

Abdun Noor, *Social Justice in Bangladesh*, Liberty Forum, Chittagong, April, 1991, Price Tk.30 (US\$ 2)

Reviewed by:

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In his monograph, 'Social Justice in Bangladesh', Abdun Noor confronts the truly fundamental problems and tensions, reflected not only in Bangladesh but in every society committed to a moral vision of the "common good" and a political vision of freedom, equality, and justice. As Noor observes, that which fuses together the moral good and the political good is a deeply internalized sense of responsibility -- a responsibility on the part of every public official to insure that every policy decision made in the name of the political good is consistent with the moral good, and a responsibility on the part of every citizen to ensure that their political representatives remain faithful in their commitments to the "common good."

Noor's treatment of public administrators is extremely relevant, valuable, and insightful. The political/legal notion of justice must be infused with a moral sense of 'just-ness'. and the key figures in effecting this fusion (in Bangladesh as well as the United States) are the government's public administrators. As Noor suggests, the notion of public service is the lifeblood of a viable, effective, and compassionate system of governance.

The notion of service is at the heart of any society that embraces a moral vision of the "common good", just as it must be at the core of any government that claims to govern in the name of the public interest or the political good. In such an environment, every public servant is, of course, a citizen ; but it must also be recognized that every citizen has a moral and civic obligation to serve. Thus, as Noor suggests, the willingness to serve demands of all political officials and public administrators functional competence, legal accountability, and unqualified moral integrity.

It was once suggested to me that God is anything that ends my isolation and respects my solitude. I have always felt this was a fitting characterization of what the mission of public administration should be. Abdun Noor's brief study reveals very clearly that a substantial majority of the people of Bangladesh lives in a state of severe isolation.

Moreover, at the present time, very few of its citizens can realistically hope for a future of compassionate well-being. His effort to sound the clarion call for *social justice* in Bangladesh, is perfectly congruent and thoroughly consistent with comparable efforts in virtually all of the nations of the world committed to the basic human values of justice, unselfishness, and compassion for one's neighbor and for the "common good." We can only hope that his call will be heeded.

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