

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



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A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing

Having true knowledge is a blessing but it has to come after hard work and the desire to learn. There is no way of gaining knowledge other than through thorough search and discovery. First it is important to realize that a person needs to know, he needs to learn and the knowledge he has is insufficient. Only after this realization he gets in a position to start his search. He also needs to understand that the see of knowledge is boundless and he has to keep on searching for more. Moreover, true acquisition of knowledge must turn him into a compassionate being, not proud and superficial.

Unfortunately, we live in the age of the superficial. Everyone wants to show that he is learned, yet everyone is shallow. The methods of showing that one is learned are interesting. One of them is to ignore all that other know. Another is to ignore the common place, and concentrate on something odd and out-of-the way. This pretense of profound learning is the pitfall into which the journalist in particular always falls. He must write airily of the odd and remote in order to conceal his ignorance of the near and the classical. He has no Leisure. His profession makes him acquainted with a mass of miscellaneous and haphazard knowledge, which he is compelled to reproduce in his articles with an air of knowing everything. The journalist is tempted to be readable and so he always tries to be original and unusual.

For the superficial knowledge of our own times other things are responsible also. Men nowadays have become so mercenary that they are not willing to undertake any serious work that does not pay. Intellect is valued only as a key to material prosperity. "He wastes his money on books. What good are they to him? He is a carpenter, not a school master." Men do not realize that the brain is not a tool for exploiting our fellowmen but to follow knowledge like 'a sinking star beyond the utmost bounds of human thought'.

There are certain theories and dogmas which have diverted men and women from the pursuit of knowledge and made them content with their ignorance and stupidity. Religious teachers have made most of these dogmas. They have taught that man has a body and a soul but they have forgotten that man has a mind also. The Cynics of Greece despised education and intellectual pursuits and declared that Virtue was the only Good. St. Basil is reported to have remarked very frankly: "It is a matter of no interest to us whether the earth is a sphere or a cylinder or a disc."

With this exaltation of stupidity and ignorance it is no wonder that we suffer from all the shortcomings of a little learning.

Take such a glaring social evil of our country as early marriage. People marry early because certain so-called religious books have recommended this practice. They are to quote chapter and verses to support their ideas. This is nothing other than an instance of a little learning.

Newton who knew so much thought humbly that he was like a little child picking up pebbles on the shore, while the vast ocean of knowledge lay unexplored before him. Some may try to give the impression that while Newton collected pebbles of knowledge painfully, it has been their pastime to collect boulders of it.

Knowledge is long and life is short, and even the best of us must be content to have only a little of it. If we could live hundreds of years instead of a few decades, we could not have enough time to acquire all the knowledge that there is. All the ills of humanity arise from ignorance and egoism. With knowledge we can at least overcome ignorance. Let us remember the beautiful exhortation of the Persian poet. Saadi; "Like a taper one should burn in the pursuit of knowledge."

This is thy duty, even if thou hast to travel over the whole earth."

A quotation from A. E. Housman in which he praises the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is worth pondering over: "Other desires perish in their gratification but the desire of knowledge never; the eye is not satisfied with, seeing nor the ear filled with hearing. Other desires become the occasion of pain through dearth of the material to gratify them but not the desire of knowledge: the sum of things to be known is inexhaustible, and however long we read we shall never come to the end of our story book. So long as the mind of man is what it is, it will continue to exult in advancing on the unknown throughout the infinite field of the universe; and the tree of knowledge will remain forever, as it was in the beginning, a tree to be desired to make one wise."



Pollution – A Serious Menace to Public Health

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Pollution poses a serious threat to the world, including Afghanistan. It takes its toll on individuals' health and scores of men, women and children lose their lives annually by the various disease stems from toxic wastes. In largely populated cities, where vehicles abound and emit more gases, different types of disease prevail among the residents. It is believed that the victims of pollution are far greater than the victims of terrorism, mainly in Kabul City where you can see thick fog and foul-smelling garbage while walking on the street. It is said that 13 million people lose their lives annually due to pollution and Afghanistan forms the bulk of the casualties. The child mortality rate, caused by air pollution, is very high in Afghanistan and rumors say that 153 out of 1000 children die before the age of seven. Every day, 8 - 10 persons die in the country by the disease caused by toxic wastes. Generally, the average lifetime has reached to 44.4 in the country - which is a great cause of concern.

The thick columns of smoke coming out from brick kilns every day in Kabul form thousands of tons of fatal gases. The gases, produced yearly by 450 brick kilns in Kabul, includes 222 thousand tons carbon dioxide, 9,922 tons carbon monoxide, 3037. 5 tons nitrogen oxide, and 5,400 tons sulphur dioxide.

In addition, there are many other factories in Kabul that pollute the air such as battery-making industries, which produce sulphuric acid (strong acid that attacks organic compounds), petroleum store, food processing, iron smelting and weaving factories and many other factories which are located in the heart of the city - the benefits go to the pocket of the owners but the harm goes to the public and target people's health indiscriminately.

If one walks on Kabul streets, s/he will think that there has been no mayor for Kabul at all. The smelly heaps of garbage on the side of streets, under the hot sun, touch the passersby's noses sharply and make them grimace with strong disgust. Moreover, you can hardly see trees in Kabul and the government pays less attention to the environment and sanitation. Despite the large population, there are no waste baskets on the sides of the streets for the people to throw their garbage. Therefore, people just throw them on the streets without feeling an iota of responsibility.

When you walk by Kabul River, you have to tighten your mask because there is only dirty water, trash and a bunch of drug addicts. A nauseous odor touches nose sharply and makes you throw up. In a nutshell, the river is used as a waste basket and has contaminated the entire city.

People are very irresponsible and throw their trash everywhere. Since the environment is already filthy, they have never thought for a second to keep their surroundings clean. Hence, they neither do the mayor a favor by keeping their city clean nor feel the responsibility of responsible citizens.

Moreover, a number of old engines are being used by free workers and storekeepers for many purposes and old vehicles, which send out heavy fog, are run in the downtown. Similarly, streets are bursting with vehicles and there is no traffic control at all. So, countless vehicles and factories in the city are the contributing factors in polluting the air in Kabul city. Thus, people inhale contaminated and toxic air, which put a deleterious effect on their health and threaten their life and lead to the death of thousands of innocent individuals.

Despite being menaced by various toxic chemicals and greenhouse gas, the world pollutes the air more than ever before and mammoth factories send thick columns of smoke to the air every day. In such a case, the threat to human life gets more serious as the greenhouse gas increases. The unmitigated pollution will destroy the ozone layer, which prevents harmful radiation from the Sun. With the destruction of ozone layer, the ultraviolet (UV) will shine directly on humans' skins and lead to various disease such as lung cancer, skin cancer, cataract, etc. Nowadays, modern and developed countries produce the largest toxic chemicals and pose serious threat to eco-system. Hence, the life of all humans on earth will be vulnerable to the large-scale pollution.

Developed countries, that possess many large industrial factories, should have a plan to reduce the pollution so as to alleviate the threat to humans' life. It should be noted that the greenhouse gas is a global threat more serious than terrorism and currently the polluted air takes large casualties, from all countries, silently.

Regarding the pollution in the country, the government will have to take preventive measures. Besides instilling a sense of responsibility in citizens, the state should control the vehicles and old machines and engines being used widely across the city. Moreover, waste baskets should be placed in public places so that the citizens do not throw the trash on the streets. The garbage collectors are supposed to clean the city every day and the garbage trucks transfer them outside the city before the trash disturb the passersby. In short, the harm of pollution is known for all and the government must pay serious attention in keeping the city clean.

Hujjattullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

Unemployment Fueling Violence in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

What is unemployment? When a person is actively searching for a job and unable to find any work is called unemployment. It can also be defined as a situation where someone of working age is unable to find a job but who would like to be in full time employment. Unemployment is often used as a measure of the health of the economy of a nation. The most frequently cited measure of unemployment is the unemployment rate. This is the number of unemployed persons divided by the number of people in the labor force. If a Mother left work to bring up a child or if someone went into higher education, they are not working but would not be classed as unemployed as they are not actively seeking job.

Studies indicate that unemployment can affect an individual's psychological well-being and it can leave tremendously powerful scars on a person's mind. Unemployment can leave some individuals with feelings of worthlessness, lack of motivation, feelings of embarrassment, greater level of anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness and increased levels of stress. It also increases morbidity and mortality rates, and can cause negative changes in family relationships and in the psychological well-being of families. And unemployment can contribute to increased rates of suicide and reduced life expectancy. Unemployment is a greater motivator to illegal and unauthorized means to receive benefits. Therefore, in most advance country people are paid social security allowance if the government fails to provide them jobs.

The worst unpleasant effect of unemployment is when a person who is jobless has a very hard time getting hired. Companies usually hire people who already have jobs as people with jobs usually socialize in similar places and word of mouth and referrals increase their chances of getting new jobs. This really adds to the disappointment of unemployed people in this country. Crime rates rise as people are unable to meet their needs and divorce rates often rise because people cannot solve their financial problems. In some cases because of the unemployment the youth delay their marriage which is also a prominent social problem.

Afghanistan comes in the list of top countries with highest unemployment where the unemployment rate is estimated over than 60%. Unemployment & social difficulties increases the number of drug addicts, the number of drug users in Afghanistan is estimated to be as high as 1.6 million, or about 5.3 percent of the population, among the highest rates in the world. Nationwide, one in 10 urban households has at least one drug user. In fact, there is a strong correlation between large numbers of unemployed cohorts and political violence.

Unemployment has a positive effect on the rise of violence and economic instability in Afghanistan. Most Afghans believe that unemployment is the main cause of continuous insurgency in the

country. Unemployment is a very useful recruiting tool for the Taliban and like minded groups to engage the youths in the fight against the government and its people. Uneducated young people in Afghanistan have few opportunities for positive engagement; they represent a ready pool of recruits for groups seeking to mobilize violence such as the Taliban. There are many examples that young unemployed Afghans joined the anti government armed groups. In fact they are not joining the extremists or insurgents to follow their ideology, and sometimes they are against their ideology but they joined them to earn money to buy a loaf of bread for themselves and for their families. It is a clear fact that killing of insurgents did not weaken the insurgent forces and they seems to be more stronger and the major reason can be the high rate of unemployment in country, which leads more of our unemployed youths to join the anti-government insurgent groups. Unemployed teens are used as suicide attackers, battle forces, or laborers for implanting Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and in some provinces unemployment has also led people to grow opium, poppy, and others are encouraged to join the extremist groups.

To win the war against terrorist the government must change strategy, and most importantly take back the destructive weapon of unemployment from the enemy hand. Unemployment in Afghanistan is very destructive to security conditions and economic growth. Lack of jobs in the country has led thousands of young Afghan men migrating to the neighboring countries, where they can be abused, exploited, tortured, trafficked, addicted and humiliated. Labor migration has possibly created a remittance dependent economy. However, those jobless teenagers who actually can not meet the expense of escaping the unemployment remain in the country and relocate from one region to another where they can find job. This is the group of people who are endangering the security situation.

According to the assessment done by different news media, and international institutions, most of these young men start to either return back to their farmlands or join the Taliban extremist groups. The best alternative they have is farming opium poppy. Opium production is fueling the insurgents, and flaming the instability in the country. It is a lucrative crop compare to any other product that the farmers can grow. However, Taliban and other extremist groups smuggle opium to neighboring countries and sell it at a higher price. This trade is the most beneficial and earns high revenue for the insurgents. The revenue is empowering the enemy of Afghanistan in fighting against the foreign and domestic troops. Finally, it is the people's stomach—not their heart—that leave their country and work for enemy.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammad-zahirakbari@gmail.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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