisis of the highest order. Such practices as free sex with all its attendant social ills and health risks, the rise in violence and crimes, the hedonistic youth, drug addiction, alcoholism, teenage pregnancies, child abuse and sexual harassment are a heavy burden on the social fabric of western society.

The whole social crisis has resulted in a generation of weak citizens without motivation, fortitude and worse, without goals and guidance. This raises the question of how are these countries going to maintain the continuity of heritage from the earlier generations?

A simple conclusion is that their education system is weak. From its earliest days, the western education system has been dominated by materialistic considerations and it is this which has produced the present generation of social ills. This crisis has opened the eyes of many western scholars towards the ideal of the Islamic education and knowledge.

In this there is a seed of enlightenment in the hearts of the advanced communities, including among Muslims (doubtful) that

Islam is the best alternative system to overcome the social crises in the west. Actually Islam is the only way, not a choice or alternative, but the realisation ought to convince Muslims to have more faith in their own religion and practise it with more thoroughness.

Scholars and educationists in this country should get together to plan and design a new education system based on Islamic teachings and values. This does not mean that western or materialistic considerations should be thrown out completely. What is needed is a reevaluation and a reorientation towards the Islamic system. Rationally speaking, there are elements from the West which are good and therefore should be retained and incorporated into the new system. This is because Islam itself is open to good ideas or practices from any system so long as it does not contradict Islamic values. In fact the good ideas and practices from other systems were originally taken from Islamic sources.

This need is equally felt in the effort to create the image of the *New Malay* and to achieve the goals of vision 2020. As an educationist once said, the time has now come to study and reform the education system because the existing system has no capability to produce quality people required to realise the ideals of the vision.

More than that, it is concerned with restructuring society to be more balanced and equitable which not only possess high technology but also high ethics and human values – caring, giving loving and so on. We do not want to see technological and material success spawning a generation of youths who have no morals, who are uncompetitive and so on which contradict our aspirations.

True, it is not easy to mould a people or a nation which is wholly Islamic. This difficulty is not just as a result of the western domination, but also because we do not have a modern Islamic state which is run wholly in accordance with Islamic principles to serve as model. This lack must be rectified by Muslims from Malaysia.

One obstacle to this end is an unconscious tendency among Muslims to take it for granted that Islam is a synonym for Arabism on the basis of history and geography. Arabs are regarded as superior Muslims by virtue of being the first. This perception gives rise to negative implications among non-Arab Muslims such that they feel as second-class Muslims. Since they have less claim to be Muslims than the Arabs, they are therefore less responsible for the good name of Islam. Being non-Arab Muslims, Malays feel inferior and whether consciously or unconsciously they feel second-class Muslims.

This makes Muslims outside the Arab world less dynamic and not serious in finding out the wisdom within Islam and make contributions to the world of Islam. At the same time the Arabs, to whom other Muslims look up to, fail to be a good role model. They are a flawed model. So Muslims have to look elsewhere – to the religion itself instead of to the Arabs.

With the heritage of Islamic wisdom and philosophy pioneered by the great Islamic scholars of the past and the ideals of Islam as contained in the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the commitment and sacrifice of Muslims, our goal of becoming a developed nation and a role model to other Muslims will be achieved. We also have to substantiate and practise the universal Islamic principles which never enjoin its followers to be hostile to non-Muslims. The achievements of Islam are to be shared with non-Muslims.

Chapter VII

**THE NEW MALAY**

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**CONCLUSION:  
THE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE**



## Chapter VII

# CONCLUSION: THE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

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Basically, we grant that education provides the bedrock for the construction of a civilization. Knowledge is the factor of social change and the measure of human achievement. This truth is further reinforced in the discussion of building the *New Malay* image. I am convinced that knowledge and learning is capable of overcoming all the negative aspects of the Malay psyche including attitude, motivation, thinking ability and so on.

Given that the sum achievement of Malays in all fields of knowledge is at a low level compared to that of other races, we have to multiply our efforts to catch up with them.



In this respect, the sole tool or the dominant tool which connects man with knowledge is education. It is not enough to talk about the importance of knowledge or education without mentioning the other. As suggested by many scholars, to ensure that education is really able to disseminate knowledge among the people, a new and more comprehensive education orientation is needed.

Among the elements in the process of education whether formal or informal are:

1. media: newspapers, magazines, journals, television, books etc.
2. formal institutions: schools, colleges, universities, research centres, etc.
3. informal processes: seminars, courses, speeches by leaders, public campaigns, advertisements, posters, banners, counseling, small group discussions, etc.

Every element in the education process must be approached more specifically and effectively. For example, Malay scholars and intellectuals must think of ways of using the media more effectively as a means of effecting social change. If we decide that trivia and sensational treatment of news leave a negative effect on youths, but at the same time they are irresistible and therefore commercially appropriate, we must think what steps must be taken to change the tastes or to create a different image and presentation by the media, one that could mould a society which is more dynamic.

Through formal channels like schools and colleges, we must analyze how to synthesize philosophy, theory and practice to produce students who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of thinking creatively, be inventive, competitive and motivated. I believe that to fulfil this aspiration and to ensure that the goals and

objectives of *Vision 2020* are achieved, our present education system is inadequate and therefore must be revamped.

All the learned of the land should pool their knowledge and expertise to draw up a policy to serve as foundation for a new education system. There is no short cut or easy formula to inject positive qualities to a generation which has inherited so many negative traits. But with a strong resolve, it is not too idealistic to achieve. Anyway, we do not have a choice but to carry on.

The informal channel, consisting, as it does, of a motley crowd of voluntary bodies, political parties, workers' unions, the uniformed brigades, religious groups and so on, although they may differ in creed and purpose, can all play their role as informal channels of education but they must be comprehensive in their goals. Whatever their activity, the national goal of education must be at the top of their list. If the combined strengths of these non-governmental organizations can be pooled towards achieving a national goal, so much the better.

Then the whole education process is directed at achieving specific qualities – leadership, good parenting, good socialising and being good students. This division is not rigid and is not absolute. It is based on my analysis and interpretation of various aspects of being a Malay. As a result, I believe, the four qualities are the source for the implementation of various strategies and programmes.

Some may say that charisma is something one is born with, not something that could be moulded. But we need to nurture all kinds of potential qualities and bring them to the fore. At the very least, it is our responsibility to nurture potential leaders so that they can contribute their worth to the younger generation.

There are methods to produce good leaders according to specific models or on the basis of specific ideals of leadership. I also

believe that to groom good leaders, we need to nurture potential candidates with knowledge, discipline, responsibility and so on.

Japan, for example, during the early part of its rise to being a modern country, established a special institution which functioned like a factory to produce a generation of leaders with calibre. The institution, named Tengen, was very successful when their products returned to work in society and became effective agents of change of the nation.

The group of 3,381 trained men and women were scattered like seeds throughout Japan and all of them left lasting impressions like so many new islands sprouting up in an empty sea.

They function as leaders in all spheres of life. Some started business enterprises, some became professors and political leaders, while one of them went on to become a prime minister. The Japanese believe so much in the effectiveness of this institution that they revive it today.

That is the experience in Japan. Maybe we can find a source of inspiration in the experience. Maybe we can learn directly from their approach, or adapt it to suit our culture or maybe their model can serve as a symbol and a source of inspiration to create a better method which is more suitable to our society.

Just like the Japanese experience, good leaders need not be political leaders. Leaders form a small core group who act as catalysts of change in the larger society. The changes are not only in the standard of living but also in values and outlook.

What needs to be imbued among the potential leaders are personal human qualities such as motivation, perseverance, ruggedness, creativity and so on. These are general qualities and form the basis for any field of endeavour they choose.

Later they may be imbued with values, motives and visions of leadership to mobilise them for specific purposes according to their

capabilities, potential and so on. Some of them become social leaders, business leaders, scholars and so on.

In Malaysia, the younger generation of Malays has been nurtured along similar lines of the Tangen model, for example youth pioneership programmes, motivational camps and so on. Although these have achieved some success, they are not enough to achieve our long term goals.

Other than thinking of new programmes to produce leaders, existing slots should be brought up to date in line with broader goals of nation-building.

The hand that rock the cradle rules the world – so goes the cliché – but have we taken its truth seriously and what has been our response to it? The saying recognises the importance of mothers, and fathers, in the moulding of the future generation and thus determining the course the world will take. Many people agree that education and home nurture determine whether children will turn out as useful adults or otherwise. In other words, the two factors determine whether children will turn out to be good and useful citizens or a burden to the family and nation.

This underlines the importance of mothers in the process of nation-building. We should therefore pay more attention to this institution. Taking it for granted is a big mistake. Therefore a number of steps should be taken to renew and double our commitment to the field of parenting.

For example, we should introduce parenting as a subject in secondary schools. Whether it is more suitable as a co-curriculum or class subject is subject to study. The question of how to position it is secondary to the awareness of its importance.

The moulding of mothers through aspects of home economics, basic nutrition, consumerism, child psychology, religion and even gender studies is increasingly needed in view of the complicated

demands of modern life with all its social, economic and education problems. Without a knowledge of parenting, mothers and fathers will be at a loss when faced with the range of behaviour of their children.

Employers and voluntary bodies should contribute by making facilities available for the purpose of teaching parenting such as by holding short courses, seminars and awareness campaigns.

Maybe an institution specially set up to formulate and implement the importance of training parents to be good parents should be set up. This will be responsible for preparing materials, disseminating information, holding seminars and promotionals, pooling experts and providing training modules.

The institution could also serve as a complaints and counseling bureau by having a panel of experts and trained counselors.

In this respect the establishment of *Akademi Keluarga Bahagia* provides a model. The academy should be enlarged to ensure that its services benefit more people. Its function should also be widened to include the points mentioned earlier. Or maybe another institution with a more specific role and function could be set up.

Another consideration is to think of ways and means to lighten the burden of parenting. The number of working mothers is increasing. The problem of giving the best possible start in life in order to produce a productive generation is thus compounded when mothers have to divide their time between holding down their jobs in the workplace and the responsibility of having to look after the children, not to mention having to look after the house as well. They are needed in the workplace because of their skills and contributions. It would be a loss to the nation if the potential of women's contribution is not channeled into jobs.

Childcare has not been given the attention and thought that it

deserves or as found in the developed countries. Childcare does not end at ensuring that they are not left alone for long periods for their safety and physical well-being only. In line with our aspirations and goals, childcare can play a much more significant role. We want the children to be given the best care possible by well-trained workers. It would be worrying if the children are left in the hands of workers who are not trained or even worse whose backgrounds are unknown.

These risks would hinder our efforts to mould the younger generation in line with national goals and aspirations. I believe that a common system for all nurseries which are more effective should be formulated.

It is time that an institution like *KEMAS* be formed at the national level whose main function is the care of children of working mothers with branches at government departments, factories and housing estates. These day-care centres would have facilities for the care of children and for their visiting mothers.

This institution would recruit, train and register a pool of child-minders. The training should include nutrition, food preparation, health, hygiene and so on. In many developed countries, such services have been commercialised and form a profession with its own professional standards and ethics.

The next element in the education mix is socialization. The caring society module in practice now can be adopted as a model. The goal is to produce citizens who are sociable, tolerant, responsible, caring, giving and who feel a sense of belonging and so on.

In this way we can hope to see individuals who would not hesitate to help out with a sense of responsibility and love whenever they see others in need.

In this respect the Islamic model is one of the most effective there is. And the work done at the national level should be made more effective by more detailed planning and implementation.

Another important dimension of education which I would like to discuss here is learning from mistakes or "experiential learning."

In this context, there are three sources of experience from which we can draw valuable lessons that are beneficial to our national goal and aspiration: the collective personal experiences of the Malays; the example of advanced communities; the lesson from Islamic philosophy.

The personal experience of the Malays includes the experience of both obvious and subtle oppression and competition during the colonial period or even nowadays whenever we have to interact with people from advanced countries. We are weighed down by various demands and challenges of past generations and the future of the Malays themselves; and then they are given the responsibility to uplift the image of Islam and the Malays which has been severely damaged and derogated.

The collective personal experience of the Malays is a compelling reason and a platform to forge forward. All that experience and personal lessons rule out any possibility of regressing into the old negative attitude and traditions. We must learn the lessons well if we are to achieve our goal of creating the *New Malay*.

A more detailed analysis of advanced communities will inject confidence into the Malays. In this way we can pick up the salient features of their success to serve as a basis to build up our model and also learn of their weaknesses and how they overcome them. Japan, for example, still clings to their conservative thinking. Korea, now a newly industrialised country, was once in its early history known to be an indolent and unprogressive race. Japan is not as great as many might think. In the course of its economic recovery after the devastation of the second world war, it received massive amounts of capital and technological know-how from the

United States. The United States was determined to see that Japan did not fall under the influence of the communists or become a military power again.

The good points of the Japanese have been dwelt upon in previous chapters. I believe all aspects of advanced communities could serve as lessons and make the Malays confident that they could compete with them. Their prowess serves as an example while their weaknesses show that they are all ordinary human beings who could be competed with.

To ensure that the knowledge is spread far and wide, maybe a course on advanced communities or great powers be taught in schools so that the lessons therein could be passed on to the younger generation of Malays.

Other than the fact that we have not lived up fully to Islamic precepts, we have also yet to delve into Islamic philosophy, whether taught as a subject or embedded in other subjects. Concerning the teachings of Islam, as said earlier, we need to implement them more comprehensively so that the lessons from Islam will be fully utilised for the well-being of Muslims and to raise the image of Islam in the eyes of the world.

Clearly, the work of moulding the *New Malay* is not as easy as it sounds on paper. But as I have repeatedly said, if all available resources are assembled together to form a wave of committed effort (incorporating planning, details, work culture, consistency, etc.) with clear and specific goals and direction, then, however high is the ideal, I am convinced that it can be accomplished.

Although the work requires the commitment from every individual, I think the leaders need to be involved at a higher level of personal sacrifice than ordinary people by virtue of their being at the forefront of the effort.