Allure of Titas and other Stories

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MY friend Mir Alek Golondaj came to my office the other day to tell me that he was trying to get a job at Titas Gas Transmission Company, preferably as a meter reader. He has been running around with his entire savings of Tk. 10 lakh to fill the pockets of the bosses there for the job. He won't mind investing that kind of money if he can get 200 percent return on it.

I was taken aback. Why should a highly educated person having all the potential to get Nobel Prize someday in the future want to take the job of a meter reader! What was the matter with him? He was a voracious reader of books I knew, but a meter reader! It didn't seem right. I asked him why this sudden plan to change career when he was doing well as an NGO director? He told me point blank that he wanted to be a *crorepati* in two to three years and the only way he could do that was by becoming a Titas employee, a meter reader to be more specific. Since he was not an engineer, he could be a meter reader at best. But that was good enough, he explained. He showed me a newspaper cutting that said that one could take any amount between Tk. 10,000 to Tk. 5 lakh for tempering a gas meter to help the industrialists. You know, friend, that is one kind of social service too. You are contributing to the growth of our industrial sector. He held the paper in front of my eyes.

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But what about your NGO? What will happen to the employees? I asked in desperation. No, friend, I am tired of running after the donors, submitting this paper, that paper, you know something, those fellows are no more as gullible as they used to be in the past. Ah, good old days of *NGOgiri*. Money used to flow in like flood-water and we could spend it like as if it was our father's property. We could simply cook up some facts and figures, take some photographs of hungry looking children and women, and send them to the donors. But things have changed drastically. He lamented.

But what about your children studying in university, will they feel comfortable to know that you wanted to be a gas meter reader to earn money for them? I sounded panicky. But prompt came the reply. Oh, don't worry, old chap, these youngsters of today never bother how their dads earn money. Buy them a car, give them one thousand taka a day, and they will go out happily to spend it all on fast food and drugs. That's cool dude!

I was shocked and said watch your language Golondaj, what's wrong with you? What kind of a language is that? Golondaj smiled and said, update yourself, friend. That's the language of the day. Don't fall behind. Because if you do, you will not be able to communicate with your children. Golondaj left my office.

No red rose, no dancing...

These are bad times for young men in Saudi Arabia. They cannot even express their youthful exuberance or do simple, normal things like buying red roses for young girls or women of their age group or exchange pleasantries on special occasions. They definitely cannot do such things in public because of strict vigilance by the police to ensure code of conduct as they deem fit. As many as 57 Saudi young men have been arrested recently during the Valentine's Day when they tried to buy flowers for their fiancés and do a little dancing on the sidewalk. The boys were also reprimanded for wearing 'indecent' outfit in public.

So, Saudi Arabia is not the best place to hangout or chill-out for young men. No wonder why many of them go to Europe or America to do what they are forbidden to do back home.