

## We must not despair in our search for goodness

Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Comment

New Sunday Times - 10/26/2008

DEEPAVALI, or Divali, which literally means "a row of lamps", is commonly known as the "festival of lights".

It is one of the most prominent festivals of the Indian community. It signifies the day when darkness and ignorance gave way to light and knowledge, and death to eternal life.

This is symbolically expressed by the lighting of lamps using natural oil, such as coconut oil.

The festival is celebrated over four to six days on the dark fortnight of the Hindu month of Ashwin (or Aasho) which usually falls in the month of October or November, depending on the lunar calendar.

Each of the festive days marked significant events in Indian mythology, signifying the triumph of good over evil, spiritually speaking. And the attainment of good health, wealth as well as valour.

It therefore represents a day of thanksgiving as well as to welcome prosperity and goodness.

Among some business communities, it is regarded as the best time to start the financial year and the opening of new account books.

Among some followers of Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism, Deepavali also has some special significance, too.

In general, many traditions readily associate "light" to something that represents good and even as an euphemism of truth.

Thus, seeking for truth is always compared to travelling on the path of light, where light is also taken to mean enlightened knowledge. It is through such knowledge that one moves closer to embrace the truth, as it were.

In this sense, Eleanor Roosevelt was right when she said that it is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness!

Unfortunately, under the present circumstances, there are many more who prefer the easy way of cursing the darkness, rather than lighting the smallest of candles.

Consequently, the darkness gives rise to even more darkness, and at the same time encourages the emergence of chaos and anarchy. Some have turned it into a fertile ground for breeding hatred and destruction.

None could be more pervasive in the unbridled ubiquitous digital world where anonymous hate-filled and irresponsible comments further darken the cyberspace.

Where the blogosphere could have been that one little candle which illuminates millions of minds and hearts in unified ways, some have hijacked it to spread ill-feeling and suspicion. Instead of turning it into a path of light, it serves as a conduit of lies, ignorance and half-truths.

Did not the Bhavagad Gita say: "Out of compassion I destroy the darkness of their ignorance. From within them I light the lamp of wisdom and dispel all darkness from their lives."

Did not the Bible say: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works?"

Indeed, the Quran has an entire chapter entitled The Light (An-Nur) containing 64 verses. In particular, verse 21 emphasises: "O you who believe, follow not the footsteps of the devil. And whoever follows the footsteps of the devil, surely he commands indecency and evil."

Verse 35 testifies: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

The parable of God's Light used in the verse is: "As if there were a Niche, and within it a lamp; the Lamp enclosed in Glass; the glass a brilliant star, lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive neither of the East nor of the West whose Oil is well-nigh luminous though fire scarce touched it. Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light."

So the Bible notes: "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

And the Gita says: "The soul is the light of every light; and its light transcends the duality of brightness and darkness."

In our search for goodness, we must not despair. Even in the midst of darkness, light will continue to persist and eventually prevail, if only we can expand our understanding beyond the sensory perception of light.

Rather, we should reach out to ignite the spiritual light, as opposed to its noticeable absence as it gradually occupies the empty spaces of our hearts with the proverbial darkness.

And there is no better time to start than in the true spirit of Deepavali as we continue to struggle to conquer our own darkness, before attempting to light up the life of others.

Wishing all Hindu readers a Happy and Enlightened Deepavali.

[Terms & Conditions](#)