of a nation's journey just like that. This time, we must make our politicians take the mandate we hand them seriously. For 15 years, through three elections, they were able to ignore it and pursue their own personal agendas, smug in the knowledge that they could. The vast majority of the Bangladeshi electorate was "illiterate," and by association, "ignorant." What could they ever know? Their votes were to be bought, if not coerced. The irony need not be mentioned.

Literacy rates continue to remain low, but I still retain the faith that the end of the charade parading as democracy on 1/11 held potential for good. Even if, for a moment, it must have caused Bangladeshis from Tetulia to Teknaf to pause and think at some point over the last two years. Seven years is a lifetime in politics. It has been a long, long time since we last saw a ballot box. Apparently, they will be transparent this time. In terms of our progress, however, they will be redundant if they are staring back at the same old ignorance in us, the electorate.

Over the next four weeks and beyond, let us strive to prove that whatever we might be, we are certainly not "ignorant." Not anymore. We have just witnessed what has been described as a transformational election in the United States. The scope does not exist for us to take such a large step at this point, but over the next four weeks, let us strive to make our forthcoming verdict at least significant.

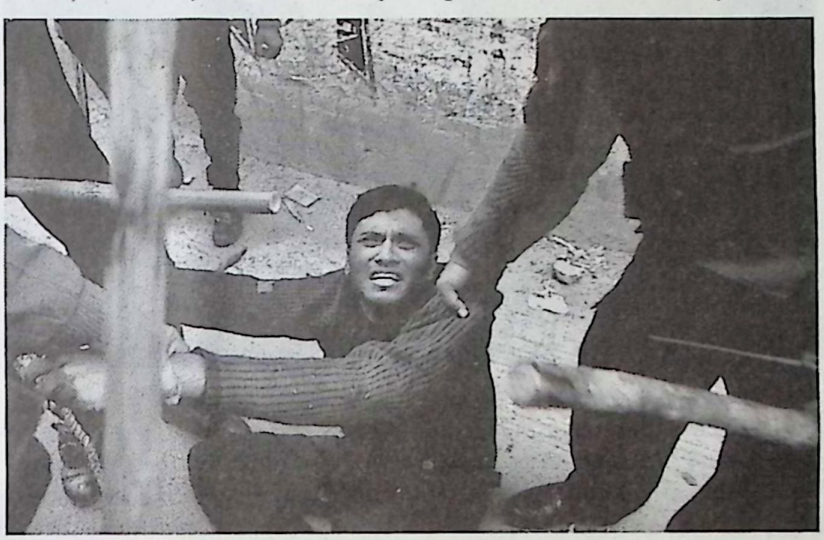
I firmly believe that, as a nation, our greatest strength lies in our collective resilience. The vast majority of this resilience derives from the likes of the people living in the low-lying areas, our brave farmers, the entrepreneurial village-women.

The people who read magazines such as this, or write in them, or publish them, contribute very little. We don't have to – we face very little by way of danger to our lives or subsistence on a daily basis. We usually live in the cities, in brick houses no cyclone can bring down, and often on plots of land our forefathers have secured for us. We are insulated from the conditions that build resilience. But we are well-positioned to contribute other strengths. One, in particular, has particular relevance to the upcoming election.

You have in your hands today access to the full list of candidates submitted to the Election Commission. You only have to care enough to look. Once the Commission has approved the selection of the candidates, on December 7, you will have access to the full list of candidates whose names will be on ballot papers all over the country come the 28th.

You need only visit the Election Commission's very well-maintained website. An admittedly long list, but you will probably not bother with too many beyond your own constituency, except for those in strategically important places like Dhaka, or those that interest you for some reason or the other. Then, unless your mind is already made up, you might just care enough to gather information on the candidates for your constituency. The media should probably have something on them in the weeks leading up to the election, but if you're in Dhaka, why not pay the commission a visit? They will have what you need, just get a copy.

Then, for hypothesis' sake, let us assume you are registered in a constituency with only three candidates. One has a charge of murder against his name, another has a history of corruption, and the third did not sit for his SSC exams. You choose whichever is the lesser of the three evils to you (or if so inclined, even the greater if you wish) and then go on to cast your



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