

## CHAPTER 3

### Factors of Apostasy among the Muslims in Malaysia

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the influence of apostasy among Muslims in Malaysia. The factors of apostasy among the Muslim community can be divided into seven main factors according to the reality in Malaysia. First, the factor of apostasy is from the family aspect. For example, children who do not receive religious education from their parents or their parents are also ignorant of the basics in the teachings of Islam. Busy parents in actual jobs until they forget their responsibility to expose their children about the beauty of Islam and the teachings contained in it will encourage children to choose the wrong path which they exaggerate the world in daily life which are follow the currents of modernity.

In terms of life, the family economy plays an important role in a well-built family. Economics of finance is very important to build a prosperous family and self-sufficient in terms of basic needs such as food, clothing, and comfortable accommodation. The second factor is in terms of romance, marriage, and divorce. Couples who get married must keep mansions built not destroyed because there will be other problems if husband and wife are problematic in their relationship. For example, a non-Muslim who converted to Islam for love or want to get married, when the relationship is not good, it can give an impact on that *muallaf*. The third factor is the influence of the environment such as the media and peers. The mainstream media plays an crucial role in the development of a society. In the era of technology today, all information can be easily found, and is no limit. Information obtained or disseminated by the opposition of Islam in the form of propaganda to Muslims can influence Muslims who do not tend to practice the teachings of Islam.

In addition, the diversity of ideologies and beliefs brought by certain groups is also a factor in the occurrence of apostasy in Malaysia. Disclosure by Ust. Firdaus and members of the Multiracial Reverted Muslims related to the religious missionary movement, especially the Christianization movement, which is increasingly daring to spread

the message and preaching Muslims to believe in their teachings. In addition, the factor in the occurrence of apostasy is the lack of appreciation related to the teachings of Islam in the Muslim individual himself. In Malaysia, apostate laws cannot be fully implemented due to certain factors. Therefore, firm action cannot be taken against the offenders involved. The last factor is the discrimination of new converts (*muallaf*) to Islam. Some Muslims look askance at new converts to Islam. This will affect converts who want to learn Islam. The bad effect is that when ignored, they will feel marginalized and return to their original religion. (Farahwahida. 2012)

Therefore, the causes of the problem of apostasy need to be addressed and taken into account by all parties because this issue involves Islam and the well-being of Muslims. Every Muslim needs to have a sense of responsibility together to resolve this crisis and not just place full trust in the authorities.

### **3.2 Family Aspect**

#### **3.2.1 Lack of Religious Education (Ignorance)**

Religious education is the main thing that parents need to emphasize at home to their children from an early age. Parents need to ensure that their children receive a complete religious education as a supply in their future life and so that they can distinguish things that are not in the teachings of Islam. (Ahmad Najib Abdul Jalal, 2019)

In reality, Muslims in Malaysia have ample platform and space to gain religious knowledge. However, this opportunity is not utilized properly by young people and intellectuals. The emphasis of the education system today is more towards the integration of science and technology by placing religious knowledge in the second class. The weakness of Muslims is seen due to the failure to maintain Islam and cunning in doing all the commands of Allah SWT. For example, many teenagers take the matter of prayer lightly and there are even a few who do not know how to do it. This leads them vulnerable to committing more sins, weakening their faith and placing religion in a low place. This

situation makes our teenagers easily deviate and some become apostates. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012)

As a result if lack of knowledge or education and also do not understand the nature of Islam and *Shariah* cause the parameter of human life backward, then people seek other alternatives to converge the scope of life. People don't recognise that they have been stuck in the trap of life and don't know which one to choose the way they were supposed to go through. The consequences of ignorance cause them to be more likely to choose the path of disbelief than to choose the path of faith in life. (Isa, 1998)

In addition, due to the slickness of knowledge and faith, a person is grouped in the category lack of knowledge in terms of faith. This will lead a Muslim to doubt and don't believe in the power of Allah SWT. It will also make it difficult for a person to accept opinions and reprimands from others. In addition, it causes a Muslim to be backward in all aspects of life. This circumstances is strenuous to transform in a short time instead it requires a process of continuous betterment and observance. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012)

Therefore, religious education needs to be learned and given exposure from an early age. Every Muslim who is *mukallaf* must deepen all the knowledge of *fardhu ain* continuously throughout life such as knowledge of faith, *Syariah*, and morality so that this knowledge can be a supply and a stronghold for daily life. Therefore, every Muslim must have an appreciation and understanding of the teachings of Islam as a whole and educate the new generation on the importance of Islamic teachings in life. (Ahmad Najib, 2019)

### **3.2.2 Parental Busyness**

The symptoms of apostasy also stem from homes where parents have no functional in educating their children with a ultimate religious education because they are busy person with work. Eventually, the children's education could not be completely met and handed over to a wage earner or maid. Some of these salaried people or maids do not have skills

especially related to the human soul, mental and physical development of children. Similarly, some parents do not understand how to discipline their teenagers nowadays and it can cause their children to lack love and family ties become not closer. Therefore, teenagers look for love and attention from outside the home. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012)

Therefore, the role of parents is very crucial in educating their children when they are still immature with a life based on Islam so that their knowledge and appreciation of religion is strong and practiced in their lives. This is following the meaning of the words of Allah SWT:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

١٦:٧٨

Meaning: God brought you out of your mothers' wombs, without knowing anything; and He gave you the hearing, and the eyesight, and the brains; that you may give thank goodness. (*Surah al-Nahl, 16:78*)

In addition, there are cases of children from intermarriage and neglected by the family tend to return to the original religion of their mother or father. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012) This shows that the shallowness of religious knowledge of mothers and fathers who still practice the old culture of life also contributes to the problem of apostasy among teenagers. For example, Mohd Yunus Kassim, 62, claimed that he had apostatized since he was 13 years old and applied to convert to Buddhism at the Tampin district Islamic Religious Office in 1974 but was not allowed. He was the son of Che Putih and a Chinese man; Goh Fook Heng who converted to Islam and changed his name to Kassim Abdullah. According to him, he married a Chinese woman, Yan Joo Eng, 60, according to Chinese custom, and had six children aged between 29 to 39 years. (New Strait Times, 2006)

### 3.2.3 Source of incomes Family/ Family Economy

A person who is squeezed by the narrowness of life can also result in him mortgaging religion to continue living. Even the demands of life in this day and age lead some Muslims to apostasy. Among them is the story of a girl named Lisa (not her real name) in Penang who needs a job. She was finally offered a job at a nightclub and was also provided with a place to stay. The effects of free association and the pressures of life caused many of his friends to decide to apostate so that they can obtain the luxury of living in a short period. (Aninah, 2006)

In addition, the story of single mothers who are stuck with the problem of apostasy in Kuala Terengganu, a long time ago. Some of them embraced other religions but still wore headscarves and went to the mosque to obscure the eyes of the community. It is difficult to recognize this group because they still maintain headscarves and carry out religious activities such as other Muslims going to the mosque and so on, while at the same time they are wearing the symbol of the cross on their necks. This group is assisted by other religions in terms of business and given luxury. Also, if they have made a ceremony of surrendering to the 'god', the more luxuries they will get. (Sahidan, 2006)

Rasulullah SAW once stated about the fact that life is plagued by poverty or poverty is an epidemic that can cause a person to become an infidel. (Isa, 1998)

As the words of Rasulullah s.a.w which mean, "Almost that poverty can lead to disbelief" (Al-Baihaqi, t.t)

### **3.3 Romance, Marriage and Divorce**

Among other factors that cause apostasy among Muslims is romance. Some teenagers are stuck in the practice of romance between non-Muslims. Although there is an competent religious education, as a result of romance, they are framed in apostasy. It is miserable to find that the teenagers affected are teenagers who are quite loving, educated and cover their *aurat* instead of wild teenagers who have no direction and purpose in life. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012)

Furthermore, the symptoms of apostasy also occur due to marriage causes, whether non-Muslim men or non-Muslim women want to marry their Muslim life partner. (Norhafiz Abu Kassim, 2019). As a result of the feeling of love that lingers in the heart, one is willing to pawn the dignity of religion for the sake of love. For example, the story of Lina Joy or real name Azlina Jelani expressed her desire to marry a Christian Indian youth and asked for the marriage to be registered to confirm her marriage. After getting married, the marriage could not be registered because it is still written on the identity card that she is a Muslim. She tried to apply to get rid of the word Islam at the National Registration Department. (Zainah, 2009)

### **3.4 Environmental Influence (media, peers)**

The tactics of distorting the faith of Muslims now mostly use a variety of cunning and difficult to detect their methods. For instance, they spread through mass media and electronic media. The media strongly influence the mindset of individuals today. The reality today is, religious programs received less response from the audience than entertainment programs. All information that is useful and not properly mixed and spread quickly through social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other media. Therefore, every user should wisely filter and take the information obtained before disseminating it to the public.

In addition, the influence from the environment such as the enemies of Islam make the poor and teenagers a target, these preachers also make the traders who are desperate to use money as their target. For example, about 300- 400 Muslim traders around Muar are also feared to be influenced by the offers of certain parties who aim to distort their faith. The parties offer free financial assistance of up to RM 50,000 to the Islamic traders who fail to pay the debt Tai Long or along with the condition that they have to fill in the forms provided the parties concerned. (Salman, 2006)

Most of the traders involved owe a debt of around RM15 000, and the high-interest rate of 15 to 30 percent charged daily causes their debt to increase dramatically to reach

RM 50 000 in a few months. Those who try to undermine the faith of Muslims is suspected of having a network with along. This is because they can track down the borrower who failed to pay off this along with debt. Although the parties involved did not force them to convert to Christianity the symbol of the cross on the form has raised doubts in the hearts of the borrowers. If they accept this offer and fill out the form then it is feared to be influenced by their agenda. This subtle design was made by certain parties in an attempt to damage the faith of Muslims. (Salman, 2006)

In addition, adolescents, in particular, are involved in a social environment because they are easily affected by their peers. This situation is caused by promiscuity and lack of care and affection at home. As a result, they are observing for something to fill their emptiness of life and is compatible with their interests. Thus, the negative section succeeds in affecting them through belief, choice, and so on. Even the collapse of marriage and divorces that occur among parents' effect children gotten uncivilized and then they seek a peacefulness and amusement outside the home with peers without observing from their parents. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, Nasir, 2012)

Director of the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS), Datuk Mohamed Khusrin Munawi also admitted that the impace of peers was found to be part of the factors that contribute to the culture of apostasy in the state of Selangor. (Ain, 2010)

### **3.5 Diversity of Ideology and Doctrine**

#### **3.5.1 Religious Missionary Movement**

There were various efforts were made by the missionaries to remove the Muslims from the tenets of Islam. Harakah daily's report a few years ago also revealed that there is a movement to apostatize Muslim teenagers who are active in Seremban 2 with more aggressive and courageous efforts to reach the target group, especially teenagers between 17 and 25 years old. This group targets teenagers because they are approachable. (Wan Nordin, n.d)

These religious missionaries offer rewards in the form of pocket money to teenagers who want to apostatize, in fact, they are also offered sex services (for which men will get women, and women will get male partners) and mobile phones. In the case that happened a few years ago, many teenagers who can be considered a large number of housing estates around Seremban 2 were affected by the offer given. According to Azman, there was a case of a teenager who was said to have apostatized and could not able to recite *syahadah* because he drank a bottle of water called 'Holy Water'. This situation is very dangerous for the faith of the local community, especially teenagers.

Another issue, a woman admitted in front of the "Mufti Perak", Datuk Harussani Zakaria, that she had apostatized because involved in charity work pioneered by non-Muslims. The charity was not only put the charitable work as the main agenda but also carry out missionary activities so that people follow their religion. The woman admitted that some members also preached to her and inquired her to leave Islam and accept their religion. Without realizing it, she began to be influenced, eventually abandon the religion of Islam and subsequently enter to their religion. The woman added that she was later sent to Singapore to study the teachings of the religion. After returning to Malaysia, she was given the task of conducting propaganda against individuals who primarily her compatriots, the Malays. So far, the woman admitted to having attracted over 500 people to convert to that religion. (Mohd Hafiz, 2007)

### **3.5.2 The Liberalism, Pluralism and Secularism Movement**

Apart from religious missionaries, some pretend to fight for Islam through the Liberal Islamic movement which carries the idea of religious pluralism. Pluralism and plurality (diversity) have differences in their philosophical sector. Religious plurality means the existence of religious diversity in the world. While religious pluralism extends from just recognizing the existence of religion and even recognizing the truth of various religions. (Arthur, 2000)

The concept of religious plurality (diversity) is not contrary to Islamic teachings. Even Islam respects and gives freedom to human beings to choose their respective religions and

beliefs. However, if this diversity reaches the level of recognizing the truth of various religions, by generalizing all religions, then it contradicts Islam. It contradicts the principle of the absolute truth of Islam as stated in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْضًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Meaning: Religion on the side of Allah is Islam. Those to whom the Scripture was given contrast only after knowledge came to them, out of resentment among themselves. Whoever rejects the signs of God, God is quick to take account. (Al-Quran, Ali Imran,3:19)

The issue of pluralism and liberalism has been debated by the Mufti of Perak, Ustaz Harussani Zakaria in Ulama Conference in Perak. The pluralism he refers to is the aliveness of a thought that recognizes that all religions are similar which is leading to the culmination of 'similar truth'. All forms of devotion, religious activities are different 'forms'. For example, if Islam performs worship by praying in the mosque while Buddhists worship by attending the temple, Christians attend and meditate in the church every Sunday and various other forms of devotion that exist on this earth. According to him, those who adhere to this understanding, all forms of worship are true and recognized because they lead to a 'true truth' which is God. (Hilmi, 2006)

The consequence of pluralism needs to be possessed because it can endanger the faith of Muslims. Due to the influence of pluralism, Islam is no longer imprudent the absolute true religion and is mistrust as a religion of revelation revealed by Allah through the angel Jibril a.s to the Prophet Muhammad and the last religion that will last until the Day of Judgment. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012) Therefore, Muslims need to have a true understanding of Islam based on the basic root of the Qur'an and Hadith. When there is a belief that there is a religion or ideology other than Islam is true, then it is a sign that the thinking of Muslims is weakening in addition to the fading of faith.

### 3.5.3 The Existence of Heretical Teachings

The emergence of groups that teach teachings that deviate from the teachings of Islam is seen to be increasing. This group of people targets those who are shallow in religious knowledge who are easily influenced by the teachings brought by this group.

### **3.6 Islamic Education System (appreciation) and the Dissemination of Religious Knowledge is not Comprehensive**

The effectiveness of education is also one of the factors that contribute to the increase in cases of apostasy. For example, the case of apostasy Aishah Bukari who was born in the state of Johor, a state that is said that have a systematic Islamic education system. As another example, a French priest named Joshua Jamaluddin came from Batu Pahat, Johor. The question that arises is the extent of the effectiveness of the Islamic education system in ensuring that faith education is embedded in the souls of students. (Farawahida, Arieff, Azmi, & Nasir, 2012)

### **3.7 Inconsistencies in the Laws of each State**

Special laws relating to apostasy haven't been yet ordained at the Federal and state in Malaysia. Although there are legal stipulations that explain offenses related to faith, it doesn't lead to avoid the act of apostasy. For example, the Syaria Criminal Enactment 1992 and the Syaria Criminal Enactment (Selangor) 1995 contribute those offenses related to the faith are false worship claiming to be a non-Muslim to avoid *takfir*, false doctrine, and false claims. Although all these offenses are classified as acts of *riddah* in Islamic law, the punishment given for such offenses doesn't reflect the seriousness to curb the instrument of apostasy.

For example, provided for in Section 8 of the Perak Criminal (Syariah) Enactment 1992, "Whoever devotion or causes to be worshiped any beach, tree, field, grave, forest, hill or any other thing or any people by any means or for any intention contrary to *Hukum Syara'* is guilty of an offense and shall, on strong belief, be liable to a fine not exceeding three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment period not exceeding two years or to both and

the Court may order that the instrument- tools, buildings or structures used for such worship were destroyed.” Although the act of worship as provided is an act of *riddah*, the provision of punishment that is a fine not exceeding two years or both is not commensurate with the offense of *riddah*.

Another example is related to believing and developing heretical teachings which are also categorized as acts of *riddah* according to Islamic law. In Section 11 of the Perak Criminal (Syariah) Enactment 1992, “Whoever confessed to be himself or claim another person is a prophet, *Imam Mahdi* or *wali* or to pretend or utter words or admit that he or another person is aware of the supernatural with false and contradictory allegations with the teachings of Islam is blameful of an offense and shall on strong belief be liable to a fine not exceeding five thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or both.

Even for an offense that a Muslim openly admits is no longer a Muslim, the punishment imposed is not commensurate. Provided in Section 5 of the Syariah Criminal Enactment (Selangor) 1995, “Any person who confessed to be a non-Muslim to avoid any action taken against him under this Enactment or any other Enactment in force in this State shall commit the offense and upon strong belief shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years or both.”

The provision of punishment that is not commensurate with the offense of apostasy stems from the jurisdiction of the Syariah Court itself to enforce punishment. Provided in Section 2 of the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Revised - 1988), the Syariah Courts which are perfectly established under any law in a State and are given jurisdiction over those who profess Islam and in respect of any matter referred to one by one in List II of the State List in the Ninth Schedule to the Federal Constitution is hereby given jurisdiction in respect of offenses against the pillars of Islam by persons professing such religion who may prescribe under any written law: Provision that such jurisdiction shall not be exercised in respect of any offense punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding three years or a fine exceeding five thousand ringgit or whipping exceeding six times or any a combination of those punishments. ”

In addition to the issue of the disproportionate sentence against Muslims who are offended, there is another issue, namely the extent of the seriousness of the law in Malaysia to curb the actions of non-Muslims to convert Muslims. To control and curb the spread of non-Muslim religions to Muslims, nine states have enacted relevant Enactments based on the provisions of Article 11 (4) of the Federal Constitution. That enactment is the Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Terengganu, 1980, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Kelantan, 1981, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Kedah, 1988, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Melaka, 1988, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Perak, 1988, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Selangor, 1988, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Pahang, 1989, Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Negeri Sembilan, 1991 and Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Johor, 1991.

For example, provided in Section 4 of the Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Melaka, 1988 regarding offenses of persuading, influencing or provoke Muslims to change beliefs, “(1) A person commits an offense if he persuades, influences or provokes another Muslim- (a) to be a believer or member of a non-Muslim religion or to be lean to that religion; or (b) to abandon or dislike Islam. (2) A person who commits an offense under subsection (1) may be fined ten thousand ringgit or a sponsor for one year or both.”

As for the same offense, provided for in Section 4 (2) of the Control and Restriction (Development of Non-Muslim Religions) Enactment of Kedah, 1988, “Any person who commits an offense under sub-section (1) upon conviction, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four years and for the second offense or subsequent offenses, to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.”

Although nine states have enacted laws to control and curb the spread of non-Muslim religions to Muslims, the main issue is that no relevant laws are enacted for the

Federal Territories (for Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya) and three other states namely Penang, Sabah and Sarawak. This is very crucial because of the deficiency of these laws can lead to various problems such as in the case of Lina Joy to issue summons *Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan & 2 Others* [2007] 3 AMR 693 where a Malay woman was baptized in a church in Kuala Lumpur without violates any law as the Non-Muslim Religions (Control of Development Among Muslims) Federal Territories Act does not yet exist in the Federal Territories. Incidents like this have caused anxiety among Muslims in the country. (Pawancheek, 2010)

While at the local level, efforts to uphold Islamic law also go through many obstacles. These barriers start from the leadership level, the media, non-governmental organizations, and individuals (Zamri, 2011). Statements issued by key leaders of the country hint at how difficult Islamic law is to be apply in Malaysia. Similarly, the views that reject Islamic law continue to gain a place in the mainstream media.

### **3.8 Discrimination against converts (*muallaf*).**

Some of the new relatives did not get protection from the Muslims and were left to live apart. What they learned about Islam was far different from the reality they had to face. The term brotherhood emphasized by Islam cannot be felt by them they are given various titles that can discriminate against other Muslims. Whether realized or not, this spread causes the feelings of inferiority among new relatives to grow stronger. (Lan, 2019) Eventually, they will mix and mingle with each other and causing their integration and communication with other Muslims to be severed.

This situation makes these new converts easy to drift and lead their direction. The Muslim community has a role to guide and lead them so that their faith is fulfilled, firmly rooted in their hearts. Without the perfect guidance, new converts will continue isolated from society. For new converts despair with the situation itself will take action leaving from Islam and turn back to their original religion.

The education to new converts in Negeri Sembilan is stated in the section. Therefore, the authorities should provide any form of guidance to Convert. In addition, new

converts are required to follow the basic guidance courses provided by MAINS. The failure of the convert education system will lead to the crime of apostasy among new converts as in the case of Fatimah Tan in Penang. Similarly, a study conducted by Ustaz Azhar Yaakob found that a total of 50 Muslim Indians in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur had apostatized and they were among the new converts. (Azhar Yaakob, 2000)

Based on the information from Negeri Sembilan Islamic Authorities, Indian *muallaf* are among the many involved in the problem of apostasy. They are seen to lack knowledge in education and understanding related to Islam. The faith of the converts is still shaky if they face any test. Therefore, this group needs to be monitored and the general community must always take care of the surrounding neighbors, especially the *muallaf* so that they do not feel marginalized and isolated. (Norhafiz Abu Kassim, 2019)

Therefore, Associate Prof. Dr. Abdul Halim Tamuri, Chairman of the Muallaf Committee, MAIS thinks there are still many challenges that need to be faced by MAIS to help the converts master in the Islamic religion as an *ad-Din*. Among them, the teachers do not master the existing basics of *fard 'ain*, the lack of non-governmental organizations to discourse the issue of converts, and the attitude of the Muslims who argue that Islam is the exclusive right of the Malays so despised foreigner who converted to Islam. (Halim, 2010)

### **3.9 Conclusion**

The factors discussed above are always present from the past ten years until nowadays. Every Muslim must be concerned with each other and play a role in addressing this problem. Therefore, as Muslims who love Islam, we need to together with the authorities to deal with this problem.