

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

Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

June 11, 2016

Political Socialization

Political socialization is both a formal and informal process of social and educative learning, by which political attitudes, skill, priorities and beliefs are intentionally and unintentionally absorbed by the individuals or citizens. Being a significant process, it orientates the people towards a particular type of political behavior, philosophy and ideology. At the same time, it causes stability or instability, continuity or change and strength or weakness in a political system, and in the government of the country. It determines the type of participation in politics and government by the people. It is, without any doubt, the political aspect of the general process of socialization which is always taking place in every society and culture.

Political learning begins early in family life, when the child is still young, when different treatment of the little boys and girls produces different political attitudes and behavior in them. Generally speaking, boys are expected to be active in politics, while girls are deliberately denied political orientation and participation by their parents and other people around them. Class differences also produce differences in political attitudes and behavior. Rich stratum of the society expects that its members should learn political skills and the attitude of domination or superiority. On the other hand, the poor people, in most of the cases are humble and docile and they socialize their children in the same way. Therefore, their attitudes and behavior are mostly submissive.

There are different agents of political socialization. Some of them are relatively active and instill the political attitude among the individuals in a compelling manner, while some others are passive in this regard and do not directly promulgate such socialization. Family is among the active agents of political socialization. Most of the basic political socialization takes place within the family. In tribal societies, like Afghanistan, the political socialization within the family is also influenced by certain groups that are outside the family; such as tribes, casts, clans and ethnicities.

Another powerful agent is educational institution. Not only the political attitudes and beliefs of the teachers influence their pupils but civic education is purposely imparted to them. This is one reason why certain subjects relate to the civic education. Moreover, patriotism is also taught in schools by different methods. However, certain formal and modern ways through which basic political understanding can be taught to the children in school are not taught to the children. Mostly, in our country, such education is not part of school course.

Among the other agents of political socialization, TVs, radios, newspapers and journals, political parties, pressure groups and interest groups are the most dominant ones. Sometimes, the influences of these agents are deliberate and consciously inculcated but most often they are not so. In addition, their influence produces some destabilizing effect on the growing minds of young people as they sometimes learn the political cynicism of the adults around them. Resultantly, they start downgrading political sentiments of loyalty and patriotism. This sort of dichotomy in political socialization, in certain cases, causes the phenomenon of revolt of the youth, more dominantly among the college and university students. Meanwhile, in certain strictly ideological countries, deliberate political socialization, even indoctrination is considered as one of the primary duties of the state.

Once an individual is properly socialized in politics, he can then participate actively in political matters. Such participation is really important for a society, particularly when the society is based on a democratic political system. Democracy demands from the people that they should be vigilant and participatory so that they have their share of participation in the matters of the state. Properly politicized person, having enough political awareness, can have continuous look over the decisions of the government, the policies of the policy makers and the decisions of different political institutions. They are also in a position to take actions, which may be necessary if the decisions and the policies are not for the advantage of the people.

Unfortunately, politics is considered to be very much negative in our society and different institutions, other than the political ones, make sure that they are not politicized in any manner. They keep their members away from politics and advise them to keep a distance from it. In such circumstances, the individuals start losing confidence from politics and consider it to be an evil instead of a blessing. This gives rise to individuals who are not fully aware of their political circumstances and can easily be fooled by the politicians and utilized in different ways by them. Man is a political being. If he is not interested in politics, politics is interested in him; therefore, he must make efforts to have political awareness and understanding and also strive so that the younger generations are also socialized properly in this regard. The different institutions in the society should also take steps to facilitate the political socialization so that we have a politically aware and active young generation.



The Holy Month of Ramadan

By Hujjatullah Zia

The holy month of Ramadan is more than abstinence from food and drink during the hours of daylight. It is a time for exercising humanity, religious values and ethical code in the best possible way. In this month, Muslims are supposed to uphold human practices and nurture virtue and spirituality. It is also abstaining from evils, sin and inhumane acts and eschewing from religious and moral taboos.

Muslims should mold their souls according to religious tenets and moral standards and satisfy their spiritual needs through praying to Almighty Allah. Moreover, they will have to free their souls from worldly temptations and Devil's yoke. In other words, it is the month of breaking the chains of slavery and purifying soul from satanic characteristics.

One must not curtail Ramadan to abstaining from food and drink. Ramadan has great philosophy and humane messages for mankind rather than sheer suffering from thirst and hunger in this hot climate. One of the reasons behind remaining hungry and thirsty, from dawn to dusk, is to feel the extreme pain and suffering of the poor who put up with for years or for the whole life. Therefore, they, especially the rich, have to help the poor. So, keeping fast is not an individual act but intends to boost the morale of compassion and humanity in a community. For instance, it will be immoral of one to live in skyscrapers and eat enormous food while his/her neighbors have no roof over their heads and suffer from starvation. Therefore, one has to nurture his/her humane feelings and emphatic and sympathetic emotions.

The message of Ramadan for warring parties is to, at least, humanize the war if not quit it. They will have to avoid spilling the blood of non-combatants, mainly women and children, the wounded in action and captives or hostages. In another term, humanitarian law, which stems from religious guidelines, must be abided by. People's natural rights and dignity, bestowed by their Creator, must be protected under any circumstances. The Islamic radicals, who claim to practice upon a certain ideology, must decrease their militancy and suicide attacks so as to prevent from mounting number of casualties.

The aforementioned aspects of Ramadan do not mean to erode with the passage of time rather it means that acquiring humane characteristics must continue for the lifetime. Human societies should revive moral standards, in this month, and continue forever. They have to fight against both inward and outward evils and devils for their entire life. The outrageous acts of horror and terror should be ceased and people's dignity and fundamental rights must not be violated not only during the

Ramadan but forever. Unlucky are those who restrict Ramadan only to remaining hungry and thirsty rather than learning a lesson and reforming their daily practices. The great aim of Ramadan is to bring positive changes in one's social and individual life. One has to reform his/her behaviors within the family as well. For instance, men have to avoid treating their family members violently, especially in patriarchal societies and where traditional mindsets hold sway.

Keeping fast is also for extinguishing the flame of sexual desires so as to prevent from moral corruption in a society. Men have to train themselves not to give licentious looks at women, who walk on streets, and vice versa. This will let people enjoy their freedom in social arena. In Ramadan, holding out against passions, enduring hunger and thirst and resisting carnal desire awaken and arouse the dormant and secret inner force, provide an exercise in self-control and enable man to resist and not to succumb easily to the base desires like the outburst of lust, anger and selfishness. So, to develop this resisting power gradually one must have an occasion to fight against his desires and personal pleasures. Fast provides such an opportunity. It renders the required help in the development of this resistance. To put it succinctly, one must prove that he/she can hold the rein of their restive passions and is able to dominate their desires and lusts.

The act of fasting is said to redirect the heart away from worldly activities, its purpose being to cleanse the soul by freeing it from harmful impurities. Ramadan also teaches Muslims how to better practice self-discipline, self-control, sacrifice, and empathy for those who are less fortunate; thus encouraging actions of generosity and compulsory charity.

Fasting trains the soul of a person. With temporary restrictions, fasting gives man perseverance, authority in will, ability of challenging with severe deprivations, and, since it controls restive instincts, it showers light and inner purity into the heart.

In brief, fasting in Islam is to train to suppress our natural appetites and shun evil. It does not mean abstaining only from food but from every kind of evil. Abstention from food is only a step towards the realization that if one has to abstain from that which is lawful, how much more he must abstain from what had been forbidden by Allah. The main object of the Islamic fast is to purify the conduct and character and get the soul charged with divine attributes of Allah in the practical life for one complete month.

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

Live in the Present

By Ahmad Shah Karimi

We often talk about "living in the present". But what do we really mean by "living in the present"? Does that mean that we do not think about the past or the future? But how we cannot think about the past or the future? That would not be possible or desirable. For we do need to recollect the past and to plan for the future at times. So we need to discuss what we mean by "living in the present".

"Living in the present" means living well in the present, living skillfully in the present. Doing what we have to do now well, in fact, be the best guarantee for the future. And also there will be no regrets when we think back about the past. Instead, there will be joy - joy at having lived a good life and at having done good deeds. Living in the present means that our awareness is centered on here and now. We are not worrying about the future or thinking about the past. When we live in the present, we are living where life is happening regardless of what happened in the past or what is going to happen in the future. In other words, being in the moment does not mean that we are stuck in the moment. We can mindfully and creatively call to mind past events, or imagine what might happen in the future. We can think about the past and think about how we might have acted differently, or wonder why something happened the way it did. We can think about possible futures, and of how the actions that we commit now will make those futures more or less likely. When we are thinking about the past or future while being in the moment, we are conscious that we are reflecting and we are not lost in the thought. We do not confuse fantasy with reality. We do not stray from thinking about the past in order to construct imaginary pasts in which we said or did the right thing - or if we do so then it's part of a conscious thought experiment to see what we might learn from the experience. We think about the future, but rather than it being idle daydreaming we're thinking about the consequences of our actions or otherwise reflecting on where we want to go in life. Now the question arises how to live in the present? Although, living in the moment is not always easy. Sometimes our thoughts are overwhelmed by regrets about the past events or anxiety about the future, which can make it hard to enjoy the present, but it is not impossible too. Of course by practice and going through certain ways we can make it happen to live in now and get the most out of it as we navigate through by doing and going according to our values.

We have to concentrate on the present. For the present is something very much alive. It is immediately before us. But our present is a touch-and-go affair. At the next moment it will be past and irrevocably gone. So the passing moment has to be seized by the forelock and turned to account which means fully utilized. And it belongs to the present that places before

the real problems. There is nothing imaginary or prospective about it. Every moment we are up against unforeseen difficulties or perhaps the hostility of interested people. We have to take a measure of these. These are the living realities of life. We should grid up our lions and grabble with these immediate problems of life boldly and vigorously. In addition, to act in the present has other advantages. It makes for steady and continues advancement. Let us remember that the heights of greatness were not reached by extraordinary leaders by a sudden fight. It involved long, laborious and patient work from day to day. If, therefore, we waste our time thinking of our past and our future and allowing the present to slip by, with nothing done, it will not win for us the noble goal.

The lesson of the past have a timeless value for the future guidance. And without a consciousness of the future, the present may not turn to be a blind lane. We purchase the future with the present. The tree of the present has its roots in the past to bear fruit in the future. Besides that, being in the moment is just another way of saying that we are aware of what is going on in our experience, that we are not just being angry (or whatever) but we are aware that we are angry and are aware that we can choose to be otherwise. Of course a lot of the time, when we are not being in the moment, literally thinking about past or future. We might be dwelling on the past - brooding about some past hurt. Or we may be fantasizing about the future in which we have won the lottery and are living out our lives in some imagined paradise, or daydreaming about being with the perfect partner. Often these fantasized pasts and futures are not even real possibilities, but simply fantasies of how things might be or how we would have liked them to have been. And as with all unmindful activity, we have no awareness that this fantasizing is pointless. All that it does is reinforce unhelpful emotional tendencies that can never enrich lives.

Living in the present gives few extra years to live. It means that we will surely live longer, but that you will have more time on your hands which would otherwise, have been wasted on either, brooding about past mistakes and failure or worrying about the future. It needs to be realized that there are many things that are out of control. So, in both of the two cases above, worrying will not improve things and it merely add to the stress. Hence, living in the present reduces stress. It helps to focus better on the task at hand, moreover, to dedicate the terms of life and are not bound by the outcomes of our actions and above all we become happier in general because we are getting things done and are not plagued by either the past or the future. We have time to enjoy the little things in life.

Ahmad Shah Karimi is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahmadshah.karimi12@gmail.com

Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net

افغانستان
The Daily Afghanistan

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.