

Real face of secularism in Bangladesh

By Md Abdun Nafi

In an agitated response to a question posed to him by a journalist from Ekattor TV, former captain of the Bangladesh national cricket team and present Awamileague Leader Mr. Rakibul Hasan baulked, “They are Hindus, they are agents of the Indian High Commissions, these **** (indecent word) are enemies in our own house...”

Mr Rakibul Hasan’s statement is symbolic to a certain extent. For the millions of Muslims residing in this country, have similar reservations. They think Hindus are agents, pimps of India. Everyone must have heard the story of the ‘red ant and the black ant’ at least once during their school days. I was told that Hindus were the red ants and Muslims were the black ants. In fact one of my lecturers even taught us that – “Hindu students are unclean and unhygienic”. But the Hindu students enrolled in my school were quite hygienic and ‘clean’ fellows.

Once there was a Hindu principal in charge of a well reputed school in Chittagong. There was a student one time who had trouble enrolling there. Frustrated by those adversities one of the student’s parents, a well-educated individual and someone I know personally, came out and complained to me, “When did Hindus grow so much in stature while living in this country?

So according to this highly educated person, Hindus in Bangladesh should be mute, dumb and deadpan vegetarians. And one poke in the right spot should be enough to send them running for their lives to India. Mr Rakibul Hasan’s interview also had another important viewpoint. For at one stage Mr Rakibul Hasan said, “It will become difficult for that journalist to live in Dhaka.”

Now that last statement implies that it shouldn’t be too difficult a task to chase Hindus away from a certain area (or country more like it). Consider the following warning issued by Minister Khondoker Musharraf just a few days ago, “If anyone even dares to eye Faridpur, I will pull his eyes out”. Which means if a ‘non-Muslim’ in Dhaka city, Faridpur or anywhere in the country really decides to protest against any form of racism he has suffered against, or tries to report any influential individual, he will have his eyes gouged out and will be banished from the city of Dhaka. And that is why we tend to find regular reports on newspapers, where Hindu emigrants seem to go ‘missing’ from places, whenever an influential Muslim is in need to buy or acquire a piece of land or property.

Meanwhile even an army major resorted to deliver a dire warning to all the aboriginals settled in Bangladesh, “It will take only a month to wipe out all aboriginals”.

That in fact is not too far from the truth. Aboriginals have been left toothless and defenseless for a while now after promises of a ‘peace treaty’ to be made, something which never materialised. If there were ever a group of people who would have taken a stand against this the religious oppression carried out in this country, it might have been the aboriginals. And now they are left in a limbo and have nothing. So as such how long do you think it would take for our “brave”, heavily fortified army to discipline these toothless aboriginals?

The egotistic megalomaniac who threatened the aboriginals above also referred to them as ‘thappa’. That is how aboriginals are perceived to be from the viewpoint of a major in the Bangladesh army. And someone like Mr Raqibul Hasan, a man amongst those who champion the ideals of freedom fighters, thinks that all non-Muslims are agents of India.

So, can you now see the secular and non-sectarian face of Bangladesh?