

Like Ershad, Khaleda should come forward with a public apology

By

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Where is that uncompromising leader called Khaleda? Like Ershad, Khaleda owes an open public apology to the nation and needs to immediately weed out her party to clear its name as well as hers .

I have all along been a supporter of BNP and have always held an anti-AL stance. But, like thousands of other supporters, I have been totally dismayed, embarrassed and disappointed by the activities of BNP over the last five years during which it was in power only to establish its widespread humungous misrule and corruption. While it is true that not all in the party were equally corrupt and some were undoubtedly very honest, the fact that the rampant corruption took place under the watch of all in the top and none of them felt morally obliged or compelled to protest and quit, all must take the responsibility, share the blame and pay a price, big or small, light or heavy. Since the tradition of politics and political parties in Bangladesh is such that the party chief is all in all and has the last and only say in a dictatorial manner, everything must have happened under the watch of the then head of the government and the party chief Begum Zia, which means she knew and tolerated or connived at all this, which politically, if not legally, makes her equally guilty. If all the credit went to her for something good and positive in the party or the government, all the blame and shame also should go to her for the failures of her party and her government. Nazmul Huda, S Q Choudhury, Mosaddeq Ali Falu, Mirza Abbas, Toriqul Islam, Iqbal Mahmud, Amanullah Aman, Naser Rahman, Nasiruddin Pintu, Salahuddin Ahmad, Giasuddin Al Mamun, Hemayet Uddin Aurango and dozens more like them were always around her and very close to her. While I still do have some respect for some of them such as S Q Choudhury and Amanullah Aman (at least for their personal charisma, if nothing else), I am ashamed to see that they also were involved in corruption. Did Khaleda ever think of curbing, controlling and punishing these corrupt elements? Did she ever think of investigating the damaging rumors about her own son Tariq Rahman, whose allegedly direct or indirect influence, participation or patronage of the corrupt practices may have been the root of all the scandals that tainted and tarnished the image of BNP for ever? Yes, the AL rule before the immediate past BNP government was not free from corruption; it also used its power to spread its tentacles in massive corruption and unethical practices. That's why AL was voted out of power and the BNP-led alliance was voted in. Was it too much for BNP to understand this simple thing and was it too much for BNP to keep the honest faith of the honest people?

BNP, then, had a unique and wonderful chance to seize on the historic opportunity it was handed five years ago—an opportunity to nobly and selflessly serve the country and win the hearts and minds of the people on whom they could bank with more faith and confidence to be easily returned to power than their amassed black money with which they wrongly thought they would buy votes, if not the conscience of the innocent public in the next election. Instead of serving the country well, they let it go down the drains and made the people suffer intolerably from a dire shortage of water, electricity and fertilizer, from the unbearably high prices of the necessary commodities and from the utter mismanagement of many national projects and organizations including the near collapse of Biman. BNP has completely squandered

the rare opportunity it got through its two-third majority and, in its gross miscalculation, seemed to have far exceeded the level of corruption in the past either on record or in popular consensus and perception, to the level of literally robbing the country right and left most ruthlessly, unscrupulously and treacherously. Didn't all this happen under Begum Zia's watch? Wasn't all this to her knowledge as broad daylight? Whatever achievements BNP may have made in certain areas have been dwarfed, overshadowed and diminished by the mega scale of corruption it has been constantly accused of and the mega failures in providing some basic services to the people.

BNP made serious mistakes in not reaching out to B. Choudhury and Oli Ahmed and not paying much attention to other party veterans such as K M Obaidur Rahman, Lt. Gen. Shawkat Ali, Choudhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui and many others who were lying low during the past five years under the influence of the evil quarters and Begum Zia's own negligence. BNP should have kept the young miscreants and opportunists at bay and should have allowed only the honest and dynamic leadership from the young like Major Akhtaruzzaman to come forward.

While BNP is currently paying a heavy price for its misdeeds and miscalculations, there may still be time for Khaleda to take some drastic steps to do some crucial damage control and significantly retrieve and recover the image of the party which I am sure will soon go a long way to bring it back on its strong footing again. Such steps would include:

1. Clear and unequivocal expulsion of all the known culprits from the party without delay (with conditional expulsion of a few selected leaders only who may be given a second chance under careful observation);
2. Candid admission of wrong doings and mismanagement by the party leadership;
3. An unconditional public apology from Begum Zia to the nation for her mistakes in running the country and the government;
4. Bringing LDP leaders including especially Col. Oli Ahmed back to the party but not those morally dubious persons who meanly betrayed the party after having shamelessly enjoyed the fruits until the very last day such as Alamgir Kabir and the woman minister, no matter how honest they may apparently seem to be;
5. Bringing all the so far tested but low-lying inactive leaders to the front and instilling new and fresh blood and energy into the party;
6. Unequivocally and mostly uncritically congratulating and supporting the CG under Fakhruddin Ahmed for the steps it has already taken especially the separation of judiciary from the executive branch, the reconstitution of EC and ACC, and the going after the corrupt elements;
7. Maintaining an overall enlightened Islamic bias and strengthening the alliance with the Islamic parties by all means including talking Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Haque and Mesbahul Haque into the fold; and finally,
8. Declaration of a fine election manifesto to be implemented if voted to power.