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Tough questions do matter

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comments 1

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IF a child asks, "Is there God? or "Where is God?", do we prevent the child from asking further or even punish the child?

Some strict parents and families would not allow "taboo questions" while others encourage these questions. Other families engage in confronting and resolving issues based on trust and parental insights.

Nations are a grouping of families. Malaysian society has more than five million families or households averaging five members in each nuclear family.

As families grow, they have to confront and resolve many issues and ensure strong bonding, unconditional love and support and prevent family members from being in harm's way.

So it is with the nation -- the family of families. There is the tender unconditional love for the family and for the nation.

Responsible members of the family cannot allow the family to be dysfunctional because of, or in spite of, family feuds. Responsible members of the nation cannot allow a nation or society to be a failed society. Sometimes there is civil war, literally and metaphorically in order to keep a nation together. There is an important way of thinking about families and the nation. One important metaphor is to think of the nation as a family.

Evidence worldwide reflects how fragile social and political order would be if tough questions are not asked and solutions not found to address root problems.

Dr Chandra Muzaffar, the late Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee and other scholars asked some tough questions.

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Yet, in the present time, the question is provocatively raised by Kishore Mahbubani in his book, *Can Asians Think?*, regarding the condescending attitudes of the West.

In the political arena, as in all other domains of life, good people ask tough questions, with love not with hate. Others may ask tough questions with hate in their minds or souls. Tough questions range from the trivia to the fundamental, the symptoms of problems to root sources of discontentment.

The concerns of tough questions go beyond the specific issues which may influence voter behaviour in elections.

Tough questions are about tough decisions. Tough questions are about dilemmas. When tough questions are clarified, they must be clarified based on permanent purpose, universal and eternal values.

Tough questions can be asked tenderly or in firm and tough ways. To ask tough questions is to love the nation in patriotic ways. Not to ask tough questions and to allow the nation and society to be misguided is irresponsible.

There were some tough questions asked and decisions made regarding the existence of Malaysia, for instance, regarding the secession of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation, race relations which led to the formulation of Rukunegara, relations with Communist China and building the Multimedia Super Corridor and the digital age.

Many tough questions about the nation are asked in homes regarding family decisions, or they are asked in classrooms or among citizens or students.

Some of the tough questions are -- where does evil reside, in the minds of man or in political parties, in cover operations or in interest groups? Where does good reside, in rhetoric or in deeds?

Have we really addressed the nine challenges of Vision 2020?

Is Malaysia a democracy? If so, what type of democracy?

Can Singapore be readmitted into Malaysia?

Are there corrupt and evil people who go unpunished and will corruption be a way of life?

Can the capital of Malaysia move to Kuching or Kota Kinabalu?

Are Malaysians racists? Do we discriminate against each other and against Africans?

Is education a subversive activity and involves indoctrination?

Are people allowed to think the tough questions? Do we sweep everything under the carpet?

Do we really care about the environment?

Who are the hidden shapers of society? People should ask tough questions before they die.

Are we really on the kaizen (continuous improvement) journey? Will we

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be able to maintain the culture of excellence?

Although mankind has made advances in material being and have established all kinds of learning centres and produced millions of graduates, the primordial mind, the clannish, the inner circles and the cronies continue to exist not just for self-preservation and survival, but for aggrandisement.

Human passions of love and hate, violence and manipulation, and coveting what others have, continue to thrive.

Power-seeking men and women have continued to thrive since the Stone Age, the ages of ignorance and oppression.

There may, however, be novel and sophisticated actions, going around the laws of contemporary society, to control or suppress others but the insanity of the species -- the selfish gene -- still remains.

If we do not ask tough questions, we do not progress; if we do not find solutions, problems do not go away. The lay person and the worldly critique have to develop the art of asking tough questions for the culture of "killing the messenger who brings the bad news" still prevails.



Think of our nation as a family.

< 1 / 1 >



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Stevens Lahamin Wasibin said:

..is there God?...w here is God?...is in fact not a sort of tough question, it is a must be question but must be w ith the right answer...so do not deprived w ith self denial question and yet self denial answer....put it into habit w ith the good faith....bravo...

2 April 2012

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