

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



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Minorities' Equal Rights Unrecognized

Every human command equal respect and fair treatment based on sacred bond humanity grants and democracy ascertains this provision. The division of man being on variant grounds be that, religious, sectarian or ethnic, never meant to serve their exodus or butchery. A pluralistic society pleads variant ethnic and religious groups living together with harmony and bond of fraternity. The critics to pluralism work to diminish this harmony by eliminating others and seek to produce a society in which a single version of religious interpretation ruling without the plights of minorities kept in contemplation.

Democracy protects and promotes of human rights -it guarantees equal rights to all citizens irrespective of their cast, sect and religion. Nonetheless, in this piece of land, there are several prejudicial and discriminatory cases reported with religious minorities being subjected to ill-treatment, fundamental rights suspended and are coerced to migration, leading to impairment of universally accepted system of governance. One of the greatest outcomes of democracy is the protection and promotion of human rights. Afghanistan's constitutions contain large number of Islamic provisions. It is good trend the constitution should owe such provisions that make Muslims practice Islamic teachings. Though, such provisions do not find application on religious minorities, yet the stately religion cast more or less impacts on minorities. It is mostly recommended that state should not interfere in religious affair of its masses -given that modern states do not owe a religion. In substitution it should facilitate every citizen practice his religion with absolute freedom. Consequently, the dream of a real democracy melted away amid hazy cloud of frustration.

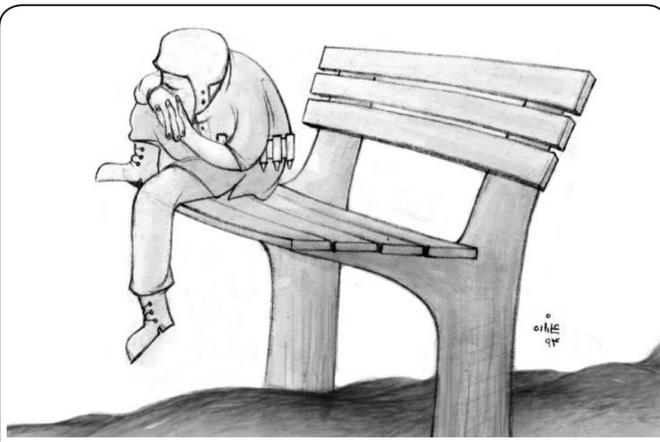
Formerly a report surfaced that highlighted the sufferings of minorities Sikhs and Hindus in particular. It was cautioned that Afghanistan's once-thriving Sikh community is dwindling fast as many choose to leave the country of their birth to escape what they say is growing intolerance and discrimination. Once boasting as many as 100,000 members in the 1990s, Afghanistan's Sikh population, according to community leaders, has dwindled to an estimated 2,500. The reason for the exodus: endemic societal discrimination in the majority Muslim country and the illegal seizure of Sikh homes, businesses, houses of worship and even cemeteries. Hindus in Afghanistan are undergoing through a similar anguish. The main problem the religious minorities are passing through is social discrimination. The Madrasas in particular and schools in general are supplied with syllabus that contains prejudicial contents -it certainly poisoned the mindset of upcoming generation. Having read derogatory remarks against religious minorities, the intolerance begotten is not unexpected. This discriminatory attitude observed is not only witnessed in streets but also in institutions and public offices. Being subdued by such discriminations many Sikhs and Hindus were either forced to sell their land or had it openly seized by armed warlords. This very stance has led to a blow in social isolation of these minorities.

Community figures and analysts believe that intolerance for non-Muslims has grown as constant violence and upheaval has made Afghans wary of those they perceive as outsiders - both native Sikhs and Hindus are widely regarded as foreigners, more readily identified as Indians and Pakistanis. If social biases and religious discrimination continue unchecked, it not only tarnishes the image of Afghanistan but also harms our image as pluralistic society.

Misery does not end here but the attempt in 2013 by former president Hamid Karzai to reserve parliamentary seats for Sikhs and Hindus was rejected by lawmakers who feared other minorities would make demands. Following that a delegation of minorities set a sitting with former president, letting him know their concerns and problems. The minority leaders presented their demands and briefed him on problems facing the two communities. They urged the president to help the minorities regain their properties and religious sites usurped by powerful individuals. They were assured with guarantees to execute some changes -nonetheless without making ground fertile for this harmonious change the change can not be met.

It was later seen the president came up with immediate but surprising rejection of single minority reserved parliamentary seat for Sikh and Hindu communities. However, subsequent to several mass demonstration registered by minorities made the president to reverse his decision. We should learn it; inhabiting in state the minorities equally own the right to free exercise of ballot and choosing a legitimate candidate who could efficiently represent them in the state. In modern democracies this very value is enshrined in constitution -contrarily our constitution is based on unfound and irrational doctrines that hardly find application in modern states. It is very right time we have to make decisions to pursue rational discourse by constituting laws that grant the citizens equal importance or law that discriminates at them.

It worth noting that the prevalent notorious detrimental state can not be reversed unless laws confirmatory to safeguarding human rights are formulated and implemented indiscriminately. In doing so we can only safe our unyielding face and let the world believe we support and promote every citizen equally found and treated before the law.



The Demands of Better Living

By Dilawar Sherzai

A society that suffers from the difficulties of obliviousness and deprivation cannot have the dreams of affluence and progress and it does not have the right, either. Although we keep on chatting about affluence and advancement but do not comprehend that only the nations that have touched a particular landmark in awareness and economic strength can have such dreams; or else, endeavoring for such dreams is nothing but daydreaming.

We, as a nation, are standing on such a stage of ignorance and hunger that the dream of stability and order itself has become a daydream. And for our plight we are worthy of sympathy and criticism and even an excuse, as we have been witnessing few decades of social, political and economic instability and at the same time 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.

Though there have been certain strata who have been involved negatively in the mentioned phase of history, the role of the ruling elite has been the most dominant one. This particular stratum 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.

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Talents not Supported by Afghan Education System

By Bismillah Alizada and Mahmood Mohammadi

Shortly after September 11, 2001, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan collapsed under the heavy attacks of American B52s, and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) invaded the country to establish a so-called democratic government. Since then Afghanistan has experienced many changes, especially in its education system, yet it has a long way to go to standardize its curriculum to global standards, to professionally implement it in schools and universities, and to see a change.

The education system, completely undermined by protracted conflict over three decades, has improved significantly in the last 14 years but only quantitatively. While during the Taliban regime (1996-2001) fewer than one million children (none girls) attended schools, this number has been soaring since 2001-today, almost ten million students (almost 38 percent of which girls (UNICEF 2011)) attend schools and universities around the country.

With the presence of international community, public schools, most of which closed during Taliban, were reopened around the country with a new curriculum, replacing the Taliban curricula that had been confined to Sharia and the necessity for Jihad. Under Karzai's administration, fuelled by the high demand for limited public school places, private schools started their activities, going through explosive growth in numbers and gaining more students than public schools in offering a relatively quality education. Marefat School is one of these private schools.

First established in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in 1994, Marefat High School started its activities with 500 USD, 38 Students and five teachers in Pol-e Khushk, one of the poorest, most deprived, and most war-torn areas in West of Kabul, in 2002. Since then, Marefat has had significant achievements. Now Marefat has approximately 3,600 students, 130 teachers, a two-storey traditional adobe building and a four-storey modern complex, and one million USD annual budget.

On a cloudy Saturday, I sat with a seven grader at Marefat who has recently written a story, a fabulous one ever written by a seven grader. Khalil Ghulami, 14, a reticent, deep, studious and reserved seven grader at Marefat High School, Kabul, has recently written a 49-page storybook, titled The Wonderful World, and has printed just one copy of it with 1300 Afs (22 USD) paid by her mother, Zakia, 35, who runs a beauty parlour to help her husband, a shopkeeper, to make a living for their family of seven members, five of whom attending schools.

Khalil's The Wonderful World, is an imaginative account of the adventures of two characters who jeopardize their lives to establish peace and equality in this imaginary world by killing the many cruel and tyrant ruling characters. In the story, Khalil symbolically depicts the quest and dream of a post-war generation for peace, keenly and thoughtfully.

Khalil is supported by his parents who want him to realize his dreams and to work on what he loves. That very support has helped

him improve. "My parents, especially my mother, has always instructed, supported and encouraged me", says Khalil with a smile on his face. With that support and encouragement, Khalil has come a long way since his childhood when he "didn't know, or knew too less about the world and about what way [he] would take." "The first piece I wrote was a short story-I decided not to give it to anyone. Then I wrote two other ones, The Crafty Fox and the Wise Wolf and The Four Princes and the Dragon. I wrote The Wonderful World, the fourth one, last winter."

Beside his school lessons and reading, Khalil is interested in learning English. He has been attending English classes since last winter at in a private Institute of English Language. Dreaming to become a well-known storyteller and novelist in the future, Khalil tries to learn English professionally so he can read fictions and novels in English to open a window to a completely new world and to pursue his higher education abroad.

At Marefat, a private school whose students enjoy a better environment of learning, teachers with better credentials and a relatively quality curriculum, however, Khalil's work has not been paid heed at, or encouraged at least as an extraordinary work of a seven grader should be. When Khalil started attending Marefat in the fifth grade, he found that it was better than his previous public school. The teachers were encouraging and his classmates well-disciplined. When Khalil decided to write The Wonderful World, he was sure his teachers and fellow students would be impressed. However, to his disappointment, more than a month after he circulated it, "only a few classmates who are close friends, and only two-three teachers have read the book". His Dari Literature teacher reviewed it for revision at Khalil's request. Marefat is one of the very few schools that encourage and support their pupils. But writing, a core skill in today's education, is not included in the school curriculum at all and only occasionally, for fun or for special events like International Teachers' or Mothers' Day, teachers assign students to write some pieces-but never academic, and they are never checked or revised.

Khalil represents a generation desperate to access quality education. In spite of hundreds of millions of dollars donated by international community and international organizations to improve access to quality education, it remains wholly inadequate. Prospects for the future do not, unfortunately, seem promising because there is neither the budget for the necessary investment in the education system, nor apparently the will to undertake the massive necessary reforms.

Tomorrow Khalil's generation will be faced with tougher challenges but the present system fails to provide them with necessary skills and knowledge. Khalil and his generation are walking on the uneven uphill path to future, not provided with quality education, the dire need for such a challenging future awaiting them.

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