

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



March 05, 2015

The Vulnerability of Afghan Policewomen

The idea of confining woman within the four walls is deeply embedded in Afghans' tradition. She is born to deal with domestic issues and household chores. Her dignity lies in nourishing the children and being subjugated to her spouse. Her nobility lies in swallowing her pride with accepting her servile position – especially in connubial life. In another item, the epitome of a modest woman in Afghan family is the one who endures the vicissitudes of life, the mistreatment of her in-laws and domestic violence with great patience. These traditional frames of mind make women highly susceptible to violence.

Involving in social issues jeopardizes women's life and liberty across the country. Engaging in social activities, Afghan women would be exposed to the venom spew forth by local traditionalists and Taliban militants. In some rural villages the custom, which roots in warped beliefs, trumps religious values and moral norms. A Taliban attitude towards Afghan women is yet practiced widely in some remote areas – particularly in Pashtun-dominated villages. For instance, the elopement of a teenage girl, who was supposed to marry against her choice, would be ensued by death. To put it succinctly, being a daughter is tantamount to being a slave to her father's wishes.

Joining women to Afghan police is considered an iconoclastic move in the society and their freedom is curtailed to a large extent. They live in great anxiety and under severe psychological pressure. Afghan policewomen encounter manifold problems such as being threatened or killed by the Taliban militants, disturbed by their male colleagues and being treated coldly by their neighbors. As a result, a report says that a policewoman was on her way home from a visit to her parents in a remote corner of eastern Afghanistan with her children by her side and a small group of women. Two men, their faces covered by kaffiyehs, pulled up on a motor scooter. "Who is Parveena, daughter of Sardar?" said one, looking at the group of women, their faces hidden behind blue burqas. No one answered. One of the men took his Kalashnikov and used the muzzle to lift the burqa of the nearest woman – in conservative Afghan society, a gesture akin to undressing her in public. It was Parveena, who like many Afghans used only one name. She grabbed the muzzle and said, "Who is asking?" But the gunmen had seen her face, and they fired 11 bullets into her. It was said that Parveena's cousins were involved in her death. The provincial police accused the Taliban, but local Taliban commanders denied involvement. After the killing, the family quickly called relatives who were in the Taliban and they heard there had been a spy, a person they knew in the community who had tipped off the Taliban to her visit to her home district.

The stigma of being a policewoman remains so powerful that even after Parveena's father and brothers picked up her body, they could find no mullahs in their village who would bury her or say the funeral prayers. "There were six mullahs in our village, and after she was killed they disappeared intentionally," her brother Wali is quoted to say. "The Taliban had told the mullahs, 'Don't do a funeral ceremony for those people,' and not one would say the prayers for my sister." This story reflects the dangers and difficulties of Afghan policewomen and the broader Western effort to engineer gender equality in Afghanistan. The plight of women under the Taliban captured the Western imagination, and their liberation became a rallying cry. A flood of money and programs poured into Afghanistan, for girls' schools and women's shelters and television shows, all aimed at elevating women's status.

But these good intentions often foundered against the strength of Afghan sexual conservatism. As the tale of Afghan policewomen shows, repressive views of women were not just a Taliban curse, but also a deeply embedded part of society. Afghan policewomen, struggling to maintain good reputations, face a legion of logistical problems poorly understood by Western donors – a need for separate changing rooms in police stations, for example, since women are afraid to wear their uniforms on their way to work. After a decade and millions of dollars, even the modest goal of recruiting 5,000 policewomen remains a mirage. In fact, only 2,700 are on the force, less than 2 percent of the 169,000 members, according to the United Nations' office in Kabul based on numbers from the Afghan Interior Ministry. "Policewomen have been branded as little more than prostitutes, dishonoring their families. That stigma means that mostly desperate women, usually illiterate and poor, have joined the force. In a society where coercive sex is a frequent tool, many endure sexual harassment for fear of losing their jobs."

According to a report, a United Nations report given to the ministry in 2013 but never publicly released – in part because of fears of possible reprisals against policewomen – found that 70 percent of the 130 policewomen interviewed had experienced sexual harassment, with smaller numbers reporting rape or more explicit pressures to have sex. We have to change our attitude towards women and rectify our culture on the basis of religious law and ethical code. The policewomen, who devote to protect our life and land, have to be respected and viewed honorably. Involving in social activities never put one's personality under question. Our citizens, the policemen in particular, are supposed to hold policewomen in due respect.



Air Pollution

The Evolution of Words

By Dilawar Sherzai

In the evolution of their social life, through every thick and thin, with fear and wonder, all the way through the thick forests, coming out of the caves and looking at the world around, surviving within the cruel valleys and deserts, fighting with beasts, fearing the volcanoes and the lighting of the dark clouds, men could make a great achievement of inventing words. Though it appears that the words were within human beings for long but it took them thousands of years to discover them. Even in the horrifying loneliness, uttering words and murmuring with himself means that human being has a company – the company of his own voice, and his reach, his approach is up to the limits of his voice and his feelings and thoughts are up to the extent of the reservoir of the words he has – the words that have taught him the way of expressing himself.

When the meaning, thoughts and dreams dreamt of coming out of human mind and spread in the world around, they came to the human lips and within the silence the sound echoed, which was called a word. And, when the same word wanted to rest, it became an unexpressed meaning in the form of thought in the mind. In fact, all the human relations are from the words, through the words and of the words, which are not only thoughts and imaginations but also the meaning, I and you and everybody else, who listens to us, think with words, use the words and even express agony with words. We actually meet through words and get departed through them. We acquire words and lose words. What is there among human beings without words that bind them at certain times and separate them at others? In the time before the history, the meaning meditated in the chambers of human mind, sometimes with thoughts and sometimes with questions and in that state which was neither silence nor noise, the wisdom nourished, and the astuteness of human beings evolved, which ultimately resulted in his marvelous capacity of expressing himself through words. He compelled himself to talk, to spread the knowledge he had gathered of the world around him and of the feelings and responses he had generated of the world. And, he did all these through words. It is important to mention a fact that must be kept in memories: word is both the wise and the wisdom; it is both the awareness and the aware. Whether it is evidence or the witness, it is a word. Whether it is a poem or poetry, a dra-

ma or an actor, it is always a word. This is how the words rule our world and us. However, it is important to mention that the relation of the words with the meanings is a bit dodgy. Sometimes the words are not able to represent the meanings they are used for. They, on certain occasions, fail to cover the vastness and the depth of the meaning; they, in fact, fall short of their own selves. Therefore, we can find human beings expressing themselves through various other means, which are not limited to words and which do not include words. While, on certain other occasions, the words become much larger than the meaning they stand for; at such stances the words seem like an ocean, while the meaning seems like a tiny drop of water. It is an art if human beings are able to use the exact and the most suitable words for the meanings they are used for. Though human beings may never achieve perfection in this regard, they can keep on moving towards it. They, if they are able to achieve such an exalted position, can avoid misunderstandings and useless clashes. However, it is not only limited to the ones who use the words but the ones who listen to the words as well. Sometimes, I may be able to use the exact words that are meant for a particular meaning, but the person who listens may get quite a different meaning as he might attach a different meaning with the words used – such is the complexity of human interaction. The words at that time may become human enemy, the enemy that takes your message to the other person but changes it to something very different and even opposite.

As the words are responsible for conveying human messages, in the similar fashion the human beings are responsible for the words they use. They are responsible for the influences they have and the reactions they generate. They need to stand strong with what they utter and they have to back their words with all their wonders and their characteristics. If they soothe the wounds of others through words, they are responsible; if they hurt others through them, they are accountable; if they guide others to better destinations with positive intentions, they are to be praised and if they lead others astray and even dodge them through their cunning words, they have to be liable. The way they cannot avoid words while expressing their meanings to others, in the similar way, they cannot escape their consequences and need to stand answerable for what words they use.

Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at Outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

What will be the Fate of the Missing Passengers?

By Abdul Samad Haidari

Nearly more than a week have passed by since 31 Hazara men were selectively abducted allegedly by Islamic State militants on Kandahar-Kabul Highway, from Shah-Joy district of southern Zabul on their way from Iran to Jaghury district of Ghazni Province. It has been learnt that the initial efforts that were being made through tribal mechanisms for the release of the captives have ended fruitless. Since the abduction of these 31 Hazara men, the local community elders along with religious leaders from Jaghury and Rasnah areas have been making concerted efforts for the secure release of the captives through peaceful negotiation, but the efforts remained all fruitless since the kidnapers offered no clear demands.

Recent local reports add based on the returns of the tribal negotiators from the particular location where the captives are taken, saying that they could hardly persuade the community elders for the talk about the missing people. Some of the community elders did not even show interest for the release of the captives and that is not sure whether it is due to unhealthy circumstances being posed by the kidnapers or they are not willing to be involved in the matter, according to reports.

In addition, the government authorities have also remained silent and unclear about the release of the captives. Bitter than all, president Ghani who was believed to change the fate of his nation in his leading has also not talked on this regard since the incident happened. Some of the local outlets indicated that the motive behind the abduction of these 31 innocent men are only because of their ethnic identity, therefore certain government authorities seem calm and did not show a single reaction against the incident for they belong to a particular tribe and that their lives and deaths will make no difference for them.

Since the kidnapping of these 31 Afghan citizens, the only point has been raised from the presidential palace was from the second vice president, Sarwar Danish who have said that we would seriously follow the incident that happened with our fellow citizens. President Ghani has had long speech on local television, addressing the nation but he did not say a single word about these 31 Hazara hostages who have been victimized in their first return from Iran or give a hope to the families of victims for their release. This is what causes disappointment among his followers and raises serious concerns about his legacy.

In a similar incident, in July 2014, the Taliban militants stopped two minibuses in the central province of Ghor, and took off 14 Hazara passengers selectively from the busses and shot them dead. Many reports have been written on the massacre with serious demands from the government to bring the perpetrators in the court of justice, yet the government has taken no responsive action in that regard. The abduction has been condemned by every and all-social and political parties throughout the country, and the civil society groups in a gathering in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, condemned the incident, targeting a specific group or community. They raised serious concerns for the immediate release of the abducted men while some other activists also criticized the government for what they believed negligence of the matter. There have been several reports from local media groups in Afghanistan about the presence of ISIS militants in some parts of the country and the threats that they are posing towards security situations, but the government authorities have persistent-

ly bypassed despite their fast growing concerns with their daily killing, burning and beheading in the Middle East, especially in Arabian states. The incident has fueled suspicions that ISIS militants are moving beyond the recruitment phase in Afghanistan. The presence of alleged ISIS fighters has been reported across the country, mostly in the volatile south and east. In January, officials in the southern province of Helmand said that ISIS was operating in the area. In early February 2015, Kabul announced that the ISIS head in southwest Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Rauf, was killed in a military operation. Other officials in Logar Province also confirmed the presence of ISIS fighters who had burned several homes and destroyed a shrine. ISIS's black flags have also appeared in the eastern province. According to reports, in western Kabul Hazara community residents have received night letters bearing the ISIS logo in which Shiite Muslims are denounced as infidels.

The arm-chaired analysts have played down the presence of ISIS fighters in Afghanistan, saying that local officials might be exaggerating their presence in a bid to attract funding from the central government. But U.S. General John Campbell, the commander of the remaining NATO forces in Afghanistan accepted the fact that ISIS has a nascent presence in Afghanistan who has a strongly anti-Shiite agenda.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has also said that the risk posed by the group could force the White House to seriously consider slowing the pace of its troop withdrawal in Afghanistan, but the domestic pressure over the withdrawal of its troops from this unfinished war has pushed the U.S to reduce its presence in the battlefield with a claim to have won the war on counterterrorism to avoid the stigma of defeat. The only gift has been offered by the U.S and its alliance in Afghanistan was the elimination of Osama bin Laden, otherwise, the terrorism, which the Americans came to eliminate, has increased to a great extent. Despite various reports and claims for the abduction of Hazara passengers, the local government official, Abdul Khaliq Ayubi, claim that these 31 Hazara passengers have been abducted by ISIS who has a strong anti-Shiite agenda. He said that the gunmen were all in black clothes and black masks in police uniforms. But the local media groups and eyewitnesses on the board reportedly said that the gunmen spoke in a foreign language and that they were foreigners who had close coordination with the local Taliban for kidnapping of these Hazara passengers who are too active on highways and in remote provinces.

Hazaras are often the target of sectarian violence at the hands of extremists in Afghanistan. An exception was a large-scale sectarian attack in Afghanistan in 2011 in which dozens of Shiite worshippers were killed in a suicide bombing in Kabul. The Taliban denounced the attack, which was claimed by the Pakistani-based Lashkar-e Jhangvi extremist group who are responsible for mass killing of Hazara people in Pakistan. Hazaras were persecuted during the 1990s when the Taliban ruled most of Afghanistan, and so does it now. As of now, no matter who have abducted these innocent men, whether Taliban or ISIS but the point is to release them securely with no harm, and the government has the sole responsibility to protect its citizens, without distinction of their colour and tribal background. President Ghani needs to make a stand against the threat being posed by these so-called jihadists, operating freely against innocent civilians and must make every possible effort for the immediate release of these 31 innocent men. Abdul Samad Haidari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at abdulsamad.haidari96@gmail.com

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 271/777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Ormeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan

Sub Office: Shora Road, Street 10, District 6, Kartey 3, Kabul, Afghanistan