its ideals can be found in the religion (the dhormo) of the Nation it is designed to preserve.

Dhormo itself is the result of a synthesis - it is created from a process involving various filters, on both a personal as well as a communal level. While our own East Bengali *Dhormo* is essentially Islamic in nature, it is actually the result of various moral orders which held sway in this region, from the pre-Vedic to the Vedas, to the teachings of Gautama, and finally to the morality of Abraham, Ismail, Moses, Jesus and Muhammed, may peace be upon them all. It can be argued that all of these are in fact fragments of the one and same message revealed through various sources at various times. What has remained are those elements from all which do not conflict with each other and which are, according to our basic conscience, fundamentally just and decent. Whatever the case, this established *dhormo* comes to represent the yardstick by which we measure the *kormo* of the State and what gives it legitimacy. But more importantly, it is also the place from which any departure is signaled by reactionary and sometimes, unfortunately, violent sirens.

With this in mind and by taking a closer look at the recent cries for an 'Islamic' state, we may possibly discover that these are nothing more than misconceived and severely distorted calls for a 'moral' state; the same calls, incidentally, that led us to enter and then exit the State of Pakistan. We entered Pakistan believing that it would embrace a policy of justness and equality and of the essential dignity of man, standards that are fundamental for the social manifestation of Islamic ideals. When Pakistan failed to deliver on that promise, we created Bangladesh so that we might finally live in a state that stands for those same principles. The fact that there are now elements within our society calling for a renewed revolution and for another reinvention of the state, should awaken within any thinking person's consciousness the disturbing truth that these standards have not been met and that there is something amiss in this People's Republic. Indeed, the fact that Bangladesh has drifted far from its stated purpose as the champion of the People is self- evident and clearly demonstrable through its track record as the most corrupt nation in the world. Apart from that, a quick look at the state of the public services, of the collection of tax revenue, of education and social welfare, of the distribution of income, of political instability, the disproportion between wages and prices, the lack of legitimate sources for upward mobility, the dismantling of a meritocratic public sector, stagnation, lawlessness and numerous other socioeconomic indicators will reveal, unambiguously, a dysfunctional state in the mature stages of regress. Given these circumstances, the recent gruesome attacks on public figures and the Judiciary should, sadly, come as no surprise. In fact, to dispel any misconceptions about their intentions, the attackers clearly declared the acts to be the reaction and resistance to a corrupt and unjust regime.

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This of course justifies in no way or advocates the spate of violent crimes we witnessed two months ago, far from it; in fact I would be quick to say that such acts are offensive to our sensibility and are in complete violation of our dhormo. That a moral state can never be established through immoral means goes without saying. However, it is necessary to identify the causes of the attacks and the opportunities that have been left open for misguided individuals to exploit in the name of religion. To put it simply, a secular, principled and functional Bangladesh would have drawn less criticism and hostility from the proponents of an Islamic state, than our current one. In sincerity I am as well a proponent of an Islamic State in so far as the definition of an Islamic state is the establishment of a system based on justice, social welfare, representative government, the equitable distribution of resources and income and the inviolability of the rights and dignities of the common man. If such an ideal is the aim of an 'Islamic' movement then there is no threat from it, but if it is only to replace the office of the prime minister with an amir, the judges with qadis and parliament with a majlish i- shura, then it is redundant, and if it uses force, fear and intimidation as its means, then certainly it should never come to fruition.

If the People's Republic of Bangladesh is to remain within the goodwill of the people, then it must recognise that we, the people of Bangladesh, chose and continue to choose as our principles, those Islamic and indeed universal values which it has thus far failed to transform into political reality. Until this, or any state that governs this territory can reflect those noble words I once read on the walls of a building at Dhaka University 'keo khabe keo khabe na, ta hobe na, ta hobe na' - which humbled me and made me feel honoured to belong to a nation that espouses so intimately such a deeply human slogan, it will have no legitimacy and will continue to be rocked by upheavals. Until the writing on the wall is finally read we will not have achieved what we set out to achieve 60 years ago when the people of this irregular shaped 144,000 sq kilometers of land decided, against all odds, to seek out a better way. ■