

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



June 14, 2017

## Ramadan – Month of Morality and Humanity

In the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims are supposed to revive moral standards and social values. A peaceful collective life originates from individual reform. When one feeds their souls with virtue and spirituality and deems others as brethren, the society will move towards peace and stability. Men's megalomania and lust for power and property are believed to be the main reasons behind the current violence and bloodshed going on around the human societies. The holy Ramadan aims to deplete the individuals' soul from all vice.

We will have to broaden our horizons and discard dogmatic beliefs. Men's radical vision of the world have resulted in lack of tolerance towards others. For instance, when one views the world from a narrow lens and with parochial mindset, they will see others inferior. Subsequently, claiming superiority for yourself and inferiority for others on the grounds of race, religion and color will pave the ground for violence.

All the destructive wars in men's history stemmed from the issue of superiority and inferiority.

A civil society void of violence will be formed when people of all races and religions treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood on the basis of being human. It is possible when individuals show tolerance and patience towards one another. The Creator has bestowed all people the rights to life and liberty and no one is allowed to curtail these rights without the provision of law. Now the question is that how can you nurture tolerance?

There are two ways to cherish tolerance towards others. First, we have to empty our souls from all vice and evil through practicing moral values and religious tenets, in their true spirit. That is to say, we are to abandon our wicked characteristics and curtail our desire for power and lust for luxury. All should realize their human responsibilities and respect the rights and dignity of others as they do theirs. Second, one has to understand a religion deeply and does not tailor religious tenets to their own tastes. For example, radical groups are imposing their own minds on religion and pursue their self-styled manners. So, violence apparently roots in men's megalomania and misconstruing religion.

In the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims have two great responsibilities to deplete their souls from evil and understand and practice religion truly. The soul also needs to be fed the same as body. But one is to be cautious enough not to feed their souls with poisonous food. Religion emphasizes Muslims to satiate their souls with ethical code namely humanity, kindness and love for mankind. Keeping fast in the holy month of Ramadan does not necessarily mean being hungry and thirsty from dawn to dusk without any reasons behind and just for being a religious order.

Besides fasting, we have to keep a tight rein on our carnal desires and physical pleasure and restrict our wants and needs. Purifying our souls from evil is the main objective of this month. There is actually a strong tension between soul and body. The soul tends to fly one in the spiritual sky of virtue, whereas the body pulls one back to the quagmire of sin and evil. We restrict our physical needs in this month in favor of soul through keeping fast.

It is believed that religious issue in Islam is not an individual act but it is widely involved in collective life. After purifying ourselves from evil, we will keep our society safe from inhuman acts, especially violence and bloodshed. The fundamental practices of radical groups are not justified at all in human societies. As it was said earlier, radical groups do not understand the true spirit and message of religion. They impose their own warped minds on religion and practice upon their self-styled rules.

The holy month of Ramadan tends to provide an opportunity for Muslims to repent their misdeeds and reform their acts. This month humanizes the society. It should be noted that one is not to reduce humanity and moral values only in this month. That is to say, it will be of no value to practice religious tenets and moral values in the holy month of Ramadan and ignore them in other months. After purifying ourselves, we have to continue being, if not perfect, good humans.

In brief, the philosophies behind this holy month should not be ignored or downplayed. In this month, Muslims are supposed to polish their souls from filth of sin and crime. All people, not only Muslims, will have to revive humanity and ethical code in any-time and uphold the rights and life of people.

Let us hope and pray for a peaceful and human society in which all people are able to exercise their rights without obstacles – this is the aim of Ramadan, too.



## Pleasure in Death and Engendering Violence

By Dr. Aman Fasihi

We have strange community, where life smells blood, death and violence and murder have been changed into common practice. One's demands are pursued at the cost of another's life. Our life and history are replete with outrageous acts. Mankind is tortured in the worst possible way and even death is preceded by horrible acts. In today's life, a new issue has emerged which is the ugliest sort of death. In this kind of death, one risks his own life and the life of innocent individuals. There has emerged strong power pushing one to death – this is in conflict with any kinds of rationality, since self-defense is one's highest aspiration and basic need.

However, murderers enjoy the death and this pleasure is the only justification behind their acts. Perhaps, self-wanted death will be the sweetest for them, since they pose a question that why one will gain in a position enjoying death?

To answer the question that how death changes into pleasure and one forgoes his/her life, one's attitude should be considered. Sometimes, your behavior will be subject to the principle of pleasure. This principle originates from the inferior aspect of man's existence. But as a matter of protecting a life and not being controlled, this will be risky. On the contrary, there is the principle of reality. Based on this principle, one will not merely follow pleasure, but follow what is in your actual favor. The principle of reality, which is dominated by the nature of self-protection, will be the complement of the principle of pleasure. In brief, the principle of reality will pursue pleasure but postpone it to hunt for further enjoyment.

Based on the mentioned principle, the normalization of death in our society is because it has been changed into pleasure for some groups. Initially, it might seem paradoxical that how death, as an end to life, will possibly change into physical pleasure. To understand this fact, take, for example, an addict who knows that addiction will lead to death but still involves in it. It is because s/he is not able to ignore the pleasure. The same is the case with death. The reasons behind changing death into pleasure which will be explained shortly:

### 1-Anti-Nature Morality

This kind of morality is in conflict with the nature of life. That is to say, the world is considered worthless, a transit or bridge to the next world, meaningless, prison, etc. and life is tantamount to pain and suffering. One the other hand, the hereafter is introduced a permanent life full of pleasure and void of pain and suffering. For instance, the next world is a complete utopia with perfect opposite sex, streams and

springs, garden and so on and so forth. So, all pleasure is reduced to physical enjoyment depleted of rational support. This kind of interpretation of pain and gain will prompt one to get rid of the worldly suffering and touch permanent pleasure. This is how death changes into pleasure and you will embrace it with open arm. As it is said, "Kill yourself to steal yourself". This killing, according to them, frees one from the worldly pain and joins to heavenly pleasure. They pursue the same kind of pleasure via death and murder.

### 2-Ideological Conflicts

The second question is that what makes killing others enjoyable? According to religious texts, these groups do not allow committing suicide in a normal way and an honorable death has the reward. Therefore, they cannot wait for a normal death and seek the ground for an honorable death, according to them. Creating ideological conflicts seem to be the best way in this regard. When life is interpreted in the frame of beliefs and jihad and others' beliefs are considered false and an obstacle for reaching salvation, those believers will be doomed to death and deserving no life. Their death will be called reward and one will seek to kill them at the cost of their own lives – this is how social conflicts such as war, violence and suicide attacks take place. In such a case, some political circles will recruit those exhausted from life and re-socialize them in religious or military bases and implant hatred in their minds and hearts so as to prepare them for killing others.

### 3-Social History

The next anomic state is changing death into social phenomenon. This phenomenon emerges in different ways such as suicide, murder, and desire for killing others and using the literature of death for expressing one's sentiments which have been witnessed by our history. Our history is replete with cruelty, war and violence and even one is killed for fun and pleasure. We are filled with a sense of revenge and hatred. Everyone will seek revenge through killing or wishing one death. This is likely to be a historical issue resulted in the current mental and spiritual state.

In a society where death changes into pleasure and life is sought in death, violence will manifest itself in death and murder. There is much historical evidence in this case. The stronger desire for death increases the more violence will emerge. To put an end to this issue, the pleasure for life should be strengthened in a society rather than death. Social violence will not decrease unless the life of mankind is changed into a value.

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## Resumption of Peace Talks and New Requirements

By Liaqat Ali Amini

The peace negotiation is an endless process discussed between Afghanistan and Pakistan. There was no positive outcome and the deteriorating security situation has continued unabated. Former President had trips to Pakistan 21 times with the bona fide intention of peace. His generous acts to Pakistan's demands such as releasing Taliban's prisoners, stopping night operations against the Taliban fighters, banning the use of heavy weapons against them, and calling them "brother" in political statements reveal the fact that peace has been Afghanistan's top priority.

Viewing the issue from the perspective of former administration seems to be naïve of one in diplomatic relations, to be kept in dark from the depth of Islamabad's strategy and to learn no experience from the foul play in the negotiating table which was a strong blow to the country. However, the new approach of the National Unity Government (NUG) towards Islamabad's policy shows that Kabul is determined to review its diplomacy, utilize the past experience and include public will and the objective realities in it.

It is about two years that Afghan-Pak relations have soured and it is easily noticeable. The government sought to put an end to strong dependence on Pakistan and open a new window in regional and international relations. Moreover, extending the commercial cooperation with regional countries will promote Afghanistan to a higher position.

The gathering of regional countries in Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, which was held with the aim of promoting regional friendly relations in its 17th meeting in the capital city of Kazakhstan, Astana, paved the way for Pakistan to demand the resumption of reconciliation process.

There are several views about the resumption of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the US and China. Two of the views will be explained shortly:

First, the global situation has been changed dramatically which affected the political and security relations in the region. The issue of Qatar reflects the same fact as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirate, Bahrain and Egypt severed their diplomatic and commercial ties with Qatar alleging that it was supporting "extremism" and terrorist networks such as the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Taliban, al-Qaeda, etc. This issue happened overnight leaving Qatar into an island under siege.

No matter what are the main reasons behind this issue, but it is most likely that whichever country supports terrorist networks, will be punished by regional and international countries.

Perhaps, the surge of anger against Qatar, as a supporter of terrorism, might have signaled a threat to Pakistan not to be doomed in the same fate. That is to say, this issue will have prompted Pakistani officials to include the negotiation of peace in its agenda and also realize this fact that Trump's administration is too different from Obama's administration.

The US seems serious enough in resuming the Quadrilateral talks and believing the fact that war will not be a solution for peace and negotiation will be the only viable way for bringing peace and stability. It is hoped that Pakistan will also pursue the negotiation of peace with bona fide intention and any foul play in this regard might have repercussions.

The second view suggests that Pakistan might capitalize on the current condition and may resume its previous game under the title of peace talks. It has played such games several times with the international community and the United States. After coming out of a stalemate, it has returned to previous policy.

It is likely that Pakistan is now in a better state than the past with having the support of Russia, China and some other countries with it.

Afghanistan's manner of presenting in this process is a significant issue. Kabul should not sacrifice everything in a probable peace process. Besides protecting the security, political, and commercial outcomes and foreign policy, Kabul administration should join this process with confidence so that it can lead an Afghan-owned peace talks and takes matters in its own hands in the future. It should be noted that a genuine intention for peace is still a matter of question.

The fruition of peace negotiation is a matter of opinion. There still seems many ifs and buts. The Taliban, whose presence is the most significant, should be persuaded to stop war and join process. But this group yet to sign in this regard.

It is hoped that this time the peace talks will come to fruition and the participants, mainly Pakistan, use their leverage to nudge the Taliban to the peace table. This round of peace is believed to be more critical and perhaps the last chance for the Taliban, as Ghani said in Kabul Process, to join peace.

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