

Creative destruction or destructive creation?

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Human beings are creative. Creativity is the mother of necessity. As human beings we have created new things and destructed old things in our journey of life from time immemorial. We have made changes to suit our needs and to respond to the problems confronting us. Transformative changes have been experienced in every field of our social and economic lives. For example, as civilisation progressed, we have transitioned from hunting to agrarian society, from agrarian to the industrial society and today's economies in many countries are mostly based on the production of services as opposed to manufacturing and agriculture.

As regards the governance of a country or political system, we have seen many forms of government - monarchy, democracy, communism, socialism, dictatorship and what not. In the past, many countries were governed by absolute monarchy. The monarch's sayings were the law that had to be obeyed by the subjects.

The emperor of France Louise XIV once said: "I am the state". This can be construed to mean that everything began and ended with him. There was no procedure, no judiciary or legislature, and no deliberations for making executive decisions. The emperor can order for a person to be arrested for whatever reason. He can decide to go to war. He can make and change laws and repeal them on a whim.

The French Revolution destroyed the old system of absolute monarchy and helped develop a more democratic polity based on liberty, equality and fraternity. In Britain, democratic rule generally emerged through a process of evolution and the present Westminster system is more or less reflected in the governing systems of many parliamentary democracies in the world, such as in India.

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 destroyed the old system based on Czarist tyranny and capitalism and created a governing system based on socialism.

The term "creative destruction" can be applied to both political and economic systems. Even in the field of technology and scientific innovation, we can use this term to mean that an old technology is destroyed to create a new technology – an example being the analogue technology which is becoming obsolete to pave the way for the digital technology. Any such change brings in 'new value' which is regarded by the members of the society as being useful.

The current and emerging political situation in Bangladesh appears to develop into a transformational change in the body politic of the country. Debates and deliberations on issues are wholesome in a democracy. Everybody has a right to put a viewpoint. Similarly others have a right to differ with a viewpoint on any issue affecting the society. Both the Government and the Opposition are supposed to play a constructive role so that the debates do not turn into chaos and violence.

Parliamentary democracy is also called a "responsible government" meaning that the Government is accountable to the people for its decisions and actions. Lack of this accountability can make a government a 'tyrant' to the utter disregard to the will and aspirations of the majority of the citizens of a country. If the opposition does not behave responsibly and take on a constructive role in times of national crisis, it can also add fuel to the flame.

In general, politicians in many developing countries provide lip service to the people and are often found to be self-seeking without considering the interest of general public in relation to political, social, economic and cultural development.

All are equal in the eye of law in a truly democratic society. Any crimes committed by a person or group of persons must be dealt with according to the law of the land and justice must be dispensed promptly without hindrance or undue interference from any quarters. This is a primary condition for social justice for all.

Problems may start when some people consider themselves as ‘more equal’ than ‘equals’ , which ultimately results in the abuse of state power, excessive use of discretionary authority and rampant corruption. This has the potential for a governing party to lose the moral ground and as a result, confidence of the people in the way the country is governed is lost. In other words, the people lose the trust they have reposed in the government through elections.

The famous poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz was imprisoned in Pakistan during the 1950s for his belief in communism and leftist ideals. From the prison he used to write letters to his friends and family. In one of his letters, he wrote, “I understand the pettiness, the preoccupation with small grievances that seem to occupy the universe, the oblivion to larger impersonal issues, the selfishness and the self-pity, the spitefulness and the temper, the silliness and the servility, spells of paralysis and feverish activity – all this is the usual concomitant of suppressed and confined living and not very easy for free people to understand”. At issue here is the conflict between free thinking and servility. Servile attitude and behaviour makes us blind and weak and stands in the way of finding the truth and reconciliation.

What do the key players in the present-day game want to achieve? Fishing in the troubled water or creating a new society based on democracy in its real sense, rule of law and social justice for all? A reality check is a sine quo non, but who will do this?

I will conclude my piece of opinion with a poem written by Habib Jalib (a progressive, leftist and humanist poet of Pakistan) on the brutality and atrocities perpetrated by the Pakistani army during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

Mohabbat golionsey bo rahey ho

Watan ka chehra khoon sey dho rahey ho

Guman tumko key rasta katraha hai

Yaqin mujhko keh manzil kho rahey ho

[You are spreading love with bullets
And washing the face of the country with blood.
You are under the illusion that you are reaching your goal
But I believe you are losing your destination.]

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