

'Fitna' is surely trash

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FITNA (or fitnah) is an Arabic word that has become well-accepted in the Malay vocabulary. Its common usage gives a negative connotation bordering on "slander", "malice" or "back-biting", especially in the context of spreading mischief and falsehood.

Fitna is therefore frowned upon in Islam since it often results in not only disrepute, but could also cause suspicion and animosity.

In these days of instant communication, fitna has a greater consequence for societal well-being. In many ways, fitna is a global phenomena, not confined to Muslims.

Interestingly, the lexicon meaning of the word is also associated with the purity or impurity of a precious metal like silver or gold.

By melting the metals over intense temperature, for example, the real composition of the metal can be discovered.

This is a symbolic way of expressing the need for a test to ensure a specific standard of reliability is met in a given situation. Indeed, reliability of information is vital for a proper decision so that fitna can be avoided.

Viewed this way, fitna refers to a "trial" of sorts, especially in a demanding situation where the "real worth" of a person is often revealed.

For instance, faced with a crisis, leadership qualities are usually called to question.

After all, it is in such trying conditions that malicious and defamatory remarks thrive, sometimes amounting to character assassination.

For Muslims, fitna is generally to be avoided as Islam does not condone any word or act intended to injure a person's credibility, more so in public.

This includes revealing incidents involving one's private lives, be it by the very individual or others, as it could be turned into fodder for fitna.

In other words, Islam expects its followers to take utmost precautions to safeguard their integrity and be of good standing at all times, unless and until there is a legitimate reason to do otherwise. Hence, everyone is urged to be constantly in a state of vigilance, a crucial step in remaining free from fitna.

Failing to understand this, there are those who insist that fitna is an integral part of the democratic process where freedom of speech reigns supreme.

It is claimed to be "politically correct" and deserves to be supported, even by a democratically elected government.

The emphasis is more on the rights of individuals or organisations to do and say whatever they want without much care on what it does to society at large.

A recent case in point is a film being released to demonstrate this very contentious point. The crudely assembled bundle of footages and clips, aptly entitled Fitna, selectively incorporates various elements designed to ridicule Islam, more specifically the Quran.

This piece of trash is created based on fitna to garner support needed to ban or dismiss the Holy Book, based on the politics of hate, Dutch-style.

It seems to disregard the reality that more than 1.3 billion people, including an increasingly number of informed Europeans, are offended by such publicity stunts.

What is more, when compared to the volumes of works of fitna attempted by the orientalist over the centuries to run down Islam and everything associated with it, the latest attempt can at best be described as mediocre.

Not surprisingly, barely a week after its release, there is already a threat to sue because of copyright infringement (IHT, April1); so much for freedom of speech.

With the impending legal suit, it is interesting to see how Fitna will be defended as an exercise of free speech and expression. Ironically, there are some indications of chickening out, with adjustments to be made to an already crude product.

In so doing, perhaps it is instructive to delve a little deeper into history and realise how Islam and the Quran have given rise to waves of new civilisations, some of which were among the most glorious.

Indeed the Renaissance of the West, too, has benefited a lot from them, including the idea of freedom of speech before it became perverted.

So until then, Fitna seems to be just a paranoia of one lawmaker-turned-instant movie maker, dragging Islam and the Quran with it out of sheer arrogance and ignorance.

In the name of so-called freedom of speech, welcome to the age of fitna!

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