

## Motivating our nation

Motivation cannot be imposed by sheer "power of leadership," it has to be inculcated. It is a self-propelling force within an individual, which keeps prompting him about what he should set himself to achieve. It also aims at mobilising the self in the pursuit of a goal.

Z. A. KHAN

WHENEVER we try to identify the reasons for our nation not performing to its potential, most of us point at the lack of motivation. How can India, with over 1 billion people and nearly 30 different languages, forge unity despite having diverse creeds, cultures and religions? The answer is that the nation has been motivated over the years by dedicated leadership.

Motivation cannot be imposed by sheer "power of leadership," it has to be inculcated. It is a self-propelling force within an individual, which keeps prompting him about what he should set himself to achieve. It also aims at mobilising the self in the pursuit of a goal. Motivation is a "function of needs, goals, perception, attitude and behaviour."

- A need is a condition of lacking something that a person needs for physical and emotional satisfaction;
- A goal is something that will reduce or neutralise a need;
- Behaviour is the action taken to satisfy needs, and is directed towards attainment of the goal. This can be explained in the following way:

Motivation cycle = Needs - Goals - Behaviour.

The basic need for all human beings is the overcoming of thirst, hunger, desire and other physical needs. The second category of needs includes acceptance,

self-esteem, achievement etc. Clearly, these needs are more important to a human being than the physical needs. There are a few more needs according to A.H. Maslow. They are:

- Security needs, which relate to protection from gross forms of violence, diseases, war, famine and poverty;
- Social needs, which deal with love, affection, warmth and sense of belonging;
- Self-esteem needs, which encompass self-respect, social approval of a job done well, and need for respect from others;
- Self-actualisation, which is generated from the development of individual potentialities so that one gets to know what he can do and then readies himself to do it.

Since independence, our leaders have not adequately focused on the real needs of the people. They depended on oratory to carry the people with them. Soon, they were confronted with volleys of questions that they could not answer convincingly. So they lost their social and emotional esteem but continued to cling on to power; formal and informal, to get obedience. This provoked people to question the integrity of the leadership that had stripped them of their self-pride and lacked the moral high ground to motivate the nation.

Being on a high moral ground is essential for motivating people. Motivation cannot be forced rather it is

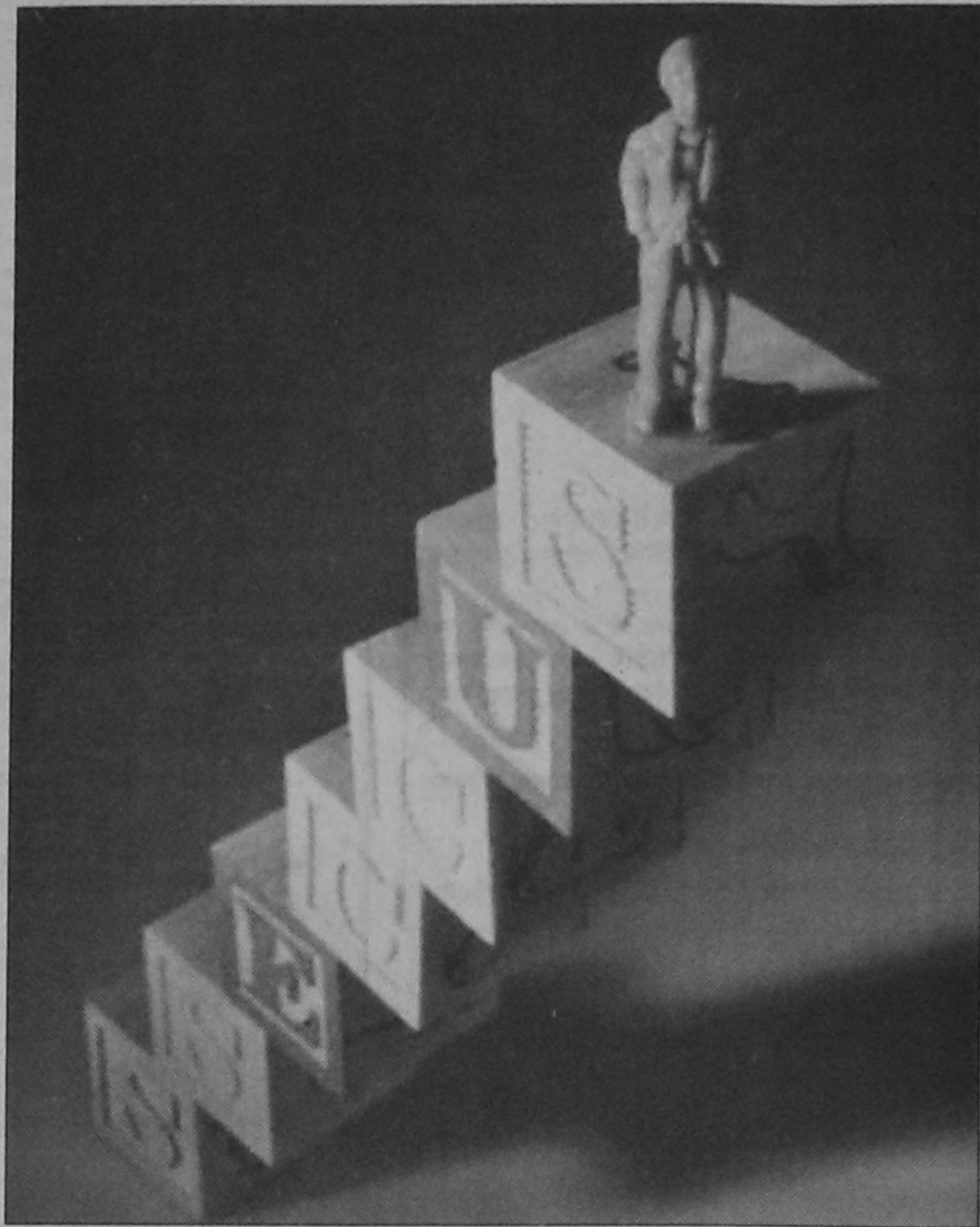
inculcated. So, unless the leader has integrity, it may be an uphill task for him to carry the people with him. Who can forget about "Mutiny on the Bounty," that took place due to the fault of the leader (Capt Bligh) who was indifferent to the needs of the sailors? History is replete with examples of people seeking to be bailed out from irresponsible and unfriendly leadership.

Whenever our nation was confronted with turmoil, we felt rudderless and apprehended that we might be led to the point of no return. Everyone in such a situation had one question for their leaders, how can the citizens be motivated towards the objective of saving the nation from the brink of a disaster? At such a juncture, true leaders should convince the people that:

- The leadership is well meaning and is geared to peoples' welfare;
- Those that betrayed the people will be thrown into the waste-bin of our history;
- Efforts will be underway to right the wrong that led to the prevailing situation.

There were occasions in our nation's brief history when our leadership made lofty promises, raising our hopes and aspirations, but defaulted on them. Not many leaders could assure the nation that they were ready to go all the way for peoples' welfare. Our once bitten twice-shy nation now finds it hard to repose its faith on our leadership.

South Korea, till the early 1960s, was on an inglorious slide due to leadership that had immersed itself in self-aggrandisement. The Korean people became indifferent towards the nation's development because of their sagging morale, the prime mover of motivation. The leadership that replaced the failed leaders launched a movement to inculcate "spiritual and moral upliftment,"



Stairway to success.

which they called Simul Undung.

The new leadership set examples of commitment, honesty, objectivity, endurance, tolerance and respect for the norms, values and tradition of the nation. Today, democracy and development are taking roots there, and the nation has

been well motivated and is set to go to greater heights.

Although neither our democracy nor our development is in such a disarray as was in Korea in the early sixties, one can see a gradual distortion of our moral fabric that may cause motivational

despair. Our leadership should take discernable steps to arrest the trend. The task may seem monumental but it is not enormously difficult.

We should immediately engage ourselves to reform our culture to focus on people's welfare and to value leadership that is keen to rewind the thread of our moral fabric that is showing syndromes of continuous decay because of the loss of esteem in the leadership that has not been seen to be adequately concerned about the needs of the people.

The leaders in our country during the past decades had made lofty promises, but were found wanting in carrying them out. Our nation suffered immensely because the leadership largely failed to set an attainable objective of all-round development. While our structural skyline is growing apace, our social esteem is yet to match the same in time and space. This is an unpardonable failure of our leadership.

What we need today is to seek self-actualisation at all levels of our national life. Our priority, in my consideration should be to implore upon all truly responsible citizens to engage themselves in motivating all of us to disassociate from the ills of ignorance and to commit ourselves head and heart to build a nation that we can be proud of.

The people should involve themselves in spiritual exercise alongside practical measures to strengthen their motivation. This, in the long run, will help us adopt a behavioural pattern that is cohesive and appropriate for development of spiritual motivation leading to utmost commitment to the cause of our nation, which surely should make our country an example of democracy and development.

Z.A. Khan is a former Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic studies.

## To the health minister

RUBAIUL MURSHED

OUR health minister said that there is no reason to be scared of "swine flu." He probably wanted to mean that creating panic would not be right. But with due respect to his views, we have to really be very cautious about this unpredictable natured H1N1 virus. According to WHO, "it is a sloppy, capricious, and promiscuous influenza virus."

Our closest neighbour, India, has already formulated proper guidelines along with knowledgeable specialists and management experts regarding this crisis. They are heading towards a National Preparedness Program. And despite the rapid spread of "swine flu" in that country, mortality rates are still low. Of course, the danger remains.

For us as well -- it's an opportunity to learn about the "infection disaster man-

agement" properly. Please, do not forget that this is the first phase of the pandemic and that's why it is milder in nature. Although your ministry has opened some exclusive wards in public hospitals, the investigation facilities are inadequate.

Then again the antiviral drug "Oseltamivir" (Tamiflu) works like magic but people are confused about the availability of this medicine. As a reputed clinician of this country, you know, most of the fatalities take place due to delay in treatment.

WHO says it may stay for months. Yesterday it was bird flu, today it's H1N1 and who knows what's waiting for us the day after tomorrow! And this is the time to think about "National Health Security Preparedness." Strategic planning requires strategic thinking. And to be up to date, we need to change often along with the world's everyday scientific progress.

At the moment, we need to strengthen the surveillance immediately, not only with your government structure but also involve non-governmental bodies. Increase the number of investigation centres -- involve all private clinics/hospitals that have more than 100 beds. Do not forget to monitor them by a strong monitoring cell involving people in and outside the government. Regarding the proper medicine, kindly make the scenario more transparent and make it available within affordable price, or free for "those who have less."

Although it started in Mexico and America, "swine flu" is now in our country. It's not easy for our doctors to diagnose the illness quickly as investigation facilities to confirm are unfortunately still inadequate. As crowded places are one of the risk factors -- health ministry should order to close down schools right away and, meanwhile, improve the



An action on time saves lives.

awareness program and manage the epidemic properly before opening after the Eid holidays. H1N1 is highly infectious and spreads very fast -- which is probably the major difference from other influenzas.

Although facemasks are very popular these days there is no real evidence (apart from the N95 respirator) that proves wearing a facemask will stop you getting the virus. Import this N95 respirator, which is considered the best with 95% protection.

Finally, one of the most important issues, "custom screening" at sea, land and air ports, should be carried out very strictly, and our finance and civil aviation ministers can cooperate with the health minister in these worrying times of need.

Dr. Rubaiul Murshed is a Professor, Health Care Management.

## My experience as editor of a Bangla magazine

These are the reflections of Noorjehan Murshid, journalist and politician, made a few years before her death. We reproduce them to mark her sixth death anniversary today.

NOORJEHAN MURSHID

I am Noorjehan Murshid and I come from Murshidabad. I was educated at the Victoria Institution in Calcutta and the Universities of Calcutta and Boston. My first job after my graduation from Calcutta was that of Headmistress of a Girls' High School in Barisal. Before my M.A. results came out, I was appointed Superintendent of a Post Graduate Women Students' Hostel in Calcutta. At the same time, I joined All India Radio as a broadcaster.

With partition I opted for Pakistan, which meant for me Dhaka and my destiny. I joined politics in 1954 and got

elected to the East Pakistan Legislative Assembly on a United Front ticket. Since 1954, I have been actively involved in politics both in and out of power. But with the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the murder of my colleagues Tajuddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam, Monsur Ali and Qamruzzaman, I lost heart and sort of withdrew from politics.

My journal was born in these circumstances and in response to my own need for a worthwhile occupation as well as to the situation in the country. You bring out a journal at a particular time when you believe you have something special to say and that there are people in society who

want it said. Most of our people are poor and without rights. The idea of social justice was accepted and current but it did not seem to include the notion of equal rights for men and women.

The journal wanted to draw attention to this long-standing default and work for the equality of woman and man. The concept of the journal and its range of interests were expressed through its different sections which were: "The World," "Country," "Society," "Interviews," "Literature," "Miscellaneous Reflections," "Debate," TV, the Theatre and "Letter from Abroad."

I recall that the first issue contained articles on the original of the dowry system in Bangladesh, women workers in industry, women's representation in parliament, a long extract from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in Bengali translation, and a discussion on the subject of women and development. We wanted Edesh-Ekal to say something to all citizens and at the same time to maintain a strong focus on women and their problems. The editor got dozens of congratulatory letters. The actual readership of the journal was limited to a small section of the middle class.

I started the venture without any institutional support. Most of the support came from my family. I created a fund with contributions from my husband and children and my own savings.

The first issue came out in August 1986. When I decided to bring out the journal I was optimistic that there would be a large readership.

We approached friends and sympathetic people for contributions and were pleased with the response. I wanted to lay a strong emphasis on women and women's issues and contacted almost all female writers in the country. I received some articles, stories and poems from them, but most of my contributors were men and I feel sorry to say that some of our women writers, who of course rightly call themselves writers and not women writers, were rather cool towards the magazine. They promised and never delivered.

I brought out my journal from the Bangla Academy Press. One morning Nirmalendu Goon, the poet, came to the place and appointed himself my assistant. He helped with proof reading and also contributed a personal column.

I contacted the Hawkers Association and gave it 1000 copies to sell, only to find out that most of these were destroyed by white ants and rats. When I protested, they said no one wanted to buy this type of intellectual magazine. They showed me some cheap and glamorous magazines of cinema and sex and asked me to bring out something like these; otherwise, it would not sell.

Nirmalendu Goon could only assist me for two hours a day in proof reading. So I appointed a very bright girl called Sabera and a boy named Tareq to help with the distribution of the journal, collection of articles and ads, answering and mailing letters, etc.

Soon I felt the need for an office assistant, who would maintain files, answer telephone calls and keep an account of the

expenses. Soon I found that my overhead expenses were becoming too much for me to bear. I was bad at collecting ads. I noticed how confidently Dr. Mustafa Nurul Islam, the editor of the quarterly journal *Sundaram*, went to business organisations and came back with very lucrative and regular ads. Obviously, I did not have his flair for business, but I know I was being discriminated against. I was a woman and an ex-minister of a former government whose members were not in great favour in the commercial district of Motijheel in Dhaka.

The first step I took was to reduce my expenses. Printing charges at the Bangla Academy Press were high. So I thought of changing the press. I tried some wayside printers, but the atmosphere in these places was rather uncongenial unlike at the Bangla Academy Press, where one could have a place to work for hours, have tea, and meet well known literary people. I bought a small composing unit and hired two compositors.

The more I tried to reduce my expenditure, the more it increased. But in spite of all these troubles, I never thought of giving the journal up. The journal used to come out regularly but understandably with very few ads. My daughter Sharmeen came forward to help me in collecting ads. She and Sabera both worked for the journal with dedication. They never thought any work for it beneath their dignity.

And what is the moral of the story? I must play down the hilarious denouement to the affair. The switch-over to computer technology need not have been the undoing of the journal. The

truth is I was weary of the effort to keep the journal afloat as a deficit proposition and of dependence on ads. I acknowledged earlier that the intellectual support I received was not satisfactory. The readers too responded well to the journal, enabling us to maintain the circulation at a reasonable level for some time. The real reason for the failure of the journal to stay alive longer than it did is to be ascribed to certain social and economic factors.

When times are hard, the lower and middle classes are not very keen on spending their scarce cash on things like *Edesh-Ekal*. The slump in the sale of the journal, which began with the great flood of 1988, coincided with the growing strength of religious fundamentalists, a group seeking power and control over society, especially educational institutes.

I, however, think, in retrospect, that despite all this, some of the problems I spoke of would not have existed for a person with greater business acumen than I possessed. I also think that the values for which the journal stood are not only valid but basic to our conception of the society we want to build. These values and forces inimical to them are at present engaged in a deadly conflict. What is needed is not surrender but a reincarnation of the spirit of *Edesh-Ekal* as a form of intelligent and assertive group action rather than lonely individual effort.

Noorjehan Murshid was a journalist and politician.



Noorjehan Murshid