



International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research

ISSN : 0972-7302

available at <http://www.serialsjournals.com>

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Volume 15 • Number 24 • 2017

Discourse Analysis and Interpretation of Intellectual Philosophy and its Importance to Nation Intellectual Development from the perspective of Syed Hussein Alatas

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Abstract: The intellectuals constitute a group of wise, knowledgeable individuals who have their own unique influence on the community. This influence is evident through their ideas and inspirations with the main aim of developing the intellectual dimension and upholding the dignity of their beloved nations. This study intends to explore the concept of intellectualism, examine the meaning of the term intellectual philosophy and investigate the fundamentals of intellectual philosophy focussing on its importance and role as a catalyst in the development of intellectualism and progressive advancement of the nation, specifically the Malays and Bumiputeras from the perspective of Syed Hussein Alatas; a Malaysian eminent scholar. This is mainly a document analysis study that focuses on the analysis of the text of articles written by Syed Hussein Alatas, focusing specifically on those dealing with the intellectual life and intellectualism, and generally those dealing with the development of the nation. This study obtained findings that intellectual philosophy is a form of a strong thought supported by intellectual value converging with reasoning faculty. The intellectuals serve as a central dimension to the progress of the nation that removes it from the shackles of ignorance and backwardness. Syed Hussein Alatas' intellectual vision contribution indeed triggered a great knowledge intellectual culture in the Malay region.

Keywords: intellectual, philosophy of intellectual, intellectual development, Syed Hussein Alatas

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (1977), is of the opinion that the effort to develop the nation has important conditions: all the individuals of the human race must develop in all aspects. Consequently, this study is of the view that the conditions referred to are the criteria that must be possessed by the intellectuals, this is due to the fact that they are held responsible for the nation's development besides endeavoring to find solutions to various problems facing the nation.

However, one wonders whether these intellectuals actually exist in Malaysia? If so, what is their role in the process of national development? Then, how do they execute their intellectual duties? Are they fully devoted and active in solving all society's problems? The above chain of questions which is posed by people of various levels seriously form the basis of this conceptual philosophical intellectual study.

Basically, intellectuals are a group that seeks to blend knowledge with their intellectual vigor. They are wise intellectuals who utilize their minds to solve various problems that societies face (Abdullah Mekki, 2017). They struggle to produce various ideas, theories and visions related especially to the process of developing their society. Their main goal is to enable the community to become civilized and knowledgeable along other communities in the developed world.

Hence, this study intends to specifically examine the concepts and intellectual philosophies rather than the interpretation of the thoughts of Syed Hussein Alatas; a Malaysian prominent scholar. The selection of this well-known scholar is based on his critical contribution to the formation and discussion of intellectual concepts in the 1960s who is its pioneer in the Malay region. In addition, Alatas's thoughts from the main focus of this study by putting into consideration the views of Azhar Ibrahim (2014:181) that the contribution of knowledge by the late Syed Hussein Alatas is something we can be proud of, and we ought to struggle such that his vision and ideas are still benefiting from.

1.2. Objectives

Thus, this study has two main objectives; first, exploring the intellectual concepts and philosophies of the Alatas's thought. Second, examining the fundamentals of intellectual philosophy as a catalyst for intellectual development of the Malays and Bumiputeras in the Malay archipelago generally and in Malaysia in particular.

It's important to emphasize here that Alatas's mind is quite interesting to be explored and studied because of its profound scientific research, its critical and sharp arguments and conclusions. The proof for this claim can be traced through his valuable intellectual masterpiece; *Intellectual in Developing Societies* (1977).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Scope

The scope of the study in this research is Alatas's thoughts about the concept and philosophy of intellectual. The intellectual concept will be assessed in the context of the nation's development, especially in the Malay Archipelago region.

2.2. Types and sources of data

This study uses a qualitative method with a special focus on data collection method based on library research. The data is gathered from the works of Alatas writings about intellectualism, as well as other scholarly studies of Alatas's thinking.

2.3. Methods of analysis

On the other hand, the text analysis method is applied to examine the concept of Alatas intellectualism in the development of intellectuals of the Malays and Bumiputeras.

III. DISCUSSIONS

3.1. First Discourse: Development and Understanding of Intellectualism according to Syed Hussein Alatas

Alatas is considered to be the pioneer of detailed and complete refinement of intellectual issues in the Malay World around 1966, in view of the intellectual problems that had fascinated Malaysians at that time. He puts in clear terms that the issue of intellectual injustice be addressed immediately with the principle of intellectual justice (Alatas, 1991).

Unfortunately, Alatas did not explain what he meant by intellectual injustice and intellectual justice, but it can be understood that both refer to a contradictory situation in meeting the needs of the community. Intellectual injustice can be understood as an opposite state value and intellectual characteristics; it refers to a person who possesses knowledge, but does not endeavor to solve particular problems in his or her field specific. The underlying essence of intellectual injustice according to Alatas is based on; intellectual idleness, absence of intellectual passion, lack of intellectual interest, and the growing problem of working intellectual groups.

At the same time, intellectual justice is a condition that raises intellectual values. This refers to knowledge-conscious groups that seek to spread its influence and lead its people in the field of thought, as well as giving high commitment to community and community development. The necessary fundamentals to realize intellectual justice are to have intellectual interest, psychological flexibility and mental dexterity, in addition to a high intellectual philosophy, besides being consistent with knowledge and field of knowledge.

However, a question crops up why did Alatas discuss intellectuals seriously? This study found that this was due to two reasons. Firstly, intellectuals are an influential group to lead and provide leadership values in the field of thought. Secondly, the absence of intellectual functioning can have a detrimental effect on society – as it loses consciousness and certain insights on various fundamental issues (Alatas, 1991: 12-13).

Then, according to Alatas perspective, what does the concept of intellectuals mean? From his point of view, Alatas (1991) defines intellectuals as self-centered people think of ideas and problems rather than a material by their intellectual ability. Alatas's definition emphasizes three main elements; those who think (i) the idea, (ii) the problem of non-material, and (iii) using the ability of reason.

The first element is idea; thoughts are active cognitive activities which involve active thinking because human beings are trying to produce something from their thinking. The result of that thought is a far more serious purpose as it illustrates a person's self-maturity. This is because it is the basis of the next intellectual element chain, of the problem of non-material.

Non-material problems are interpreted as an abstract, complex, diverse and compelling. This problem often involves concerns about humanity and humanities such as religion, social, politics, knowledge and divinity. The problem occurs in a given community group, and at another stage it involves the problem of the state and the universal civilization. This means that the problem of humanity and the humanities is a foundation that must be resolved by the intellectuals and knowledgeable. Certainly, this would necessarily require someone's ability to interpret the problem properly, precisely and clearly.

On the third element of the intellectual meaning, Alatas emphasizes the element of intellectual ability, which here is understood as a process of understanding, which involves considerations and judgments using senses, or sense judgments. However, in a Western thought tradition, intellect refers to mental activity; it is a way of thinking that involves a step by step process, from one consideration to another or from a statement to the next statement (Adler, 1999). Interestingly, the Islamic tradition looks at the intellect as constituting (i) the intellectual being a substance of spirituality, and (ii) the rationale for intellect (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 2011). Mohd Zaidi Ismail (2016) on the other hand is of the view that the intellect in Islamic epistemology is indeed broader and more fundamental as it [is] the human being itself. The intellect is also known by other names such as spirit, self or soul, heart and mind.

This means that intellectual include elements of ideas, non-material problems and thinking processes. These three elements need to be sharply sharpened so that those who are knowledgeable and have high intelligence have the ability of being intellectuals capable of developing their nations.

As if that was not enough, Alatas went ahead to present features for the intellectuals which he termed as social characteristics. Alatas (1991), puts it in plain words that there are six social features for this group as follows:

1. They are recruited from all levels in varying proportions.
2. They are found among supporters or opponents of various cultural or political movements.
3. They are generally not doing hardword, most of them are writers, deans, poets, journalists and so on.
4. They are somewhat away from the community (to some extent), but mingling with their own group.
5. They are not only interested in technical and mechanical knowledge, but also in ideas about religion, better living, art, nationalism, organized economy, culture and the like are also part of their world of thought. They also try to see things in a broader perspective, in the form of mutual and comprehensive relationships.
6. This intellectual group forms a smaller part of the community.

From the above features, the study observes that Alatas purposely used the term social in order to classify intellectual classes based on some considerations. Firstly, intellectuals are entities that are related to society as they are part of the community. Both of them provide something for the benefit of the people, especially from the perspective of their minds, energy and time to the fullest; they work to solve various problems or social issues.

The study again makes an astonishing observation of these intellectual features, whereby the fourth feature is quite eye-catching. Alatas notes that these groups will stay away from the community, but some will mix in their own group. The question is, why is this happening when they are the ones responsible for thinking about the problems of society and always strive to benefit their communities?

The study wanted to emphasize here that intellectuals at some level or boundaries begin to stay away from their communities when they became surrounded by those who were mostly in the absence of a sense of thought and inability to see the consequences of themselves and their surroundings. This is

because such groups are quite difficult to accept the reprimand and often reject the changes they wish to make although the purpose is for their good progress and development of the self and the nation.

3.2. Second Discourse: Intellectual Philosophy From The Viewpoint of Syed Hussein Alatas

The study continues to focus on how did Alatas identify intellectual philosophy. According to (*Kamus Dewan*, 2010: 406), philosophy in its etymology means knowledge of the understanding which is considered to be the highest form of knowledge, the basis of other forms of knowledge. Philosophy is also seen as a love for wisdom in the eyes of (Fieser & Stumpf, 2015: 36; Ahmad Sunawari Long, 2006: 9).

Intellectual discussions in the context of philosophy in fact begun since the Greek period pioneered by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. These topics were discussed by them when it comes to epistemology specifically about the theory of knowledge (Norman Gulley, 2013; Rehaf A. Madani, 2016).

Thus, this study is of the opinion that the relationship between philosophy and intellectuals can be refined through the process of searching for wisdom, which Sunawari Long (2006) feels that it encompasses any field of knowledge, understanding, moral practice, proliferation of views and attitudes that bring happiness.

When examining Alatas's later thinking on his works, it was found that he did not specifically, thematically and critically define intellectual philosophy. However, this study concludes that Alatas's intellectual philosophy is being communicated as an intellectual spirit. Why so? This is because his "intellectual spirit" includes the spirit of study, the enjoyment of intellectual quest, and deep respect for rational knowledge. He further emphasized that historically and sociologically, it is the intellectuals who stirred up this spirit and rendered its form." (Alatas, 1991: 14, 16-17). Here are some considerations about the intellectual spirit and its relevance to philosophy.

First, the intellectual spirit emphasizes the spirit of research, which is a scientific activity which entails an in-depth, detailed search and examination in order to gain knowledge or understanding of what is being studied. The relationship between philosophy and research activity is clear. This is because philosophy is a field of knowledge that emphasizes the ongoing process of research on human issues involving metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, ethics and morality. Duignan (2010) is of the view that this is in line with Aristotle's thinking that all men by nature desire to know.

Second, the intellectual spirit; the spirit of pleasure in intellectual quest. A person who loves or craves for knowledge will come to a degree of enjoyment of the intellectual and intellectual pursuits. The connection of this intellectual delight element with philosophy is based on Phytagoras's view that the quest for wisdom is important in philosophy rather than achievement of wisdom or knowledge (Sunawari Long, 2006: 10; Ewing, 1968: 13). The search for wisdom here therefore is synonymous with intellectual search (Asmawati Suhid & Fathiyah Mohd Fakhruddin, 2012).

Third, the intellectual spirit is a deep respect for scientific rational knowledge. Scientific here refers to what is understood in Islamic epistemology as an arrival of meaning in self and the self-arrival of meaning (Mohd Affandi Hassan, 2016: ix). This means that deep respect for scientific knowledge encourages people to strive to pursue knowledge. Such honor leads them to emphasize rational and logical elements during the quest for knowledge. The relevance of this element of honor with philosophy evidently refers to

knowledge and rationale, the fundamental basis of philosophy. Basically, philosophy itself is a science of the facts, according to Aristotle, the essence of something while in al-Kindi views it is the essence of divinity, which is the human capacity to respond and understand. In addition to that, philosophy is wisdom and wisdom is the subject of all knowledge. In a rational context, philosophy is a field that rationalizes thinking in the process of seeking wisdom; rational thinking which allows one to work accordingly based on his ability to get the truth of everything (Delius & Gatzemeier, 2000: 41-42).

This has an implication that the intellectual philosophy of Alatas refers to the elements of seriousness in one's self to knowledge and research and the persistent effort in the process of understanding a problem concerning his nation, with his persevering effort which needs to be in line with the good personality.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of the Importance of Intellectual Philosophy in the Context of Nation Development

The role of the study at this level is to examine and analyze the fundamentals of the significance of intellectual philosophy. The study focuses on the importance of intellectual philosophy towards progressive and productive intellectual progress and development among the Malays and the bumiputera in particular and the Malaysian nation in general.

Based on the above analysis, the importance of Alatas's intellectual philosophy is identified based on the three main entities which embrace the role, influence and symbolism or intellectual symbolism. The details of this importance are interpreted in the following three main considerations:

First, the intellectual catalyst to the creation of crystal ideas

Intellectuals are a very valuable group in a society (Francesco Campagnola & Li Man, 2016), including Malays and Bumiputera. Basically, this group plays a significant role and function in the development of the nation. The question is, what is actually the true role of the intellectuals? How do they contribute to the development of their nation?

If properly refined, the primary role of the intellectuals is to work or produce a variety of thoughtful and useful ideas. On this, Alatas argues that intellectuals play an important role in generating ideas and disseminating them to other members of society, hence, their task is to explain the problems of society and try to find solutions (Alatas, 1991; Azmi Arifin, 2012).

Alatas is seen here emphasizing that intellectuals play an important role as a catalyst for the creation of crystal ideas for the development of the nation and its people. Crystallization of ideas is interpreted as glowing and radiant thought. The highlighted idea for this study focuses on ideas that discuss or disagree with a problem. The glittering idea refers to the solution to a problem or conclusion on an issue that is new that is effectively practiced and implemented.

Highlighting and radiating of ideas is an intellectual responsibility. Consequently, Usman Awang (2016) affirms that intellectuals and ideas are synonymous. He pointed out that an intellectual is a person who always thinks (a thinker), he contributes as well develops his ideas. Strictly speaking, intellectuals are not the key role-holders as explorers and action initiators but they are a group that provides analysis, ideas, theories and ways to change.

Feuer's study (2010: 202-203) elucidates that intellectuals are ideologists. They are known as thinkers who have ideas, even outside their field or profession. These ideas enable them to have their own opinions on questions that are difficult to answer or disagree.

Furthermore, Azhar Ibrahim (2014: 72) asserted that the intellectuals are responsible for defining, planning, criticizing, generating ideas as well as imposing delusions or superficialities. This role is closely related to the idea that Azhar interpreted as an individual who can raise an idea about an issue or a particular problem.

In this context, it can be illustrated that intellectuals and ideas are a chain that complement each other and are never inseparable. This is because intellectuals are famous for their ideas in one sense. On the other hand, a great higher level, thoughtful idea is triggered by them because their intellect is capable of doing so.

Hence, here is the way how the intellectuals contributed to the development of their own ideas besides was incorporating them in the already existing ones. Firstly, sincere interpretation of each problem facing their communities. Secondly, educating communities, especially the youth about traditions. Thirdly, guiding and leading the people to knowledge and truth.

Second, the intellectual icon revolutioner of a nation

Alatas (1991) emphasized that intellectuals are quite an influential group because they are capable of providing leadership in the field of thought. According to him, the intellectual influences in the field of thought are the evidences of this study in categorizing them as intellectual revolutioner icons; the movers and developers of their own nations.

Why revolutioner icons? Reflecting on the views of Ali Shari'ati (1986), for example, for him, intellectuals are an icon of change as they needed to be forward because they are brave to resist all the obstacles and shortcomings of their time. Hence their influence is quite significant to the community as the initiators of ambitions, in addition to their struggle to renew and improve their love and faith of their society towards knowledge and truth.

Furthermore, on exploring the meaning of revolutioner, it means something completely new and different (*Kamus Dewan*, 2010: 1327). This meaning is a basic representation yet unique to intellectuals. This is because its being new and different makes it so significant with this group.

The new element in the context of producing new and different thoughtful, critical and successful ideas from existing ones. This element according to Alatas requires intellectuals to have psychological flexibility and mental readiness to move from one topic to another. However, the above discussion needs to be done by this group without being shallow and without repeating the already known truth by disguising it as a new discovery.

The ability is increasingly manifested by the spirit of the new philosophy that the intellectuals have. This spirit is the driving force behind the spark of revolutionary thought in the world community. The history of the world recorded the 1917 Russian Revolution, which broke out as a result of the boom of new philosophies among the people at that time (Matthew Rendle & Aaron Benyamin Retish, 2017). The revolution became the most important event in the history of Russia as it moved to develop in a modern way of thinking.

Commenting on the above phenomenon, Alatas stressed that such revolutionary events have been mobilized by the intellectuals in raising their spirits and giving a form to their race or society.

It is crucial to note that the different elements refer to the standpoint and the intellectual attitudes, especially in dealing with the problems of society. In addition to their ability to solve every problem that occurs in their own way. This entity allows intellectuals to be self-sufficient in defending their ideas and point of view. Consequently, Julien Benda argues that an intellectual must be prepared to defend his own point of view (Raja Ahmad Aminullah, 2014: 35).

Hence, Edward Said (1996) affirms that it is certainly reasonable to place intellectuals who possess elements of renewal and uniqueness in themselves as revolutionary icons.

Edward is of the opinion that intellectuals represent emancipation and enlightenment. He further stressed that the intellectuals represent what he or she represents and how those ideas are represented to an audience. Implying that the intellectuals are influential and worthy of being marked as a nation's revolutioner icons due to their efforts to transform their society and country.

Third, the intellectual symbolism of the dignified civilized character of the nation

Furthermore, intellectuals are classified as an important part of the nation's development. Alatas stressed that intellectuals are indispensable to society. His characterization was based on their ability to spread the influence in the principles of a nation, let alone being a group that can be bragged on. Interestingly, the intellectuals in the eyes of Pramodya Ananta Toer (2016: 53) are those who have the ability to see the future, in addition to being committed to shaping a better society (Shaharom TM Sulaiman, 2013: 3).

It is important to note that they have the ability and commitment to provide valuable insight into their nation, besides their symbolism being a reciprocal reflection of the basic problems to the people, including the Malays and Bumiputeras in Malaysia such as: intellectual slavery, the absence of intellectual-philosophical spirit, lack of intellectual interest, and the growing problem of working intellectual groups. These problems are a turning point to the need and obligations of the existence of critical, logical and rational intellectuals.

This means that they need and the existence of this group of Malaysians and Bumiputeras in Malaysia are very apparent, important, significant and necessary for national development. This made Alatas (1991) to again assert that this requirement was an absolute one for national development. Strictly speaking, stresses Alatas, a society without effective intellectuals will not be able to identify problems, to make matters worse, it will lose the level of consciousness and certain insight into the underlying issues that hit them.

Alatas's expression can be taken as a requirement for functional and active intellectuals in ensuring progressive and effective progress towards their own race or society, including Malaysia. This urgent need is an indication that intellectuals are a very important and special group, especially in the context of dissemination of knowledge and problem solving in the community.

These intellectual interests and privileges also signify that they have a unique and great identity. The uniqueness and greatness of intellectuals expressed by Alatas (1977, 1991) that they are more knowledgeable, have the ability and willingness to think, and know the consequences of every action. This self-confessed symbolizes that they are the heart of a dignified civilized nation.

Alatas's opinion is supported by Shaharom TM Sulaiman and Raja Ahmad Aminullah. As the heart of the community, intellectuals as viewed by Shaharom (2013) are a group that is charged with the responsibility of improving social conditions as well as guiding the community. Raja Ahmad Aminullah (2014) agrees with Alatas and Shaharom TM Sulaiman, further adds that intellectuals are groups who have the feeling of collective responsibility to improve their society, capture their aspirations and express their hope, anxiety, restlessness and worries of society and try to study, digest, formulate and propose basic or alternative ideas to solve problems confronting them.

The study once again emphasizes that intellectuals are a symbol to the civilization of a nation. This is due to their ability to assess a problem, capable of suggesting feasible solutions, besides being committed to solving various problems of the nation.

V. CONCLUSION

5.1. Conclusion

Overall, this study acknowledges that Alatas had a sharp mind. This is based on his critical, thoughtful and profound idea of the community as well as intellectual issues. The sharpness of his mind can also be traced in his writings such as *Intellectual in Developing Societies*. The scope of Alatas's thinking is delineated and his intellectual concept and philosophy that he did build is based on value frame. The value meant here is his personal philosophy which stipulates significant influence on the formation of his ideas, especially when he discusses various issues involving the intellectual and the problems surrounding him.

Based on the focus of this study, it can be concluded that intellectuals are capable of using their own minds in responding to and understanding various issues and problems that occur. This includes issues related to race, society and nation. The issues and problems that will be identified and solutions to solve them will be found. Intellectuals also struggle hard to produce good ideas so that the problems that occur within their nation can be overcome wisely and effectively for a long period of time.

As a result, the intellectual philosophy of Alatas is formulated as an intellectual spirit, which refers to efforts to seek, study, research, evaluate and understand the various fields of knowledge, with the purpose ultimately leading to the discovery and acquisition of the truth about the nature of something.

Finally, it can be concluded that the working intellectuals are a valuable figure for the development of the intellectual property of the Malays and Bumiputera especially, as well as the nation throughout the world generally. Their value is illustrated by Allah The Almighty, especially among the Muslim intellectuals in *Surah al-Mujadalah* 58: 11 which states that, "Allah, exalted the ranks of the believers among you, and those who were given the knowledge of religion from amongst you some degrees". Their elevated degrees have placed them in a very important position among their own races because of their role as thinkers who solve the problems surround their communities.

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