

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



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The Challenges of Multiculturalism

The world of ours is embellished with variety of thoughts, feelings, perceptions and ideologies. And the same variety, many believe, is the beauty of it. However, maintaining the same variety, the challenge for the current phase of human evolution is to co-exist with harmony and peace.

No reason can stand solid for killing innocent fellow human beings; not even the differences in views and opinions. In real sense they are bound to differ in their thinking, as human beings are born with different perceptions. Every individual is bound to be different in some way or the other from others. That is what forms his/her personality. Differences in thoughts can never harm you unless they are pursued with extremist sentiments and ultimately guided to violence and terror. If others differ from you, it means you exist. They are supporting you in building your identity. There is no need of getting sick of that. And no one can ever give you the right to kill others just because they belong to a different religion, ideology or sect as long as they do not mean to harm you.

The same stands correct for groups and institutions as well, and may even be applied to religions and cultures. But, unfortunately, this concept has been vehemently ignored by the people and the violation of the same concept has led to the killing of millions of people. The differences among the people and the groups of people seem to be getting deeper instead of disappearing. The globalization process that has been expected to bring people together has not been able to maintain a harmonious multi-cultural world. The people still because of their cultural, religious and ethnic differences seem to abhor others and even get ready to launch tyrannical missions against each other.

Definitely, immigration along with the developments in communication and transportation has made it possible for the people of different cultural backgrounds to get closer to each other, which has given rise to the concept of multiculturalism - different cultures co-existing in harmony at least theoretically. Multiculturalism definitely depicts and demands higher human values, but it is difficult to manage.

There are various challenges that a multicultural society has to face. Among them acceptability is one of the most important ones. Further, the society wherein multiculturalism has to exist always generates a sort of fear of loss of national identity. This loss of national identity sometimes takes the form of political struggle through political platforms, while at other times it may take the form of violent measures. And on certain occasions it is also possible that the political parties themselves turn violent in the pursuit of their motto.

The concept of multiculturalism has not been able to implement itself thoroughly in the world. The multiculturalism has not been able to form a global ethics or a global code of conduct. It has been lost somewhere in cultural relativism. The cultures or the negatives in the cultures are accepted with the claims of cultural relativism. If the same inclination towards cultural relativism is maintained it would be very difficult for today's world to form common values, laws or systems, which are very necessary to avoid clashes among the cultures and civilizations. Unfortunately, our today's world is moving right towards the same kind of clashes.

On the other hand this is going to strengthen the phenomenon of ethnocentrism. Though many sociologists believe that ethnocentrism, to a certain extent, is unavoidable, as every individual of group of individuals have to think from their own cultural and social backgrounds and may have a perspective of others in relation to their own cultural norms and values; however, the intensity and sense of extremism in this regard can prove detrimental for world peace and for the concept of co-existence.

As the concept of ethnocentrism says that it is judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture, the ethnocentric individual will judge other groups relative to his or her own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with concern to language, behavior, customs, and religion. These ethnic distinctions and subdivisions serve to define each ethnicity's unique cultural identity. Ethnocentrism may be overt or subtle, and while it is considered a natural proclivity of human psychology, it has developed a generally negative connotation.

Anthropological studies reveal that People born into a particular culture that grow up absorbing the values and behaviors of the culture will develop a worldview that considers their culture to be the norm. If people then experience other cultures that have different values and normal behaviors, they will find that the thought patterns appropriate to their birth culture and the meanings their birth culture attaches to behaviors are not appropriate for the new cultures. However, since people are accustomed to their birth culture, it can be difficult for them to see the behaviors of people from a different culture from the viewpoint of that culture rather than from their own.

It is really fine that the different cultures in the world sustain their identity and even be proud of their historical and cultural backgrounds but they are never entitled to subjugate and devalue others cultures and values. Nonetheless, when there is the discussion of a multicultural society, there are some necessary safeguards against ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. In a multicultural society, there is a requirement of common values that do not harass human beings and violate their rights, even if the same is suggested in a particular culture.



Dose of Solution to Challenges of Educational System

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Though education is one of the most fundamental factors in socio-economic development but the condition of educational system in Afghanistan is getting more critical as day passes. According to a recent survey carried out by Justice Foundation, the situation of education has been worsening in last three years. This survey conducted with 450 interviewees including teachers, students and community leaders then 87% of them expressed that condition of education has been deteriorating since dawn of NUG (national unity government). Based on this study, 2000 female students poisoned and 1300 schools had been closed.

Now, with nearly 65 percent of illiteracy, the country retains one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world; while every year two hundred thousand illiterates are augmented to the current level but our educational system is unable to educate more than 1% out of 10 million currently uneducated people. Generally, there are 16000 schools across Afghanistan but 8,000 schools are still required to be constructed for the remaining 3 million deprived children.

The key chain factors are lack of security, poor management, corruption, unprofessional teachers, discrimination, retreating international donors and non-quality books. The statistics show that 170,000 teachers are currently working to educate over 8 million students. Among this small number of teachers, only 24 percent are legally qualified for coaching, meaning that they completed two years of educational training after high school. In certain areas, the shortage of instructors is so severe that schools are employing teachers that have only passed sixth or seventh grade despite the fact that this is illegal.

The university graduated talents are not willing to join schools either due to low salary or variety of corruptions. In some areas, teachers must bribe to get salary or wait for three to six months so that they can get their salary. Furthermore, the number of female school instructors representing are just 30 percent of teachers nationwide. Afghan girls face many obstacles when it comes to their education, including early marriage, conflicts and inaccessibility to nearby schools. As a result, only 9.2 percent of girls reach secondary school, compared to 28 percent of boys.

In addition, there are many other issues such as old shaky school buildings, outdoor schools overcrowding, which mean that sometimes multiple students must share a desk or up to ten students must share a textbook whereas the ministry of education fails to spend his allocated budget. Most schools have resorted to operating on split shifts wherein students only receive three hours of instruction each day.

Child labor has also been a serious issue in Afghanistan, and it has hindered many children from receiving an education. It is said that approximately one quarter of children ages 7 - 14 were working in recent years, with higher numbers occurring in more rural areas. Child labor makes it much more difficult

for many to attend school, while it keeps some from education completely. Students who are enrolled often fail to attend school on a regular basis due to outside obstacles like early marriage, child labor and most importantly security issues.

Similarly, educational system is undermined by corruption as it is said that there are still many ghost schools receiving funds while there is no staff or students, or the number of staff and students are fabricated. Taking bribe, discriminations and sexual abuse are the other forms of corruptions which widely exist in educational system. These issues highly bring the last decade achievements of Afghanistan's education sector under question. The existing challenges to the education sector underline the need for the national unity government to take actions in addressing the challenges in the sector.

Overall, Afghanistan is still one of the countries where many school-age children have no access to schooling or day to day they are losing their motives due to ruling psychological war and unemployed graduates. It is obvious when children are not in school or have no motivation for school, they are at an increased danger of abuse, exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups. Conflict and fragile security impedes delivery of school supplies, enrolment, monitoring and school supervision these challenges are exacerbated by entrenched tribal norms that oppose the education of girls.

Early marriage also often interrupts the education of such girls as may have been fortunate enough to have entered school. In recent years, two hundred and sixty thousand girls have been refrained from schooling, while the trend is increasing especially for senior classes.

In conclusion, we need to use from modern experiences available in today's world if there is a decisive will to rescue this nation. For example, in Japan, education is one of the top national priority that attract the highest amount of national budget. The prestige of the teaching profession elementary teachers ranked 9th and 18th in public esteem, out of 82 occupations and monthly they get average 7500\$.

Elementary teachers enjoyed higher prestige than civil and mechanical engineers, and municipal department heads. Thus, Principals' prestige is higher than that of department heads of large corporations, public accountants, and authors. University professors were ranked third, below court judges and presidents of large companies, but above physicians. The Competition for becoming a formal teacher continues to be intense; for instance, there are around 200,000 applicants annually for approximately 38,000 vacancies in Japan public school system. And legally, education is compulsory at elementary and lower secondary levels. As a result, now Japan is one of great economy power and ranked as a highest quality education with Zero illiteracy in the World!

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

Freedom - The Citizens' Basic Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

Man is born free and can enjoy this right as an integral element of a dignified life. In order to enjoy freedom, a person should be free from inhibitions of the social structure in carrying out their free will. Freedom is enhanced by the ability of citizens to participate in their government and have their voice, interests and concerns recognized as valid and acted upon. Isaiah Berlin recognized two main types of liberty. Berlin described a statement such as "I am slave to no man" as one of Negative Liberty, that is, freedom from another individual's direct interference. He contrasted this with a Positive Freedom statement such as "I am my own master", which lays claim to a freedom to choose one's own pursuits in life.

Charles Taylor's clarification may be even more useful. Taylor explains that Negative Freedom is an "opportunity-concept": one possesses Negative Freedom if one is not enslaved by external forces, and has equal access to a society's resources. Positive Freedom, says Taylor, is an "exercise-concept": possessing it might mean that one is not internally constrained; one must be able to act according to their highest self - according to reason. Put in the simplest terms, one might say that a democratic society is a free society because it is a self-determined society, and that a member of that society is free to the extent that he or she participates in its democratic process. But there are also individualist applications of the concept of positive freedom. For example, it is sometimes said that a government should aim actively to create the conditions necessary for individuals to be self-sufficient or to achieve self-realization.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was adopted on 16 December 1966 and ratified by Afghanistan on 24 January 1983, includes the basic and integral rights of a man to be observed by the state members. Those rights are as:

- 1 - Physical integrity, in the form of the right to life and freedom from torture and slavery
- 2 - Liberty and security of the person, in the form of freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention.
- 3 - Procedural fairness in law, in the form of rights to due process, a fair and impartial trial, the presumption of innocence, and recognition as a person before the law.
- 4 - Individual liberty, in the form of the freedoms of movement, thought, conscience and religion, speech, association and assembly, family rights, the right to a nationality and the right to privacy.
- 5 - Prohibition of any propaganda for war as well as any advocacy of national or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence by law.
- 6 - Political participation, including the right to vote.
- 7 - Non-discrimination, minority rights and equality before the

law. The ICCPR states in article 9 as, "Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law."

This article recognizes the rights to liberty and security of the person. It prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, requires any deprivation of liberty to be according to law, and obliges parties to allow those deprived of their liberty to challenge their imprisonment through the courts. These provisions apply not just to those imprisoned as part of the criminal process, but also to those detained due to mental illness, drug addiction, or for educational or immigration purposes.

Moreover, item 1 article 18 of ICCPR declares, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." In item 2 and 3 it says, "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice."

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others." Finally, in item 4 it adds, "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

It is said in the permeable of the Constitution of Afghanistan, "... Form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights" Furthermore, article 7 says, The state shall observe the United Nations Charter, interstate agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...." Although the integral sources of the Afghanistan's law root in Islamic sharia which hold human and his rights, including the rights to freedom, in high esteem and also our country has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and ICCPR, yet the human rights are violated to a large extent and people's freedoms are disturbed in one way or another. Hope the Executive Power act more seriously and protect the rights of the citizens that include freedom - which is one of the basic rights of each citizen.

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

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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