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**Morality and materialism**

Zakaria's letter on the subject published on 14 November is thought provoking. He quoted Pope Benedict's warning against materialism, and the extremist nature of modern culture, which was subsequently analysed, giving Zakaria's interpretation of it. He concluded that women's freedom is the main reason behind our cultural degradation today, and stated growing permissiveness and laxity as the signposts of modern cultural trends. I personally wonder if this is the root cause and reason for our moral decline in culture. Response from women, to these conclusions drawn by Zakaria, will be a welcome perspective on the issue. It will bring out the other side of the picture.

In argument against this, I would state that even if women entice us; the moot question is why are we enticed? Is this not a moral weakness of men's character? Two hands are needed to clap; so not women alone, but both the sexes have to keep their baser instinct in control. Possibly, the laxity in faith leads us towards a materialistic based society; which is driven by the axiom, that the more you get, the more you want.

These base instincts that lie dormant within us, are metamorphosed by avarice and greed; the two main causes of moral laxity. If we cannot control these; then we tend to blur the distinction between mankind and animals. This represents the paradox of the "Jekyll and Hyde" syndrome; that remains hidden within almost all of us, men and women. Once this comes out, and materialism is a catalyst for its coming out; we are no better than animals!

We all accept the saying that "Health is Wealth". However when wealth combines with avarice and greed; then the result is lowering of morality; in thoughts, words and deeds! When character is nurtured on greed; then opportunism supersedes hard work; and material comforts and desires override faith and honour. The result is the spiralling corrup-

tion, that we see around us; in all spheres of living.

Women alone are not the only source of moral laxity as stated by Zakaria.

Indecency is not limited to women alone; it is a pot-pouri of our base desire and greed that overcome good sense and taste. Scanty dress is a woman's vice; likewise, drinking is by and large a man's vice; these vices are increasing by leaps and bounds; yet another dimension of materialism!

Today we encourage such material based lifestyle, rather than a value based one. The values inculcated by faith, honour and belief in living is the only yardstick of mankind.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

**Mobile phones**

Nowadays cell phones are a part & parcel of modern communication system. People, obviously feel very easy to communicate with others, if necessary. In our country we are fortunate to have some very good names in Mobile Telecommunication Sector. A number of mobile servicing points have also been established under the supervision of mobile companies. People are to visit these points if they find any trouble with their mobile. But the role of the most servicing points is simply not reliable. They make customers one way, but act quite differently. As a result, customers don't get proper service.

Moreover, they are being ill-treated by the staff of these points. Do the customers deserve it? If not, why are they playing such an ugly role with the innocent customers.

Proper action should be taken against them as early as possible.

Md. Manjur Alam  
Shining Star School  
CDA, Agrabad, Chittagong

**Hide and seek!**

The whole nation has been waiting for a non-violent and good enough election for more than two years. After the creation and reformation of the caretaker government(s), we considered generally that it would conduct a fair election. In the primitive stage, providentially, the government was stronger than the working

political parties. But for unknown reasons, especially in the last few months, the government seems to be weaker or even helpless. Besides, the bargaining power of the political leaders is increasing tremendously. They started to impose conditions, one after another. Now the nation observes a 'hide and seek' game between the government's (implicit) spokesperson and party's representatives. It is not comprehensible to us what they want to make us understand, or really what's going on behind the screen. The stand of the parties should be clear; their agenda should be explainable to mass people.

We want wrapping up of this hide and seek between the government and the political parties. Md. Abdul Hamid  
Assistant Professor  
Dept. of Business Administration  
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

**Unsuccessful IPO candidates**

I appreciate the letter of Mr. Sikander Ahmed, Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka published on 14 November 2008. Being NRBs we have also applied for IPOs, but we do not find any way to know our IPO status. The IPO result which is published shows some code Nos. displayed by the computers such as Lottery Serial, Bank-Branch Code, Bank Serial No. I could say it is incomplete as it is unable to meet the requirements of the applicants. Obtaining information in any way is troublesome and time consuming even sometimes impossible if the authorities do not make it simple, easy and proper. Allotment is uncertain; refund is unknown as if it were the mercy of the authorities to offer these services. I would like to suggest some points to the authorities concerned:

1. The result of IPO Lottery should include the BO Accounts at least, so that we can understand our position.
2. The refund can be made directly to the bank which is specified in the IPO forms and the respective bank can put a notice in their branch within a period specified and known to all. So that the investors can

easily make sure that their refund is made. In case of NRBs a notice of refund warrants should be sent as the investors are unable to see the notice in the bank or they can use the provision of email or fax or mail which is easy and available.

3. The IPO allotment and the refund should take place within a certain period, so that the whole system will work smoothly and thus it will become more transparent.

4. The cash dividend must be transferred directly to the BO Account holders' accounts, not in cheque which is returned in many instances.

5. If the Security Exchange Commission could enforce strong rules or fine them for any unnecessary delay in the refund or disbursement of dividends, it could protect the rights of investors.

We are sure that everything is possible if we come forward with the commitment that we need to develop our country. The company needs to treat the investors as partners, not as clients so that the gap minimizes between them.

Therefore, we should have a clear vision.  
Mohd. Mofiz, Bahrain

**Prices of bread & biscuit**

A few months back price of wheat rose sharply in international as well as local markets. We experienced the same phenomenon in case of sugar and edible oil. These are the basic ingredients of making bread and biscuit.

In Bangladesh, both bread and biscuit prices went very high instantly. But in the last couple of months prices of all the basic ingredients of bread and biscuit have been going down continuously. But in the local market the prices of bread and biscuits have not been showing any downward change, which is surprising.

The producers are not reducing their prices.

I urge the producers of bread and biscuits to reduce prices of their commodities according to the fall in the prices of raw materials.  
Md. Ashraf Hossain  
Central Bashabo  
Dhaka

**Those chaotic days**



MUNEM WASIF / ORIKNEWS

It will be an interesting exercise to go back to the period prior to 1/11. The political atmosphere was charged with extreme confrontation, injustice and intolerance. The BNP appointed Justice Aziz as Chief Election Commissioner. The EC embarked upon the 'solemn duty' of election engineering. Thirteen million false voters were registered and 500 crore of taxpayers' money was reportedly ill-spent by them. The scenario was set for sure victory of the BNP-Jamaat alliance. Driven to the wall, the Awami League and other tormented and aggrieved political parties acted in the interest of themselves, country and common people. They formed an alliance and started agitation. The political sky was filled with high octane and we witnessed the rest of the events.

Surely, 1/11 came as a saviour of the country and common people. Maybe it dragged a bit too long. The political scenario was difficult and complicated. The BNP-Jamaat politicised the judiciary, administration, police and also the other forces. It was hell of a job to set the situation right in pro-people perspective. The followings are the gains of 1/11.

- 1. The country has been saved from fierce confrontation politics, disruption and destruction.
- 2. The BNP-Jamaat axis could not execute their evil design of clinging to power through illegal means.

Pro-liberation parties and elements were saved from oppression and annihilation.

Political parties will think thrice in the future before engaging in corrupt practices and stealing public funds.

Political parties will try to nominate better quality people as MP candidates.

The process of 'cleansing' has been started by the present CTG and good results of 1/11 will be more evident after 5-10 years.

Hitherto silent pro-liberation common people, civil society etc. were saved from humiliation and annihilation by the anti-state, anti-liberation Jamaat elements and BNP hawks.

The 'Jamaat' has been fully exposed. The BNP has partly realized its mistake of going with the hated 'Jamaat'.

Sector commanders' forum could project the evil deeds and designs of anti-liberation forces and drum up public opinion against the 'devils'.

1/11 gave us 'HOPE', that the future will be better than the past.

Dr. SN Mamoon  
One-mail

**Lesson for Bangladesh**



PHOTO: AFP

"After Barack Obama's win it is now statistically more probable for the child of a decent Bangladeshi citizen to be President of the United States of America than to be Prime Minister of Bangladesh."

This is the real lesson for Bangladesh from Barack Obama's win in the US elections.

The fight to change Bangladeshi politics continues even after the next elections.

We ask not can we be the best or that we must be the best.

We demand only that we be the best that we can possibly be.

And, under Hasina and Khaleda, we are nowhere close.

Change will come to our nation. It must. History, justice, time and faith demand it.

So many people have given up on our nation in spite of their love for it.

It is not their fault. It is not our fault. It is the fault of our politicians.

The next time change comes, good change or bad change, it will not come quietly.

And it will not go quietly. And change will not consider our definition of right or wrong.

Ezajur Rahman, Kuwait

**News headlines**

Very often we find some deceiving headlines in some Bangladeshi Bangla newspapers.

Today's headline in different newspapers is an example. The deceiving headline reads-

"ek-tarfa nirbachoner dikey desh",-- meaning the country is heading for an one-sided election and not a participatory one". The BNP is of course the second biggest political party which grouped with 3 other parties. The participation of this party is important for a broad based democracy but definitely not the only condition without which the country would have a totally non-participatory election. The EC reportedly has registered 40 political parties. All of them are willing to participate in the 18 December election which would constitute more than

60% of the voters. Secondly, the mainstream BNP as is now halved due to desertion of many who are now joining other parties or trying to participate as independent candidates.

Even if the BNP finally does not participate in the next election without a valid reason, the Dec 18 election cannot be called "ek-tarfa" as the newspapers have headlined. Shafiqul Islam, NY

**Parjatan and Barisal**

Surprisingly and unfortunately, Barisal a divisional headquarters and gateway to the South-- does not have a state owned Parjatan Hotel. There is hardly any hotel of international standard worth mentioning. The only hotel in the heart of the city is not up to the standard and lacks all the basic amenities. The importance of Barisal has increased

manifold over the last couple of years. The flow of travellers has increased significantly. The govt. Circuit House always remains occupied and cannot cater to the needs of the growing number of visitors. It is really disappointing and a shame that the city is yet to have a modern hotel. The land of Sher-e-Bangla, Ashwini Kumar, Poet Jibananda Das and Poet Mukund Das is a land of mesmerizing and stunning beauty.

With the world famous Sundarbans and the pristine sea resort, Kuakata beach, nearby, it is only natural that the influx of tourists would gain momentum with the establishment of good accommodation facilities.

I would therefore request the authorities to look into the matter seriously and act expeditiously.  
Shamim Ahmed  
Gulshan, Dhaka

**Arsenal disappoints**

Arsene Wenger was full of confidence that his team would do very well this year before the start of the EPL, much to the doubt of millions of fans. Chelsea, Manchester United, Liverpool and even a few mid-level clubs bought some very famous players to add to their club's strength, but Arsene Wenger decided to stick to his young team without any big star.

Wenger should have known that to win EPL is not something that will come easily and he should have bought some good players before the start of the season or when they have the transfer window open. Apart from two three games, Arsenal looked like a very mediocre team who would fight for the fifth place to take part in the Champions League. Arsenal was shocking against Aston Villa, Hull City and Spurs.

Badal Hasib  
One-mail

**Do politicians understand?**

Our respected and venerable intelligentsia are screaming nearly for 24 hours on TV and writing hundreds of articles foretelling that we are at a crossroads; passing through a critical time; moving towards the darkest phase of our history etc. Whenever my good luck prevails I take the opportunity to listen to some of the dire forewarnings about the bleakest future of our country. (I am not sarcastic but after listening to them for a while future seems to be really bleak to me). The problem is I have an uncanny feeling that whatever the host and guest of these talk shows predict, the people concerned--the politicians--do not bother at all. May be they do not have enough time to watch TV or read newspapers. But their deputy-cronies (cronies of cronies) should have informed them about what these respected people are trying to pass on. In the Holy Quran, Allah has termed some people as deaf, dumb and blind since they would never take the right path. Unfortunately, I find a lot of similarity between the people mentioned in the Holy Book and our politicians.

This country as a whole

wants peaceful transition to a whatsoever elected form of government. The caretakers are also in a hurry to leave the power citadel. Then where is the problem with the politicians? I may sound naive but I would ask why can't they just go to election first and make changes they want after the election? Our people would not dare question any of the steps taken after the election. The BNP fears they will lose without the help of their corrupt people. The AL thinks they will win. But nobody knows what will really happen. Our countrymen have some peculiarity in their character. They always go for the wrong guys.

Our politicians have never understood the psyche of our people. Will they ever understand?  
Asif Khan  
Circular Road, Dhanmandi  
Dhaka

**Anti-poverty campaign**

I am in receipt of a copy of Choyon - a tri-monthly magazine (July-September 2008 issue) edited by Poet Lily Haq. I am not sure about the spell-

ing of her name, though.

It now appears to me a critical mass of the magazine has apparently been created with products (essay, short stories, poems) of a number of promising literary personalities of Bangladesh.

The focus of above products was multi-disciplinary in nature and scope - ranging from gender biases and inadequacies associated with the country's social, as well as criminal justice system; to Eid reunions and sweet reminiscences; to attempts towards capturing one's own past in pursuits of taking a pause from the moving reality (Dr. Jahan Ara), to interactive virtual discussions, to love and emotion, to nature, and to other things perceived or sensed or felt or internalised otherwise by contemporary human systems (used in a medical sense) of relevant contributors - relative, however, to time, space and other variables. The bottom line is: good effort towards creating an interface between self and surroundings in the search of happiness and welfare - both finite and infinite, per se.

Interesting though, a part of the magazine deals with

inter alia pieces of news reflecting on activities pertaining to distribution of happiness among all stakeholders of Choyon and Lily Haq foundation (including inter alia poor Bangladeshis) - via assisting for example, the stakeholders, who are poor, in their effort towards improving the quality of life and towards liberating themselves from clutches of poverty. The activities of Choyon literature club and Lily Haq foundation - at present, in a limited way, though - focusing on for example: sustainable livelihoods, helping the poor to acquire assets, educational assistance to poor children, health care assistance to the poor, and distribution of winter cloths to the poor bear testimony to the good work. The bottom line is: literature in anti-poverty action.

The examples of Choyon and others in creating, sustaining and promoting choices for Bangladeshi poor and other disadvantaged people tend to suggest, among other things, there is - at least at this point in time - no apparent shortage of anti-poverty windows in Bangladesh. But one of the

present day challenges, in that respect, is: how best and quickest Bangladesh, friends of Bangladesh (including inter alia the US, Saudi Arabia, the UK, the EU), neighbours of Bangladesh (including inter alia India, Pakistan, Myanmar) and others (including the World Bank, the UN, Saarc) could create enabling environments for say, local anti-poverty entities - both existing and evolving - in pursuits of enhancing anti-poverty interplays between and among them and mainstreaming resultant gains in, for example, national and sub-regional anti-poverty programmes and outcomes for ensuring a continually incremental and sustainable impact on life and living of poor people of Bangladesh and the world at large.

The last word: the present day anti-poverty opportunities lie in inter alia giving - at the soonest and in a result-oriented manner - a more prominent anti-poverty face - than the existing one - to engineering and technology in pertinent areas.  
Dr. M.S. Haq  
One-mail

**Election and voters' list**



The sky is gradually getting clear. The EC is not fully ready to hold the election. Their prestigious voter listing with foreign aid has become a big hurdle now as reported in the media. Right from the day one I was sceptical about the success of the preparation of electoral rolls and national ID card. Nobody could speak about its limitations due to the state of emergency. The foreign sponsors never told us about the problem we might face. They told us about "gold standard" of the voter listing with photos. Not to speak of the NID, the voters' list with photos will not be available to all participants in the election. Nobody knows what is in store for us and whether this voter list would become redundant when the election will be held (?) The EC is talking about their affidavit to the SC. But there is no real basis one can stand on.

In a talk show on ntv a couple of guests were in favour of shifting the date by a few weeks after consultation with the major political parties. The BNP would find every excuse to seek postponement by at least 4-8 weeks. I am only afraid if we would have to hold the election based on the voters' list prepared by Justice Aziz's commission!

A reader  
One-mail