



PENYATAAN BELASUNGKAWA ATAS PEMERGIAN KE
RAHMATULLAH PROFESOR DATUK DR. SYED HUSSEIN ALATAS
(1928-2007)

Bagi pihak Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia (PSSM), saya ingin merakamkan ucapan belasungkawa sedalam-dalamnya atas pemergian Allahyarham Profesor Datuk Dr Syed Hussein Alatas pada 23 Januari 2007 malam di Kuala Lumpur. Pemergian beliau adalah satu kerugian yang besar kepada keluarganya, kepada negara dan komuniti ilmuan Malaysia khususnya dan kepada dunia kesarjanaan sains sosial antarabangsa umumnya. Kami para komuniti ilmuan sains sosial dalam dan luar universiti di Malaysia amat terkejut dan berdukacita kerananya.

Profesor Alatas ialah seorang tokoh intelektual awam, sarjana, dan pemikir ulung yang sukar ditandingi. Beliau adalah antara tokoh angkatan lama yang telah memelopori dan mengasaskan perkembangan ilmu sosial, khususnya sosiologi di Malaysia, sejak pertengahan 1950an sebelum Merdeka dan meneruskan usaha gigih mengembangkan ilmu tersebut sehingga akhir hayat beliau. Kewibawaan beliau sebagai seorang ilmuan, intelektual awam dan pemikir tersohor memang terserlah dan diiktiraf sejak awal lagi. Beliau memperoleh ijazah Doktorandus pada 1956 dan PhD pada 1963, kedua-duanya daripada Universiti Amsterdam, Belanda. Setelah berkhidmat dengan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka antara 1958 hingga 1960, beliau menceburi bidang akademik pada 1960an sebagai pensyarah dan ketua jurusan budaya di Jabatan Pengajian Melayu Universiti Malaya antara 1964 hingga 1967. Kerjaya akademik beliau meningkat dengan pesat apabila diangkat sebagai Profesor dan Ketua Jabatan Pengajian Melayu di Universiti Nasional Singapura mulai 1967 hingga 1988. Apabila Profesor Diraja Ungku Aziz bersara sebagai Naib Canselor Universiti Malaya, Profesor Alatas telah mengisi jawatan itu dari 1988 sehingga 1991. Selepas satu masa, beliau berkhidmat pula di Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia selama kira-kira 10 tahun sejak 1995, mula-mula di Pusat Pengajian Umum, kemudian di Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, dan terakhir di Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu (ATMA) sebagai Profesor dan Felo Utama.

Profesor Alatas ialah seorang sarjana dan pengarang yang prolific dan berbobot yang pemikiran dan karyanya mempunyai kepentingan universal. Beliau telah menghasilkan banyak buku dan artikel dalam jurnal antarabangsa serta makalah dalam akhbar tempatan. Penulisan beliau meliputi banyak bidang, antaranya pembangunan dan pemodenan, politik dan rasuah, intelektual negara membangun, pemikiran masyarakat bekas tanah jajahan, serta persoalan umat

Islam menangani pemodenan. Antara buku beliau yang penting dan sudah menjadi klasik ialah, *Modernization and Social Change in Southeast Asia*. Buku ini yang terbit pada 1972 membahas secara kritis pemikiran ahli teori Barat tentang pemodenan dan pembangunan di mana beliau menyanggah konsep pemodenan sebagai pembaratan. Buku *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, yang pertama kali terbit pada tahun 1977, ialah sebuah karya besar yang mendedahkan bagaimana kolonialisme Eropah telah mencipta mitos peribumi malas. Karya ini dianggap oleh Edward Said sebagai ‘teramat asli’ yang telah menginspirasi beliau sendiri untuk menghasilkan karyanya mengkritik Orientalisme. Karya Profesor Alatas tentang intelektual di negara membangun membezakan dengan jelas antara intelijensia yang mempunyai kelulusan formal dengan intelektual yang mempunyai daya pemikiran tinggi dan kritis membahas persoalan masyarakat. Serangkaian karya beliau mengenai persoalan rasuah di negara membangun sentiasa dirujuk sebagai bahan yang amat penting dalam bidang kajian rasuah dan bagaimana membanterasnya. Dengan bahasa kiasan yang tajam, beliau pernah mengatakan bahawa dalam usaha membanteras kanser masyarakat ini, kita perlu membangkitkan kebencian dan marah rakyat kepadanya agar kita dapat menyeretnya keluar daripada lorong-lorong gelap supaya tidak ada lagi tempat bagi perasuah menyorokkan diri.

Tentang persoalan pemikiran masyarakat, Profesor Alatas telah mencipta konsep ‘*the captive mind*’ atau ‘watak tertawan’ yang bermaksud bagaimana pemikiran atau minda anak tanah jajahan sudah ditawan oleh cara pemikiran bekas penjajah sehingga pemikiran itu tidak lagi mempunyai keaslian. Dalam bidang pemikiran masyarakat inilah beliau selalu bertarung secara terbuka dalam media dan medan-medan lain melawan kejumudan atau apa yang beliau istilahkan sebagai ‘bebalisme’. Sementara di satu pihak beliau dengan tegas mengkritik pandangan Orientalisme terhadap masyarakat tanah jajahan, khususnya masyarakat Melayu, beliau juga dengan gigih berjuang untuk mengikis kejumudan pemikiran sebahagian masyarakat Melayu yang tahyul dan juga yang menafsirkan Islam secara sempit dan harfiah. Usaha beliau ini amat penting dalam membuka minda tentang bagaimana masyarakat Melayu-Islam harus maju untuk berdepan dengan arus pemodenan pada abad ke-21 ini.

Sumbangan Profesor Alatas yang cukup besar di bidang ilmu dan pemikiran sosial serta di medan perdebatan awam menunjukkan beliau mempunyai keistimewaan sebagai seorang intelektual dan sarjana yang asli dan mandiri yang diiktiraf di dalam negeri dan di peringkat antarabangsa. Hal ini jelas diakui oleh tokoh-tokoh antarabangsa sezaman dengannya. Meminjam kata-kata Profesor Hans-Dieter Evers, seorang tokoh sosiologi terkemuka dari Jerman, “Melalui pelbagai karya dan kuliahnya (selama setengah abad lebih ini), boleh dikatakan Profesor Alatas telah mewujudkan satu aliran pemikiran sosiologi yang tersendiri di rantau ini.”

Hubungan kami dalam Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia dengan Profesor Alatas memang amat rapat. Kami menganggap beliau sebagai mercusuar

intelektual yang sinarnya terus bergemerlapan sekalipun beliau sudah pergi. Dunia intelektual dan kesarjanaan Malaysia telah kehilangan sebutir bintang di ufuk kesarjanaan yang luas tidak bertepi. Namun, pemikiran beliau yang bernas dan kritis serta teladan intelektual yang mandiri dan amat berharga itu akan berada bersama-sama kita untuk menginspirasi kita semua.

Semoga Allah mencucuri rahmat-Nya ke atas roh beliau! Al Fatihah!

Profesor Dato' Dr Abdul Rahman Embong
Presiden, Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia
24 Januari 2007

MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE ON THE PASSING OF
PROFESSOR DATUK DR. SYED HUSSEIN ALATAS (1928-2007)

On behalf of the Malaysian Social Science Association (PSSM), I wish to express my deepest condolences on the passing of Professor Datuk Dr Syed Hussein Alatas on the night of 23 January 2007 in Kuala Lumpur. His passing is a great loss to his family, the nation and the community of Malaysian intellectuals, and to the world of social science scholarship internationally. We, members of the community of social science scholars within and beyond the university in Malaysia, are shocked and saddened by the news.

Professor Alatas was an unparalleled public intellectual, scholar, and thinker. He was among those of the older generation who pioneered and founded the development of the social sciences in Malaysia, especially sociology, from before Independence in the middle of the 1950s. He continued his tireless efforts at developing the social sciences right up to the end of his life.

His authority as a respected scholar, public intellectual and thinker was evident and acknowledged from early on. He obtained his Doctorandus degree in 1956 and PhD in 1963, both from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. After working for the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* [the national body dedicated to language and literature] between 1958 to 1960, he took up academic work as Lecturer and Head of the Culture Stream at the Department of Malay Studies of Universiti Malaya from 1964 to 1967. He advanced greatly in his academic career for, soon, he was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore (1967 to 1988).

Professor Alatas was appointed the Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaya from 1988 to 1991 with the retirement of Royal Professor Ungku Aziz. After a lapse of a few years, in 1995 he joined Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia where he spent some ten years, initially at the Centre of General Studies, followed by the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, and finally as Professor and Principal Fellow at the Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA).

Professor Alatas was a prolific scholar and author of great substance whose thinking and works are of universal significance. He produced many books and articles in international journals as well as the local newspapers. His writings cover many fields, including development and modernisation, politics and corruption, intellectuals in developing societies, the mentality of colonised societies, as well as the question of the Islamic *ummah's* engagement with modernity. Among his significant books that are regarded as classics is *Modernization and Social Change in Southeast Asia*. Published in 1972, this book critically discusses Western theories of modernisation and development and challenges the idea of modernisation as Westernisation. His book *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (first published in 1977) is another substantial work that shows how European colonialism created the myth of Malays as the lazy natives. Edward Said considered this book to be a “startlingly original” work that inspired him to produce his well-known critique of Orientalism.

Professor Alatas's work on intellectuals in developing societies distinguished between an intelligentsia with formal qualifications and intellectuals who are highly capable thinkers and engage social issues critically. A series of his works on the question of corruption in developing societies is a very important reference in the study of corruption and its elimination. In order to get rid of this social cancer, he used to say in a sharply metaphorical language, we need to elicit the hatred and anger of the people that they may smoke it out of the dark alleys into the open where there is no place to hide.

In studying the mindset of members of society, Professor Alatas advanced the concept of ‘the captive mind’ to describe the mentality of colonial subjects who had been enslaved by the mode of thinking of their one-time colonizer, to the point that it was bereft of originality. It was on this issue of the society's mindset that he always engaged in a relentless open battle in the mass media and other arenas in order to fight outmoded thinking or what he termed ‘bebalism’ (thickism). On the one hand, he firmly criticised Orientalist perspectives towards colonised societies, especially Malay society. On the other, he was determined in his struggle to overcome the outmoded mindset of a segment of Malay society who put stock in irrational beliefs as well as those who interpret Islam in a narrow and literal manner. This is a very important contribution on his part towards opening up the minds of people to the ways by which Malay-Muslim society should engage with modernity in the 21st century.

Professor Alatas's great contribution to the field of knowledge and social thought as well as the arena of public debate was the hallmark of an original and independent-minded intellectual, scholar and thinker, highly regarded nationally and internationally. This fact is clearly evident in the accolades of international figures whom were his peers. Professor Hans-Dieter Evers, the well-known sociologist from Germany, observed as follows: “Through his various writings and lectures (for more than half a century), it may be said that

Professor Alatas has created a school of sociological thinking of his own in this region.”

As members of the Malaysian Social Science Association, our relationship with Professor Alatas was very close. We regard him as an intellectual beacon whose light continues to shine even though he is gone. The intellectual and academic world in Malaysia has lost a star in the infinite horizon of scholarship. His cogent and critical ideas as well as his exemplary independent-mindedness as an intellectual are immensely valuable and will persist in our hearts and inspire us all.

May Allah shower His blessings upon his spirit! Al Fatihah!

Professor Dato' Dr Abdul Rahman Embong
President, Malaysian Social Science Association
24 January 2007