Mirror, mirror on the wall, who are we laughing at?

A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

Unless we learn to objectively assess our roles in creating such a marketplace and act proactively to dismantle this system, more women will be turned into commodities.

SOME of us are born entertainers. It can be a boon or a curse, as the fallen star Pori Moni is now finding out. Even in her darkest hour, she has her audience held in rapt attention. People are keenly waiting to know what happens next. Every tiny detail is gratefully accepted, and summarily dissected.

A "prostitute", a "derailed woman", a "seductress", an "addict"—these are just some of the adjectives that are being thrown around to brand this Dhallywood actress. Narratives surrounding her so-called salacious life have been dominating both social media and conventional forums ever since her very publicly-played-out arrest on August 4 by the country's elite security force, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), on allegations of hoarding liquor, drugs and making pornographic videos.

Some civil society members have tried to assess the situation from an objective perspective—albeit cautiously—but the majority of the public seemed to have condemned Pori Moni for her "immoral" vagaries. While all the speculations surrounding what she did or did not do make for juicy gossip, perhaps it would be more worthwhile to reflect on the situation from a broader perspective and understand how our society commodifies women—packaged for the consumption of those who can afford it. Shamsunnahar Smriti, her real name, was an orphan living an ordinary life in a remote district, far away from the glitz and glamour of Dhaka's entertainment industry. She came to the capital in 2011, secured an offer for modelling, and then got her film break on the silver screen. She became a popular face in the Bangladesh showbiz industry, earned a good living, lived a lavish life in an upscale neighbourhood, and made some influential friends.

Things had been going pretty smooth for her until she ruffled up some influential feathers in recent months, which turned some of her friends into foes. Then, suddenly, she became the conniving villain of a criminal plot. She was, we were told, part of a blackmailing racket—a group of "loose" women—who allegedly seduced unsuspecting men with their wily charms and made comprising videos and then blackmailed the helpless victims into paying for their silence.

Pori Moni at Dhaka CMM court on August 10, 2021. STAR FILE PHOTO

While the wider society is accusing Pori Moni of being immoral—somehow women facing legal issues often end up being questioned for their perceived lack of morality and judged guilty even before a court verdict—nobody is talking about what aided her transformation. Even if the stories being told about her are true, there is a clear demand in our society for the services of people like Pori Moni. We have all by now various snippets of the sleazy underbelly of the supply side, but how is it that the demand side is missing completely from the spotlight? Who are on the demand side? This is a question that must be asked if we want to make a fair assessment of the still-largely-one-sided narrative we are being fed.

Consider this: if Pori Moni's life were a movie plot, she could have been both its protagonist and antagonist, depending on the lens we look at her through. This could have been the story of a young woman's journey through life—the story of a self-made woman who has overcome myriad social struggles to achieve her dreams of being at the centre of limelight, but was led astray or victimised by a group of powerful men for whom she had become a nuisance. After all, in a male-dominated society, who likes a woman who questions the acts and wills of powerful men—let alone her patrons—or alleges them of attempted rape!?

Or, that plot could have been about a scheming temptress, who entraps innocent men with her devilish wiles and leads them into a life of dark temptations for her own nefarious ends. It is all a matter of perspective: the plots we choose to consume, the discourses we indulge in.

But right now, instead of turning Pori Moni's life into a circus—digging down deep into the lurid details, watching the leaked personal videos and making dirty jokes about her—perhaps we should be asking ourselves about the contours of the narrative we are choosing to indulge in at our dinner tables, in our living rooms, in our newsrooms, on our social media feeds. Why are these shaped the way they are?

There have been many women entertainers who have been in this situation before, enduring a harsh media trial, scathing social slanders, and there will be more in the future. This is how it is. This is how the social system operates.

If we want to break this vicious cycle of exploitation, we need to take a good hard look at ourselves first. Unless we learn to objectively assess our roles in creating such a marketplace and act proactively to dismantle this system, more women will be turned into commodities. More women will become victims of our flawed social perspectives.

Whichever narrative route our own personal Pori Moni movie is leaning towards—Pori Moni the fallen star, or Pori Moni the vile seductress—it is a tragedy either way. It is a very human tragedy, feeding off human frailties that have been the inspiration for ancient bards and modern novelists alike. But before we jump to conclusions, perhaps we could take a moment from our busy lives and ask ourselves: aren't we also somehow culpable?

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @tasneem_tayeb

PROJECT SYNDICATE

A Dangerous New Variant of Populism

MICHAEL BURLEIGH

MOST of the "geopolitical" threats, real or confected, that capture headlines in the West nowadays are exogenous—emanating from China, Russia, Iran, and so forth. But others lie within the world's democracies. Among these are the US Republican Party's embrace of Trumpian authoritarianism, which is eroding the country's democracy, and the possibility that new unanticipated variants of populism will take hold around the world.

One new variant of populism might involve hostility toward both costly green policies and vaccination against Covid-19. And it would be driven by a combination of genuine concerns about pocketbook issues and the kinds of conspiratorial lunacy that thrive on the internet.

Anti-green populism is particularly likely to flourish in the more fossil fuel-dependent economies of Central and Eastern Europe, in response to the European Union's new strategy for reducing greenhouse gases by 55 percent by 2030. Indeed, the so-called Fit for 55 plan would seem to call for the wholesale remodelling of these economies.

Consider Poland, which generates 70 percent of its energy from coal and receives additional supplies through a gas pipeline from Russia. Coal is especially abundant in southern Poland, where it is used to fuel giant power stations that provide industry with cheap electricity.

If it is to meet EU emissions targets, Poland is going to have to decarbonise more extensively and rapidly than anyone else. The government recently set an ambitious goal of reducing the proportion of coal in the country's energy mix from 70 percent to 11 percent by 2040. But that will have massive implications for mining, which employs some 100,000 heavily unionised and politically influential workers.

Moreover, with little wind or sunshine in winter, Poland is ill-suited for renewable-energy deployment. Instead, it has set its sights on "solutions" like nuclear power and the "Baltic Pipe" gas pipeline—subsidised by the European Commission to the tune of USD 251 million—to import gas from Norway via Denmark.

But neither of these options has gone down well in Germany. If Poland's efforts to align with EU policy put it at loggerheads with key neighbours and trade partners, it will be damned if it does and damned if it doesn't. The conditions are set for a thriving anti-green populism.

Yet this populist threat is hardly limited to Central and Eastern Europe. Opposition to climate action could just as easily spread to Europe's more established democracies if costly items like air source heat pumps and smart metres are rendered technologically redundant, or if vehicles with internal combustion engines are forced off the road by government fiat.

In fact, France was briefly the epicentre of an anti-green backlash in Europe, with the rambunctious *gilets jaunes* (yellow vest) protests that began in 2018. Angry citizens who rely on cars to get around their country districts eventually forced President Emmanuel Macron to rescind a new tax on diesel fuel. They had a point, considering that the infrastructure for more expensive electric vehicles simply does not exist in France (or anywhere else).

More recently, a significant share of this cohort seems to have joined with militant anti-vaxxers (many of them on the far right) who have adopted various libertarian poses propagated on the internet. This confluence of grievance may have traction, especially as more conventional populist movements have begun to take a battering, notably in Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and elsewhere. People have grown weary of authoritarianism, corruption, and divisiveness during the pandemic—a crisis that was grossly mishandled by populist governments, in particular. The likes of Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán are the elite, not some anti-systemic opposition to it.

Demonstrators in Paris protest against the anti-Covid-19 measures announced by French President Emmanuel Macron, in July 2021. PHOTO: REUTERS

Opposition to vaccination is as old as inoculation itself. The English city of Leicester used to be a hotbed of it. In 1885, 100,000 people there attended an anti-vaccination rally, complete with a child's coffin and an effigy of Edward Jenner, the pioneer of smallpox vaccination. Such movements were often based on a fusion of fundamentalist Christianity (which opposed interference in God's work) and suspicion of powers being arrogated by the modern state, which made vaccination mandatory for infants or children entering school.

The only unique contribution of our current age is the role of social media in amplifying the views of crank medics and scientists, as happened after *The Lancet* published (and then retracted) Andrew Wakefield's false claims that there is a link between the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism.

Nowadays, any online search of vaccines immediately reveals a disproportionate number of anti-vaccination sites, as well as pernicious guff claiming that the barring of unvaccinated youth from nightclubs is akin to Jews being sent to Auschwitz. Versions of that analogy have long appeared in the British *Daily Telegraph*, courtesy of its dogmatically libertarian commentators, who have made common cause with the likes of the Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), Italy's homegrown fascist movement. Any enemy of the EU is their best friend by default. Although the overwhelming majority of Italians support the government's green pass initiative, the Fratelli's leader, Giorgia Meloni, loudly does not.

In the homeland of Louis Pasteur, such militants are particularly exercised by the government's vaccine-passport rules,which exclude the unvaccinated from concerts, cinemas, museums, swimming pools, theatres, and restaurants where 50 people or more are gathered. More trouble may ensue if nurses (only 50-58 percent of whom are vaccinated) are prevented from working until they receive two doses; or if railway workers raise objections about having to enforce vaccine-passport rules on local and commuter trains. No job should involve the risk of being headbutted or punched in the face.

It was perhaps inevitable that the parasitic populist right would latch onto these issues. Although Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally party has typically hedged her bets, her former right-hand man, Florian Philipott, was very vocal at the biggest of the many anti-vaccine rallies in July. These are growing in size by the month, with 200,000 attending the first one in August. This "movement" flourishes among the semi-educated in small towns and in cities like Marseille, where obdurate *pastis* guzzlers and religious immigrant communities also contribute to its ranks.

However, it is worth stressing that 62 percent of the silent majority in France supports vaccine passports, and 70 percent want all hospital and care-home workers to be fully vaccinated. That is probably why Macron has stuck to his guns: he hopes that rationality will prevail and that any increase in economic activity will benefit his campaign in 2022. Let's hope he is right.

Still, one can see the outlines of an emerging political fusion between irrationality and pocketbook issues. As anti-vaxxers and anti-greens join forces, any number of stray populist demagogues might seek to lead such a movement. That underscores the importance of UN initiatives such as Team Halo, which has brought together scientists to publicise the importance of vaccines, especially on social media platforms.

Michael Burleigh, a senior fellow at LSE Ideas, is the author, most recently, of *Populism: Before and After the Pandemic* (Hurst 2021).

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়
গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ,গাজীপুর।

"দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

স্মারক নং-গাজীঃ মেট্রোঃ পুঃ/প্রশাঃ/২০২১/১৯৩৫/ই

তারিখঃ- ১২/০৮/২০২১ খ্রিঃ।

"The Public procurement Act-2006 & The Public Procurement Regulation-2008/2010" (সংশোধনী-২০১৬) অনুযায়ী ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরে গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ সদস্যদের ইউনিফর্ম সেলাই কাজ বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্তে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে প্রতিযোগীতা মূলক উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর ঃ-০৩/২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বৎসর।

১.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	ঃ	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ
২.	সংস্থা	ঃ	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
৩.	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার, গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ।
৪.	সংগ্রাহক সত্ত্বার জেলা	ঃ	গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ।
৫.	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
৬.	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	ঃ	রাজস্ব খাত।
৭.	দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাপ্তির সর্বশেষ তারিখ	ঃ	০৭/০৯/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
৮.	প্রাক দরপত্র সভা	ঃ	৩০-০৮-২০২১ খ্রিঃ।
৯.	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	০৮/০৯/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ সময় বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১০.	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	০৮/০৯/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ সময় বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্র দাতা বা মনোনীত প্রতিনিধিদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্র সমূহ খোলা হবে।
১১.	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর অফিস ও ঠিকানা	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়, গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ।
১২.	দরপত্র প্রাপ্তির স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়, গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ।
১৩.	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়, গাজীপুর-এ রক্ষিত দরপত্র বাক্সে।
১৪.	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়, গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ।
১৫.	দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা ও দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা প্রদান করিতে হইবে	ঃ	(ক) নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র, (খ) হালনাগাদ নবায়নকৃত ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, (গ) টিআইএন নম্বরসহ হালসন পর্যন্ত আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদপত্র, (ঘ) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র, (ঙ) ব্যাংক কর্তৃক আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতার সনদপত্র, (চ) অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র, (সকল দলিলাদির ফটোকপি দাখিল করা হলে অবশ্যই প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড অফিসার কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত হতে হবে)
১৬.	দরপত্র আহবানকারী	ঃ	পুলিশ কমিশনার, গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, গাজীপুর।

কাজের বিবরণ

ক্রঃ নং	লট নং	কাজের বিবরণ	সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরৎযোগ্য)	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমান (ফেরৎযোগ্য)	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়
১.	০১	গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ সদস্যদের ইউনিফর্ম সেলাই কাজ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছর।

বিশেষ জ্ঞাতব্য ঃ

(ক) ঠিকাদার ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্ত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাডে আবেদন পূর্বক বর্ণিত স্থান হতে পত্রিকায় বিজ্ঞাপন প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে ০৭/০৯/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয়/সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
(খ) সর্বক্ষেত্রে প্রচলিত দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬ ও দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট রেগুলেশন- ২০০৮/২০১০ (সংশোধনী-২০১৬) বিধিমালা অনুসরণ করা হবে।
(গ) দরপত্র সিডিউলে অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী বিস্তারিতভাবে বর্ণনা করা হবে।
(ঘ) দরপত্রদাতা কর্তৃক সিডিউলে বর্ণিত সকল শর্তাবলী অবশ্যই পালন করতে হবে।
(ঙ) নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময়ের পর সিডিউল বিক্রয় ও দরপত্র গ্রহন করা হবে না।
(চ) কোন কারণবশতঃ দরপত্র খোলার দিন অফিস বন্ধ থাকলে পরবর্তী দিবসে একই সময়ে এবং নিয়মে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে।
(ছ) দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল বা গ্রহনের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

(ফারজানা ইসলাম)
বিপি-৭৮০৬১১৪২২৪
উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (লজিস্টিক্স এন্ড ট্রান্সপোর্ট)
পক্ষে/পুলিশ কমিশনার
গাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, গাজীপুর।

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