

Independence Day is about moving forward

Let's come unstuck from debate over fundamentals

It is a great day we are remembering today. On this day, 31 years ago, we redefined ourselves. What had been underlying embers of suppressed longings for self-identity burst forth into a fiery resolve to achieve national independence through a do-or-die armed struggle. The triggering point was the genocidal crackdown on March 25, 1971 coming as a culmination of colonial domination taking on the ugly form of armed subjugation. And, we wouldn't be found wanting in proving equal to the stupendous task almost from the point in time it had started unfolding before us.

The genocidal haemorrhage was traumatic for the living and they felt instantaneously drawn to the memories of the dead, tortured and dishonoured to resolve to fight to their last drop of blood for the vindication of the latter's unparalleled saga of sacrifices and sufferings. To the multitudes who would court martyrdom in the next nine months we express our deepest gratitude; for, we believe that without their sacrifices we would not have breathed the air of freedom.

As we revisit today the soulful patriotism and unprecedented solidarity experienced in our ranks in those dark and trying days, our regrets deepen over the present-day sense of alienation from loyalty to the country and the polarisation in Bangladesh society. Such a conflictual situation is casting a long shadow over our future. What is perhaps worse, this is threatening to jeopardise the gains we have made in the socio-economic fields against stunning odds.

We regretfully note that 31 years since independence our thought-process remains tragically preoccupied with some fundamentals one would have thought had been settled way back at the time of the country's birth. Alas, these keep arising with a renewed vigour in alternating circumstances of one or the other major political parties -- the AL or the BNP -- coming to power. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the supreme leader of our liberation struggle and Ziaur Rahman a liberation war hero. The two positions of honour are not conflicting; in fact, they are actually complementary to each other. But the contending political parties basing on their respective legacies are taking the debate to such a length that the people wonder whether they want to move the country ahead.

Let's have respect for historical veracity and truth and give each the respect he deserves in his own way. The nation wants the matter put behind so that it can concentrate on the urgent task of catching up with the 21st century.

Our priorities ought lie with the issues of socio-economic uplift that has eluded us all these years although that is what the spirit of independence has been all about.

Ashura is for peace

Universal message belongs to all

ONCE again the tenth day of the Muslim month of Muharram is amongst us to resurrect feelings of resolve, redemption and grief. If history has been replete with the spirit of mourning since the event occurred, we should also explore the lessons of the pain that the war causes. 1500 years after the event happened so much tear will be shed in remembrance of the desperate sorrow caused as a result of that war in which the grandson of the Prophet (pbuh) and his family members died and we must seek out the meaning of that loss.

Traditions have kept alive the cruel decision by Yazid who cut off water supply to Hazrat Imam Hussain and killed him and his followers in that war. History has many such instances but for Muslims of the world this has particular significance because of the people involved and the events surrounding it. The beloved grandchild and other members of the family of the Prophet of Arabia (pbuh) were martyred by this deadly decision reminding history and all who came to learn of it that even being the close blood relative of the Prophet (pbuh) is no guarantee that one will escape the vagaries of war and its machinations.

Yet Ashura is not just a time to mourn or a time to hate ancient enemies. One must recognize that its time for reflection and learning lessons as well about the ways of all mankind. Perhaps this great tragedy has enshrined mourning into our soul and taught us lessons in resolves of principled integrity but in today's world, one must go further and seek out the lessons of peace as well. The fact that the events of Ashura still strike chords of overwhelming grief is a significant reminder of the power of sadness.

In that same line let us be reminded of the power of peace as well. The greatness of faith lies in its capacity to instill pacific intentions in us all. Islam's emergence was to glorify the essence of peace and goodwill and most interpretations have been to further that end. And the root of the message of Ashura is also not merely about the silhouettes of tragic mourning but that mankind achieves victory and prevails through the magnificence of mankind's ultimate truth: the truth that God resides in peace not war.

On this day of Ashura, we express our sense of communion with all who mourn, all who pray and all who resolve to fight for peace and human dignity.

HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

The challenges of decentralization

HOW critical is decentralisation? The very posing of such a question may come as a surprise insofar as attitudes to this issue have for a long while assumed almost an axiomatic character. The question of 'why' tends to be taken as self-evident; the issue is projected mostly as one of 'what' and 'how'. Recent empirical evidence, however, is beginning to underscore the importance of re-visiting the 'why' aspect of the issue. A compelling case in point is that of Bangladesh where significant gains in the poverty field have occurred without any commensurate advances in the decentralisation agenda. Notwithstanding weak local governments, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in a host of areas including food production, safety net programmes, rural infrastructure, credit provision, primary education, child immunisation, family planning, drinking water provision all of which have translated into major gains in the fight to reduce poverty. While the decentralisation agenda has languished except on some aspects of the electoral frontier, there has thus been no necessary vacuum in local-level development with a number of important initiatives by NGOs and central government agencies.

How useful then is it to base the focus on strengthening local governments merely on a substitution argument, i.e. have local governments do what central agencies like LGED on rural infrastructure and NGOs on primary schooling and health-care are perhaps already doing well? Once posed in these terms, a substitution argument per se thus appears not to offer a compelling enough basis for engaging with the issue of local governance. Far from being self-evident, the 'why' aspect of the issue clearly merits a fresh look.

The rationale for a new engagement with the issue of local governance arises most critically from the very nature of the poverty trends itself. We have already noted that Bangladesh has made impressive gains in many aspects of the poverty challenge, gains in which NGOs and central agencies have played the larger role. However, once all gains have been accounted for, the net rate of reduction of poverty in the 1990s appears to be stuck at around one percentage point of year. There is thus a major challenge of re-visiting existing strategies towards a radical scaling up of the rate of poverty reduction. It is this context of a scaled-up attack on poverty which lends urgency for a new engagement with the issue of local governance.

The focus thus is not merely on local governments as project implementing agencies. It is rather on local governance as a political and institutional process which can contribute to the required scaling up of the rate of poverty reduction through enhancing the developmental choices available at the local level and a better inclusion of all social groups in these choices.

The Realpolitik of Reform Dynamics

It is easy to get swept along in the normative discourse on local government in Bangladesh. Ideal-type solutions abound. The cycles of hopes and frustrations, however, are regular enough to warrant a closer look at the underlying sociology of the discourse. This reveals certain constants in the pursuit of reform agendas which can be seen to constitute as it were the *realpolitik* of reform dynamics. An exploration of this *realpolitik* is crucial both to understand the true reach of reform initiatives and to avoid the trap of ineffectual normative debates. Four features of this *realpolitik* stand out:

Tier Experimentation: Though over a hundred years old, local government in Bangladesh has been more an area of policy experimentation than one of stable institutional development. Since the emergence of Bangladesh as a

sovereign nation, institutional continuity has been provided only by Union Parishads and later on Pourashavas (Municipalities). The law currently provides for four tiers: village, union, thana and district but political and administrative consensus on what a stable structure should be is yet to coalesce. The sense of experimentation is perhaps a sign of a fledgling democracy finding its feet but it certainly is a major barrier to institutional development of the sector.

Accountability versus Development Administration: Policy attention to local government in Bangladesh has always found it necessary to balance the demands of the accountability principle with those of effective development administration. The precise nature of such balancing have not necessarily been conducive to consolidating a process of institutional and political growth of the local government sector. However, notwithstanding the outcomes, there is a certain durability in what may be seen as the official "approach" to reform ideas. The overriding principle at work is to ensure a close supervision of local governments by central administration and a pre-eminent central jurisdiction on local development while at the same time allowing the space for a local political process. The "approach" born of this principle moves on an implicit bifurcation whereby accountability issues are emphasised for the lower tier and development administration issues for the upper tiers. More often than not, the goals of accountability and development administration thus come to be pursued in isolation from each other resulting

culture' being an imposed style of political accommodation between aspiring local government leadership and the bureaucratic state.

An Absence of Champions: While there is no shortage of general advocates on decentralization, there is a fundamental absence of "champions", i.e. organised actors who can or care to drive the local government agenda as a consistent strategic goal. This is true both of the political and the bureaucratic power centres, indeed also of the NGO sector. In all these three cases, attitudes appear to be implicitly influenced by notions of zero-sum competition over control of the development process (in the case of national-level politicians), control of power (in the case of bureaucrats) and access to donor resources (in the case of NGOs). The local government sector itself too has not generated any organised forums which could have spearheaded the role of 'champions'. In the absence of 'champions', the decentralization agenda is continuously rendered toothless.

Local Governance: Towards a Politically Intelligent Agenda

As has been noted already, a perennial weakness of the local governance discourse in Bangladesh has been its excessively normative orientation. The challenge first and foremost, therefore, is to engineer a shift in the discourse towards greater political intelligence. There are five core components to such a discourse shift.

Understanding the 'Permitted' Space for Reform: Any meaningful

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not in what one author has called an 'unresolved wrangle' but rather in an in-built barrier to effective local governance.

General versus Specific Powers: Powers and responsibilities of local governments are invariably defined in general and vague terms while the powers of the central government are enshrined in specific and precise terms. For example, the general power of the Union Parishad is to maintain law and order but the specific powers in this context lie with the magistracy and the police in terms of powers of arrest, bail and so forth. At the ground level, it is always the specific power which has the teeth while the general power cannot graduate beyond being a declaration of intent.

The enfeeblement of local government bodies thus produced is compounded by a certain one-sidedness in the public discourse which exalts when more general responsibilities come within the purview of local government bodies but rarely produces a focussed engagement with the specific issues of powers and jurisdictions.

The 'Wheat Culture' of Local Development: A defining empirical landmark in the evolution of a development culture at the local level was the introduction of food aid in association with the Basic Democracy programme of the 1960s. "Wheat" became the new language of development leading on to the emergence of an enduring nexus binding local politicians, administrators and local government functionaries in a truncated vision of development built on institutionalised corruption. Though food aid went on to play its own important role in addressing rural poverty, 'wheat culture' became entrenched as a fundamentally distorting influence shaping the developmental visions of politicians and local government leaders. Much of the criticism here has focussed on the aspect of corruption but perhaps the more significant and less understood issue has to do with the 'wheat

pursuit of decentralization must be clear of the priorities which matter, namely, supervised development administration for the bureaucratic elite and electoral experimentation for the political elite. These two poles describe what may effectively be seen as the *permitted* space for reform. There are two crucial insights here relevant to new agenda-building:

+ Development administration is a key component of the *permitted* space but it has been effectively left to be a discourse of the bureaucrats. This has only ensured that it is the bureaucratic rather than local governance perspectives which have come to shape the directions for change in development administration at the local level. Engaging on the specifics of development administration policy will be one of the key entry points for a discourse shift on local governance.

+ Macro actors, in particular the state bureaucracy is inherently resistant to jurisdictional concessions to local governments. Agenda formulations which accord jurisdictional demands an upfront place thus routinely fall foul of such entrenched bureaucratic resistance. The critical insight to note here, however, is that while the bureaucratic power centre is rigid on jurisdictional concessions, it is not necessarily so when it comes to the development of functional spaces at the local level. There is in other words a clear contrast between jurisdictional rigidity and functional openness which mark macro attitudes to the local governance agenda. From an agenda-building perspective, the key operational message here is about *sequencing* i.e. the political wisdom of placing the development of functional spaces ahead of pure jurisdictional demands. The clearest example of the 'success' of this approach is provided by the well-known 'Comilla initiative' of the 60s which served to achieve a wholly new functional space at the local level as embodied in the TTDCs

(Thana Training and Development Centre) without any major upfront jurisdictional victories. Functional openness thus has to be seen as a critical aspect of the *permitted* space. Engaging more robustly on this potential is central to developing a more politically intelligent agenda.

Investing in a New Strategic Focus: Local Governance for Poverty Reduction through Local Growth: Is local governance only about electoral participation? Is it only about service-delivery? What poverty reduction stuck at a best-case scenario of one percentage point reduction a year, the urgency of a scaled-up attack on poverty point towards a new strategic frontier in which to forge the local governance agenda, namely, the facilitation of local economies for faster poverty reduction. In many ways, such a focus is a novel one for Bangladesh but changing ground realities make such a focus an increasingly relevant one.

With migration and multiple livelihoods as dominant features of the new ground reality facing the poor, a *local economy perspective* has become the relevant reference frame in which livelihood strategies for a scaled-up attack on poverty are best forged. A local economy perspective is to be distinguished from prevalent sectoral or micro household perspectives as also from traditional notions of village economy. The perspective being argued is more accurately a *meso* economy perspective. What imparts the novelty to such a perspective is the changing ground realities such as the growing rural urban continuum which now define the 'local'. In an

hegemonic state-centric model of yesteryear to the new hegemony of the NGO-centric model, other actors, both legitimate and socially real, have found it hard going to find a place in the conceptual universe. The empirical analysis in this study clearly challenge the validity of either of these state-centric or NGO-centric model of agency. Instead, what the evidence points to is a multi-agent reality in which no single agent, be it government agencies or NGOs or community capacities, singly hold the key to the question of agency. All of the identified cast of actors are legitimate and relevant actors in the lived reality of governance in Bangladesh.

The presence of many actors, however, does not simply imply diversity; there is a certain matching of actors to roles. Thus, NGOs are not deemed relevant to the 'dispute resolution' or 'law and order' types of governance needs. At the same time, traditional elders are not seen as the relevant agent category in the field of development. Such actor-role matching is not primarily a matter of functional specialisation; today's actor could very well graduate to a new role tomorrow. The actor-role matching in the first instance is better understood as an expression of social legitimacy.

Arguing a multi-agent analytical framework thus is not intended to imply any ready-made operational model to institutional strategy. The argument in the first instance is more appropriately read as pointing towards an *opportunity map* which makes explicit the cast of actual and potential actors relevant to the governance discourse and in which the growing rural urban continuum which now define the 'local'. In an

earlier era, the programmatic understanding of such a focus would have been captured by terms such as 'integrated rural development' or 'local-level planning'. The current emphasis on a local economy perspective, however, marks a radical departure on such earlier meanings. The concern is less about sectoral programmatic focus per se underscored by bureaucratic notions of co-ordination. It is more about positing a new action goal, namely, that of a regeneration of the local economy by which the pursuit of multiple livelihoods by the poor is best empowered.

What of the vehicle(s) by which the goal of 'regenerating the local economy' is to be achieved? This is where a focus on local *governance* becomes of critical relevance. The cast of actors who matter here extend well beyond the traditional focus on local *governments* as they also cut across traditional sectoral or rural-urban boundaries. The challenge really is of multiple livelihoods, of linkages and a critical expansion of local opportunity frontiers, and of bringing within mainstream attention any categories of 'missing poor'. Such a menu of tasks do not fit easily within traditional sectoral or decentralisation approaches. What is required rather is a governance focus with a twist, namely, a primary orientation to livelihood issues and embracing the possibility of enlisting categories of actors beyond local governments per se. Interestingly, it is precisely in adopting such a livelihood-oriented governance focus that the real possibilities of a decentralisation agenda lie in the current balance of political and administrative power.

Rethinking Institutional Strategy: The re-orientation of agenda-building is incomplete without touching on the issue of agency. In many ways, the rise of the NGOs in Bangladesh as a hegemonic non-state actor in the conceptual universe has for a long while now obscured the question of agency in the discourse. From the

their respective role specializations. There is also a need for a mind-set shift towards a coalition approach to institutional strategy. Not only is no one actor up to the challenge of realising the challenge of a strong and viable local governance, the sum of many actors acting individually may also not suffice. The need really is to get a sum which is greater than its parts. A new approach is thus called for, one built around the idea of coalitions i.e. understood both as process and as working arrangements in which the energies of the government, local governments, NGOs, civil society and entrepreneurs find a virtuous fusion.

Such a transition is, of course, unlikely to happen overnight since a coalition approach is far from being the 'natural' tendency of our key development actors. 'Thinking coalitions' has thus to be the first step towards the new approach; within our prevailing institutional culture, it is a step which will require an active process of propagation. A clarification may be useful here on the type of coalition which is being hinted at. It is not the case that the idea of coalitions is totally absent in the prevailing institutional milieu. However, what tends to go by the idea of coalitions currently is a coming together of the same type of actors, i.e. coalitions among NGOs, etc. What is being emphasised in the present context is coalitions across boundaries i.e. local governments and NGOs, local governments and private sector, local government, NGOs, private sector and support institutions and so on. It is also important to emphasise that we are not talking here about an inflexible notion of coalition built around a fixed focal point. The idea rather is about context-specific coalitions built around specific goals.

Resolving a New Tension: MP's Constituency Role

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and Local Government

To round up our discussion, we may cast a brief look at an issue which has gained great currency in current discussions on local government reforms, namely how the role of the Member of Parliament interfaces with the role of local government.

There are three dimensions to MP's developmental and constituency role:

- v LOBBYIST for constituency to central government
 - v DEVELOPMENTAL
 - v GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL Channel i.e. local ombudsman
- How are these roles operationalised and what significance do they carry for the discussion on local governance?

Lobbyist: This is a political role. There is no issue here as such of developing formal procedures. Developmental: There is clearly a question here of formalising this role. This is also the area where tensions vis-à-vis local governments can arise in the absence of clear and appropriate guide-lines. In developed countries, this role has been phased out over a long historical process. In developing countries, this role is still very much present but the institutional mechanisms vary. Currently, this role is institutionalised through the strong advisory role given to MPs over local government projects. Since 1997, the advisory role has even extended to union parishads.

An advisory role of MPs over local government projects is not conducive to building a viable local government system. This is clearly not the optimal developmental role for the MP. This is also the conclusion when one looks at other country experiences. The optimal developmental role of the MP has the following components:

- + No formal *selection or approval* role over local government projects but informal roles of suggestion and monitoring
- + Control over a formally specified sum of central government funds for local development for the following purposes:
 - + emergency schemes
 - + innovative schemes
- + The MP's right here is to *select and monitor* but technical screening and implementation will be through regular administrative channels.

Variants of this model run in most developing countries. Philippines appears to have the most variant in that the money is given to the MP without much screening leading to widespread corruption. Thailand has recently done away with the system. India follows a more structured system under the title Local Area Development Schemes. Bangladesh can lead the way by concentrating attention on innovative and emergency schemes.

Grievance Redressal: Currently this is not a formal role but a very strong informal role centred around *tadbir*. However, in developed democracies and even in many developing countries, this role has been formalised through:

- The MP having a formal office in the constituency
 - Having specified assistance to record and scrutiny grievances and maintain a data-base on grievances
 - formally channeling grievances to appropriate authorities for redressal
 - Monitoring progress on redressal.
- For the above roles to become effective and socially useful, attention has to be given to three other issues:

- + The respective roles and functions of upazila parishad and union parishad need to be rationalised
- + Administrative protection of central government officials at local levels in the performance of their legally specified duties
- + Encouraging the emergence of user groups and citizen bodies as an additional aspect of a balance political system.

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ASHURA

The matchless sacrifice

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

MUHARRAM is the first lunar month of the Islamic calendar and the 10th day of this holy month is known as Ashura. On this historic and memorable day the grandson of our holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) Hazrat Imam Husayn sacrificed his life at the desert of Karbala on the bank of river Euphrates for a just and noble cause, some 1300 years ago from now. And as the valiant Imam preferred to lay down his life for a just cause and also for the cause of Islam, the Muslims all over the world mourn his martyrdom every year on this solemn occasion of Ashura.

Cruelties and crimes perpetrated on the revered Imam and the members of his small party including his infant son by the cruel-hearted Yazid's horde are known in history as Tragedy of Karbala. About the genesis of this painful and heart-rending event it may be stated here that an agreement between Muawia, Hazrat Imam Hasan and Abdullah-bin-Zubair was executed that after the death of Muawia the holy Prophet's grandson Hazrat Imam Husayn would become the next Caliph of the Islamic State. But it was a flagrant violation of this agreement for we find during his lifetime Caliph Muawia nominated his son Yazid to become the next Caliph after his death. It was, therefore, natural that Hazrat Imam Husayn declined to owe his allegiance

to Muawia's son Yazid and accept his unjust and illegal nomination as the next Caliph made by his father during his lifetime.

When this was the political situation Hazrat Imam Husayn was invited by the people of Kufa with a view to helping them for they were being oppressed by the local governor, that is, the governor of Kufa Obaidullah-bin-Sa'd. The kind-hearted Imam accepted their invitation and left for Kufa with a small band of soldiers and members of his family including women and children. Now the Imam who was on his way to Kufa in accordance with his programme and when he and the small band of his companions were not far off from the city of Kufa a tribal chief Al Hore blocked their way, and consequently the Imam changed the course of his route and encamped at a desert site known as Karbala on the first day of the lunar month of Muharram. The presence of Hazrat Imam Husayn was also not liked by the governor of Kufa and as such he dispatched a 4,000 strong cavalry under the command of Omar-bin-Sa'd for siege and with instructions to block the way leading to the river so that no one from the Imam's party could have any access to river water to quench their thirst. This was not only undesirable, this was inhuman too. Finding no other alternative Imam Husayn appealed to the cavalry commander to allow him to go to the place wherefrom he came or allow him to go to Damascus to discuss the whole matter with Yazid for a just

solution. But the Imam's appeal was rejected by the audacious cavalry commander. In the circumstances the valiant Imam was obliged to fight this unequal fight to the last instead of surrendering to Yazid's men and accept their unreasonable demands. The Imam and his party obviously became helpless victims of a deep-rooted conspiracy designed by Yazid.

The courageous Imam fought to the last and gave his life for a just cause which the world will remember forever. But the people still shudder to think the cruelties perpetrated on Hazrat Imam Husayn and the member of his small party by Yazid's heartless men on the 10th day of the month of Muharram. But such heinous crimes and cruelties can never belittle the pristine glory, values and golden principles of Islam as were being preached and propounded by Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) over 1400 hundred years ago from now. We may also refer to the candid observation made by noted historian Syed Ameer Ali on cruelties perpetrated by the stony-hearted Yazid's men on the revered Imam. He says, "The butchery of Karbala caused a thrill of horror throughout the Islamic state and gave birth in Persia to a national sentiment which afterwards helped the descendants of Abbas to destroy the Umayyads". Mentionable, Yazid was an Umayyad.

Time turned turtle

M ARSHAD ALI

THE event of Karbala is a tragedy of the highest magnitude not only according to common parlance but judged by the Aristotelian canons of literary criticism. It was enacted on the 10th of Muharram, 680 AD on the western bank of the Euphrates consequent upon the conspiracy of Yazid executed by his governor of Iraq, Obaydullah bin Ziyad. The cunning and guileful, the unscrupulous and pitiless, the cool and calculating, the selfish and murderous Mu'awiyah did not hesitate to adopt any means fair or foul to achieve his own ends. Thus in flagrant violation of his pledges to the grandson of the Prophet, he nominated his unworthy son Yazid to succeed him. This nomination of Yazid met with vehement opposition from the saner section of the society with Hazrat Husayn, the surviving grandson of the Prophet at the head. Upright, honest, sincere and known for bravery, piety and ability, Husayn refused to show allegiance even at the risk of his life to Yazid who not only led a sinful, sensuous and immoral life but also prided himself on his vices. Thus the very principle of Islam along with its whole set of moral and ethical values was at war.

Faint with loss of blood resulting from the piercing of the dart, Husayn "soon fell to the ground and then the murderous crew rushed upon the dying hero. They cut off his head, trampled on his body and with savage ferocity subjected it to every

ignominy. A thrill of horror ran through the crowd when the gory head of the Prophet's grandson was cast at Ubaydullah's feet. The scene that followed is still fresh in the believer's eyes. Gibbon says, "In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Husayn will awaken the sympathy of the coldest spirits." Thus fell one of the noblest spirits of the age and with him perished all the male members of his family with the solitary exception of a sickly child named Ali who was later to become known as Zain al-Abidin. But "There is music in the midst of desolation And a glory that shines upon our tears."

It is an occasion not for shedding tears as our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam exhorts upon us (*Tyag chahi, Morshia/kronod chahi na*) but for glorification and emulation. The saddest death of Hazrat Husayn teaches the Muslim world, nay the whole mankind a great lesson -- the lesson of holding the interest of the people and the nation above that of the individual. The common interest should predominate over the personal one. Self aggrandizement is to be despised against the battlement of national welfare. Hazrat Imam Husayn could have saved himself, he could have escaped the fatal end by declaring his allegiance to Yazid. He could have led a life of ease and luxury, but to him that was a vile life -- a life of ignominy unbecoming of the descendant of the greatest man of the world.

The Prophet's grandson could not succumb to the worldly temptations of a life devoid of high moral and ethical values. He stood firm to his principle and laid down his life at its altar. He symbolized the unity of the Muslim brotherhood. Had he emerged victorious there would have been an end of animosity and disunity, dissension and disaffection that were so deeply implanted in the hearts of the Muslims that even today they are drifting apart. The seeds of distrust and division that Karbala sowed have germinated and grown into perennial trees. Thus the tragedy of Karbala was an event of far-reaching consequences in the history of Islam. It was decisive not only of the fate of Caliphate but also destructive of the prospects of unity among the Muslims which had its origin in the all-unifying leadership of the Prophet. It was the Prophet who first attempted to build up a nation by reconciling the followers of rival creeds, it was he who established an empire upon the goodwill and co-operation of all people irrespective of caste and creed. He founded the Republic at Madina, united the heterogeneous elements into one homogeneous whole. With no central government at command the peninsula that was divided into several areas dominated by diverse tribes which used to fight among themselves through the ages for supremacy of one over the other making disorder and unrest as the order of the day, was turned into a compact Muslim brotherhood of the different warring tribes.

But the forces of disunity and dissension got the upperhand in Karbala so much so that PK Hitty says, "The blood of Husayn, even more than that of his father, proved to be the seed of Shi'ite Church." The battle of Karbala cemented the foundation of the Shi'ite sect leading to the division of the Muslims into two hostile camps which stood as stumbling block to the progress, prosperity and unity of future Islam. The fall of Husayn secured the accession of Yazid to power. The racial jealousy that was wiped out as a result of the preaching of the holy Prophet and was held in check during the rule of the pious Caliphs revived following the events of Karbala. In order to serve their selfish ends the Umayyad caliphs fanned the tribal jealousies by playing one tribe against the other pursuing a policy of divide and rule. Thus ascension of Yazid who was to be fought out of power by Hazrat Husayn signalled the emergence and revival of sectarian, and tribal forces and weakened the strength of the Muslim nation.

The divisive forces widened the gap between the subjects and the rulers. The Caliphs loved and lived simple life in accordance with the principles of Islam, and wandered about at night to see the conditions of the people with no bodyguards for protection and no magnificent palaces for their residence so that they were easily accessible to the common man fostering the growth of equality, fraternity and fellow feeling that cement the bond between the ruler and the people in

particular and among the people in general. Conversely, the dynastic rulers following the tragic happening of Karbala lived in castles and palaces and employed bodyguards for their protection thus distancing the people from them and creating a gap that tended to widen with the passage of time.

The Republic succumbed to kingship and democracy to despotism. The rule of law that held sway during the rule of the great Prophet and of the pious Caliphs suffered serious set back under the autocratic regimes of the dynastic rulers. The democratic system of governance -- the rule by consent and consultation came to an end with the abolition of the Shura or Council of Advisers. Under the Republic the Caliph was elected by the people of Madinah and the election was held in the public mosque where the Muslims declared their allegiance to the new Caliph. This democratic dispensation of choosing the government by consent participation and co-operation was abandoned with the ascension of the Umayyads the Umayyads wilfully nullified the process of election by nominating their successors to the throne. Henceforth the Caliphate of the Prophet was converted into a defacto kingship -- a definitely retrograde arrangement turning the wheel of progress towards backward movement and thwarting the continued growth of democracy.

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