

NO TIME TO HIBERNATE

BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

An upsurge of extremism has shaken the foundation of our fledgling democracy recently. Zealots have found convenient bases and are making covert attempts to turn this country into a theocratic state, extinguishing the spirit of the Liberation War. Certain groups of people have embarked on sinister activities that have generated a feeling that the country is drifting towards a chaotic and anarchic situation. The sermons of some religious clerics might have galvanised the discontented and disenchanted people. While most people profess to be devout Muslims, they do not shy away from the path of progress and development through education. Religion is an individual's way of life, and when practiced properly is a social and ethical force that distinguishes the right from the wrong. But religion mired in politics can only be sensitive and complicated, because political issues, state authority and acts of parliament can be questioned and resolved but religious codes cannot be questioned. Because fundamentalism or radicalism thrives

among the lower middle classes and the semi-illiterate and illiterate people. Just think about the strength, organisational ability and unity that Jamaat-Shibir men in Sundarganj village of Gaibandha demonstrated when they ambushed a police team and kept them at bay for five hours when the police went there on January 19 to arrest the alleged culprits in connection with the violence on February 2013.

There have been attempts to whip up fundamentalist fervour and communal frenzy by Jamaat-Shibir activists. Cultural fundamentalism now preached and backed by some Islamist parties seeking political identity has no place in the country. In 2004, when evidence of sinister activities by JMB, JMB and Huji started surfacing, the administration sidelined the issue.

The then government's indifference and inaction may have inspired the "holy warriors" to wage war against the rule that they call man-made. These groups want to establish an archaic system divorced from the realities of the world. By killing liberal minded people, torching houses of religious minority communities, desecrating temples and vandalising idols, they want to destroy a just society based on religious harmony.

If there was any lingering doubt that the militant groups have graduated from being poorly armed to be the most threatening insurgents, it died first on August 17, 2005 when the country was rocked by synchronised blasts. Because the then administration handled those threats too lightly, Bangladesh now trembles with petrol bomb blasts and cocktail explosions.

Being a moderate Muslim country, we need to take note of the effects of radical sentiment

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Think of the amazing success these mentors of religious education have achieved in training young gullible madrasa students in radical thoughts about Islam. Abu Hanifa, a student of class 9 in a Dakhil madrasa in Satkhira, just 16 years old, didn't hesitate to face death in a gunfight with the joint forces when he attempted to blow up a goods-laden truck in Bhomra land port.

Most discussions on the question of radical Islam fail because even moderate Muslims resent any questioning of religious faith. This is where the problem lies. If radical groups have become strong, either in our country or elsewhere in the world, it is because moderates are by and large too afraid to speak up. And it may be sadly said that they also suffer a siege mentality that makes them partly join the chorus of those who seek to absolve people like Osama bin Laden or his like for the hate campaign and secret bombings launched by them.

Some people claiming to be staunch followers of Islam are propagating dangerous edicts, like "kill in the name of Allah until you are killed. Then you will be in peace forever in paradise." Devout Muslims are shocked to hear that the name of their faith, which means 'submission to Allah,' can summon up such images of violence. Islam's Holy Prophet Muhammad's (SM) precepts, interpreted as a code of earthly behaviour that should have galvanised Muslim societies with hope of renewal, instead create a fear of upheaval.

If you go to some religious schools which have mushroomed across the length and breadth of the country, you will find that all they teach is Islam and Arabic. There is nothing wrong in knowing about Islam and Arabic, rather it should be mandatory for every Muslim to learn Arabic and understand the Holy Quran and essence of Islam. But

polarised education is bad. It has been widely acknowledged that unchecked mushrooming of such schools -- often affiliated to hard line organisations and jihadi groups -- has been the major factor in the spread of the culture of militancy. Children taught to look at the world through a religious prism will always see it divided into believers and infidels.

Islam did not impose itself by the sword. The Quran insists: "There must be no coercion in matters of faith" (Sura Baqara: 2.256). Jihad is not one of the pillars of Islam. The primary meaning of the word jihad is not holy war but "struggle" -- the difficult effort that is needed to put Allah's will into practice at every level -- personal and social as well as political. Prophet Muhammad (SM) often told his companions when they went home after a battle: "We are returning from the lesser 'jihad' (battle) to the greater 'jihad,' the far more urgent and momentous task of extirpating wrongdoings from one's own society and one's own heart."

Muslims can be proud of their eclecticism and innate capacity for tolerance. And in Sura A'raf Allah has commanded the Muslims "not to transgress the limits" and "not to create mischief on the earth after it has been set in order but they must call Him with fear and longing, for the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good."

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GLOBAL WARMING OR GLOBAL COOLING?

QUAMRUL HAIDER

As we watch on TV the harrowing images of death and destruction caused by natural disasters, global warming is the first thing that comes to our mind. Bucking the mainstream consensus, a group of scientists believe that global warming is on the decline and we are actually heading towards global cooling. As evidence, they cite the current rapid decline in solar activity, recent record-low cold snap in Chile and sub-zero temperatures in the United States, coldest winter in China in nearly 30 years and in Bangladesh since the 1960s. In fact, they see the possibility of a "Little Ice Age," similar to the one during the Maunder minimum from 1645 to 1715 or Dalton minimum from 1790 to 1830.

On the other hand, majority of the scientists and environmental organisations assert that human activity causing global warming has been increasing exponentially. They argue that even if emissions of anthropogenic greenhouse

mer and mathematician Milutin Milankovitch -- is most likely responsible for the episodes of ice ages.

Earth's orbit changes its shape from less elliptic to more elliptic in a cycle that takes around 100,000 years. Consequently, the points farthest (aphelion) and closest (perihelion) to the Sun also change. When Earth's orbit becomes more elongate, aphelion will be farther from the Sun and the intensity of sunlight falling on Earth will be substantially less than it is at perihelion. As a result, summers in the Northern Hemisphere will be cooler if the Earth is near the aphelion. Cool summers will allow snow and ice to persist to the next winter, allowing the development of large ice sheets over hundreds to thousands of years. Furthermore, the Earth moves more slowly near aphelion. Thus the time during which the temperatures are lower will last longer.

Summer temperatures are more important than winter temperatures because a reduction in summer solar radiation energy will initiate the growth of continental ice sheets. Also because most of the land mass is in the northern half of the planet, Northern Hemisphere is more important to the worldwide climate than the Southern Hemisphere.

The Earth's axial tilt that causes almost all the seasonal changes varies between 21.6 and 24.5 degrees in a 41,000-year cycle. The orientation of the tilt determines the seasonal distribution of radiation at higher latitudes. If the tilt becomes smaller, the Sun does not travel as far north in the sky during the summer, producing cooler summers.

Just like a spinning top, the Earth's rotational axis precesses in a circle every 26,000 years, thereby causing the Earth to cross the aphelion at different seasons. The combined effects of the predictable cyclic variations of the three celestial phenomena will change the climate by altering the distribution of solar energy between the seasons across the Earth. A decreased or increased solar radiation will impact the advance or retreat of the glaciers.

So, are we cooling or warming? Currently, the Earth's orbit is becoming more elongated, axial tilt is decreasing and the Northern Hemisphere is in aphelion at summer solstice. This is a perfect recipe for global cooling.

Shivering at the prospect of another ice age, anti-environmentalists think that global warming is actually a boon, and that we have staved off the return of the huge glaciers. Much to their dismay, if we can curb the greenhouse gas emissions and if the Sun goes into hibernation about 80,000 years from now when the rhythmic wiggles in the Earth's orbit, tilt and the axis are expected to resonate, the stage for the next big freeze will be set. Human influence on the climate may delay the transition by a millennium or two.

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Suchitra Sen, you never knew how much we loved you!

FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

THE passing of the queen of Bengali cinema, Suchitra Sen, has touched a chord, not only among Bengalis who are children of the 1950s, but also among the younger and older generations. In death, Suchitra Sen has become more of an iconic figure than she was in life.

The first superstars of the Bengali cinema were singer-actress Kanan Devi, and Promothesh Barua, who acted together in the 1942 hit, Shesh Uttar. Kanan and Barua were eclipsed by the meteoric appearance of Suchitra Sen and Uttam Kumar in 1952. The two defined Bengali cinema for the next twenty four years, and appeared as a romantic pair in 30 movies. The chemistry between the two -- their passion, complexity and grace -- was irresistible from the beginning. The carefully crafted scripts were brilliant, and the lyrics and the shur of their songs, an integral part of any Suchitra-Uttam movie, were exquisite.

The pair's rise coincided with our bildungsroman, or coming of age. Bengali movies without Suchitra-Uttam lacked luster, and box office appeal. Entrepreneurs cashed in on their appeal. Suchitra Hair Salons popped up everywhere, with the promise: "Ekhan Uttam Bhabhe Chul Kata Hoi!" We laughed, cried, loved and sang with them in Agnipariksha (1954), Shapmochon (1955), Shobar Uparey (1955), Shagorika (1956), Shilpi (1956); Harano Shur (1957), Pothe Holo Deri (1957), Rajlakshmi O Srikanto (1958), and Saptapadi (1961), to name a few.

Suchitra-Uttam movies were the rage of our time. They were our first introduction to love, jealousy, misunderstanding and reconciliation. Suchitra embodied the essence of Bengali womanhood -- petite and pretty, vulnerable and romantic, feisty and resilient. Most of the Bengali men and boys in the 1950s and 1960s fell in love with Suchitra Sen.

Some of Suchitra's most acclaimed Bengali movies were not made with Uttam -- Deep Jwele Jai (Ajit and Anil Chatterjee 1959), Hospital (with Ashok Kumar, 1960), and Saath Pake Badha (with Soumitra, 1963). Suchitra also acted in seven Hindi films including Devdas (with Dilip Kumar, 1955), Bombay Ka Babu (with Dev Anand, 1960), Mamta (with Dharmendra, 1966) and Aandhi (with Sanjeev Kumar, 1975).

Inarticulacy in Hindi somewhat hampered Suchitra's performance in Hindi films. One of Lata Mangeshkar's favourite songs sung by her is pictured on Suchitra Sen in the movie, Mamta -- "Rahein Na Rahein Hum, Maheka Karengi." My favourite Suchitra-Lata Hindi song is in the 1957 movie, Champakali, under Henmata Mukherjee's music direction and shur: "Chhup Gaya Koi Re,

Duur Se Pukar Ke."

Although their voices did not quite match, Sandhya Mukherjee was Suchitra's singing voice. (Sandhya's voice was deep, while Suchitra's enchanting voice had a distinctively Pabna-accent, according to West Bengalis!) My favourite Suchitra-Sandhya songs are from Shagorika. All the songs are loaded with delectable lyrics (by Gouriprasanna Majumdar; shur by Robin Chatterjee), which Sandhya delivered flawlessly with the right dose of emotion ("Aei To Aamar Prothom Phaguno Bela," "Tabo Bijoy Mukut," "Aei Modhu Raat," "Ankhi Jane Phool Keno Phutego.") A friend of mine was so smitten by Shagorika that he decided to become a physician! (Suchitra and Uttam were medical students in the movie.)

After Suchitra's passing, there is an ongoing discussion about the best Bengali song in the movies. Many fans chose "Aei Poth Jodi Na Sesh Hoi" (Hemanta-Sandhya, in Saptapadi). But there are so many more contenders: "Tumi Je Aamar" (Geeta Dutt, in Harano Shur), "Aei Sundaro Swarnali Sandhya" (Geeta Dutt, in Hospital), "Kichokhon Aro Nahoy Rahete Kache" (Sandhya in Pothe Holo Deri), "Ke Tumi Amare Dako" (Sandhya in Agni Parikkha) etc. My personal favourite is Shyamal Mitra's "Shat Shagor Aar Tero Nodir Paare" from Shagorika. I don't think there has been a greater hit than that one. But, let the debate continue.

If she were allowed one mulligan, I am sure Suchitra Sen would take back her decision not to agree to a three months' exclusive contract with Satyajit Ray to make the movie Devi Chaudhurani in the 1960s. Suchitra's rationale was that she could not say "no" to the directors who had patronised her during her early years in the movie industry, even for three months. Sadly, I don't think any of the other directors would have objected. Suchitra was feisty and strong-willed. In the 1960s, no Indian actress would have had the guts to say "no" to a request from Raj Kapoor to act in one of his films. Suchitra did just that.

Like Greta Garbo, Suchitra Sen decided to become a recluse after retiring from acting in 1978. Let us not judge her motivation. The consequence of her decision is that we will always remember Suchitra as young and beautiful.

Farewell Suchitra Sen; our one and only heroine! Thanks for all that you have done for Bengalis everywhere. We are all sooo proud of you! You made us proud to be Bengalis! May your soul rest in peace.

Borrowing a line from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and using it in a completely different context, I should like to ask my fellow Bengalis: "Please stand, Suchitra Sen has passed!"

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.



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gases stop immediately, the ones that are already present in the atmosphere will continue to drive global warming for hundreds of years.

Historically, cold spells in the Earth's climate history have been linked with ice ages. Glacial periods within the ice ages last a few million years. Glaciation alternates every hundred thousand years or so with warm spells called interglacial period. The ice sheets in Greenland, Arctic and the Antarctic suggest that the last ice age that began about 3 million years ago may not have ended yet; rather we are going through one of the warm spells.

While we know the causes of global warming, the exact causes of ice ages and the glacial cycles within them are not yet fully understood. Scientists however believe that the complex interplay of three celestial phenomena -- the periodic changes in the Earth's orbital shape, precession of the rotational axis and variation in the axial tilt, collectively known as Milankovitch Cycles after the Serbian astrono-

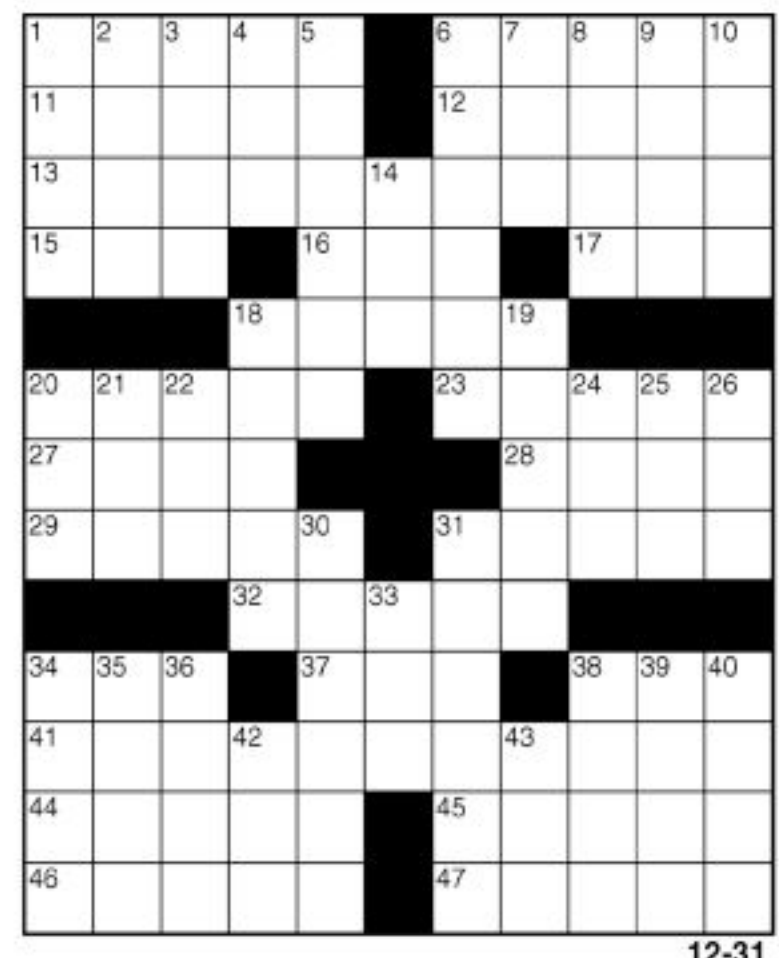
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- Champagne poppers
- Glass-raised salute
- Migshty as-
- Big name in TV talk
- Annual celebration
- Mountain road shape
- Light metal
- Behold
- Wash vigorously
- Bar in a canary's cage
- Lasagna and linguine
- Noted lab assistant
- Map line
- Spoil
- Small drum
- Heathen
- Relaxing spot
- Fellow
- Drill part
- Busy place on 13-Across
- Martini garnish
- City-based
- Bike part
- Without letup

DOWN

- Walking aid
- Wallet bills
- Uses oars
- Band-leader Kyser
- Rough drawing
- Distraught
- Harvest goddess
- War god
- Be thrifty
- "Of-I Sing"
- Vacuum lack
- Throw away
- British nobleman
- Sty resident
- Sense of self
- Hold up
- Bart, to Homer
- Price place
- Hoopla
- Off-distressed one
- "Macbeth" ghost
- Metane, for one
- Halt
- Carpet feature
- In the center of
- Paul Bunyan's ox
- Turkey neighbor
- Watch over
- Longoria of TV
- Coffee dispenser



CRYPTOQUOTE

JX LMZV IPVBTGV JX O BMQLPV EVOGJ
AW O BMQLPV DMQS OIJ MB AVJVG
JEOQ O JEXTBOQS EVOX-AXFQMLB MQ
IGOWVG.

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:

Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.

-- Theodore Isaac Rubin

Yesterday's answer



A XYDLBAAX is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

QUOTABLE Quote

There are times when a leader must move out ahead of the flock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way.

Nelson Mandela

Vacancy Announcement

Civil Service Change Management Programme (CSCMP), UNDP is seeking to employ 5 **Project Associates**, who would be interested to work in the human development field for a period of 5 months from mid-February to mid-June 2014.

For more information please visit: www.cscmp-mopa.org/vacancies. If you think you fit the profile, please send your CV to cv@cscmp-mopa.org no later than 3 February 2014.

Vacancy Announcement

Civil Service Change Management Programme (CSCMP) is seeking to employ a **National Consultant** for the "Development of Citizen's Charter module for civil service training programmes" over a period of 4 months (mid-February to mid-June 2014).

For more information please visit: www.cscmp-mopa.org/vacancies. If you think you fit the profile, please send your CV to cv@cscmp-mopa.org no later than 3 February 2014.