

A STRANGER'S TRIBUTE

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OVER the last four days, I picked up a pen and closed the MS-Word document many times while writing this tribute to Faraz.

Every time, the same stomach churning feeling comes over me, with the same haunting question: how do I write about someone whom I never knew?

Thus, another question that also haunts me is whether I would have the same courage as Faraz, or what would I expect from a friend, a relative or even worse, my yet to be 20 year-old-son, faced with the identical, hostage situation? Surely, his parents embedded some values of loyalty, trust and kindness, which have little to do with any rich or middle-income background.

It is time to look into our family's structure and the role of a father and mother. It is urgent that we take care of our young in this age of the internet, which has such a large and often unpredictable influence on their behaviour. After all, we cannot expect everyone to be a Faraz, a young man who has surely set the highest standards for measuring the strength of humane values in recent times.

Values are not goods but are expressed in behaviour. Values are not owned by any particular class or group of people. For all students of economics, Faraz's sacrifice will surely turn the dominant rational choice, profit-maximising selfish behaviour model upside down. Faraz's sacrifice has a broader implication: it is about our national integrity and it underlines the choice of our

independence and freedom, in a world where our friends are also as safe as us.

If I am allowed to extend Faraz's sacrifice to a national scale, it shows that, as a nation, we are not willing to live a life, even if it is gifted to us by terrorists, where we will be guilty of leaving others behind.

Before concluding, as a Muslim, I must speak a little bit about the terrorists who killed the bold Faraz and many others. Surely, Islam does not permit the killing of an unarmed citizen, let alone a woman and child, and bloodshed is especially prohibited during Ramadan. I cannot agree more than with the Prophet's (Peace Be Upon Him) description of such so-called Muslim extremists in Jami' at-Tirmidhi (Book 31 Hadith 2188):

"In the end of time there will come a people young in years, foolish in minds, reciting the Qur'an which will not go beyond their throats. The Prophet (PBUH) went on to say that they were the "worst of creation". It is hard to disgrace them any further.

Surely, Faraz's choice of not walking free illuminates the highest values of Islam - of being kind, loyal and trustful. Who would not want to claim Faraz as their son, as a brother and/or a friend? Then again, what would not many of us do to be 20-year-olds again? And yet Faraz will never have this experience, to have the longing of a past memory. Maybe he deserved something more and better than most of us can imagine or long for. Every time his photo appears in media or whenever I am thinking of July 1, the black day of Bangladesh which has so shocked us as a nation, I only ponder on my misfortune of never having had an opportunity to be more than a



Faraz Ayaaz Hossain

stranger and meet Faraz, the Bengal Tiger, in this lifetime. Faraz's sacrifice, along with the two policemen who ran into the scene without any hesitation, are reminders of those millions who sacrificed their lives in the belief of a Sonar Bangla,

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for our freedom as a nation to talk and walk in our motherland, with our heads held high.

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