

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



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The Quagmire of Poverty

Poverty is one of the meanest menaces in human society. It is responsible for myriads of social evils and disturbances. It is a quagmire that not only grasps the society from its legs but also clasp an individual from his throat.

A poor person does not only suffer from aching of starvation but also from the discriminating behavior of the society. The society treats a poor person just like an orphan. People try to avoid his company and thus isolate him in the worst possible manner. He does not seem to have any dignity and respect even among his close relatives.

All a poor person goes through during destitution is the agony of poverty. In that agony there is hunger, disease, grief and lengthy days and nights. Hunger is the worst of them. It engulfs human senses and thinking. A hungry person does not seem to be thinking about anything else other than food to eat.

All his thoughts, his attention and feelings are bound to be searching food. Luxurious aesthetic sense, praise for beauty and work of art, social responsibility and religious obligations all seem to be negligible as compared to the agony of the hunger he is suffering from. If you talk of a beautiful night with a full moon and even share some poetry about it to a hungry man he would not be able to understand anything and would see the full moon to be a bread that he would wish to eat.

And then a country suffering from poverty tends to have more social problems. Consider the example of Afghanistan - there are many social problems that have their roots in poverty. Corruption, theft, drug addiction and even terrorism, in some or other, are connected to poverty. There are thieves who steal in order to feed their families who are suffering from starvation.

There are youngsters, who having found no job and having no sources of income join terrorists who promise them some money. There are many others of the youngsters who have become suicide bombers and can be bought for some hundreds of dollar. And then there are the ones who have given up struggling against the cruel poverty and opted for drugs - at least addiction minimizes their pain and make them more forgetful of their miserable lives.

However, these facts are never pondered upon. Corruption, theft and drug addiction are now being related to 'Criminal Genes' and 'Filthy Blood'. It is said that thieves, addicts and terrorists are so because of their nature. However the actual fact is being covered.

The social circumstances and the irresponsible human attitude that are basically responsible for most of the poverty are not being discussed. It can be easily observed that there are many people in our society who work from dawn till dusk, with all the energies they have and still they are poor and their families do not have rudimentary requirements of life and then there are few others who are born in rich families, do nothing and still have all the luxuries of life. This is not even fortune or luck, it is the socio-economic setup that has made such a tragic reality possible. It is supporting the rich to become richer and pushing the poor deeper in the abyss of destitution. We, human beings, require to change our consideration. It is difficult to imagine how we are not able to see the suffering of the millions whom we experience every day, but we are able to focus our attentions towards the things that are less important and more destructive. We are ready to exert our energy for weapons, wars and ways of annihilating others but never concentrate on how we can help a poor person who is living from hand to mouth in our immediate neighborhood.

This is, in fact, the biggest injustice that we are doing to our own specie. Dwight D. Eisenhower beautifully clarifies this fact, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."

Our country Afghanistan also requires to fight the menace of poverty seriously as more than 20 million people live below the poverty line. All the other fights relating to insecurity, terrorism, corruption and crimes must be dealt as secondary and all the efforts must be diverted for slaying the giant of poverty; otherwise, all the efforts would end up in smoke and the giant of poverty would stand victorious over the corpses of the poor!



The Suffocating Air of Kabul

By Hujjatullah Zia

Kabul residents encounter a myriad of challenges and air pollution is one of the most serious one. The pollution increases in winter as residents burn coal for heating. Thick columns of smoke are emitting from chimneys and no one, including the officials, take responsibility or care for the public health. Due to heavy fog, you will see only some meters away and breathe the smoke and polluted air.

If you walk in Kabul streets in early morning or late evening, the heavy fog will fill your lung. The pollution is not only as a result of burning coal, but the brick kilns and old cars also pollute the air. Moreover, you will always see piles of trash on the sides of road and in streets since no trash cans are installed in cities by the municipality.

There are two major reasons behind the disorder and pollution in Kabul city. First, more than five million people live here which is beyond the capacity of this city. In such a case, the government is not able to provide the residents with facilities. The government even cannot afford to keep the city clean. Citizens also complain about basic necessities such as clean water and irregular electricity. Second, the constructions are not based on a map. The buildings are made without a plan.

There are narrow streets with large number of buildings made in and the occupants simply throw their trash inside the streets. Besides the terrible traffic system, the roads are too narrow but there are large number of vehicles. People use their private vehicles whenever they want and government poses no ban on old cars which pollute the air. If old cars were banned and people were not allowed to use their private vehicles all days, the amount of pollution could decrease to some extent.

On the other hand, the government's negligence made citizens so careless about the sanitation or cleanliness. They simply throw the trash on the streets and roads. Children and even old people urinate on the sides of roads in Kabul city. As citizens, they feel no sense of responsibility toward their environment and as if they do not belong to this city. This way, the future generation will also grow irresponsible. They are socialized in the same way, grow up in the same environment, and acquire the same sense of irresponsibility.

As a result of pollution and dirty water, the graph of pa-

tients is too high in Kabul. Drugstores are likely to be the busiest places in Kabul city. Doctors are as busy as bee treating the patients. After all, if you visit the embassies of neighboring countries, mainly India and Pakistan, you will see scores of people are applying for visa every day to be treated across the border. The low-quality drug in the country is a big trouble for citizens and compounded their challenges. To cut short, lack of clean water and unmitigated air pollution are the major reasons behind the widespread diseases.

It is more than a decade that the government has solved none of the challenges of Kabul residents. Officials simply postpone solving the problems from one year to the next. You will hear too many talks and mouth-watering promises from officials about facilities in Kabul, however, they are yet to be fulfilled. I can claim with full certainty that a single problem of Kabul residents has not been resolved within more than a decade. Although this city does not have enough capacity for that number of residents, at least one of the problems should have been solved within the past decade.

There is no rule in the city at all. For example, drivers stop and park their vehicles wherever they wish. Street vendors occupy everywhere in the city. They throw the garbage in the city, it is what the government allows them and installs no trash bin on the sides of the road.

The challenges of Kabul residents have been downplayed and turned a close eye by the government. In spite of the public complaints, the challenges remain as serious as ever. Kabul residents continue suffering from lack of access to clean water, clean environment, electricity, gas, etc. However, since officials' feet do not touch the dusty and muddy streets of Kabul, they pay no attention to public troubles.

To mitigate the pollution in major cities, mainly in Kabul, the government will have to pay serious attention to the ongoing problems. The municipalities need to install trash bin on the sides of the road so that citizens could put their trash inside, this will arouse the sense of public responsibility toward the environment. If the government underestimates these challenges and does not care about the environment, citizens will remain irresponsible, too. To solve the root of the problems, there should be a plan for buildings and constructions.

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What is unity?

By Zahir Akbari

Unity is the act of joining together and living together under a nondiscriminatory political system in order to achieve national goals. In the meantime, political systems, more importantly the educational system, media and elites are to establish a deeper collective feeling of coexistence. This feeling of national unity is extremely required for leading the nation towards its progress and prosperity and this feeling of national unity helps strengthen the nation and promotes peace and love in a country. It gives people sense of security for they are able to know each other better and understand each other's sensitivity. Unity promotes cooperation and opens opportunity to excellence.

People living in Afghanistan, somewhat, belong to different castes, religion and ethnic origins. This diversity of caste, colors, religions, languages and cultures is our own identity. They are like different flowers in a garden. The beauty of the garden lies in the varieties of its flowers and fragrance. This is the unique feature of Afghanistan. Whatever caste, creed, culture and customs we follow, we are all Afghani the beautiful flowers of the same garden, Afghanistan. We should think that the progress of the country is our own progress while its misfortune is the misfortune of every Afghan Citizen. Thus, there should be unity in diversity in Afghanistan - the main basis to strengthen the feeling of unity among. According to national and international law, the first important principle of peaceful life is equity and equality regardless of their race, language, culture, color, religion and gender.

Any unity which doesn't have its origin in the multitudes is tyranny. In fact, unity in diversity is a concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation that shifts focus from unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and/or psychological differences towards a more complex unity based on an understanding that difference enriches human interactions.

"Unity in diversity" is a popular motto within and among nation states, and also in political and social movements. But the deep feeling of unity is not formed by motto or using good words it must come out from national will through creating good educational system, good legal system and over all good political system. So, we should note that unity is beyond slogans or paternal advices! It is not achieved unless we truly believe in it and realize the common law that one should love his neighbor as himself.

Promotion of this feeling is crucial to lead the nation or the world towards its progress, prosperity and sincere brotherhood. It is the only way that increase trust, sympathy and general collaboration against social disorders or foreign aggressions. It gives people sense of security so as to know each other better and understand each other's sensitivity. It can unite and promotes co-operation and

opens opportunity to excellence.

In the other words, no country has ever reached the blessing of unity without social justice. It is highly important that new generation of Afghanistan deeply believe that social justice and meritocracy are an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous life within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote rights of minority groups, gender equality, children and other vulnerable people.

Genuinely, we cannot become one unless we remove all barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. Also, the government should advance social justice to remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, disability and replacing tradition to legal justice system. On the other hand, the mass should also play a central role in electing good leaders.

They must vote on the basis of ones' patriotic commitment, meritocracy and background profile. They have to be aware to vote for leaders who unite, not divide and distinguish that they are real representative of Afghan people not any second countries.

Therefore, unity and national integration must be the main agenda of the country government, especially the country's leaders. Various genuine mottos and strategies need to be organized for the purpose of fostering unity and relationship among races by means of various policies. In addition, it is the responsibility of religious scholar, ministry of culture and education to aware new generation differentiates between general peaceful spirit of holy Quran and hatred interpretations imposed by extremists. We must accept unity in diversity as one of unbreakable principle in our social and political platforms. People should be taught that religious faithwa (degree) is only issued by credible addresses under certain terms and conditions.

Finally, we must learn from vast political experience available in today's world; it was the power of unity that changed the destiny of many war-torn countries both in eastern, western and also European countries. No race or tribe can be dignified alone; In Africa, When the Apartheid of Republic of South Africa celebrated 20 years of independence on 31 May 1981, the theme of the celebrations was "unity in diversity" as a cynical attempt to explain away the inequalities in South African life but Anti-apartheid campaigners opposed these celebrations and called on runners of the Comrades Marathon to protest at the co-option of the event by wearing a black armband. The winner of the race, Bruce Fordyce, was one of those wearing a black armband. This term has since been incorporated into the preamble of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa as a central tenet of the new South Africa. In short, we should believe if there is no unity, no rescue.

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