

Beast breeding industry(!)

ASIF NAZRUL

CHOPPER in hand, the blood in the shirt bears the sign of that weapon; bestial anger written all over their face and the picture of a young man crying for his life in front of those bloodthirsty youth. He is Bishwajit Das. On the previous day, he had celebrated the victory of Bangladesh cricket team. In a matter of few hours, he was lying on the ground, writhing in agony, botched up by the young men. In day light, in a street in the capital, and in front of the police and many bystanders, after being repeatedly attacked with meat-chopper and heavy blows and trodden under their feet and soaked in his own blood he finally yielded to death. Did Bishwajit ever dream of such a fate in this journey from ecstasy to groan in a matter of a few hours?

What was his fault? His only fault, he was born in Bangladesh. He may be Bishwajit. He may not be a member of a party. He may be completely innocent. But he was born in Bangladesh where there is no Hutu-Tutsi conflict, no Palestine-Israel, no Taliban-Karzai, but there is Awami League and BNP here. There is the beating of war drum, people overtaken by murderous propensity and thirst for blood. How dare Bishwajit venture out on street on such a day? Death was his due!

The Daily Star has published the interviews of the parents of the killers. They had seen the brutality of some of these beasts on television. They cannot believe that these beasts are their children. They had toiled hard to send their sons to the university, and they cannot ever imagine what they have learnt here. They were wiping their tears caused by shame and guilt. They themselves have demanded that their sons be put on trial. But Bishwajit's father or brother does not have the courage to file a case. They have left the responsibility of the trial to the Almighty.

But then they are also very lucky, for Bishwajit was not born as Bayezid or Bashir. Had that been so, Bishwajit would have been made into a Jamaat-

Shibir cadre, and his killers would have been hailed as brave fighters imbued with the spirit of liberation. The minister and the party leaders would have proudly proclaimed that people have resisted the pro-hartal elements. Some writers, commentators, intellectuals would have welcomed the public beating. The killers of Bishwajit would have soon become big party leaders, and would have, after somehow finishing their education, become the APS of one minister or the other, may be a minister in this country someday.

It is a matter of bad luck for Bishwajit's murderers. Their Chatra League comrades had committed such heinous crimes as the killing of Abu Bakar of Dhaka University and the murder of Jahangir Nagar University's Zubair. None of them has been punished as yet. But there will be no letting off of Bishwajit's killers. The killing was carried live on TV and pictures have appeared in the newspapers. How can they escape now! Nahid-Limon-Rajon-Rafiqul, whoever they may be, they will be arrested. The way the media and the newspaper have covered the issue they may not get off quickly either.

But Bishwajit's killers need not be too worried. Some day when the journalists will get busy with the news of another such killing or even with more serious crimes, these killers will also get bail without anybody coming to know of it. Even if they are tried or punished, these killers, brave soldiers, need not lose hope. In this very country a murder-accused adorns the seat of a high court judge. And one who had celebrated a hundred rape gets a job in the university, and an animal who had tied a person in a bathroom and chopped him up in pieces receives President's pardon on the prime minister's recommendation. Therefore Bishwajit's killers need not worry, for better days for them will come. Did they not come out on the street on the instructions of the home minister to resist the BNP and Jamaat-Shibir? They did not go to beat up the driver of a garbage truck on the "instruction" of Mirza Fakhrul. Mirza Fakhrul has been

arrested instantly. He has been made accused in 37 cases in a matter of few hours. At least Bishwajit's killers will not have to suffer so much hassle. A murderer belonging to one's own party has more dignity than the opposition party's secretary general. The same may happen in future when BNP comes to power.

We feel sad for the family of Bishwajit's killers. They really wanted to bring up their son well and not to turn them into animals. Now we have to hear which of them belong to

Jamaat-Shibir camp, which of the killers' father, brother, uncles have been to which madrasa or which of them were involved in Jamaat Shibir or BNP politics, and that too from the PMO. They have no scope to pose a counter question. Is there no one in the family of the ruler of this country who belong to the family of razakar? They do not have the scope to ask as to which student organisation the killers belong to. Why the government had not tried these killers for their many crimes before? Why, even after being expelled, the Chatra League leaders had raised slogans and bravely lead processions keeping them in the forefront? Why the government did not arrest them before the media brought this to the lime-light? Is it because their uncles belong to Jamaat?

It is better for us, the common public, to keep these questions aside. Let us rather be occupied with the matter of the trial of these animals. Apparently, the murderers have been arrested and they will also be tried. Let us rather celebrate that. What an extraordinary country, what extraordinary politics? This sort of politics teaches you to associate with the politics of either Chatra League or Chatra Dal, to attend their meetings and sing

the praise of the two leaders to retain their hall seats, and to become killers in order to get a job or a business or to become a big leader. This politics shows the streets rather than the class room, shows the tender form rather than the book, teaches to be a rapist

than a beloved, and teaches to be an animal rather than a man.

We need not be worried about the animal breeding industries. Let this be our consolation that the owners of this industry, the lords of this state, are also

having their children educated. They are receiving higher education in either Harvard or Oxford, living in a civilised land and marrying there, and are constantly alert with a stick in their hand and apprehension in their heart to run this country. Their soldiers are to be found in the universities, in the courts, in the newspapers, in the police. Those of us who are animals, and those of us whose children are animals have been set against each other like Hutus and Tutsis. We fight among ourselves. We sing praise to our lords. We become the guards of their power and property. We love their children keeping our own in uncertainty and facing darkness and death. We wait for their future with bouquets and arches.

Some of us, like fools, wonder when this country would see better days. Did not this country see 52, 69, 71 and 90? We talk about these events. But there is the fear of Chatra League and Chatra Dal, and Shibir violence. There is the prospect of torture and jail, and the cold fear of forced disappearance. And there is Bishwajit's face crying for his life. Even then, we shall not accept defeat!

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Khan Sarwar Murshid: Unique in many respects



SIRAJUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

TO know him was a privilege and to be taught by him was a good fortune, and working with him as a colleague was simply an added advantage.

Dr. Murshid was a genuine scholar, interested in books--his collection was remarkable. In fact, books have been his passion and he was very interested in influencing his students to feel the curiosity to know, learn and think more.

Over the years I have seen him setting himself up as a role model of a teacher, an intellectual and a nationalist who believed in democracy and wanted state and society to be democratic; guaranteeing equality of opportunity and rights.

I have known him even before I was his student in 1952. This knowledge came to me because of his journal titled *New Values* which he brought out in 1942, which was quite unique and unexpected during those days.

I used to read it and was heavily influenced by its content.

Khan Sarwar Murshid was its Editor, Publisher and Manager at the same time. The circumstances were not convenient, but he never gave up. He loved his journal and continued to bring it out until 1965.

Professor Murshid's academic interest has been very deep. He was widely read in English and European literatures, and was a devoted student of Bengali literature as well.

Dr. Murshid was a very pleasant speaker. He spoke not thoughtlessly, but carefully. He was never a pedantic, his knowledge was never a burden for him; he carried it with ease and a sense of humour, which was very remarkable indeed!

To hear him speak was always a pleasure.

He was a sort of teacher who would invite his students to have deep discussions on various topics with him. I met him as a student when I entered university in 1952, but he left soon after for his PhD and returned in 1956 when we were in our final year. His thesis was on "The influence of Tagore on W.B. Yeats, Aldous Huxley and T.S. Eliot." He taught us Yeats in our Masters and brought out the philosophical aspect of Yeats' writing without which one cannot study Yeats properly.

Professor Murshid did not write much. He used to write using a pencil because his logic was that one should improve one's writing, and every piece should be meticulous.

He is inimitable in his writing style -- 'Kaler Kantha', which he calls voice of his time, is an important work not only for its substance but also for its writing style.

In 1958, the English Department of the University of Dhaka held nine seminars on contemporary Bengali writing and in each of these seminars he presented an articulated piece.

He wrote vividly on men-women relations in Bengali literature where he wrote with insights, with knowledge and in a very persuasive manner.

Professor Murshid was connected with all the important events of the country in his time. He was the first president of the 'Sangskriti Sangsads' which was a cultural organisation of teachers and students set up in 1949.

He was actively involved with the State Language Movement. Two teachers of Dhaka University--Mozaffar Ahmed Chowdhury and Munir Chowdhury -- were arrested and Professor Murshid's name was also on the list.

The police could not arrest him because they were unable to find him.

He also participated in the protests against the military regime and was one of the leaders of the 'Autonomy of University Movement' where after independence, he played the key role in making the new Act that guaranteed autonomy to universities.

Dr. Murshid and Nurjahan Murshid was a model of partnership as they both supported each other tremendously in their individual work.

Nurjahan Murshid was also involved in politics and was nominated by the united front in 1954 provincial election from the Dhaka-Narayanganj women's constitution, claiming an easy victory. Again, in 1970 election Nurjahan Murshid participated and won.

Then in the 1971 both of them worked actively for the liberation of Bangladesh. Dr. Murshid became the member of Planning Commission of the Mujib Nagar government. Nurjahan Murshid campaigned in favour of the liberation war all over the India; she even gave a speech in Indian parliament.

After liberation, Professor Murshid continued his service through different roles with patriotism and with great ability.

It is a great loss that he is no more with us but there is a consolation that he has left his impression on many of us. He had inspired us. We had seen in him a role model of a teacher and a committed intellectual.

Imagining the East

JYOTI MALHOTRA

Teesta waters agreement between the two countries.

And third, Bangladesh remains in general denial of the fact that illegal migration, or infiltration, of Bangladeshi across the porous border into India continues until to this day.

There was a fourth achievement wrought by this Bangladeshi parliamentary passage to India: The fact that senior Awami League leaders like Tofail Ahmed and Ashequr Rehman and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders like Moudud Ahmed and M K Anwar sat together, on the same side, and broke bread with parliamentarians like Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers party --

who was, supposedly, named by his father because he admired the Indian Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon-- and Zafar Iqbal Siddique of the Jatiya Party, was clear evidence that Bangladesh's deeply divisive politics isn't as fractured as it seems from the inside.

BNP leader Khaleda Zia's recent visit to India had,

clearly, reassured her party that Delhi was a benign power and would promote the relationship with Bangladesh irrespective of the party that ruled it -- to which Moudud Ahmed more than once pointed out that the BNP returned the compliment. Considering the tense history of the BNP-India relationship so far, both sides seem to have come to terms with the fact that they cannot be antagonists forever; that the nature of the 21st century demands a transformation from pure politics to a political-economic relationship between the two sides.

As for the Awami League, it is par for the course that relations with India will

improve when it is in power in Bangladesh, except when Mamata Banerjee wills it otherwise. But now that the Trinamool Congress has walked out of the Congress-led coalition in Delhi, it seems that the ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) will be introduced in the Indian Parliament sooner than later, and once that is done, the Teesta waters agreement will also be pushed through.

Salman Khurshid, India's foreign minister, is believed to have already begun informal consultations with the opposition party to win them around to supporting a two-thirds ratification of the LBA.

But it was the visit of the Bangladeshi parliamentary delegation to Guwahati that created the greatest stir. First of all, this was the first ever visit by a group of Bangladeshi parliamentarians to Assam, and its capital city was agog by the fact that they were there.

Security and pilot cars and sirens ensured that they got top protocol.

And in response to persistent questioning at the Guwahati Press Club, when the Bangladeshi parliamentarians insisted that "there wasn't a single illegal Bangladeshi immigrant in India," they also got top billing in all the newspapers.

When you have a border that is more than 4,000 km long and which has been so criminalised that it allows everything from cattle-smuggling to illegal export of phensedryl drugs to trafficking in humans, then it is time to transform the old blame-game and consequent denial into an opportunity. As Rashed Khan Menon pointed out, people move for economic gain, it isn't their fault that the grass is

sometimes greener on the other side.

It must be time, then, for India's eastern seaboard to begin imagining its own destiny in which neighbouring states like Bangladesh and Myanmar as well as the provinces of southern China are connected with India's north-eastern states like Assam and Meghalaya and Tripura through trade and lines of credit and investment.

Assam's rich resources could become the centre around which the criss-cross of commerce takes place, while Bangladesh's intrepid and hard-working people could manpower this transformation. Illegal migration? What's that!

First, though, the transformation must take place in Delhi. For too long Delhi has held sway over its bordering states. Now the time has come for it to let go and allow the fringes to take charge. The political impulse is already moving from the centre to the states and the government in Delhi must move with it.

This means that the governments of Assam and Tripura and Meghalaya and Sikkim must be much more involved in the making of policy with Bangladesh and Myanmar--as well as with other states further east like Thailand and Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. When politicians talk to each other, directly, they will find local solutions. Allowing legitimate, cross-border travel means that people can legitimately seek greener pastures, instead of hiding from smugglers and traffickers. The Indian north-east would regain its pre-partition connectivity, while transit states Bangladesh would reap the windfall of its incredible location between India, Myanmar and southern China.

Can we do it together? Can India and Bangladesh's political classes set aside their fierce political rivalries and come together to debate issues that matter to both our peoples?

If they don't, I think the time has come that we will soon do it, anyway.

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The writer is an eminent educationist.