

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



January 14, 2015

Government's Commitment for Peace Talks

The news about the efforts of present Afghan government to start talks with Taliban are still resounding in the media and according to the internal sources, the government has not ceased its endeavor to achieve a break-through in this regard. As the unity government came into existence, the president expressed his desire to bring Taliban and other anti-state elements on the table of negotiations. Though not accepted by the palace, there were news that government had agreed to give some ministries and other high government posts to Taliban in order to build the trust and persuade them to leave militancy and join hands for the development of the country. However, Taliban had rejected this offer and repeated their old demand that until the exit of all the foreign forces from Afghan soil, they will not become a part of any mechanism that should make them leave their weapons and join the government. Even after this, the government has not become disappointed. Last week's two important events also indicate the same strategy of government. First was the visit of some prominent political figures from the neighboring country of Pakistan. In this visit, the influential religious leader of Pakistan, Maulana Fazlur-Rehman and a number of Pashtun elders visited Kabul and held talks with the president and other important members of Afghan government. Maulana Fazlur-Rehman is considered to be an important figure to have good influence among the lines of Taliban as well. He can prove to be an important bridge in breaking a deal between Afghan government and Taliban. In the same way, the Pashtun leaders of Pakistan are also considered to be having much influence in the Pashtun-dominated areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan where Taliban and other militant groups are considered to be busy in carrying out their activities. Keeping in mind this important visit, the government has made another serious effort to bring Taliban on the table of talks.

In the same way, the visit of Taliban leaders from Qatar to China and meeting with the important Chinese officials is also indirectly considered the effort of Afghan government to reach to an agreement with Taliban. In November, Mr. Ghani had requested the intervention of Chinese leaders in starting negotiations with Taliban and bringing them to the table of talks. It is yet unclear to the media as how the talks went in China and if Taliban have agreed to start talks with Afghan government or not.

The sad incident of Peshawar also provided an important opportunity for our government to broker a deal with Taliban. There are reports that Pakistani establishment and its most influential ISI is now ready to go to any extent against Taliban. Afghan government and masses have long been making hue and cry against ISI and Pakistani government to stop supporting Taliban and the incident gave an opportunity for them to revise their policies. If Pakistani and Afghan governments join hands and fight seriously against Taliban, it would leave no option for Taliban to join the process of negotiations with Afghan government. In past as well, there have been numerous efforts by Afghan government to hold talks with Taliban but they were never fruitful. The High Peace Council was never able to meet its objectives and now it lies as a paralyzed institution, with almost no activities.

Ex-President Hamid Karzai also made numerous efforts to win the hearts of Taliban but he was not successful. In this regard, hundreds of Taliban prisoners were released from jails of Afghanistan and dozens more were released from Pakistani prisons on the request of Afghan government. Mr. Karzai had to face harsh criticism on this issue as some of the released Taliban joined the lines of militants and started carrying out fresh attacks against the forces and civilians of our country. However, till his last days in palace, Mr. Karzai was of the view that only solution to the problem of Taliban lies in negotiations. Although large number of people in our country are against negotiations with Taliban and they ask the government to take strong military action against them but it is on record that military action has failed, even when our forces had full-fledged support of foreign forces against Taliban. There are also reports that there are large numbers of Afghan Taliban who are against the militancy and especially the brutal killing of civilians and with some efforts, they can join the peace process. Once these Taliban are desecrated from Pakistani Taliban, they can turn the things into the favor of the country and people, bringing an end to the decades' old miseries of Afghan people. Realizing these facts, our government is making sincere efforts to bring Taliban to the table of negotiations. It would be early to make any guess about the result of these efforts but it should not be forgotten that our innocent people are also used by large number of regional and international powers on the name of Taliban and until and unless we don't sit with them and listen to their miseries, we would never be able to finish the problem of militancy in the country. It is also needed that government should also work to cut the links between militants and their international godfathers so that such efforts may give tangible and long-lasting results.



Loneliness - A Spiritual Vacuum

By: Hujjatullah Zia

When you close your doors, and make darkness within, remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not alone; nay, God is within, and your genius is within. And what need have they of light to see what you are doing?" Loneliness is a common human experience. Meaning that all of us, whether single or married, whether for a short period of time or for an extended season, deal with loneliness. Why so? Well I believe that loneliness is, at its root, a spiritual issue. But often we define loneliness in physical or emotional terms. We think loneliness can be defined by the absence of people whether physically or emotionally. So we think to ourselves, 'What we need to do to fix our problem of loneliness is to have more people in our lives.' And when that doesn't work we think, 'Well, we need more considerate people in our lives.' And so I talked about how we define loneliness as emotional or physical. But that doesn't complete the picture because loneliness is also the presence of pain. Loneliness is not just the absence of people; it's the presence of pain, the pain of separation from God and others. It began in the Garden of Eden when Adam decided to choose the pleasures of sin, and in doing so, inherited the pain of loneliness. People who fear being alone, are people who are afraid to look in the mirror.

The monster you see reflecting back at you is your own image. Living in denial causes loneliness. You will have a lot of company in the light of day, but when darkness falls and you have to be with yourself, you will be afraid. Learn how to face the truth. Learn how to accept the consequences of your actions. Making peace within is the only way to set your spirit free.

Right now, there are people all over the world who are just like you. They're lonely. They're missing somebody. They're in love with someone they probably shouldn't be in love with. They have secrets you wouldn't believe. They wish, dream, hope and look out the window whenever they're in the car or on a bus, or a train and they watch the people on the streets and wonder what they've been through. They wonder if there are people out there like them. They're like you and you could tell them everything and they would understand. You're never alone.

What torments my soul is the loneliness we feel deeply in our daily life. The more it expands among friends and the daily habits or pleasures, the more, it seems to me, it flees me and retires into its fortress. The poet who lives in solitude, but who produces much, is the one who enjoys those treasures we bear in our bosom, but which forsake us when we give ourselves to others. "When one yields oneself completely to one's soul, it opens itself to one, and then it is that the capricious thing allows one

the greatest of good fortunes, that of sympathizing with others, of studying itself, of painting itself constantly in its works."

This poem is nicely stated, "We have forgotten love, and sat lonely beside each other. We have eaten together, lonely behind our plates, we have hidden behind children, we have slept together in a lonely bed. Now my heart turns toward you, awake at last, penitent, lost in the last loneliness. Speak to me. Talk to me, break the black silence."

We must begin by admitting that the first place in which to go looking for the world is not outside us but in ourselves. We are the world. In the deepest ground of our being, we remain in metaphysical contact with the whole of that creation in which we are only small parts. Through our senses and our minds, our loves, needs, and desires, we are involved in this world of matter and of men, of things and of persons, which not only affect us and change our lives but are also affected and changed by us. The question, then, is not to speculate about how we are to contact the world but how to validate our relationship, give it a fully honest and human significance, and make it truly productive and worthwhile for our world. Hence, we can evade loneliness through metaphysical contacts namely communing with our Lord in our solitude.

"We have a heart problem. We can invite more people into our lives, and we can invite more quality people into our lives, but the problem is that doesn't take care of the root pain of separation that's happening there. We have a spiritual heart problem and we don't need medication, we need a new heart, and that takes a doctor. And so, we have a strong desire to be in intimate fellowship with God and others, but the problem is that we have, at our root, a sin problem that clouds our hearts."

If you're living completely on your own, you have to find understanding somewhere, somehow. No matter how scary it is to learn and use social skills, absolute loneliness is scarier. A good method to break out of solitary confinement is to seek to understand others, and help them understand you. But the best method is to polish our spirit from the rust of sin and start communing with God in our solitude.

To be continued ...

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Paris Attack Added into Muslims' Miseries

By Asmatyari

On January 7, three masked gunmen attacked and killed the editorial staff of a weekly satirical journal Charlie Hebdo in Paris which ridiculed Judaism, Catholicism and Islam. Following the incidence, they did not only leave behind 12 dead bodies, including that of the weekly's chief editor and a number of elite cartoonists of France, but also a very worrisome state of affairs for three days. The rampage was claimed by renowned terrorist group of al-Qaeda and Islamic State extremist groups, followed by a chilling new threat from the Yemen-based Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. AQAP top sharia official Harith al-Nadhari warned France to "stop your aggression against the Muslims" or face further attacks, in comments released by the site monitoring group.

It is unearthed that the reason behind the daylight massacre is said to be the publication of highly provocative cartoons published in the recent past, which had deeply offended Muslims. Whatever, the reason be, the carnage never justifies and deemed a legal course to avenge the sacrilegious cartoon. The deed exercised by extremists finds no validation; in fact contradicts Islamic interpretation. The extremist terror perpetrators deem they served sacred cause, earned a favor of Holy Prophet (PBUH) that paves their way to heaven and eases the lives of their fellow Muslims, which is only day dreaming.

The countless innocent civilians killed didn't quench the thirst of these self claimed religious champions; Al-Qaida, ISIS and Taliban whose bloody tale of mass massacre, outpatient the humanists across the globe. The Muslim world should come to a conclusion to disown and alienate these evil practitioners, manipulating the sacred religion for personal gains, adding than deducing the miseries of Muslim. The six million Muslims living in France and elsewhere in Europe understandably dread a backlash and fear that the sense of Islamophobia, which is already very visible in their country would further deepen.

France is estimated to have 6 million Muslim populations, almost 10% of its 65 million people. Muslims the world over, especially those living in Europe and particularly in France are much less safer today than they were before last week's brutal attacks in the name of faith, a faith that does not permit such acts.

The Paris attack earned a grand condemnation from around the world. Formerly, hundreds of thousands of people and dozens of world leaders marched together through Paris Sunday in a historic show of solidarity and defiance after terrorist attacks in the French capital. A sea of humanity flowed through Paris' iconic streets, breaking into applause and spontaneous renditions of the national anthem. The mourners chanted, in honour of the cartoonists and journalists killed at Charlie Hebdo. Emotions ran high in the grieving City of Light, with many of those marching bursting into tears as they came together under the banner of freedom of speech and liberty after France's worst terrorist bloodbath in more than half a century.

It was observed that reprehensible attack instigated other major Western publications to republish the same offensive cartoons that Charlie Hebdo had published, ostensibly in a bid to show solidarity with the magazine. One wonders whether this is the right way to show solidarity and condemn these attacks. Show-



ing support for Charlie Hebdo does not mean that publications in Europe or America replicate the editorial judgments of the French magazine. Before these attacks, even those who believed in artistic license and liberal use of freedom of expression are said to have started feeling sickened by the sick ridiculing indulged in by this relic of the past, offending equally, Muslims, Jews and Christians and politicians of all colours and hues. Along with this unnecessary brutality, the likely backlash against the Muslim population of the West in response makes the perpetrators doubly guilty.

The rest of the West, too, is likely to experience the aftershocks. In the UK, the ultra-right UK Independence Party is likely to use the event as a more persuasive argument in its campaign against London's current immigration policy, a campaign which the mainstream political parties are already finding increasingly difficult to oppose. In Sweden, the Democratic Party that promotes anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments and which in recent polls has been getting 15 per cent support is also expected to cash on the Paris massacre. Indeed, those who would suffer the most from this event would be the majority of the West's Muslim population, most of which is made up of law-abiding, ordinary people who believe in the policy of live and let live and who do not subscribe to the distorted version of their faith that is being propagated by a handful of misguided extremists.

That is a nasty business involving large number of deportations, cancellation of French citizenship, and other threats that inevitably would affect many individuals with no direct connection to terrorism. In the short term it would lead to more radicalization. The effort would be costly, but ultimately it would succeed; most French Muslims simply want to stay in France and earn a living. To revive its credibility, the Muslims abroad should condemn terrorism and extremism on every forum and shouldn't leave a vacuum to be infiltrated by hatemonger and political opportunists. It depicts that France or any other state could defeat the terrorists; all they require doing is to stand united against terrorists irrespective of cast, creed and religion.

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