

# Aliran

Vol. 1 No. 1

October 1980

30 Cents

KDN 0037/80

## THE SPIRITUAL WORLD VIEW

The whole man, the total human being has yet to be born. The great task of religion in the coming age will be the creation of this total human being who is loyal to God because he is loyal to the divine values which lie at the core of his personality. It is a human being who will be triumphant in his liberation because he has freed himself from bondage to capital and machine, state and authority, priesthood and power. He will be free at last because he will pay obeisance to God's values — and nothing else.

### NOT REVIVALISM

How will that human being be born? Not through a return to the dogma of yesterday, not through literal interpretation of the holy scriptures, not through insistence upon rules and regulations, not through obsession with rituals and ceremonies, not through the force of authority, still less through blind, fanatical faith. It is not possible to create the new man through religious revivalism if religious revivalism means unquestioning acceptance of ideas, principles, laws and institutions found in a particular religious tradition. It is not possible to create the new man if we are not prepared to distinguish what is perennial and essential in religion from what is peripheral and superficial. It is not possible to create the new man if we cannot separate the fundamental from the inconsequential, the eternal from the contextual.

Why is religious revivalism incapable of creating the new man, the totally liberated human being? To put it simply, it is because it does not comprehend growth and change in human civilisation. Modern man cannot be convinced of the need for a spiritual world view merely through appeal to sacred authority or unquestioning faith. Modern man belongs to a world which has, in the last few centuries, used reason and science to explain the individual's relationship with himself, his family, his society and nature. The knowledge that has been accumulated in the process in all these spheres is simply stupendous. Man has tried to explore his own personality, to understand his drives, his desires, his motives; he has tried to study and analyse relationships within the family; he has attempted to understand order and conflict, regression and progress in society; he has sought to master the forces of nature. Will such a man accept without a murmur

a religious law which his understanding of sociology and history tell him is clearly contextual? Will such a man accept without reservation the exclusive claim of a particular religion to greatness when reason and knowledge tell him that there are noble ideals in all the traditions known to us?

### SPIRITUAL CRISIS

If religious revivalism is not the answer, why does it appear to have such strength and appeal? Part of the reason has already been suggested in this essay. The alienation of man from God, the secularization of life, the subversion of perennial moral values have created a spiritual crisis of sorts. Religious revivalism is an immediate and easy response to the situation. It is, however, a superficial and dangerously misleading response.

cont. on page 4

## EDITORIAL

We welcome readers to the first issue of our journal. Perhaps some readers have already been following the progress and endeavours of Aliran in the recent years. In any case, to all readers we express our thanks for their interest shown in this journal, our very first issue and wish you happy reading.

Let us reaffirm what Aliran stands for. To start with let us declare clearly that Aliran is a multi-ethnic non-partisan reform movement concerned with raising social awareness and fostering a common sense of nationhood. Aliran is therefore not connected with any political party, trade union, community organization or any other institution and we stay outside the electoral process.

In pursuing our objectives, we publish books and pamphlets, hold seminars and carry out public campaigns. Of course while seeking to educate others, we have to educate ourselves. So we also have an internal education programme aimed at increasing the knowledge and consciousness of our members as well as improving their analytical powers.

### BOOKS

During the 3 years since our formation, we have published 6 books on a wide range of subjects like Democracy, Islam and psychological feudalism. In an effort to reach a wider audience with perhaps lower formal education, we also publish a set of booklets on various national issues.

We do not take sides in expressing our stand on public affairs. We give credit where credit is due. If the Government initiates policies which are in the public interest, we support them. But if the adoption of a certain measure is detrimental to the nation's welfare, we voice our disapproval. And we are sure our readers like all right thinking and loyal Malaysians would not wish it any other way.

So we look forward to your attention, as well as your critical appreciation and we hope to gain your support in the coming months and years.

## SOME ECONOMIC VALUES IN ISLAM

I make no claim whatsoever to be knowledgeable in Islamic economic doctrines, let alone in Islamic studies; therefore, in presenting this paper, I have chosen to put across quotations from the writings of well-known Islamic scholars who are authorities in their own right.

I shall start off with the foundation on which the Islamic world view and its scheme of life are based. This is the concept of Tauhid or the acknowledgement of the Oneness of God and His sovereignty. This acknowledgement is demonstrated in the form of prayer and other acts of ritual. But besides laying the rules of relationship between man and God, Tauhid has far greater significance in that it encompasses the political, economic, social and cultural life of man. Man's approach to social reality is an integral part of this belief. "Establishment of justice in human relations is a demand of this faith. Belief in God's unity and His sovereignty means that all human beings are equal, and that their rights are a natural extension of God's right".

The teachings of Islam go further, addressing the unity of mankind as well. The Quranic phrase 'Ummatan Wahidah' is laid down in Chapter 11. 213 which reads: "In the beginning there were a single people. Then God designated for them prophets as warners and bearers of good news to settle the differences among them". "In the context in which the word 'ummah' is used, with reference to people, it embraces the whole of mankind with the believers acting as a central community. The Qur'an addresses mankind throughout as an indivisible unity. Admittedly, the people are divided into groups and nations but these divisions are no more than marks of recognition. The inherent oneness of man is the core of Quranic thought." "Distinctions of race, colour, caste, wealth and power disappear; man's relation with man assumes total equality by virtue of the common Creator." Of course sovereignty of God which is supreme and immutable is different from the sovereignty of mankind which is prone to exploitation or suppression.

Hence as far as the economic and social

aspects are concerned, Tauhid implies that our cultural goal should be a society where there are no class antagonisms and differences, and where there are no disparities between rich and poor; this is because any dichotomies in society would be a denial of the Oneness of God. The Prophet exercised this justice during his time: "There was no distinction even between those who were his followers and those who were against him".

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

If one examines the spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the practice of the Prophet) it is clear that the society that is envisaged is one where there is maximum economic and social justice. The Prophet is supposed to have said: "the society that I aspire for is one where there will neither be exploitation nor poverty."

As regards poverty, the Prophet said: "Poverty can take a man to the boundary of disbelief." The satisfaction of the elementary wants of man is therefore essential for without it he is unable to keep even his moral standards. Islam cannot approve a society which does not provide for

cont. on page 2

# ALIRAN DAN LATAR BELAKANGNYA

Persatuan Aliran Kesedaran Negara atau ALIRAN adalah satu pergerakan reformasi berbagai kaum yang pertama kali muncul di negara kita ini. Telah ada sebelum ini lain-lain pergerakan reformasi yang terhad kepada kaum-kaum atau hal-hal yang tertentu. Sebaliknya, pergerakan kami ini bukan saja mendapat kekuatannya dari berbagai kumpulan agama dan linguistik tetapi juga terlibat dalam reformasi masyarakat Malaysia secara menyeluruh. Ianya adalah satu usaha yang akan menjangkau beberapa dasawarsa.

ALIRAN adalah satu pergerakan tersendiri yang tidak ada hubungan dengan mana-mana parti politik, kesatuan sekerja, persatuan pengguna, organisasi masyarakat atau lain-lain institusi. Sifatnya yang bebas ini amat penting untuk peranannya dan untuk mendatangkan kesan. Inilah sebabnya ALIRAN bersifat bebas dan tersendiri.

ALIRAN akan menggunakan semua peluang yang ada di sisi Perlembagaan dalam usaha untuk menyampaikan pandangannya kepada negara. Kami percaya bahawa pendekatan yang seperti ini akan menguatkan proses demokrasi itu sendiri sebab ianya akan menghasilkan masyarakat yang lebih aktif, sedar serta lebih gigih melibatkan diri dalam soal-soal umum. Selain dari mencetak buku-buku dan risalah-risalah sebagai kegiatannya yang utama, di samping mengadakan syarahan, forum dan seminar, ALIRAN juga akan mengadakan kajian terhadap berbagai masalah sosial dan mengadakan kempen-kempen dari masa ke semasa terhadap beberapa hal yang tertentu. Di tahun-tahun yang akan datang ini akan wujud tindakan-tindakan demokrasi corak baru apabila pergerakan reformasi ini menemui cabaran-cabaran baru dalam suasana yang pada halnya sentiasa berubah.

ALIRAN terbuka kepada semua rakyat Malaysia yang menerima perlembagaannya dan bersetuju dengan Dasar-Dasar Asasnya. Ahli-ahli yang sedia ada sekarang ini datangnya dari berbagai lapangan pekerjaan. Pada pendapat kami, ini adalah kekuatan kami. Apa yang menyatukan ahli-ahli ialah kesedaran yang sama, idealisme yang sama satu dedikasi kepada reformasi masyarakat kita. Walau bagaimanapun, keahlian tidak berapa penting. Satu pergerakan reformasi tidak seharusnya menitik-beratkan sangat tentang bilangan ahli. Apa yang penting adalah penyebaran fahaman-fahaman.

## MENGAPA ALIRAN?

Sesungguhnya, inilah sebabnya penubuhan ALIRAN. Setengah daripada kita berpendapat bahawa pentingnya diwujudkan satu organisasi yang boleh menanamkan kesedaran di kalangan rakyat tentang hal-hal yang dihadapi oleh negara kita ini. Hak-hak dan kebebasan awam, konsep tanggungjawab sosial, peranan hak menentang dalam sebuah negara Dunia Ketiga seperti kita ini, kedudukan akhbar, koperasi dalam pembangunan ekonomi, perhubungan di antara kegiatan swasta dalam kebaikan sosial, corak industrialisasi di Malaysia, kebaikan-kebaikan ekonomi berdasarkan pertanian, peranan pelaburan asing, kesan-kesan rasuah, akibah-akibah ketamakan dalam kehidupan sosial, nilai-nilai di dalam sistem pendidikan, persoalan Bahasa Kebangsaan dan kebudayaan nasional, masalah identiti nasional, kedudukan Islam dalam masyarakat berbilang kaum, keadaan hubungan kaum dalam negara, kebaikan kepimpinan yang unggul dan

sesungguhnya kesemua persoalan yang ditujukan kepada pembangunan kebendaan dan kerohanian kita sebagai sebuah negara — tidak satu pun hal ini yang pernah diperbincangkan, diperbahaskan, dianalisa dan dinilai secara mendalam dan teliti.

Inilah yang merupakan usaha pertama ALIRAN — untuk membolehkan rakyat berfikir. Daripada pemikiran akan timbul kesedaran. Kesedaran adalah asas untuk tindakan yang baik dan menasabah. Ia sememangnya merupakan asas untuk tindakan-tindakan baik dan peristiwa-peristiwa yang telah merubah dunia. Oleh itu, pentinglah ditimbulkan kesedaran melalui pemikiran di dalam masyarakat kita.

## KESEDARAN

Sepanjang sejarah, usaha untuk menyedarkan rakyat telah menjadi tanggungjawab tokoh-tokoh reformasi dan pergerakan reformasi. Pendekatan inilah ciri utama setiap pergerakan reformasi. Ianya berusaha untuk menyedarkan kita akan apa yang harus direformasikan. Parti politik, kesatuan sekerja dan persatuan pengguna di samping organisasi lain juga memainkan peranan ini. Walau bagaimanapun, memanglah benar bahawa bukanlah tujuan utama mereka untuk mendidik masyarakat, membangunkan jiwa dan pemikirannya. Sebuah parti politik, misalnya, mementingkan usaha merebut kuasa seperti mana kesatuan sekerja yang hanya melibatkan diri dalam hal gaji dan keadaan pekerjaan. Persatuan pengguna juga bercorak demikian di mana ianya hanya berusaha untuk menjaga kepentingan pengguna. Hanya satu pergerakan reformasi yang berusaha ke arah reformasi sosial saja yang benar-benar dapat menimbulkan kesedaran baru di kalangan rakyat.

Di dalam peringkat sejarah kita sekarang ini, usaha untuk mewujudkan satu kesedaran baru dan mendidik masyarakat adalah lebih perlu daripada hanya penglibatan dalam persaingan memenangi undi. Walaupun pilihan raya boleh mendatangkan perubahan di dalam kepimpinan, ini bukanlah jaminan yang ianya akan membawa kepada munculnya pemerintahan yang bijak dan jujur untuk memenuhi aspirasi-aspirasi rakyat. Biasanya, penggantian satu kumpulan pemegang kuasa oleh yang lain di banyak negara Dunia Ketiga, samada melalui penggulingan seperti mana yang selalu berlaku atau melalui proses peng-

cont. on page 3

## SOME ECONOMIC VALUES IN ISLAM

From Page One

even the basic needs of its members. In other words, there should be a fair and equitable distribution of wealth among its ummah. The Qur'an says: "Let not wealth circulate only among the rich." (59:7) The wealthy are responsible for the poor, as laid down in the Qur'an: "And in their wealth there is the right (due share) of the poor and the needy." (51:19) This teaching is tied to the basic principle governing property or acquisition of wealth in that the real owner of everything is God and that man is no more than a mere trustee of this wealth; as such he is commanded to manage all that he has in accordance with God's directions.

## ZAKAT

Another practice in Islam that is directed towards economic and social justice is the idea of giving zakat which constitutes the third pillar of the Islamic faith. It is calculated at the rate of 1/40 of one's wealth annually. Zakat is obligatory; it represents the community's tithe on a citizen's wealth. "It is meant to feed the hungry, wipe the tears of the needy and remove the pain of the deprived". Besides zakat, there is also the practice of giving sadaqat (alms above and beyond zakat) to the less fortunate, as an expression of a greater sense of gratitude to God for the wealth bestowed. While it is an honour to live from the fruits of one's own labour, the poor are not degraded for having to receive alms. The Prophet said: "the one who gives out wealth is no better than the one who takes out of need." He also said: "Sadaqat goes into the hands of Allah before it passes into the hands of the poor." "Moreover... sadaqat is more beneficial to the giver, for the giver is rewarded in this world and the Hereafter, but all the poor gets is that which satisfies his hunger."

Furthermore, Islam enjoins that property should be acquired through means which are legitimate and beyond suspicion.

Exploitation is explicitly forbidden. The Prophet is alleged to have said that exploitation is far worse than slander; and slander, in Islam, is twelve times worse than adultery. A form of exploitation that is deplored is the practice of earning interest or riba. The Qur'an prohibits interest in all its forms. A verse in the Qur'an reads "But those who extract riba turn rabid as if touched by Satan. They delude themselves when they claim that after all trading is a form of riba. But God has forbidden riba and permitted 'bay'." (2:275) "O believers, fear God and write off outstanding riba if you truly believe, but if you do not then you must know that you are in open hostility to God and His Prophet." (2:279) (The relevant word in the Qur'an is riba which means 'increment' and covers both interest and usury. Riba is distinguished from the word 'bay' meaning income earned through normal trading operations, which is perfectly legitimate while riba in all its forms is completely forbidden.) Maududi, a well-known Muslim scholar, comments that "such strong language has not been used in the Qur'an in respect of any other violation." Finally the Qur'an (3:161) says: "Then shall every soul be paid back fully what it has earned, and they will not be wronged."

## LABOUR

Next is the question of labour. Islam values the dignity of labour. The Prophet is reputed to have said: "I am the friend of the worker". Prophet Muhammad often advised his companions to pay handsome and generous wages to labourers; he himself never gave low wages to anyone. Among other sayings of the Prophet regarding labour, are:

"God will be the enemy of three persons on the Day of Judgement... and the third person of these is the one who employs a labourer and gets full work from him but does not

pay him his wages."

"Give a share to the labourer from his work."

"Whenever possible get your servant to sit with you at dinner table."

"Give food and clothing to the servants according to the prevalent custom and impose such burden or work on them that they can bear."

The last of the above sayings suggests that the wage of labour should be high enough to cover the basic needs according to the standard of living of the times; and this could be regarded as the minimum level below which wages should not fall. Sayiddina Ali's definition of labour in relation to exploitation has a lot of meaning for modern society. He has said, for instance, that no one else had a right to the fruits obtained by one's own labour. Afzal-ur-Rahman in his book "Economic Doctrines of Islam" notes: "Islam offers a very amiable solution to the problem of wages and safeguards the interest both of the working class and the employers. The labourer gets a reasonable wage without infringing the legitimate rights of the employer. The employer is not allowed to tyrannise the working class by depriving them of their rightful share, while the latter are not given over the entire National Dividend so as to deprive the former of his rightful claim." The Islamic conception of labour, one observes, cannot be compared to the Marxist notion because Islam recognises that individuals should be rewarded on the basis of their differing capacities. Nonetheless, it is equalization of opportunities for everyone that Islam seeks. This is because every human being is a representative of God.

The sum total of the sort of economic system that will emerge through the observance of Islamic values would be one where the vast majority of people will lead a moderate life

cont. on page 3

without being attached to luxury and affluence. Two hadiths of Prophet Muhammad read:

"That Islam is very easy and simple and whoever creates difficulties in it, will be over-powered by them. Adopt the middle course and remain close to moderation and be happy."

"On the one hand excess of wealth may endanger the faith and morality of the Muslims; and on the other, poverty may drag them towards disbelief."

And the Qur'an says: "O ye who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which God hath made lawful for you, and commit no excess; for God loveth not those given to excess." (5:59)

The society which emerges through the observance of Islamic values will also be a society where justice is achieved through co-operation and not coercion. "Islam regards social and individual welfare as complementary rather than competitive and antagonistic. It, therefore, encourages co-operation instead of competition and rivalry; and develops intimate relationship between individuals. In an Islamic system, the good of the individual is considered to be the good of society and vice versa; if society prospers, the individual is better off, and if the individual prospers, society also prospers." This is why the idea of co-operatives is so important in Islamic economic philosophy. Mohd. Hatta, the Indonesian Muslim thinker, has even argued that the whole idea of society should be based on the principles of co-operation.

If one compares what has been said about Islamic economic values, it is obvious that they bear many similarities to values upheld in other religious traditions. For example, the concept of moderation is expressed in the Qur'an as the quest for the middle way: "Thus have we made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses on behalf of mankind, even if the messenger is the witness on your behalf." (2:143) The same idea is expressed in the con-

cept of the Middle Path in Buddhism. Similarly, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity also value the dignity of labour.

Hence in order to develop Islamic thinking on economic values so that they can be appreciated by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, there should not be a dogmatic, fanatical attitude. As Altaf Gauhar has noted: "all that the Qur'an and Sunnah lay out are general principles and values; it is up to us to work out an economic system." Let us not argue that there already is a well worked-out economic system in the Qur'an. There are only basic values and these values should inspire us to seek new ideas and new principles from other sources of knowledge including western thought. To deny that is to deny the role of reason which all religions cherish. Accepting reason guided by moral values is to show loyalty to God and to the concept of Tauhid.

[Paper presented at Aliran's Seminar on "Belief in God in a multi-religious society" held on 22-23 March, 1980.]

LIST OF ALIRAN PUBLICATIONS/ORDER FORM\*

1. BASIC BELIEFS contains an account of Aliran's philosophy neatly summarized in ten points.  
21 pages ..... \$0.70
2. DASAR-DASAR ASAS is the translation of Basic Beliefs into Bahasa Malaysia.  
20 pages ..... \$0.70
3. WHITHER DEMOCRACY? (An Analysis of the Malaysian Experience) is a collection of speeches and panel discussions on the challenge confronting democracy in Malaysia, by trade unionists, politicians, lawyers, academics, journalists and leaders of interest groups.  
88 pages ..... \$3.00
4. THE REAL ISSUES: THE MERDEKA UNIVERSITY presents Aliran's standpoint on the Merdeka University controversy and recruitment into local universities.  
106 pages ..... \$2.50
5. THE UNIVERSALISM OF ISLAM attempts to show the universal character of Islam which demolishes the myth that Islam is identified with only one race and one culture. Contains writings of Jalal al-Din Rumi, Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, Abul Kalam Azad and Ameer Ali.  
63 pages ..... \$2.20
6. ISLAM YANG TULEN discusses various concepts in Islam — the concept of law, position of women, science and knowledge and multi-racial society in Islam, based on the writings of well-known Islamic thinkers.  
78 pages ..... \$2.50
7. PROTECTOR? by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar. This book on Malay society, its concept and practice of unquestioning loyalty represents an unprecedented analysis of the development and perpetuation of the feudal sentiment from the Malacca Sultanate period to contemporary times.  
154 pages ..... \$4.20
8. ONE GOD, MANY PATHS contains the proceedings of Aliran's seminar on belief in God in a multi-religious society held in March 1980. Mainly essays on the social relevance of religion in Malaysia from Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and scientific viewpoints.  
145 pages ..... \$4.20
9. ALIRAN quarterly contains news, views and articles on current affairs and public issues.  
about 6 pages ..... 40¢ each

Tick	No.
<input type="checkbox"/>	

\* Those who wish to order any of the books listed above, please tick and write the number of copies required in the boxes provided. Cut out the form and send to Aliran, P.O. Box 1049, Pulau Pinang, with your address and name written at the back of the form. Prices stated do not include postal charges. US\$ prices are charged to overseas buyers only. Only money orders are accepted.

# ALIRAN DAN LATAR BELAKANGNYA

From Page Two

undian bererti berterusannya satu keadaan penindasan dan keruntuhan. Ini adalah kerana faktor-faktor serta kuasa-kuasa di dalam struktur ekonomi dan politik yang bertanggungjawab menghalang kemajuan rakyat dibiarkan begitu walaupun ada perubahan dalam pucuk pimpinan. Penguasaan golongan yang mengeksploitasi dan menindas tidak akan hilang dengan terjatuhnya pemerintahan yang tidak baik melainkan kalau penggantian berazam untuk melenyapkan pengaruhnya. Malang sekali, selalunya kepimpinan politik baru itu sendiri — walaupun ia berazam pada mulanya ke arah reformasi — akhirnya mengamalkan keburukan yang ia sendiri mengkeji semasa kepimpinan yang sebelumnya.

## JALAN

Dalam keadaan seperti ini hanya ada dua jalan keluar kepada masyarakat yang ingin mencapai perubahan melalui cara demokrasi. Satunya dengan mengharap akan munculnya pemerintahan yang sanggup memusnahkan halangan-halangan ke arah reformasi sambil mengekalkan kemuliaannya atau dengan berusaha ke arah satu kesedaran sosial yang baru untuk menghentikan penyelewengan oleh pemimpin-pemimpin dan dalam jangka masa panjang mewujudkan keadaan di mana mereka yang baik dan berkebolehan memegang kuasa. Cara yang pertama tidak boleh kita rancang dan sekiranya ia berlaku ini adalah secara tidak sengaja. Hanya tinggal cara yang kedua saja sebagai pilihan yang menasabah.

Selain dari hujjah di atas yang benar bagi setengah negara-negara Dunia Ketiga, mendidik masyarakat ada pentingnya kepada Malaysia dan mungkin beberapa negara berbilang kaum yang lain. Memang telah diterima bahawa pertimbangan perkauman mempunyai peranan penting

di dalam pemikiran nasional masyarakat-masyarakat ini. Tetapi, apabila setiap hal nasional ditinjau dari segi perkauman, bila setiap institusi nasional mencerminkan kepentingan satu kaum atau yang lain, bila kedudukan dan kemasyhuran kebanyakan tokoh awam bergantung pada unsur-unsur perkauman, maka ketaralah hakikat bahawa perkauman telah menjadi faktor utama dalam semua lapangan hidup yang penting. Di dalam satu masyarakat di mana pertimbangan perkauman terlalu meluas dan berkuasa maka sudah tentu akan wujud polarisasi kaum yang kuat. Parti-parti politik dan kumpulan-kumpulan yang benar-benar ingin mewujudkan perpaduan tidak mungkin dapat merapatkan jurang di antara kaum terutamanya jika keutamaan terhadap perkauman berlanjutan untuk menolong setengah kumpulan memegang kuasa. Sesungguhnya, untuk hidup dalam keadaan seperti ini parti-parti politik sendiri terpaksa menggunakan soal-soal perkauman untuk mendapat sokongan pengundi-pengundi. Lama kelamaan mereka ini juga dapat kita anggap sebagai faktor yang melanjutkan politik perkauman. Sebab inilah parti-parti politik yang bergerak di dalam arena politik di mana harapan pengundi berdasarkan perkauman tidak akan berjaya merubah keadaan — melainkan jika mereka yang bertanggungjawab atas politik perkauman itu sanggup bertindak terlebih dahulu.

## NILAI-NILAI SAMA

Jika ini tidak berlaku, satu jalan keluar ialah supaya satu kumpulan di luar proses pengundian yang berjuang untuk perpaduan kaum memulakan dan mengukuhkan hubungan kaum atas dasar nilai-nilai dan matlamat-matlamat yang sama dan melalui proses ini berusaha untuk mencairkan perasaan kenegaraan yang sama. Jelas sekali tugas ini lebih mudah dilaksanakan oleh satu pergerakan reformasi kerana ianya tidak terlibat

dalam usaha memenuhi kehendak-kehendak perkauman demi untuk mengekalkan kemasyhuran politiknya.

## IDEALISME

Oleh itu, satu pergerakan reformasi mempunyai peranannya di dalam konteks yang wujud sekarang. Peranan ini memerlukan kesabaran dan kegigihan kerana di dalam keadaan di mana kuasa serta kedudukan dan kekayaan merupakan tarikan kepada individu-individu satu pergerakan yang tidak dapat menawarkan apa-apa kepada ahlinya melainkan idealismenya sudah tentu akan menemui beberapa kesukaran. Sekurang-kurangnya kesatuan-kesatuan sekerja, badan-badan koperatif dan persatuan-persatuan pengguna mempunyai harapan untuk mencapai kejayaan konkrit melalui kegiatan-kegiatan mereka. Satu pergerakan yang berdedikasi untuk mewujudkan kesedaran sosial, sebaliknya, harus berusaha ke arah masa depan yang mana mereka yang hidup sekarang tidak dapat melihatnya. Walaupun demikian, dalam setiap masyarakat, khususnya di mana tidak ada minat terhadap kemanusiaan yang melampui sikap perkauman yang sempit dan di mana tidak ada sebarang kesanggupan untuk mengorbankan kepentingan diri sendiri demi kebenaran dan keadilan, perlu adanya satu golongan yang berpegang teguh kepada keunggulan ideal mereka. Idealisme yang seperti inilah akhirnya akan menggerakkan orang ramai ke arah matlamat-matlamat mulia.

Dalam usaha mengadakan satu masyarakat yang lebih baik, ALIRAN akan dipandu oleh beberapa dasar asas dan adicitanya. Konsepnya terhadap reformasi masyarakat Malaysia tentunya akan berasaskan dasar-dasar ini. Program reformasi ALIRAN dalam berbagai bidang kehidupan nasional akan dibincang di dalam penerbitan-penerbitan dan forum-foramnya di tahun-tahun yang akan datang.

## THE SPIRITUAL WORLD VIEW

From Page One

As proof, one has merely to observe how religious revivalists seldom attempt to analyse the social ills of our age in depth or to prescribe solutions that require wholistic transformation of social structures. The restoration of faith, the strengthening of one's moral values are the fond remedies of the revivalists.

The spiritual crisis aside, various historical and sociological factors including Western economic and cultural dominance, the stultification of indigenous cultures, urbanisation, ethnic sentiments, the fragmentation of the middle-class and the sheer competition for political power have also contributed towards religious revivalism in Malaysia and other countries.

### DESPERATE

However, we should not assume that this revivalism, which as I have explained is incongruent with our age and era, represents the wave of the future. On the contrary it is the last, desperate effort of the conservative forces which have dominated all religions for the last few centuries to maintain their grip upon the human soul. After all as Ibn Khaldun observed, in his illustrious analysis of the growth and decline of civilisations, a group that is about to collapse will nonetheless put up a show of greatness in its last stage like the light from a candle that shoots up just before it is extinguished.

Obviously then the future of religion does not lie in mere revivalism. Religion must absorb and adapt in a creative manner all that is vital in the civilisation that modern science has created. This is the only way in which our spiritual world-view can be transformed into actual programmes for social reconstruction. The beautiful values and ideals embodied in our spiritual world-view will have no meaning if they cannot be utilised to change social structures and the existing patterns of education.

### BORROWING

Of course, creative absorption must be distinguished from wholesale borrowing. There are elements in modern civilization which are antithetical to our spiritual world-view. For example, alienation from God has created a sense of loneliness, a feeling of purposelessness, and a paralysing fear of death. Some of the work that is being done in medical science has in fact arisen from this basic alienation. There is no reason for us to channel scientific energy in that direction. Similarly technological innovations geared towards stimulating consumer desires which have actually develop-

ed from greed and self-interest or the manufacture of sophisticated weapons brought about partly by a conflict-oriented psychology are irrelevant to a spiritual world-view that believes in altruism, co-operation and peace.

### SCIENCE

Having said that, it must be remembered that there is a great deal in modern civilisation that will serve to enhance our spiritual world-view. Human compassion in the past was often confined to a man's immediate community. Modern communications have enabled us to transcend every conceivable boundary in the expression of our love and sympathy for suffering human beings. Consequently, the moral character of man has attained a higher level at least in this respect. Likewise it is because of the scientific spirit and the growth of the social sciences that we are in a position to understand the causes and consequences of exploitation, greed, corruption and suppression. Religion voices its aversion to these vices. But it is science which has analysed them in depth and detail. Similarly, religion advises us to maintain a detached attitude towards power, position and wealth. Again, it is science which has shown us how power is sought, why it reinforces itself and what concentration of power can lead to. By the same token, it is science that has indicated to us how wealth is accumulated, how wealth is used to pursue certain interests and how differing patterns of ownership of wealth have resulted in social disparities. Equally important, it is through scientific enquiry that we have begun to realise how imperative the unity of mankind is. A world that has been brought closer together as never before through technological progress is now confronted with the choice of forging the bonds of brotherhood or perishing together. At last the oneness of man, that clarion call of every religion, now appears on the distant horizon as a goal that we must accomplish. Most of all, however, it is this scientific era in human history that has brought to the fore the need to accord the fullest attention to the human being, the common man, often described as the masses. For the first time since civilisation began, the majority, not the minority, the masses, not the elites, have become the primary concern of human endeavour. The 20th century has been rightly called the century of the masses and the various branches of the sciences have been instrumental in creating this new outlook. For our spiritual world-view which regards the human being — every human being — as the representative of God with sacred rights and responsibilities can there be a greater victory than this? There is no doubt at all that the spiritual world-view owes an immense debt to the scientific spirit.

### INTERACTION

This interaction between science and religion will have a profound impact upon the future of man. As the sciences explore social reality and social phenomena, they will discover how crucial certain, perennial, immutable values are the beacons of conscience in man's

voyage of discovery. It will dawn on them that just as the physical universe operates on the basis of certain regularities, so does social behaviour require a spiritual world-view which is not subjected to the vagaries of time. At the same time religion through its contact with science will undoubtedly undergo a tremendous metamorphosis. Blind faith will give way to reasoned understanding; religious authority will give way to religious experience; literal interpretations of the scripture will give way to a deeper understanding of the spiritual essence of revelations; the obsession with religious differences will give way to a concern for underlying commonalities; the arrogant desire to establish the greatness of one's tradition will give way to a humble search for the goodness that is part of every tradition. In that situation, the mosque, the temple, the church and every other house of worship will be seen as symbols of man's eternal quest for communion with that Divine Reality which is beyond human description. The houses of worship will not be seen as impenetrable barriers to inter-religious understanding. Unity in essence will be more important than diversity in form. When that happens we will understand what Tagore meant when he proclaimed, "The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temple of the tribe". We will then realise the truth of Rumi's great discovery: "I searched for God among the Christians and on the cross but therein found him not. I went into the ancient temples of idolatry; no trace of him was there. I entered the mountain cave of Hira (where the archangel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet) and then went as far as Gandhar but God found I not, neither in low nor in high places. With set purpose I fared to the summit of Mount Caucasus and found there only anqa's habitation. There I directed my search to the Ka'bah, the resort of old and young; God was not there either. Turning to philosophy, I inquired about Him from Ibn Sina but found Him not within his range. I fared then to the scene of the prophet's experience of a great divine manifestation only a 'two-bow lengths distance from him' but God was not there, even in that exalted court. Finally I looked into my own heart and there I saw Him: He was nowhere else".

### NEW VISION

Saudara-saudari, we should not fear this new vision of religion — a vision which every prophet and mystic has proclaimed through the ages, a vision which man has never ceased to betray. I am convinced that the creative absorption of the scientific spirit into our spiritual world-view will take us along the path they visualized. And that path, that journey will be man's noblest quest yet — the quest to fulfil his tryst with God. Come, saudara-saudari, let us join hands — whatever our religions — and stride forward in joy to greet that glorious dawn.

Dr. Chandra Muzaffar

(Excerpt from the keynote address given at the Aliran Seminar on Belief in God in a multi-religious society held on 22-23 March 1980)

# AIMS AND PURPOSES OF ALIRAN

ALIRAN is the first non-partisan, multi-ethnic reform movement to have emerged in our country. There have been reform movements in the past confined to particular communities or to particular issues. Our movement, on the other hand, not only draws its strength from various religious and linguistic groups but is also concerned with the total reform of Malaysian society as an endeavour which will span a few decades.

ALIRAN's reforms will be directed towards the creation of a society where the spiritual and material development of Man and his community would be based upon certain fundamental moral values acceptable to the Malaysian nation as a whole. These values, highly cherished in Islam are in fact universal ideals which would be in complete harmony with the interests and aspirations of the non-Muslim communities. Freedom and equality, unity and solidarity within diversity, love for honesty and integrity, respect for industry and excellence and most of all a commitment to truth and justice — these would be among the supreme values of ALIRAN's ideal society. In such a society, the political system, the economic order, social institutions, cultural patterns and ethnic relations will reflect those moral values which are at the core of the nation. Our commitment to them will be all the more precious because it emerges from an abiding belief in God as the Source of these values.

To achieve this goal the first and perhaps most important task of our movement will be to get our rakyat to think and to reflect on the major challenges confronting our nation. Sound analysis and proper understanding of Malaysian problems is only possible if there has been serious thinking and reflection. Out of this reflection, it is conceivable that a new consciousness of the type of reforms we need in various spheres of national life will emerge. ALIRAN will seek to nurture and nourish this consciousness so that our people will realize what social justice means in reality, why civil rights and liberties are so vitally important, what the sane, sensible approaches to national unity are, and how honest, able leadership can inspire the masses to harness their energies in the quest for excellence.

### COMMON VALUES

More than cultivating social consciousness, ALIRAN will also attempt to disseminate values and principles common to all our communities in its desire to build a strong, solid foundation for national unity and solidarity. This emphasis upon common social and cultural values will be buttressed by a comprehensive examination of both historical realities and the contemporary situation, especially those policies which have a profound impact upon inter-ethnic relations. It is a fact that an understanding of the relationship between communities based upon these premises has yet to manifest itself in our country.

Finally, as a reform movement, ALIRAN must be concerned not only with the long-term task of educating society but also with its immediate position in an environment fraught with urgent issues. It must therefore articulate public grievances — from wages and incomes and housing problems to efficiency in our public services and corruption — on behalf of the common man. Our reform movement will thus become yet another channel for the representation of our peoples' woes and worries.

In espousing the interests of the rakyat, ALIRAN, it must be emphasised, will utilise all the constitutional avenues of action available. It will be guided by the aspirations of the Rukunegara. We believe that such an approach will help strengthen the democratic process itself since it will result in a more active, alert and participatory public. Apart from publishing books and pamphlets which will be its main activity and organising talks, forums and seminars, ALIRAN will also conduct research into various social problems and plan public campaigns from time to time on particular issues. In the years to come new modes of democratic action will be developed as the reform movement itself discovers new challenges in what is, after all, a constantly changing situation.

It is our hope that our people will help ALIRAN achieve its ideals — ideals which are fundamental in Man's eternal quest for justice and freedom.