

The Real Meaning of Independence

News:

On the 31st of August 2018, Malaysia will be commemorating her 60th year of independence from British rule. This date is regarded as a sacred date as it reminds the people of Malaysia of the independence of the country from more than 400 years of colonization by various external powers, the last being the British. Some regard this year's celebration as very special because for the first time since independence, the people of Malaysia is free from the 'iron grip' of Barisan Nasional, especially from UMNO. And with the slogan of 'Loving Malaysia', the people are hoping that Malaysia will be free and independent from the former government's draconian ways. However, one cannot escape from asking the same question every time independence day is celebrated; more so with the new Pakatan government and their promise of implementing 'true democracy' – are we really enjoying true independence as Malaysians? After centuries of being colonized and plundered of our natural wealth, we are still fully dependent on the West in almost all aspects of life. In fact our laws, our economic system, our political organization, our education setup – they are all formed and structured following the ways of the West. So what is the real meaning of independence?

Comment:

Independence of a land holds the connotation that it is free from physical colonization and free from the control of external powers. An independent state is a free decision-making country which determines its direction either in terms of its governmental structure, economic system as well as education and social cultures. Independence for an individual means that he/she is not controlled and possessed by anyone and free of bondage and possesses free self-determination in ascertaining the direction of his/her life. Although many claim that Malaysia has achieved independence and the individuals in the land have been granted the right to freedom, most still do not realize that they are still subjected to 'bondage' to other human beings and foreign doctrines. This causes a person to be oblivious that the direction of his/her life is totally controlled by external parties. The Word of Allah (swt) explains this clearly: **﴿اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾** ***"They take their rabbis and their monks as their gods apart from Allah and also the Messiah, son of Mary, whereas they were commanded to worship none but the One True God. There is no god but He. Exalted be He above those whom they associate with Him in His Divinity."*** [TMQ At-Taubah: 31].

When 'Adi bin Hatim came to Rasulullah (saw) trying to explain to the Messenger that the Jews and Christians do not worship their rabbis and monks, Rasulullah (saw)

said: «أليس يحرمون ما أحلَّ الله فتحرمونه، ويحلُّون ما حرم الله فتحلُّونه؟ قال: قلت: بلى! قال: فتلك عبادتهم» ***“Is it not that that they (their rabbis and their monks) forbid what Allah (swt) has made lawful, then you (the Jews and Christians) consider it unlawful. And they (their rabbis and their monks) make lawful what Allah has forbidden, and you (the Jews and Christians) regard it as lawful? ‘Adi answered: Indeed! That is their worship to them (the rabbis and the monks)”*** [HR at-Tabari].

This is the form of 'slavery' which is rarely recognized by many, that the followers will follow their leaders by doing whatever they say and avoiding whatever their leaders prohibit, even though the command and the prohibition are against the commandments and prohibitions of Allah (swt). This can be clearly witnessed in the system that dominates our lives today. Democracy is a system of government based on the secularisation of faith and state. In this system, there is no room for the commandments and prohibitions of Allah (swt) to be considered. Majority vote is the sole source of law and sovereignty belongs solely to man. After all the drafting and approval processes, this law will be enforced on the people and they are forced to comply with all these laws and will be punished in the event of any offense. This is exactly the form of worship of fellow human beings as explained by Rasulullah (saw). The act of establishing what is lawful and unlawful is no longer carried out by monks in modern times, but this task is taken over by lawmakers. They reasoned that the laws are created based on human rights and freedom but, in reality, they are laws that come from the whims and desires of man, neglecting the demands of syari'ah. Consequently, the application of this "human" system has resulted in chronic world problems.

Islam comes to free mankind from various forms of suffering due to the bondage and slavery of humans to other humans. Islam comes to make us truly independent and worship only Allah (swt), the One true God worthy of worship. And the conversation between General Rustam (Persia) and Rab'iy bin 'Amir (envoy of Commander Saad bin Abi Waqas) at the Battle of Qadisiyyah describes the reality best. When Rab'iy was asked why the Muslim army came to Persia, he answered:

“Allah Azza wa Jalla has sent us to deliver you from worshipping the creation to worshipping the Creator of the creation and to deliver you from the constriction of this world to the vastness of this world and the after life and from the oppression of the religions to the justice of Islam. Allah Azza wa Jalla has sent us to save you from worshipping each other.” [Ibn Jarir ath -Thabari, Târîkh al-Umam wa al-Muluk, ii / 401, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, Beirut].

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