CONCERNING RIZQ

By: Faizal Sidik

Narrated Abu Zar r.a Rasulullah (peace be upon him) said:
"Allah Ta'alala loves a Mu'min who engages himself in lawful means of earning a living" (al-Dailami)

Introduction

Rezeki (or sustenance) in the Malay vocabulary is derived from the Arabic rizq, which means everything granted by Allah for one's physical as well as spiritual needs. The word rezeki is one of the many borrowed and adapted into the Malay language from Arabic; as there are between 2,000 to 3,000 of those in total. Sustenance is also synonymous with wealth, income, livelihood, salaries, wages, profits, earnings, allowances, commissions, dividends, bonuses or rewards.

In everyday life, we regularly hear common Malay expressions relating rezeki that can be loosely translated as “looking for a living”, “halal living”, “may [Allah] grant sustenance” and there is also proverb that says “don’t deny sustenance, don’t seek enemies”. Such is a handful of stories of the meaning of sustenance. As humans, it is something we won’t stop searching for as long as we remain breathing.

One of the 99 known names of Allah is Al Razzaq (ar-Razzaq), which means The Sustenance Provider. There are around 82 verses that relates to sustenance in the Quran. Amongst the more commonly read and recited in prayers is in the surah after Al-Fatiha in the Quran; from al-Baqarah, verse 3:

For those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond the reach of perception, who establish Prayer and spend out of what We have provided them. (Al-Baqarah 2:3)

This verse describes the attributes of the believers; i) of those who believe in a higher power (that cannot be directly captured by any one of the human senses) and believe that over above any human power lies the almighty power of Allah; ii) of those who perform solat (or prayer) with the unreservedly and with entirety of the mind, body and soul; iii) provide for and donate part of the personal wealth for the poor, through zakat, alms, and other charitable means.

The above verse ends rather abruptly yet Allah promises multiplied rewards to those who depart from portions of their wealth and earned living in such ways of Allah;

Who will you lend Allah a goodly loan (with full sincerity and absolute pure motives) which He will return after multiplying it for him manifold? For [remember], Allah has the power to both decrease and increase [rezeki and sustenance], and to Him will you be returned. (Al-Baqarah 2:245)
There are many additional hadiths that have been recorded by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in relation to rezeki, amongst which is narrated ‘Abu Huraira: I heard the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Whoever desires to have expansion of his sustenance and a prolonged life, should treat his relatives with kindness”

(Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

From the hadith in al-Awsath;
“To seek and attain halal rizq, begin early in the morning, as this results in barakah and prosperity in one’s work.” (at-Tabarani)

The Prophet (pbuh) used to pray to The Almighty Allah to bless his people who are early risers, as narrated by Ashab as-Sunan and Ibn Hibban, when he called on his daughter Fatimah to find her lying down at dawn, he said:

“Allah distributes sustenance to the people between dawn and sunrise” (al-Balhaqi)

Ibn ‘Abbas r.a narrated, Rasulullah (pbuh) said:

“The one who (regularly) says Istighfaar, that is, frequently repent to Allah Ta’ala for sins committed, Allah ‘Azza Wa-Jalla will open a path from poverty and difficulties. All sorrow and hardship will be removed, and in its place prosperity and contentment granted. One will receive sustenance from unimaginined and unexpected sources” (Abi Dawud)

The Malay world is rich with proverbs, pantuns and poetic sayings that carry subtle hints in the Malay expressions of rezeki, some of which can be found in the Malay Proverb Dictionary such as those can be loosely translated as ‘where there is life, there will be rezeki’ and ‘where there is day, there is rice’. And these could be interpreted as a belief that for as long as we live, there will always be ways to obtain rezeki and to make a living. ‘If it’s not meant to be, what’s in grasp could still be lost’, that means that certain wealth has not yet been determined. ‘Foods of eagles can not be eaten by foxes’ means that a person’s rezeki cannot be taken away by others. ‘Danger must never be courted, and fortune must never be rejected’ means that while one must never seek danger, one should accept all good fortunes that comes one’s way with gratitude.

In addition, there are also more Malay proverbs that elude to sustenance and rezeki without direct mentions of the word; but instead they describe more on the act of sourcing and working for them. Amongst which includes, ‘better to nurture a hen than a rooster’, which gives meaning that it is better to source for a halal living than a haram one. ‘Wet throat’ indicates to obtain rezeki. ‘Fish trap set away from the stream’ describes when it is hard to earn a living. ‘Hill meets at the edge of the well’ eludes to obtaining luck and unexpected rezeki, whilst ‘sourcing food in a stranger’s land’ means to make a living despite the unfamiliar.

Other proverbs that reflects on obtaining rezeki includes ‘diligent bones fill up bellies’; it would be easy for those hardworking to make a living. ‘Light bones, heavy bellies’; those reliable makes easy living (as opposed to ‘heavy bones, light bellies’). ‘Where there is sugar, you will also find ants’, indicating that there will be population growth where there are opportunities. ‘Where you find ripe paddy, you will also find sparrow’, means that learned people always have better opportunities. ‘Food on plate, left uneaten’; something so close yet could still not be yours. ‘Where there is dead branch, mushrooms will grow’, means wherever we live, there will always be rezeki.

Other than proverbs, there are also pantuns; a form of Malay poems, that give meanings to sourcing and obtaining sustenance, such as:

A Chinese boy plays ceki
Shirtless, with only trousers;
If something is not meant to be
What is in grasp could still be lost.

Broken branch amidst the jungle
Broken at Malim Sidi’s bridge
The elephants, they may appear substantial
But what belongs to the snake indeed will be.

(From Hikayat Abdullah)
RIZQ

There are five artists selected for this exhibition to provide visual views on the theme *rezeki* or sustenance – Aznan Omar, Raduan Man, Elias Yamani Ismail, Yusri Sulaiman and Nuriman Amri Abdul Manap. Interestingly, each artist offers different genres and the use of different medium such as paintings, sculptures, prints as well as mixed media; to give a multi-dimensional exhibition within the space. Aznan Omar is well known for his protruding metal sculptures; Raduan Man is synonymous with wooden printing (wood cut) on canvas; figurative painting by Yusri Sulaiman, whilst Elias Yamani and Nuriman are known by their works with mixed media and objects.

Aznan Omar
*Dimana Ada Gula, Disitu Ada Semut* 2012
Aluminium cast
83cm x 90cm

In the works of Aznan Omar, the animal kingdom is the message projected for the theme with the use of aluminium as medium. The work 'Rezeki Jangan Ditolak, Bahaya Jangan Dicari' depicts a man-hero who carves a Malayan tiger, but in the end was devoured by the very tiger of his creation. What caught my attention particularly in this work is that it gives rise to the conflict faced by sculptors – Muslims sculptors in particular – in their attempts to fully express their creativity within certain limitations of expressions by the religion. I believe this is a metaphor by Aznan; for the man-hero to depict his own self as well as other sculptors who face the same constraints and risks in their works, so as their expressions will never be considered to be too divergent and borders to question its *halal* manner.
Skilled with wood prints even during his early days in the local art scene, Raduan Man started a series of vehicles printed on wood cuts and the use of mixed media since the end of year 2000. At the beginning of human civilisation, pets were also used as means to assist people travel and to carry weights, but it is the intellectual power of man that revolutionised this role to be taken up by mechanical machines instead.

This was as stated in the Quran, Surah Al-Isra verse 70: “Indeed, We honoured the progeny of Adam, and bore them across land and sea and provided them with good things for their sustenance, and exalted them above many of Our creatures.”

These days, these vehicles are not only the source of sustenance for some jobs by providing transportation services such as buses, taxis, ferries etc., but also serve their purpose in the logistics, property development, farming, defense as well as in the aesthetics of design.
The term *rezeki* in our society is frequently mistaken to only take form in monetary means. In actual fact, it carries a broader concept and extends beyond the scope of physical properties. Health and abundance of opportunities also form the gifts from God and are absolutely invaluable and cannot always be bought with money. It is this very concept of opportunity that has been exploited by Elias Yamani Ismail through his works in the box series. The concept of creator who awards human intelligence as well as inspirations that leads to ability to think and produce inventions. *Rezeki* takes its form not just monetarily but also in health and opportunities. For Elias, opportunity also took its form in space and time within this exhibition.

In “The Clash”, a work inspired by the films of U-Wei Haji Saari, translates the idea of the theme conceptually. In the movie ‘Jogho’ saw the cast jostled to make a living. In ‘Buai Laju-Laju’ the character Zaiton (played by actress Betty Benafe) married a land property owner, and this advantage is said to be Zaiton’s *rezeki*. In ‘Perempuan, Isteri and ...’ the character zaleha (played by Sofea Jane) wanted to marry as marriage is a symbol of sustenance. In ‘Kaki Bakar’ the character Kakang (by actor Khalid Salleh) is an immigrant who came into the Peninsular to make a living and build a new life for his family. But all three main characters were faced with conflicts in finding compatibility in their choices.

Another Malay proverb, ‘a quart will never be a gallon on its own’ describes how important effort is in making a living. This concept of striving serves as the inspiration to Nuriman Amri Abdul Manap in producing his work of “Atas Kudrat Selagi Niat” (Kancil’s Bonnet). As a full time artist, Nuriman spends most of his time on the road with his faithful Perodua Kancil. The car also serves as his moving studio and gallery, and ventures wherever Nuriman wills it to be. “Atas Kudrat Selagi Niat” (Kancil’s Bonnet) is a painting on the car that shows Nuriman’s equipments used in his daily tasks. In addition, sixteen still life of each tool and daily object have also been documented and displayed alongside with the work.
For Yusri Sulaiman, he is mainly moved with the laborious and bitterness of the human sweat in making ends meet. He spent his childhood living in an area close to the indigenous settlement that is remote from most human civilization. Developments and new townships eradicate their source of living that mainly comes from the forest. It is this sympathy towards this fate that Yusri has translated into portraits and figurative paintings. He captures the facial expressions as they ponder on the fate of their lives.

**Conclusion**

In general, it appears as if all five artists have different points of view on ‘living’ and express *rezeki* differently from one another. There is however, one similarity, and that is each put forth his own visual commentary based on personal experiences and their own journey in sourcing sustenance in their lives.

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*Yusri Sulaiman*

**After Dawn 2012**

Oil on canvas

173.5 x 134cm

*Yusri Sulaiman*

**Daily Burden 2012**

Oil on canvas

173.5 x 134cm
REZELI
A GROUP EXHIBITION

Artists
RADUAN MAN
YUSRI SULAIMAN
AZNAN OMAR
ELIAS YAMANI

Featuring Artist
NURIMAN AMRI

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