



CREATIVEDIFFERENCE WORDPRESS

We need a facilitator not a government

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K. SIDDIQUE-E RABBANI

ANALYSING what is happening throughout the world, I think we need to ask ourselves a fundamental question; in the post-colonial era, how have we reconciled with the colonial concept of a "government" in which some people have more authority over others?

This authority over others had been the major cause for all sorts of exploitation, corruption and human misery in the colonial era; it is no different today in a "free and independent" country. It is ironic that after all the centuries of struggle and sacrifice to eliminate such authoritarian forces, we have again made ourselves slaves to the same.

"Morey cheno? Darogaar je nayer majhi, taar je guchay kachi, taar bareer dharey ami aachi" (Do you know me? I live near the house of the person who assists (draws ropes) the boatman of the officer-in-charge of the local police station). I heard this in my childhood, and it carries the essence of the authority over fellow human beings.

Thus, even today a petty office staff, a peon or a police constable of the government can play havoc with the lives of ordinary people. A person who is acquitted someone in the government can do it on a much bigger scale today.

In a democracy, a dynasty-based monarch is replaced by an elected monarch, or a group behaving like a monarch. We have not been able to carve out a system fostering real freedom, both intellectual and physical, for all individuals in a state.

Considering that we have both human and animal dispositions, enjoying authoritarian power over fellow human beings falls under the latter. This is also the mindset that worked subconsciously in our civil servants when they virtually rebelled against the last caretaker government as it tried to separate the judiciary from the executive. They could be calmed down only after the authority to conduct mobile courts was given back to them.

We find the same in the clashes for authority between the upazila chairpersons and the members of parliament at the local government level. Any person having some sort of a link with the government wants to exercise this authority by indulging in wholesale corruption and violence against others. Thus, authoritarian power brings out the animal within us, and a system that does it cannot be reckoned to be a desirable system for human society.

In my opinion, what we need is a "facilitator," not a government. We also need a wise, experienced and humane leader, who does not crave for that position but is pushed into it by others. *Aponerey boro boley boro shei noi, loke jare boro bole boro shei hoi* (one who claims him/herself to be the best is not so. It is s/he who is adjudged the best by the people), according to age-old philosophy and wisdom.

In a government all thinking and planning are done by a few, as if all the talent is concentrated within a group of elites, and the common people are just to follow these plans. We consider the common folk only as a source of cheap labour, having two hands only, ready to be exploited.

On the other hand, God has given every

human being an intellectual gift besides the two hands to wriggle out of any crisis provided s/he is not forced or inhibited by more powerful human beings, or by a number of equal human beings forming groups to become more powerful than an individual.

In a "facilitator" system as proposed, this immense intellectual power of the millions of people will be tapped to the full, resulting in the removal of misery in almost no time. The job of the leadership would be to arrange for the people to get access to knowledge and technology, to create beneficial infrastructures, and to facilitate the efforts of the people that appear to bear fruit.

The combined talent of 150 million people can work miracles, and eliminate poverty in the blink of an eye. But this will never happen if they are only made to follow rules devised by a few in a monarchy, or in the present form of government.

We have seen how the "Lathi-Baashi Samity" - an association of common people in Nature -- eliminated violence and crime successfully from their town some years back. Although it was hailed initially, even by the people in the government, it was eventually disbanded on the argument that it was "anti-constitutional."

While this should have been a model to be tried out in other areas of the country, we killed it -- because it gave the people freedom to exercise their power, and threatened the authority of a few people of the government. We are looking for the "golden deer" in the wrong place and the wrong way.

A close examination of the Magna Carta will reveal that it was written by the dukes to take a share of the authority of the monarchy for themselves and for those who might make things difficult -- the Church. It did not have an iota of consideration for the rights of the common people.

Western politics and economics both are based on the philosophy that balance of power

and money will occur when all the people will form into rights groups. Unfortunately, when you have groups of lions, hyenas, deer and chicken, it is easy to understand what would happen as a result of this fight for rights. That is what we see in the global arena now -- an unacceptable degree of disparity of various kinds, between nations and within a nation.

Whatever system we evolve, it should be based on a sound and clear philosophy, not one with vague speculations, and definitely not one with any hidden agenda of serving the interests of a few. Again, the philosophy should be able to bring out the "human" qualities of the people, appreciating that a wrong system could indeed bring out the "animal" in the same person.

All the Western systems of governance or of economics are based on the model of a corrupt human being -- "absolute power corrupts," so divide the people and go for check and balance through an opposition. The systems are based on "mistrust and check and balance."

Naturally, this is creating the wrong environment and propagating mistrust like fire. I think a state or a social system should be based on a "human" model, corruption and crime being taken as exceptions. So the fundamental theme should be "trust." This will allow almost all the people to feel at ease, and they will naturally try to reciprocate. For the exceptional few abusing the trust, corrective steps like counselling, warning, and exemplary punishment will be in order.

Look at your home, office, everywhere -- can you live without trust? Aren't we taking risks at every step by trusting others around us? If I do not trust my wife, children, relatives or colleagues, then is life worth living? This also applies to the state too, which influences our lives in a big way.

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Keeping the lights on

Faced with the current monumental energy crisis, we hope that the energy planners and decision-makers this time will chalk out a national energy strategy combining a balanced mix of coal, gas and nuclear, with renewables playing a complementary role.

A.B.M. NURUL ISLAM

A headline in Dhaka newspapers stating, "Future of Energy lies in Coal," reminded me of our national malaise: lurching from one extreme to another (*hjujuge bangalee*).

As far back as the 1960s, when we in the Atomic Energy Commission were pleading with the national energy planners not to burn our natural gas (a valuable raw material for many petrochemicals) primarily for electricity generation, it went unheeded.

Fast forward to 2002. The Bangladesh government toyed briefly with the idea of exporting Bibiyana gas to India. The powers-that-be possibly thought: "We are floating on gas." Now that we are shutting down fertiliser factories to divert gas for power generation, even the ruling party MPs are waking up to possible voter wrath in the next election. That's some progress.

Although the role of coal as the worst polluter contributing to climate change is well documented, like it or not, it (along with peat) still supplies 26.5 percent of world's primary energy needs. As a national resource of Bangladesh, coal should and must be developed and utilised by the best possible methods.

Clean coal technology is no longer an oxymoron. The offending gas/gases can be removed either before (by gasifying the coal) or afterwards through carbon capture and storage (CCS). The carbon footprint of Bangladesh is quite small at present (0.25 tons CO₂/capita) compared to, say, that of US (19.10). As front-line victims of climate change, we should keep our carbon footprint as low as possible.

The biggest mistake we made in the energy sector, I believe, had been not investing appropriately in developing local capability in gas exploration and development. Bapex and other state-owned companies received step-motherly treatment. The sooner this is corrected, the better.

Reinvigorated exploration is likely to yield positive results. Also, the local companies should be allowed to sell gas with a reasonable profit so that they can become self-sustaining and can invest in further exploration.

The recent worldwide renaissance of interest in nuclear energy has come about because of the realisation that when one needs large amounts of energy at competitive prices with near carbon-free footprint, the solution is nuclear. The lessons learnt from the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents, and improvements made, have enhanced reactor safety by two orders of magnitude compared to earlier reactors.

Concern over nuclear safety is more of a perception problem. The issue of what to do with spent reactor fuel is solvable. First of all, the "spent" reactor fuel is neither spent nor a waste. Thermal reactors currently in use hardly utilise 2 percent of the energy stored in the nuclear fuel. The remaining 98 percent can be utilised by closing the nuclear fuel cycle with construction of fast reactors and associated reprocessing plant to recycle and burn the plutonium and other actinides, thus rendering them harmless as well as extracting energy.

Alternatively, the easier solution for Bangladesh will be for the reactor supplier to take back the spent fuel. It is reported that Russia is willing to do so. Bangladesh should, therefore, invest not just in one reactor at Rooppur, but also in a string of reactors to solve the load-shedding problem.

Faced with the current monumental energy crisis, we hope that the energy planners and decision-makers this time will chalk out a national energy strategy combining a balanced mix of coal, gas and nuclear, with renewables playing a complementary role.

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Imperatives of interfaith tolerance

We would like to see Bangladesh as a tolerant and humane society where different religious and ethnic groups can coexist with their distinctive faiths and cultures. Freedom to practice one's own religion unfettered by the majority's commanding faith is a civilised norm, and an essential ingredient for democratic dispensation.

SYED REZAUL KARIM

A few days ago, national dailies reported that an Ahmadiya woman was denied a burial place in the Nakhhalpara graveyard in Dhaka because she belonged to the Ahmadiya community. The woman used to live in the Nakhhalpara area and it was her Sunni Muslim neighbours who barred her burial in the locality. Her body had to be carried to a graveyard at Tejgaon, where she found an eternal resting place.

This social and religious intolerance and hostility is symptomatic of a society unaware of the true spirit of Islam. Tolerance, in essence, means to give consideration to others. In social life friction between people does occur in every society, and differences arising from religion, culture, tradition and personal tastes persist.

But the truly pious persons look upon people with love and compassion. There is a well-known Hadith narrated by Jabir Bin Abdullah. The Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said: "He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully (Bukhari)."

The elements that make peace in a society in

the spirit of Islamic tradition are compassion, forgiveness and respect for all. There is a very significant and interesting story recorded by Al-Bukhari in this regard. The Prophet of Islam once saw a funeral passing by in a street in Medina. The Prophet was seated at that time. On seeing the funeral, the Prophet stood up in respect. At this one of the companions said: "O Prophet, it was the funeral of a Jew." The Prophet replied: "Was he not a human being?" What is meant here is that every human being is worthy of respect.

There may be differences of opinion among people regarding religion and culture but everyone has to respect the sanctity of the other. Allah has stressed the importance of following the Prophet (peace be upon him), revealing that His love of a person and His forgiveness of his/her sins depend on him/her following the Prophet.

The patent hostility towards the Ahmadiyas on the part of some Sunni Muslims stems from their (Ahmadiya's) belief that Mirza Golam Ahmad (1835-1909) of Qadiyan was a divine reformer, a messiah and prophet within the fold of Islam. This belief is rejected as blas-

phemy by Sunnis and Shias alike.

They point out that the holy Koran is categorical in stating that "prophethood" has been sealed with the advent of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), who is the last in the chain of prophets. However, the Ahmadiyas also believe in the oneness of God, in the Koran and Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

The Koranic revelation to the Prophet with regard to religious divisions can be gleaned from the following passage of Sura Anam: "Those who have made divisions in their religion and became sects, thou art not of them in anything; their affair is unto God, then He will tell them what they have been doing. Whoso brings a good deed shall have ten the like of it; and whoso brings an evil deed shall only be recompensed the like of it; they shall not be wronged (verse 159/160)."

To deny a place of burial to a human being is an insult to humanity. The Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said: "All God's creatures are his family, and he is the most beloved of God who trieth to do most good to God's creatures."

The famous poet-philosopher Hazrat Sheikh Sadi composed a beautiful couplet on the humanity of man: "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created from one essence."

Sometimes, in blind religious zeal and emotion, some zealots call the Ahmadiyas Kafirs. But one should be reminded of what our Prophet said about such reckless sayings. Hazrat Abu Jaar (peace be upon him) said

that he heard the Prophet saying: "No man shall call another man Fasik or Kafir, because if he or she is not really so, the allegation will fall on the person who said so."

"Everyone is divinely furthered in accordance with his character," said the Prophet.

From the above sayings of the Prophet and the Koranic admonitions, it should be understood that intolerance to human beings in the name of religion, caste or sect is not in the traditions of Islam. God has laid the earth open for every class or creed of people, whether they believe in Him or not.

We would like to see Bangladesh as a tolerant and humane society where different religious and ethnic groups can coexist with their distinctive faiths and cultures. Freedom to practice one's own religion unfettered by the majority's commanding faith is a civilised norm, and an essential ingredient for democratic dispensation. Let God's mercy be on all living creatures.

We would like to conclude with seven pieces of advice from Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, a Sufi saint and the greatest mystic poet of the world. He admonishes:

"In generosity and helping others, be like a river.

In compassion and grace be like the sun.

In concealing other's faults, be like the night.

In anger and fury, be like the dead.

In modesty and humility, be like the earth.

In tolerance, be like the sea,

Either appear as you are or be as you look."

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