

TEENS and TWENTIES

It is Time to Resolve Crisis

Seeing the Political Crisis Through the Prism of a Teenager

by Shahed Latif

THE other day I read in the paper that the opposition had announced a six day hartal. Reason for this is known; to pressurize the government to accept their demand for a neutral caretaker government under which the next general election will be held. But the first thing that comes to one's mind is why did the opposition choose this strategy to convince the path of destruction. Why did the opposition lose its faith on a democratically elected government? We had to fight for this cherished democracy all through the 80's; this country has gone through many revolutions and counter revolutions ever since it came to the map of the world.

Let us for once go back to where we started, from. In the 1950's and 60's we had some alien country ruling our beloved country. At that time any kind of revolution was seen as a welcome sign to the people of this country and every single person took to the streets to fight and to say what they had to say. In the year 1952 we had a revolution to establish Bangla as the state language.

But this was not to be the end of the struggle that had just begun; then came the mass uprising of 1969 against the autocratic and barbaric regime of Pakistan led by the father of the nation (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) which ended in the war of liberation of 1971. The war lasted for nine months and much blood was shed to free this nation from those corrupted and autocratic clutches of Pakistan, and for that freedom, Bangladesh (the country now we criticise, being Bangladesh) had to pay very dearly.

Then came the time when all the trouble started for power and corruption and every person forgot his great sacrifice and looted the land of its riches, its character and so on. At that time law and order totally failed. Every single small or big thing was very high priced, so much for this chaotic rule which ended with the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Then, came the new Bangladesh of the 80's we know of. But before I tell you about the turbulent 80's let me tell you that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made one mistake and that was he pardoned the evil forces of the liberation war who were against the birth of Bangladesh. That was the

biggest mistake and blunder made by him.

Then came the rule of late President Ziaur Rahman who was close to Mujibur Rahman and declared the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. During his rule he made the same mistake and allowed the evil forces to walk freely on the soil of Bangladesh. And even at that

Everyone began to forget about all those millions of people who gave their life for the freedom of their country and the once after. All the parties had one motto and that was power. No one was willing to work for the cause of the poor landless peasant or a homeless family who spend their lives living on the road and eating food from dustbins.

racy in the country which they worked against during the war of independence. I am not a politician nor an intellectual or a bureaucrats but I am that ordinary person of Bangladesh deprived of the peace and stability and economical growth that I so long desired, like crores of people of this country. Then after much more blood and tears, finally the regime of

country. But BNP again made the same mistake by sitting with that evil force in the parliament to rule Bangladesh.

Then suddenly this democratically elected government was termed autocratic by the opposition parties led by AL the JP and the ever evil force now a party, for their own selfish needs. This government was termed un-

parties to resolve the crisis before it goes totally out of hand, we don't want another Rwanda or Bosnia or Sudan. We want peace and harmony, we want tolerance and not vengeance, otherwise we will not forgive you.

Then came the time when the opposition decided to quit from the parliament to create pressure on the government. This was a mistake and government seemed totally uninterested and continued to carry on with their self proclaimed flow of development in Bangladesh, which never occurred in its 20 plus age.

After resignation from parliament, the opposition seemed to go for mass programmes like six days hartals, and others. But the government is not at all bothered and they remain 'Apothein' of what they consider to be very proud off.

I want this country's flag to fly high up in the sky making us and all those who laid down their lives for the cause of this country proud. We all must remember that it is very tough to have freedom and it is even tougher to stay as a free nation. So we must not do anything that may provoke others to interfere in our problems we must solve our own crisis. Because if we don't no guardian angel is going to do so.

The government should be bold enough to make decisions and implement them. The government can easily do that by holding a yes/no referendum whether the people of the country want a neutral caretaker to hold the elections or whether the government should hold the election, the people should have the say, after all, they elect the leaders. And the opposition wherever holding that position then must agree that if the next general election is held under a caretaker government and if they lose or win they must allow the government (elected) to finish its term. "No" election will be held under any circumstances until the term expires, they must help the government in the country's development and they must criticise when the government is wrong. However, the opposition should not criticise because of the sake of criticism, they must criticise constructively. The government must also learn to be criticised.

Let us end this tug of war by saying 'Joi Bangla' and 'Bangladesh Zindabad'.



The usual hartal scene.

time there was power struggle, then in the early 80's he was also assassinated. Then came the rule of Hussain Muhammad Ershad which lasted all through the 80's as he ruled with an iron hand, he also committed the same mistake by forgiving that dark evil soul that began to cast its shadow over Bangladesh and by that time that force became quite powerful and started playing the role of an opposition party joining hands with the AL & BNP founded by Ziaur Rahman)

The army general also had a party known as Jatiya Party (JP) for short. The autocratic regime stole the freedom of the press, the freedom of the state and the freedom of the people to vote for the party they wanted to in one word it was an one party rule.

The politician's were busy doing politics and totally ignoring what the people had to say, every political party began to use them for their own needs. This continued and Bangladesh remained poor as ever. But the leaders of all the parties just did not bother to help the ordinary people of the country they just called hartals strikes, mass demonstrations, boycotting office, parliament and causing all sorts of chaos in the name of democracy. They had not participate in any elections under that government because they termed it as autocratic and not elected by those people who they were not bothered about. Don't forget both the AL & BNP had that evil force with them in the shadow talking long like they were fighting to establish democ-

General Ershad fell. This was possible because the two 'super power' political parties the AL & the BNP joined hands with other small parties, along with the evil force. They all agreed to name a neutral caretaker government to hold the first free general election of Bangladesh.

In that election the people of the country elected BNP for a five years period led by the current leader of BNP and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia who joined hands with the evil forces to form a government with them. They sat with them in a free parliament free from autocracy and free from occupation, they sat in the parliament for all those who laid down their lives for the cause of Bangladesh to have a free

democratic because of the fact that their was some mismanagement in the by-election of Mirpur and Magura. And from the onwards the current opposition programme started to unseat this government and the country was again in the middle of a constitutional disorder, but both the government and the opposition remained stubborn of not bothering about the people and the country but for power. Thus, began the same course of action to end this rule like the Ershad regimes time; calling hartals, strikes and road, water and rail barricade and what not.

We the younger generation who has not seen the great liberation war but heard and read about it are observing a very disturbed country for years; we plea to the

— Star Photo

YOU could see the boy every afternoon precisely from five O'clock on the frontyard of his house, and the neighbourhood girl on the roof of her house, leaning upon the railings; both keenly observing the slow but playful movement of...kites.

Nothing special about them — the girl, the boy or the kites. But then, their unusual punctuality might catch some idle person's eyes. It was going on..... kind of smoothly, until one day the mother joined her daughter — to watch kites. She observed something more. From then on, the girl had to forget watching kites.

And the boy? He became reasonably (that's what he thought) irritated by the increasing number of kites. So much of them; he thought that most of the sky would soon be out of sight. In his anger he felt like threatening the kite flying bullies.

But a mere threat would in no way help him concentrate, he knew. There comes a time..... an afternoon, each day. There comes a time.... a Spring, each year. There comes a time..... a youth, to each life.

In campus, the boy is known as a guy who fits everywhere. He could now be seen at the corridor, of TSC and then at the Hakims. He would start his day at Madhu's canteen and then be going home, exhausted with somewhat boring class lectures. A person can be judged by his appearance — and he was not an exception. But his eyes, those wandering grey eyes beneath the sleek frames would attract you at any instant. His father died when he was only two years old. The eldest of the family,

an university dropout, is since then running the family. The youngest, and yet somehow dutiful, the boy is about to graduate in journalism.

He does not remember his father's death. Absence of a father does not appear to be that significant to him. Still, subconsciously arouses an inscapable emptiness, wandering, like lava beneath the ground, searching for relief. Is it a shelter that he craves for? What else could be a common aspiration during those moments when both the girl and the boy used to be so much drowned in the sadness of the departing sun!

Her father was a doctor. The telephone number on his mother's prescriptions would now & then lure him. Precisely at five O'clock, one fatal afternoon, he dialled. An extremely seductive female voice could be heard immediately.

Male : 818929?

Female : yes.

Male : I am a journalist from the Daily Sun. I would like to speak to the lord of the house. And...you?

Female : I'm Farzana Ali, Dr. Mahboob Ali's wife. Would you hold on please... I'll call him.

The boy started thinking fast, very fast. He started from an emotion, not a whim. And he would entirely depend on his wit.

The doctor picked up the receiver.

Doctor : Mahboob Ali speaking.

Journalist : Mr. Mahboob, I am speaking from the Daily Sun. I am assigned with a job to collect people's opinion regarding the forthcoming National Victory Day. I am dialling at fifty residences randomly. Would you spare me a

5 O'Clock

by Md Atiquzzaman

few minutes please.

Doctor : Of course, please proceed.

Journalist : Do you suppose that the commemora-

tion arranged by the government is sufficient?

Doctor : Well... yes, it is... more or less. The mass media do play constructive role.



and they ought to be supporting it. People's participation is also encouraged. But, mere remembrance is never enough. The martyrs' lives, living styles, ideologies remain obscure to the coming generations. Their relatives are brought to the TV screen and they leave sobbing after they had depicted melodramatic incidents, raising sympathy.

Journalist : Would you please comment on the newspapers' present position regarding their aspired sovereignty?

Doctor : I don't find it directly related with the day. However ... if you consider the day as the Haal Khata Day ... well, besides your sovereignty, I'll count in VAT, I'll count in prices of essentials, I'll count in the uncertainty in my daughter education. Nothing's changed basically, you know.

Journalist : How do the doctors' community celebrate the day?

Doctor : As far as I know... BMA would organise a discussion. I am not that much involved.

Journalist : Well ... many thanks to you: Mr. Ali. Can I please converse with your family members...?

Doctor : Of course. The issue demands so.... my wife's busy in the kitchen. I'll call my... daughter.

Female : Hello?

Male : You are a..... student of Dhaka University.

Female : (puzzled)... yes, first year: Economics Deptt.

Male : I would like to ask you four questions. Your father must have briefed you. I'm collecting opinions regarding the National Victory Day. You have time?

Female : yes.... but I would like to answer in short.

I am not particularly worried about my country.

Male : Well, first question. How do the students' community contribute to the celebration?

Female : You see, the last two days I've strolled around my campus. Most of the megasized celebrations of Dhaka are being arranged here... right?

So, who are more sincere? Intellectuals, journalists or students?

Male : (Irritated) How do you evaluate and remember the day, during the rest of the year?

Female : The independence was not achieved overnight. People fought for nine months and people died everyday. So, I do not find 16th December more memorable than the rest of the days.

Male : You love your country a lot. Right?

Female : Unquestionably.

Male : Well... (hesitating) this'll be my last question regarding... love. But would you please make a prompt answer? I would like a raw truth.

Female : (amused) ... ok!

Male : You like the boy at 5 O'clock?

All of a sudden a deadly silence grasped the wires. The girl could immediately recognise the voice. She almost yelled in utter surprise.

Moments were rushing furiously. The boy was losing fuel. He gave up all his hopes. The handset was morning away from his ear, while she muttered with an extremely seductive voice, like the one that her mother possesses, 'will you phone again for people's opinion?'

[First published in Bangla with the title 'Dinaanter Shobhabole']

The road to freedom

by TAG

23rd June, 1757, Lord Clive defeated Nawab Sirajuddowla. With this setback Bengal lost its freedom to the British for 200 years. After a long struggle the British finally left in 1947. A part of Bengal was then brought under Pakistan, calling it East Pakistan. The Bengali people again revolted. After more struggles and a nine month long bloody battle Bangladesh was free for good. The following accounts are a brief description of how Bangladesh came to being.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress was formed. The Muslim League was formed in 1906. They supported independence but never involved in armed conflicts. In 1905 the 'Bongo-Bhongo' and 'Shuadeshi Andolon' started after Lord Curzon's formation of the Bengal province. From 1907 activists started a string of political murder and robberies under groups like 'Anushilan Shomiti' and 'Jugantor'. Khudiram Basu was a brave activist of the Jugantor group. He planned to kill the magistrate Kingsford. The bomb he hurled to kill the magistrate actually fell on another similar car killing two ladies. Khudiram Basu was hanged on 11th August 1908. Finally the 'Bongo-Bhongo Andolon' was successful on 12th December 1911 George V at Delhi's court canceled the new Bengal province.

From 1918, under Mahatma Gandhi a nationwide movement started in favour of a National Congress. 1930, Bangla's great son Surjo Sen led an armed rebellion. His rebels looted the arms depot at Chittagong and declared independence. His rebellion was very brave attempt, but unsuccessful. The British managed to suppress the rebellion. Bengal had its first election in 1937. Bengal's rising leader A K Fazlul Haq's party 'Nikhil Banga Krishak Proja Somiti' contested in the elections and won 43 seats in the legislative assembly. Under his leadership a coalition government was formed with the Muslim League.

THE British ruled Bengal from 1757 to 1947. In this 190 years the people of Bengal revolted against the British numerous times. The first uprising is called the 'Fakir and Sannasi resistance'. This resistance lasted for 40 years from 1760 to 1800. The most frequently these Fakir actions were in the districts of Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Bogra, Mymensingh, Birbhum, Malda and Purnia. The most renowned leader of the Fakir movement was Fakir Maznu Shah.

The Sannasi leadership came from Bhavani Pathak, Devi Choudhurani and others whose names are not traceable in records. According to British historians the Fakirs were 'dacoits'. The target of these, said to be dacoits, was creating hindrance to the plundering, taking place in the name of East India Company.

Insurgencies of the peasants of Sherpur, from 1824-1833 is particularly significant. It was organised by a combination of tribes (the Garo and Hajongs) and non-tribals, peasants and farmers, and its leadership came from both the Hindu and Muslim communities. One of their leaders was Korom Shah. The event is commonly described as the 'Pagal Bidroho' or rebellion of the pagals. The rebellion was in its height in April and May of 1833, when troops were sent in to restore order.

In 1831 the Wahabi's revolted under the leadership of Titumeer. Titumeer openly announced revolt against the British. On 14th November the Calcutta Militia made the famous 'bamboo fort' at Narkelbaria. This fort is better known as 'Titumeer's Basher Kella'. A big cavalry and infantry from Calcutta attacked the fort. They captured the fort and Titumeer became a martyr. Even after Titumeer's death the Wahabi revolt continued from 1833 to 1857. During this time the revolt was mainly centered at Faridpur.

A very important rebellion initiated from Chittagong in 1857. This was the 'Sepoy Mutiny'. One hundred years after the battle at Pallasey, sepoy's under habildar Rajab Ali revolted. On that 18th November they freed the prisoners from the jail, looted the treasury and arms depot. They also set alight the magazine house. Out of 400 mutineers 300 of them died. Four days later, on 22nd November sepoy's of Dhaka's Lalbagh Fort revolted.

A British force attacked the Lalbagh mutineers and defeated them. There were some casualties, some were caught and some managed to escape towards Mymensingh. There were also skirmishes at Sylhet, Rangpur and other places. Some of the arrested mutineers were given life sentences, and the others met their death by being hanged. They were hanged in public at Victoria Park, in the centre of Dhaka, where a memorial now stands in their honour.

Fazlul Haq became Bengal's first prime minister. Nikhil Bharat Muslim League's session began at Lahore on 22nd March 1940 and was presided by Mohammed Ali Jinnah. When Fazlul Haq came to address the session he was welcomed by the slogan 'Sere Bangla Jindabad'. He announced Muslim League's proposal on the political division of India. The proposal was on the formation of two independent Muslim states in this subcontinent. This proposal is known as the 'Lahore Prostab', and was accepted on 24th March.

During the second world war India's forward block leader Shubhas Chandra Basu formed the 'Azad Hind Fauz'. They fought in the regions of Assam and Manipur to liberate India. In 1942 Mahatma Gandhi lead the 'Quit India' movement. This movement would lead to the independence of this subcontinent. In 1946 general elections were held in the whole of the subcontinent. The Muslim League, headed by Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim won a majority in Bengal and Suhrawardy was elected to be the prime minister of Bengal.

Meanwhile the labour party in England decided to give India its independence. They sent in Lord Mountbatten as the last Viceroy of India, with the target of handing over power to one or more government and leave India. Congress and the Muslim League decided to form the two states called India and Pakistan. The British announced the hand over on 3rd January and on 14 and 15 August British India was divided into two independent states.

ERRATA
Destination Heron Point, Sundarbans by Sajjid R. Matin printed on Nov 14, 1995 explained the writer's own experience. His trip along with others were not only arranged by Bangladesh Astronomical Association but also by Bighan Sanskrit Parishad and Anusholdisu Chakra.