

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



March 24, 2015

## The Ugly Face of Sectarianism will Disturb Peace Process

Men are born with inherent and inalienable rights, especially the rights to life, liberty and estate. The discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, belief, etc. is deprecated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and also in the Constitution of Afghanistan. Article 1 of UDHR asserts, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."

Moreover, the Constitution of Afghanistan states in article 22 as, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden."

The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law."

The soul of International Instruments of Human Rights and the Constitution of Afghanistan emphasize on men's equal rights and dignity without any sorts of discrimination. To put it succinctly, men are equal in the eye of law and states are obliged to treat the citizens equally and protect their basic rights. Human rights are described as a sociological pattern of rule setting. These approaches include the notion that individuals in a society accept rules from legitimate authority in exchange for security and economic advantage – a social contract. However, the appalling reports about racial discrimination and sectarian violence depict the flagrant violation of human rights. Ethnocentrism, which roots in men's egotistic ideology and megalomania, rules the country despite the Afghanistan's democratic system of government. As a result, national and international media reported that unknown armed men abducted 31 Hazaras from Shah Joy district of Zabul when the passengers were traveling on the Kabul-Kandahar highway and later the hostages were transferred to Khak Afghan district of Zabul. The negotiations between the elders of Zabul and the alleged abductors were proved abortive. Likewise, a recent report says that six more passengers from Hazara ethnic minority have been abducted by armed masked men on the Herat-Farah highway, west Afghanistan on last Monday. The appalling incidents have stoked a sense of great worry and raised public concerns. The Ulema Council has denounced the incident of abducting 31 passengers in harsh tone and called it an anti-Islamic move. Moreover, thousands of people, in Kabul and Ghazni demonstrations, urged the government to take serious steps in releasing the hostages. The officials' lax approach towards this issue has roused the citizens' anger. Thus, fingers are pointed at the officials for being indifferent to the case.

It appears that religious cults intend to sow the seeds of discord among Afghan nation through involving in sectarian acts. In another item, either the Taliban militants or outsiders such as Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL), who are feared to have infiltrated the country, try a new strategy in Afghanistan to see the results and reactions.

Sectarian acts add insult to the injury, caused by historical conflagrations and civil wars. Afghans were burning amidst war and violence more than three decades and suffered heavy losses and great havoc. Within the blazing flames of sectarianism, a stream of blood of the hapless nation, tinged with ignorance and baseless animosity, flowed relentlessly. The pages of our history are colored with the blood of innocent individuals who easily fell prey to sectarian violence. Will the history repeats itself in the country?

Our country is not doomed to be the hotbed of religious ideologies or political strife. There are fears that the militants, involved in political turbulence and sectarian violence, are mercenaries rather than ideologues. In short, it is believed that the insurgents are vehicles for the objectives of political masterminds who are planning behind the scene.

Giving a lip service to democracy and human rights' issue or peace negotiation will not be a panacea for the wounded hearts of Afghan nation. It is strongly believed that peace platitude will bear no fruit as ever and it is just a political chicanery. Under the aegis of negotiation, the militants seek to gain their sinister goals – as they did within the last decade. As a result, the Afghan president Hamid Karzai released the militants' dangerous prisoners to pave the way for peace negotiation but the attempts remained abortive.

After a decade of futile attempts to bring the Taliban to the table of negotiation, the prospect of a negotiated deal, not surprisingly, has many critics, particularly among those whose family members have been killed or maimed in the conflict. Some worry that the ragtag militants who have committed atrocities could escape punishment under the guise of negotiation. Others warn that even if the militants were to nominally disband, its factions would continue to carry on kidnapping and trafficking narcotic drugs and so on.

Let us hope that the officials will learn from the past so as not to re-fall for the bogus claims of the militants. After all, the government has to react strongly against the militancy and sectarian violence so as to prevent from insecurity.



## The Sad Murder of an Afghan Woman

By Hujjatullah Zia

The dolorous story of a 27-year-old woman, who was lynched by an angry mob, outraged the public conscience profoundly. Shocking video has emerged of a woman being beaten to death by an angry mob in Kabul. Farkhunda, who was believed mentally ill, was lynched by a crowd of men near the Shah-e Doh Shamshira shrine and mosque after she was allegedly seen burning a copy of the Holy Koran. The video of the attack shows the woman being battered, stamped on and beaten and struck with a piece of wood. One of the attackers hurls a brick at her as she lay on the ground, and others are seen kicking and punching her lifeless body. Her body was then taken to the Kabul River where it was burned. Several of the men in the video can be seen filming the attack with their mobile phones. The footage later surfaced on social media websites.

Speaking to the BBC, an eyewitness described the incident saying: "I heard noise, I went and people said that a woman is burning Koran. When I went closer I saw angry people shouting they want to kill the woman. They beat her to death and then threw her on the river side and burned her. Firefighters later came and put out the fire and took the body."

The head of Kabul's criminal police, General Farid Afzali, confirmed reports of the incident and said, "A woman burned a copy of the Koran in the Shahi Doshamshira neighborhood."

The victim was accused of setting fire to pages of the Koran; however her parents have told Kabul police that their daughter had suffered with mental illness for many years and had not meant to burn the Holy Koran.

Desert court is against the soul of law and religious sharia. Whoever was involved in killing Farkhunda, who allegedly suffered from neurotic disorder, has violated the law flagrantly and has to be prosecuted. It is also highly degrading to torture a woman in public. The frenzied attackers are not only involved in death but also in besmirching the character of the woman.

Torturing one is forbidden in Afghanistan's law and so far one is not proved guilty by authoritative court, s/he will be considered innocent. The Constitution of Afghanistan states in article 25, "Innocence is the original state. The accused shall be innocent until proven guilty by the order of an authoritative court." Moreover, article 27 says, "...No one shall be pursued, arrested, or detained without due process of law. No one shall be punished without the decision of an authoritative court taken in accordance with the provisions of the law, promulgated prior to commitment of the offense."

The perpetrators have put the social order under question. The Thursday's lugubrious incident will augment violence and chaos in the so-

ciety. The desert court is not unprecedented in Afghanistan. As a result, a man and woman who eloped were found butchered close to a graveyard in Helmand province last year. Moreover, a woman was captured after eloping with her loved one by her villagers and killed by people last year in Nangarhar – where the police failed to release her from the angry mob. But, the perpetrators were all left unprosecuted. Breaking the law with impunity will disseminate lawlessness. Anyhow, in the aftermath of Farkhunda's death, human rights groups have voiced concerns as to whether enough was done to stop the rampaging mob.

Heather Barr, a senior researcher for women's rights in Asia for Human Rights Watch said: "I would certainly hope the government would be trying to arrest and prosecute everyone who was involved and doing an internal investigation into whether the police response was appropriate."

Women are highly susceptible to domestic and social violence in Afghanistan. Women and girls underwent great suffering in the solar year of 1393. They lost their lives in suicide bombings, mutilated, tortured, dishonored and raped and, at the end of the year, was murdered by the angry mob in the worst possible way. To put it succinctly, their rights and dignity were violated without public concerns.

In macabre stories of violence, the death knells of Afghan women sound, every now and then, lugubriously. The miscreants' fractious attitudes lead either to injury or death. The insurgents, the patriarchy and the conservatives seem to have turned into sworn enemies of women who will beat to death over a trivial matter – as a man reportedly killed his spouse for not serving a cup of tea. The said individuals evince a deep sense of antipathy towards the issue of human rights, women rights, democracy, and so on – labeling these subjects as the product of foreign states.

Treating women unfairly and inflicting restrictive measures upon them are believed to be detrimental to social norm. In other words, the rights of women are trampled upon on the grounds of traditional prohibitions, which are totally baseless from religious perspective. We have to break the chains from the women's feet and let them breathe a sigh of freedom and engage in social activities peacefully. The rights and dignity of women should be held in due respect and the violators must stand on a fair trial.

At the end, I would like to express my deep condolence over the tragic murder of Ms. Farkhunda and those who lose their lives as a result of violence. Hope no one will fall prey to violence, lawlessness and desert court anymore.

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## The First and Final Drop!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The story is very interesting from the beginning to its end. A poor and old lady used to work in the house of a rich man. The lady lived with her two daughters who had just become adult. The man was having a contented life with his beautiful wife but they were not having any children. The lady fell ill and did not come to work for a couple days. She was hoping to recover in these days but when she did not feel well even after so many days, she sent one of her daughters at her place. The poor girl, who had not seen much of the outside world in her entire lifetime, was too much shy and worked very silently. When the old lady saw that her poor health did not let her continue the work and her daughter had smoothly replaced her, she permanently let her daughter to manage her work. With the passage of time, she no more remained a shy girl but gradually started learning the etiquettes of the upper class; her speaking style changed, her walking style changed and she became more confident. After some time, the man divorced his wife and married her. Now, she was able to exhibit her confidence in dining at fine restaurants, fine dressing and shopping in great malls. Time kept passing, adding more to the social skills and confidence of the girl. Now she attended the parties of elite class and met the important and influential members of the society. Her confidence, her style and sense of social etiquettes had made her an important part of these gatherings. In one of such parties, she developed acquaintance with the ambassador of a foreign country. Then one day, she quietly got married to the ambassador and left her native country forever. Her journey of success did not stop there. In one of the European countries, she married an industrialist and her management abilities soon made her a best part of the administration. Then a time came when her husband passed away and she became the sole owner of the company. The company got a new life under her control and it experienced a new wave of success and expansion and became one of the biggest companies of the country.

This unbelievable true story tells us what happens when one discovers his or her skills and field of interest and then takes the risk to move ahead in the field, ignoring all the difficulties and odd circumstances. The above story has been simplified for the purpose of brevity but in the original text, it is a very long story in which the skills and abilities of the girl have been described in detail and how she decided to go against all the odds when she developed confidence on herself. This is one of a number of stories of success, perseverance and dedication which are true and their characters are breathing in the same air and living in the same world.

There was a student of university who had been forced by his father to take medical field and become a doctor as doctors are having more social status in our society. But he did not have even a little interest in biology, medicines and other relevant things of his field rather he was naturally born with the interest of stories and books. In his school days, he was found to be busy in reading short stories and other books more than his school course. In university, his performance was always poor and his father was not happy of him. On the other hand, he had developed such a good taste of literature that now he had started writing some small stories and his impressive style showed that he would become a good writer in future. But his father was not happy of all these; he thought that writers don't earn too much in our country and he should join a profession in which he should make good income.

A writer had shared an interesting story on one of the social sites. He had written that, 'A friend of us used to work with us in the radio station. He was too happy there as he liked this job but then he found a job with comparatively handsome salary and left the radio and joined his new job. After a few years, he came back to the radio, resigning from his good job. When asked, it was his reply, 'When you are doing a job that you like, you not only get salary but also draw happiness and contentment. In my other job, I was having good salary but no happiness and as you know, it is impossible that we should be able to buy happiness from somewhere, on whatever price available.'

At a particular stage of our lives, we discover that we have been born with some special skills and can do marvelous in a specific field. It can be painting, music, sport, and literature, medical, engineering or any other odd field of life. Unfortunately it is that, we always decide upon a career having a look at its monetary benefit but not our skills and aptitude. We fear that if we took a profession, we may not be able to earn enough money and we will suffer a lot financially. It is the reason we see that everyone is trying to be a doctor or engineer and then choose those fields which are less productive in terms of income generation. In majority of such cases, we may not be willing to join a specific field or may not be having any interest at all in it but we do so just to follow a trend being strictly followed in the society. Another important factor in this regard is the fear of making mistakes or not being successful. There are many of us who believe in our abilities but we hesitate to join the field of our choice because we fear that we may not be successful in it or we may face financial losses and thus continue with our routine work. This has stopped us from having big dreams. But it should not be forgotten that majority of the successful are those who reached to success after passing through the valley of failures and setbacks. Except for some rare cases, there is no success without initial failures.

It has also stopped us from dreaming big or following our dreams. Many of us believe that we can establish great companies, run a successful business, be a successful footballer, find the basis of a successful educational institute, invent something amazing, be a world-renowned artist but we hesitate to take a forward step as we fear the failure.

In all these cases, important thing to consider is to ignore monetary gain. If we lock our dreams with the reward in form of money, we may never be able to make them true or choose a field of our choice. I personally know many teachers who can earn far better in any other field but in the field of teaching, they have such a command on its different aspects that they bring changes in lives of many on daily basis and this factor gives them enough contentment and happiness to continue their profession. It should also not be forgotten that when we become successful, the money eventually follows the success.

I am not sure how many of us would be able to believe in the above facts but I invite some of us to take risk and try to do something out of the routine. No doubt, the first drop of rain may lead other hesitant drops to follow the path.

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