

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



January 10, 2015

Peace is Wise, Hostility is Otherwise

Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world. Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at; do it for peace. Let us radiate the peace of God and so light His light and extinguish in the world and in the hearts of all men all hatred and love for power.

Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other - that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbor, do you think we would still need tanks and generals? Peace and war begin at home. If we truly want peace in the world, let us begin by loving one another in our own families. If we want to spread joy, we need for every family to have joy.

"We can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom. But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion.... This, then, is my true religion, my simple faith. In this sense, there is no need for temple or church, for mosque or synagogue, no need for complicated philosophy, doctrine or dogma. Our own heart, our own mind, is the temple. The doctrine is compassion. Love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are: ultimately these are all we need. So long as we practice these in our daily lives, then no matter if we are learned or unlearned, whether we believe in Buddha or God, or follow some other religion or none at all, as long as we have compassion for others and conduct ourselves with restraint out of a sense of responsibility, there is no doubt we will be happy."

Today, nations put too much effort and money into defending their borders. They know very little about the poverty and the suffering that exist in the countries where those bordering on destitution live. If they would only defend these defenseless people with food, shelter, and clothing, it is believed that the world would be a happier place.

The poor must know that we love them, that they are wanted. They themselves have nothing to give but love. We are concerned with how to get this message of love and compassion across. We have to struggle to bring peace to the world through our work.

The Dalai Lama asserts, "A good motivation is what is needed: compassion without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their human rights and dignities. That we humans can help each other is one of our unique human capacities." He adds, "It is lack of love for ourselves that inhibits our compassion toward others. If we make friends with ourselves, then there is no obstacle to opening our hearts and minds to others."

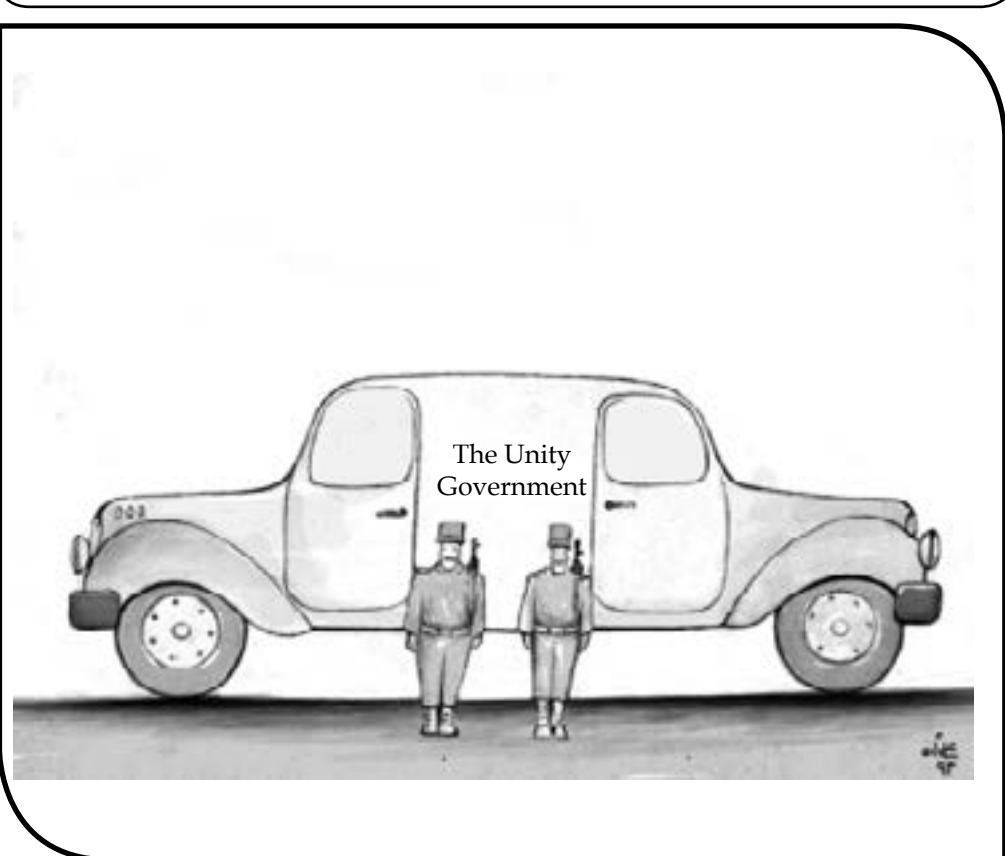
The Dalai Lama further believes that each of us in our own way can try to spread compassion into people's hearts. Western civilizations these days place great importance on filling the human "brain" with knowledge, but no one seems to care about filling the human "heart" with compassion. This is what the real role of religion is.

Thich Nhat Hanh's words are agreed upon who asserts that we often think of peace as the absence of war; that if the powerful countries would reduce their arsenals, we could have peace. But if we look deeply into the weapons, we see our own minds - our prejudices, fears, and ignorance. Even if we transported all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the reasons for bombs would still be here, in our hearts and minds, and sooner or later we would make new bombs. Seek to become more aware of what causes anger and separation, and what overcomes them. Root out the violence in your life, and learn to live compassionately and mindfully.

Hume establishes sympathy as the glue that affectively binds others to oneself and binds a community of ethical individuals together. One of the undisputed masters of the English language in his own day, Hume asserts that "the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated and decay away by insensible degrees"

It is aptly said that, "Prayers and sacrifice must be used as the most effective spiritual weapons in the war against war, and like all weapons they must be used with deliberate aim: not just with a vague aspiration for peace and security, but against violence and against war. This implies that we are also willing to sacrifice and restrain our own instinct for violence and aggressiveness in our relations with other people. We may never succeed in this campaign, but whether we succeed or not, the duty is evident.... Everything else is secondary, for the survival of the human race itself depends upon it."

It is time for human societies to cherish patience and compassion and abandon violence, war and bloodshed. All countries, groups and sects are humbly asked to practice upon the Golden Rule, "Treat others as you want to be treated." Moreover, in the age of humanity's scarcity, we are supposed to practice upon moral values and revive humanity all around the world. It is time to respect the rights and dignities of our fellows irrespective of their race, sex, color or beliefs. In short, let us practice upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."



Afghanistan after the Withdrawal of International Forces!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Except for a limited number of foreign forces left behind for the training and technical assistance of Afghan forces, rest of the forces have left the country. At the same time, the debate about the overall impact of the stay of these forces is also getting heated up. In the international media and especially in the American and British media, the continuous discussions and writings about the achievements of the forces are unveiling so many positive and negative aspects of this decade long invasion. The stay of coalition forces in Afghanistan can be declared as one of the most lengthy, costly and at the same time disastrous military movements of the modern history. Yet, the numbers of military experts who criticize this military endeavor surpass those who have rather positive feelings about them.

It all started with the decision of America and its allies to attack Afghanistan to bring an end to the regime of Taliban and completely eliminate the Al-Qaeda activists from the Afghan soil in 2001. In the beginning, the scale of military operations was kept limited but every passing day witnessed ever-expanding involvement of foreign troops in the country. It still remains a controversy as why the respective governments did not try to quickly enable the Afghan forces to control the security of the country instead of increasing the military presence of their own forces. In this connection, large numbers of military bases were established in all the provinces of the country and then started a lengthy operation of transporting different objects for military. Starting from a heavy military truck to the drinking water of soldiers, each and everything was imported. This operation, which lasted for many years, gave birth to the famous concept of 'container convoys' in which hundreds and some times, thousands of trucks assembled together as a convoy to deliver the goods to the different parts of the country. These goods entered Afghanistan from the routes of either Central Asian countries or from Pakistan, after which they travelled around the country to reach their final destination.

While talking of the achievements of these troops, they removed the radical and non-democratic government of Taliban which was gradually turning the country into a failed state. They also attained some initial success in curbing the militant groups in the country but later on, they reappeared and they still pose a great threat for the democratic setup of the country. Their role in training and establishing a well-trained and well-equipped Afghan army is also quite considerable. But their greatest achievement can be called the establishment of a democratic setup in the war-torn country that had fallen very far from any such democratic practice in its blood-bathed civil war of more than three decades. But the critics have more points against the stay of these forces. They are much opposed to the ideas that these forces should be welcomed like a 'victorious force' returning home and should be treated like heroes. They are also not ready to accept the perception that these forces are returning after a 'mission accomplished' rather they have opened a door of unrest which still needs to be shut permanently by someone.

The biggest failure of these forces came in the form of their failure to finish the remnants of Taliban and Al-Qaeda who are still active in the country and have even got stronger in the last couple of years. In the beginning, these anti-state elements disappeared with the disappearance of Taliban government and there was peace in the country for 2-3 years but later on they started emerging silently and now they run a parallel government in some parts of the country. Some military experts term

this anti-terror war a 'serious conspiracy' and their ideas point to a great game played in the country in which all the stakeholders, i.e., terrorists, foreign troops, international spy agencies, Afghan government and some of the neighboring countries are all playing their role to befool the people in and outside the country. It is really strange that an organized and strong army, equipped with the latest technology cannot beat a group of scattered militants who are disorganized, poorly-funded and rather poorly-trained. In the Helmand province, where British forces were deployed, the poppy cultivation reached to its peak in the last few years. In the beginning years, there were some achievements to decrease the poppy cultivation but later on, it turned out to be a 'fake game' and the poppy cultivators are thriving. Once again, poppy cultivators, foreign troops, local drug smugglers and the government officials are accused of running a safe and hidden network to sell out the drugs in international markets and all the stakeholders have their share in the benefit. Same situation is present not only in Helmand but also in all the Afghan provinces where poppy cultivation was a trend in Taliban's regime. Unfortunately, this lucrative farming has spread to some other parts of the country where it was not present even in Taliban's time.

The latest controversy came in form of landmines that have been left undetonated in the military posts previously operated by the international coalition forces in Afghanistan. The National Security Council's latest meeting presided over by President Karzai demanded the international forces to clean up these mines before they leave the country. According to the media reports, more than dozen of citizens with majority of children have so far lost their lives to these mines. These mines are going to remain as the legacy of these forces to remind us of the tragic events of this so-called 'war-on-terror'.

Hundreds and billions of dollars spent of the American taxpayers for this endeavor may be termed as the 'internal headache' of American people but it is still a controversial issue as if these dollars were spent for what they actually meant and the aimed targets have been achieved or not.

Inside Afghanistan, it was unfortunate that these forces failed to win the hearts of common public though lot many campaigns were carried out like the media campaign, showing American and other foreign soldiers distributing biscuits and juices to the Afghan children. All these efforts were nullified by the military operations in which neutral and innocent civilians were targeted and on many occasions, the military spokesman had to accept these 'grave' mistakes and apologize to the bereaved families. The torture and inhumane attitude towards Afghan prisoners in the notorious Bagram prison also added to this negative perception. Some sources also talk of the 'outsourcing' of military services to some local and international armed groups that carried out covert military operations and targeted killings. These groups still remain a threat to the security of the country. Last but not the least, the involvement of military officers in giving away contracts and accepting commission and bribe is one of the alarming factors to corrupt the army of a country. Keeping in view this dangerous trend, it is always advised that the military should be kept away from civilian interactions as they may also get corrupted in the process. Now that majority of international forces have left the country with all their positive and negative impacts, they have also left behind numerous lessons for international heads of state to learn and consider before deciding to send your army into a country.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. he can be reached at muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com

Children; the most Vulnerable Class in Afghanistan

By S.Najeebullah Wajahat (Akbari)

Entering a big terminal in Kandahar city the driver stopped the car. I was yet to lift my travel bag when I was engulfed with four or five smeared and torn clothed, dusty but innocent faced children, aged eight to twelve years. Grumbling and asking each other to go away and find another purchaser, but none of them was ready to go unless I purchased. All were offering and imploring me to buy beverage and cake. When the second car reached, the same scene was repeated. About ten meters to the left another long haired child seeming thirteen or fourteen years old was pushing a heavy cart full of goods. One of the cart wheels was caught in a small pit. I helped him pull it out and asked him some questions. His name was Mohammad Bari. He told that he was an orphan. "My father was killed in a road side blast five years ago. Since then I have been involved in this work. I have to feed five other people." Bari told. I asked him about education and the answer was "no". A hotel manager in the terminal told me that it was the daily scenario there.

It repeats over and over. There is no exact statistics to show how many Afghan children find the life alike and how many even have worse condition than that. But it is certain that the scene I witnessed and explained above is just a short trailer of the tragic life of Afghan children. It portrays just a corner of their problems. This is how the life of a massive number of children in Afghanistan is. Unaware of their basic and humanitarian rights, they pass their days with no dreams working hard to feed themselves. More tragic scenes can be seen in other cities of Afghanistan. Even in the capital city of Kabul if one walks in main streets particularly around the Pamir cinema, he can see large number of small children selling used-clothes, nuts and gums, delivering goods for the market owners and some even beseeching in a very poor condition.

All around the world children are indeed considered builders of the nation and pillars of the society. The future of a nation completely depends on the children of that particular nation. In a bigger context the future of the world relies on human children. Therefore, children need to be valued and given importance. Their training, moral capacities, self-confidence and education become very important as they are considered the

key traits in path selection and definition of the future. Moreover, the world needs to train the children in accordance with the ideals defined by the United Nations. (The ideals suggest training the children: liberal, personable and pacifist, with spirit of understanding and solidarity)

Despite the efforts made by the United Nations to protect the child rights, (forming UNICEF and UNCRC) and struggles of civil societies, Afghan children don't find much difference in their life. Still they are deprived of their fundamental rights. Many children die at birth before they open their eyes to the new world, millions are deprived from education, hundred thousands of them have to work hard daily and eight varied abuses and harsh words, thousands of them suffer from different diseases with no treatment and many are sold or suffer from gender-violence. For two core reasons; traditional tribal culture and three decades of devastating war in Afghanistan, Afghan children have been kept deprived of their basic rights. More or less two third of the Afghan population live village life, and vast majority of them still push on their live basing on tribal values and customs.

Since the tribal system is a patriarchal system, the natural characteristics of this system are such that can institutionalize the gender discrimination and make it seem normal phenomena of the society. It allows no child or woman to share idea or make any decision. Furthermore; it considers no right for the children, and believes that the only responsibility parents have towards children is to fulfill their clothing and feeding requirements. In fact the will of the tribe is submitted to the head of the tribe and the will of family is put on the mercy of the head of the family. Three decades of imposed war in Afghanistan in the shape of foreign interference and civil war has put this country at least a century back. apart from the demolition of the infrastructures, massive amount of migration, disunity of the nation and death of the millions of innocent and guilty people, the war has cost many children lose their parents and leave them in a situation wherein they are just alive but they don't live. The situations have made them just easy victims for the varied gangs from kidnapers to narcotic sellers.

S.Najeebullah Wajahat (Akbari) is a freelance Afghan Columnist. He can be reached at najeeb_wajahat@yahoo.com

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 271/777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Omeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan