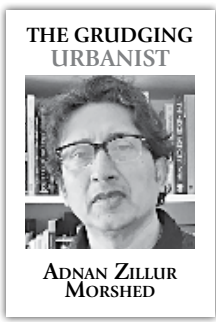


Not rewarding honesty is promoting dishonesty



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

It is hard not to notice the frozen posture of BUET engineer MD Delwoar Hossain's murdered body on the bank of the Turag river. There was a lot of tragic symbolism in his corpse. A raised hand, eyes closed, dried blood oozing from his mouth, his modest checked shirt, worn out pants, a carelessly abandoned body—all coalesced into a haunting image on the canvass of green grass, almost a catastrophic enactment of a deeply conflicted Bangladesh. I kept wondering if his killers noticed his raised hand, as they left after dumping his body. And, if they did, what they thought of it.

In its heartbreaking silence, Delwoar's lifeless body spoke loudly. With its lifted hand and closed eyes, his body was telling us something profound: that not rewarding honesty is actually promoting dishonesty. We are slowly getting glimpses into his personal and professional life from the descriptions of his classmates, colleagues, and family members. A portrait is slowly emerging: an honest city corporation engineer who resisted the temptation of crores of taka that could have been easily deposited under his office table, if he so allowed. He would not approve grossly inflated invoices. His honesty became a roadblock to a lot of people around him who would like to accumulate wealth at any cost.

It is becoming clear that Delwoar Hossain's professional honesty prompted his guilty verdict and death sentence. The "politician-city

corporation-thikadar-industrial" complex, an omnipotent billion-dollar mafia in Bangladesh, may have ordered his execution. This complex assumes the power to decide who lives and who doesn't. It is often protected by many concentric circles of political and bureaucratic patronage. The demand for justice can often fizzle out trying to penetrate just a few outer circles.

How does society respond to a tragedy of somebody getting killed for being honest? You may choose to stay silent but your silence may inadvertently take the wrong side. The lesson is this: If we don't champion honesty, we are facilitating dishonesty.

I didn't know Delwoar Hossain personally but I reckon I must have passed him by sometimes in the corridors of BUET academic buildings during the 1980s. Although not in the same department, he was my contemporary, beginning his BUET journey four years after I did. Looking at his social media pictures it is hard to miss the intense power of his piercing eyes. The setting of his family pictures reveals the modesty of a quiet middle-class family. There is no ostentatious display of wealth. There is never a smug laugh either on his face or on those of his family members. There is no hubristic body language. The family pictures that have emerged so far are defined by the humility of a simple Bangladeshi family and their even simpler lifestyle.

I kept wondering why Delwoar's murder isn't getting enough traction in the news media. I have a lingering suspicion that it may be because of a prevailing "typical" image of a government engineer as an unscrupulous bribe-taking mercenary. Is the news media trying to be super-cautious as to not fall into the trap of



PHOTO: COLLECTED FROM MD DELWOAR HOSSAIN'S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

Engineer MD Delwoar Hossain at a BUET reunion programme. Hossain was found dead at the Beribadh area under Turag police station on May 12, 2020.

whether he was honest or not? Or is it that the media decides which murder to sensationalise and which murder to ignore? How much power do moneyed god fathers exercise to control media narratives and bury "inconvenient truths"? Is there a prearranged limit to investigative journalism?

The broader problem is that to perpetually accept a predetermined impression of something or someone as truth, and normalising it within our popular imagination, is to tacitly support the evil behind that

impression. Only by, on the one hand, relentlessly uncovering corruption and, on the other hand, promoting honesty could we ever hold a government official accountable. It is the media's moral responsibility not to preemptively normalise the corrupt or honest image of a city corporation engineer. If the engineer is corrupt, then expose him or her. If the engineer is honest, then champion him or her. But surrendering to a fixed portrait of the government engineer as dishonest serves no noble purpose. Worse yet,

the news media's silence or negligence can indirectly enable the corrupt circle that kills people.

I have been thinking about the last few minutes of engineer Delwoar Hossain's life. The killers were all waiting for him in the minivan that picked him up from his rented residence in Mirpur. He was allegedly beaten and strangled to death inside the van before being thrown out onto the river bank. One wonders whether the holy month of Ramadan could have any neutralising effect on people's darkest instincts.

This sheer contradiction can be explained by what the philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt called the "banality of evil," evil done with stunning mundanity, as if one is simply performing daily duties. But more intriguingly, how people at large respond to the banality of evil reveals the sustainability and permeability of evil in society. The great French philosopher and activist Simone Weil wrote in 1933: "Never react to an evil in such a way as to augment it." Will the failure to demand justice for Delwoar Hossain's brutal murder augment and fortify the dark forces that designed his elimination?

His children will not only not have a father to celebrate Eid with this year but also remain traumatised forever by the image of their father lying dead on a lonely patch of grass, blood still drying on his face. The least that society can do is demand justice—and a judicial system that is just, independent, and swift. Not demanding justice would mean supporting injustice and evil.

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Azad Rahman: A star in the musical firmament of Bangladesh

SYED NAQUIB MUSLIM

While highlighting the significance of music in human life, Martin Luther, the German theologian and leader of the Protestant Reformation, once said: "Music can make the sad merry, the merry sad... Make the proud humble..." Humble yet versatile, Azad Rahman, a legendary figure of music in Bangladesh who is considered the father of Bangla Kheyal, passed away at a hospital in Dhaka on May 16, 2020.

Born in West Bengal in 1944, Azad studied Indian Classical Music at the Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata from where he received a gold medal. He migrated to Dhaka in 1964, and began working as an artist and music director in then Radio Pakistan. From there, he began to earn popularity as a composer, working on various songs mostly composed by Jibunnessa Jamal, Abu Haider Sajedur Rahman, Azizur Rahman, Dr Moniruzzaman, Rafiquzzaman, Dr Moniruzzaman, and Fazle Khuda.

Azad earned praise for his originality in crafting tunes, not comparable with that of any other composer. Besides his musical talent, he was also quite well known for his administrative capability. He served as a principal of the Government Music College, and also as the director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy for two terms. Earlier, he was appointed the first executive director of the (now defunct) National Academy of Performing Arts. As Director General at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, he produced a cultural troupe for representing Bangladesh abroad through music. He



Azad Rahman (1944-2020).

led a number of cultural delegations to a number of countries. It was because of his committed mentorship that we got talented artists like Firoza Begum, Sabina Yasmin, Ferdausi Rahman, Ferdous Ara, Khurshid Alam, Runa Laila, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Anjuman Ara Begum, Nashid Kamal, and others.

He displayed a remarkable zeal and commitment through the music direction of a number of patriotic songs such as "Songram cholbe, cholbey..." He was totally committed to the Liberation War in 1971, and during that critical time he composed songs like

"Jonmo amar dhonno holo maago" to inspire the Freedom Fighters. He was in charge of music direction in a few movies including *Agantuk*, *Dossu Bonhur*, *Ananto Prem*. Also, he sang a playback song in the movie *Epar Opar*. Thus I have reasons to be fond of his music since 1966. I have been listening to the songs of Khursid Alam, Zinat Rehana, Khondoker Faruque Ahmed—"Tomar duhaat echuye shopho nilam", "Shonibar shonibar shonibar aaj", etc. These popular songs were tuned by Azad Rahman.

Azad was a regular participant in

musical interview programmes on television where he used to impart lessons in a soothing tone and always appear with a smile across his lips. On December 31, 2019, Channel-i sponsored an exclusive programme of Bangla kheyal where he taught the audience the core points of kheyal. Apart from music direction, Azad used to give lecture on music and musical theories at private universities.

Diversity was his forte. One unique feature of his musical genius is that he had, unlike many famous composers of both Bangladesh and West Bengal, the

remarkable skill of mixing the nuances of kheyal, gazal, and Lalon giti in the same song. Melody and simplicity were the dominant traits of Azad's tune. In 1977 and 1993, he was awarded twice the national prize as Best Music Director.

Another rare feature of his personality was that he could create "fusion" not just in the cultural life, but also in social life. He was an ideal husband, an affectionate father. The romantic song sung by his life partner Seilna Azad, "Moneri rongey rangabo," was extremely popular to the lovers of music. He used to help his wife in the kitchen. As an intimate friend and admirer of his music, he once invited me to dinner and claimed that a few vegetable items on the menu were prepared by himself. I saw him last in 2018 at a musical soiree, held on the Green Herald School campus, and I again met the couple at Bangabhaban the same year on the occasion of the Victory Day. He was a very humble man but he would not tolerate any debate on the validity of Bangla kheyal to which he was exceptionally dedicated.

Every song contains a melody that lingers in the minds of all, young or old. Experts in communications and music agree that music makes pleasurable sounds that communicate a message to our inner being. Azad Rahman will be remembered for his melody, simplicity, originality, and diversity. His songs will continue to inspire both the present and future generations of Bangladesh and beyond.

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Dr Syed Naquib Muslim is a former secretary of the government of Bangladesh.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

TIBET ANNEXED BY CHINA

May 23, 1951

China formally annexed Tibet as an autonomous region on this day in 1951, giving rise to a Tibetan independence movement—led by the Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize—that continued into the early 21st century.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

29 Energy

32 Signal of approval

33 Sock part

34 Immediately

36 Auctioneer's cry

37 Indian coin

38 Crack up

39 Fixes copy

40 Fill with joy

41 Bears' lairs

42 Sheet material

DOWN

1 Renaissance fair address

2 Trying to lose

3 Augmented

4 Binds

5 -- Francisco

6 Lingerie items

7 Run-down

8 "Skyfall" singer

9 Network points

11 Hyped

15 Stick out

17 Academic studies

20 Conclude

21 Bird of myth

24 Footstool

25 Not in time

27 Opponent

28 Blush

29 Did kitchen work

30 Piano piece

31 Visit briefly

35 Brooklyn team

36 Songs for one

38 Hair goo

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

L	A	F	F	S	R	E	T	R	O
A	W	A	R	E	A	R	R	A	Y
M	A	K	I	N	G	G	A	I	N
P	I	E	A	L	E	B	A	T	
S	T	R	A	T	U	S	E	W	E
			C	O	T		S	C	A
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O	N	U	S		L	E	E		
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S	E	P		A	N	D	V	I	A
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E	V	I	C	T		O	S	A	G
R	E	N	E		D	A	N	E	S

BETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT