Conflicting forces in history



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WHAT Georg Hegel and Karl Marx said is true, I suppose. Time advances through conflicts. Opposite forces lock horns in a bid to annihilate each other and make their way to future. The pages of history are marked with clashes of opposite forces. The observation applies to intellectual as well as social phenomena. It is all thesis, antithesis and synthesis, as they call. The thesis is encountered by antithesis, resulting in some kind of synthesis. And thus going ahead. The process is essentially dialectical.

Conflict is hot and cold. In the conflict one force may gain victory over the other, or the conflict may end with no force winning. In the first case the triumphant force will replace the defeated one while in the second case the two will continue to exist side by side with some sort of compromise. Replacement and rapprochement is the way of history. Hand shake or blood shed. Peace or war. The picture of conflict gets far more complicated when more than two forces are involved. And in fact multitudes of forces interplay on earth and heaven. Any one can rise as dominant at a particular time suppressing the others. History is the crosscurrents of thoughts and events -- the battle field of multifarious deals and ideals.

In the ideological realm there has been a perpetual conflict between materialism and spiritualism. The materialists have always sought to prove this visible world as reality while the spiritualists have tried to brush it aside as illusion. For the latter, spirit is more fundamental than matter. On the plane of morality there has been conflict between altruism and hedonism. Morally, some have been led to Stoicism for spiritual happiness while others to Epicureanism for physical pleasure. In a broader perspective, philosophical investigation has proceeded through a hitching between rationalism which emphasises reason and mind, and empiricism which lays emphasis on experience and experiment. In epistemological concerns, having direct bearing on psychology, behaviourism and mentalism have contradicted each other.

In the development of spiritualism, theism has clashed with atheism; polytheism with monotheism. Religions have also dashed one another. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism are in the perpetual run of dashing. These are the major religions, still extant, which knocked out many other older ones. Even inside a particular religion, clashes have occurred and are still occurring. Catholics and Protestants have clashed within Christianity, Shiah and Sunni inside Islam, and so on. The religious bickering has made the world a hotbed of nightmare replete with sorrows and sighs. The conflict between religions is a major crisis of civilisation today.

Religions have not only collided among themselves but also with science. In medieval Europe, Church wallowing in darkness just shooed away science with frowning. When science emerged as a chief truth-proclaimer, challenging the divine scriptures, at the beginning of modern age, the Church fell upon it with all vehemence. In Renaissance period, scientists were regularly tortured and executed for their work. Giordano Bruno was burnt at stake by the Church and even Galileo had to face Inquisition for his astronomical theories. Religions do not tolerate science because it threatens to prove their claims false. The tendency of science is progressive while that of religion is regressive, which makes the tussle between the two inevitable.

Kingdoms and empires have also crossed swords throughout history for establishing their supremacy over one another. The Egyptians warred with the Hittites, the Persians with the Greeks and Romans, the Ottomans with the Byzantines and so forth. There was always 'clash of civilisations', as Francis Fukuyama observes. In the political system, oligarchy has been at odds with monarchy, and autocracy with democracy. In the economic system, capitalism has been in conflict with socialism, and liberalism with protectionism. There is no end of clash. Clash is always there.

Bangladesh is not out of the historical flux of conflicts. Politically speaking, here progressive and reactionary forces, guided by secularism and fundamentalism respectively, have been in confrontation since the birth of the nation. Progressive forces, being imbued with the sprit of liberation, oppose regressive elements, though not with appreciable success. We may discern division and internal clash inside the forces. The parties based on democratic principles do not tolerate one another just as the parties based on religion are locked in internecine battle. In recent history there has also been a conflict between representative governance and caretaker governance. The former is political and popular while the other is apolitical and backed by military.

Human wisdom is grateful to Hegel and Marx for revealing the truth of history. Conflict is in fact the basic truth of life. Inside 'self', one is in constant conflict. Whenever you have to make a decision, you have to choose from the conflicting ideas. You have to favour one and reject others. Or you may be in a dilemma. You either put faith in God or you take to scepticism; you support either capitalism or communism; you either love music or hate it; you either take animal protein or you remain a vegetarian -- all these come from conflicts, the word 'either' being its proof. Dive at your depth and discover the conflicts. It may be intriguing to explore the conflicts in personal history.

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