



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	THE SUN			
TARIKH	:	23/6/2021	MUKA SURAT	:	9
JABATAN	:	KeTSA/ PERHILITAN			

THE religious push for conversion often brings tragedy on a scale that unmask its true intent - as a weapon to subjugate the enemy. It does not matter if this enemy is completely defenceless.

Last month, the remains of 215 children were dug up at the site of a large residential school in Canada's province of British Columbia. Kamloops Indian Residential School operated between 1890 and 1978, with a mission to assimilate tribal natives into Canada's mainstream society. Amerindian, Inuit, and Metis children were taken from their families and barred from practising their indigenous natural religion.

Kamloops was one of 139 boarding schools established in Canada to achieve the goal of assimilation by converting the primitive folks to the religion of the settlers from Europe. Thousands of school inmates died of malnutrition, neglect and gross abuse.

A survivor who is still alive, Evelyn Camille, told the press early this month: "They came and took us in big cattle trucks. We were physically, mentally, spiritually abused." Right down the American continent all the way to the tip of Argentina, massacre sites abound - testimony to the indigenous resistance towards conversion.

More than one civilisational religion inflicted horrors on non-believers. India, during the 16th and 17th centuries, saw many episodes of forced conversions in which natives were coerced to adopt the religion of invaders from the northwest. Camouflaged as spiritual warfare to destroy the idols of pagans, the hidden motive in every case was a desire for their land and their

Seeing the light through Nature



CONNECTING FAITHS
BY JOACHIMA NG

subjugation to the new political order. Civilisational or doctrinal religions - the ones we know so well - emerged less than 10,000 years ago when tribal populations grew in size from a maximum of 500 individuals per tribe to a million, with the merger of tribes into tribal federations and thence to kingdoms.

An instrument for mass social control to ensure cooperation from all sectors of society became essential. That instrument was civilisational religion based on doctrines.

All civilisational religions serve exactly the same purpose, and all are equally successful in binding the masses of people together.

What about their role in bringing people to God? Early in 2020 when Covid-19 spread rapidly across the globe, the health minister of a large neighbouring country asked clerics to organise mass prayer sessions as the power of prayer would keep the virus at bay. All the same, our neighbour was not spared the pandemic.

Prayers to God do not quite help because God has nothing to do with this affliction. The virus comes from displaced wildlife in a chain of transmissions from animal to animal and finally to a human being.

Logically, the forest people who are close to wildlife should be the first

to be infected. But no, it is the civilised people in a civilised marketplace that form ground zero. This is a point that nobody has reflected on.

We civilised people with our doctrinal religions see ourselves as standing apart from and superior to Nature. It is a bipolar fixation, the perfect setting for viral disaster. In contrast, the forest people see humanity as woven into the fabric of Nature.

Indigenous folks such as the orang asli believe in the interconnectivity of humans and wildlife, as all are sharing the natural environment. They do not engage in commercial exploitation of wildlife.

No doctrines of any civilisational religion can ever be a match for the aboriginal faith, as that is the original faith of humanity - faith that God is within Nature.

If there is any nation that can point us in the right moral direction away from zoonotic viral infections, it is the orang asli and other first nation indigenous people around the world.

Instead of preaching to the orang asli, let us hear their sermons. Aborigine cultures have the spiritual vaccine to protect humanity from destroying itself.

As Robert Roskind tells it in *Wisdom of the Ancients*: "They were a people who valued cooperation rather than competition, mutual respect over domination, equality



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rather than exploitation of women, and a sustainable use of resources.'

The Kamloops tragedy should make us ponder why is it that in Peninsular Malaysia we only speak of three amigos: Malay, Indian, Chinese (MIC trio). The orang asli were here first and they were the sole occupants for a good 40,000 years.

It is high time that we promote the foursome of Asli, Malay, Indian, Chinese (AMIC quartet). Let the Asli guide us back to the God within Nature.

If we lose the aboriginal spirituality, we lose humanity's original faith in God. All we have then is a religiously fervent nation that denies the presence of God in Nature.

Ritual-bound and superficially worshipful, we trap ourselves in a war against Nature without realising that Nature is the hand of God. This is unbelief of the most dreadful kind.

The writer champions interfaith harmony. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com