

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



March 23, 2016

## Let's Commit for Better Society in New Year

New Solar Year (1395) has just started and all the Afghans celebrated Nauroz (first day of the new year celebrated traditionally in Afghanistan as a welcome to new year and spring season) peacefully and hoped that the new year would bring them stability and tranquility. Afghanistan stands on a very crucial juncture. Most of the international forces have withdrawn and almost all the responsibilities of security now lie with the Afghan security forces. Taliban insurgents have multiplied their attacks in the areas that were not previously their stronghold. The country is now facing the threats of the growing strength of Daesh militants. Afghan security forces still require a great deal of support in equipments and training. Added with these challenges are the challenges of negotiating a peace deal with Taliban, which at the moment does not seem to be on track and the most important of the challenges would be guiding the nation as a whole toward a truly democratic society.

Apart from the reforms in the system and the challenges in the political life, there have to be changes in the individuals as well to achieve true democracy. As in a democracy, the people participate to a great extent and they have a dominant share in the affairs of the country, therefore, they can make a huge difference if they are vigilant, responsible and active.

One of the most basic requirements for democracy is freedom of expression. So, it is really important that a respect for it should be inculcated in individuals so that they are able to realize its true worth. All the individuals must realize that they have to express themselves freely and must not hesitate to disseminate their opinions, and should also reserve the same right for others. The behavior of democracy is largely based on the art of proper speaking and the patience to listen carefully. In democracy we should accept the sort of environment wherein we can be opposed openly. Those people who support democracy must want that the issues should be solved through dialogue and reasoning not through violence. They should understand that the opposite reasons should be listened to sufficiently and the claims should always be reconsidered.

However, in our democratic system, there is no proper respect for freedom of expression and there are many barriers in the way to free expression. The individuals are not confident enough to share their views regarding the corruption or the misdeeds of the ruling class. Even if they do so, there are possibilities that the ruling class may use its authority to subjugate them.

On the other hand, there are bans on media and particularly on journalists. The journalists or media personnel are, in fact, in danger of losing their lives if they intend to pursue truth. Both the authoritative members in the ruling class and the Taliban respond to the facts uncovered by the journalists with violence and intimidation. In the last year (1394) many journalists were killed for the same reason.

As a matter of fact, there is no tolerance for the difference in opinion and thoughts (Mahatma Gandhi had said that intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit). If we oppose or favor, we do it with our extremist approach. Our statements have taken the shape of threats. Some people have even started the attitude of calling others with different opinions as non-Muslims and infidels. 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.

It is never too late, and we have so many opportunities as well. We can start anew and make new commitments and turn them into tangible actions to change our fate. Highlighting the drawbacks and the problems are really necessary but to keep on talking about them and not working on their solution is a blunder, which we have to avoid in every possible way. This would be the only prove of our being a sensible nation.

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 government and the people play a very important role in it, 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.

## Poetry – An Integral Part of Art

By Dilawar Sherzai

March 21 was celebrated as World Poetry Day throughout the world. The Day was basically declared by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1999. The purpose of the day is to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world and, as the UNESCO session declaring the day says, to "give fresh recognition and impetus to national, regional and international poetry movements".

Poetry is considered an integral part of art, literature and in a wider context a part of culture. It is considered as a medium through which the poets express their emotions, feelings, understandings, teachings and even philosophies. However, poetry is not just expression; it is expression in a beautiful manner. The poets do not just express themselves in poetry but paint their poems with the colors of appropriate words, phrases and rhythms. This article is a collection of discussions on poetry by some of the well-known personalities in English literature, which would help understanding poetry in a better way.

Poetry, for Aristotle – the great Greek philosopher, is a genius which is sharply divided into species, the noblest of which is tragedy. Taken together, these species – tragedy, comedy, the epic and the others – would constitute the genius, without any surplus or residuum. He could not think of any poetry independent of some distinct kind of poem. To Aristotle every kind of art is a mode of imitation. Yet there are differences between the various modes of imitation. One such difference is in their medium of imitation. Poetry like other forms of art is also a mode of imitation. The medium of the poet and the painter are different. The painter's medium of imitation is color and form, the poet's is rhythm and harmony. Aristotle finds an affinity between poetry and music; rhythm and harmony. Poetry is nearer to music than to painting, as it, too, imitates through harmony and rhythm. To this it adds language as well. The linking of poetry and music is significant, as it suggests that poetry is something above mere mimicry. According to Sidney – the name very much familiar in English literature – poetry is superior to all sciences. Different sciences have different ends, but the chief end of all sciences alike is to promote knowledge. Poetry may be identified with the mistress knowledge; "the knowledge of man's self – the supreme knowledge to which all others are subservient." Sidney believes that the poet is a greater teacher than the philosopher, because of his capacity for moving the reader, which is well nigh, the cause and the effects of teaching.

The theory of the 'Poet of Nature' – William Wordsworth – regarding poetry is very helpful to understand poetry. In his theory he has sent down the origin, nature and purpose of poetry and the function of the poet in a civil society. Wordsworth defines poetry that it is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till the tranquility disappears and an

emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does prove itself that it actually exists in mind. The clear springs of poetry must flow freely and spontaneously; it cannot be made to flow through artificially laid pipes. Poetry is born, not in the mind but in the heart overflowing with feelings. Poetry is produced by a man, who being possessed of more than organic sensibility, had also thought long and deep.

Wordsworth talks of 'expressing powerful feelings' felt in the heart and not generated in the mind. Poetry takes its birth in the springs of the heart and not in the cold store of the intellect. All of us feel, so does the poet, but he feels intensely and deeply. The poet's heart leaps up when he beholds a rainbow. The heightened emotional state of the poet finds expression through his verses. Thus according to Wordsworth, deep emotion is the fundamental condition of poetry. It is the feeling that matters. He discards Aristotelian doctrine. For him, the plot, of situation, is not the first thing. Wordsworth himself says that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation". Wordsworth lays emphasis that good poetry is never an immediate reaction to the provoking cause; that our sensations must be allowed time to sink back into the common fund of our experience, there to find their level and due proportion. That live is found for them by the mind in the act of contemplation and then in the process of contemplation, the sensations revive, and out of the union of the contemplating mind and the receiving sensibility, rises that unique mood of expression which we call poetry.

Poetry for Coleridge, a philosophical critic, is a wider category than that of poem, that is, poetry is a kind of activity, which can be engaged in by painters or philosophers or scientists and is not confined to those who employ metrical language, or even to those who employ language of any kind. Poetry in this larger sense brings the whole soul of men into activity, with each faculty playing its proper part according to its relative worth and dignity. It is the excitement of emotion for the purpose of immediate pleasure through the medium of beauty.

Coleridge also says that poetry does not get itself written without the aid of the conscious will and understanding. So too, the pleasure attached to the poetic emotion or excitement is not merely a sympathy with the objects, emotions or incidents contemplated by the poet, but is also a pleasure of the mind in the exhibition of its powers for their own sake, as is hinted in the phrase 'full play'. It is a pleasure peculiar to poetry as poetic emotion is peculiar.

Poetry, no doubt, has worth of its own. It is not just the language that makes poetry, neither it is the emotions or intellect alone; rather it is the amalgam of all of them that makes a good poetry and a good poetry always has it imprints on the minds of the individuals, in the literary books and ultimately in the annals of history.

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

## Revitalizing the Minsk Agreement

By Carl Bildt

There are two possible futures for eastern Ukraine's Donbas region. One could be found under the framework of the Minsk peace process, the series of agreements cobbled together to defuse the showdown between Russia and Ukraine. Or the region could become the site of a "frozen conflict" of the sort found elsewhere in post-Soviet territory, with low-level skirmishes underscoring the ever-present risk of more serious bloodshed.

For the moment, the process has sunk into a stalemate. Finger pointing by both sides is likely to escalate as the European Union and the United States discuss whether or not to prolong sanctions on Russia. Moving the process forward will require a much more assertive approach by the West.

The decision about whether to lift sanctions should not be a difficult one. The condition for doing so has always been described as the "full implementation" of the Minsk agreement. And there are no signs that this will be accomplished by the summer, when the current round of sanctions is set to expire.

It should also be obvious that easing the sanctions would deprive the EU and the US of their leverage over the Kremlin – and their remaining credibility in Kyiv. Such a decision would almost certainly mean a continuation of the conflict, alternating between hot and cold phases.

The biggest bottleneck in the implementation of the Minsk agreement regards Ukraine's commitment to provide the country with a federalized form of a government. The Kremlin has frequently accused Ukraine of moving slowly, if not deliberately stalling, on the issue.

But while constitutional reform, including decentralization, is included in the Minsk agreement, the text is very vague about what this might entail. Indeed, Russia itself is a perfect example of how constitutional language does not always translate into reality. On paper, Russia is a federation. But President Vladimir Putin has centralized power in his hands.

The key question now is who should represent the regions under de facto Russian occupation as the constitutional process moves forward. The Kremlin, unsurprisingly, wants the regions to be represented by the separatist leaders, who were installed with its blessing and depend on its support to remain in power. But the government of Ukraine, just as obviously, opposes this, and has made free and fair elections in those regions a precondition for discussing constitutional changes – a stance that is fully compatible with the Minsk agreement.

A fierce diplomatic battle is being fought over who should run

these local elections, and under what conditions they should take place. The separatist leaders do not want political parties from the rest of Ukraine to take part. Nor would they like the 1.5 million people displaced by the fighting to other parts of the country to be able to cast ballots. But these conditions should be unacceptable to the government of Ukraine, the EU, and the US. If the Minsk process is to move forward, there seems to be no alternative but to have some sort of international organization run the elections, as has been done in similar cases elsewhere. But setting this up will take time; and, again, it is unlikely to happen before the summer.

If Russia is truly committed to resolving this part of its conflict with Ukraine (its illegal annexation of Crimea remains completely unaddressed), it should not have any difficulty agreeing to an internationally run election. Those running their fiefdoms in eastern Ukraine would certainly oppose such an arrangement, but Putin's Kremlin is no stranger to dealing with those who disagree with it.

Another important issue concerns security. Russia is involved in supplying and manning key parts of the two army corps that are occupying Donbas, and the Ukrainian government is right to insist on the restoration of its control of the border as a precondition of constitutional changes.

The West should not underestimate its leverage. The Kremlin has put on a brave face regarding when sanctions might be lifted; indeed, it is busily imposing sanctions of its own. But there is no doubt that serious damage is being done to the Russian economy. Furthermore, output from Russia's existing oil fields is projected to decline by as much as half over the next decade; as it does, access to the technologies needed to exploit harder-to-extract reserves will become increasingly important. As long as sanctions are in place, such technologies will remain out of reach. There are certainly some in Russia who might advocate a prolonged, low-level conflict, interspersed perhaps with occasional bursts of military offensives, in the expectation that Ukraine will eventually disintegrate.

This would be a serious misreading of the situation, one that could damage Russia deeply, and for a long time to come. For all of its problems, Ukraine is emerging as a more coherent and viable state. The West must not allow the sanction regime to crumble and the Minsk process to slide into irrelevance. If it does, the ultimate outcome will be a low-level conflict that one day could suddenly become much more serious. And that would be in nobody's interest. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Carl Bildt was Sweden's foreign minister from 2006 to October 2014 and Prime Minister from 1991 to 1994, when Sweden joined the EU.



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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

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