

Sixty years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The legacy of Russell-Einstein Manifesto

DR. M. SHAMSHER ALI

ON August 6, 1945, at 8:50am the world witnessed one of the greatest tragedies of human history: the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima. Carried to Hiroshima from Tinian Island by the Enola Gay, a U.S. Army B29 bomber, this first atomic bomb exploded approximately five hundred and eighty meters above the ground. The city below was hit by heat rays of approximately 3000 to 4000 degree centigrade along with the blast-wind and radiation. Half the city vanished and 140 thousand people were dead. Again, on August 9, 1945, Nagasaki became the victim of the second Atomic bomb, and again 70 thousand people were killed. In Hiroshima, a shockwave with the pressure of 700 thousand atmospheres spread in all directions. Following the shock-wave was an extremely strong wind and the maximum instantaneous velocity peaked at 440 meters per second. Those who were 100 to 200 meters from the Hypocentre (the spot above which the bomb exploded) were exposed to radiation of 17 Sieverts, which is 17,000 times as high as the level harmless to the human body. The compound effects of heat rays, blast and radiation caused by the atomic bomb was beyond any imagination. In the words of a survivor, "such an indiscriminate bombing was nothing but a diabolical atrocity, unethical and immoral".

The two mushroom clouds at Hiroshima and Nagasaki punctuated the end of the world war -- unprecedented in scale, ferocity and destructiveness. After the second world war was over, Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell realised very well the long lasting effects of the applications of weapons of mass destruction like the atom bomb, and deemed it fit to get a statement of men of the highest eminence, communists and anti-communists, western and eastern, about the destructiveness of the atomic bombs. Accordingly, the manifesto known as the Russell-Einstein manifesto was signed on 9th July 1955 by the congress of 11 internationally reputed scientists, Max Born, P. W. Bridgman, Albert Einstein, L. Infeld, J.F. Joliot-Curie, H.J. Muller, L. Pauling, C.F. Powell, J. Rotbalt, Bertrand Russell, Hideki Yukawa. The galaxy of Nobel Laureates included in the list appealed to the scientists of the

world and the general public to subscribe to the resolution: "In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge the governments of the world to realise, and to acknowledge publicly, that their purposes cannot be furthered by a world war, and we urge them, consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them".

Following the release of the manifesto, an international conference was held in the summer home of Cyrus Eaton in a fishing village named Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada, on 17th July, 1957. From this first meeting, the Pugwash Conference has evolved into an international organisation with national groups in more than 50 countries, which, by the summer of 2001, had organised 265 meetings, involving more than 3500 individual scientists, academics, and policy specialists. In recognition of its efforts to eliminate the nuclear threat, Pugwash and its the then President, Joseph Rotbalt, were jointly awarded the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

This year, the 55th Pugwash conference on science and world affairs took place in Hiroshima, Japan, 22-27 July. The previous such conference in Hiroshima was held in 1995. The author was invited to attend this year's Pugwash conference. Before describing its salient features (which included topics like terrorism, human rights and international security, and the Islamic world and relations with the West) it would be proper to communicate the feelings of a survivor who was present at the meeting. "I am greatly honoured -- as one of the survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima -- to make this speech on the occasion of this important conference, and on the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. I was 13 years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Because I was sick that day, at the moment of the bombing I was sleeping at home. When I came to my senses, I found that I was trapped under my crushed house. I struggled and wriggled, and was at last able to crawl out of the piles of broken wood and plaster.

"When I stood upon my crushed house, the world I found was like night -- the morning sunshine blocked by dark brown air that changed to yellow and then white,

Prevention of nuclear terrorism is a priority, and a co-operative international effort would improve that chances of success. Immediate, rather than gradual, de-enrichment of HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium) is a priority, so that the chain of supply of potential bomb material can be broken. The so-called "war on terror" has been misconceived, and the reaction of the U.S. has created new enemies and more terrorist supporters. The terminology "Islamic terrorist" is inflammatory and counter-productive.

and finally became clear. I was shocked to find the city of Hiroshima was flattened as far as I could see. I could not grasp what had happened. Immediately, I heard my mother call my name. My mother said that she was unable to move, that her legs were caught between big beams or pillars. But it was far beyond my ability to free her. I called out in vain to adults for help, but those wounded could do nothing more than find a safe place for themselves. I did not notice the fire at first, but it was spreading

gradually. When I told my mother of the approaching fires, she told me, "you should survive, you should become a good person by studying well." Though she could not see the fire, which was growing stronger, she said, "that's enough, never mind your mother. Get away from here!" And when a large fire storm arose, my mother said, "Get away right now." It seemed faint, but it was strong, and so I decided to leave without her. As I escaped, I said, "Forgive me, mother!". That was the last conversation I had with my

mother.

"There was no road, and amidst the flames and houses, I could see only piles of houses, and badly burned people escaping. At last I reached the riverside, and swam across the river, and stayed on the dry riverbed watching the burning town from the other side. The smoke and flames became a cloud over my head. When I thought of my mother beneath the flames, my heart was broken, and I thought, "Was there not something I could have done to save her?" I had tears of regret and

repentance in my eyes. Even now, the same feeling comes over me whenever I think of my mother."

The survivor was no other than Shoji Sawada, a reputed high-energy physicist in Japan. In the words of the survivor's mother were echoed the feelings of the universal mother. Another atom bomb survivor Akihiro Takahashi, former Director of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, made an appeal, "I would like to vigorously appeal to you for the abolition of nuclear weapons at the earliest

possible date. Though 60 years have already passed since the end of World War II, I still feel the need to petition to you to achieve lasting world peace without further delay."

No wonder, the Russell-Einstein manifesto was revisited at the Hiroshima conference. It was felt, that even after 60 years of the Hiroshima bombing, the concern over the deployment of nuclear weapons has increased rather than decreased in view of the fact that the number of nuclear states is increasing and that the planet has amassed thirty thousand nuclear arsenals. More than ten thousand nuclear arsenals are believed to exist in US itself, and the US public don't seem to be aware of the consequences of this. In a poll, a section of the American public held the view that the US would need at least two hundred nuclear arsenals for its safety!

The idea, therefore, arose that Pugwash, in spite of its earlier successes with NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty), and SALT (Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty), should involve itself in a much bigger measure towards mobilising world opinion in favour of the dismantling of nuclear arsenals on an immediate basis. The idea of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was discussed and it was felt that non-proliferation should be total, that is, it should be aimed at not only horizontal non-proliferation but also vertical non-proliferation. The policy of NPT cannot succeed unless the "double-standard" that exists at present, is avoided. The existing veto system of the United Nations also came under discussion, and it was felt, that in order to make the UN a real instrument of peace, the veto system must be done away with.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of terrorism and the relationship of Islam with the west was also reviewed in working groups. It was agreed that the root causes of terrorism must be found out and terrorism should not be fought with terrorism. It was felt by many that regardless of the genesis of the problem, the resolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict and the balancing of the United State's unqualified support of Israel would go a long way in convincing the Muslim world of the official Washington position that the United States is not anti-Muslim. The participants in the working group on terrorism, human rights and international security summarised

that prevention of nuclear terrorism is a priority, and a co-operative international effort would improve that chances of success. Immediate, rather than gradual, de-enrichment of HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium) is a priority, so that the chain of supply of potential bomb material can be broken. The so-called "war on terror" has been misconceived, and the reaction of the U.S. has created new enemies and more terrorist supporters. The terminology "Islamic terrorist" is inflammatory and counter-productive because it labels a diverse community of 1.5 billion Muslims. More resources should be supplied to alleviate the impoverishment and insults to human dignity that characterise terrorism in failed or fragile states. Justice must replace injustice.

All sources of influence and power, including states, NGOs, multinational enterprises and individuals have a responsibility to participate in these efforts. Since terrorists in developed countries have been displaced from their cultural roots and not integrated into society's mainstream, their mistrust must be replaced by understanding through integration of multicultural communities. To have hope for the future, it is essential to believe that terrorism is temporary, work case by case to understand the problem and apply an appropriate remedy.

All in all, the participants from all over the world concluded that both within and outside, Pugwash must make relentless efforts with the cooperation of all concerned -- politicians, scientists, intellectuals and the public alike -- and should make the world community understand the essence of the Russell-Einstein manifesto: There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal, as human beings, to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

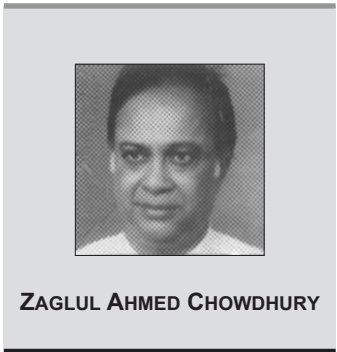
Dr M Shamsheer Ali, a theoretical nuclear physicist and founding Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Open University, presently is the Vice-Chancellor of Southeast University.



PHOTO: YOSHIKAZU TSUNO (AFP)

This birds eye view shows skeleton iron structure of the famous A-bomb Dome at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park, western Japan. The 60th annual memorial service for the two hundred thousand A-bomb victims will be held here today (06 August).

Is Indo-Pak peace process moving on the right track?



ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

IS the much-talked and much-desired peace process between the two South Asian rivals -- India and Pakistan -- is moving in the right track? The answer will be at least something in affirmative since the process that began nearly two years ago has not suffered any major setback. However, of late there have been some ripples in the positive ambience that runs counter to the constructive trend. This has led to some speculations whether the process will go unhindered or face impediments. It is reassuring that leaders of the two countries have affirmed to continue the positive spirit despite certain negative signs. When Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf called Indian prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh over phone to express deep sympathy over the loss of life and properties caused by flooding in Mumbai and some other places, two leaders also agreed to carry on the phase of normalisation of the ties. More importantly, they stressed that nothing should be said by one against the other that could potentially queer the pitch of developing good neighbourliness.

While two agreements -- military and nuclear technology -- signed between New Delhi and Washington in recent times caused some irritation in Pakistan, India feels that "terrorist" activities in the Kashmir region have not receded in the manner that New Delhi expected and the blame obviously goes to Islamabad. From Indian point of view, Pakistan failed to live up to the commitment in discouraging or stopping the cross border insurgency. Furthermore, certain comments from both sides were not seen as conducive to their efforts to furthering friendliness and consequently the future of the peace appeared little uncertain.

Earlier peace process received boost from highest level of two

countries. When Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf and Indian prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh met on the sidelines of the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung, Indonesia, sometime ago, they vowed to take the good initiatives forward. The Pakistan president was in the Indian capital later for the Indo-Pak cricket match, but the bilateral talks that he had with the Indian premier were seen as a "success" given the sensitivity that governs New Delhi-Islamabad ties. Two leaders agreed to give impetus to the difficult peace process and

may now be able to find common ground to improve their badly ruptured ties. However, this feeling is "cautious" and also "guarded" in the quarters familiar with the character of their bilateral ties -- albeit the positive aspects are not lost. The last SAARC summit in Pakistan provided a badly needed dialogue at the level of the top leadership of the two countries on the sidelines of the conference of the seven regional heads of government and the outcome of this contact had remarkably changed the nature of the New Delhi-

fairly well in the given situation and also resulted in some other positive steps like rail communication and re-opening of Karachi and Mumbai consulates. All these augured well for reconciliatory endeavour.

This encouraging conditions notwithstanding, one cannot probably lose sight of the fact that the peace process is contingent upon settlement or understanding on main bone of contention, which is obviously the Kashmir dispute. Two sides have diametrically opposite position on the issue, but are showing signs of readiness for flexibility. But how far this flexibility can go is the moot point. They have agreed to discuss the dispute but both have compulsions since it is too complex an issue although not beyond settlement. Pakistan president has to take his people and also big chunk of the "Kashmiris" along with his policy on the subject vis-à-vis the peace process with India. Some Kashmiri outfits have already described Musharraf as seeking to compromise on the fundamentals of the problem but bigger such organisations have not criticised as they have either not opposed the current drive or casting cautious watch.

Realism is dawning on different circles that the dispute cannot be settled by military might and negotiations are important. In India too, there seems increasing awareness that flexibility is required for resolving this contentious issue and thereby create a peaceful Indo-Pak relationship. The ball has been set rolling and the road is bumpy towards eliminating the root cause of hostility. But this is how difficult things are accomplished in international relations. While one cannot fully count that the Indo-Pak peace process is "irreversible", certainly hope can be placed on their current efforts. Some unfavourable signs notwithstanding, the Indo-Pak peace process is unlikely to be affected much unless unforeseen developments mar the 'favourable' atmosphere. Bilateral talks at different levels are on. It is heartening to note that their leaders are willing to ignore the discouraging signs and put them behind.

Islamabad relationship. However, such optimism did exist before as well, but unfortunately fell short of expectations.

This time there is an aroma of hope that the two neighbours may be able to settle their problems through discussion. President Gen. Musharraf is upbeat that the irritants including the main "Kashmir" problem are not beyond resolution particularly during his tenure and that of Dr Manmohan Singh as India prime minister. When Musharraf visited India over four years ago, he did not miss the opportunity of having a glimpse of his ancestral house in old Delhi. 1947 partition had resulted in huge migration of people between newly created India and Pakistan and persons in both the counties occupying the helm originally belonged to the other side of the fence. Indian premier Dr Manmohan Singh hails from West Punjab, which is now Pakistan.

Coming close on the heels of some positive measures to bolster confidence building measures (CBM's) like the once inconceivable bus service across the line of control (LOC) in the disputed Kashmir region, their talks in the Indian capital had gone off

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Whither justice?

KAZI ALAUDDIN AHMED

LITTLE Dipu, a primary school student was recently caned to death by his teachers comprising the headmistress and an assistant male teacher. For an infant of his age the offence committed could either be indifference to his lessons or childish fickleness. A report in a newspaper quoted the headmistress as claiming to have a 'right' to punish her students. And in the ruthless exercise of such unwritten 'right' she and her male colleague did the greatest 'wrong' to the poor boy, his family and to themselves.

The use of cane as a 'deterrent' to unruly behaviour of the school students vis-a-vis to indifference to learning by a few, has been indeed a very primitive process to bring about administrative discipline. By and large, and with the advent of the new millennium along with massive advances in the world of technologies, the use of cane in schools has turned out to be redundant. Unfortunately, however, some of the schools claiming themselves as 'ideal' ones still value cane as the most 'vital tool' to teach. And that's how Dipu lost his life.

Coincidentally, in the Indian state of West Bengal another 12-year-old student died around the same time as Dipu breathed his last due to merciless beating of a teacher of his school. A 4/5 year old child was also shown on an Indian TV channel with severe bruises all over his body. His parents were reported to have filed a case against the defaulting teacher there.

Dipu's unfortunate death must have been an eye opener to the teaching community. Hopefully, they will immediately work out a more congenial modality to make their individual teaching proficiency more and more attractive for their students. It is a genuine and spontaneous love and affection -- a richer bond of closeness with the students -- that can make their labour more rewarding. That's how, this writer proudly remembers, even after sixty-five years, many of his school teachers. Teachers of today are surely capable of following the footsteps of their great predecessors, meantime, I shall urge upon the government to ban use of cane in schools forthwith.

Peace in conjugal life is, in my personal estimation, essentially linked to upholding human values. From them generate the ultimate strength to hold the forte. That's how in the yonder years, existed large, firmly knit joint families where the

elders used to rule and the youngsters followed with unfettered respect and allegiance. Those golden days are no more. Individualistic approaches to promote one's own thinking, rightly or wrongly, have been more rampant now than ever before. When combined with irrational stubbornness on the part of such promoters this quite often drives the contesting parties to a point of no return. And that's how barring the myriads of households in the lower echelons of the society, many family precincts in the upper middle class and the so-called affluent part of the society are often threatened with disintegration. And when the division takes place between a mother and a father in front of their small off-springs, boundless tragedy befalls the latter. When such domestic feud is dragged outside and subjected to endless legal battle in the court the innocent

children of the assassinated police sergeant Forhad do even today recall how their dear father was gunned down by a student leader while on duty in 1999. His widowed wife moved heaven and earth imploring hauling up of the killer and giving him exemplary punishment. The government of the time responded instantly and ensured arrest of the main culprit. Formal process in the court were also being initiated. There was eye-witness account of the harrowing tale but, with the change of government, the killer was bailed out. Political victimisation was, as usual, the concocted ground for such blissful exonerations. His 'tremendous contributions' to the student and youth organs of the political party concerned got large-scale publicity and patronage.

Consequently, his abhorring and

Having been caught off-foot the concerned ministers, particularly the law minister is out to defend himself frantically but the arguments proffered are being vehemently contested and challenged by the political adversaries and the press. The whole episode, in their opinion, is tantamount to setting up of a very bad precedence.

small children suffer most.

The recent legal battle of a pair belonging to the highest tier of the society, may, in the political arena, posed such an 'awesome predicament' to the little child who himself was also reported to have been a retarded one. His parents have at least realised that they loved the child. Such natural yearnings have eventually paved the way to a sort of compromise between the mother and the father. They shall enjoy weekly custody of the child to fulfil their parental love and affection. The poor child however continues to be a victim of an ominous, agonising gamble. Yet, he is alive moving like a shuttlecock not knowing his fate on the morrow. One can, however, imagine that he is no better than our Dipu this write-up started with.

Genuine parental love and affection for the children must have been an invaluable gift from heaven. When the parents are gone their children left behind store their memory till they depart. Such spiritual episode persists from one generation to the other. The children and the grandchildren are used to take pride if their parents either jointly or separately leave examples of some remarkable acts during their lifetime. For instance, the

ghostly image as a diehard criminal in the old part of Dhaka city was conveniently ignored. Yet, he was destined to die an equally tragic and pitiable death on the street, which must have presented a replicated scenario of the ill-fated Sgt Forhad lying in a pool of blood on the street. The suspected killers are yet to be identified though there have been some expressions linking the whole episode to a series of dash on material interests. To the orphaned children of Sgt Forhad the death of their father's alleged killer could have a natural end as would partially indicate their wounded feelings. But that too must have been viciously neutralised when they and the whole nation witnessed the massive mourning participated by the party chairperson and all other leaders. All of them very liberally extolled the 'great organising abilities' of the 'martyred' youth leader. Still then let us not grudge the prayers offered for the salvation of the departed soul. Let us not also forget that the dead man paid back by his own counterpart coin.

Sweden has been quite popular for her strange hospitality to fugitives seeking asylum there. Even some of our boys have earned notorious reputation prefixing the name of this European country to their names. One such fellow,

languishing behind the bars being convicted by the court of law for a couple of years now can be cited as an example. His name itself -- a novel one, is enough to portray a beastly picture of a diabolical killer rising from the inferno. Even in jail he is reported to have been as powerful and outrageously omnipotent as a free man outside. His lieutenants, equally 'capable' give their boss continuous 'feedback' on the operational aspects, prospects and possibilities, financial status etc of the 'empire'. The chief in the prison appears to have no strong political linkage which could get him out in the open.

The man referred to above is apparently outrun by yet another person who had been in exile in Sweden for two decades with a rope of the gallows around his neck. He and a few 'compatriots' were sentenced to death by hanging by a military court in early eighties during army rule. They were charged with murder. He has been fortunate enough to have been able to flee the country but his co-accused, who were hauled up, have been already hanged. Their appeal for mercy or presidential clemency was turned down. Here too, the person alluded to, has reaped the undue advantage of his political linkage. Curiously, however, it took him a very long time to earn the coveted patronage of the administration. On the recommendation of the home and law ministries, endorsed and recommended by the head of the government, the President of the Republic granted, the man sentenced to death by hanging, mercy and relieved him of the charges. The mysterious manner by which the appeal of the man was handled, the unworly rapidity by which the whole process was accomplished and the hush-hush all around had been deviously preposterous. And, somehow, the secret manoeuvre and patronage besides some alleged 'personal care and interest' taken by some cabinet members leaked out to media. Having been caught off-foot the concerned ministers, particularly the law minister is out to defend himself frantically but the arguments proffered are being vehemently contested and challenged by the political adversaries and the press. The whole episode, in their opinion, is tantamount to setting up of a very bad precedence. Whither justice?

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