

Whither democracy?

MD FAIZUL KABIR

SPEAKING frankly democracies are the creations of military bureaucrats who, by taking advantage of corrupt and weak civilian government usurp the power and settle themselves over the carcass of rotten civilian leadership as a sharp-clawed falcon does over its dead prey. They cannot govern but rule not by 'ifs and buts' but by 'do and done'. This rule of 'do and done' is backed by a sort of law called martial law.

The conquest of lousy and loathsome civilian leadership is over, the usurped power is consolidated in the hands of the high command. He commits to produce a real democracy for the people, and a sort of democracy is produced out of the womb of camouflaged wisdom acquired at the floor of military academy. It is a multi-styled democracy assuming various names such as basic democracy, controlled democracy or guided democracy. Ayub Khan of Pakistan was the first military bureaucrat of this sub-continent to produce such kind of martial democracy.

This type of coloured democracy has been and is being experienced by the people of Bangladesh. They achieved complete separation and independence from the military bureaucratic domination of Pakistan through a War of Liberation in 1971. But the ghosts of military bureaucratic rulers made a re-entry into this liberated soil and mischievously caused to kill the founder of this new nation with his family. Only his two daughters annihilation. Subsequently his four closest companions were also killed in the jail. These grave tragedies at the beginning made a halt to the natural flow of democratic tradition long cherished and nourished through the great leaders like Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque, Shahid Suhrawardi, Mawlana Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Power to govern was transferred from the hands of people to the hands holding the trigger of gun. Democratic tradition nourishing the spirit and inspiration of the War of Liberation came to an abrupt end and martial law government was imposed upon the people. So goes the age-old proverb that if you want to kill a dog give it a bad name and if you want to crush people's will do it in the name of democracy. Machiavellian expediency set in and subsequently a mouthful democracy devoid of the supremacy of the people's will was introduced in Bangladesh with all its inherent mischiefs. Mischiefs begets mischievous acts and as a natural consequence all mischievous forces have now been let loose to defame Islam and destroy innocent human lives and properties.

In fact democracy can neither be given nor produced. It is an abstract concept of highest human standard and noblest expression of human qualities of an organised society ensuring just, peaceful and prosperous living. It manifests itself as a natural phenomenon in society provided its members are solemnly committed to a social order based on morality, justice, welfare and nourishment of learning for unflinching manifestation of good conscience through mutual consultation. Only then self-aggrandisements deprivations, lies,

abuses and injustices are done away with. Intelligent devils and half-educated rogues do not dare take lead in the society. They simply suffer their questionable existence in their loathsome wealth and suspended fiendish desires. Democracy has an ancient heritage. It originated in the great funeral oration of great Athenian king, Pericles. In his famous speech in public funeral in 431 BC held in honour of the soldiers who gave their lives for the defence of Athens, he first used the word 'democracy' as a form of their government meaning government of the many, honour proportionate to ability and doing good to citizens. Women and slaves were excluded from rights. The Periclean democracy was a government by the people of abilities for public good, not by fiction but by action, as opposed to Aristocracy meaning rule by a small privileged class. Thereafter centuries slumbered away. Lions, tigers and hyenas ruled animal society for the few and the aristocrats, oligarchs and patricians ruled the human society also for the few.

But in mid-nineteenth century the second public funeral was set at Gettysburg battlefield where the American soldiers gave their lives to save the United States from being broken apart. President Abraham Lincoln in his famous Funeral Address in 1863 told that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth. Democracy was reborn in the Second Funeral Oration out of the lives of the patriots. The spirit of democracy again reverberated in the voice of Abraham Lincoln. Like Pericles he breathed out a deep faith for government participated by every citizen for their ever-lasting peace and prosperity.

By the word itself democracy is democracy meaning people's welfare, which again is deeply related to constant well-being of the polity meaning constant well-being of the society. Both democracy and politics are therefore synonymous with each other pointing to a prosperity of the highest order in a human society. But where is that democracy which was breathed out as a deep faith and commitment from the very hearts of the two great statesmen in two public funerals at the two great battle fields where the patriotic soldiers sacrificed their lives for the sake of their motherlands? Democracy was thus created out of the graves of the martyrs and sanctified by their sacrificed blood and flourished through the hearts of the patriots.

It is thus born and reborn. And after its rebirth with the breathing out of Abraham Lincoln at the Gettysburg of the United States of America and its flickered reawakening in the oratories of Edmund Burke of the United Kingdom, it is again pushed back into its apologetic existence. The demons of human society have become cunningly crazy and devised a sort of democracy shrewdly derived from the words 'demons crazy'. This democracy is not breathed out from their hearts but disgorged from their tongues dressed in false allegories and rhetorics to lure the citizens into hypnotic belief that they are the true makers and givers of democracy and even if they do nourish their own selves at the cost of others that should be deemed to have been done for the public good. After all they are the blessed sons and daughters of democracy!

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Making your marriage more romantic

WAHEEDA ALI

WHEN you were courting, all you could think about was how exciting and romantic it was to be together. Back then, you couldn't do enough to please each other. As time passed, you got so accustomed to married life that you stopped making special efforts for each other. There were always so many responsibilities and details to take care of, that who could think about romance? Maybe you've been missing those blissful feelings and you sense that your partner misses them too. Here are a few ways to put more romance back into your marriage.

Pay attention to your appearance

There's a saying: Beauty's only skin deep, but ugliness goes right through to the bone. Too often, people who've been married for years no longer feel the need to go through the effort of looking good for their partner.

If your wife doesn't enjoy seeing you lounging around the house in your dirty lungi or pajama, or if your husband is bothered by seeing you in worn out slippers and an old sari or faded salwar kameez, don't ignore it. Doing that is a lot like saying: "We're married. Therefore, I don't have to bother putting in any effort. You're always going to be there, so I don't have to worry about pleasing you."

After you become indifferent to your appearance, your spouse may have a hard time seeing you in a romantic and exciting way. There's nothing wrong with being comfortable around the house. But do yourself, your spouse, and your marriage a favour by paying attention to your dress and personal hygiene. Show your husband or wife that you care by taking the time to look, feel, and smell good.

Saying the words "I love you" is always a good idea as long as it is said sincerely. Everyone appreciates being told how much they're loved and cherished.

The special experiences and meaningful rituals that you create over the course of your marriage help you have a richer and more romantic life together.



Here are some ways to expand that simple three-word phrase:

- Share your hopes, dreams, and secret thoughts. There are some things that you can only communicate through words. And few things make your partner feel closer to you than letting her in on your most private thoughts and visions. When your goal is to create more closeness in your marriage, you want to share only thoughts and emotions that are likely to make your partner feel loved and wanted. Save any worries that are likely to generate anger or tears for another time.
- Tell your partner often how much you love being married to her or him. Then, talk about the qualities you enjoy most. Is it her terrific sense of humour? The way she greets you at the door when you come home from work? Married couples often spend a lot

of time complaining about one another's faults and shortcomings. If you want to stir up the romantic fires in your relationship, try letting her or him know what she or he does that pleases you most.

The way people touch each other communicates different feelings and provokes different sensations. Wives often complain that their husbands touch them only a special moment. Women seem to like more hand holding, kissing, and gentle physical closeness than men. So, guys don't wait for bedtime to touch and fondle your wife. Make it part of the way you communicate every day.

The absence of affectionate touching doesn't always mean that there's a problem in the marriage. However, a certain amount of gentle, non-sexual touching enhances closeness and height-

ens the sense of romance between the partners. This touching can take many forms, like caressing your partner's face, putting an arm around her back, or stroking his hair.

Make time to be alone together

When husbands and wives don't spend enough time alone, they are bound to grow apart. And when a couple already has problems, they often distance themselves from one another by using kids, friends, family memberseven groups of strangers as buffers.

Couples with young children need to make a special effort to find time to be by them. Sure, it's not always easy to find a babysitter. It often seems easier to drag the kids along to wherever you're going. That may be conducive to a rich family life, but you need to balance that with time for the two of you.

Make it your business to find at least a few hours each week for the two of you to be alone together. Go for a walk, movie. Meet for lunch. Try to get away overnight as often as possible. Simply logging your time together won't make your relationship more romantic. What you need to do is to spend uninterrupted time sharing thoughts, ideas, and activities in a way that gives you pleasure and you closer as a couple. It may be taking a drive in the country. Or stay home, order in a pizza, and rent a couple of videos. Whatever makes the two of you smile and feel light-hearted.

Is there a special spot where you used to spend time when you were newly married couple? Return to the locations that have special meaning to you—on a regular basis, if possible. Continue to seek out new romantic places and rituals, add them to the ones you already have.

The special experiences and meaningful rituals that you create over the course of your marriage help you have a richer and more romantic life together.

The author is a freelance contributor to The Daily Star.

WARRANTLESS WIRETAPS

The Bush administration's assault on privacy

INSIDE AMERICA

According to the polls, most Americans still want their privacy and the right to be left alone by Big George. But since 9/11 our bungling leadership in Washington DC has extended government snooping on a wide range of activities all in the name of a war on terrorism that will, most likely, last for decades. Our enemies aren't smiling, if they are eavesdropping. They are laughing their heads off!

RON CHEPESUK

GEORGE Bush, Jr. is one leader who thinks he's above the law. That's the only conclusion to reach in assessing how he is defending his latest breach of civil liberties in the name of the War on Terrorism. I'm referring to his recently exposed domestic spying program. Alberto Gonzalez, the US Attorney General who spends a lot of his time trying to find ways to justify the administration's reservation of the torture option was on Capitol Hill in Washington DC, attempting to provide legal justification for the warrantless surveillance of ostensibly "terrorist" suspects in the US without special congressional approval.

Our enemy is listening, and I cannot help but wonder if they aren't shaking their heads in amazement and smiling at the prospect that we might disclose even more. Gonzalez told Congress. Watching the earnest bureaucrat deliver his boss's message, I had to smile, too. Firstly, surely al Qaeda knows that any calls they might make to the US could be monitored. Secondly, if they are listening, they are more likely smiling and shaking their heads in amazement at how the Bush administration has been doing a better job in undermining the "Great Satan's" democratic system of checks and balances than they can possibly do themselves.

It's quite amazing as well that the Bush administration would flout the law, given that it can wiretap its citizens and foreigners within the US legally, if it wants. Under the 1979 Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA), Bush can go to a secret court 72 hours in advance of a wiretap operation to get it approved. Journalist Martin Schram, described this protocol as "close to a judicial rubber stamp as a president can conjure up in his fondest power dream." During a 25-year period, from 1979 to 2004, the court approved 18,742 applications and denied only four, Schram pointed out. To justify its spying program, Bush has mounted an aggressive PR campaign that has tried to justify the program and convince, as some would say, scare Americans into supporting it. He's used Orwellian double-speak to spin the program, suggesting its name should be termed a "terrorist surveillance program" as if a simple change of terms would make the program legal and acceptable.

But he has not convinced a neutral observer like the non partisan Congressional Research Service, the research arm of the US Congress. Bush said, "It's amazing that people say to me, 'Well, he's just breaking the law.' If I wanted to breach the law,



why was I briefing Congress?" Bush's perceived incredulity aside, he didn't brief Congress. He briefed just eight senior lawmakers. But that said, the Congressional Research Service report noted that Bush's action "would appear to be inconsistent with the law, which requires that the congressional intelligence committees be kept fully and currently informed of all intelligence activities."

Those congressional committees should also be informed when the administration makes a major shift in gathering intelligence. The National Security Agency's job is to spy on communications abroad, not on its citizens in the US. The Bush administration claims to be only spying on possible terrorist suspects, but who is he trying to con? Under the presidential order issued in 2002 authorizing the domestic spying program, NASA has monitored the international telephone calls and e-mail messages of thousands of people inside the US without warrants to track any possible connections to al Qaeda. That's thousands. My question is: how many of these people have nothing to do with terrorism and the would-be spy catchers know it? The wrong answer, I'm afraid, puts us on the slippery slope to the police state at worse than the paranoid society at best.

The Bush administration has shown that its not averse to fishing expeditions when it comes to prying into the lives of Americans. This coming March 13 has been set as the court date to determine if Google, the giant Internet search engine, must comply with US Justice Department's demand that it be given search information about millions of its users. The Bush administration wants to use the information for its legal battle over online access to adult material, such as pornography online. If Google has to comply, millions of its users' search questions will be affected. Note that Microsoft and Yahoo have already caved into Uncle Sam's demand. Meanwhile, big business, most

notably AT&T, has become the Bush administration's handmaiden in its assault on the privacy of Americans. Without informing its customers, the giant telecommunications company has allowed NSA direct access to its huge databases of telephone and e-mail records, involving you guessed it, millions of Americans. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a peoples' champion and one of America's great institutions, has sued AT&T, charging that the company has made possible "the biggest fishing expedition ever devised." The ACLU is also one of several US pro-privacy organizations that are suing NSA to stop its secret electronic surveillance program.

And what is the government getting for its assault on constitutional law, besides the making of a police state with a paranoid society? Not much, according to a recent investigative report in the Washington Post last February 5. The newspaper reports that: "Fewer than 10 US citizens or residents a year, according to an authoritative source, have aroused enough suspicion during warrantless eavesdropping to justify interruption of their domestic calls."

According to the polls, most Americans still want their privacy and the right to be left alone by Big George. But since 9/11 our bungling leadership in Washington DC has extended government snooping on a wide range of activities that include telephone calls at both the office and home, e-mails, airline flights, library usage, cell phones, and credit card transactions, for starters, all in the name of a war on terrorism that will, most likely, last for decades.

And all we have to show for it are fewer than ten suspected US citizens annually. Our enemies aren't smiling, if they are eavesdropping. They are laughing their heads off!

Ron Chespek is a Visiting Professor at Chittagong University and Research Associate with the National Defense College.

The new fascism?

MD. ABDUR ROUF

HISTORY repeats itself. Such repetition often results in devastating consequences. Yet it appears that people do not take lessons from history. It is an irony. In this article, I argue that there are strong similarities between the Fascism of the inter-war period and the current US doctrine of the New American Century. German Nazism, together with Italian Fascism and Japanese imperialist ambitions, shattered the collective security mechanisms instituted after World War I and caused World War II that resulted in more than 60 million deaths and huge destruction. I predict that the US doctrine of the New American Century, if not halted, is again going to shatter the collective security mechanisms instituted after World War II, and this will present mankind with a disaster of the type not thought of by man and not found in history.

Fascism

Fascism was a political movement that was prevalent in parts of central and east Europe during the inter-war period. In all its forms, Fascism shows some basic features. Prominent of those are extreme right-wing nationalism, totalitarianism, rejection of Marxism and all left-wing ideologies, rejection of liberal democratic values and individualism, fascination with arms and uniforms and glorification of violence and martial virtues, unquestioned obedience to leader, etc.

Some forms of Fascism, especially German Nazism, were extremely racist. In Italy, Fascist leader Benito Mussolini with his followers staged a march towards Rome and took over power in 1922.