

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



July 25, 2015

We have to be Cognizant!

A society that is undergoing the problems of unawareness and starvation cannot have the extravagance of dreaming about opulence and growth and, as a matter of fact, it does not have the right to do so. Although we keep on dreaming affluence and development but do not realize that only the nations that have reached to a specific stage of awareness and economic constancy can have such dreams; otherwise, running after such dreams is nothing more than daydreaming.

As a nation we are standing on such a stage of obliviousness and starvation that the dream of constancy and direction has become a fantasy. Keeping our condition in mind, it can be said that we are worthy of compassion and censure and even an excuse, as we have been observing few decades of social, political and economic unsteadiness and besides that conflict and wars. Now, the time that we have to mend our all losses seems to be very short and in this short time we have to make up for all the blunders that we have committed.

Though this excuse seems to be valid, we cannot get rid of our responsibilities and have to react as responsible citizens of the country. Yes, this excuse would suffice if in earning the losses that we experienced in the past decades, there had not been our own share; however, that is not the case. In the meanwhile, the role of certain strata in the past tragic phase of history has been very controversial and negative. Unfortunately, they have continued the same in the present as well.

Even though, there have been certain strata that have been involved negatively in the mentioned phase of history, the role of the ruling elite has been the most dominant one. This particular section has been involved mostly in pursuing its own self centered incentives instead of pursuing the interests of the people as a whole. The rich people have been basically busy in accumulating wealth in whatever way possible. They have, in this particular capability, achieved great milestones and since the installation of the so-called democratic political setup and the inflow of the aid money, they have had more opportunities to do so, while the condition of the poor people has remained the same. They have shown great miracles to the people - they have been able to build great building and grow large amount of money over night on the completely barren lands. And, they have been able to do so because of the misuse of their authority and unlimited power of their positions.

If discussed seriously, such people have given great loss to the nation. They have installed a system, wherein the people only value money and they run after wealth. There is no respect for the true social values and ethics. The materialistic gains have become the motive of the life of all the people; however, only they themselves have been able to gain them. For them, it does not matter where the nation stands; the important thing for them is where they themselves have reached. Progress and development have different meanings for them - they think competing with each other by building new designs of houses and buying the latest models of cars is the real progress and development.

The question at this crucial moment is whether the country can go ahead with such a setup, wherein most of the people of the country suffer from hunger and poverty while only few families have all the luxuries of life? Is it just that almost all the people of the country went through era of instability and chaos and mostly the common people gave sacrifices and their whole lives were influenced negatively by socio-political and economic circumstances, yet they remain the most unprivileged stratum? Is it really ethical that by gaining authority the ruling elite has gotten the license of having all the privileges they want and it, at the same time, remains unaccountable?

It is really important to consider all the questions thoroughly and try to find out their true answers. The sort of negative practices and thinking mentioned above have become a part of daily life and soon they will become a part of our nature; therefore, it is necessary to understand them and take action against them before they are able to become irreversible. Unfortunately, the common people are so ignorant that they do not even realize that they are being dodged and their rights are being violated. They are kept in dark and instead of demanding for light they have started to make compromises in order to live in the darkness. It is the demand of better living and higher thinking that the intellectuals in our society must rise to the occasion and strive to let the people know the evils of ignorance they have and must suggest economic reforms and clear changes in the socio-political setup. They have to start a comprehensive movement against ignorance, hunger and poverty. They have to demand for better living standard for the common people; the country does not need large bungalows and latest model cars; it requires schools, colleges, institutions, hospitals, productive farms and efficient industries.

Moreover, People have to be made vigilant and they need to understand what their basic rights are and what the government is responsible for giving them. Asking for their rights is not something wrong and the government is responsible to facilitate them their due rights. They have to start thinking in a different way and, at the same time, start acting differently; otherwise, the pitiable plight will continue indefinitely.

The Prospect of the Afghan Electoral Reforms

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The long-delayed formation of the electoral reforms commission has come as a major step forward for reforming Afghanistan's electoral system and preparing the ground for the upcoming parliamentary elections. However, there are concerns whether the National Unity Government is really and sufficiently committed to bringing genuine reforms to the electoral laws, procedures and the governing bodies and planning for the parliamentary elections. The Meshrano Jirga on Tuesday July 21, 2015 criticized the National Unity Government (NUG) for failing to announce the timeline of the parliamentary elections, saying that in protest to the issue the house would cease procedural cooperation with the Lower House of the parliament, the Wolesi Jirga. On the other hand, a number of election monitoring organizations have voiced concerns over the make-up of the commission and absence of representatives of women and election monitoring groups in the commission.

The electoral reforms commission is formed after months of differences between the leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) over who should lead the commission. Forming the commission for reforming the electoral system and procedures as well as the electoral bodies was a key provision of the agreement that led to formation of the NUG. The formation of the commission suggest a major compromise between the NUG leaders and a major development for the efforts to reform the electoral system in order to avoid another fraudulent and controversial elections. Despite the major step ahead, it is quite premature to judge whether the government and the reforms commission would be able to bring adequate and reliable reforms to Afghanistan's electoral system, procedures and the two major election commissions in charge of holding national elections. There are widespread disappointments among observers and election monitoring groups over the formation and make-up of the commission as well as concerns over how it will lead the electoral reforms process, which is to be a key state-building reform for Afghanistan's political establishment.

There are still profound differences among key stakeholders of Afghan politics over the nature of reforms to the electoral system, procedures and election commissions. The differences that delayed formation of the reforms commission are still lingering in the Afghan political arena and are potentially distracting for the nascent reforms process. There is no agreed reform agenda for modifying and reforming the current electoral system, making the task of the reform commission much more difficult. The commission has merely an advisory role for reforming the Afghan electoral system and election bodies, making the reform commission incapable of bringing changes and making decisions for reforming the electoral system. The commission is supposed to propose recommendations to the government on reforms to the Afghan election system and the two election bodies. This incompetency makes the reforms commission vulnerable to failure and the

efforts for reforms ineffectual. This could trigger another political stalemate in Afghanistan over the reform of the electoral system and the fate of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

One of the criticisms made to the formation of the electoral reforms commission is the political nature of the make-up of the commission and dependency of the members of the commission to key political figures and stakeholders of the NUG. According to two major Afghan election monitoring organization, a major step is taken for reforming the electoral system. However, they expressed their concerns over failure of the NUG to appoint commission members based on their technical knowledge and understanding of the reform task. The transparency advocacy groups expressed concerns over the fact that the newly appointed members of the commission are loyal to the two major camps of the national unity government. This puts the commission's work vulnerable to politics while in nature the reform issue to the electoral system and procedures is highly legal and technical.

It seems the electoral reforms commission is facing enormous challenges in the very beginning of its difficult task of reform to the election system and the election commissions. There are profound political differences among key government stakeholders and the Afghan political spectrum affecting the process and development of reforming the electoral system. The reforms commission is tasked with recommending reforms to the whole electoral system and procedures as well as the two electoral bodies responsible for holding the verifying national elections. This is while all efforts of the commission could end up in vain as the reform efforts will need a genuine political will from the President and the Chief Executive Officer as well as all other major stakeholders of the unity government. There are fears that there may be no real and genuine political will for change and that the formation of the reforms commission may be another time-buying measure from the government.

A key challenge for the reforms commission is the complexity of combining political, technical and legal nature of the reform task. It means that the commission should do a difficult job of reconciling political, technical and legal nature of the reformation of Afghanistan's electoral system. This makes the task highly unachievable since reconciling a genuine electoral reform with the political necessities would be highly difficult and even impossible. Therefore, the task of reforms to the electoral system is more a political trend that needs compromise from the stakeholders of the Afghan politics and the NUG. A successful reform process needs that the leaders of the NUG first reach to a concrete reform plans and provide sufficient authority to the reforms commission for proposing reform programs. Any time-buying measures from the leaders of the NUG would only deepen the problem and make the reform goals further unattainable. A political uncertainty is looming in the country with the parliamentary elections going into a potential legal and political stalemate. Politically-motivated and time-buying reform measures would only worsen the looming uncertainly related to the upcoming national elections.

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Nelson Mandela; the Unforgettable Soul

By Asmatyari

Following successful formation and finalization of unity government, the masses begin to eye resolution of multifaceted problems, waiting their fates for years. Previously, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani revealed the new government had a comprehensive agenda for reforms and change in Afghanistan to peace process, rule of law, good governance, and economic development. While presiding the first session of cabinet meeting Mr. President gave a deadline of 100 days to the ministers to show efficiencies and bring visible change during the laid course of time. Even months after the formation of cabinet no enquiry into what to do lists of ministries are launched. The government successfully went past this stage, entering into next stage of getting across these problems.

Afghanistan faces daunting challenges -poverty one of the challenge pressing it hard. 36% of 30 million population lives below poverty line including endemic poverty and lack of human capacity; insecurity; weak governance and institutionalized corruption; opium exports equal to 22% of gross domestic product; rampant gender inequality; and policy, regulatory, and institutional constraints that have limited effective growth in public and private sectors. Has the adopted measures done something to alter the state of affairs?

Frequently it gets troublesome to compare the size of the problem. Looking at despotic and self-centered undertakings the size of the problems is likely to grow. High ranked public officials senior politicians involved in bank scandals and corruption seemed not the government's concern or priority. Where is the farsightedness put into practice to help Afghans get rid of financial discrepancies?

The deteriorating state of security remains to be another obstacle on the way to developed Afghanistan. Violence has been a dominant phenomenon browbeating every fabric of Afghan society. The fight between insurgents and government backed international allies seems unending provided civilians are not ended. Harmony promoting education and equitable distribution of resources and services narrows down the differences whilst paving the way for peaceful coexistence. There is a documented existence of law and with negligible application or prejudicial application, serve none's interest.

Another issue earning bad fame for Afghans is the illicit growth and trade of life snatching drug. Many countries and humanitarian organization showed grave concerns over mass production of the drug. Moreover, the illegal drug trade has always served a part in deterioration of law and order and a prior asset of insurgents and militant. Reportedly, the illegal drug has been greater source, serving financial affairs of militancy and insurgency. Without aiming to eradicate this pain in the neck who should Afghans expect would rescue them?

No worries how impressive tales are fabricated, falsely deemed would soar our dignity and credibility worth a penny until grounds are prepared and plans are executed as per aspiration of one's conscience. Undoubtedly, like other nations Afghans neither lack strength nor capacity but what it lacks is willingness. The indulgence of political elites in personal than national affairs is worrisome, sufficient to undermine the very foundation of institutions and the state. We hitherto are in need charismatic, dynamic, visionary and farsighted leader that could drag Afghans out of multiple crises.

The month of July on international calendar remind us of such an unforgettable soul, Nelson Mandela, acclaimed as one of the greatest personalities of our times. He belongs to that category of men who have graced our civilization with their personal charisma and noble contributions. His life long fight for the cause of freedom in South Africa and its eventual success will be written in golden letters in the annals of history. His entire life epitomizes man's unquenchable thirst for freedom. For more than forty years, black South Africans were subject to the harsh racial segregation of the Apartheid system; despite making up over 70% of South Africa's population, they had little to no rights. He did not only lead the movement to wind up the racial discrimination but also reintegrated South Africans to emerge as a great nation who were divided on variant grounds.

The cruel oppression of his people broke his heart and Nelson Mandela infused with the ideals of liberty and democracy took up the cause of national freedom as a student and joined the African National Congress (ANC), a small organization which had been set up on similar lines as the Indian National Congress in India. ANC challenged the racist political system of apartheid, in which black Africans were legally discriminated against, in all walks of life. ANC under Nelson Mandela's leadership organized labor strikes and nationwide protests and demonstrations against apartheid during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Bearing the brunt of repression in 1964, onwards Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in the famous Robben Island, where he spent 27 years.

During the 27 years of imprisonment, thousands and thousands of Africans joined the nationalist movement for freedom forcing the white rulers to give up apartheid and release their beloved leader which they captured in 1990. In the first free election that followed in 1994 ANC under Nelson Mandela won the election and he was chosen to lead the country as its First Black African President. Nelson Mandela's greatest achievement was not so much in becoming South Africa's first black president as putting an end to the evil of apartheid which divided blacks and whites of South Africa. He ushered in the history of South Africa an era of social harmony, national unity, democratic governance, and building the national fabric from the scars of former regime. Nelson Mandela was the man who abolished Apartheid, freeing South Africa from the binds of racial segregation forever. However, it was not an easy road and Mandela needed patience, strength of character, focus, passion, understanding, perseverance, and most importantly, forgiveness, to achieve this.

Every year on 18 July -the day Nelson Mandela was born -the UN joins a call by the Nelson Mandela Foundation to devote 67 minutes of time to helping others, as a way to mark Nelson Mandela International Day. For 67 years Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the service of humanity - as a human rights lawyer, a prisoner of conscience, an international peacemaker and the first democratically elected president of a free South Africa. This day was declared in November 2009, the UN General Assembly declared July 18 "Nelson Mandela International Day" in recognition of the former South African President's contribution to the culture of peace and freedom.

I turn it down great leaders are born after centuries -supporting the very notion great leaders are the outcome of enormous problems. The poverty and war wrecked land of Afghanistan facing multiple problems are in dire need of such a leader that could turn over the circumstances in his favors.

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