

The Long Night Of Brutal Pain Has Just Ended, But Peace Is Too Wounded to Step In

Just a few months ago we witnessed the finale of a brutally uncivilized, sordid, mean, ugly, and vulgar political drama.

It was the culmination of a yearlong despicable and crazy vendetta between an Independent Counsel blinded by self-righteousness, a wantonly greedy and malicious Republican Party, and a vain and unprincipled press on one hand, and an adolescent-minded president on the other. There was another party to this bizarre political circus, Attorney General Janet Reno, who behaved, throughout the national ordeal, as if nothing had happened.

The impeachment and trial of President Clinton was the apex of the ongoing grilling war between the two main political parties in U.S.. It revealed to what abysmal level the fight for political supremacy can reach. The constitution, the decency, the privacy, the dignity of man, did not mean anything; victory over the opponent was all. While American politicians do not tire reminding their potential voters of how great their country is, now they should be reminded of the sordid saga before they go on the greatness trail again, and their listeners should have reservations believing them, if they do not.

A penetrating wound has been inflicted on the common American's psyche. He and she has much lesser faith in politicians and institution of government than they had before the calamity struck. More than that, the dream of a decent political system, run by a decent set of people, governing their country, has been badly shattered.

Was the shattering of the dream of the ideal of a government, so indispensably vital to the vitality of a state, worth the price of finding Clinton guilty of lying about and concealing an affair? It was the murder of wisdom to have carried a microscopically legal, and then a mechanically constitutional, treatment of this trivial and a very private affair. The investigation was given the level of a murder case. The number and type of witnesses called, the extent and the personal nature of the details examined, and the hundreds of thousands of White House documents subpoenaed was stupendous. There was a time in Washington, deeply reminiscent of MaCarthy era, when the fear of being subpoenaed by independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's grand jury hung like a Damocles' sword over all the government employees and others. The time was also transported to another era, when a reigning king's or queen's hatchet man could unleash the royal wrath on some chosen individual with unrestrained passion. One man was throwing civilized society's unwritten code of decency to winds, to allay his fury over the perceived immorality of the president of the United States. Why would any government spend so much energy, time, and money to prove that the two consenting adults had sex? It was carried on for purely political advantage that one party would achieve over the other; it was a criminal use of public money to help a political party; it was a shameless rape of one man's privacy for the gain of a group of people. While the world watched, political bandits tried to hijack a duly elected government, in an attempt to enforce a "legal" coup d'etat.

Human selfishness is nothing new, it is as old as the humanity itself. While nature created larger-than-life potentials in the human spirit, it also planted crass selfishness, wanton cruelty, and blind ego in its folds.

The brutal destruction of President Bill Clinton's image, the tormenting cuts inflicted on his and his family's emotional and psychological lives, by his political enemies, is a moving and an eternal example of human violence, selfishness, greed, and blindness. Civilization moves forward, but not necessarily progressively in all directions, at all times. There are some basic aspects of human personality, which will never change—as they have been planted by nature for reasons of balance, survival, and innate imperfection.

The consequences of this extremely low-level fight for political ascendancy has left disgust, disillusionment, and disenchantment with the entire fabric of politics among the politically sensitive people. Today's bright young men do not aspire for the presidency in the same numbers and with the same fire as was the case until a few decades ago. The institution has been disfigured, tarnished, and belittled by the forces of commercialism, political competition, and individualism. Kenneth Starr has significantly bulldozed its aura and authority. President Clinton's defense of himself, thereby that of his office, was so weak that he let the worst speculation about the scandal leave some tangible stigma on the institution. What America's enemies could not achieve against it, the Independent Counsel did it for them in America's confidence, image, and self-doubt.

The modern politics in America is using character assassination as a weapon of choice in the war among the rivals. Even further, criminalization of the political competition seems to be taking root. If you do not have the mind and heart for a fight of the ideas then let there be a war of the survival. Healthy competition has become a pathetic loser to the compelling need to win—a cultural development conditioned by industrialization, individualism, alienation between man and nature, and degradation of warm connection among human beings.

In most of the major upheavals it is the collusion of crucial elements which creates them. In this political upheaval there was the evil-genius of the special prosecutor Kenneth Star and the hungry-to-destroy venom of the American political right. For years the two very anxiously and expectantly waited for an exploitable Clinton weakness to erupt. When Monica Lewinsky liaison with Clinton was bared (again with the collusion of Linda Tripp, Luciene Goldberg and Paula Jones' attorneys), the political right got the right tools to do their dirty work. Starr's referral became the legalized weapon of destruction in the hands of House Judiciary Committee Republican right-wing zealots. With such answered-prayers opportunity at their doorstep, they did not want to take a second look at Starr's case against Clinton. By the sheer power of the brute majority in the Committee, the Republicans stifled any fair and reasonable examination and

assessment of Starr evidence.

The case against Clinton was of a weak socio-ethical nature, with wobbling evidentiary legs to support it. The grand-jury (Aug. 17) testimony perjury charge was a legal absurdity and obstruction of justice charge had all theory to support it but no evidence to give it legal ground. Any regular court would have thrown them out as reckless and irresponsible charges unworthy of its time. But in the political court, with the help of presidential preeminence and media hype, the case thrived for a pathetically long time. A political vendetta was given a legal license to go ahead—and many naïve people thought it was the real thing. The Paula Jones legal case was a carefully engineered right-wing political conspiracy.

Clinton's private and personal lives were thrown to rabid dogs to feast on. No man's grand jury testimony is made public—but Clinton's was, because politicians (Republicans and Democrats did it for different reasons) considered that a president has lost such civilized society's protections by virtue of his public position. More than that, they were kowtowing to conservatives' clarion call of a moral crusade. A simple, easy-to-understand situation of personal embarrassment and humiliation, laced with the potential of explosive political damage, which were the basis of Clinton's elaborate evasion of straight and factual answers to legal questions asked of him in the Lewinsky scandal investigations, was maliciously twisted to make it appear the murderous work of a serial killer. Clinton was aware that the questions asked of him were calculated by his political enemies to hurt him. He countered that by answering the questions slyly on the mean political chessboard.

The irony and the tragedy of the Clinton impeachment drama is how a political move by Clinton, in response to a political move by his enemies, was given the attention, the respect, the credibility, and the weight by politicians and media- in the process making many innocent and ignorant people believe they were confronted by a situation worthy of consideration for American constitution's high crimes and misdemeanors. Politics is still the back-waters of human conduct and culture; it continues to remain to a good extent crude, primitive, and exploitative.

Kenneth Starr is a self-righteous personality, looking at the world through the prism of morality, whose practical manifestation is law for him. Human beings have to live strictly in conformance of the laws of the land, because that is god's wish. Humanity is much secondary to morality. Never mind whose moral code one has to follow in his religion. He sees himself as an applicator of the moral code, an agent of the divine will, an interface with society's pursuit of the ethical agenda. For him legal uprightness is absolute; morality precedes existence. Catching Clinton for him is a moral crusade, a super-ego-lifter, a cathartic exercise. No matter how trivial a legal infraction Clinton may have incurred, for Starr it serves as a gate-opener on the larger moral lapses he believes Clinton has committed and has the potential of committing. Legality is only an excuse, a method, a catch to expose Clinton's fundamentally and vastly flawed moral fabric. Kenneth Starr wants to be given some legal levity in order to bring about Clinton's larger-than-life evil. He did not hesitate to let his prosecutors use unethical methods to dig out evidence against Clinton; he did not even wink in letting salacious details paint a lot of his 445-page referral. Lowly means are justifiable in pursuit of a high-level aim of nailing down a moral aberrant. The right-wing polity, moralists, visionaries, and vigilantes in America are frustrated enough to let the burden of using the right means to achieve an end be slackened in pursuit of their grander designs.

Much of human morality has always had uncertain feet to stand on. With the onset of democracy, strengthening of human rights, enlightenment of science, morality has become a debatable subject, a terrain of human conduct lying on relativistic altitudes. There is obviously some conduct which is bad, which has to be looked down upon; but there is "bad" conduct which is too personal for a society to interfere with. Last five hundred years of history has taught us to develop an ability to live tolerantly with other conducts, religions, and cultures, as long as they do not seriously interfere with our lives. Imposition of our views on others is as primitive and sinful as usurpation of others' right to vote in an election. Self-righteousness is as harmful as political dictatorship.

Clinton drama has a deep background of the struggle of some people to live with the modern practices of liberty, life, and pursuit of happiness. Clinton is seen as too much of a youthful-looking, handsome, fun-loving, liberal-minded, woman-chasing man to be the chief executive and the commander-in-chief of the self-conscious America. Even though some fifty-percent Americans indulge in adultery, they do not want to see their sports heroes, writers, artists, and public figures to do the same. It is a monumental hypocrisy and immaturity to believe in this piercing contradiction. America is the leader of the sexual revolution in terms of the scale of sexual activity taking place in it. A million teenage girls become pregnant annually here. Conservative movement believes that the modern sexual liberation is hurtful to the human social and ethical infrastructure. It believes that the old ways of personal behavior, discipline, and sense of righteousness befit the stature of man. Conservatives are oblivious to the last three hundred years of human psychological development. Even though they are a minority, their being very impassioned, insensitive to democratic consideration of other people's ideas and feelings, and highly egotistical, keeps their ideas in intense circulation. They have heavily argued that the liberal way of life has been a failure in the realm of family cohesion, individual responsibility, individual and group achievements, and satisfying living in general. They are saying that the liberalism of the last two hundred years has failed, and that we should go back to the values of the earlier times.

After the strong criticism of most of the people against the lightweight charge of sexual misconduct and its concealment, the Clinton tormentors changed their strategy to accusing him of the legally respectable perjury and obstruction of justice charges. These pompous charges sounded right out of the heart of the conservative moral high firmament. Perjury of what—when the whole world knew the facts; obstruction of what justice—when Paula Jones case did not have anything to do with the Clinton affair with Lewinsky. These were technicalities of technicalities, without any redeeming practical value—a mockery of the use of one of the greatest concepts in human civilization, justice. Paula Jones' case was thrown out of the court because it lacked legal merit; Monica Lewinsky succeeded in achieving the great ambition of having an affair with a big-fish and, therefore, was not seeking any redress for it. Injustice was done to the nation, who had to bear the torment of suffering a yearlong insult to the institution of government.

Injury was inflicted on the people whose sensibilities were wounded by the farce, the absurdity, and the vulgarity of the scandal to give substance and weight to a sex-scandal, by a small band of reckless and unethical people, using people's money and working on their watch.

The alleged technicalities of perjury and obstruction of justice were the only way the inquisition of Clinton could be carried on. Otherwise, after some time, the public in general, was fed up, rather felt cheated, and was infuriated and thrown into the spiral of revulsion and cynicism. The tenacity, the fanaticism, and the moral tone and temper with which this enterprise was carried on, was at once astonishing and disturbing. A thin-legal-veneer case was catapulted, by the help of a carefully orchestrated intrigue, into a full-body-press impeachment trial. The political and legal hijacking was performed in open daylight, with everyone's eyes open. This was a darkness at noon, a rape at gunpoint. What confidence do we have that something as outrageous like this will not happen again? None. This is because the evil which controls some people is often bolder, more ambitious, more potent, and more single-minded than the goodness which the vast majority of people carry in their hearts. Then there is evil-free blindness of many people; who must follow a procedure, a system, a principle, to an extreme, oblivious to common-sense, unmindful of the inherent harm done by their relentless pursuit, to people and society at large. For such people the system is more important than the humanity, the adherence to rules is of higher value than intrinsic-value of the situation being judged, legality is a higher spirituality than the creative acceptance of human condition. Because supposedly Clinton lied about his physical relationship with Lewinsky, it was worthwhile to shake the whole country, throw the entire government into limbo, earn the strong and lasting cynicism of people toward government and public-service in general, be perceived as a morally-deficit nation by the rest of the world.

For the American political right Bill Clinton epitomizes the debased morality, unrestrained and glorified lust, premature mental growth freeze, unrelieved childishness, and wanton ambition. To defeat him is a moral crusade, the war for the reclamation of soul of man, the flight from the crisis of culture. For the right Clinton as a president symbolizes for the whole country the values he lives; his

faults are more potent because of his position. He can not just be taken as a person, he is the symbol of the whole nation, an icon.

Starr and the conservatives had the relationship as of a charge with an explosive, the ignition being provided by Lewinsky. If there would have been no Lewinsky, the charge would be desperately seeking for something else to ignite it. The main body of the explosion, the explosive, does not have the fire starting quality in it, only the mass to carry the tangible destruction. Without Starr, the conservative body would just be a cauldron of seething hatred, frustration, and anger, but without the tearing explosion, the heavy destruction, the radiating high-intensity flash.

The press is still in the kindergarten stage of its development as a responsible tool for public good. It played a childish, selfish, and vicious role in the Clinton crisis. Ever since its successful role in the ouster of President Nixon, it has been eagerly waiting for another knockout victory in the big league politics. It is not because it finds Clinton immoral, unlike the conservatives, that is why it want him out; it is because it wants to flex its muscle and wants to be the third and equal player in the super-league of politics and business. The press has no morals—it operates on a non-moral basis. It lives by what makes news and the money that makes; it is a “story” that drives it—rest is details. The press has not developed into a creative institution, something to help people, a vehicle of public good that it could be. Instead, it is big business—a heartless camera on the events, except that the heart beats when its self-interest is involved. It has remained one of the most disappointing institutions since the Industrial Age; its great potential always stifled by its owners because of commercial reasons and lack of their imagination. The press beat the Clinton story to a pulp. It did not care for fairness, sensitivity, taste, good of the country; all it cared for was ratings, attention, power, and sensation. It has multi-million dollar stars, who wanted the greatest media pitch in what they saw as the super-world-series of news—a one-of-a kind of opportunity in a century.

In this comical tragedy one player who has remained consistent, fair, and

disgusted has been the people at large. The press and the pundits have been at a loss to understand the majority of people's response to the Clinton scandal. More than a hundred polls were conducted since January 1998; more than they have ever been conducted for any problem in a year's time. They are a statistician's dream come true, because with such a large baseline of samples statistical probability approaches certainty. Common man has the honesty, directness, gumption, lightness of ego, and fairness to nail down the elements of human behavior; whereas the smart, important, specialists, partisan, and egotistical people have difficulty doing so. The press and the politicians have been heavily partisan in Clinton crisis, which has not helped in their lack of balance and mature judgment on it. The common man thinks that the sexual conduct charges against Clinton are a smoke-screen cast against the political murder, which his political opponents have up their sleeve. They see the serious-faced charges of perjury and obstruction of justice just another variation of the same tune—tricks played to bag the cat. They see Kenneth Starr as a cheap, partisan, and hypocritical; working on their dollars and dangerously disrupting their government. They see the press as partisan and without a soul, hungry for attention and without love for their country. To expect that a president will never have an affair, and if caught having one will never lie, is a fairy tale only supposed by politicians for putting down their opponents. A president is a human being, regardless of whatever talents and achievements are to his credit. The last two hundred years of civilization has taught us that all human beings, regardless of their inherent powers and quality of environment they have lived in, share common human traits. Humanization of historical personae has been in this direction. Common man in America sees Clinton as a talented politician, who has made some good improvements in their lives, and more than that they see in him a man of commonsense and accommodation. They are put off by the level to which politicians can descend to compete with their opponents. This political war has broken something permanently in the common American's public life psyche.

A commonplace, inconsequential, juvenile, and very human Clinton-Lewinsky liaison was blown up to be subjected to a dramatic, significant, and historic constitutional procedure, because not of its absolute significance, but because it was a good opportunity for some politicians to level with the arch evil-icon Clinton. The attackers were not concerned with the national upheaval this

Armageddon would unleash; their justification lay in the moral victory it would engender, the cultural cleansing it would effect. Pain suffered in a cathartic process is worthwhile, the necessary price to be paid, for the repair of a crucially significant element in the psychological and cultural ethos of this country.

The moralists live by a tight code; the human conduct is a binary system for them—it is either right or it is wrong; the gray shades produced by the kaleidoscopic envelope affecting us called the human condition are discounted. Three hundred years of human psychological and intellectual growth has produced an understanding of the human behavior which can not be discarded just to align with a political and a cultural fashion of a time. We have come to a solid understanding that sex is a biological force deeply planted in the human system; fighting it can produce a significant personality warp. Living it—creatively—is the best way to harness this elemental force. Sexual behavior lapses are not necessarily deep personality aberrations, but may be the effects of growth, indiscipline, and culture. Sexual revolution, which is a child of this century, besides loosening the tight chains round sexual behavior, aims at removing the stigma attached to human sexual function for much of the history of human civilization. But the phantom of sinfulness of human sexuality is resurrected regularly by moralist social groups, who consider human life designed in heavens, and not a product of nature, evolution, and mind.

The Clinton inquisition has been a serious lapse in the cultural, intellectual, and political fabric of this country. That a political and cultural minority coalesced so fiercely as to subject the entire nation to a year's mental turmoil is incredible and also scandalous. When serious history of this time is written, it will be noted how the majority of Americans waited sadly and disgustedly on the sidelines to let the sordid political and cultural vendetta run out its course. History will also note how the U.S. presidency was disfigured and tarnished, how the institution of government was pushed further away from people's esteem, and how a man and his family were subjected to a deliberately cruel embarrassment, humiliation, and psychological torture.

For generations to come, sensitive people will wonder, how this sordid, ugly, and mean drama took place in this time of human history, when civilization has reached a high-point in moral and cultural relativism, democracy, and individual liberty. In human conduct, generally, evil behavior has more passion to it than good behavior has. A band of evil people move through a bad scheme with a laser-like focus and intensity, while good people stand on the sidelines with contempt for them, with disbelief of the work they are doing, and evaporate into inaction. While evil behavior swoops to attack, the good behavior is, generally, hesitant, delayed, and diffused. Even though the general level of fairness and decency in this country is good, but selfishness and narrowness of vision are the only weapons to fight in the arsenal of many people. So, no matter how advanced the ethical level of people in general, there will always remain some people who will be mean and low-minded. To this you have to add the commercial dimension of the modern existence. There are institutions and the individuals who are designing-exploiters of people and situations for money. Today's exploiters work on a much bigger scale than it used to be. Modern corporations use huge resources and a bewildering array of marketing tools to promote business.

When Clinton's private life was being savagely ravished by a band of brute political opponents and narrow-visioned boiling-point moralists, the champions and the sympathizers of the sophisticatedly civilized set, sat silently on the sidelines. The thinkers, the artists, and the sensitive people did not publicly express outrage at the flagrant violation of personal privacy and conducting of a political war between the country's two main political parties at the public expense and on its time. Good and more-developed people, once again, were paralyzed by the fury of the evil, and by their numb passions and weak moral sensitivity. While a massacre was committed by a band of small-minded people, the "good people" waited till the point when only the post-mortem could be achieved. Evening after evening one was forced to listen to a superficial analyses of the basic situation from the high-priced but low-illumination talk-show hosts and from their equally shallow and narrow minded guests. Almost all of them thought that the drama was about a legal-whodunit, and not the interplay of perverse political, human, and commercial forces. This clearly demonstrated why such a farcical situation was allowed to grow so large.(Because people who judged its contents were so light-minded.)

Commentators and vigilantes do not talk about the millions of dollars that Lewinsky and some commercial interests will garner from this degrading episode. Where is the talk of values? But American permissiveness is too vast and its inward-looking so shallow and narrow, that the commercial exploitation is considered to be a reasonable and wholesome outcome of such a mega-news-generating story.

Clinton's conduct in the drama was childish, sheepish, spineless, and undignified - not to mention pathetic for a country's political leader. Once his enemies had pinned him down, he should have come out fightingly—not because of possessing superior morality, but because it would have been tactically better in the guerilla war he was in. But the onus of the national nervous breakdown that the scandal created falls squarely on Clinton enemies and not on Clinton. A president, like any human being, occasionally slips from the right course, but his deviation should not be allowed to be exploited by his political enemies and commercial interests. A man's privacy is his last sanctum.

History will also wonder why the Attorney General waited on and on to intercede and stop the evil designs of Kenneth Starr. At the outset, it is understandable, it was difficult to know the color, the tone, and the content of the independent counsel Kenneth Starr's intentions; but as the years passed they became transparent to everyone, except to Janet Reno. This spineless law-enforcer-in-chief is no match to the intensity, ambition, guile, and focus of the right-wing zealots wanting to obliterate the liberal philosophy and way of life, whose ostensible icon is Clinton for them. She kept on expanding the independent prosecutor's power till he found the right opening to throw his knockout punch. Naivete is no defense of incompetence, accommodation in political vendettas is not public wisdom but unscrupulousness. Attorney General was practically the only person who could have stopped a political activist disguised as a prosecutor from unleashing a rain of unethical and nationally harmful actions he took. Sitting idly by while a murder is taking place is as reprehensible as the murder itself. Was the sex-scandal investigation worth the national shake-up in the faith in the institution of government it engendered? No sane person or a group of persons would go to the extreme level the U.S. Government went to investigate a trivial

matter. The colossal perversity and the stupefying absurdity of the level of efforts made to prove that Clinton lied to hide his affair with Lewinsky stands as one of the most monumentally degrading acts of U.S. Government. The scars it has left on the public psyche will take decades to heal; the culture of loftiness and national interest in public affairs it has vandalized will remain a crucial deficit for times to come.

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