

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



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Fighting the 'Evils' in Our Society

Human societies are formed to ensure different sorts of facilities and better living conditions for their residents. However, it is not possible that they provide every sort of facility and satisfaction, and some sort of deficiency always persists. These deficiencies and shortcomings pave the way for different social evils. These social evils have the capacity to disrupt social structure and setup and influence other spheres of life as well. Though there have been efforts to overcome them, they have kept on existing in some way or the other. They clearly depict that human societies are never perfect. It is important to understand those shortcomings and strive to find out the main causes of those evils and their appropriate solutions in order to support the societies move towards perfection.

Though it is a matter of concern that a social evil erupts in a society, more concerning, however, is when the evil keeps on increasing or gaining strength and starts penetrating within social fabrics. One of the basic reasons that any evil gets promoted within a society is the appreciation and support it gets from within the society members. Or there may be indifference on the part of society members towards the evil. The members of the society may neglect the evil and thus support in promulgating it.

The example of Afghan society in this regard is very much relevant. There are different social evils that get no proper attention by the members of the society. For instance, the evil of corruption has penetrated deep within Afghan society and most of the institutions in the country are being influenced by it in some way or the other, yet it is not being taken as much seriously as it should be taken. People consider it an integral part of their social life. They complete their tasks through corrupt ways without even feeling guilty. Such a social value is really very much pathetic and it has kept on feeding corruption to a great extent.

People's indifference towards corruption around them is really very sad; there has not been any comprehensive movement to condemn corruption within Afghan society. Though there have been many protests and demonstrations on the issues that are not important enough, but, unfortunately, the evil of corruption which is crippling the social system within the country has faced no comprehensive protest.

It is common to find people, who complain against corruption, getting involved in corruption easily. It is easier for them to get their tasks done through some bribery and recommendation than to follow the honest, lengthy and tiring process of 'honest means'. They quite easily forget their demands for corruption-free society and higher standards of honesty.

It must not be forgotten that the people responsible for controlling the corruption must play a role in controlling the corruption, but the importance of social movements is very much vital in facing a social evil. The control mechanism within a society can enforce a law and can control a social evil by force to a certain level but if the society members do not support the mechanism it is very difficult to control the situation. For example, the violence against women in Afghanistan has been identified as social evil by the control mechanism, yet it has not been controlled as Afghan society is not yet ready to accept it as social evil. The society members do not consider it inhuman and unlawful to carryout violence against women. It is very much normal in patriarchal Afghan society to find husbands beating their wives, fathers beating their daughters and brothers being violent to their sisters. And when there are cruel incidents of violence against women, the society members, except few, do not come to the roads to protest and shun such incidents as social evils.

Same is the case with the evil of drug use. The people of Afghanistan use drugs as if they are part of their normal lives. People use it as painkillers and as medicine to fight against cold weather. Though in some cases people do so because they are not fully aware of their negative consequences but at others they just do so because they are totally indifferent towards the issue. They know that using such drugs may lead them towards negative consequences, yet they are not ready to avoid them and find out ways of getting rid of them. It is really imperative to note that the sustainability of any social evil within the society largely depends on the attitude of the society members towards the evil. If from the very beginning the society members realize that social evils are negative and they act as the main barriers to the development of the society and generate serious problems for them, there are possibilities of fighting the social evils properly, but if the society, either due to ignorance or negligence or individual considerations, remains indifferent towards evils, it would be very difficult to control them.

Therefore, it is necessary that as a part of the society, we must feel responsibility and be very much vigilant on these issues. It is our responsibility to rise against the social evils, stand against them and raise our voice. Unless we respond to those evils we do not have the right to complain about them and we do not have any way of avoiding them.



Tackling Corruption in Afghanistan

By Sakhi Rezaie

Corruption is broadly defined as the abuse of entrusted authority—both public and private—for illegitimate gain. It is a barrier not only to economic growth and development, but also to political stability, democracy, social justice and sustainable peace. In fragile and conflict-riddled countries such as Afghanistan, corruption can strongly undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of nascent government institutions.

Although corruption in now country including Afghanistan cannot be eliminated overnight, but it could be significantly reduced, and even modest improvements in public accountability will substantially enhance the legitimacy of the government among the people. As Afghanistan seeks to stand on its own, the national unity government cannot afford to appear indifferent to the anger many Afghans feel toward an entrenched elite widely perceived to be motivated more by greed than by a spirit of public service. Likewise, the frustration of the international community over revelations of the massive scale of fraud and waste of their taxpayer funds in Afghanistan must be considered.

Corruption reemerged as a potent force in Afghan life following the U.S.-led international coalition's overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. When NATO started its mission in Afghanistan, a wide network of political elites connected to the Afghan factions effectively positioned themselves as intermediaries between well-intentioned Western officials, donors, and ordinary Afghans. They succeeded in diverting billions of foreign aid dollars and investment to themselves and their allies, resulting in a number of high-profile scandals in Afghanistan. The most disastrous of these was the near-collapse of the Afghan banking system following revelations that its largest institution, Kabul Bank that deeply undermined the credibility of the Afghanistan to the international community and also undermined the credibility of the government to the Afghans. Currently, entire government institutions have become enmeshed in complex patronage networks that stretch from minor functionaries to high-ranking ministers. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the realm of customs and border control. As the New York Times put it, "corruption can no longer be described as a cancer on the system: It is the system." A new report by the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, estimated that more than half of Afghanistan's annual customs revenue is being lost to graft.

Maybe, most troubling, however—from the perspective of Afghanistan's post-conflict transition—has been the persistent corruption that has plagued the institutions of government that directly are responsible for law and order in the country. The Afghan National Police, or ANP, have become particularly notorious for pernicious graft and is considered as one of the most corrupt organs of the government. SIGAR has repeatedly faulted the Afghan Ministry of the Interior for failing to properly account for billions of dollars allocated for police

salaries via a U.N.-administered trust fund. According to SIGAR's most recent audit report, corrupt practices within the ministry "could take as much as 50 [percent] of a policeman's salary." This underpayment has predictably resulted in a high incidence of corrupt solicitations by police officers, which affects ordinary Afghans most directly. A 2012 survey by the Asia Foundation found that more than half of Afghans who had contact with an ANP officer over the previous year were forced to pay a bribe. The question rises here is that, how such corrupt people can maintain rule of law and order in a conflict-riddle country?

However, the new leadership of MoIA seems more committed to implementing the obligations the NUG has pledged to the international community and the Afghan people.

The Afghan National Army, while more professional than the ANP, has also struggled with misallocation of resources and high incidences of bribe solicitation. A 2013 Transparency International survey found that one-fifth of Afghans viewed the military as corrupt. By contrast, the justice system may be even more reviled than the police—both the Transparency International and United Nations surveys found that Afghans consider judges the judiciary the most corrupt segment of their society. Corruption networks are such strong in these institutions that tackling corruption without a national will beside the political will, no entity would succeed in this battle. As a result, it is the duty of every Afghan to stand firmly against corruption and corrupt people in order to save their country from the networks of various mafias.

Causes and effects of corruption

There are numerous and complex causes of corruption in Afghanistan. Several decades of conflict have severely hampered the development and maintenance of effective government institutions and the civil organizations that monitor them in this country. Afghanistan legislative and regulatory frameworks are patchwork and inconsistently enforced, and the agencies tasked with fighting corruption and imposing rule of law often work in isolation and contradict one another. Education levels are low; illiteracy is rampant among the ANP and ANSF. Civil servants are frequently underpaid, and they receive little training. After decades of war, officials use the opportunity of public office to fill personal coffers and channel funds to patronage networks at the expense of public good and the country lack a shared vision among its citizens in terms of national interest to unite them around one goal in order to fight for one cause. In countries such as Afghanistan with tribal systems and entrenched ethnic divisions, structural weaknesses interact in complex ways with traditional ideas about patronage and kinship—particularly with the expectation that those who have influence wield it to benefit members of their extended network. These systems are the main barriers to the Afghans ethnic groups to transition from patronage and kinship and shape a national vision for their future as a nation.

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The Legitimacy of States

By Hujjatullah Zia

In democratic states, the legitimacy is based on law, which is approved by the public representatives. Democracy is the product of modern era and advocates the rights and liberty of all individuals. The hegemony of democracy dominates human societies for supporting peace and prosperity and holding all people in respect regardless of their racial or religious backgrounds or political affiliations.

In democratic systems, people should be able to exercise their fundamental rights freely. All individuals are entitled to have freedom of thought, expressions, religion, etc. Simultaneously, freedom from intolerance, discrimination, and violence is strongly upheld by democracy. The public are urged to live a peaceful life with tolerance and the spirit of brotherhood and, in turn, leave no room for discrimination or violence. All are supposed to hold the beliefs and distinction of one another in respect based on the principle of equality. The principle of 'human treatment' prevails in democratic system, too, which means that degrading one or violating their dignity is against democratic principles. Hence, one's rights to life, liberty, and estate are backed by democracy, which derives its legitimacy from law and legislation and parliament (the legislative power) is considered the beating heart of democracy.

Legitimacy based on tradition also rules a number of states in which legislation does not carry much weight or falls in the realm of royal family. In such a patriarchal system, much restriction is imposed on people's rights and freedoms by rulers. That is to say, people are not able to exercise their rights and freedoms, particularly freedoms of speech and thought, as they should. The rulers will appoint their successors before abandoning the throne and the government is inherited from the past rulers rather than being formed on the basis of election. People's participation in political issue is highly restricted. Such a patriarchal system still prevails in some states, including Saudi Arabia, where human rights, especially women's rights, are under question.

The third source of legitimacy is charisma and the attraction of one's personality. In our time, this legitimacy is widely accepted by illegitimate parties, i.e. the radical militants rather than states. For instance, the Taliban's founding father Mullah Muhammad Omar was a charismatic leader of the Taliban and militants viewed him as a spiritual leader. He declared himself Amir-ul-Mumineen (the commander of the faithful) with the intention of claiming legitimacy. Similarly, the head of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq

and the Levant (ISIL) was also viewed as a legitimate caliph based on his charisma. He announced caliphate and state to obtain legitimacy among the militants. Therefore, they fulfilled his decree and practiced upon his dogmatic ideology. In such a system, people will follow their charismatic leader blindly. The loyalists to ISIL, a religious cult on the verge of disintegration, followed their self-proclaimed caliphate with their eyes closed.

It is believed that militants who fight against states are not legitimate at all. They are not recognized by any states for carrying out terrorist attacks and targeting soldiers and civilians alike. Charisma will offer legitimacy to a state but not a party. But this legitimacy has been reduced and rules among radical parties.

In modern world, democratic system is supported around the globe and only democracy will alleviate the ongoing challenges and sow the seeds of tolerance and brotherhood, which will necessarily generate peace and prosperity. Democracy backs law-oriented system and derives its legitimacy from law that considers equal rights for all people. In a democratic system, all individuals, including officials, will have to practice upon law and no one is deemed beyond it. Legitimacy on the basis of law, which prevails in democratic systems, is embraced globally and acceptable for all nations. Law is mostly approved by people's representatives, mainly in democratic states, and let people exercise their rights and freedoms without discrimination. Furthermore, law will facilitate the public to participate in political issues. Consequently, this kind of legitimacy is supported widely.

Perhaps in one decade or two, all other systems of government will be replaced by democracy and legitimacy will be claimed only on the basis of law and legislation. To view the history of human societies, legitimacy based on tradition and charisma ruled in the past and kings called their regime legitimate based on custom and tradition inheriting the throne from their forefathers. Hence, people could play no role in their self-determination and political issues.

To ponder over this matter, two issues should be considered. First, all people should be treated equally and exercise their rights and freedoms in the frame of law without discrimination. Second, the public ought to be able to play their role in political issues. Otherwise, the state will show tendency in dictatorship which will necessarily lead to violation of human rights.

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