A Dismal Prospect

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I am back in Dhaka and I am not talking about the fog. I am glad to have escaped the wet, cold Roman winter for the milder weather here, so I don't mind the misty, sunless prospect. It's the grey and foggy pre-election perspective which bothers me.

As a nation, can we see beyond our nose?

Remember the saying 'Every nation gets the leader it deserves'? And remember an election slogan in a country which to the chant of 'YES WE CAN' just got rid of their leader who recently dodged a size 10 shoe? Well, this must mean it is true that a nation CAN not only manage to get the leader it deserves, it can struggle to get rid of one it believes it does NOT deserve.

But those are fairy tales for lands beyond seven oceans and thirteen rivers in terms of political maturity and national self-respect. Yes, the business of choosing a leader and a government is ultimately a question of how much self-respect a nation has, and what it believes it deserves.

Surely, no self-respecting Bangladeshi deserves to be in a position where it is forced to elect the dregs of humanity, the renegades of society, or quite simply, a bunch of liars and thieves? Yet here we are in the winter of our discontent, befuddled with our vision fogged up, and left between the Devil and the Dirty grey sea.

Remember the phrase 'Maachey-bhatey Bangali'? We, whose staple is fish and rice? Well, what would a true-blue Bangali do when out shopping in a fish market and faced with stalls upon stalls of rotting fish? I strongly suspect our shopper's lunch or dinner menu would not have fish in it.

But now the Bangali nation has just been inducted into the great fish market of Election. And we know very well that the 'Rui-Katlas 'on the stall have been belly-up for a long time. And yet we stroll around the market place, ignoring the stink and going through the motions of shopping! Are we mad? Are we actually considering going home to a few years of eating rotten fish curry with our rice? I don't know about you, but I'd sooner starve!

An election is a time for us to choose our public servants not our rulers! We are supposed to be the employers, those with the upper hand. We select the retinue of staff who will manage the running of the national household for us. If I dismissed a domestic worker because he was stealing or had showed too much arrogance or was inefficient, I would never re-employ him. If I felt my housekeeper was suffering from delusions of grandeur, of being the begum sahib, I'd not let the person into my home.

But I don't think I want any longer to use domestic metaphors. I have contracted an allergy to the feminine principle in public office. I don't want to see another

