

The rebel poet

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M. MIZANUR RAHMAN

It is our privilege that Kazi Nazrul Islam was made the national poet of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Nazrul's song *Chal-Chal Urdo Gogoney Baje Madol* was adopted as the national military song of Bangladesh.

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That was the time when the people of India were struggling for independence from imperialist ruler. Nazrul was fighting against the rulers vehemently through his rebellious poems and songs, but he always professed humanism against tyranny and misrule.

In 1971, our patriotic freedom-fighters were inspired and invigorated by Nazrul's rebellious poems and songs during the war of liberation. Nazrul's inspiring patriotic poems and songs speak up against all sorts of tyrants and exploiters of the people.

After the independence of Bangladesh, most governments came to power with the solemn promise to give succor to the impoverished and war-torn people of Bangladesh, and to root out all evils in society to make it a corruption-

free and exploitation-free state.

But people's sufferings increased to a great extent. Those people in power could hardly check the temptation of receiving kickbacks from different sources, whereas the people suffered in all respects. Bangladesh topped the list in the state of corruption as well as being a least developed country.

Kazi Nazrul Islam had lashed those impostors long ago in his poem *Raja-Proja* (king and subjects):

Friends, this is what happens. The people fought the enemies and came out victorious

But the victory was declared in the name of the king!

The people used to procure provisions, remunerations and uniforms

For government employees But they are not the employees of the people,

They are the employees of the king!

Oh what a farce of justice! We have to salute our paid servants!

Oh look here, look here at the face of The Public Servants!"

Turn the wheel of the time, One and a half crore thieves ride on the shoulders of one and a half crore human beings!..."

But Nazrul never gave up hope. He said:

Not to be disappointed, yet we are hoping for the day that is not so far away when the voice of the king would let us hear the victory of the soil:

The rudder of the vessel of this earth would remain under their control.

We should always remember our

subjects!"

(*Sarbohara, Raja-Proja*, p.19, 3rd edition, Calcutta.)

Of course, this poem was composed to portray the behaviour of the alien British Raj and its governments.

Till now, in political processes, Nazrul's voice is echoed in chorus. Every citizen of a sovereign country must have his/her social, political as well as economic rights. The people without human rights are said to be no less than slaves.

Nazrul raised his mighty voice against such slavery. He dreamt of free Bangladesh. While appreciating the freedom fighters he said:

"Till today the sons of Bengal are sacrificing their lives for freedom with extreme courage and determination that would be written in history in golden letters." And he advised us: "Teach these ideals to the Bengalis and their children:

"Ours is sacred Bangladesh -- this is for the Bengalis. We will beat down and expel all the alien thieves and robbers, we don't fear ..." (Navayoung, 3 Baisakh, 1349BS).

Moreover, Nazrul wanted those dedicated patriotic souls to engage themselves in building the nation, with dignity of labour and justice and fair-play, and to be above all temptation and allurement.

"Those people whose entire hearts and souls are wetted with love of the soil:

The rudder of the vessel of this earth would remain under their control.

We should always remember our

national poet who prayed:

"Give us strength and courage and tolerance

And give us heart, O God!

Give life to the dead, put infinite strength and courage

In those fearing hearts,

O God, the Omnipotent.

Give us health, give us longevity

With ever fresh light and air,

And make our free mind, and give us accurate knowledge,

O God, the Omnipotent.

Give us divine grace in our body,

Give us bliss, and peace at home

always,

Give us virtue of sacred love

And welfare-oriented devotion

So that we can keep our head aloft

And remain straight beyond any fear of proscription.

Whatever we want, we must earn it by our labour

But not by drawing gifts or beggaringalms from anywhere,

O God, the Omnipotent."

Thus, our national poet Nazrul became the symbol of love, beauty, truth and welfare of all. He had given us proper way to come forward towards working for the benefit of the people, where the each individual must have his/her due share.

One must not get involved in any activity that is detrimental to the national cause. Rather anything that goes against the interests of the country must be removed to improve the state of a nation. We must pay proper respect to our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. His words are beneficial to our national cause and must be given due value.

A nation that does not pay proper respect to its national poet must fail to achieve its ends. So, against the backdrop of social, political and economic perspective

of Bangladesh the importance of the national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam is immense.

Not fear or frustration, but the practice of love and amity between people is much more effective. The principles of justice and fair-play would do a lot to eradicate the root cause of corruption from the body of the nation which is affected thoroughly.

Our national poet, who taught us ideals akin to ideals of Islamic equality, seems to be the panacea.

"None is high or low, all men (and women) are equal,

And none is either king or subject of anyone.

We all share happiness and sorrow equally. None

Has the right to hoard. Would some shed tears

To put light on to another's room to enlighten the fate

Of the few keeping the millions remained ill-fated?

It is not the law of Islam."

Nazrul had his humanity in the light of Islamic liberalism. He had profound faith in Islam. "Love for humans is the best prayer of Allah." He said: "When you do not expect sorrow, pain, torment and indignity for yourself, you must not wish them for your brothers. Do not take your meal keeping your neighbours starving."

We cannot avoid our duty and responsibility by only observing the birth and death anniversaries of our national poet, because we cannot evaluate him this way. He must be brought to the fore of the national importance in social, political and economic perspectives, so that in words and deeds every individual of the nation becomes inspired with his ideals. In memory of the poet, let our all welfare-oriented works speed up.



"I sing of equality--that there is no great and magnanimous thing than the human.

Irrespective of countries, nations, and faiths,

He exists as the relative of the human beings in each and every abode

Learn truth which is greater than scriptures.

Nothing sort of Kaba-Mandeer is better than this (Human) heart..."

In the poem "God" Nazrul said: "He is revealed in everything everywhere among everyone

Having seen me I came to know of my Creator."

For Khaled of Islam, Nazrul composed the poem "Khaled" in which he reproached the bigots who stand on the way to progress.

"When the world is on the progressive way,

We are sitting still researching

The Feka and the Hadith predict Of divorcing wife."

From this it is evident that where

hypocrisy prevailed in the name of

religion, falsehood raises its head against truth and beauty. Nazrul is there in his rebellious mood to stamp out the liars and hypocrite bigots in order to save the nation. He sang for everyone's welfare for waking up the people with rejuvenation, expecting great and prosperous future for coming generations.

"Let's have victory to peace, victory to equality,

Victory to truth -- let's have that victory.

Let all evils, all torments, all disturbances,

All persecutions, all cowardliness, falsehood

And frustrations wipe out. Let all wants,

Diseases, sorrows and unnecessary hatred go.

Let's win victory over death gaining immortality.

Let the weak become strong and fearless.

There shall not be any disorder in this orderly life.

Let the prison be shattered, let's cross the persecuted

World of desert barriers, and let this world become sweet

And fully of love. Let's have victory, victory and victory only."

And with this end in view let us have our Bangladesh free from all evils like corruption, falsehood, hypocrisy, and superstition, and let us win the victory for the well-being and happiness of the people of Bangladesh by implementing the ideals of Nazrul, appreciating him truly as our beloved national poet.

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(Poems and prose from Nazrul as quoted above are translated from Bengali into English by the author of this article.)

Looking beyond election

Please clean the Augean stable of corruption from the body politic of this country once for all. Remove the cancerous growth of black money and muscle power from our national politics. Restore politics as a noble profession for men and women of honour and dignity to serve the people and the country. Send politics, which degenerated over the years in this country as a lucrative business for making personal fortunes, packing, together with businessmen-politicians, to the museum.

SHAMSUDDIN AHMED

WITH the arrests of Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia there should not have been any doubt in any quarter, especially among the detractors of this caretaker government, that the government will not waver in its resolve to cleanse politics from the garbage of crime and corruption -- the twin bane of this nation.

The latest round of high profile arrests of Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami and other BNP stalwarts in the notorious Gatco Graft Case should put to rest any thoughts that the government can be derailed from its principled stand on bringing those who have plundered and looted our state wealth and property to justice.

This caretaker government is different from previous caretaker governments. It is unique in the sense that it is focused not only on holding a credible, fair and free parliamentary election but also on what is to follow beyond the election. It wants to see a viable and sustainable democratic system of governance emerging in this country following the election.

Unfortunately, the two venerable ladies who have shaped our politics as it is, or whom politics has shaped into what they are, over the last three decades or so have been so involved

in corruption and wrongdoings that it is difficult to believe that an elected head of a government could harm the interest of his or her country to the extent that they have.

Ministers, members of parliament, ruling party activists, government officials, and even low-level employees in sensitive posts, made money and grabbed land and property with both hands. You could cause bomb blasts and kill innocent people at will, and there would be nobody to catch you because you enjoyed the blessings of the powers that be.

You could term it a golden age of crime and corruption. Imagine a Dhaka Electric Supply Authority clerk owning property worth Taka four hundred million. One could easily guess how fabulously rich have become our corrupt "Sirs" and "Madams." Politics changed their lifestyles. Money was no problem for them.

They would go to UK, US, Singapore, Thailand and Saudi Arabia for routine medical check-ups and for medical treatment of their minor ailments. They would go on pilgrimage to Mecca every year. They would not miss the opportunity of performing Umrah during



Is their future as bright as their smiles?

the holy month of Ramzan.

These are the people who have trampled democracy and good governance under their feet, and have brought the country to such a pass. These are the people the ACC has caught in its dragnet. These are the people we need to keep away from politics if the election is to be meaningful in that it ushers in genuine and sustainable democracy.

Let us not be emotional as a nation. It is not Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is standing in the dock charged with corruption. And it is not Khaleda Zia, the widow of Zia ur Rahman, who stands indicted with corruption charges. It is Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia, two former prime ministers of this country, who stand indicted.

A word about the much-touted dialogues with the political parties. Those who have not practiced

Chief Advisor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and his cabinet colleagues,

democracy within their own parties, and have done little to democratise their parties so far, are unlikely to agree to any meaningful democratic reforms the government is contemplating.

It is good to have a consensus on essential political reforms. But it does not mean that there will be no reforms just because Party A or Party B does not like it. What is good for the greater majority of the people and the country has to be done, no matter what people of a particular party or parties may say to the contrary.

In this light, it is suggested that the government also engage members of the civil society, academics, members of various professional groups, prominent citizens, media persons etc. in dialogue, and ascertain their views and suggestions on how and where reforms need to be undertaken.

Brig Gen Shamsuddin Ahmed (Retd) is a former military secretary to the president of Bangladesh.

Walk away

As the card shark in "The Gambler" concludes, the United States is now "plain out of aces." To save its weak hand it needs to know that the time has come to walk away from the deal and let the chips fall as they may.

SUMIT GANGULY

KENNY Rogers, one of the country's icons, has a line in the song "The Gambler" in which a card shark tells a greenhorn that he needs to "know when to walk away and know when to run." This piece of homespun wisdom may or may not have much value for poker players. However, in the game of international politics, where the stakes are considerably higher, it is invaluable advice. As the Bush administration enters the high noon of its negotiations with India over a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement designed to end India's decades-long nuclear isolation -- a result of unwillingness to sign the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) -- the United States needs to heed the gambler's admonition.

After carefully negotiating the civilian nuclear deal with India over