

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



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Learning Must Continue

Human beings are different from other living beings because of their superior quality of learning. They have the instinct of enquiry and craving for knowledge. Since the very beginning of their lives, human beings start the process of knowing and understanding different things and phenomena around them. Thus, it can be said that human beings have inquisitiveness in their nature. All they have to do is keep that alive and it will open vistas of knowledge and learning for them.

It is important for learning that the thirst for it should be kept intact or even it should be strengthened. Human beings, therefore, must keep this thirst alive and keep on learning new things with the passage of time. It will equip them with the capabilities to further understand the universe and most importantly understand themselves and their societies and would provide them with the potential to guarantee their survival.

However, the major point of consideration is that throughout their lives, at different stages, the process of learning must be kept alive by different factors and different people in the society. Different people have different roles and responsibilities, which they have to use to keep the candle of learning alight.

The first institution where human beings start their learning is a family. The parents are, thus, the first teachers. It is through parents that children start learning a language and form the foundations on which they construct the building of their knowledge. Parents prepare the children for what they are going to learn in the years to come. Parents, in fact, do not install the urge for learning within the children. The urge to learn and the thirst to know are already there. The parents only require to keep that alive; or even assist in increasing that.

However, on certain occasions, the parents discourage that urge and strive to install within the minds of the children what they know themselves. They want the children to be their carbon copies; copying what they teach them. The inquisitiveness, the curiosity and keenness that are the natural gifts of the children are thus spoiled in that case and the children become habitual of getting fed by their parents instead of searching for knowledge themselves.

Another institution that plays a tremendous role in supporting the children to learn is school. Though schools assist children in learning to a great extent, they can also be responsible for snatching from children their precious gift – the capacity to learn. Certain schools use the methods and ways that are not at all supportive in learning; rather, they discourage children to a large extent.

They mostly emphasize the administrative aspects and strive for discipline and obedience. They, therefore, require students not to think in their own ways, and pursue their own objectives; they, in fact, snatch the creative and innovative tendencies of the children and turn them into robots that are programmed to generate a particular set of outputs.

On the other hand, the use of fear is also one of the methods that is applied in schools and it is highly responsible for killing the students' craving to learn.

Dominated by the fear of punishment, the students are reluctant or they are discouraged to pursue creativity and inquisitiveness for learning. The students that have more questions are mostly punished or discouraged.

Teachers, therefore, must strive to keep the students' craving for learning alive instead of inculcating in them the readymade thoughts and concepts. Teachers must support the students in polishing their capacities to develop their own understanding, instead of making them repeat like parrots.

The habit of learning keeps a person updated and ready to face the overgrowing changes of changing world. As, with each passing moment the universe is expanding and along with it the knowledge, it is essential that human beings must never give up the habit of learning. At the end of each day a person must have something new that he has learnt. It is the only way that a person can remain updated and young. He, in this manner, never gets old and outdated.

For human beings to keep on learning the central concept is to consider that a person has never learnt enough. As the great philosopher Aristotle used to say, "I know that I don't know anything." It is the very basic step. The realization that a person knows that he knows not leads to true learning.

On the other hand the ones who believe that they are not ignorant and know everything, for them all the doors to learning are automatically closed. They, from the very first step, deny to open the vistas of knowledge to themselves. They are basically the blind believers who are unfortunately sure that they have enough knowledge, while on the contrary, they are the ones who need the most of it. And, they are, undoubtedly, the most ignorant of all.



Impacts of Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations on Peace Efforts

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

Afghanistan and Pakistan are once again stepping back from a common ground on peace effort that was established over months of mutual works through the four-nation peace initiative which also comprises China and the United States. While it is not clear to the public what is going on behind the curtain between the two countries over peace talks with the Taliban, Afghan and Pakistani officials once again return to war of words over the insurgency in Afghanistan and the recent stalemate of peace negotiations with the Taliban. In recent weeks, a number of Afghan government serving and former officials have criticized Pakistan for its lack of determination to help in the Afghan peace process and bring Taliban leaders to the table of negotiations.

In a briefing to the parliament, Afghan acting director of National Directorate for Security (NDS) Massoud Andarabi accused Pakistan's ISI for "completely supporting and encouraging" the Taliban to seize territory in Afghanistan and expand its insurgency in the country. A Pakistani foreign ministry official called the allegations on Thursday as baseless, insisting that Pakistani is fighting terrorism with complete resolve and determination. The comments by Afghan security officials were echoed by Mohammad Umer Daudzai, a former interior minister who is now a member of the Council of Protection and Stability of Afghanistan. He said that, in exchange for helping in the peace process, Pakistan has demands from Kabul that the current government or any other government in Afghanistan would not be able to meet. Daudzai insisted that Pakistan pursues its own goals in Afghanistan and is not sincere in helping peace efforts in the country. The recent open claims and counterclaims between Afghan and Pakistani officials come after the recent failure of planned talks with the Taliban backed by the four-nation coordination group of Afghanistan, Pakistan, US and China. There have been high hopes pinned on Pakistan who was supposed to play a facilitating role in the Afghan peace process.

Some months ago, Pakistan for the first time admitted that it had influence over the Taliban and would use it to bring the leaders of the militant groups to the table of negotiations. However, Pakistani officials have long said that the country does not have an ultimate control over the Taliban. Despite the recent setback, Pakistan says it is trying to persuade the Taliban to come to the peace initiative and sit for talks with the government of Afghanistan.

With the failure to start talks with the Taliban, many in Afghanistan, including former interior minister Omar Daudzai, now say that it was basically wrong to rely on Pakistan's role for seeking peace with the Taliban. This suggests how the opinions in the Afghan political community over Pakistan's role in the peace talks could swing rapidly with event of setbacks and disruptions in the peace process. This highlights the fact that the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are highly dependent to the two countries' success to do something concrete for peace in Afghanistan rather than other potentials

of cooperation and partnership between the two nations. Therefore, both the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan need to realize that it is essential to improve relations and mutual cooperation with the focus on peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Relying on Pakistan's help to negotiate peace with the Taliban has become president Ghani's high-stake political gambling with the Afghan government making it a top priority to seek peace with the Taliban through Pakistan's assistance. Despite the setback, President Ashraf Ghani remains cautiously hopeful to Pakistan's role in the peace efforts. In a recent interview with the BBC, he expressed optimism that Pakistan would stick to its pledge in bringing Taliban leaders to the table of negotiations. However, he knows well that his outreach to Pakistan has met trouble and the initiative to seek peace talks with Taliban through Pakistan's help has faced serious challenges.

President Ghani's outreach to Pakistan aimed at reviving peace talks with the Taliban now is being seriously tested. If it does not work and fails bring the Taliban to the table of peace negotiations, it will broadly affect the relations between the two neighbor countries, and in the other hand, the peace efforts would go nowhere without a robust cooperation between the two countries. The failure to hold the face-to-face talks seem to be unraveling the recent trust-building mutual efforts of Kabul and Islamabad aimed at reviving peace negotiations with the Taliban.

In order for the peace initiative to work, both the Afghan government and Pakistan need to work to maintain undisrupted warm relations. Only through robust relations between the two countries, they can prevent unexpected disruptions in the efforts to revive the peace talks and start negotiations with the insurgents. A sustainable relations between the two countries is in fact a prerequisite for successfully leading the efforts to start negotiations with the insurgent groups. What the Afghan and Pakistani governments neglect is the fact that deterioration of relations between Kabul and Islamabad is more detriment to the peace efforts than any other factors in the way for peace efforts. Therefore, both the countries need to maintain sustained friendly relations with the aim to pave the way for peace talks and preventing unexpected disruptions.

For this, officials from both size need to realize the other side's sensitivities related to sovereignty and security. The officials of both countries need to remain cognizant that there will be always unexpected disruptions threatening the efforts to revive talks. Both sides need to do more to minimize the impacts of such developments.

Pakistan will need to keep its pledge to make concrete actions against Taliban leaders residing in the country and end playing what some call double game in the Afghan conflict. There are internal skepticisms and oppositions in both countries threatening the efforts to make a breakthrough in the peace efforts. Both sides need to overcome these challenges through sustainably improving the relations.

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Militancy – A Menace to Freedom

By Hujjatullah Zia

A surge in terror has put the rights and liberty of the public at stake. Life is very cheap and one's blood is spilt for nothing and without an iota of mercy. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the political instability and their individual and collective freedoms are curtailed to a great extent. Civilian casualties and terrorist attacks are the hackneyed statements making headlines on national and international newspapers and the bloody pictures shown on TV channels and posted on Facebook numb our minds and senses.

In spite of the vast discourse over the men's natural and inalienable rights, international human rights' instruments and counterinsurgency campaigns, a large number of people lose their lives around the globe on the basis of their racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Considering the strong threats, such as terrorist attacks, suicide bombings, arm trades, chemical weapons, an increase in insurgent groups and corrupt policymakers behind the scene, one will be lucky to survive – mainly who live in the heart of militancy such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc.

Although, democracy and philosophical theories over human rights, which played integral role in the constitution of some countries, alleviated men's pain and suffering to some extent, it could not stop mankind from bleeding. Perhaps, since the spirit of democracy is moribund in third world countries, people suffer from widespread militancy and terror.

It is believed that there are two major reasons behind the violation of human rights. Firstly, religious extremists are inculcated that democracy, human rights, women's rights, etc. are the profane products of western culture, and had to be fought against at the cost of one's life. Therefore, the radical ideologues spill the individuals' blood recklessly and put the legitimacy of a democratic government under question.

Secondly, the power sharing among the executive, legislative and judicial powers is not balanced, mainly in the aforementioned countries. To protect the citizens' rights and freedom, the power should be decentralized, in a government's machinery, through dividing equally into three independent powers. In another item, it will tend to cruelty and jeopardize citizens' rights when power is centralized in one point and the same person legislates, interprets and enforces the law. Dividing the state's tasks equally on three organs and protecting their independence are the main elements of division of power. In a nutshell, the fair and equal division of power and submitting it into three independent organs is the soul of democracy, which will protect the rights and liberty of citizens. As a result, the kings' absolute power in the past led to despotism and people's rights and freedoms were trampled upon on a large scale. Hence, the past experience demonstrates

the fact that centralization of power jeopardizes citizens' individual and collective freedoms and paves the way for violence and bloodshed. To avoid rhetoric, "Democracy is an impossible thing until the power is shared by all, but let not democracy degenerate into monarchy."

Besides division of power, the three powers should move parallel and independently in a government's machinery. For instance, when the legislative power is strict towards terrorist networks, the judicial system must interpret the law strictly and the executive system must enforce the law in the same way. So, since no one is considered beyond the law, one should not threaten others' life and liberty with impunity.

There are many barriers ahead of democracy and giving it lip service will not alleviate a nation's pain and sufferings. In a democratic administration, the social society activists will have to play a pivotal role to assure that the public rights are protected by the government and scrutinize the officials' activities. Moreover, those who deem democracy as western product and resort to arms for the destruction of democratic governments should be brought to justice or dealt militarily.

Whenever one imagine the pungent smell of a human's burnt limbs in the bedlam of a suicide bombing, the painful sobs of the injured, the bloody bodies of street vendors, the children's beheaded corpses, the mothers who seek their kids tearfully and the profound anguish of the victims' families, s/he will recoil with unmitigated disgust and wish they were not born so that they would not hear the lurid reports or see the poignant incidents going on in their surroundings.

We have to break the chains of egotism and megalomaniac feelings. We should believe that we are equal and the racial and linguistic differences matter not in the realm of humanity. We are all human, born with certain and inalienable rights and dignity. We will not gain peace and freedom unless we respect the rights and dignity of our brothers and sisters, cherish religious tolerance, value the code of ethics and yield to the call of our conscience.

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." We are not "bound to the starless midnight of racism and war." We are able to end this conflagration and cultivate the morale of brotherhood and sisterhood on the prolific land of our society.

Afghan government has constantly called warring parties to stop insurgency and join peace talk – this is the best possible option for the insurgent groups since killing innocent individuals serves no useful purpose. Moreover, it is believed that murdering people for self-interests or on the basis of any particular backgrounds is not justifiable at all in any religions on the surface of earth.

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