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The Influence of Western Secular Ideas of Liberalism on Some Malay Muslim Intellectual Elites in Malaysia

Nurul Aminah Mat Zain*

Che' Razi Jusoh**

Abstract

This paper discusses the Western ideas focusing on liberalism that influenced some Malay Muslims intellectual elites in Malaysia. This is only a conceptual paper to highlight the rise of liberalism among the Muslim intellectuals nowadays in Malaysia thus attracted the youngsters to follow them. This study is also introducing certain prominent liberalist in Malaysia to scrutinize their ideas and standpoint towards Islam because they called themselves as Muslim-liberal. The main objective of this paper is to examine some influencing factors of Western ideology upon the mind of Muslim intellectual elites that drive their actions for everyday life. The finding reveals that those intellectuals have been de-westernized their thought because of their Western educational background but still believing in Islam as their religion. As a result, their Islamic practice is merely on the mold of Western thought unlike the majority of Muslims.

Keywords: Malay, intellectual, elites, liberalism, de-westernization

Introduction

Every human being is given body and soul which called as dual nature. Body refers to the physical appearance (*al-jasad*) whereas soul is spirit. Then a man has been taught about the names (*al-asmā'*) of everything and the names we infer it as knowledge (*al-ilm*). This knowledge does not encompass knowledge of the specific nature of the essence (*al-dhāt*) or the inmost ground (*al-sirr*) of a thing (*syai'*) for instance the spirit (*al-ruh*) refers to knowledge of accident and attributes pertaining to the essences of things sensible and intelligible (*mahṣuṣat and ma'qulat*). All of these are to make the man known the relations and distinctions

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existing between them. It is also to clarify their natures within these domains in order to discern and to understand their meanings, that is, causes, uses and specific individual purpose.¹ However, the knowledge is limited in human and they are forgetfulness (*nisyān*) by making a lot of mistake even though God has given them minds (*‘Aql*) and soul.

Islam does not prohibit human to seek for knowledge or study abroad. Prophet Muhammad SAW encourages Muslims to study and seek for knowledge (*ṭalab al-‘ilm*) in any field. Rasulullah SAW said in the hadith narrated by Ibn Majah:

*"Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swines."*²

The idea of liberalism is widely spread all over the world now days including in Malaysia. The term liberal became common and certain countries like Indonesia has practiced liberalism and they call as Islam Liberal for Muslims. In Malaysia there are some Malay Muslim scholars who practiced liberalism including in the matters of religion. The terms of Islam liberal became popular in Malaysia recently. There are various reactions toward to idea of liberalism among Malaysian Muslim. Certain of them are totally rejected the idea due to their religion. However, for certain Muslim they totally accept liberalism and practiced it as part of their life. Generally, the liberal ideas came from those scholars who studies abroad especially in the west.

There are many critics about liberalism idea especially related to religious matters especially Islam. It is clear that Islam have certain rules and laws for human life. Muslims must react according to what has been stated in Islamic rules. It means that liberalism idea is incompatible with Islam. According to Muhammad Rashidi Wahab a lecturer at the Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin liberalism is rejected because they wants to eliminate religious institutions in Malaysia such as JAKIM and other Islamic religious institutions in Malaysia.³ Due to this reason some of the Malay Muslims scholars now days are influenced by the idea of liberalism and they are the intellectual elites.

¹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Nature of Man and The Psychology of The Human Soul – Prolegomena To The Metaphysics of Islam*, (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur, 1995), p. 143.

² Sunan Ibn Majah, English reference: Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 224.

³ Melati A. Jalil, Liberal Try to Dismantle Islamic Bodies, 17th January 2017, accessed 6th May 2017, www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/liberals-trying-to-dismantle-islamic-bodies-lecturer-says-antiilluminati

This paper will discover the Malay Muslims scholars who are influenced by the western ideas of liberalism. The participants of this paper are focusing on three Malay scholars only. They are, Kassim Ahmad, Zainah Anwar (The leader of Sisters in Islam), and Datuk Noor Faridah Ariffin (leader of G25). This paper will study on how western ideas is influenced these scholars.

The Definitions and History of Malay Muslims Intellectual Elites

Before deeply discuss about the western ideas and it influence on scholars it is great to know the definitions of those words. The term intellectual elites can be defined as those scholars who are graduated overseas and bringing back the idea into their country. According to yahoo answers certain people defined the intellectual elites as those who have had more schooling and more knowledge into sciences and philosophy than the average citizen. It's perfectly possible to be intellectual and poor (like several of the world's greatest thinkers were monks) or to be rich and not-intellectual. The author of this paper is agreed with this definition which is quite understandable to others.

The words "Intellectual" in English language according to Oxford English Dictionary is derived from noun since 17th century referred to a person possessing, or supposed to possesses, superior powers of "intellect".¹ However, the term became ambivalent and political edge during the trial in 1898 in France due to the case of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. After that time the words has been variously described mainly in sociological aspect. The other meanings are like literate and educated (sometimes referred to religious), elites as creators of high culture, philosophers, scientific innovators and "men of ideas". In Cambridge Dictionary Online the word "intellectual" refers to the ability to think and understand things, especially complicated ideas. Historically, in the early 1920 to 30s Malaya or Malaysian Intellectual Elites came from various races Chinese, *Peranakan*, Indian or Malay. They are very active in the intellectual pursuits especially in the field education such as writing and publishing. After that, there was increasing of awareness of a collective identity as an elite group with particular social responsibilities as indicated in 1930s where Malay teachers has been known as "kaum terpelajar" (educated or elite). However, during that time the term of intellectual or "*intellektual*" (in Malay) as they called "*kaum terpelajar*" does not yet appear until after the World War II. The intellectual elites in Malay world at that time

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. The Oxford English Dictionary: Being A Corrected Re-Issue with and Introduction, Supplement, and Bibliography of A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, (Oxford: At Clarendon Press. 1933).

came diverse educational and linguistic background including Dutch Educated in the NEI, those who are graduated from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, from religious school like “*pondok*” or “*Madrasah*” and in Makkah. Previously, most of the Malay intellectuals are dominated by men only. Very rarely have the participation from women as part of the discourse concerning intellectual. Female leaders at that time only represent women only rather than general causes and intellectual discourse. After several years, there are a lot of women leaders arises in Malaysia. The prominent Malay intellectual leaders in Malaysia now days are like Zainah Anwar, Azah Aziz, Aishah Ghani, Noor Faridah Ariffin and many more.¹

Most of the Malay Muslims intellectual elite scholars or leaders in Malaysia have an educational background from overseas and mostly from Western countries. They brought the ideas when they are graduated and return to Malaysia later on by publishing the books, talks or as social media influencers. That is the medium the western secular idea of liberalism came to Malaysia. The author will further discuss on the background of the three Malay Muslim intellectual scholars at another part of this paper.

Secular Idea of Liberalism? Generally, How Western Ideas Came to the Muslims World?

Discussing about the idea or doctrine that has been brought to Malaysia by certain Malay Muslim Intellectual Elite scholars is always emphasizing on liberalism, secularism, post modernity, secular humanism, Gender Equality, Feminism and so on which called as western ideas. This paper will discuss the idea of liberalism and it practices among Malay Muslim scholars by focusing on three scholars in Malaysia.

There are several meaning of liberalism has been introduced. Liberalism shares with progressivism a belief that government can actively correct social problems. According to David Sirota, liberalism focuses more generally on using government money to solve social problems. For example, liberals would create a program that provides government money to college students as college tuition prices rise, and this kind of programs will include federally subsidized student loans and federal grants. Liberalism tends to work in tandem with a free-market society, rather than regulate the existing society to create change.² Based on this definition of the term liberalism is good where it open the opportunity to create change in the newly world order. This idea has been influenced by some of the Malay Muslims scholars in Malaysia.

¹ Deborah Johnson, *The Malaysian Intellectual: A brief Historical Overview of the Discourse*, (Humbolt University, Berlin, 2009).

² Kevin Wandrei, *Definition of Liberalism*. 2017, accessed 7th March 2017, www.people.oureverydaylife.com/definition-progressive-liberalism-6746.html

1. Kassim Ahmad

Kassim Ahmad was born in 1933 to an Islamic religious teacher, Ahmad Ishak and Ummi Kalthom Hj Ahmad, in Bukit Pinang, Kota Setar, in the northern state of Kedah in Malaysia. His parents were fourth generation Malaysians on his father's side, were believed to have migrated from Padang, Sumatera, Indonesia. His mother is from the Thai Malay province of Pattani, Thailand. His father was a religious teacher and farmer was domiciled in Seberang Perai in the state of Penang.¹

Educational Background

Facing a hard life, his parents wanted their eldest son to make good. Being a diligent and intelligent boy, Kassim easily won the praises of his teachers in both primary and secondary schools and was given many positions of responsibility. But towards the end of his schooling, he shows the interest in politics that turned him into a young radical, and was later to land him as head of the Malaysian socialist party and in political detention for nearly five years.

However, being of an intellectual turn of mind and with a love for literature to boot, he became a famous poet in his own right and a famous, albeit controversial, writer too. Added to that, his renewed interest in Islam since around 1972, as a philosophical and scientific political thought made him sit uneasy in his party chairman's position. He therefore resigned that position in 1984. His attempt to bring reforms into the United Malays National Organization, which he joined in 1986, failed and he quit active politics in 1992.²

Career and Works

After leaving University, he worked for a while as a research officer at the Malaysian Language and Literary Agency in Kuala Lumpur, then took a teaching post at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London for four years and then returned to Malaysia to teach in a secondary school in Penang. Being of a free spirit and not inclined to follow rules too much, his services were terminated by the school authorities in 1969 for distributing socialist party literature to his students. He became a freelance writer, translator, journalist and teacher after that and ever since.

¹ Wordpress, Kassim Ahmad, www.kassimahmad.wordpress.com, 2008, retrieved 10th April 2017.

² Wordpress, Kassim Ahmad.

Kassim's political and philosophical interests introduced him to the LaRouche's political-philosophical movement in the United States, to the revolutionary Baathist Party in Iraq and to the U.S.-domiciled, Tucson-based Egyptian Quran scholar, Dr. Rashad Khalifa. He has attended conferences held by all these organizations. Kassim's interests are diverse. Literature, politics, philosophy and religion — these are his major interests, and he has written books and essays on them. He has been awarded the honorary Doctrate of Letters by the National University of Malaysia in 1985 and the Poetry Award of the Malaysian National Writers' Association in 1987. His works include books on Islamic social theory (1984), on Prophetic Traditions (1986), an interesting account of his political detention (1983); and several collections of literary and political essays as well as an anthology of verses (1967). He published two major philosophical essays, one a criticism of Marxism (Dewan Bahasa, December, 1975, and another on the meaningfulness of life (Pemikir, Oct.-Dec., 1997. He has also edited several classical Malay works. Most of his works are in Malay. The work on the Prophetic Traditions, which was hotly and widely debated when it came out and for which some religious authorities pronounced him apostate, has been translated into English and Arabic (1997).¹

2. Zainah Anwar (Leader of Sisters in Islam)

Zainah Anwar is a founding member and former Executive Director of Sisters in Islam. She is a member of Malaysian non-governmental organization (NGO) workings on women's rights within the Islamic framework. The group works in the areas of research, advocacy, public education and legal reform and services to push for a progressive rights-based understanding of Islam. It engages with a wide range of issues, including Islamic Family Law, Islamic Criminal Law, domestic violence, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, Islam as a source of law and public policy, and Islam and women's rights.²

Currently, Zainah is the Director for Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family. She also writes a monthly column on politics, religion and women's rights, called Sharing the Nation, in the Sunday Star, Malaysia. She is a former member of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia.

¹ Wordpress, Kassim Ahmad.

² Sisters in Islam, Zainah Anwar-Biodata of Zainah Anwar (n.d), Retrieved 27th April 2017, <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/news.php?cat.6>

Her other work experiences include: Chief Programme Officer, Political Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, London; Senior Analyst, the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Kuala Lumpur; and Political and Diplomatic Writer, the New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur. Her book, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students*, has become a standard reference for the study of Islam in Malaysia. She was educated at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, Boston University, and the MARA Institute of Technology, Shah Alam, Malaysia.

3. Datuk Dr. Noor Faridah Ariffin (leader of G25)

Dato' Noor Faridah Mohd Ariffin is a Director-General at the Research, Treaties and International Law Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is the Ambassador At-Large for the High Legal Expert Group on Follow-up to the ASEAN Charter (HLEG). Dato' Noor Faridah graduated her legal studies from Inns of Court in London.

Previously, she is a Civil Servant with over 34 years of experience, 25 years with Judicial and Legal Service, 5 years with Commonwealth and Secretariat and 11 years with Foreign Ministry. She is the Co-Agent of Malaysia in case of Pulau Batu Puteh has had a long and distinguished career over 36 years in the Public Service. After that, she was seconded by the government to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London for 5 years as the Director of the Women and Development Programme. In 1993, she return to Malaysia and was transferred to Wisma Putra as Head of Legal Division of The Ministry.¹

The Secular Idea of liberalism Among the Malay Muslim Scholars towards Islam

Islam According Dr. Kassim Ahmad

Those intellectual elites always claim they are practicing Islam as the majority of Muslim but they have their own way of expressing it. However, there are many questions were raised by larger part of Muslim on their practice of Islam. Some of the popular questions are like what is their thinking or ideas that is rejected or accepted? Why it is very important to know the thought of these scholars? Is Islam allows that kind of idea? Is the idea is compatible with Islam?

¹ N. A, Sp Setia Bhd (8664: Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange): Noor Farida Binti Mohd Ariffin (n.d), accessed 1st May 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/resdsearch/stocks/people/person.asp?personId=60411850&capId=2482172>

The thinking and ideas of Dr. Kassim Ahmad became controversial when he claimed the Islamic religion that we practice now is totally wrong. He claims that Muslims are overreacted of Prophet Muḥammad SAW by adoring and praying him too much. According to him the Islamic religion in Malaysia now days has been manipulated because it is govern under one system as “*kasta paderi*” which called as ‘*Ulamā*’. The “*kasta paderi*” system does not exist during the time of Prophet Muḥammad SAW. It only arises around three hundred years ago and they appointed themselves as Islamic religion interpreters to the Muslims. He also feels that the al-Qur’ān has to be reinterpreted because it still depends on the old method by using Ḥadīth to explain the true meaning because for him it is ridiculous for Prophet Muḥammad SAW to know everything as he is only the messenger of Allah.¹

Dr. Kassim Ahmad also defined Ḥadīth as just a news or report and *sunnah* is laws or action. He has his own way of practicing Islam and Al-Qur’ān has been interpreted by his own interest. However, he never mentioned any Ḥadīth in detail as the literally meaning or the report of action and words by Prophet Muḥammad SAW.

The Islamic Practices According to Zainah Anwar: A Leader of Sisters in Islam (SIS)

Another scholar that had criticized Islam in Malaysia is the Leader of Sisters in Islam and one of the renowned Malaysian liberalist activists named Zainah Anwar. According to Sisters in Islam, Islam need to be reinterpreted according to modern context to determine the validity and reliability of its content either it is true Islamic teaching or vice-versa. Islam also need to reform in order to give a clear understanding to the public. The SIS criticized that if the Islamic Law has an intrinsic values that fair and just but women is oppressed thus threatened as second class people. Furthermore, if the Islamic Law having an inherent concept of equalities and justice in the modern world why it does not appear in most Islamic countries govern under Sharī‘ah law.²

Mostly, the issue that has been raised up by this group is more on gender equality where women must be the same like men. They blame

¹ Ashamsuri, Rambut Bukan Aurat: Islam Cara Dr. Kassim Ahmad, Tokoh Pemikir, 2014, retrieved 28th April 2017, <http://ashamsuri.blogspot.my./2014/02/rambut-bukan-aurat-islam-cara-dr-kassim-ahmad.html>

². Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2006) The Construction of Gender In Islamic Legal Theory, Seminar International Consultation on Trends In Family Law Reform in Muslim Countries, organized by Sisters in Islam. Crown Princess Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

the 'ulamā' as the traditionalist where they interpret the Islamic text especially Al-Qur'ān and legislated the Sharī'ah law incorrectly. They also claim that the Sharī'ah law is bias, selfish, political reason and inherited by cultural patriarch. In this aspect the Sisters in Islam has agreed to the view of Dr. Amina Wadud their former leader and also the practioner of Islam Liberal a few years back.¹

Recently, Zainah Anwar has criticized about *hudūd* (Islamic Law) by saying that Malaysia as a country that touts itself as the leader of a global movement of moderates does not move forward by introducing a law that imposes punishment considered as forms of torture, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. She also added that *hudūd* is revolted by many Malaysians either they are personally affected or not. Based on the record of enforcement by the existing Islamic laws on the right of women, citizens of other faith and marginalized groups have wrought fear and distrust of the Sharī'ah system. According to her, *hudūd* is a draconian law in terms of the forms of punishment.² All of this opinion will be influenced by other people and leads to misunderstanding of Islam due to their intelligences thinking.

The Islamic Practices according to Dato' Noor Faridah Ariffin

Noor Faridah is criticizing the human right in the issue of *khalwat* (indulging in illicit love). She urges that the punishment for the *khalwat* case should be abolished. It is because *khalwat* is related to the issue of human rights. The religious body like JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia) cannot simply go to the house and catch people who are doing *khalwat* because it happens in their own house and not in public. According to her the *sharī'ah* law became a problem where a personal sin became a crime.³

The other view of Noor Faridah is related to *hudūd* where it is not relevant and medieval with modern age. She claims that a lot of pedophiles will come to the state of Kelantan if the hudud is implemented. She stated that *hudūd* is still weak due to its implementation is not using the new technologies and the rejection of

¹. Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor. (n.d). Sister In Islam: Wajah Gerakan Liberalism Di Malaysia?

². Zainah Anwar. (2016). Sharing The Nation – The Thorny Issue of Hudud. Sisters In Islam: The Star. Retrieved 27th April 2017, <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/new.php?item.1433.6>

³ Rodelio JunjunTaucan, G25 Mahu Hukuman Khalwat Dimansuh, Utusan Online, 2015, retrieved 1st May 2017, <http://www.utusan.com.my/berita/nasional/g25-mahu-hukuman-khalwat-dimansuh-1.166423>

scientific method as evidence in the case of *zinā* (adultery). So it is very hard to prove that judge the doer.¹ The critics of *ḥudūd* is not only from Dato' Noor Faridah but also other scholars like Dr. Kassim Ahmad and Zainah Anwar like the author's has explained before.

The critiques of liberalism ideas. Why this idea is dangerous to Muslims?

The Critiques on Kassim Ahmad's thought

The main purpose of this study is to discuss, and evaluate their ideas of liberalism. Those Malay Muslims intellectual elites have study the al-Qur'ān and Ḥadīth thus admitting both are the authentic sources of Islam. However, these people are lack of knowledge in understanding the content thus they tend to interpret it based on their own thought and intellectualism.

This is very serious matter for Islam because it has high tendency to influence other people especially for those with shallow knowledge of Islam even though they are called as Muslims due to the background of the family. This kind of thought will make Islam easily manipulated, misinterpreted and even misconceptions among the non-Muslim generally and Muslims themselves specifically.

Dr. Kassim Ahmad once said that Muslims are deifying the Prophet Muḥamad SAW by highly praising him and remembrance in every prayer. However, he should understand that Allah is the only creator and Muslims are obligated to worship Him as the Only God and nothings are comparable to Him even the Prophest Muḥammad SAW. Deifying of the creator is consider as a big sin because it is *syirk* (the association of God) and Dr. Kassim Ahmad has accused the majority of Muslims have deviated from the true Islamic teaching. It is because Muslims praising Prophet Muḥammad as the Christian's (Naṣrāni) worshipping Jesus (Prophet 'īsā) as their God through the system of "*kasta paderi*"²

Furthermore, Kassim Ahmad also stated that the Muslim scholars ('*ulamā*') are not pure from committing sins (not *ma'ṣum*) because they are prophet. However, he has to understand that the '*ulamā*'s have

¹ Azyyati Ahmad, Pedofil Akan Membanjiri Kelantan Jika Hudud Dilaksana, Astro Awani, 2015, retrieved 1st May 2017, <http://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/pedofil-akan-membanjiri-kelantan-jika-hudud-dilaksana>

² Md. Asham Ahmad, *Fello Kanan Pusat Kajian Syari'ah, Undang-Undang dan Politik, Institut Kefahaman* (Islam Malaysia (IKIM): Kuala Lumpur, 2014) Retrieved 23th April 2017, <http://ikimfm.my/siapa-kassim-ahmad>

gained recognition from people due to their hard works and contributed their deep Islamic knowledge such as in the field of *tafsīr*, jurisprudence, prophetic tradition and many others. All of these matters have been prove according to the historical fact whereby many Muslim scholars have conquered many field of knowledge that does not necessarily in religious as perspective only. Therefore, Kassim Ahma's critiques and judgments towards the '*ulamā's*' is not making him as a *mufasssir* or *mujtahid* and he is also fails to proof his accusations are legit.

Kassim Ahmad once stated that he was defiance of praying is not to the creator instead he was opposing the deifying of Prophet Muḥammad and the '*ulamā*'. According to Kassim Ahmad, the concept of deifying the prophet is similar to Christian deifies Jesus thus worshipping him wholeheartedly. According to him, the concept deifying is in accordance with the western secular idea especially among the sociologist which he agreed and practiced. Mostly, the western secular idea is encouraged people towards newly world order. By all mean, the world has to be changed totally including values, belief and knowledge as an evolution at all cause.¹

The Critiques of the Idea of Zainah Anwar

According to the religious bodies in Malaysia the idea of liberalism is not in line with Islam thus deviated from the true Islamic teaching. However, Zainah is very confident with her liberal idea by claiming that she has better understanding devoted herself to Islam. Therefore, her interpretation of Islam is incorrect because she understands it based on the Western perspective by depending upon the views of Western scholars and practicing liberal *ijtihād* and manipulating the concept of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. As an actual fact, this concept is applicable in certain specific condition only and the practice is entitled for the Muslims scholars that possessed deep knowledge of Islam as a whole. Thus, the laymen are not qualified to freely practice *ijtihād* then interpreting the Qur'ānic text according to their own understanding.

In respond to Zainah Anwar's idea of liberalism, Khalif Muammar suggested her to learn Islam with truly Muslims scholars (the '*ulamā's*') rather than inauthentic sources especially from the work of orientalist. Mostly, they are confused and fail to differentiate between the *Sharī'ah* and the issues in *Fiqh*. Islam must be learnt from the root of the religion (*Uṣūl al-Dīn*) and it is not enough by attending seminars or workshop or

¹ Ibid.

any courses. For certain people they are spending a long time in learning Islam in order to deeply understand the religion as whole.

Islam never prohibit human to use their mind (*'aql*), but fully depending on rational thought is quite inappropriate because it has prepared the guideline based on revelations and not merely depending on the scientific evidence. Islam also accepted the concept of freedom but with some limitation because it will destroy the human from the right path. However, the liberalist always accusing Islam and Muslims reject the freedom of thought of human being. The rejection has made Muslims hard to express their ideas, opinions and individual feelings. Some popular issue that most of the liberalists are fighting is for human rights including LGBT right, gender equality that usually revolve around women empowerment and discriminations against women. In fact, those fights of freedom and gender equality are relevant in the west only as a response towards cruelties upon women. As a matter of fact, Islam never discriminate women but protecting them by giving justice to every human being in general and all women specifically.

Justice and equality is not the same concept but indeed it is true that women need protection from men. However, due to the ignorance of men and facing with moral problems, men are totally failed to protect women in every angle of their life. Giving the same right between men and women is not the solution because both are having their own strength and weaknesses by each other.¹

The critiques on the thought of Datuk Noor Faridah Ariffin

Dato' Noor Faridah is criticizing the Islamic Law when the religious authority rush the place that they believes having *khalwat* after they received the report from the neighbor. For her, that kind of act has violated the human rights and the individual are prohibited to hunt inside the other peoples' house. It is undeniable that, Islam prohibits mankind to trespass for other people disgrace and each individual have their own right that is untouchable by other human being. However, in the issue like the *khalwat* case the *hukm* could be change to the public right when the religious authority is receiving the report of such activity. As a consequent, the *hukm* is no longer belongs to individual rights but has been changed to the public rights which given the approval the religious

¹ Khalif Muammar, Surat Terbuka Kepada Zainah Anwar, 2016, retrieved 1st May 2017, <http://www.facebook.com/drkhalif/posts/1162320127121255>

authority to rush that particular space. So, human cannot claims that it is against the human rights.¹

Liberalism and its Suitability with Islam

The findings from the discussions above found out that the idea of liberalism is mostly incompatible with Islam. This idea is only depending on rational or logic as their main sources. Those scholars are fight for freedom in everything and they keep criticizing the religion. Islam never obstructs people of their freedom but Islam provides guidelines to the right path towards any human actions.

It is undeniable that, those scholars are very intelligent and influential people as which we called them as the intellectual elites. However, their idea towards Islam is quite dangerous for Muslims because they manipulate the Islamic fact and they have high tendency to influence other people to follow their liberal thought. Islam in their eyes is by giving total freedom to human being thus depending on rational or logic to find the real meaning of life. However, the scientific evidence only is not enough but requires human to learn Islam thoroughly for better understanding. Overall, this situation is happen due to the wrong interpretation of Al-Quran using their own *ijtihad*.²

As a matter of facts, criticizing Al-Qur'ān and Ḥadīth by bringing up new ideologies that solely depends of human rational thought thus avoiding revelations is unacceptable. This issue is totally related to our '*aqidah*' (believe) as Muslim. Al-Qur'ān is our main sources and Hadith will explain most of the general verses of the text by simplify it like in the issue of covering the '*awrah*' for women. Al-Qur'ān stated that women have to cover their '*awrah*' properly but did not mention the '*tarīqah*' (methods) to do it. Then Ḥadīth by Prophet Muḥammad SAW explain and taught women the methods of covering the '*awrah*'. Muslims must understand that certain verse in the Qur'ānic text contain *naskh* and *mansukh* (the verse that have been abrogated) (that are applicable for specific period only or *ayat al-Kawuniyah*). Supposedly, before criticizing the Qur'ānic text human needs clear understanding of the whole Al-Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Similarly, the Islamic Law also cannot be simply criticized because it is the commandment from Allah SWT through revelation and not

¹ Mohd Shauki Abd Majid, G25 DisarannUntuk Bertaubat, Majlis Dakwah Negara, n.d, Retrieved 1st May 2017 <http://www.mdn.org.my/p=2986>

² Dr. Khalif Muammar, *Islam Dan Pluralisme Agama:Memperkukuh Tauhid Pada Zaman Kekeliruan- Pengaruh Pluralisme Agama Terhadap Intellektual Muslim*, (Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur), p. 34.

created from human mind. In fact, *hudūd* is not cruel but more towards frightening or threatening with death penalties to human being entirely. There are very strict rules to be considered before giving the punishment. Thus, it requires proper education to educate the laymen on Islamic jurisprudence and not merely based on human judgments.

Conclusions

The secular idea of liberalism is quite dangerous for Muslims because it allows human to criticize everything including the religion. It relies on human minds by stressing on freedom and practicing it based on their own *ijtihad*. It means that human does not need the '*ulamā*' to do *ijtihad* but they can do it by their own. Obviously, the western people are very civilized they are great in every aspects such as in technologies, educations, politics and so on but at the same time they are facing a very bad moral issue that remain unsolved until now. That is why they are tending to commit suicide, drug addicts, prostitutions etc.

Al-Qur'ān and Hadith cannot be translated or interpreted based on our own *ijtihad*. It requires the *ulama*' to explain it to public because their understanding of religion are better than normal human being. The '*ulamā*' are extra ordinary people with great minds who can speak about religion clearly. So, by against the '*ulamā*' is not making a human is better but it shows the weaknesses and lack of religious knowledge of a person.

However, not all Malay Muslims intellectual elites in Malaysia are supporting liberalism and the other Western ideas by criticizing Islam and its practice. There are some great scholars even though having an educational background from the west like Professor. Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al- Attas (ISTAC), Professor. Dr. Mohd Kamal Hassan and many others.

Finally, Muslims must always seek for thorough Islamic knowledge in order to avoid any wrong ideologies conquering Muslims thought nowadays. Recently, Muslims must be reeducate of religious practices and the '*ulamā*' plays a bigger roles to give clear understanding on Islamic teachings. Finally, further research also required to discuss more on the current issues and problems facing in the world now days.

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