

## The ‘Confessional statements’, the Ethics of Journalism and Relevant Issues

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The ongoing exposures of ‘confessional statements’ by the stalwarts of the two major political parties, namely BNP and AL and some business tycoons of the country in different electronic and printed media have perturbed the mindset of the common people in different ways. Among the common people, many of them have become utmost frustrated concerning the apex leadership of the country. Many of them are considering this as a phenomenon of a grave conspiracy against the major traditional political parties, with a view to providing pace for the new political party to be emerged in a political vacuum by dismantling the central leaderships of AL and BNP. Yet many others are in a confused state like the author of this article.

The confessional statements, as reported in most of the media have been given by the some of country’s key political figures and businessmen during the periods of their remands for the secret interrogation by the Task Force Intelligence (TFI) cell. If the extraction from these confessional statements regarding two apex leaders of the country tallies exactly with the reality then we, the fellow countrymen have the very strong ground to ascribe them as the “notorious queens of mafia domain”. Already, due to wide publication of these ‘confessional statements’, the perceptions of some quarters towards these two leaders have been started to change despite the glorious roles they played during the movement against autocratic regime of General Ershad. In this context Dr. Kamal’s recent repentance and begging apology to the nation for keeping close association with Sheikh Hasina and her AL can be cited. Perhaps influenced by the published stories based on the ‘confessional statements’, the editor of the highest circulated Bangali daily in a commentary has advocated for the implementation of the so called ‘minus-two theory’, suggesting the removal of incumbent chiefs of these parties.

Now as regards publishing these so called confessional statements, an ethical question may be raised. So far, the media publishing the interrogation transcripts have not mentioned their source of information. Mysteriously the media people have received the interrogation transcripts of some AL leaders Mr. Abdul Jalil, Sk, Selim, Obaidul Quader, Abul Awal Minto et al in audio CDs from an unknown source. Apart from this, the reports on interrogation of BNP leaders and other businessmen have been published in the media without disclosing any source. In this context, it may be argued that the leaders or business tycoon concerned are under governmental custody and so reports on such interrogation must come from any source of the government as no journalist was present during the secret sessions of the interrogation. But it has been learnt that respective authorities of the government have straightforwardly denied providing the media with any information on those interrogation in TFI cell or supplying any CD on interrogation. Then what is the source of such reports? Unless the reliability of the source be ascertained, these so called confessional statements can be ascribed as mere gossips. As conscious citizens of the country, we know that for honest journalism while publishing reports in media, the authenticity of the source is a must. Besides, before publishing such reports the media should have cross checked with the concerned parties to justify the authenticity of the reports. Now the very question is to what extent the majority of our media are maintaining these ethics of the journalism in publishing such reports on sensitive national issues? Are the media hundred

percent sure about the authenticity of the so called reports based on the ‘confessional statements’? Any positive answer to this question, so far, has not been ascertained.

The so called confessional statements may be distorted and even fabricated if we consider the following points:

- a. The source of the interrogation transcripts of the secret TFI cell is still undefined. Officially such interrogation is treated as confidential and so no journalist is allowed to be present during the sessions of interrogations. So, naturally question arises as who have taken this initiative of exposing the secret information to the media? What is the motive behind this? Again it may be mentioned that the transcripts of interrogation with only AL leaders (e.g. Mr. Jalil Sk. Selim) in recorded CDs are distributed to the media. The question is why not such CDs of BNP’s leaders like Babar, Tarique or others are distributed? Why this discriminatory step has been followed?
- b. Recorded CDs of the interrogation transcripts of the AL leaders which are distributed to the media seems to be edited. These recorded audio transcripts are not clear enough to listen. Sometimes the recorded transcripts are seemed to be superimposed with other voices. Technically by using the superimposition technique the statements recorded can be changed or edited. So, in that case the possibility of such contamination must be investigated.
- c. In some cases misinterpretation of the claimed confessional statements are possible. For instance, most of the cases about receiving money from the leading businessmen as revealed in the interrogation is termed as ‘extortion’ which may be a part of conspiracy. In fact, in bourgeois democracy, receiving money on part of a political party is a norm. Even in the developed world like the USA and the UK political parties are financially supported by the multinational companies or big corporate and this is termed as donation or subscription. So, when BNP or AL received money from the businessmen, this should not be portrayed as extortion. However, the point should be emphasised whether this money was used for carrying out party activities or realized by the leaders concerned for their personal gain.
- d. We can not ignore the possibility of providing such ‘confessional statements’ given by the political leaders and others under tremendous mental and physical pressure. In this respect, at the court one of such interrogated leaders, Mr. Obaidul Kader of AL told to the reporters that ‘everything was lie.’ To escape from the torture these leaders might ‘confess’ as dictated by the interrogator.

Right now Bangladesh is passing through a critical juncture of the history. The lack of transparency of the government on some sensitive state issues like the present one has made the situation more complex. We, the majority of the common people are in a confused state. We have seen the aspirants of so called minus-two theory are active again. May be behind the scene some are initiating the heinous policy of character assassination of the central leaderships of the major two parties to implement their much desired ‘Minus-two’ theory.

So assessing the above stated background our media should act cautiously. If the so called 'confessional statements' are wrong or contaminated then in future the present roles of some media will be much deplored.

Finally, it should be mentioned here that this article is not defending the corrupt politicians. Rather, this suggests the media to unearth the truth based on the fact. The media concerned need to be very cautious and unmask the fact that whether any coterie inside or outside the government is working objectively for creating leadership vacuum in the country.

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