

Violent Islamism and Bangladesh - Avijit Roy's murder: No country for atheists

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The rise of violent Islamism has made Bangladesh a hard place for minorities.

A couple of Islamists waited for Avijit Roy as the founder of the atheist blog site "Mukto-mona" (free mind) was going back to his Dhaka University campus home from the ongoing Ekushey Book Fair. They stopped the cycle rickshaw, dragged Roy down, and began hacking him with machetes. His wife Rafida jumped to protect him. Roy bled to death in moments. A profusely bleeding Rafida cried for help. People did come to her aid, after the killers had left. One fled towards the bus stand, the other towards the Suhrawardy Udyan. The Islamists had drawn blood. Once again. In February 2004, fair free-thinker writer Humayun Azad was killed after he came out the same Ekushey fair.

In February 2013, blogger Rajib Haider was hacked to death near his home in Mirpur, Dhaka. They were all atheists who were warned and then eliminated by Islamist radicals. Roy, an engineer, was a naturalised US citizen. Shafiur Rahman Farabi, a virulent Jamaati, had warned in a public post on Facebook, "Avijit Roy lives in America and so, it is not possible to kill him right now. He will be murdered when he comes back." Roy came back. Jamaati Islamists killed him. Farabi had warned Rajib Haider in a similar fashion and killed him in a similar attack. He was arrested and released on bail.

Atheists are soft targets who don't group and retaliate with violence. Religionists do not like atheists much because the latter question the existence of god. The fundamentalists among them hate atheists and kill them to protect their god's honour.

There is so much bloodshed in the name of religion that once unperturbed atheists have become vocal. The new atheist actively denounces religion because the days of benign disregard are over. The atmosphere is toxic with malignant ideologies pervading peaceful societies. Religion in general is weaker than ever and religious fanaticism is more aggressive than ever. Atheists are aggressive too, but words are all they have. They think of religions as ideas and counter them with their own.

They have questions. Religion has answers. A book or books full of answers. If it is written in the book, it is believed as the truth. The religious fundamentalists are so sure of the written word, that they fear the written word. This is why they fear atheists, especially those who write books. Because if everything written in one book is true, what if everything written in another turned out to be, too! They kill atheists when they find time from rioting against theists of a different colour.

Thankfully, only a tiny minority of religious people are fundamentalists. The vast majority does believe in god and the book. They gloss over the content, because they are content just being believers. They do not rise to defend their gods because god should logically be capable of defending himself. The tiny minority of self-appointed defenders of the faith would not be a problem, had they not been so shockingly barbaric. They are known by different names in different countries. They

burn little children alive, organise mass slaughter of humans and line up men and women to shower them with bullets.

There is no end in sight. Because the silent majority is, well, silent. The vocal make the most noise. The state pretends to be deaf, blind and mute because everyone fears the wrath of god's killing machines, like Farabi. He will well be arrested again, may secure bail again, and threaten to kill another Avijit, Rajib or Humayun Azad, yet again. Real and brave people. Unlike God.

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P.S.

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