

My dear motorcyclists



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

SALAAM from the people, yes people, whom you almost ran over, whom you shoved off the footpath, beeped to deafness and pushed from behind as they sat on rickshaws. The rickshaw-pullers would also like to wish you but they have been so bullied by you over the years that they suffer from a sense of motorised phobia.

Allow me to begin by stating that the country has nearly 21,000 km of road, and dear bikers, not one bit of that belongs to you alone, whatever amount for road tax, etc. you may be paying. However, your appalling road etiquette would belie that obvious fact.

Although there are other users, you take the liberty to misbehave in connivance with your vehicle to a point that it appears that you two have the right to go right, left and forward, even backwards if needed.

While manoeuvring your two-wheelers, which you somehow are unable to do without continuously honking, you will nudge a pedestrian with your front wheel, graze a motorcar with your rear-view mirror, and arrogantly drive a rickshaw off its course, simply because you are in a hurry. It may help the rest of us if you understood that no one on the road is in less of a hurry than you.

The pavement, which you also mistakenly consider your road, definitely does not belong to you, and yet despite a court ruling, (if my memory is not failing me, footpaths were declared off-limits for your noisy and smoky contraptions), you honk big-headedly (not only on account of your helmet) to ply on it disdainfully and at will. Foot-travellers,

children too, who normally have nowhere else to go, are traumatised by the revving of your engine and sickened by the grey smoke that emits from your pipe. It is they who have the right to walk on the pavement, and yet they are the ones who are thrown off, by you.

Judging by your reflection on road safety, at best you are rather selfish, wearing a helmet, and considering the head of your

wife/friend/woh expendable. You care nought for the lady riding with you without a helmet. If only she knew she may not have hugged you as closely. Neither do you have any sense of responsibility for your kids: one stashed between you and the hand grip, another on your wife's lap, and yet another behind her. Ahem! But, you have a helmet on because the police will catch you. I have heard your

equally disillusioned colleagues say that the police are okay with one rider wearing a hard hat. Aha! But that one protected person could have been your girlfriend, and yes I have seen that too; so much love for oneself, I refer to the privileged lady.

The wrong side of the road does not exist for you. In case you have not been in practice, we drive on the left side of a road since the

first motor arrived in British India. Your philosophy is left-hand drive or right or even if there was a third hand, which perhaps is your prerogative, the bike must go on coupled with as much cacophony as your thumb can manage. Over footpaths and ditches, under barricades and over bridges, shoving people into roadside niches, all the traffic rules the biker breaches. How do you even sleep at night?

You make a habit of jumping the red light; that's the one above amber and green. I know it is not a usual practice for those who are warned "do not try this at home", but this refers to your speeding through with or without a companion or two on the pillion at the first half-an opportunity, while the traffic policeman is holding up the entire traffic.

You treat rickshaw-pullers like trash, as if they are parasites on the road. You address them derogatively with a 'tui'. Where from do you get such ideas of audacious behaviour? You literally command them as your slaves to pull their vehicle forward, or get down and push it back or to the sides to make the extra few inches so that Your Lordship may have his way through.

Have you even considered that someday some rickshawalla may turn the tables on you? Them being in the majority, it might be a good idea to carry an additional helmet for two reasons: one for your passenger and the other to fend the *keel-ghushi* accompanying the wrath of the poor. No, I am not instigating a law and order situation because towards that end you (as motorcyclists) have been contributing for a long time. Plainly be reminded that the poor and the toiling cannot afford to readily counter an insult for various reasons, but whenever they did, they helped liberate a whole country.



PHOTO: STAR

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The Education Antidote to Violence

Ronny Noor

IN an article titled "The Education Antidote to Radicalisation," published on December 30, 2015 in *The Daily Star*, former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, proposes education as a remedy for the radicalisation of young Muslims. His article is, unfortunately, not only superficial but also grossly misleading because of its sweeping over-generalisations based on inappropriate examples. For instance, he mentions that "in the Middle East, half of those aged 18-25 are either unemployed or underemployed," claiming that this situation, along with the millions of unemployed children in the region, creates a fertile ground for recruitment of fighters for Daesh or the Islamic State. Then, without any cogent reason, he concludes that "we will need . . . to convince nearly 200 million young Muslims that extremism is, quite literally, a dead end." It is very true that extremism is a dead end but Mr. Brown does not tell us who those 200 million young Muslims are. Hence we can assume, as he lumps together Arabs and non-Arabs offhandedly in his article, they must be young people in the Muslim population of the world, because the Arab population is only around 385 million. What he fails to realise is that Islam is not a monolithic religion. It has been accepted by people in far flung countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe who have languages, cultures, and histories of their own. Non-Arab Muslim countries may have incorporated some virtues of Islam into their cultures but they are certainly not concerned with the politics or unemployment problems of Arab nations, just as Arabs are not concerned with the political and social issues of non-Arab Muslim countries. The country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia, has proven that very fact by refusing to join the Saudi Arabia-led coalition of 34 Muslim-majority countries to fight extremism.

Mr. Brown not only misleads his readers with his assertion about young Muslims, painting people in vastly different cultures with a broad brushstroke based on the social situation in the Middle East, but also skirts the roots of extremism by giving simplistic examples of educating the young to counter extremism. For example, he writes about

children's magazines, videos, radio shows, and books in Pakistan and Arab countries that oppose al-Qaeda and expose the brutality of Daesh. These are no doubt commendable means to show the cruelty of these groups, but curious students, as students should be, would like to get to the bottom of things and want to know how these groups came into existence. These groups, irrespective of their names, harbour the same ideology - the ideology of jihad. And this jihad started in Afghanistan with the *mujahideen*, the ignorant peasants who opposed modernisation and women's education promoted by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). They turned a political issue into a religious one for broader support because PDPA was backed by then Soviet Union, claiming that Afghanistan was being turned into an atheistic society. This false propaganda drew thousands of fanatics, especially Saudi Wahhabis, into Afghanistan. The United States took full advantage of this situation and launched Charlie Wilson's War, supplying the *mujahideen* with thousands of Stinger missiles and billions of dollars to "sow shit in the Soviet backyard," as Pankaj Mishra writes. So it is the West that helped the *mujahideen*, Charlie's soldiers, to come to power in Afghanistan, from where their tentacles fanned out under different names to different countries carrying out terrorist activities like bringing down the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. Thus the "shit" that the US had sown in the Soviet backyard was splattered in America's front yard and Charlie's soldiers became terrorists in American parlance.

Consequently, the US went after the terrorists, the Taliban government in Afghanistan, in 2001, giving birth to the Pakistani Taliban. And after the US invaded Iraq in 2003 with the help of Britain, making a false claim of Saddam Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction, and removed the Sunnis from power, Daesh was formed in 2004. So these groups came to power as a result of the actions of the West, which tries to undo other societies for the interest of its rapacious military-industrial complex and set up puppet governments with poodles in power to do its bidding.

Daesh's revolting barbarism is reminiscent of that of the US in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. Neither has a moral high ground because violence is their mantra. The truth is that groups like al-Qaeda and Daesh are not

about religion at all, just as the West is not about democracy. These are convenient masks for them to justify their violent behaviour. The *jihadis* wish to establish their hegemony, or Arab imperialism, killing dissenters in the name of religion just as the West wishes to establish its hegemony, or Western imperialism, toppling governments in the name of democracy. The Western hypocrisy is apparent in - just to mention two examples - the toppling of the democratically elected Mosaddeq government in Iran in 1953 and that of the Salvador Allende government in Chile in 1973, which led to 17 years of Pinochet's brutal military dictatorship. When the West's greatest weapon is violence, how can Mr. Brown hope to "win the war of ideas"? His patronising words sound hollow at best, because violence is for those who have no ideas.

Mr. Brown, however, hits the mark when he claims that the hearts and minds of people cannot be won through violence but education. However, fruitful education requires an understanding of the source of violence just like a medicine to be effective requires knowledge of the cause of a disease. And the prime cause of this disease called violence is a desire for hegemony. So the chief perpetrators of violence - those toppling governments from Latin America to Africa to Asia, helping or producing groups like al-Qaeda, Taliban, and Daesh - or installing dictators or puppets in power to cause misery to millions - are the ones most in need of education. The US has made over 200 military incursions into other countries since World War II; the brilliant American intellectual Gore Vidal thus aptly calls the US the "barbarian horde". Shouldn't the young Muslims be educated on the views of the best American minds? Or should they be kept ignorant of the world so that they can be exploited like the unlettered *mujahideen* in Afghanistan? Mr. Brown makes no mention of that in his article.

To avoid being exploited by vested domestic or foreign interest, the ignorant and backward *jihadis* must be educated to be self-respecting individuals who will value life, not death; who will make the best of their lives to contribute positively to the world instead of sacrificing themselves for the hegemony of others. Education is also needed for the dictators and poodles who

crave power at any cost to serve foreign masters, as we see in Syria, where the US and Russia are vying to defend their strategic interests, taking advantage of the uncompromising nature of Russia-backed Assad and US-trained radicals, while thousands die and millions flee the country. Last but not least, education is crucial for all young people so that they can grow up to be conscientious men and women who will not cause misery to their fellow humans for hegemony or for the interest of their military-industrial complex by wearing the mask of democracy or religion. They must understand that a common thread binds all religions. To gain that knowledge, students have to be educated - in schools, seminaries, madrasas, and other religious institutions - on the philosophical basis of God. As I have written elsewhere, God is the symbol of goodness. It is a moral concept that

comes from the Indo-Aryan Vedic religion, where it is represented by Indra. This concept was borrowed by the Persian prophet Zarathustra, who called it Ahura Mazda (or Ormazd), later borrowed by Jews and Arabs.

Thus, proper education on God and religion will help people to refrain from violence. Then Mr. Brown's hope that "the young people of the Middle East and the rest of the Muslim world [would] share the aspirations of young people in every other part of the world" would materialise, because in that case the aspirations of young Chileans and young Afghans, not to mention young Iraqis and young Syrians, would not be smothered by violence for the strategic interest of those who seek hegemony in the world.

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QUOTABLE Quote

BEN OKRI
 Nigerian poet and novelist

The magician and the politician have much in common: they both have to draw our attention away from what they are really doing.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
 1 Robe part
 5 Smooths, in a way
 10 Playful mammal
 12 Hospital area, for short
 13 Business card datum.
 15 Like jazz cats
 16 Mafia head.
 17 Much of N. Amer.
 18 Skilled shooter
 20 Over-supply
 21 Scatter
 22 Hip-hop songs
 23 Last Greek letter
 25 Easy win
 28 Surprised sounds
 31 "Exodus" author
 32 Detail maps
 34 Sibling, for short
 35 Luggage ID
 36 Sibling, for short
 37 Address identifier
 40 Cow of commercials
 41 From the Arctic
 42 Oozes

DOWN
 43 -- Valentine"
 1 Last year's frosh.
 2 Acropolis setting
 3 "Cut that out!"
 4 Egg layer
 5 Whirled
 6 Sleeve filler
 7 Interstellar cloud
 8 Decorates
 9 Small herrings
 11 Trade in
 14 From Oslo, say
 19 Respect, in slang
 20 Lawn growth
 24 Join forces
 25 Hurries
 26 Baltimore player
 27 Treat badly
 29 Small stone
 30 Brook
 33 Apologetic word
 35 Casual tops
 38 Use a straw
 39 Unruly group

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

A	D	A	M	C	L	A	S	S
L	I	R	A	A	I	R	O	U
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S	E	N	A	T	O	R	P	U
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S	N	E	E	R	I	N	N	S

Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited
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Employment of Legal Advisers (Retainer) and Panel Advocates

Applications are hereby invited in plain paper from the members of the District Bar Councils of Dhaka, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali and Chittagong for appointment of Legal Adviser for Comilla Area and Panel Advocates four for Dhaka, two for Comilla, Brahmanbaria and one each for Chittagong (Experience in Labour Law), Chandpur, Feni and Noakhali Area for a period of two years for conducting suits in different courts on the following terms and conditions:

- For Dhaka area the applicants must have ten years experience as legal practitioner in Civil Courts including five years experience in High Court Division. An advocate having a Bar-at-Law/LL.M or Doctorate Degree in any discipline of law will be given preference. Except Dhaka all other area's applicants must have ten years experience as legal practitioner in Civil Courts.
- Retired District Judges (age not exceeding sixty years) who are engaged in legal practice are eligible to apply.
- The applicants must be Bangladeshi by birth.
- The applicants must possess a good physique.
- The Legal Advisers will be paid a monthly retainer fee of Tk. 1,000.00 (one thousand). Legal Advisers and Panel Advocate will be paid legal fees separately at BGDCL's scheduled rate(s).
- Advocates engaged as Legal Adviser/Retainer in any other organisation are not eligible to apply for appointment as Legal Adviser/Retainer in BGDCL.
- Interested candidates should submit 2 (two) copies of applications stating name, father's, mother's/husband's name, present and permanent address, 2 (two) attested copies of certificates regarding nationality, experience/qualifications and 2 (two) copies of recent passport size photographs duly attested by First Class Gazetted Officer directly to the Secretary, Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited, Head Office, Chapapur, Comilla within 15 (fifteen) days from the day of publication of this notice.
- The words "Application for the post of Legal Adviser/Panel Advocate" should be mentioned on the application and envelopes.

Secretary
 BG-1271 February-16
 GD-353
 Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited
 Comilla