

For Strong Japan-Bangladesh Relations

by Patrick Markey

RASHED Ahmed, the newly-appointed ambassador of Bangladesh, is ready for the challenge.

For a professional diplomat, when you go to a country, you go with a commitment to develop friendship, to look at the positive, that is not to say that we would not look at the reality, but we would like to build on the positive in a country. If you go with a critical mind, it is difficult to build on, because you will be psychologically conditioned.

Any individual, any educated person and any nation has a moral obligation to contribute to better understanding of different people.

Japan is the latest in the impressive list of Ahmed's postings. A former lecturer in political science at Dhaka University, Ahmed has served in Paris, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Vienna and Cairo to name just a few. North-South dialogue in Manila, the opening of Bangladesh's first mission in Yugoslavia, followed by the mission in Kuwait and participation in the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana; all have been part of the fabric of his diplomatic experience.

Having arrived in August to take up his new Tokyo post, Ahmed considers Japan one of the most challenging posts for any ambassador because of Japan's formidable economic status. Yet with a 27-year history in diplomatic circles, he is more than qualified to comment on the state of Japanese-Bangladesh relations.

After the 1971 war of liberation when "democratic aspirations were answered by bullets," and the birth of Bangladesh, Japan played an important part in extending goodwill toward the fledgling nation, he says. The conceptual building block for Bangladesh-



Japan relations was Japan's early recognition of the Bangladeshi state and the assistance in the reconstruction of a new, but ravaged, nation. On this solid cornerstone of goodwill, says Ahmed, Japan and Bangladesh have built a relationship of common beliefs.

Japan and Bangladesh have a shared vision of a peaceful non-nuclear, equitable world order. Japan is against war, against conflict, against any form of domination. And so Bangladesh stands for a non-nuclear, war-free world.

We find that we have a shared vision and we realize clearly that to achieve development, to achieve the goals of giving at least some quality of life to our people — because poverty is a grim issue — it can only be done in an environment of peace and stability," he says.

However, in the wider framework of international relations and economic disparities, it is perhaps the question of financial aid that draws most attention to Bangladesh. A veteran of North-South dialogue, Ahmed is resolute in emphasizing differences over this complex issue.

"We feel very strongly that aid is not charity. The feeling in some of the developed countries... that they are paying for this, that they would like particular behaviour in return, is something that we find very difficult to accept. Every educated person knows that when a country gives aid purely out of charity, there is some enlightened self-interest, there is interdependence. So when we get assistance, it may not always be used in a way that the developed countries would like aid to be utilized, without any imperfection. If everything was executed on time in Bangladesh, if every thing was absolutely perfect then we would not be a developing country, we would be sitting among the ranks of the rich."

Like other countries hindered by natural disasters and socio-economic problems, Ahmed says that the "modicum of success" that Bangladesh has achieved receives little attention.

"Whatever we do, the problem persists that our modest achievements are not given credit, and sometimes issues which do not exist, like fundamentalism, are given more air. In a world torn by ethnic and religious strife, Bangladesh

has been basically an oasis of peace and stability. It is a beautiful tapestry of different cultures, civilizations and regions, but out of a nation of 120 million, you will always find a few people wanting to get up on the rooftops, but that doesn't mean we have all become militants."

The successes Ahmed refers to are development of a "formidable opposition" in a democratic parliament, press freedom, expansion in primary education, successful population control, and "self-sufficiency in food, no mean feat for a country of 120 million." Ahmed also refers to the World Bank commendations of Bangladesh's macro-economic management.

Within the framework of Japanese relations these achievements have been symbolized in a series of friendship bridges, the latest of which is the large Jamuna Bridge project.

In his capacity as ambassador, Ahmed aims to promote not only projects such as improvement of transport to the capital, Dhaka, and the modernization of airport and harbour facilities in Chittagong, but also to present Bangladesh in a larger context.

"What is the totality of the Bangladeshi people? What are the aspirations? What are we seeking and hoping for in a partnership? It is not like a relationship between donor and receiving country; that would be too narrow a description of my role. I would like the Japan-Bangladesh relationship to acquire a wider dimension and depth, to have not only trade and economic cooperation, but also cultural, intellectual content and greater exchanges at all levels."

Courtesy : The Asahi Evening News

KHAN-I-KHANAN, a courier in the court of Emperor Shahjahan, was overwhelmed at the beauty of Darbar-i-Khas built by Emperor Shahjahan. In that moment of ecstatic joy and surprise he delivered an effusive poetic judgement instantly:

'Agar Ferdous bar ruge jaminast'

'O haminast, haminast'

Had there been a Paradise on earth,
It should be here, here and here.

Khan-i-Khanan, unfortunately for him, did not visit Feni to improve his poetic ideas on paradise. Another poet, Hafiz, invited troubles for him when he wanted to barter away Samarkhand and Bokhara for a beauty spot on the cheek of his beloved:

'Agar an Turkey Shiraji Badast arad dil-e-mara Bakhal-hindbush bakhsham Samarkhand ba-Bokhara.'

If the beauty with black spot on her cheek touches my heart by her own hand, I may present Samarkhand and Bokhara to her.

Hafiz had to apologise to Timurlane for such expressed wish to give away some one else's estate for love.

During my childhood when fictions appeared more credible than facts, I was told by a Fenian (the people of Fen in the same analogical order as inhabitants of Venice are called Venitians) that if God ever taken a retrogressive decision to shift paradise on earth, the site for such eternal abode of the pious would have certainly been Feni. They claim that ecologically, spiritually, intellectually and materially Feni is the ideal place for any construction of spiritual bias designed to house the pious with a licence to get everything tax free till eternity. In absence of a divine decision, however, Feni lost its last opportunity to become an

Distant Drum
M N Mustafa

that Japanese bombs were badly made to cause ignition to the explosives and that the Japanese pilots dropped bombs off the target to avoid ground fire which were ceaseless and unrelenting.

My grand father whose pocket was picked three at Feni disdainedly dismissed Feni's right to such divine dignity. He argued that if God consigned pickpockets to dwell in hell eternally, Feni stood a better chance to provide site for a hell. My grand mother, however, visited the shrine of Pagla Pir at Feni many times and her views ran contrary to those of my grand father. Their nagging arguments for and against Feni often disturbed domestic peace and brought our home nearer to hell. They might have settled their difference in the other world now.

None knew what her prayer was about but my grand mother appeared to be contented with her visit to the shrine. God perhaps granted her prayer. As an obliged and grateful votary, she felt that Feni was spiritually suitable to be called heavenly. If cannot be elevated to heaven itself. She, however, did not delineate other celestial reasons which could justify Feni's station above earthliness.

These spiritual backlash apart, Feni has other claims as well. It accommodates all extremes. The fastest train from and to the port city of Chittagong stops at this place. Equally, the slowest train on earth from Belonia to Feni terminates at, and originates from Feni. The poetic description of leisurely journey finds its practical application here. The arrival and its run are not controlled by the guard or the engine. It depends on the mood of the passengers to remain mobile or motionless. At school in the forties, our English teacher, Ayodhya Narayan Lala, compared all slow moving objects, man or machine, with engines of Belonia train. It was slow but not without poise or pause. As it runs along green meadows at both sides, the passengers change compartments to avoid the ticket examiner and some even leave the train to prove their innocence. Here speed and stillness change places without hurting one another.

The first poetic counsel to

adore and cultivate mother tongue, some claim, came from a Fenian poet, Abdul Hakim, who is on record to have condemned the haters of mother tongue:

The man born in Bengal,
Hates the Bengalee tongue
I know not whom was he
born of.

In their liberal patronage of language and literature the Fenitians imported generously words of Persian and Arabic origin and infused in Bengali language the Aryan and Semitic blood. Fenitians, under the spell of Aryan or Semitic heredity often replace Bengali words by Arabic or Persian ones. Under this influence 'Pan' becomes 'Haan' and 'Paris' changes into 'Harts' when they pass through the multilingual Fenitian tongue which often refuses to accept phonetics of common tongue. Phonography here enjoys seemingly uncanny twists and bruises at the hands of Fenitians. It may not be common, but creative and recreative.

Fenitians are accused of being tall talkers and gossips. They really are. Who are not? They are news mongers as well. Who does not know that Fenitians are the pioneer news and newspaper producers? Feni produced some of our best journalists many of whom did not possess the sweet tongue to play the courtiers of King Canute. A Fenitian editor preferred selling kerosene oil to serving a surrogate press. A deceased editor of a leading daily originating from Feni narrated how he got his first job in the Public Relations Department of the then Bengal Government. His Director one day called him to his room and congratulated him on his appointment. Explaining why the post was offered to him, the Director claimed that the candidate proved his ability to say what was not so, convincingly and that was the best qualification for Govt. PR job.

Azad gracefully acknowledged him as his equal. Incidentally he was the only Bangla-speaking person who had the rare honour of becoming the President of Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdi. His speeches in Bangla moved and mesmerized all. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Vivekananda Mukherjee considered him to be the "Bipin Chandra Pal of Modern Age". Tagore's appraisal of Badruduja's inimitable oration was brief but eloquent. He called it "Bhagabati Dann" — a gift of God. "His song will always remain", in the words of Sarojini Naidu, "as fresh as the first flowers of the springtime and as enchanting as the music of moonlit streams".

An intimate friend of Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed and Kazi Nazrul Islam as he was, Badruduja played as key role in the treatment of the rebel poet. It was through his sincere solicitude, testifies Zulfikar Haider in "Tomar Shamraje Juboraj", that the treatment of the great poet progressed unhindered at the Lumbini Park Hospital in Calcutta in the forties. It was also his sincere gestures which brought Abdul Alim to Calcutta for the first time, enabling the bud with the golden voice to bloom into a full blossom. Pallavi Kazi Jasimuddin, drifting aimlessly like a rootless hyacinth, also found a decent footing in life when Badruduja graced him with a respectable job.

Justice Abdus Sattar, later on the President of Bangladesh, also had the rare privilege of being elevated to the post of Chief Executive Officer in Calcutta Corporation through the affectionate help of this salt of the earth. No wonder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself eulogised this dauntless crusader as "great leader" and very graciously arranged foreign exchange for his last rites (*Challishai*) in December 1974.

Syed Badruduja lived by the principle of political morality. The politics of power of the Machiavellianism inherent in the exercise of authority, was to him all reflective of a diseased body-politic of the state. In all the active years in politics, he never made it a point to aspire for political authority. The trappings of power were but insignificant compared to the moral authority which flowed from him — and permeated the lives of the millions. Which was why temptations — and they came in plenty, like the presidency of India, ministership in the Union Cabinet and governorship of West Bengal — never caused him to stray from the high ground of intellectual honesty. As Mayor of Calcutta in British India, as a Member of the Lok Sabha for fifteen years, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for nearly twenty-five years, Syed Badruduja basked in unremitting glory. And then there were the arrests, the insinuations and the accusations. The darkening shadows of the day never quite shifted his zest for the truth, for the principled attitude to life and living.

SOCIOLOGICAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Durkheim and the Division of Labour

by Anita Aparna Muyeed

EMILE Durkheim, born in April 1858 in the Vosges region of Eastern France, was one of the first philosophers who talked extensively about the "science of morality". He tactfully connected the phenomenon of morality with science by using vivid organic metaphors, and by describing the operations of society like the functions of a body.

Durkheim noticed a progression of societies from a pre-modern to a modern stage. He spoke of this transition in terms of mechanical to organic solidarity; from a less complex to a more complex infrastructure. His theory of societal evaluation is based on the foundations of the Darwinian theory of evolution, and runs parallel to it. Like the development and progression of simple unicellular organisms to complex organisms, he portrayed a resemblance this phenomena to the development and progression of societal morality.

In pre-modern society, he believed, there was very little personal diversity in beliefs. He named this type of collective consciousness, mechanical solidarity. Individuals in this kind of solidarity all resembled one another. Since society lived and acted within each person, there was nothing personal and distinct about the individuals. They were merely collective beings. He compared mechanical solidarity to "molecules of inorganic bodies" that could only bond in one way and could not move as a whole for they lacked any movement of their own.

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Where collective consciousness was strong, punishment also would be very passionate. He judged that repressive justice would be characteristic of mechanical solidarity. In this type of society, any sign of difference would be translated into a potential threat against the common conscience, and as a consequence would be crushed. In such environments, individuality would have a meagre chance to survive or even to rise. Individualism, at the most, could only be absorbed into the collective personality or covered by it. Durkheim believed that where the state of law would thus be wholly repressive, it would spontaneously prove itself to be a lower form of society.

As traditional moral beliefs declined, a new prototype soon emerged. As all the other ideologies and customs assumed less and less religious a character, the individual, himself, became the object of a sort of religion. Durkheim perceived society moving towards a different type of solidarity, where collective personality slowly faded and became weaker and vaguer. With this, the growth of individual consciousness had commenced.

As individualism would increase, collective consciousness could only work inversely and decrease. His reasoning was that they could not possibly grow in opposite directions. Mechanical solidarity implied that the individuals resembled one another. The newer one, organic solidarity, on the other hand assumed that they had personalities that were different from one another, and that each had their own "sphere of action". As a consequence, labor was soon divided up, and became more and more specialized. This resulted in people depending more intensely upon society and upon each other.

As individuality grew through division of labour, society became more effective and "mobile", for in this type of society individuals could "move" by themselves. Durkheim named this kind of solidarity, organic. He compared it to the composition of higher animals: each organ had more and more specialized functions to manipulate the movements of the larger organism with more ease and success. The structure of societies where organic solidarity was constituted not by the replication of similar elements, but by a network of different organs, comprising of differentiated parts, with specific roles. They were coordinated and interdependent to one another around a central body.

With the emergence of the division of labour, individuals were no longer grouped and formed in terms of blood or ancestral relationships. They were distributed according to their profession and devotion: the nature of their social activities. According to Durkheim's ideology, people had to be satisfied with their work. When natural talents coincided with social interests, social harmony would follow. (If this wasn't met, anomie could ensue.) The pursuit of one's own interests and the process of cooperating with other individuals, would lead to the discovery of their interdependence.

Moreover, Durkheim spoke of the emergence of contracts. He believed that contracts helped increase specialization and existed because they embodied a large moral ideal. Society not only shaped people's moral responsibilities, but also assumed that all source of solidarity was moral. Anything that created a sense of belonging, beyond one's ego, made one move as a whole in a meaningful way. Thus, contractual solidarity did not merely reflect people's egoistic, benevolent interests (in which case, it would render them very unstable), but expressed a moral code of selflessness and cooperation. Contracts best exemplified organic solidarity, because they expressed coopera-

tion, compromise and rational criticism.

Contracts, Durkheim affirmed, were based on individualism and diversity. Thus, he concluded that rational criticism was essential in binding people together in a society where the division of labour and organic solidarity prevailed. It was essential that people adapt rational criticism (which was lacking in mechanical solidarity) in order to respect different collective interests, and promote the growth of a specialized society.

In the making of a contract, the parties involved participated in a common task and exchanged with one another. This exchange not only presupposed the division of labour between functions, but also presupposed duties and beliefs. It assumed an idea of justice and individual responsibility as well as a harmony of functions. Moreover, contracts were based in law. Durkheim believed that people created laws collectively. This tied in his belief that liberty, (when people are not dependent on outside forces and subjected to whims of others, but dependent on their own wants) is determined by the law.

He believed that the more advanced societies were, the more they embodied and developed the division of labour. He saw this differentiation as a natural progression. Moreover, he believed that the ties that bound people to society through common beliefs and sentiments were much weaker than those resulting from the division of labour. The more societies evolved, the stronger the sense of their unity. He perceived a society embracing organic solidarity as the most harmonious, productive and successful. Yet, Durkheim believed that societies had not reached their full potential of organic solidarity. He affirmed that morality had not developed to the extent which is necessary for absolute harmony, and believed that the division of labour produced alienation only in abnormal, dysfunctional circumstances.

Alienation was something that developed when individuals failed to integrate as part of a proper and efficient group. He insisted that anomie or alienation did not result from institutional dominion and that it was not related to class struggles, as Karl Marx had, but simply stemmed from the fact that people were not sufficiently integrated in a social milieu. Anomie reflected a lack of social solidarity. It would be overcome naturally with the specialization and development of the division of labour.

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People needed to experience a sense of shared morality and community. He postulated that individuals should not be segregated from each other, but

be aware of and in contact with their neighbours. The division of labour does not imply individuals to stand isolated and absorbed in their own work. On the contrary, it implies that they do not lose sight of those cooperating with them. In order to facilitate this type of cooperation and understanding, Durkheim spoke of occupational groups. These diverse groups merged and created a sense of belonging and moral activity in accordance to social functions and ideals. They helped bring the ideals of the state closer to the isolated individual without exerting control over them.

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