

Finding meaning amidst the chaos of terror



THE OVERTON WINDOW
A year has passed since militants attacked the Holy Artisan Bakery in Gulshan killing 22 people. Yet, there is so much that many of us still can't quite arrange in proper sequence, to be able to explain, to ourselves, the entirety of the gruesome event, as despite being an overwhelmingly Muslim-majority country Bangladesh had never really witnessed anything quite like it before.

Sure there are those who have warned of some form of extremism emerging having observed the inequalities that exist in the social, economic and political fabric of our daily lives (which sometimes give rise to extreme reactionary forces). But they don't really explain the Holy Artisan bakery, as most of the attackers, all in their late teens or early 20s, came from, and, as such, were not necessarily victims of such unfair discrimination. One thing though is for certain, that they were somehow influenced by external forces.

And here is a lesson to learn: as unfair as it is to ask more of parents to send their children to some of the best educational institutions in the country (or the world), they must keep keener eyes on their children. Because as was made evident from the tragedy of July 1, 2016 you never know what kind of monsters are lurking in the dark, waiting to incorporate impressionable minds.



ILLUSTRATION: FANATICSTUDIO/SOURCE: ODYSSEY ONLINE.COM

into their wicked designs.

But is it that easy to divert youngsters down such destructive paths? For one, we don't really know all the details of their recruitment. The current environment, however, might just be perfect for such indoctrination, particularly given the sudden and complete collapse of all previously prevailing societal value structures.

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in 1882 asked in his book *The Gay Science*, with the demise of "what was holiest and mightiest of all," [in] the world... What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? This philosophical observation of his is perhaps one of the most misunderstood by religious and non-

religious minds alike.

Nietzsche's argument was that, since the west's value structure was constructed on religion and was crumbling with the decline of religious belief, people would have to create their own value structures (while the famous Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung believed that human beings were simply incapable of arbitrarily inventing value structures to direct their own lives by and would thus, fall into chaos until they could transform themselves to come to this realisation).

Unfortunately, he never got the chance to address how the west could deal with this "problem"—its idealism as an illusion—to be grounded on an appealing—as religion increasingly became considered a mere fantasy.

What the west, however, would 'certainly' do next, in the chaotic aftermath of being disillusioned by the value structure upon which western society had been predicated, he said, was descended into a combination of nihilism and totalitarianism. In fact, he even prophesied that millions of people would die in the coming century in his book *The Will to Power*, specifically due to conflict between the competing value structures and ideological doctrines that would attempt to replace the vacuum—Zionism, Fascism, Communism, etc.

To this day, the west is still struggling to solve this problem. But with rapid globalisation, it has, moreover, become sort of universalised; as globalisation, though often understood in terms of economics, does have major cultural, political and social dimensions to it involving technology, goods and services, the movement of people, their ideas and cultures, across geographical space. One such dimension, according to noted linguist and cultural historian Norberg-Hodge, who has been studying different cultures for nearly 50 years, is to local cultures (and value structures) with the newly invented "global monoculture" of consumerism (and nihilism).

This has resulted in millions of youth around the world, including in Bangladesh, suffering from a severe identity crisis, unable to connect with (or relate to) their own history, culture, etc. Indian political and clinical psychologist Ashis Nandy explains, "The Southern world's future now, by definition, is nothing other than an edited version of contemporary North. What Europe and North America are today, the folklore of the globalised middle-class claims, the rest of the world will become tomorrow" (*Regimes of Narcissism, Regimes of Despair*, Oxford University Press).

But the contemporary global monoculture that is spreading like wildfire is not predicated on any moral or ethical values, or value structure. And in the absence of any concrete principles to hold onto (or value structure which would allow them to determine 'good from evil'), the youth, particularly those coming from relatively privileged backgrounds (not having to worry about survival all the time), can easily become disillusioned and sometimes even desperate to grasp at any alternative that they believe will

give them (back) some meaning. Only to find there are (almost) none. Other than the global monoculture promoting hedonism, narcissism and powerlessness.

"Once the visions of the future are this narrowly defined, the resulting vacuum is sometimes filled by pathological forms of millennialism," Nandy argues, some of which are "perfectly compatible with the various editions of fundamentalism floating around in the global marketplace of ideas today." Therefore, to fight back against extremism, society must address this problem, as well as many others that push the youth towards the various forms of fundamentalism—such as the violence that is being perpetrated by western governments, seemingly under false pretences—that are trying to allure them under the guise of offering some form of certainties (order) amidst all the chaos.

But this alternative value structure cannot be based on violence, nihilism and the idea that (any) life is meaningless and thus, can (and should) be taken by another at their will. It has to be the opposite. The alternative that the youth should be offered must include dialogue as a means to settling existing differences, rather than violence. Spirituality, morality, or whether it is more or less, nihilism. And the idea that (all) life, including their own, is full of meaning, as opposed to being meaningless, as it is they, who must shape the direction that the human family will tread down, in the days to come. All of which, the great religions and philosophies of the past had 'valued' and promoted, albeit others.

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Instilling a strong work ethic early in life



MIR AFTABUDDIN SIDDIQUI
A recent survey by the globally acclaimed social services organisation Caritas Internationalis suggested that in the 2015-16 fiscal year, an estimated 25 percent of the 15-29 age group in Bangladesh were neither in education nor employed in any sort of formal economic activity. The World Bank puts the youth unemployment figure (15-24 age group) at an estimated 11 percent of the total Bangladeshi population in 2016.

Whilst these are numbers based on purely statistical analysis, it sheds light on various facets of Bangladesh's economy. It tells us that in no uncertain terms, addressing youth unemployment in the country requires a two-pronged approach. On one hand, commentators are rightly highlighting the government accountable to generate enhanced youth-based human capital growth. However, on the other side, we also need to look at non-public policy factors which are preventing individuals in Bangladesh from being employed.

By defined measures, unemployment is best as occurring when a person is actively searching for work, but is unable to find work. As such, if and when a person is willing and able to work, but does not get work, he or she is termed as unemployed.

Interestingly, the new branch of behavioural economics amalgamates sociological patterns, human psychology, traditional economics and cognitive factors to study the causes of unemployment. Therefore, behavioural economics focuses on the willingness of a person to work,

rather than their ability to do so. And it is here where Bangladesh needs to take a closer look.

In a society such as ours, the traditional sense in upper-middle class families is that parents shoulder the financial responsibilities of their children, up until the latter is able to settle down. For those fortunate enough to access tertiary education, students are rarely encouraged to search for jobs unless they finish their degrees. Suffice it to say, on a high number of occasions, students are encouraged to complete their bachelors and masters degrees, and then only to look for jobs. As such, in reality, a high proportion of upper-middle class youth do not actively search for work until the average graduation age of 23-25.

Culturally, student jobs and internships are restricted to a growing, but unequivocally low number of organisations in Dhaka. Volunteering opportunities are developing through foundations like Footsteps and Green Channel, but these remain restricted to a specific social group. As such, youth unemployment amongst recent graduates hovers around an ever-growing 11 percent in Bangladesh.

Behavioural sciences indicate that because of the reluctance of soon-to-be graduates caused not only by the unavailability of student jobs, but also by a culture of dependence on guardians, youth unemployment figures are rising at an increasing rate. Essentially, to put it into a different context, imagine Canada and how it regularly promotes student jobs. At the same time, culturally, the youth are encouraged to start partaking in job searches from their teenage years, thereby fostering an environment of a *quid-pro-quo* approach by the state, organisations and individuals. This cognitive phenomenon of the

Bangladeshi mindset has sadly resulted in an approach of *study first, work later*, rather than *study and work simultaneously*.

The above case however does not cater to the vast majority of the country. Lower middle class to the lower class of the country surely does not operate in the same way as those in the upper echelons of society do. Priorities are different. Needs are drastically dissimilar. Traditional

prioritising monetary benefits over, say, prestige or reputation. It makes perfect sense. However, behavioural economists further suggest that the longevity of being unemployed, either due to a lack of vocational skills as present amongst the lower strata of society (occupational immobility) or the unwillingness to move to a different part of the country (geographical immobility), creates an intense relationship

between their basic educational attainments, monetary and non-monetary aims and desired geographical needs with proposed jobs. Furthermore, lack of jobs further deters people to stop looking for jobs themselves, cultivating an environment of the fundamental responsibility to ensure that the youth of Bangladesh get access to quality training, education and healthcare, the notions of



SOURCE: CORPORATESTANDARD

An estimated 25 percent of the 15-29 age group in Bangladesh were neither in education nor employed in any sort of formal economic activity in the 2015-16 fiscal year, according to a Caritas International survey.

economists highlight how individuals base their choices on the idea of rationality, thereby constructing decisions on whether partaking in an economic activity would yield greater satisfaction than the second alternative. For example, people get motivated to look for jobs if nationwide wage levels are increased. Therefore, it is surprising to witness people in the lower middle class to the lower class of the population

between job expectancy and search intensity. Imagine this. Would a technician in a factory be willing and able to transfer skills to a growing IT sector? Is there any state-level forum to ensure this transition of skills or training? Would the technician want to move from Dhaka to Sylhet? Would the technician have faith in himself to even apply for such a job? This unfortunately creates a scenario where the youth cannot think of

behavioural economics point to a culture of dependence as a key instigator, if not a cause, of youth unemployment. Ironically, unwillingness to work as seen in many Bangladesh households should in theory bring youth unemployment rate down. Yet, numbers and statistics remain contradictory, and it is here where both traditional economists and behavioural scientists tend to have

problems. Whether Bangladesh has a youth unemployment rate of 11 percent, or whether it is more or less, is something to which the common man has no answer. Yet, it is visible to the naked eye that prospective groups of young Bangladeshis are unable to activate their full potential in the workforce.

Bangladesh is thriving under pressure. High levels of foreign remittance and a resilient RMG sector are a testament to this. However, the success of the Bangladesh economy is based on a need for economic survival. But in order to achieve the spirit of success, the youth of the country must be encouraged and motivated so as to increase innovation and reduce total youth unemployment levels in the country. Starting from our homes, we need to be encouraging our children to participate in further volunteer programmes and small-scale jobs, so as to reduce the culture of dependence. Education side-by-side with experience is a tried and tested formula, which we need to initiate. The state has a key role, but households do too.

However much we celebrate the success of the Bangladesh economy, and mind you, we should, basing an entire economy on two or three sectors is fundamentally unsustainable. Building people and building an environment to encourage people to work has to be prioritised. The long-term success of this country depends on its youth. Let us ensure that collectively we can create a holistic environment to ensure large-scale human capital growth.

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QUOTABLE Quote

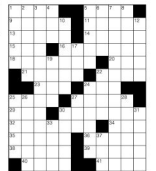


E.M. FORSTER

One person with passion is better than forty people merely interested.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | 29 Big galoot | 6 Valhalla VIP |
| 1 Massage target | 30 Tourney favorite | 7 1968 Beatles song |
| 5 Unruly crowds | 32 Come together | 8 Bubble shape |
| 9 Flock members | 34 Dos predecessor | 10 Wizard's concoction |
| 11 Make suitable | 35 Singer John | 12 Far from wordy |
| 13 Namelet word | 36 Big name in racing | 13 Rooster's mate |
| 14 Nouveau -- | 38 Was out | 19 This is one |
| 15 Put away | 39 "My Cousin Vinny" star | 22 Frat party sights |
| 16 Rodin work | 40 Valuable rocks | 24 Use a sponge on |
| 18 Genus sub-division | 41 Important times | 25 Watch parts |
| 20 Auditor's org. | | 26 Low of light |
| 21 Acrylic fiber | | 27 Lawn starter |
| 22 Petal's place | DOWN | 28 New York tribe |
| 23 Nearest star | 1 Great fall | 30 Colors |
| 24 Dripping | 2 Low quality | 31 Day in Hollywood |
| 25 Bogus | 3 1968 Beatles song | 32 Easy run |
| 27 Weary sounds | 5 Sushi choice | 37 Formerly known as |
| | 5 Slugger Rogers | |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

MATT SPICER
NEATLY TONAL
INERTLY ANGLE
DAY DAY GAMES
ALDA BEST
CODE FAST
TAB BARN
UTE DAY JOB
ROOM OWE
ONION ELEN
RINGS SAINT
SAGES BESS

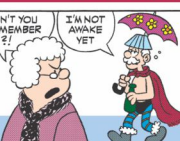
BEEBLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



BY MORT WALKER



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

