

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



February 23, 2017

## Problems with Democracy in Afghanistan

Democracy is the political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government they choose to establish. In modern democracies, supreme authority is exercised for the most part by representatives elected by popular suffrage. The representatives may be supplanted by the electorate according to the legal procedures of recall and referendum, and they are, at least in principle, responsible to the electorate. Democracy demands certain things without which it is unable to work. First of all, it needs a written constitution, a strong one which assures the rights of the people to be guarded irrespective of class, creed, influence and power. Without a clearly written constitution, it is not possible to form the base of a democratic state.

Democracy needs a parliament of powers. Unlike dictatorship, vested where powers are in one hand, it divides them between people and government. People have the power to question government for any step at any time. Government too is not formed by a single man with the authority to do everything. It has different parts and Prime Minister or President is elected by them by winning the vote of confidence. He is responsible for his decisions, can be questioned any moment and has to work with the co-operation of his cabinet. Democracy needs a disciplined election system free of loopholes and corruption. It demands sincerity and honesty from the very lowest to the very highest level. Ideally, a man honestly chooses his representative on sound grounds of ability.

The whole process of election involves giving rights to rule to only those deserving it. All well-organized party system is one of the basic components of democracy. Parties having the full knowledge of political system, knowing their duties and rights of people and showing tolerance towards each other are needed. Parties insincere to country and general public and running after their own selfish motives fail to play a vital role in the democratic process.

Education of all is an essential pre-requisite of democracy because it gives people a greater foresight and helps them to develop a scientific attitude of mind which steers clear emotional approach to life. And above all, a democratic state depends for its successful working upon the corporate efforts of its citizens. Corporate efforts, therefore, require the harmonious fitting in individual aspects for benefit of the whole.

Meanwhile, the functions of democracy are manifold. It's very first function is to produce a man, as the unit of civic life who is individually developed yet socially responsible. It is to develop consciousness of 'rights' among people for themselves and others both. Not only rights but awareness of duties too is the responsibility of democracy.

When we go through the demands and functions of democracy, the question arises, why democracy is a failure in Afghanistan and how to make it feasible in Afghanistan in future. In order to answer these questions we have to chalk out the factors that are making the future of democracy dark and its feasibility weak in the country.

For a democracy to flourish, an enlightened educated and politically alert electorate is absolutely necessary. A people plagued with hunger, disease and poverty and steeped in ignorance and superstition form a deplorably shaky and unreliable electorate. Afghanistan has one of the lowest per, capita income in the world. Miserable standards of living and gross inequality in the distribution of wealth are the most unavoidable drawbacks of our social structure. The ordinary man is caught in a vicious circle of ignorance and poverty.

How can he think of his broader issues of democracy and public opinion when his day to day life is miserable? Uncertain of where his next meal will come from, he can give little thought to high ideals of political freedom and is not interested in national or international affairs, if they do not affect him personally. In such conditions, no democracy can flourish. Most of our population live in rural areas. Communications are poor and many villages remain deprived of all mass media and are, therefore, indifferent and unaware to political development and governmental upheavals.

The proportion of educated and politically conscious people is insignificant. The common man is under the control of his feudal lord and shows traditional loyalty to the tribal chief, landlord or the religious leader of the village. His hopes and desires do not go beyond the boundary walls of his village because his outlook is very narrow and his vision cramped. He cannot imagine a government shaped and controlled by him and working for him. Unless the common man participates, we cannot think of democracy. Afghanistan possesses very few politicians who have that sense of public spirit, disinterested service and nationwide vision which are necessary for the working of democracy. Here, most politicians are power hungry. They exploit the people for their own benefits. Political stability is the base of democracy and there is a crying need for leaders who really care for the people and do not simply indulge in shouting empty slogans. Unity among people is required for democracy which is wanting in our country.



## Good Teaching Practices

By Saikat Kumar Basu

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Teachers teach different subjects in their class rooms or in the laboratories and libraries; conduct exams and class tests, field trips; and even do research works with their students. In course of their career they often encounter frustrations and misunderstanding; but also experience new excitements and happiness. Teaching is not a static, but a dynamic process that require continuous strategies to adapt to new situations and to make the courses more engaging, interesting and easy to digest. It implies the use of various materials, books, boards; but also new techniques and technologies to better engage student in an active learning process.

Among the methods and techniques that serve students well is starting a new course with a game or a story that can hold student attention without bothering them initially with the pain of learning something new and challenging. It is important to build in the student interest first and then slowly move forward with the content starting from simple towards complexity in a stepwise manner. Teachers must learn to listen, observe and adopt new strategies to better serve their target student communities.

The interactions with their students, guardians as well as peers can help a teacher to develop new strategies to cater to their students more efficiently. Different courses have an in-depth comprehension of the forms of knowledge embodied in the traditional disciplines; of the interdisciplinary nature of inquiry and of the multiple forms of understanding that individual student bring to the classroom. In a dynamic world, it is necessary to continuously expand knowledge base to make it more useful for the students.

The importance of course preparation and evaluation before, during and after a course should contribute significantly in understanding and measuring student learning and individual academic progress. Teaching is a profession that needs the abilities to transpire the passion of learning among the students. A well-grounded knowledge of the content area is essential for any educator; however, at the same time, gaining practical wisdom that integrates different forms of understanding, skilled actions both in and outside the classroom along with sensitivity towards individual student need are the keys to this noble profession. In another word, pedagogy is necessary to convey information accordingly.

Enrollment in any education programs should always aim at better equipping students with valuable skills and tools for further enhancing their learning abilities and learning outcomes. Furthermore, teaching in local and regional languages is central to our national identity and a reflection of our values rooted in social justice and equity.

The driving force behind young people's decision to continue their education in vernacular languages should never be underestimated as this has direct and positive learning outcomes. Teachers should be well verse in local languages to be able to better engage with their target student communities. The learning components must be presented in the format of

integrated modules during which students can master the theory as well successfully complete their laboratory experiments and field observations, as the case may be. Students should be made to demonstrate their learning skills and understanding of a particular topic via multiple activities based on class tests, ability to conduct experiments individually in accordance to the kits, manuals and protocols provided, successfully complete group assignments, confidently make presentations to fellow students and teachers or through independent report preparation. The self-assessment section is important as this should include open-ended questions that focus on individual student's learning ability.

A course or a program should not only provide the students with basic understanding of the core principles; but also help them to master skills and abilities in better understanding the complexities of individual discipline. The targeted student skills should include competence in lab work, help in developing better communication and building comprehensive knowledge base and promote student ability to identify knowledge linkages within their field based on their deeper understanding of the intellectual and practical aspect of the discipline, build confidence and lastly prepare them for an appropriate career or higher studies. Greater clarity in understanding what career or educational path an individual student might wish to pursue is an important responsibility of a good teacher. Teaching should have a direct relevance to an individual teacher's work experience and educational background; so that he/she can add those experiences to better equip them with effective knowledge in a particular discipline that will be central to their teaching practice. A good teacher should be always ready to train students under various multicultural environments at different levels; and in a wide variety of settings, libraries, class rooms, workshops, fields, labs; depending on the discipline they are specializing. In the process, they can gain extensive professional and practical experiences, student management and teaching skills that can help them to quickly adapt to any classroom environment and better train them to run a curriculum efficiently.

Advance teaching training can further empower them in developing and assessing their effectiveness as a successful teacher. A teacher's passion to explain and share his/her knowledge to the students is critical for helping him/her in establishing more profound teaching techniques and methodologies on conveying information to students at different age groups. A good teacher can therefore play a more critical role within the teaching community by providing effective operational and tactical support to help students in their development and to guide them in leadership roles.

It is always important to adapt a cooperative and stress free learning environment by an individual teacher and promote dialogues among students and the teacher for better learning through perseverance, discipline and dedication. Teachers with better teaching skills always attract bright students and help them to reach their full potential.

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## Obstacles before Afghan Women

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan women suffer severe violence and their rights and dignity are violated in some ways. The outpouring of pain and anguish of Afghan women continues and they are still the inferior creature in the patriarchal system. Their voice and concerns fall on deaf ears.

Their tendency towards democratization and their ideas regarding their own rights are considered brazen and against the social norm. Women are believed to have more responsibilities than rights. Some self-righteous individuals tend to articulate their ideas about women persistently, which are mostly unacceptable in sound minds.

In addition to domestic violence, there are many social barriers which restrict the role of Afghan women. Some unfair views regarding women prevail among the officials as well which demoralize them and hamper their progress. It is self-explanatory that traditional customs and views had strong sway in Afghanistan throughout the history.

The Taliban regime strengthened those traditions and even radicalized them through fundamental interpretations of religious texts, tinged with their own tastes and parochial mindsets. Such mentalities are still practiced in tribal belts and those views are held regarding women's rights and freedoms. Therefore, Afghan women are punished and tortured in desert courts in tribal areas, which is against the Constitution of the country. The Taliban militants continue their cruel practices against women and target them in public places.

In other words, Afghan women are left at the mercy of militancy and lose their lives in suicide bombings and terrorist attacks. The emergence of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL also known as IS) group seems to pose more serious threat to women, especially those who belong to ethnic minority groups. Their ideology is harsher than the Taliban.

By and large, the role of Afghan women has remained low in political decision makings and no more than four female ministers and eight deputy ministers were appointed in the National Unity Government (NUG).

Similarly, only one woman, Masuma Moradi, holds the position of provincial governor in Daikundi province. Based on a recent report, the participation of women in official decisions within the government has raised no more than one per cent (10.7 % share) in the last three years.

Constitutionally, there are no discriminations between man and woman and both are supposed to exercise their rights and dignity freely. The constitution in the post-Taliban Afghanistan is the most unprecedented one which has ever been approved and holds equal rights for men and women.

Article 22 states, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citi-

zens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law." Similarly, the government is to protect the rights of all citizens as it is said, "The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity."

However, women are the victim of injustice and violence. Reports say that in the current solar year, seven females have been killed in Bamyan province, including a young girls, who were found dead recently. The main reasons behind these incidents are believed to be patriarchal view and traditional mindset, which considers women an inferior creature. When females dress up against the cultural norms of their areas, they trigger the anger of their families and will be punished physically which lead to death, sometimes.

In traditional societies, a woman is considered as a productive creature to give birth and to feed and train her children. She is chained in cradle at birth, bound to suffer within the four walls of the kitchen and finally buried in an unmarked grave or her ashes will melt away - she takes all her dreams to the grave with her. This is her role she plays in a traditional community. That is to say, women have to be restricted within the four walls and do the household chores with their lips sealed. They should live under the dominance of their husbands and created to satisfy their carnal desires. Their presence in social life is toxic to the society on the grounds that their devilish charm will challenge men's faith. Ultimately, men will be tempted to their feminine attractions and divert from the right path. Thus, women have to live behind a screen.

It should be noted that discriminating one on the grounds of their sex is against the law. Women should no more suffer men's fractious attitudes, mental and physical tortures. The religious guidelines and country's law should be practiced upon and the patriarchal system should end so that women's rights and dignity be held in respect.

Those who violate law flagrantly, through harming women, should be prosecuted.

Moreover, the Ulema Council and clergy will have to enlighten the rights and dignity of women according to religious tenets and condemn the violent acts being practiced against women, which are not acceptable based on religious or constitutional law. To put it succinctly, the clergy will have to articulate the true rights of women and the government must enforce the law to mitigate the violence.

The government has committed to empower women and develop their role to 30 per cent in the three next years. The state is responsible to decrease the barriers which hamper women's progress, fight terrorism to strengthen democracy and create safe ground for the social activities of all citizens and prosecute the violators of women's rights.

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