

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim's Works and Contributions to the Development of Islamic Civilization in the Malay World

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Abstract

Sheikh Abdullah bin Ibrahim or also known as Haji Abdullah Fahim (Pak Him). A great scholar with a very wide vision and contributions to the development of Islamic education in the Malay archipelago especially Malaya (Tanah Melayu) who contributed his strength and thought to ensure Islam stood firm and protected. As a great scholar, he believed that knowledge was the only asset for mind building. He frequently thought on the best approaches in providing Islamic education in an arranged and on a larger scale. His focus was on Muslim communities who lack the knowledge and did not practice Islam wholeheartedly in their daily lives. His thoughts mingled on the quest to generate leaders of tomorrow with a strong foundation of Islam, willing to free the country from colonialisation as well as reforming the race and religion for the better. It was these reasons that made him willingly established the school even though he was aware of the challenges ahead. There is no doubt that sound knowledge and education would eventually lead to civilization that contains characteristics of self-confidence, progressive spirit, and peaceful co-existence with others. Civilization as such could be regarded as a complete and comprehensive portrayal of Islamic teachings with an emphasis on the development of economics and advancement among contemporary Muslims. This paper therefore, is an attempt to highlight the contribution of Sheikh Abdullah Fahim in the development of Islamic civilization in the Malay World.

Keywords: Scholar, Knowledge, Contribution, Development and Civilization

Introduction

One of Allah's gifts to the Malay archipelago especially Malaya (Tanah Melayu) before securing independence was the existence of Islamic movements and activities. Even though the Portugese, Dutch and English continuously prevented the spread of Islam, the light of Islam managed to be absorbed in the Malay world, which later flourished and spread widely. This fact is discern through the emergence of great scholars who contributed their strengths and thoughts to ensure Islam stood firm and protected.

One of those distinguished scholars with a very wide vision and contributions to the development of Islamic civilization was born in Seberang Prai, Penang. His name was Haji Abdullah Bin Ibrahim or also known as Haji Abdullah Fahim (Pak Him). He was known with his surname Tok Ngah Lah by the people of Kepala Batas. He was born in 1869¹ at a place not far from Masjid al Haram, Mecca² called Shuaib Ali. Other sources mentioned that he was born at Kubur Panjang, Kedah and migrated to Mecca with his father during his childhood.³

His father, Sheikh Ibrahim Bin Haji Tahir served as a religious teacher with a specialization in al-Quran in Masjid al Haram Mecca. Most of his students were originated from Malaysia, Indonesia, Pattani, and other parts of the Malay Archipelago.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim married a Malay woman in al Hijaz and and was granted with two sons, namely Ahmad Ghazali and Ahmad. Later, Haji Ahmad Bin Abdullah was known as Haji Ahmad Badawi⁴.

Education

Haji Abdullah was very much influenced by his surroundings in Shuaib Ali that later triggered deep interest in the knowledge of Islam including al-Quran. His efforts was paid handsomely with the ability to master several fields namely syariah, usuluddin, tafsir, hadith, tasawwuff including Arabic literature and astronomy⁵.

According to Datuk Haji Ahmad Badawi, his father sought knowledge from 42 famous Islamic teachers⁶. Nonetheless, Mokhtar Petah declared in his

¹ Born in 1870 based from a book entitled "Abdullah Fahim Perjuangan Seorang Tokoh Agama dan Kemerdekaan", Published by the Information Ministry, Penang, 2001 p. 1.

² Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 26.

• ³ Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 48.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Abdullah Fahim Perjuangan Seorang Tokoh Agama dan Kemerdekaan", Published by the Information Ministry, Penang, 2001 p. 1.

⁶ Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 26.

book that Sheikh Abdullah Fahim studied in Mecca from 45 famous ulama⁷. Besides religion, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim studied politics and international relation. His interest later grew and his thoughts in the field of politics⁸ often expressed. Hence, his mastery of knowledge both in religious and modern knowledge enables him to contribute such an integrated knowledge to his students after his return to Tanah Melayu, which eventually develop the true picture of Islamic civilization among the latter.

In 1374 Hijrah, Haji Abdullah once declared “Long live the Malays. Malaysia and Indonesia are like brothers”. Besides being actively involved in the quest for independence, Haji Abdullah once predicted that Malaya will gain its independence in the year 1957 because the country was “mature and ready for it”⁹.

His interest in Arabic poetry

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was an expert in the Arabic language. His deepest passion was in Arabic poetry. One will find his poems contain several elements as stated in the following:

1. The inculcation of self awareness and self esteem in oneself.
2. The urge to change one's attitude by strengthening the mind and the promotion to move toward changes and ready for the future.
3. The enhancement of the spirit to excel amongst the Malays and to combat low self esteem.
4. The enhancement of the spirit of jihad and love for the country and independence.

Amongst his poem written on the 28th Safar 1369Hijrah that was included in “*Izhar al Hak fi Usuliddin wa al Fiqh*” by Haji Zakaria Abu Bakar¹⁰ was:

Bismillah al Rahman al Rahim, al Hamdulillah al rabbi al alamin, Wa al Salatu wa al Salamu ala Saidina Muhammad, wa ala alihi wa ashabihi ajma'en.

قدموا بدولا كن سموحا غير مقتر	صفوفا ضحوكا باسمما غير عابس
تذل ولا تحقر سواك تحقر	ولا تغترتقدم ولا تك طامعا
تصدق ولا تركن إلى قول مفتر	وعود تعالى الصدق نفسك وارضه

⁷ Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 49.

⁸ Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 26.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Matba'ah al Ittihadiyah, Maktabah al Haji Abdul Bin Muhammad Nur al Din Al Rawi, United Press, Penang

وكن راغباً في الخير ما عشت وانتصب لنفع الورى ما اسطعت والشر فاحذر
ولا تقف ذلات العباد بعدها فلسـت على هذا الورى بمسيطر
ولا تعترض لاعتراض عليهم دع الخاق للخلاق تسلم وتؤجر

Several stanzas of his poem which were written on 27th Syawal 1348:

بالقومي هل يكن فينا كمال
ورب العلم سياسة بطل
صائب الرأي فحاطب لايهاب
مالك الارية مفتول الفصل

In his other poem, he expressed his love towards his country by stating:

وطني وإن جرت علي عزيزة
وأهلي وإن ضنوا علي كرام

The above illustrations of poems composed by this great scholar vehemently clarifies his contribution in promoting the necessity of knowledge and the necessity to express love towards one's country which are essential to instill Islamic civilization to the heart of the readers and listeners.

The Sanad in his Tafsir, Tasawwuf, Usul, Awwad and others

This great scholar studied in various fields namely Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Usuluddin, Tasawwuf, and others. He was granted several Sanad from his teachers in the said fields as an acknowledgement to an outstanding student from his mentors. The Sanad was included in a small risalah.

He also studied the knowledge of syariah like Tafsir Jalalain, Tafsir Baidawi, Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Daud, Sunan Tarmidhi, Sunan Nasa'i, Sunan Ibn Majah, Kitab Tuhfah, Kitab al Nihayah, Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin, Kitab al Mustasfa, Imam Ghazali. and others.

In Hijaz, he studied the views and thoughts of distinguished scholars from several mazhab via books written by great ulama. Nonetheless, upon his return to Tanah Melayu, he preached Muslims to hold on to only one mazhab (Syafi'i) to avoid rifts and disunity amongst them.

His services in the field of education

After completing his studies in Mecca, Haji Abdullah returned to Malaya in 1921. He went back to Mecca for a visit and returned to his

homeland after World War II. He stayed in Kampong Limbung Kapal, Alor Star, Kedah.

As a great scholar, he believed that knowledge was the only asset for mind building, and eventually promoting to great civilization. He became a teacher at Maahad Mahmud and taught the Sultan of Kedah. He taught in Kedah for seven years. He later returned to Kepala Batas, Seberang Prai and taught therein for several months¹¹. He started to teach at his house whereby his students did not exceed five (5) in numbers. Later, he started to teach at mosque and eventually at school.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim moved to Kuala Kangsar in 1928 to succeed the position of Allahyarham Haji Muhammad Bin Haji Muhammad Salleh, the head of Madrasah Idrisiah, Bukit Chandan. Madrasah Idrisiyah was an Islamic school under the wakaf of Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah (the 1st), the father to Almarhum Sultan Alang Iskandar Shah¹².

In 1932, the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Iskandar decided to rearrange the syariah law in the state based on al-Quran and Sunnah. He called upon the scholars (ulama) to prepare a paper work for the said reason. Amongst the scholars who participated were Sheikh Nawawi Bin Muhammad, Haji Mohammad Zain Minagkabau, Sheikh Mohammad Tahir Jalaluddin, and Sheikh Abdullah Fahim. Sheikh Abdullah Fahim himself was appointed by the Sultan to become the chairman.

However, the English Resident who at that time resided in Kuala Kangsar wrote a letter to the Sultan alleging both Sheikh Abdullah Fahim and Sheikh Tahir to be a part of the anti-resident movement over sea as well as plotting to dethrone Sultan Alang Iskandar and other Malay Sultans. The Sultan then ordered the two to leave Perak within 24 to 36 hours. Sheikh Abdullah Fahim left Bukit Chandan and returned to Kepala Batas¹³.

Daeratul Maarif Islamic School, Kepala Batas¹⁴

Generally, Islamic schools in Tanah Melayu were divided into 3 types. Two of them were of "formal" education system. Education at the surau or

¹¹ Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 49.

¹² Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 50.

¹³ Ibid p. 53-61.

¹⁴ Kepala Batas obtained its name from the word "Kepala Batas" which meant 'road' and 'head'. The town of Kepala Batas existed before 1786 (at a junction in front of the old post office). Originally, the location belonged to Kedah but was later handed to Penang (to Sir Francis Light). Originally, the people of Kepala Batas came from Kedah and Pattani. There were estimated about 200 people at that time. (http://www.kepalabatas.com/Abdullah_fahim.html sejarah.htm)

mosque was considered informal type held privately at evening or at night to teach Ibadah to children and adults.

Pondok (religious hut) was considered as formal and privately held by religious teachers who provided regular education courses with the time frame of 2 to 5 years. Next was the madrasah and later known as Sekolah Agama Rakyat (Community Islamic School) that differed from those of the government's.

The subject taught at the pondok were Tauhid, Fiqh, Tasawwuf, Quran, Tafsir, Hadith, Arabic grammar, Saraf, Arabic literature, Usul Feqah and others. These courses aimed at strengthening Islam for those who learnt it thus elevating the status of oneself in the society.

The development of this type of school was better transformed after the year 1900 especially in the northern part of the peninsula exemplified by Daeratul Maarif al Wataniah School, Kepala Batas.

The background of Daeratul Maarif al Wataniah school

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim continuously thought on the best approaches in providing Islamic education in an arranged and on a larger scale. His focus was on Muslim communities who lack the knowledge and did not practice Islam wholeheartedly in their daily lives. His thoughts mingled on the quest to generate leaders of tomorrow with a strong foundation of Islam, willing to free the country from colonialisation as well as reforming the race and religion for the better as to achieve the real meaning of civilization. It was these reasons that made him willingly established the school even though he was aware of the challenges ahead.

According to Ustaz Ahmad Maliki the reasons for the establishment of the school were:

“Approximately a quarter of a century ago, Tanah Melayu was in the hand of greedy people who ruled as they pleased but provided nothing to the community except for themselves. The idea on the spirit of the Malays be it alive or dead were seen to be trivial to be catered for unlike today where the people are more alive to uplift the standard of the Malays. In the olden days, the Malays did not have the urge to move ahead, to be better, to educate their children to be patriotic toward the country. They lack the knowledge to promote the spirit to shield and protect themselves. All that was there was hatred and the employees just surrendered themselves to be bullied by their employers. The people were blanketed with the feeling of fear for the ruler. The farmers were utterly satisfied with their efforts. They did not want to venture in business even when the benefits were known to be fruitful.”

Simply said, our race were afraid of changes. Even Allah stated that changes will bring happiness. They still hold on to old customs that were already outdated but unwilling to depart from it no matter how silly the practices were. The understanding at that time was old-fashioned like what Allah mentioned in al-Quran that meant:

“When We tell them to follow the path of their parents even if the parents did not know anything”

With all these in mind Al-Maarif Al Wataniah District Islamic School emerged with the quest to combat ignorance together with other schools of the same policies¹⁵.

Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah school for the country

The word “al wataniah” attached to the school implied the meaning of educating the people to enable them to contribute to the development of the country. Ustaz Ahmad Maliki said:

“The word “Al-Wathoniah” meant “for the country” adapted as the school’s name was a clear indication of its purpose. To educate male and female youths so that they later able to give back to the country. It was also the characteristic of its founder who loves his country very much¹⁶”.

As soon as the school was built (for the benefit of the country, a congress entitled “المؤتمر النافع للوطن” with the meaning of ‘a useful congress for the country’ was held.

With this foundation, the female and male youths were moulded in the compound of al Maarif al Wathoniah by teachers who willingly served them in the name of Islam. The teachers were the living example for the students to excel. No wonder the teachers at the school had to undergo challenges and changes that sometimes contributed to their changed of thoughts. Whatever it is, the core objective was to educate the students and trained them to have pure hearts. Willing to sacrifice for the country all in the name of Allah¹⁷”.

This school was built in 1344 hijrah in which Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was the first person to teach Hadith. Generally, this school played an important role for the country in spreading Islam via the Islamic education system rejecting any unIslamic practices. All former students of the school agreed that

¹⁵ Refer to the speech of Yang Mulia Tuan Haji Maliki, The Guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah School inconjunction with the 28th Ihtifal p. 7.

¹⁶ Refer to the speech of Yang Mulia Tuan Haji Maliki, The Guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah School inconjunction with the 28th Ihtifal p. 7.

¹⁷ Refer to the speech of Yang Mulia Tuan Haji Maliki, The Guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah School inconjunction with the 28th Ihtifal p. 8.

the school succeeded in producing excellent graduants not just in academic but as good Muslims in promoting and practicing Islam.

His strong spirit in promoting Islamic education was acknowledged by Tuan Haji Ahmad Maliki in his speech (as the guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniyah School at that time) in conjunction with the school's 28th Ihtifal Day. He mentioned¹⁸:

"The district of al Maarif al Wataniyah was founded by al 'Allamah al Sheikh Abdullah Fahim, a product of al Haramain who has a clear understanding of Islam. He taught the people towards the paths of Allah. He mastered the subject of Tafsir and hadith as well as in the field of astronomy and the branches of religion. He appreciated the people and passionate towards his race, religion and country".

An extract of his words of wisdom was:

لو سرنا سيرة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لكننا أعظم دولة تحت السماء وأكبر مملكة في الأرض
Meaning: If we move according to Rasulullah's movement, we will be able to rule underneath the sky and be the most powerful ruler on earth.

Sheikh Haji Ahmad Maliki praised the founder and the teachers for their hardwork and opinions. He said:

"Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniyah was founded at the exact location and time where the people were eager for changes. No explanation needed to justify the school teachers' hardwork toward the goal of promoting Islam widely in the name of Allah.

The foundation of the school was based on trust and support from the people who believed and sacrificed for its success practicing jihad to uplift the kalimah "*Laila ha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasulullah*".

The progress of the school was not powered by money but "great will". They held on to the concept of 'when there is a will, there is a way'.

فإذا عزمتم فتوكل على الله

Allah said: If you want things so badly, go on ahead and fight for it. When there is struggle, there will definitely be victory.

The second foundation: *"Believe in Daeratul al Maarif to serve the people for the benefit of the race, country and Islam especially. The students will come out from the school ready to contribute justly with strong faith in Allah. Allah said:*

¹⁸ Refer to the speech of Yang Mulia Tuan Haji Maliki, The Guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniyah School inconjunction with the 28th Ihtifal p. 6.

لا تهنوا ولا تحزنوا وأنتم الأعلون إن كنتم مؤمنين

Meaning: "Do not be weak and sad at heart for you will gain victory if you have Iman (faith)".

The third foundation: *The school believed in "patience". The will to face hardship and challenges to move forward all in the name of Allah. Allah said:*

فاصبر كما صبر أولو العزم منكم

"Be patient like Ulul Azmi (Prophets who had firm will in their hearts). The authority of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniyah based their goal and Allah's command towards the Muslims, the Malays and Tanah Melayu itself"¹⁹

According to Ustaz Ahmad Saghir in his statement on the success of the school in eradicating superstitious practices and understanding of the people that produced students highly respectable in the society. He said:

"Al Allamah al Sheikh Abdullah Fahim came to Tanah Melayu from Mecca at a time where the Malays were practicing superstitious acts. Rifts amongst them were very large. Ibadat were not performed accordingly. It was at that moment when Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah developed. Al Allamah taught and worked really hard to spread the true meaning of Islam delivering the words of al-Quran and Hadith. Alhamdulillah his works were paid off in ten gruelling years. Daeratul Maarif al Wataniah managed to produce several scholars who specialised in the field of religion"²⁰.

The above three noble foundations in the establishment of this exemplary school are self sufficient to develop and enhance the spirit of Islamic civilization not just among its students and teachers; yet among the locals at that time.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim as the main reference to muslim writers

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was the main reference to Muslim writers of his era. As an example, he praised a work done by his student named al Sheikh Mustafa Abdul Rahman Mahmud²¹ on Tafsir al-Quran. It was considered a

¹⁹ Refer to the speech of Yang Mulia Tuan Haji Maliki, The Guardian of Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniyah School inconjunction with the 28th Ihtifal p. 7.

²⁰ Refer to notes written by Ustaz Mohammad Soghri, the 28th Ihtifal, Daeratul al Maarif al Wataniah, p. 13

²¹ Sheikh Mustafa Abdul Rahman. His full name was Mustaffa Bin Abdul Rahman Bin Mahmud. Born at Gunung Semanggol in 1918. The eldest out of seven children. Married to Puan Ruhayah Yahya of Taiping , Perak. They did not have children. He was a very quiet

masterpiece in the field of religion since it portrayed reformed and tajdid issues in the development of the Muslims especially in this part of the world. The people were living in the verge of independence. Even if some of them already obtained it, their thoughts and lifestyles were still influenced by the colonist.

This book of Tafsir was a great contribution as well as the only tajdid ought to be embalmed in the hearts of Muslims to wake up from their slumber, ready to make changes based on the teachings of Islam. The most important piece of writing in the field of tafsir and the earliest ever written in Bahasa Malaysia was named *Tafsir al Quran al Hakim*.

This book was special since it was created based on the actual scenario that took place and later became the foundation for other fields of Islam. This tafsir comprised of 27 volumes written in Bahasa Malaysia using Jawi. Every volume contained 1 juz (chapter) of al-Quran was completed during his life time. It was printed and published by Muhammad Ali Bin Hj. Muhammad al-Rawi. Persama Press Publication 83-85 Achen Street, Penang. First published on the 19th January 1949.

Since Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was a core reference for the knowledge at that time, he was asked to write a few words in the introduction chapter of the book. He said;

"I praised Allah for the opportunity to read several tafsir in Bahasa Melayu. Tafsir al-Quran al-Hakim by al-Fadhil Mustafa Abdul Rahman Mahmud. Based from my observation, I feel that this piece of work is very satisfactory based from its contents and arrangements. It started by providing the meaning of each ayat from the Quran as well as subtle explanations that are easily understood, remembered and applied by the readers. In the conclusion, he added: "I will pray hard so that this tafsir will be published repeatedly to be practiced by all Malay Muslims in the Peninsular of Tanah Melayu".

The writing and publication of this book of Tafsir is indeed a clear proof on Sheikh Abdullah Fahim's achievement in moulding his student to absorb the true meaning of Islamic civilization through the portrayal of Islamic teaching and tajdid as such.

Mazhab al-Shafie

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim wanted the Malays to believe and practice Mazhab Shafie only rather than other mazhab, as to avoid distortion of race

person who loved to read during his free time. He was a man of great virtue and very pious. He left behind 27 valuable works after his demise. His father *Haji Abdul Rahman* was a famous ulama in Perak. He was the founder of *Pondok al-Rahmaniyyah* Gunung Semanggol before it was replaced with *Maahad al-Ehya al-Syarif* in 1934. studied for 15 years and graduated from al-Azhar, Egypt and Masjidil Haram, Mecca. Passed away in 1959.

especially when the country was on the verge of independence and unity was very much needed.

In one of Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Friday congregational prayer sermons, he wrote on his firm stand on Mazhab al-Shafie. He said:

“Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim was the earliest ayat and Ijma’an. Those who performed prayer without reciting Bismillahir Rahmanir rahim, will not be accepted. If he is the Imam and did not recite Bismillah, it is an obligation for the makmum to mufaraqah²²”.

There was one letter written by Sheikh Abdullah Fahim on the importance of the Malays to hold on to Mazhab al-Shafie. He said²³:

“Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim, Alhamdulillah, wassolatu wassalamu ala Saidina Muhammad, wa ala alihi wa ashabihi (Amma Ba’du).

Everyone were well known of the fact that the Malays in Malaya from the lowest class till the highest (Kadi, ulama, ministers and sultans) practiced only Mazhab al-Shafie”.

1. *They adopted the laws of Feqah Shafie from Kitab Tuhfah, Kitab Nihayah until Kitab al Um and Mukhtasarat. The translated ones in Bahasa Melayu were sabil al Muhtadi, Baghiyatu al Tullab, Matla’ul al Badrain and others.*
2. *Usuluddin based on the journey of Abu Hassan al-Ash’ari. Originated from syuruh, hawashi Ummu al Barahim, Jawharah and other Malay books.*
3. *The knowledge of tasawwuf based on the journey of Imam al Ghazali. Taken from minhajul Abidin, Ihya Ulumuddin and translated into Bahasa Melayu like Sairu al Salikin.*

These were books regarding to the stated field. All laws included derived from al-Quran and Hadith were intricately analysed by Ulama Ajilaa. They were practiced more than a thousand years and translated for the Malays for hundreds of years²⁴.

In several seminars (muzakarah) attended by the ulama of Malaya, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim defended his fatwa on certain issues. He was supported by Sheikh Fadlullah Suhaimi, Datuk Abdul Jalil Hassan, Sheikh Haji Nawawi Bin Muhammad, Sheikh Haji Zubir Bin Muhammad, Haji Ahmad Fuad, Ustaz Haji Mad Saman Kati and the entire mufti from the federation of Tanah Melayu. Amongst his fatwa were:

²² Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 pg. 44.

²³ Ismail Awang, Tokoh Ulama Semenanjung Melayu, p. 39

²⁴ Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 46

1. Lottery money including lottery fund of Board of Social Welfare was prohibited (haram) to be used by Muslims. This was to protect the peoples' rights.
2. Marriage via "cina buta" method was illegal and cannot be accepted.
3. Money which came from bribery is illegal to be used by any Muslims²⁵

His firm stand towards promoting solely Mazhab Shafi'i as to promote solidarity among Muslims and to prevent disunity among them shows the Sheikh seriousness to promote civilized society with mutual understanding and solidarity.

The spirit of the Malays

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim had a very strong Malay spirit in his blood. He once showed aggression to those who were anti-Malays and tried to teach other than Mazhab al-Shafie. The Khawarij group was the one Sheikh Abdullah Fahim resented²⁶.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim advised the Malays not to have rifts amongst themselves. This was because, at that time Mazhab Khawarij that practiced other than Ahli Sunnah wal Jamaah existed in Tanah Melayu.

The Mazhab Khawarij follower tried to diverge and created confusions in the Malay mind. Haji Abdullah Fahim pleaded to all as not to be easily influenced by the preaching that clearly inexistence in Mazhab al-Shafie²⁷.

He even reminded all to "kill as adapted on serious crimes anyone who wanted to break apart the Malay unity".

He said: *"Anybody who comes to you and tells you to obey one individual in the quest to break the unity of your race, kill him"*²⁸.

Haji Abdullah Fahim wanted the people to reconcile amongst themselves and live in unity and harmony. He said: *"The Muslims must make the effort to reconcile amongst each other in order to stay united. This is the only tool to strengthen the position of the Malays and Islam"*.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim later added: *"If the Muslims betrayed their race, country and religion, Allah will replace them with other Muslim race to manage the country"*²⁹.

The fight against the colonist and the quest for the country's independence

²⁵ Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 28

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 29

²⁹ Mokhtar Petah, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim Penentu Tarikh Kemerdekaan Negara 31 Ogos 1957, Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur, 1977 p. 46

He once proclaimed:

“Those who fight in the name of Allah with good intentions will always be blessed by Him. For those who forgot his purpose, betrayed and greedy will be condemned by Allah that will lead to humiliation³⁰”.

Even though Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was not in the frontline in the team of discussing the agenda of independence with the British, he was an inspiration and reference to the heroes of the Independent Federation of Tanah Melayu.

His awareness in the political field and quest for independence begun while he was still in Mecca. It can be seen in his poems that promoted the fight against the colonist.

The fights for independence started when the leaders who were the ulama and umara became aware of the oppression committed by the British. The Malay spirit soared high in the 1940s with the atmosphere of anti-British evaporated greatly amongst the people of Tanah Melayu.

Tunku Abdul Rahman stated that the struggle for independence was triggered by the realization amongst the Malays. Furthermore, the immigrants in the country were not united with the Malays.

With that, the English government created a term whereby all the three races (Malay, Chinese and Indian) must unite before they were granted independence. The main reason for it was as soon as the people aimed for was permitted, the English did not want riot to take place.

Dato' Haji Md Nor Ahmad (the former secretary of UMNO, Kepala Batas) who was once a member of Dewan Undangan Negeri (ADUN) Tasik Gelugor district from 1974-1986 said, “as soon as Tunku Abdul Rahman explained on the terms and conditions from the English government, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim exclaimed *MasyaAllah* (this was often uttered by him while talking to people or after receiving any news)”.

Soon after, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim raised his hand above. He pointed his fore finger, middle finger, the fourth and the little finger. He however, bended his thumb. He said that it was symbolically done. The fore finger symbolised the English government, the middle finger were the Malays, the fourth one were the Chinese, the little finger were the Indians and other races in Tanah Melayu. He told Tunku Abdul Rahman that the best way was to have all these fingers to stay together (united)³¹. In other words all races must be united in order to gain independence.

³⁰Abdullah Fahim *Perjuangan Seorang Tokoh Agama dan Kemerdekaan*”, Published by the Information Ministry, Penang, 2001 p. 10

³¹Abdullah Fahim *Perjuangan Seorang Tokoh Agama dan Kemerdekaan*”, Published by the Information Ministry, Penang, 2001 p. 13

Tunku Abdul Rahman often mingled with Sheikh Abdullah Fahim for advices on governmentship as well as independence. Sheikh Abdullah Fahim told Tunku Abdul Rahman to board a ship to London in 1956 instead of the plane so that the delegates will have more time to discuss on the matter before meeting with the British.

Dato' Hai Md Nor Ahmad said " Sheikh Abdullah Fahim wanted Tunku Abdul Rahman and his delegates to board a ship so that they have ample time to negotiate amongst themselves and decided in unison on how to make the discussion with the British much easier.

If the journey was by flight, the discussion would be shorter. However, the delegates were told to take the flight home to avoid any mishap that will jeopardise the nation's independence.

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim told Tunku Abdul Rahman that if the British do not grant independence to Tanah Melayu on the 31st August 1957, the people would have to wait for another 5 years which will be on the 31st August 1962. He had a premonition that before the year 1962, it was considered not good for the Malays to declare independence³².

The contributions and legacy of Sheikh Abdullah Fahim

The smart and active Sheikh Abdullah Fahim did not have the chance to write a book. According to Haji Ahmad Badawi, he was too occupied with his teachings and was left with no spare time. However, he did left behind an unfinished book of tafsir written on the 5th Ramadhan 1345 hijrah. He wrote a book on astronomy but didn't get to be printed. Nonetheless, his love for Arabic poetry made him composed a lot of it.

His teachings and contributions managed to produced great leaders to the society as well as the country in the quest towards an endless journey of promoting Islam and the progress of independence for the benefit of all, and thus, proving this great scholar's contribution to civilization.

Amongst his former students who became ulama were Allahyarham Haji Ghazali a religious teacher of Maktab Babul (Lenggong , Perak), Sheikh Ismail Hamzah as the Mufti of Perak, Sheikh Hamzah Mu'ti, Dato' Haji Yang Ghazali Bin Abdullah as the Mufti of Selangor, Haji Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Salam as the Kadi of Perak, Haji Muhammad Saman Kati as an ulama and a great figure of Perak and Haji Zakaria Bin Mat Dohor as the Kadi of Perak.

Amongst those who was formally involved in politics before passing away was a member of Dewan Undangan Negeri Perak, Mohammad Kassim Bin Haji Din.

³²Ibid., p. 14.

Some even became successful businessmen. They were Allahyarham Yahaya Arif and Datuk Abdul Aziz Bin Ahmad the manager of Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur.

When Sheikh Abdullah Fahim was the headmaster of Madrasah Idrisiyah, he was closely in contact with several ulama of Perak. They were Allahyarham Sheikh Tahir Jalauddin, Haji Mohammad Arshad Karai, Haji Muhammad Zin Minagkabau and Sheikh Haji Nawawi Muhammad.

Madrasah Daeratul al Ma'arif al Wataniah of Kepala Batas was successful in producing graduates in various field of Islam. Together, they developed the school, became teachers, authors of Islamic books as well as held posts such as Kadi and Imam. As example, al-Fadhil al-Ustaz Abdul Halim al-Hadi the headmaster of Daeratul al-Ma'arif, Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir the Mudir of Maahad al-Ahya' al-Sharif of Gunung Semanggol, Ustaz Ahmad Hashmi the founder of al-Maahad al-Islami Tasik Junjung, Ustaz Ghazali Abdullah, the founder of Maahad al-Thaqafah al-Islamiyah Layang-layang Kanan Parit Perak who later became a teacher of al-ulum al Shariah 20th mile Bagan Datuk and finally as a special Kadi at Majlis Agama Islam Perak. Other than them were, Haji Mohammad Razi Abu Hanifah a religious teacher of Selikuh Bagan Datuk, Tuan Hamzah the Kadi of Kuala Nerang Kedah, Tuan Haji Mansur the Kadi of Baling Kedah, Tuan Haji Ahamad the Kadi of Kuala Muda, Tuan Haji Ahmad Junaid a Quranic visitor of southern Kedah, Tuan Haji Zakaria the Kadi of Batu Gajah and many more who were in service in various filed throughout the country.

Time passed but the school stood strong and bold after some renovation done to its structure. The school is now know as **Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR)** administered by the committees of al-Jamiul Badawi Mosque. It is the centre for Islamic education with the majority of local students from Sekolah Kebangsaan Permatang Bertam and Sekolah Rendah Hashim Awang.

The mufti of Penang

In his olden days when the Muslims of Penang were in dire need of his service as a Mufti of the state, he held the post for five years before he passed away.

The demise of Sheikh Abdullah Fahim

Sheikh Abdullah Fahim passed away at 8am, on a Thursday 28th April 1961 at the age of 92 years old. It was clarified by the late Dato' Haji Ahmad Badawi that this great scholar was not ill even to the knowledge of his neighbours. Feeling tired and weak that night, he asked for a glass of water and

drank it. His lips constantly pronouncing Allah's name till the end of his life³³. His body was buried at the northern part of Kepala Batas Mosque.

Conclusion

Those were the contributions by a great ulama of the country. Sheikh Abdullah Fahim accomplished his responsibilities as a true citizen for the sake of his race and nation as a whole.

He was a very pious ulama and a great man. He mastered the field of astronomy, Syariah, Usuluddin, Tasawuf and Tarekat, Tafsir al-Quran and Hadith. He was also a very cunning politician. It is undeniably true that through the establishment of school, he managed to boost the spirit of gaining true and profound knowledge of Allah that is essential to enhance the civilization among people.

No doubt that a good cooperation amongst the ulama, political leaders and the people was the shield to protect the country from the colonist who tried to fail the quest for independence.

Without Sheikh Abdullah Fahim's contributions, the history of Malaysia would probably be different. His works ought to be remembered by the later generations of Malaysia that comprised of many races.

His gifts and dedications would always be the source of guidance and inspiration to the Malaysians today and forever.

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³³Majallah Pengasuh, no.428, Zulhijjah 139h. December 1977 p. 29.

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