

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



June 19, 2017

Democracy Depends on the People as a Whole

This is an undeniable fact that Afghanistan has not been able to acquire stable and true political system. Though we claim our country to be democratic, we lack all the qualities that are required to nourish a democratic country in true sense. In fact, it is not just the rulers who form democracy; rather a democratic system is always developed by the society as whole.

Democracy is not like monarchy, where a single person took all the decisions of the nation. The subjects were bound to follow what the kings used to order them. Though in certain cases some of the individuals or groups could question the orders of the kings, on most of the occasions they would be accepted unchallenged. And, the system used to largely depend on the wills of the kings. If the king used to be somewhat merciful, the system would be lenient comparatively, and people would have some sort of blessings, otherwise, mostly the kings were authoritarian, despotic and tyrant.

A democratic system on the other hand, largely depends on the nature of the people as a whole. As the system is people centered, the role of the people as a whole stands paramount in a democratic system. There are certain qualities that should be possessed by the people within a democratic country; otherwise, the experience of democracy would never produce the desired results.

Our struggle with the democratic system is largely nullified by the attitude of our people. As the experience of the system is new for most of the people, they are not sure of their roles and responsibilities. They still believe that the rulers have all the duty and they must change the circumstances. In this way they can also put most of the blames of the drawbacks in the system on the rulers and, themselves, avoid responsibilities.

However, it is really imperative to comprehend that such an attitude would never help us in bringing any change within our system. Though, 16 years can be considered very little as far as the experience of democracy is concerned, we have not been able to learn as much as we should have learnt by now or as much as we could have learnt, considering the opportunities and assistance that were available for us. For us it is not necessary to go through a lengthy evolutionary process of democracy like the other nations of the world; as we have the examples of others before us and we can easily learn from them. Today's great democracies in the world had to go through the lengthy processes because they did not have the examples of others before them. For the nourishment of democracy it is vital that all the members of the society must play their roles; there is no other option.

Along with the political efforts, we would require amending our conscience and our inner selves, as well. The departure or distance from democracy would only spoil us to a further extend. Now that we have decided to welcome it with open arms we require changing ourselves. As an individual, first of all, we need to change our behavior.

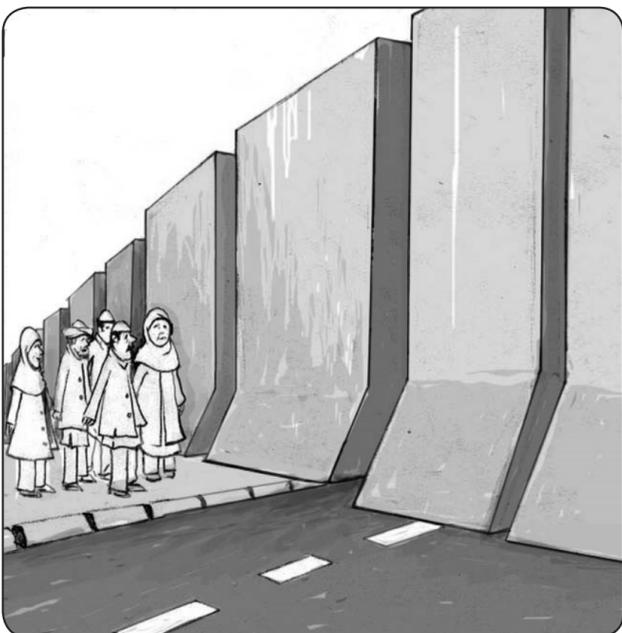
A democratic behavior is largely based on the art of proper speaking and the patience to listen carefully. Democracy supports the freedom of expression and allows everyone to say what he wants to say. In democracy we basically accept the sort of environment wherein we can be opposed openly. Those people who support democracy fundamentally want that the issues should be solved through dialogue and reasoning not through violence.

They want that the opposite reasons should be listened to sufficiently and the claims should always be reconsidered.

We have dishonesty in our intentions and extremism in our actions. The difference in opinion and thoughts are dealt through intolerance and even violence. Our statements have taken the shape of threats. The true spirit of democracy can only be found in the theories and promises; therefore, the people do not see the true practice of it and are ambiguous about it. This is really unfortunate that at this instance of hope and great expectations we are suffering from these problems; yet, we do not have to be disheartened.

If we really like democracy and democratic values, we would require making its prerequisites possible. We would need to feel our responsibility in order to lead our country towards true democracy; otherwise, the dream of democracy may shatter and we will not be able to recreate it.

Though the roles of individuals are paramount, some of the responsibilities go to those leaders and religious scholars who have great influence in forming the opinion and the attitude of the people. They need to understand that instead of sowing the seeds of hatred and intolerance in the minds and hearts of the people, they can spread love and tolerance and they can really participate in forming an environment that is suitable for democracy.



Opportunities and Challenges of the Upcoming Elections

By Liaqat Ali Amini

Within recent weeks, a sense of worry surges up for no decision to hold election. The chairman of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said it was most likely that election would not be held in the current solar year. The media and civil institutions have expressed their concerns about slow process of execution in the IEC and disagreement among the members of the Commission regarding several issues.

It seems that the process of parliamentary and district council elections have faced challenges. But there are also opportunities to be used in the best possible way.

This commentary seeks to point out the greatest challenges and opportunities before the election. It is hoped that opening electoral debates will catalyze the election's significant and destiny-changer process.

Reforming the electoral system was one of the commitments of the National Unity Government (NUG). The dissatisfaction with the electoral process, which was discussed with many ifs and buts, changed the electoral reform into a complicated and time-consuming issue.

Passing a tough process, the election commissioners, including the IEC and Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), were finally approved by the high-ranking government officials.

Despite the promises made for conducting provincial and district council elections in the current year, there are still pressing challenges before the election. There is not a sound and reliable environment to minimize the public fear about electoral harms and violation of the principles of fair and transparent election. Although there was security concerns about previous elections, too, the worries are stronger in this round.

The process of democratization, which will lead to political, economic, security and educational progress in the country, has been constantly hampered by terrorist groups and their foreign backers. Their destructive plots disrupted Afghanistan's constructive plans. The deadly attacks carried out recently by the Taliban and merciless Haqqani network in Kabul and other provinces reveal the sinister intention behind the terrorist scenes. The attacks further show that Afghanistan's constructive activities, fundamental projects, economic developments and rehabilitations and launching electoral process are beyond the tolerance of the enemies.

One of the issues which plays a key role in election's transparency is the process of distributing electronic identity cards to the citizens. The lack of a reliable national docu-

ment for participating in election will be a strong blow to nationalization and democratization – this fact has been proved in the past. The opportunity for a sound and comprehensive election narrows, whereas the possibility for delay grows stronger with each passing day.

Spending millions of dollars for distributing ballots in every round of election was not a wise decision. This issue was not only a financial waste but also unsupportive to the elections' transparency. Moreover, it brought no responsibility to the citizens to keep them safe. Perhaps, it was the main reason behind the government's decision to distribute electronic cards with the aim of preventing further financial waste and ensure the election's transparency. That is to say, this approach will ensure the transparency and protect the rights of citizens. However, this issue also encountered challenges and the opportunities for the completion of this process are most likely to be elusive. To citizens' unmitigated chagrin, their expectation for receiving electronic card in near future will not be met.

Recently, the discussions going on between government and IEC show a dilemma about conducting a timely election. Government is of the idea that the election's deadline should be arranged and declared, but the IEC says the mounting insecurity and lack of budget for conducting provincial and district council elections are the main obstacles in this regard. So, holding election in the current year is still a mystery and there is a weak possibility in this case. In addition to a series of political disagreements and factional conflicts, the demand for delaying election by members of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Parliament) and their illegal continuation of activities (the legal period has been expired constitutionally) are the next issue challenging the election in the current year.

In accordance with IEC and international institutions supporting the electoral process, the government will have to struggle to put an end to public concerns and worries of the would-be candidates. In brief, the government is responsible to be clear in this respect to end the confusion. Climate condition predicts less opportunity for conducting election, since there are left no more than six months to winter. Hence, it should be declared whether comprehensive strategies are adopted for holding transparent provincial and district council elections or the obstacles hamper the election.

In case of keeping the public in dark, the assumptions and discussions might change into a hot issue.

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The Challenges before Education in Private Schools

By Mohammad Baqirian

More students study at private schools rather than governmental schools. Since a large number of students are taught in private schools, the questions are that do these schools meet the necessary criteria? Do the instructors pay enough heed to the talents of the students? Do they only teach or also socialize the students in a better way? How is the quality of teaching in such institutions? This commentary tends to answer these questions.

Besides the profit motive behind this activity, the process of employing teachers is a matter of question. The processing of hiring instructors shows the significance of quantity and appearance rather than quality and content. Two tests will be conducted for hiring instructors. First, the would-be teacher or applicant will have to take a written test. In case of passing this process, s/he will have a demonstration class, which is conducted in a real class where a delegate of teachers monitoring the applicant. The most attention in this test will be focused on how the would-be teacher is able to control the class and make the student keep silent. The more silent a class is the better score the applicant will gain. The teachers' body language such as gesture, eye-contact, facial expressions and the way s/he acts will also be taken into account to some extent. However, the main subject, which is communicating and transferring the knowledge to the students, is either forgotten or paid a superficial attention. That is to say, the quality of teaching, teacher's level of knowledge and teaching experiences are hardly taken into account. Moreover, the teachers' familiarization with psychological subject, which is highly important for instructors, is ignored completely.

This type of hiring process will dismantle the cornerstone of education and training. The teachers being hired based on the said criteria will not be fit for teaching. Moreover, the personal talent of a student is never paid attention in any schools. For instance, every student has his/her own talent for a particular subject and the best teacher will be the one who is able to find out this talent and foster it. All students are not supposed to be equal in math, physics, chemistry, etc. or memorize the text from A to Z. Perhaps, one student has painting talent, the next one in poetry and the third one in art. A real teacher is to find out this talent and promote it. Discovering the students' talents and enhancing them will be the highest responsibility of a teacher. The value of knowledge should not be reduced into a small number of subjects. A successful teacher is one who can satiate the spiritual need of students. Finding out the inner talent will trigger the keen interest of a student on learning and studying hard. That is to say, a teacher will reconcile a student with book through the

mentioned fact and teachers' lessons will be music to the students' ear and change them into real bookworms. Quenching the students' thirst will awaken their talents and inner force will move them towards studying. Unluckily, our teachers turn a blind eye to this fact, and their role is restricted in the structure and appearance of the class.

Rather than paying attention to the personal talent of a student, private schools establish restrictive and unnecessary rules which will lead to the students' distaste. A large number of students are overloaded with heavy home assignments. Subsequently, they have to spend all their times in fulfilling their backbreaking assignments or else is punished physically by their instructors. On the other hand, one of the main issues is that students do not learn the lessons to do those assignments properly because of the disharmony of teachers' explanation with students' level of understanding. Hence, students will show strong reluctance to books and schools. In other words, the students deem school a strong burden on their shoulders with such process of teaching. School will fill students with a negative image and will spark off a sense of hatred and exhaustion. This blow is the result of lack of teachers' knowledge with teaching and training and ignoring the students' personal talent.

One of the highly significant issues is the way a teacher treats students. As it was mentioned earlier, the best teacher in a school is the one who keeps the class silent. Such a teacher will be praised not only by administration but also their colleagues. Sometimes, other teachers ask such a teacher about the technic of keeping a class silent. It should be noted that focusing on a lesson with silence will not be negative but on the condition that it does not weary the students or applied with violence.

Silencing students with punishment, mainly physical one, will not be a technic for teaching. Of course, students will remain quiet by force. Cultivating a sensitive relation with such instructors are not possible. It is crystal clear that whenever we dislike someone, we also hate their words even though the words are positive. The students who are forced to keep silent will experience the very fact. The instructors' dictator manner will trigger a sense of hatred in a way that they will reveal negative reaction towards the instructors' words. So, their teaching will not bear the desired result.

The ministry of education and other responsible institutions will have to resolve these issues and pave the ground for a sound learning environment and quality lessons so that students do not graduate with low level of knowledge.

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