

The Closeted Centrist: When pragmatism is a problem

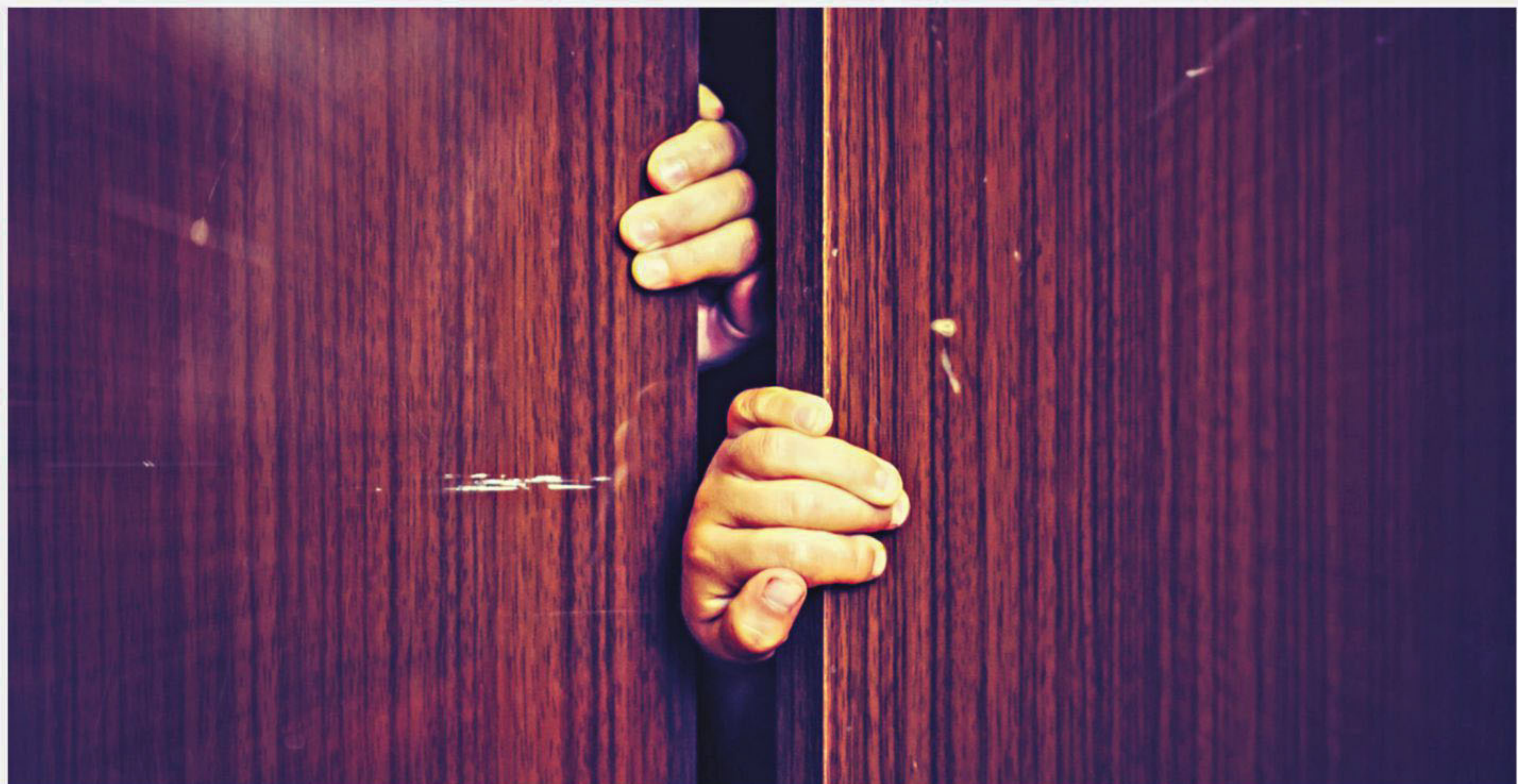
RABITA SALEH

"The empty vessel makes the loudest sound."
—William Shakespeare

The life of a centrist comes with its fair share of tribulations. The question of "Why people have to pick a side and then blindly ignore all other logical reasoning?" is a constant. The mind boggles at the general populace's supposed insistence on always sorting things in boxes of black or white, and then ignoring any hard facts that may influence their categorisation.

We find ourselves going through comment threads, or "flame-wars" as we term them, burdened with the knowledge of the exact type of people and comments that we are likely to come across, yet unable to let go of the simmering hope that there is still some sense left in the world. Every time we fail to locate that voice of reason we hope will exist, that hope dwindles to a lower simmer.

In desperation we find ourselves typing out an entire paragraph of long arduous flawless logic of why every single person there has their heads on backwards. We articulate references and cold reasoning in order to persuade them all that the grey exists, that it's the best solution to all their questions; that if only they listened, if only they saw, if only they understood, things could be a lot simpler. When it comes to dangerously controversial topics, the solutions are varied, and none will fit all. Yet people insist on applying formulae that have worked for others to their situations without context. All we want is a reasonable debate, and yet that, of all things, is what counts as intolerable to



these people. We type it all out in a haze of adrenaline and conviction in the sense of our words.

And then, instead of pressing enter, we press backspace. We decide to give up on this specific part of humanity and move on with our lives. We do this because we know that a comment thread is not the place to change people's opinions. These people are not the kinds who are ready or willing to have their opinions changed. The louder they "speak", the further they cement their will to remain ignorant of

anyone's views but their own.

After you find yourself going through this ritual a few times, you realise something else. Maybe you aren't alone. Maybe, there are others, others who do the same, others who have also realised what you've realised. Keyboard justice achieves nothing. As you come to that realisation, the mystery of all those times you failed to locate a reasonable voice in the comments is solved. The people at the two extremes of all spectra are the ones who engage in these debates. The others, the ones whose

opinions lie in the convenient space between these two extremes are the ones who know to keep silent in the face of futility. As you think of these other closeted centrists, of you, and I, the hope that there are still reasonable people on this planet, that was simmering dangerously low, burns that much brighter.

Rabita Saleh is a perfectionist/workaholic. Email feedback to this generally boring person at rabitasaleh13@gmail.com

Things we'll miss once the World Cup is over

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

As the stage in Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium is all set to draw the curtains over another hair-raising World Cup season, we prepare ourselves to bid farewell to the festivity that came along with it. With just a few games left to be played, let's look at the things that we will surely miss as we wait four more years for the curtains to be unravelled once again in Qatar.

The Wavin' Flags: From the roof tops to the balconies of every building, from the bonnets of our cars to the front of almost every rickshaw, the flags of our favourite teams stood high throughout this world cup. These flags are the key components to the festivity of the game. For now, the flags will be hoisted down and folded with care inside our cupboards, waiting for the next season. Until the next time we see hawkers out on the streets carrying the flags on their long stands, we wait.

The Common Topic: Every now and then, we as a nation are tied together with popular topics of interest. But unfortunately, most of these topics aren't



of the joyous nature. The World Cup topic is completely different. It gives us something to talk about, something to start a conversation with. Nothing else can give us happiness and a single topic to chat over at the same time. In fact, the

topic becomes so prevalent that many of us end up changing our pick up line from "ki koro" to "khela dekhso".

The 'Seasonal' Fans: First of all, there is nothing wrong with being a seasonal football fan. After all, that is what the

World Cup is all about. Whether you're a pundit or someone who watches football once in every four years, we are all the same. Having said that, these fans will be missed as they along with their often outrageous social media posts are about to disappear from the face of this world for the next four years or so.

The Banter: Banter is an inseparable part of this game we all love. Football rivalries have been shaped and built around such banter over the years. Every World Cup, we get more material to rub into the faces of our rival team and its supporters. This will be highly missed once the tournament ends.

The Tears: The beautiful game is often the most tear jerking one. The sorrow of having your team eliminated from the tournament is something that destroys many of us emotionally. Some teams make an early exit, while a few make it far but yet not far enough to lift that prestigious trophy. Some tears are of joy as miracles happen in the very last second sparing us a heart attack. With the end coming nearer, some of us may have shed our last tears for this World Cup.