

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

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Social Reforms Crucial to Collective Success

At present, nations pursue their goals to collective progress, social wellbeing and safeguards from possible incursion. The consolidation of a state primarily pivots on the former requisites than latter, provided that the universal notion of peaceful coexistence isn't run-down. The role of nation states thereby is confined to provision of social services than keeping large standing army. Conversely, the nascent Islamic democratic state of Afghanistan is distant yet to embrace the modern democratic norms of rule of law, pluralism, segregation of state and religion and civil liberties. A society at the behest of irrational discourse and traditional laws is bound to suffer and wander till the onset of pertinent cognition of introducing social reforms.

Social reform are often gradual but understated changes to particular characteristics of society, although when a social reform does not work, a radical, aggressive social reform may take place. However, it seeks to reform policies regarding women's rights, child labor, civil rights, education systems, judicial system, institutional discretionary power, health services, housing schemes and universal suffrage.

Women constituting half of the population are rendered dysfunctional, put on the brunt of socio-religious charges - a tactic that not only underestimate their mental and physical soundness but also coerce them at the bank of societal undertakings. This is an absolute inequitable conduct and deliberate negation of societal building capacity, they are gifted with. A woman despite numerous discriminations dare making public appearances, serving state institutions are rendered vulnerable to harassment, offensive charges and even physical abuse from both state and non-state actors.

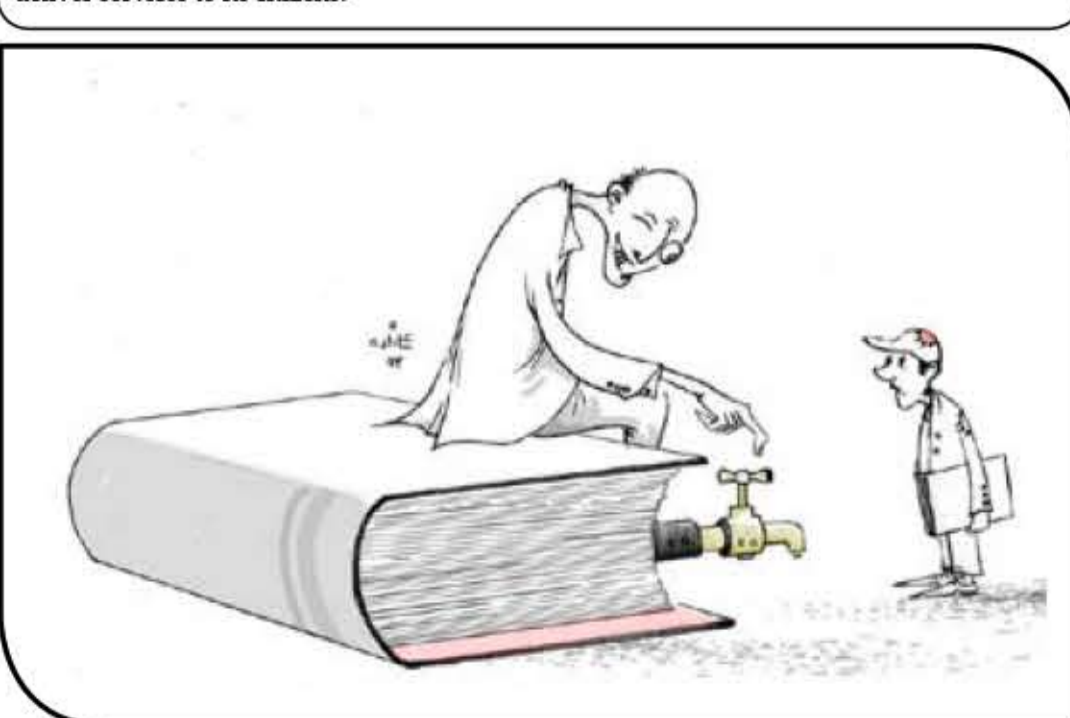
Another, predicament running across our social consciences unfelt is growing child labor. The rule of land either is silent at the subject or owes subtly implemented provisions, shelved to add into the look of constitutional edifice. Notwithstanding, the children subjected endless afflictions and exploitation ranging from physical, mental abuses and tortures fails to earn the attention of guardian of law. Previously the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSMD) reported that human struggles transfer Afghan children abroad through illegal means and many of these children are abused by the mafia and smugglers on the routs toward the foreign countries. Eliminating child labor is one of the biggest challenges for the upcoming government that needs immediate attention. Child labor not only causes damage to a child's physical and mental health, but also keep him deprive of his basic rights to education, development and freedom. Keeping the gravity of problems in consideration the government of Afghanistan must take immediate steps for alleviating the child labor on war footing.

Institutional reforms to broaden Afghan political participation and punish corruption would be preferable, but institution building is fast slipping beyond reach. It may soon be necessary to settle for constraining favoritism at the margin by renegotiating today's political deals between Kabul and sub-national power brokers to exclude only the worst abuses. In particular, land taking by criminal patronage networks is uniquely destructive; with Western patience and resources dwindling, preventing official land grabs could soon be the limit of the achievable. Its response emphasizes formal institution building by creating an independent, effective attorney general's office plus a military equivalent for the security forces. At the same time, electoral reform is intended to open political participation and strengthen the parliament as a check on executive excesses. These are noble goals. But they are very ambitious, and will require more time and resources than the West now seems willing to commit. This is because formal institutions have the weaknesses of their strengths: if effective, they pose a permanent, uncontrollable threat to any official with corruption in the past or present. As such, they threaten a wide array of major figures; creating potent opposition that today's limited leverage will be hard-pressed to overcome.

Afghan governance is now shaped by a series of powerful patron-client networks designed to provide political top cover for corruption that enriches the network at the citizenry's expense. Regrettably every elected leader depends on the networks' leadership to deliver political support; in exchange, he empowers them with critical appointments, protects them from prosecution, and allows them to prey on the public. This is what we witnessed formerly, when cabinet members were to be picked for various slots, a great deal of favoritism and loyalty exercised to win the confidence. The result is a government of informal political deal making rather than rule-based administration by publicly accountable institutions.

In Afghanistan, land is often the difference between feeding one's family and destitution; the future of many families, tribes, and communities depends on their land holdings. Yet it is common for the powerful in Afghanistan to throw people off their land, often for economic development projects that serve chiefly as vehicles for fraudulent loans and financial schemes that benefit officials and their associates. According to a report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), some 9 million Afghans - 36 per cent of the population - are believed to live in absolute poverty and a further 37 per cent live only slightly above the poverty line, despite an estimated injection of billions of dollars in previous years. Only 23 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and only 24 per cent of Afghans above the age of 15 can read and write, with much lower literacy rates among women and nomadic populations. It's concluded in the light of aforesaid details, an all-encompassing social reforms might subside the magnitude of problems if couldn't eradicate them. The provision of life necessities, social security safeguards, access to law, right to vote etc stands the primary responsibilities of the state. The government must design to improve its capacity to deliver services to its citizens.

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Living for One's Own Self

By Dilawar Sherzai

One of the dominating beliefs in today's world is that a person should live for others. By living for others, he can really pursue the aim of live and there are certain people who even claim that a person is created for others. However, such a way of thinking seems to be confused in a sense. If a person is created for others, why are the others created then? Every person, in my perception, lives or must live for his own-self; he is not created for others and that is neither the objective of his being.

Oscar Wilde had said, "The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly - that is what each of us is here for." A person is lost and his existence does not have any importance or even impact, neither on himself nor on others, if he does not understand his own being, his own self. Man's search in his own existence is his first priority or should be his first priority. That is the beginning and all the other steps follow automatically. Even a person can only be useful to others and assist them if he has realized his own self fully. Without knowing his true nature and without developing his personality, helping others can only be a day-dream.

Definitely, it seems more humane and more sensitive to say that one must live for others, but such a feeling can only be an emotional eruption and may not turn into a possible action. It is not realistic and a possibility to live for others. Yes, a person can be cooperative to others and can assist them but cannot live his entire life for fulfilling the desires and wants of others. Those who try to do so, in fact, achieve nothing, as it is widely accepted that the ones who try to please everyone, actually please no one.

It was also quoted wisely by Oscar Wilde that most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation. And, by doing so, they, as a matter of fact, lose their identities. They become bodies without souls and minds without thoughts. They are robots which are basically functioning on the commands of others. Their remote controls are with others and others use them for their own motives. They are slaves with their masters defining their destinies and their lives.

Some may argue that nature is full of the examples where different things are dependent on one another and cannot live without each other. For example, they may claim that a tree is there to provide food and leaf for human beings and animals. It is there to provide clean environment to others and even shade during the summer. Thus, based on such claims they may conclude that every existence is there for the benefits of others. However, they fail to realize the real mystery of existence. Every existence in its essence wants to become what it has to.

A tree has to become a tree and without becoming a tree it cannot provide the support to others that it does. It is not that it lives to facilitate others but, in fact, it lives to become what it is; it does not have the conscious to direct his life for the service of others. It does not plan that it has to generate fruits for others and be fuel for humans. It just becomes a tree and all the other qualities automatically become a part of its existence.

A human being can also experience such a beauty in his existence. He can be affectionate to others, spread love to them and be kind and generous. But, he does not have to do so by deciding to live for others by planning that he would dedicate his life for them. All he requires to do is realize his own-self; be what he is supposed to be; become a human and all the other qualities will directly be a part of his existence. He will then only spread love, affection and generosity without even claiming that he is doing so.

What is true for an individual is also true for a particular group of people. If a nation, let's suppose, decides to live for others and claims that it is there for the benefits of others, can such a nation really be capable enough to rise to dignity and glory? Never! A nation that does not understand its own self, does not live for itself and does not know its capabilities and priorities such a nation would ultimately face a failure. It would be lost in waiting for the considerations and priorities of others and would live a slavish life. It is important that a nation must first live for its own self and afterwards it would be in a position to support and assist others.

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Religion Nurtures Human Rights' Discourse

By Hujjatullah Zia

Metaphysical human rights, which are discussed among religious scholars, will neither heal the bleeding wounds of human societies nor preclude from violence and bloodshed. Human rights' discourse from religious perspective will widen the schism between religious and secular parties and religious wars and crusades will be repeated in human history - which is against the objective of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It is believed that the soul of religions nurture the UDHR but fundamental interpretations of religious texts, which deny pluralism and relativism, challenge the Declaration.

Human rights' discourse is debated hotly in Islamic world, and UDHR is acceptable only among the moderate followers. Since the maudlin religionists were indoctrinated persistently by religious radicals, they deem the UDHR contradictory to their faith, beliefs and moral values.

It should be noted that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is based on moral values, adopted to preclude from violence, oppression and barbarity which had outraged the human conscience, and to ensure freedom, peace and justice around the globe. The modern human rights' discourse aims to recognize human's rights and dignity which root in moral values and religious concepts. The objective of the UDHR is stated in its preamble, "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people, Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law ..."

Many religious intellectuals believe that there exist "substantial" and "accidental" issues in Islam. The accidental matters took place on the grounds of historical, social, economic and political conditions of Hejaz - the geographical center of Prophet's invitation. Since Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a charismatic leader, his charisma oozed charms and attractions in a way that the maudlin religionists, who were smoldering with burning faith and strong sense of godliness, did not involve in rational and analytical discussions.

Fourteen centuries have elapsed from the age of our Prophet and we live in modern era with different cultures and social facts. It is time to analyze the substantial and accidental issues of Islam. We have to consider

the locality and social and historical phenomena of our Prophet. It is believed that studying the religious issues apart from historical facts will be fruitless. The accidental facts root in historical phenomena of a certain locality. For instance, if Islam emerged in a locality having different culture from Hejaz, the accidental issues would be colored by that culture or social facts.

Religious and political freedoms, which are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were not discussed in Hejaz in their modern concept. These freedoms were not recognized in Hejaz on the grounds that the necessary social evolutions did not come to existence. Islam emerged in a land that idolatry reflected the social identity of Mecca people. Idolatry was handed down from one generation to the next one. The strong animosity and violent backlash against the Prophet and his followers in Mecca reveal that religious freedom and conversion jeopardized their social solidarity which was beyond their tolerance. Since religion was considered the social identity and social solidarity of those societies, religious freedom, in its modern concept, was beyond their imagination.

The same was the case with political freedom. People were subjugated to sultans and tribal leaders. There was no central government in Hejaz and it was the tribal leaders who ruled over Mecca and Medina. Allegiance and council were the traditional methods of obedience rather than political freedom. However the soul of authoritativeness existed with puissant force and social or political authority was in the realm of tribal leaders in earnest.

Citizens can be entitled with the right to freedom of religion in a society where social identity and solidarity relate to nationality rather than religion. However, in Hejaz, it was only religion and tribe which were considered as social identity and social solidarity. An individual was deemed as a member of a tribe rather than a citizen and there was no cultural ground for freedom of religion or political liberty. Hence, if social identity and solidarity do not transit from religious factors to secular ones and an individual does not be considered as citizen, discussing about the freedom of religion and political liberty will be in vain.

So, religious and political freedoms are the basic rights of contemporary men and the product of emergence of society and state. Human rights aim to adjust the men's social relations in modern age - the age of pluralism, relativism and skepticism. The freedom of religion in Universal Declaration of Human Rights means that one is entitled with basic rights such as freedom, social rights and the right to citizenship irrespective of his/her religion or beliefs. Thus, freedom of religion, in the modern concept, is merely related to contemporary human rights which was beyond imagination if Hejaz and it does not contradict one's religious beliefs or moral values.

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