



By Praba Ganesan

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NOV 12 — *Nothing great will ever be achieved without great men, and men are great only if they are determined to be so* . — Charles De Gaulle.

I am drawn to the French leader when I see the giveaway remarks by many of my countrymen in regards to the state we are in.

The typical “it’s too difficult”, “too far down” and “not in my lifetime” quips usually accompanied by the imageries of an apocalyptic end — horned horny devils humming in the background.

The Hollywood disaster flick being released today notwithstanding, the country is far from being unsalvageable. We have a great country, we are a great people, we just seem to have lost our way — not unlike Moses and his flock lost in the desert after leaving Egypt and not dissimilar to the 40 years they were there.

A doctor friend told me that any smoker who quits before he crosses the “no-return” line is in good company. The lung can regenerate the non-cancerous dead cells. The lung probably will return to reasonable shape and you can go on.

Like a renewal. I like renewals.

As critical as I am of the ruling regime and its mascot now in retirement, there are fantastic reasons for us to feel euphoric about Malaysia — it is a competition to helm the ship, not a race to see who stays with a sinking ship.

It is just normal to be pissed when they keep slamming the ship into reefs and fish in empty

waters (if I am allowed to milk the analogy to its dry end). And like Nietzsche's mad man screaming in the marketplace, I go crazy with the widespread apathy.

In lectures I'd ask students to hand me RM10 at the start of the class for a false demonstration. Without fail at the end of the class before I leave they'd ask for their money back.

Which is my cue, to pose a quandary, "I teach you for weeks, supervise you and you can ill-afford to let me have your RM10? The state takes thousands off you in a year, and you say you are not interested in politics?"

"You need to know about politics not because it is a cute hobby, you need to know about politics because it's your money!" I don't even get to the more than RM10,000 a year from our oil money that the federal government — its Cabinet primarily — spends on our behalf.

That's the reason for the piss-sentiment, but it does not abrogate my commitment to the country as a deliverer of better lives for all of us.

The biggest tool for power preservation by the BN over the years is not in their amazing ability to rule, but their all-out frontal assault to convince everyone that no one can replace them — Reductio ad absurdum

It is a brilliant strategy since it works with a people who cringe in a corner to the theme music of “too hard”, “too late” and “not now”. I mean look at the way people tear apart the inconsistencies and conflicts in the opposition ranks. And the rapid speed of applauding announcements made by previously avowed bigots now serenading as senior ministers, because it seems — according to what they say, not do — they want to change.

By all means have a real good go at the mistakes of Pakatan Rakyat, but surely you should set a higher bar for the guys who actually govern. Surely they can't get away with promising things when the tools for implementing the changes are squarely in their arsenal.

We have the people, we just need these people to step up to the plate.

Opposed to what one reader asked — what are the immediate things to be done, and how to achieve them — the real goal is to get the cleverer people to get involved.

That is how we are going to shift the country from the path of mediocrity it is on — a crash trajectory belabouring to planet obscurity.

There is a consensus that the chunk of leaders on both sides don't measure up, but there they are, in their respective places. They will remain there as long as they have the stomach to weather your complaints, and you despite your admonishments dare not displace them.

Like any football team, talent only takes you that far. You need a hunger, you need a real want for it. If you want the outcome of the game to be different, then you have to show up. Half of democracy is in showing up.

De Gaulle, for most of the Second World War, was outside France since the country was under German occupation. It must have been embarrassing to be holding on to the coat-tails of the British and the US throughout, even in regaining your homeland.

Somehow De Gaulle never felt small, in fact was known to be belligerent. I think his hunger made him show a strong public face irrespective of the odds.

We can indeed achieve great things, in Malaysia. But for that we need great men. Are we determined to be so?

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