INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE

We must embrace diversity for inclusive prosperity

A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

THE space for tolerance is shrinking in most parts of the world. From major conflicts to the more subtle acts of discrimination, minority groups, refugees and marginalised communities are facing persecution and suppression in many forms, shapes and scales.

From turning away boats carrying desperate refugees—leaving them at the mercy of the unforgiving seas—to premeditated attacks on places of worship and violence against targeted religious and ethnic communities, the world is witnessing an alarming increase in conflicts in recent years. And most of these conflicts can be attributed to an all-pervasive, ever-present problem: intolerance.

Bangladesh is not immune to this social illness: in the last decade alone, there have been multiple cases of attacks on minority communities, with the most recent incident unfolding in October this year, marring the Durga Puja celebrations in the country.

In view of this situation, states and governments need to reflect on and identify the factors that are causing the rise in intolerance, and work towards minimising them.

Reduced access to resources due to climate change, rising authoritarianism and far-right ideologies, increasing fundamentalist sentiments, unchecked human rights abuses, and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic could be some of the key factors that are clouding people's empathy and judgement, and leading them towards a myopic worldview.

Extreme weather conditions, leading to droughts, salinity of cultivable land, land degradation, loss of productivity, frequent floods, and rising sea levels, among others, are making natural resources scarce. This is resulting in a number of factors that are triggering tension and creating scope for intolerance.

For instance, if agricultural land is impacted due to climate change in a region leading to limited productivity, the people in that area are going to bear the economic brunt of it. Many would lose their means of livelihood. There will also be food scarcity in the region due to the lack of agricultural production. Such scenarios lead to frustration, anger and hopelessness. The affected, deprived people might become more intolerant and hostile towards the others, and would be more disposed to engage in conflicts.

A Yale climate change communication blog titled "Does Climate Change Increase Risk of Conflict?" sheds further light on this: "Additionally, different groups are affected differently by climate change. Groups with pre-existing grievances—especially grievances related to ethnic discrimination or colonialist histories—are more likely to turn to violent conflict. Politically marginalised groups in lower socioeconomic brackets are less able to adapt to the effects of climate change and will thus have more grievances."

Not only the minority communities, but the majority might also become more prone to engaging in conflicts, as groups vie to establish control over lands and productive resources as these become scarce. It is likely that the majority would grow intolerant and exert pressure on the minority communities, leading to conflicts.

Similarly, the rise of the far-right nationalist ideas and authoritarianism are also directly resulting in intolerance. Authoritarianism by definition has very limited room for tolerance, as no diversion from obedience to authority is tolerated. These forms of government are non-pluralist in nature and have zero tolerance for dissent. Similarly, far-right ideologies—on the rise in many parts of the world—are also highly intolerant of diversity as the right-wing nationalists believe in the "purity" and "supremacy" of the communities they represent, and strongly emphasise hierarchical relationship between groups. They look down upon people belonging to other races and ethnicities, and if needed, resort to violence to suppress the voices of the minorities.

Diversity is key to growth and intolerance is the root of destruction—people at all layers of society need to understand it and internalise it. SOURCE: **JAVIER TELLEZ**

Because of the rise in such conservative, extreme political beliefs and their consumption by the people, democracy is becoming weak, human rights are becoming more prone to abuse and violation, and certain groups are playing the religion card to manipulate the suppressed populations to further breed intolerance and violence.

In a world where we talk about diversity and inclusion, the growing intolerance of various groups towards the minorities and marginalised communities bodes ominous portents for everyone. The spike in conflicts triggered by intolerance, leading to loss of lives and livelihoods, sends a very wrong message to humanity: that people are losing their human values, their capacity to empathise, and their mental ability to acknowledge, appreciate and embrace what is unique, what is different.

This increase in intolerance depicts a picture of a society that is moving towards anarchy and destruction, because without diversity, how can we evolve as a civilisation? How can we grow?

If we continue to subscribe to authoritarian, right-wing and fundamentalist ideas, we will never be able to harness tolerance. While external factors—such as climate change and the rise of fascism on a global scale—will try to take away from our ability to share and make our worldview one-dimensional, and while vested questers will try to take advantage of these circumstances by feeding the people extremist ideas, it will be unfortunate if we fall for these traps.

In democratic countries such as Bangladesh, India and the US, where tolerance is waning, the governments need to take this issue seriously and strengthen the democratic institutions, the statutory bodies, relevant public sector institutions and human rights organisations in order to combat this menace. By strengthening these bodies, the government will be empowering the diverse communities and reinforcing their rights. And this will also act as a warning for the groups that try to destabilise social equilibrium by instigating and exacerbating intolerance.

At the individual level, we must focus on the richness that diversity brings. We must champion the fact that diversity is an integral and indispensable part of our social fabric. We must respect diversity, and we need to allow diversity to flourish to facilitate a holistic growth of the human race. And in order to do all these, we must become more tolerant towards groups and communities that are different from us, that are unique. Let this be our realisation and commitment on the International Day for Tolerance.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*.
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The urgent need to battle the growing rise of hatred

ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

MY recent open letter to Hindu brothers and sisters published in this newspaper was accompanied by a photograph that is seared in my memory.

Two Hindu women stand amid the destruction wrought by vicious religious bigots. On the left, a woman is crying inconsolably. It is the other woman on the right, comforting the crying woman, whose image continues to haunt me.

Her eyes are dry. Her piercing gaze, fixed somewhere on the horizon, is filled with horror, pain and utter incomprehension at the barbarity of human beings.

This image is a distillation of the terrible havoc that hatred can wreak.

All over the world, purveyors of hatred are having a field day. In South Asia, vicious sectarian hatreds manifest in many horrible ways, and defenceless minorities bear the brunt of the violence. Whether it's Muslims in India, Ahmadiyyas and Shias in Pakistan, Shia Hazaras in Afghanistan, Tamils in Sri Lanka, or Rohingyas in Myanmar—what makes all these attacks so reprehensible is that the attackers are members of the majority community.

In a strange, toxic inversion of reality, a venomous majoritarian sense of victimhood and grievance is fanning the flames of hatred worldwide.

The seeds of this hatred may be in grievances real or perceived, but a sinister set of circumstances have caused it to mushroom into a full-blown, global crisis. Sometimes, it is petrodollar-fuelled extremist Islamist groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda, and a variety of fellow travellers like al-Shabab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and ISIS-K in Afghanistan. (The Taliban itself has Pakistani military intelligence's fingerprints all over it.)

More alarming, however, is the hatred fomented in efforts that are not covert or clandestine at all. Opportunistic politicians from majority groups gleefully fan the flames of fear and draw rich political dividends, creating a frenzy of panic and fear in the majority community, with dire consequences for terrified minorities. When hatred has a majoritarian edge, it becomes doubly dangerous. Now the levers of democratic power can be deployed to condone—if not legitimise—hatred.

We see chilling examples of this in India and Myanmar. In India, brazen, sectarian remarks and vicious acts of violence are often greeted by a ruling party with what may be politely called callous nonchalance. In Myanmar, an inspiring leader who earned the world's admiration for her courageous leadership against oppression has lost her sheen after her refusal to acknowledge the plight of an aggrieved minority.

Gone are the days when the West could cast a patronising eye on such developments. Like Covid-19, hatred is now a global pandemic.

In the US, where I live, one of my most distressing experiences in the recent past has been to witness all norms of civility in politics discarded scornfully. Former President Donald Trump is the first US president in history to refuse to concede after losing an election, and his debunked claims of a "stolen" election has, in a bizarre fashion, become a litmus test of loyalty for much of the Republican Party. As a slew of conservative outlets fan the flames of incendiary partisanship, hatred and violence are sure to follow.

In an article titled "Menace Enters the Republican Mainstream," *The New York Times* reports: "From congressional offices to community meeting rooms, threats of violence are becoming commonplace among a significant segment of the Republican Party. Ten months after rioters attacked the United States Capitol on January 6, and after four years of a president who often spoke in violent terms about his adversaries, right-wing Republicans are talking more openly and frequently about the use of force as justifiable in opposition to those who dislodged him from power."

It's not just the US. The debate over Brexit in Britain has been so acrimonious that it has divided friends and families. Right-wing, anti-immigrant parties which were once in the fringes are gaining strength in France and Germany.

I honestly believe that the restoration of comity is a vital global challenge that is no less urgent than battling climate change or reducing poverty and economic disparity.

In a strange, toxic inversion of reality, a venomous majoritarian sense of victimhood and grievance is fanning the flames of hatred worldwide.

The majority community must take a united stance to root out bigotry and hatred against the minorities, and to uphold equality and harmony in society. PHOTO: **STAR**

In 1994, Unesco marked the 125th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth with its proclamation of November 16 as the International Day for Tolerance. Unesco suggests five guidelines for battling intolerance: laws, education, access to information, individual awareness, and local solutions. All true, if a little facile.

We can make headway in tackling the menace of hatred if we address the underlying causes. It is important to recognise that a broad sense of socioeconomic apprehension has given an opening to bigots and political rascals. Those who profess an abiding belief in tolerance and humanity will need to get out of their comfort zones and take on the purveyors of hatred. This is actually a challenge, because the challenge to hatred has to come from within the groups that are poisoned by hatred of others. This is what Marxist sociologist Herbert Marcuse called an "immanent critique."

So in Bangladesh, it is the task of humane, pious Muslims to create a groundswell of opinion that makes it clear that violent attacks on innocent non-Muslims will be considered an attack on their reputation and beliefs. Or in the US, it is incumbent upon Republican leaders to join Wyoming Republican Congresswoman Liz Cheney, for instance, and say violence and disregard for the rule of law are anathema to democratic values.

Sure, it's a tough row to hoe. Cheney is treated more like a pariah than the brave hero that she is in this particular cause. We can draw inspiration from the great leaders of yesteryear who never moved from their commitment to tolerance.

Gandhi literally gave his life for his staunch belief in tolerance. His favourite Tagore song was "Jodi tor dak shuney keu na ashey tobey, ekla cholo re (If nobody responds to your call, then go forth alone)." Think of the US civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. He led African-Americans at a time of racist violence, when his people faced egregious racial discrimination, but he drew inspiration from Gandhi and refused to meet violence with violence. Think of South African leader Nelson Mandela, whose beatific smile and genial patrician mien was unsullied by the bitter experience of decades of incarceration, as well as terrible racist violence and institutionalised discrimination against black South Africans. Mandela steered his black-majority nation to freedom in a transition that was remarkably, almost magically, free of rancour.

People of goodwill have their work cut out.

How soon will we get there? I would like to cling to Tagore's credo: "*Manushey bishwas harano paap* (It is a sin to lose faith in man)." But the jaded, cynical soul that I am, my cautious optimism is closer to former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban's wry observation: "Men and nations do behave wisely, after all other alternatives have been exhausted."

Ashfaque Swapan is a writer and editor based in Atlanta, US.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
অধ্যক্ষের কার্যালয়
চট্টগ্রাম কলেজ, চট্টগ্রাম

College Education Development Project (CEDP)

Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.		
2	Agency	University Grants Commission/National University.		
3	Procuring entity name	Principal, Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.		
5	Procuring entity district	Chattogram.		
6	Invitation for	Procurement of Books and Journal for Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
7	Invitation Ref. No.	ctgcol/cedp/otm(g)/ift-01/2021		
8	Date	16/11/2021.		
KEY INFORMATION				
9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit).		
11	Development partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank.		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
12	Project code	224017200.		
13	Project name	College Education Development Project (CEDP).		
14	Tender Package No.	G-05.		
15	Tender package name	Procurement of Books and Journal for Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
16	Tender publication date	16/11/2021.		
17	Tender last selling date	05/12/2021, Time: 4.00pm.		
18	Tender closing date and time	06/12/2021, Time: 02.00pm.		
19	Tender opening date and time	06/12/2021, Time: 2.30pm.		
20	Selling tender document	Office of Principal, Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
	Receiving tender document	Address: Office of the Principal, Chittagong College, Chawkbazar, Chattogram.		
	Opening tender document	Office of Principal, Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
21	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	Shall not be held.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 3 (three) years *[years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper]*. 2. The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 01 (one) contract(s) successfully completed within the last 5 (five) years, each with a value of at least Tk 9.0 (nine) lakh [years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper]. 3. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be **Tk. 10.00** (ten) lakh. 4. At least 80% of the Books listed in the Section 6: Schedule of Requirements, are to be quoted (priced) by the tenderer in the Price Schedule (Form PG3A-4A) and correspond at least to 65% of the total package value. **For non-compliance of this requirement, tender shall be evaluated as non-responsive**. 5. Other criteria mentioned in Tender document.		
23	Brief description of goods or works	Supplying of Books of multiple subjects like History, Economics, Science, Literature etc.		
24	Brief description of related services	Related services shall be in accordance with Section 4: Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6: Schedule of Requirement.		
25	Tender document price	BDT 1,000.00 (one thousand) only.		
26	Tender name	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time (in days)
	Procurement of Books and Journal for Chittagong College, Chattogram.	Chittagong College, Chattogram.	25,000.00	60 days
27	Name of official inviting tender	Professor Mohammed Mujibul Hoque Chowdhury.		
28	Designation of official inviting tender	Principal, Chittagong College, Chattogram.		
29	Address of official inviting tender	Principal, Chittagong College, College Road, Chawakbazar, Chattogram.		
30	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 031-615007	Mobile: 01815697515	email: ctgcollege@yahoo.com
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.			

Professor Mohammed Mujibul Hoque Chowdhury
Principal, Chittagong College

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