

“Glimpses of Political, Intellectual and Religious Thought and Contribution of *Bapak* [Father] Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993): An Extraordinary Muslim Leader of the 20th Century C.E.”

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia (known as the Netherlands East Indies before independence) has produced one of the greatest Muslim political leaders, statesmen, thinkers, intellectuals, and propagators of 20th century Islam in the extraordinary personality of Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993). Fondly addressed in Indonesia as Pak [Father] Natsir by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, he became the most prominent leader of Islamic politics after the 2nd World War and became the first Prime Minister of a united, post-revolutionary Indonesia in August 1950. By 1949 he was the head of the Islamic party, called MASJUMI, which brought together several Islamic political parties under one umbrella. A Western educated intellectual with strong Islamic foundation, Mohammad Natsir rose rapidly to the top of political prominence within a short revolutionary period. In the 1930s Natsir became a leading Islamic polemicist who criticised not only Western misconceptions on Islam, but also the domestic propagation of secular nationalism, whose greatest protagonist at the time was Ir. Soekarno, when he was a young nationalist intellectual and when he became the first President of the Republic of Indonesia.

There was no doubt that M. Natsir was an exceptionally intelligent, knowledgeable, wise and compassionate Muslim leader not only in politics and international relations, but also in Islamic thought, Islamic education, inter-religious dialogue, national and community development, and Islamic propagation (*da`wah*) work. He was loved by the people as well as by his colleagues, and highly respected by friends and foes alike. He was considered as among the last of the religio-political giants in Muslim Southeast Asia and was much sought after by the Muslim intelligentsia and Islamic youth leaders in the region and particularly in Malaysia. (The present writer was honoured to have met him in his residence and interviewed him for

more than an hour in Jakarta in 1973, and to have had the opportunity to visit him in a Jakarta hospital where he was warded a few months before he passed away in 1993).

FACETS OF HIS THOUGHT AND CONTRIBUTIONS

As a highly regarded political leader, Islamic thinker and activist intellectual, his influence was far greater than any other thinkers of Islam or contemporaries of his time. His close friend and contemporary called Hamka (alias Hj. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908-1975) was another famous Islamic religious scholar and propagator of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world. If Hamka was the most well-known “*ulama-intellectual*” of his time, then Mohammad Natsir was undoubtedly the “*intellectual-*ulama*” par excellence* of post-independent Indonesia, because the former was educated only in Islamic religious sciences and Arabic, while the latter was formally educated in the secular Dutch-oriented educational system and knew Dutch, German, English, French, Latin and Arabic, while he also had profound knowledge of the religion and civilisation of Islam which he acquired from Islamic religious institutions and private Muslim organisations. He was widely known and admired for being what Prof. George M. Kahin said about him after he met Natsir when he was the then Minister of Information that he was “extraordinarily modest and unpretentious.” The full statement of George Kahin is as follows:

Last of the giants among Indonesia’s nationalist and revolutionary political leaders, he [Mohammad Natsir] undoubtedly had more influence on the course of Islamic thought and politics in post-war Indonesia than any of his contemporaries. By nature extraordinarily modest and unpretentious, he had a well-deserved reputation for personal integrity and political probity. He always lived simply with respect to house and attire, even in 1950 as prime minister. When I first met him in 1948 and he was the Republic’s minister of information, I found a man in what was surely the most mended shirt of any official in Yogyakarta; it was his only shirt...(Yusrizal, 2010: 3)

As a young Muslim student leader of the *Jong Islamieten Bond* (Union of Young Muslims) of Bandung and a teacher in the city, Natsir began writing on the subject of Islam in 1929 until 1935 particularly in the magazine *Pembela Islam* (Defender of Islam) associated with Ahmad Hassan, a rather hard-liner religious leader of a reformist Islamic organisation *Persatuan Islam* (PERSIS) to which Natsir aligned himself. His grounding in the knowledge of al-Qur’an, *Sunnah* and Arabic was deepened by his study of classical as well as contemporary exegesis of the Qur’an,

including *Tafsir al-Furqan* of Ahmad Hassan in Bandung (Adian dan Nuim, 2007). As a prolific young Islamic writer, he also contributed his reformist Islamic ideas in *Pandji Islam*, *Pedoman Masyarakat* and *Al-Manar*. He had authored approximately 45 books, monographs and hundreds of articles in various magazines and journals. When he read what the influential Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje wrote, namely "*La solution de la question islamique dépend de l'adhésion des indigènes a notre civilisation*" (the solution to the Islamic problem hinges upon the adherence of the indigenous people to our [western] civilisation) through secular Western education, he became more motivated to establish Islamic educational institutions in order to counter the negative effects of secular education introduced in Indonesia by the Dutch. Regarded as a perfectionist and philosophical teacher ("*Guru yang perfeksionis filosofis*") , he was very concerned with the negative effects of secular Western education upon the younger generation bearing in mind Snouck Hurgronje's advice to the Dutch government that "[Western] education and learning will be able to liberate Muslim people from the grip of Islam" (Natsir, 1955). He was also responsible for establishing the school of Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Islam* or *PENDIS*) which he led until 1942, because he was at heart an educationist who was driven by Islamic civilisational vision and the excellent model of Prophetic personality and character.

Realising the negative social and political consequences of the educational and cultural dichotomy of traditionalist and conservative religious education on the one hand and that of modern secular education on the Muslim community on the other hand, Natsir felt the need to work towards the integration or unification of the two opposing systems, so that eventually there would emerge the "ulama-intellectual" and the "intellectual-ulama" ideal types in Indonesian society (Natsir, 1955). Hence M. Natsir expressed as early as 1938 the necessity of establishing a Higher Islamic College (*Sekolah Tinggi Islam* or "*Universitet Islam*") in Indonesia (Natsir, 1955), and formed the Association of Muslim Higher Institutions of Learning (*Perikatan Perguruan-perguruan Muslimin Indonesia*) with the acronym "Permusi" (Natsir, 1955). The Islamic Higher College was founded in Jakarta in 1945 and was moved to Yogyakarta in 1946. By 1947 it became the Islamic University of Indonesia (*Universitas Islam Indonesia*), the first private Islamic university in Indonesia. As a leading public intellectual Mohammad Natsir's academic writings not only focussed on educational issues. They touched on various social, political, economic, religious,

and cultural issues of his time, but in each of them he would introduce Islamic perspectives.

Education in Natsir's intellectual discourse is a process of holistic spiritual-physical development "which leads to the perfect formation and complete development of human qualities in its fullest sense" (*jang menudju kepada kesempurnaan dan lengkapnya sifat-sifat kemanusiaan dengan arti yang sesungguhnya*) (Natsir, 1955). He explained that the aim of integrated education was none other than to actualise the life of *'ubūdiyyah* (servitude) to Allah (S.W.T.) as ordained by Him in *Sūrah al-Dhāriyat* 51: 56). He reiterated that in the worldview of the Qur'an it was the knowledgeable scholars who were the truly God-fearing servants of Allah (S.W.T.) (Q. *Fāṭir* 22:28). Grounded in the worldview of *Tauḥīd* -- affirmation of the absolute oneness of God and the oneness of His all-embracing sovereignty over every aspect of human life and the cosmos) -- Islamic education, Natsir argued, would ensure well-being in this world and happiness in the Hereafter (Natsir, 1955).

In 1938, Natsir joined an Islamic political party and became its leader of the Bandung branch until the 2nd World War. During the Japanese interregnum from 1942 until 1945, Natsir was actively involved in educational activities, and also became a member of the newly formed Islamic organisation which later was changed into *Madjelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), or MASJUMI, which became the largest and most influential Islamic political party which brought together several Islamic political parties from the whole of the Netherlands East Indies. Later he became the leader of MASJUMI which, after the war, became the powerful political force and voice for Islamic nationalism and patriotism as opposed to the other two contending ideologies of secular nationalism and Communism. That brought him and Masjumi into direct political confrontation with Ir. Soekarno, the charismatic and popular leader of the Nationalist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Nasionalis Indonesia*) who championed secularism as the basis of the would-be nation of Indonesia, along the lines of Kemalist Turkey. Natsir opposed the new concept of Indonesian nationalism and argued that only Islam properly understood as a universal civilisation with democratic principles could be the most appropriate foundation of the new nation with overwhelming Muslim majority population. The polemics and debates between Natsir and Soekarno are well documented in the book of Natsir called *Capita Selecta* which compiled his more than sixty articles in two volumes.

His disagreements with the secular nationalistic stand of Sukarno hinged upon his Islamic vision of the future of the new nation. Those disagreements notwithstanding, Natsir was willing to cooperate with the secular nationalists for the larger interest of the fledgeling nation. This was with regard to the newly reached agreement with the Netherlands at the 1949 Round Table Conference, which in his view was not in the best interest of Indonesia, because it meant that the new nation would be a federation of several Indonesian states, a political structure that would be advantageous to the former colonial master, the Netherlands. In addition, Natsir was perturbed by the failed Communist Coup attempt of Madiun in 1948. In the interest of forging a united nation of the new Indonesia, Natsir therefore initiated his historic motion to the parliament in 1950 -- after consulting Soekarno and vice-president Hatta -- for the integration of Indonesia as a single unitary nation. This motion which became known as "*Mosi Integral Natsir*" was widely accepted even by those states which were in the federation structure. Thus Indonesia became the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*, NKRI) thanks to the brilliant initiative of Natsir which saved the archipelago nation from becoming a potentially fractious republic and a divided nation. Hatta was reported to have likened Natsir's motion as the "second declaration of independence of Indonesia." (*Jawa Pos*, 3 April 2018).

However, in the new unitary Republic, Mohammad Natsir had to contend with the strong opposition from the secular nationalists. He became increasingly disillusioned with the authoritarian attitudes and decisions of President Soekarno, the ensuing political chaos and internal divisions of the government, as well as the Islamically inspired *Darul Islam* rebellion which remained unresolved. Not willing to compromise on matters of principle, Natsir decided to resign from the government and he and his party leaders joined the Sumatra-based rebellion known as Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia*, PRRI) in 1958. The rebellion was, however, crushed and in 1961 Natsir and other leaders of the rebellion were imprisoned by Soekarno. After the collapse of Soekarno's regime in 1966 at the hands of Gen. Suharto, Natsir was released from prison.

Like most reformist Islamic intellectuals around the world, Natsir propounded the Tauhidic worldview and the totality of Islam as a complete and holistic way of life.

As the Indonesian archipelago was mainly Muslim populated and Islam had for a long time defined the religion and culture of the majority of the people, Natsir argued that the Indonesian state should be based on Islam, not in the form of a theocratic state, but that Islamic values would be imbued in the governance and development of the state. Strongly opposed to communism, secular nationalism and authoritarianism, he regarded democracy to be compatible with Islam. Thus, based on this understanding, Natsir developed a new concept of what was called “Islamic democratic state” (Luthfi Assyaukanie 2004:77). Natsir explained:

Perhaps people will ask: Is Islam undemocratic? We answered: Islam is democratic in the sense that it is anti dictatorship (*istibdad*), anti absolutism and against authoritarianism. [Democracy] does not mean the parliament’s approval to abrogate [the legal status of] gambling and pornography and to whether the myth (*khurafat*), idolatry (*kemusyrikan*) and so on, should be discussed democratically. No! this is not the right of Parliament to discuss. (Mohammad Natsir, *Agama dan Negara dalam Perspektif Islam*, Jakarta: Media Dakwah, 2001, 89 in Ahmad Ali Nurdin, 2016: 77)

Natsir elaborated in his polemic with Ir. Soekarno that Islam was a sufficiently flexible synthesis which would accommodate what had necessarily to evolve in radical ways in circumstances which require radical solutions, without undermining the aspects of Islam which were not supposed to change (Natsir, 1980a). Therefore, in a state which is based on Islamic teachings, what the parliament should be doing is not to use the vote to question the fundamental principles of religion but to discuss ways and means to operationalise the Divine norms and values (Natsir, 1980a).

As a prominent leader of the Muslim *ummah*, Natsir’s exceptional intellectual, ethical and spiritual qualities have impressed his closed associates as well as the masses. His close friend Mohamad Roem regarded him,

[as] the heart and conscience of the ummah, in addition to being a national warrior, patriot, politician, diplomat, statesman, educator, teacher, writer, thinker and *da`i* (proselytiser). Studies also show that the attributes of a *Mu`min* (Believer), *Mukhlis* (Sincere Servant) and *Muttaqī* (God-fearing Servant) have unified the variety of Mohammad Natsir’s functions and personality in a unity that is harmonious, beautiful and attractive.”(Anwar Haryono, 2001; Endang dan Rais, 1988).

This exceptional, multi-talented and visionary personality appeared to possess three special qualities which was described by Mohamad Roem as follows:

When he plunged into the arena of politics, Mohammad Natsir was an exemplary politician. When he plunged into the field of physical struggle, he became a brave commander and when he entered into a debate with the adversary, he emerged as an expert in knowledge and Islamic *da`wah*. With his deep knowledge of *Sīrah* (biography) and the role of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w,) as a Leader of the *Ummah* who struggled, emigrated and fought to establish the truth and justice of Allah – he did not admit the possibility of “half-Islam” or recognised any type of “half-falsehood” (Anwar Haryono, 2001; Endang dan Rais, 1988).

The superior intellectual quality of Natsir contributed significantly to the advancement of the discourse of Islamic renewal and reform in 20th century Indonesia. In emphasising the necessity of reform, he made sure that it was a genuine Islamic discourse and effort because modern Muslim history has shown that there have been modernists, secularists, socialists or deviants who have used the labels of *Iṣlāh* (reform) and *Tajdīd* (renewal) as a camouflage for deviant ideas or programmes. The controversial thoughts, theories and initiatives of Prof. Haron Nasution, Dr. Nurcholish Madjid and Abdur Rahman Wahid (“Gus Dur”) which were further developed by the younger generation of Muslim intelligentsia beyond the life-time of Natsir were examples of unauthentic Islamic reformism or renewal. Although he did not live long enough to witness the disruptive consequences of the so-called “Neo-Modernism” and the Liberal Islam Network in the beginning of the 21st century, he did express his caution thus: “When the renewal effort undertaken goes beyond the limits of Islam, then it is clearly an act of treachery” (Barton, 1995). The challenges posed by the liberal thoughts of Dr. Nurcholish Madjid, Abdur Rahman Wahid and Ulil Abshar-Abdalla and his colleagues in Liberal Islam Network have been regarded by some Islamic scholars of contemporary Indonesia as manifestations of “intellectual diabolism” (“*diabolisme intelektual*” (Adian dan Nuim 2005) or “diabolical thinking” (“*diabolisme pemikiran*”) (Syamsuddin, 2008). (See also Barton, 1995; Adian, 2003,; and Luthfi 2002)

In addressing the challenge of rationalism espoused by Muslim secular nationalists and scholars in the 1940s, Natsir affirmed, in a way similar to what his contemporary Hamka did in his prolific writings, the importance of reason and the religious necessity to use the intellect in human life as well as in the construction of human civilisation. But he clarified that “the autonomous reason freed from religious convictions” (“*akal merdeka yang bebas dari pegangan Agama*”), or “autonomous reason wrongly applied” (“*akal merdeka yang salah pasang*”), or “independent reason

which has lost the way" (*"akal merdeka yang tersesat"*) or "which is undisciplined" (*"yang tidak berdisiplin"*) will lead to many deviations in understanding religion not unlike "the creed of anthropomorphism". His discussion on the issue of "anarchic reason which knows no bounds" (*"akal anarki yang tak kenal batas"*) in 1940 is still relevant to contemporary Muslim thought on modernisation and development. He said, among other things: "[T]he end result of what we get from independent intellect is no longer religious interpretation (*interpretasie Agama*), but liquidation of religion! (*likuidasie Agama!*)" (Natsir, 1988).

It would seem that M. Natsir was anticipating the problem of post-modernistic Muslim thought in contemporary Indonesia when he made the following statement: "A 100 per cent independent reason does not place any limits upon itself. It seeks to destroy everything, control everything, criticise everything; except to criticise itself." (Natsir, 1988). Some of the problems posed by the current trend of religious pluralism which posits the equal validity of all world religions appears to be in the foresight of M. Natsir as well. In this regard, M. Natsir discussed the problem of "too many doctors trying to cure the disease" in the variety of interpretations of religion. He said by way of allegory:

There is the doctor who comes with the medicine of "synthesis", that is a medicine which is a mixture of what is recommended by the theosophists who are of the opinion that all religions are equally good. So we can take from Islam what is good and from Christianity or from Hinduism what we feel is good....In the end we produce a liberally mixed religion (*agama gado-gado*). There is the doctor who brings the medicine of "rationalism".... And as long as that rationalism knows its limits, it is useful to help strengthen and deepen the faith and religious feelings. But, whenever such theories turn left and right to understand the essence and attributes of God without observing any limits....then what results is liquidation of religions (Natsir, 1988).

In the field of literature, M. Natsir laid down certain principles so that literature did not represent the "a portrayal of the faulty intelligence of a particular people (*"lukisan dari tingkat ketjerdasan salah satu kaum"*)" (Natsir, 1955). He explained why the concept of "*l'art pour l'art*" (art for art sake) was objectionable, because although Allah (S.W.T.) was beautiful and loved beauty, He loved only that art which was truly beautiful from the religious and ethical perspective. He said, "whatever is harmful to the spirituality of my people or that which has more harm than good, I have to reject as a dangerous thing!" (Natsir, 1955). Literature of high value is "one that is most lofty

and most pure, coming from the heart of the particular society” (Natsir, 1955). He emphasised the importance of *Weltanschauung* or worldview in the intellectuality of a particular community so that the literature that was produced truly represented the lofty and noble aspirations of the people and portrayed the philosophy of life of the people (Natsir, 1955).

It is noteworthy that as an Islamic intellectual and polemicist, Natsir indirectly promoted an ethical code in the conduct of intellectual debates or dialogues. It is well-known that he had engaged Ir. Soekarno for a long time in intellectual polemics, but his strong opposition to the secularising views of Soekarno did not prevent him from sustaining a respectful humanistic relationship with him to the very end. Such cordial relationship was also maintained with his political adversaries among the socialists, Marxists, Protestants and Catholics. Both he and his colleagues in Masjumi also showed a high degree of accommodationism of political differences in the case of their promotion of the sacrosanct “seven words” in the Jakarta Charter which made it “obligatory [for the state] to implement the *shari`ah* for its adherents [the Muslim community]”. They were prepared to withdraw their insistence on the inclusion of the “seven words” in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution in order to induce the minority Christian communities to agree to the establishment of the unitary Indonesian Republic. They compromised with the understanding that the first principle of the Pancasila ideology would be interpreted from the Islamic perspective -- an understanding that was not observed by the subsequent regimes of post-independent Indonesia. M. Natsir was once asked by Drs. Lukman Harun as to “why we failed in politics?” His answer was, “Because we were practicing sincerity in politics” (Anwar Haryono, 2001).

The advent of the New Order after the collapse of Sukarno’s dictatorial regime in 1966, unfortunately proved to be a serious setback to Islamic political activism or what is labelled in Western political circles and media as “political Islam”, because the military government decided to ban the influential and most prominent Islamic party Masjumi, and Natsir with his colleagues were legally prevented from being politically active in the domestic political scene. Natsir, however, found an alternative channel for spreading his reformist thought, democratic political vision and religious charisma to the Indonesian society by establishing the Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia (*Dewan Da`wah Islamiyah Indonesia*, DDII). Through this *da`wah* institution and its

branches throughout the archipelago, he and some of his colleagues in the defunct Masjumi Party, devoted the rest of their lives to the spread of the teachings of Islam and the development of Muslim communities throughout Indonesia. Through DDII, Pak Natsir channelled his intellectual, educational and social development energies to spread the holistic and comprehensive civilisational mission of Islam throughout Indonesia and forged new linkages with international Islamic movements in West Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Pak Natsir used to explain his radical transformation from active politics to active Islamic religious propagation work by saying that “Before, we conducted *dakwah* through the channel of politics; now, we pursue politics through the channel of *dakwah*.”

As a leader of Islamic *da`wah*, Pak Natsir was known and admired not only for his broad religious knowledge and wisdom but for his deep and profound spirituality and high moral standards which he developed since his younger days of socio-political struggle to become an essential and natural part of his humble and unassuming personality. One of the fundamental lessons he taught in his regular lectures to the would-be propagators (*muballighs* and *dā`is*) of Islam in the early years of the establishment of DDII was how Divine revelation guided the Divinely endowed *fiṭrah*, the original human nature which was inherently inclined towards the recognition of God as the Creator and Sustainer. In this particular lecture which had the sub-heading of “*Waḥy* is calling the *Fiṭrah* – The *Fiṭrah* needs *Waḥy*”, Pak Natsir begins by saying that the responsibility of the Prophetic mission as well as that of the *muballighs* is to bring the *fiṭrah* of human beings to meet with Divine *waḥy*. The Qur’an directs the human mind (*`aql*) to recognise the Signs of God in the whole cosmos, nature and human beings to bring them closer to the Creator, the Wise and Compassionate Master and the Beneficent Sustainer. The Qur’an urges human beings to observe, to think, to understand, to contemplate and ponder upon the different manifestations of Divinity and His purpose so that they would be able to utilise the numerous God-given bounties in nature and in their own selves to fulfil their natural needs and fulfilment of their purpose of existence. Pak Natsir explains that *waḥy* does not oppose the senses or the intellect because they are the creation of the same God. Divine revelation guides the senses, the intellect and the spiritual hearts (*qulūb*) to undergo the process of reform (*islah*) and self-purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), to operate in harmony and in a balanced way with the Divine purpose and not to be misguided by the base desires

(*hawā* and *nafs*) or autonomous reason (*akal merdeka*). That would lead to the spiritual and moral corruption (*al-fasād*) in the world (Q. *al-Rūm* 30: 41) whereas the ultimate purpose of Allah's creation of human beings and Jinns is to know and serve Him (Q. *al-Dhāriyāt* 51: 56). Pak Natsir explains how the fundamental doctrine of servitude (*ubūdiyyah*) impacts upon all activities and vocations of human beings as Allah's obedient and sincere servants.

Unfortunately, many human beings choose not to take Divine revelation seriously and depend solely upon their autonomous reason and desires. The Qur'an says that "They (only) know the external realities of the life of this world, but they are heedless and unmindful of the Hereafter" (Q. *al-Rūm* 30: 7). It is therefore the duty of the *muballighs* to follow closely the footsteps of the Final Messenger of Allah (S.W.T.) to contribute authentically to the spiritual-moral reform and purification of human beings, to prevent them from the vice of intellectual pride and arrogance, to make them conscious of the Hereafter and strive hard in worldly life by combining *fikr* (reasoning) and *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah (S.W.T.) (M. Natsir, 1980: 10-32).

Pak Natsir stresses the importance of the Muslim community to strike the right balance (*tawāzun*) between the needs of Muslims as individuals and as social beings since Islam requires Muslims to live as a collectivity of a united and strong Islamic brotherhood (*bunyān marṣūṣ*) and as an excellent universal community (*Khair Ummah* and *Ummah Wasaṭ* in Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 143). The plurality of different tribes, ethnic groups or religious communities has to be accepted positively by Muslims as a God-given opportunity to know the others and cooperate in areas of common interest in the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. (M. Natsir, 1980: 33-100). As for the systematic training and preparation of the *muballighs*, Pak Natsir stresses the crucial importance of developing their personalities and character by consistently emulating and internalising the personality traits and character of the Final Messenger (s.a.w.) and his close Companions. The *Muballighs'* purity of creed, morality, ethics and sound understanding of Islamic *da`wah* are the key factors in the success of their *da`wah* efforts. While internalising and actualising the principle of "Truly my prayer, all my acts of worship, my living and my dying are (all) for Allah the Cherisher of the Worlds" (S.W.T.) (Q. *al-An`ām* 6: 162), the *dā`ī* is required to be equipped with different kinds of skills and knowledge, including sociology, psychology, anthropology and other relevant disciplines such as communications and command of languages. Pak Natsir

describes the three additional categories in addition to *Fiqh al-da`wah* (understanding *da`wah*), namely, *Tafaqquh fi`d-Dīn* (deep understanding of religion), *Tafaqquh fi`n-Nās* (deep understanding of human beings, peoples and societies), and *Tafaqquh fi`d-Dunyā al-Mutaṭawwirah* (deep understanding of the ever-changing world) (M. Natsir, 1980: 121-155). The strengthening of the spiritual fibre, ethical integrity and seeking greater proximity to Allah (S.W.T.), as the basis of God-fearing character of sincere servants of Allah (S.W.T.) are, nevertheless, the primary *conditio sine qua non* of the effective *Muballigh* which Pak Natsir himself exemplified. His extraordinary personality whose charismatic aura would naturally reach out to those who came close to him was undoubtedly another key factor in the positive development of Islamic *da`wah* and the DDII itself. When his blessed soul left this transient world in 1993, he left behind a most valuable spiritual-moral-intellectual legacy which needs to be studied, understood and perpetuated. His demise also caused a leadership vacuum in reformist Islamic thought and action in modern Indonesia which was not easily filled.

Before the military regime of Suharto decided to tighten their control over the international relations of prominent Masjumi leaders years later, Pak Natsir was invited in 1967 to visit Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia (where he was conferred two honorary doctorates), Pakistan and Egypt and made his impact as a world leader of Islamic *da`wah*. He was appointed as the president of the World Muslim Congress based in Pakistan, as a founding member of the Muslim World League based in Riyadh, and as the leader of the World Council of Mosques. But as a consequence of the army's hostility towards Islamic reformism and politics and knowing the popularity of Natsir in the Muslim world, not only he was prevented from travelling overseas, but was denied any official recognition for his substantial and historic contributions to the new republic in the early years of Independence. However, after President Suharto resigned on 21 May 1998, after 31 years in office, thanks to the rising tide of the popular movement for democracy, Natsir's reputation regained its national and international impact so that by the time of the presidency of B.J. Habibie (third president from 1998-1999) and that of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (sixth president from 2004-2014), Pak Natsir's valuable contributions to and sacrifices for the well-being and reestablishment of Indonesian democracy imbued with ethical values and norms, were finally officially recognised. The former posthumously awarded Pak Natsir a national medal of Adi

Pradana in 1998, and the latter declared him a National Hero (*Pahlawan Nasional*) in 2008.

Pak Natsir is also remembered with great respect by Muslim and non-Muslim supporters of democratic and civilian-ruled Indonesia for being one of the fifty prominent signatories of the Petition of Fifty ("*Petisi Lima 50*") on 5th May 1980. It was a document read out in public which expressed the serious concern of many prominent Indonesian elites, including former army generals, intellectuals, educationists, Muslim religious leaders and Christian elites. Other than Natsir, three other former members of Masjumi also signed the petition. It was, in fact, an open and courageous non-violent protest against what many people saw as President Suharto's abuse of the Pancasila state ideology to stifle political opponents; exonerate himself from any wrongdoings by invoking the Pancasila; continue to make arbitrary and unpopular political decisions; elevate the Armed Forces' oath above the Constitution, and to undermine the forthcoming general elections. President Suharto did not appreciate the petition and responded by cancelling the governments' permission to those who signed the petition to travel overseas.

His life as a Muslim leader of Indonesia spanned over four turbulent periods, the last being the post-New Order period of Reformation and Democracy. Although he passed away a few years after the triumph of Reformation which saw the rebirth of democracy, many of the intellectual and Muslim leaders of the Reformation movement were his political, intellectual and religious disciples, supporters and admirers. Many of the young leaders and intellectuals have been exposed to and influenced by the democratic ideas and Islamic cosmopolitanism of Pak Natsir.

CONCLUSION

Pak Natsir was fortunate to witness the collapse of the New Order which had delayed the rebirth of democracy and the spread of reformist Islamic democratic and ethical politics which Pak Natsir preached, practiced, internalised in his personality and institutionalised in Masjumi. But due to declining health and the increasing complexities of Indonesian society, politics and culture, he was not able to provide the intellectual leadership that he once commanded. The growth of extremist radical Muslim activism, on the one hand, and the rise of Muslim liberal thought on the other hand, as two opposing and mutually exclusive trends in Indonesia in the beginning of

the 21st century would have engaged Pak Natsir's mind and personality if he were to witness the advent of the new challenging scenarios in the Indonesia. In order to avoid falling into the traps of these two opposing Muslim tendencies of *Ifrāṭ* (excessiveness, immoderation, extremism) and *Tafriṭ* (laxity, negligence, liberality) in the 21st century, it is crucial and urgent that the younger generation of Muslims learn from the past great leaders of the *ummah* in Indonesia, such as Pak Natsir as well as Buya Hamka and other exemplary exponents of the *wasatīyyah* (justice-excellence-balance), *rahmāniyyah* (compassionate, merciful), *insāniyyah* (humanity, humanitarianistic) and the *al-ḥanafīyyah al-samḥah* (original nature of tolerant and magnanimous monotheism) characteristics of Islam whereby Muslims live in peace, harmony and mutual respect with non-Muslim communities without compromising the fundamental principles of the Abrahamic faith.

Pak Natsir had spent his whole life in a long peaceful religio-political struggle which encompassed the whole dimensions of Islam as a spiritual meeting between God as such and Servants of God as such, as a religion of *fiṭrah*, and as a universal, holistic and virtuous civilisation which would lead the Republic of Indonesia to a greater destiny on earth (Yusuf Abdullah, 1978; Ajip, 1989; Endang dan Rais, 1988; Yusril, 1995). In today's world it would be difficult to find a Muslim religio-political leader who possesses intellectual brilliance with profound knowledge of Western and Islamic civilisations; political wisdom, ethics and probity; moral integrity of a high order; exceptional simplicity and humility; "extraordinarily modest and unpretentious" persona and, last but not least, a *qalb salīm* (sound spiritual heart) which was always in close proximity with his Master and Compassionate Nourisher and which loved Him and His Messenger (s.a.w.) above everything else. But Pak Natsir has bequeathed to the younger generation of Muslims in Indonesia and the Malay-Indonesian world his invaluable intellectual-ethical legacy which is still relevant to the pluralistic, multi-religious and cosmopolitan Indonesian and Malaysian societies, and therefore should continue to be a major source of historical knowledge, intellectual inspiration and religious motivation for them to walk humbly in his blessed footsteps.

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