

## **The Interim Government, Fairy Tales, and Ground Realities**

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My three and a half years old baby girl Raidah always loves to stay in her own fantasy world. Perhaps, all kids of her age group have their own dreamland where they enjoy most to stay in their golden part of lives. Raidah, few days ago, on a fine morning woke up from sleep and desperately requested me, 'Papa, please take me to the fairy land right now!' I wondered at her amazing desperation and so asked her, "Why? Why do you want to go to the fairy land?" In reply she asserted me with explanation at a stretch, "Don't you know Papa.... the fairy has magic stick? If I go there then the fairy will touch me with her stick and I will have wings on my back so that I can fly like them. Men have no magic stick. Is it fair papa? Only the fairy has magic stick!" I endorsed the logic of the innocent mind and asked her, "Then, how will you go to the fairyland as you have no wings now?". "Papa, please get me some gas balloons... both you and me will go to the fairyland riding the balloons." By this time I assured her buying gas balloons later on and succeeded in diverting the conversation which faded away her desperation for going to the fairy land. My analysis has suggested that the little Raidah must have fully assimilated the CDs on fairy tales, especially Thakur Mar Jhuli (classic fairy tales of Bengal) which stimulated her imaginative power to go to the fairyland.

When kids, during their blooming stage, thrive for fantasyland, we enjoy it appreciating their power of imagination. But if the thinking process of some matured members of the civil society is intermingled by the childish fantasy then we can not but deplore. Assessing the recent political fabrics of the country and views expressed in both electronic and printed media by some members of our civil society one may have sufficient reason to be frustrated. In the context of the changed political stage, some members of the civil society have started to believe that the army backed caretaker government would transform Bangladesh overnight into an ideal one as if the incumbent government had a magic wand! It seems that this segment of the civil society paradoxically believes that by dint of this magic wand the government would eventually transform everything from evil to good, everyone from devil to angel. And for this their continuous efforts to influence and guide the government without focusing on the ground realities are evident.

No doubt, misrules of the political governments, especially the government of the four-party alliances put the country's future at stake. All pervasive corruptions from top to bottom, nurturing of Islamic extremism, corrosion of all democratic institutions, and politicisation in all spheres of lives have portrayed the immediate past political government as the most evil government since the inception of Bangladesh. Unfortunately, subsequent caretaker government, headed by the partisan president Professor Iazuddin Ahmed totally failed to move the country towards any positive direction. Instead Prof. Iazuddin as a CG head, further put the country on the political razor edge by taking part in BNP's conspiracy. On the wake of this, our armed forces entered the scene as the saviour on the eve of the 11th January and installed the interim government headed by Dr. Fakruddin Ahmed. People of all walks of life appreciated this change as there was no other alternative to avoid the speculated violence and bloodshed if the scheduled election was to be held on the 22nd January. Since its inception, the interim government has been engaging itself in anti-corruption drive in line with the aspiration of the common people. Nabbing the bigwigs including the former prime minister's corrupt eldest son, national eyesore for corruption has given a ray of hope to the common people. In this context

many have advocated for total eradication of corruption from the country, assessing the situation with puritan eyes. They have also suggested that this time Bangladesh has to be transformed into a corruption-free society without assessing the ground reality. This is no doubt a sort of day dreaming. Corruption has spread its tentacles far and deep so much so that it would not be possible to uproot it overnight. Besides, in a realistic approach, if we analyse the present socio-economic structure of the country then we hardly expect to establish a corruption-free country without initiating a massive revolution with the people against the present capital-driven and market economy-oriented social order. Even, if we shed light on the developed world like the US and the UK, we will find the evidence of corruption there. For instance, declaration of fabricated lower turnover than actual one with a view to getting undue tax evasion by the business concerns is not uncommon in those countries also. At the policy level, on different international issues, the governments of those countries adopt corrupt policies even violating international laws. Should not the capturing of Iraq by the US in the name of so called 'war against terrorism' be regarded as a classic example of corruption?

The origin of multinational companies lies in most of the developed countries and they are nurturing and propagating the corrupt corporate culture worldwide with the blessings of their respective governments with a view to exploiting Third World countries and the consumer group in general. So, we need to be realistic when we are going to address corruption. The essence is instead of eradication of corruption we should give stress on reduction of corruption to a tolerable level. Very recently William B. Milam, former USA ambassador to Bangladesh in an article with reference to pervasive corruption in our country has pointed out that if Bangladesh succeeds to reduce the magnitude of corruption to 50 per cent, it would add at least 2 per cent to our GDP. If the government ensures to reach this target then this government definitely will be appreciated by the common people. I think, instead of eradication of corruption from society the government should set a target for reducing the corruption objectively considering the existing strength and socio-political constructs of the country. This is not wise to expect total success in anti-corruption drive with the help of massive corrupt government administration and the law enforcing agencies.

Regarding the ongoing drive against corruption, some issues have already surfaced in the mind of the conscious people. First of all, though it has been widely alleged that while in power centre some political leaders of the government had realised crores of Taka from the public funds, yet no single case has been filed by the government against them on charge of misappropriating public funds. Instead, the government has brought some of such leaders under trial on charge of extortion filed by individual people. The question is why the authority in power has failed to frame charge sheets against them for misappropriating the huge amounts of government money? Another relevant issue is that apparently it seems that some of the corrupt ministers and leaders (among whom some are retired army officials) of the last alliance government have been spared from the anti-corruption drive. This discriminated attitude has distorted the neutral feature of the government.

In some tales of Thakur Maar Jhuli we have found some time the King or the King's court feel that due to presence of Suo Rani and Duo Rani (two queens of the king), the kingdom has been suffering from enormous crisis. To get relief from this, these queens must be sent into exile. Recently, Bangladesh has witnessed similar melodrama centring Khaleda and Hasina, the apex leaders of the BNP and AL respectively. It can be extracted that some quarters of the government influenced by the suggestions of some members of the civil society have started to believe in the so-called 'minus two' theory which asserts that keeping these two women in the country, the much expected reformation of the two major political parties will not be possible. The idea of such exclusion policy has originated in Pakistan where

General Musharaff Hossain, just to fulfil his personal political ambition, succeeded to send two of his rivals Benazir Bhutto and Newaz Sharif into exile. Unfortunately, the proponents of this theory have failed to understand the socio-political construct of Bangladesh. In Pakistan, both civilian and military political forces are still from the feudal class. The common people there are very little concerned about politics. The situation in Bangladesh cannot be compared with Pakistan. Here in Bangladesh there is no established feudal class. Moreover, the common people in this country are more politically motivated due to historical reasons and they always uphold the spirit of democracy.

And so, the efforts of the government to keep the two leaders out of the country are widely deplored by the common people. Perhaps, evaluating the peoples' perception and partly due to international pressure the government has abandoned its 'minus two' theory at least for the time being. The major flaw of this theory is that like the fairy tales, it also portrays two women as the root of all evils of the country ignoring the ground realities of society.

**Moral:** Real life does not approve of the creation of castle in the air in solving any problem. Even the little Raidah, at her infancy, knows that no magic wand belongs to the man. So, the interim administration should abandon any sort of fantasy if it has any. Instead, it should work objectively to accomplish the prime task to offer the nation a free, fair and fruitful election within a reasonable timeframe.

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