

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



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## Do not We Live in a Dystopia?

We live in a real dystopia. The blood gushing from sliced throats, the tears rolling down the cheeks of rape victims, and the smell oozes from amputated limbs of war victims will fill one with a strong sense of sorrow and hatred. One will be appalled at untold sagas making headlines around the world. The genocide in Myanmar and human fatalities in Syria and Afghanistan as a result of conflict and militancy will numb one's feelings.

The tragic picture of a 3-year-old Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi - whose image made went viral after he drowned on 2 September 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea - was highly outrageous. Similar incidents continue around the world on day-to-day basis.

With a spate of gory incidents, people approach the issues in callous ways. With the view of a body riddled with a militant's Kalashnikov, one simply contorts their face in a sad appearance or passes with a grimace. Then, this act is vilified by the media and condemned by political officials - however condolence and condemnation have been changed into daily clichés. Only the flabbergasted families of victims mourn with indescribable heartache. Public apathy toward carnage is the great tragedy of our time.

On the other hand, religious fundamentalists who operate under a sacred façade seek to spill as much blood as possible, no matter where and how. That is to say, religious radicals show no mercy to civilians, mainly women or children. They neither respect humanitarian law nor religious tenets or moral values.

Afghan people bear the brunt of militancy. The Taliban guerilla fighters have intensified their attacks in recent months. Notwithstanding their religious claim, the Taliban shed streams of blood and degrade the rights and dignity of all individuals. Their cruel practices against combatants and non-combatants have vehemently outraged the public conscience. The Taliban, who were reputed to practice upon Islamic Sharia in the beginning of their regime, ushered in massacre and sectarian violence to the detriment of their reputation. They exercised dogmatic beliefs and terrorized people through their violent acts, which besmirched their character at international level. Their acts of terror continued despite the collapse of their regime.

Violence has been particularly desensitized in Afghanistan in the wake of escalated insurgency. Hearts are void of sympathy. There is no shoulder to cry on. People are phlegmatic to the pain and supplication of sufferers. One is hardly mortified by their sanctimonious demeanor, which is hidden under the veneer of humility. The peaceful and amicable life of the past remain a nostalgia for modern men.

In case of bloody incidents such as terrorist attacks and suicide bombings, a number of people play ostentatious role - i.e., post the pictures in social media and condemn the heinous act of militants. Perhaps, a handful of people will do it with bona fide intention to sympathize the nation. Nevertheless, posting the shocking pictures of war victims in social media put a pernicious effect on people rather than healing their wounds.

Moral values are moribund in human societies. If one practices upon moral standard, they will empathize the people beset by any sorts of vicissitude. Generally speaking, men of principle will seek to allay the sorrow of a sufferer and pursue peace and salvation for the entire society. They will uplift human rights and dignity. Nonetheless, the vacuum of spirituality and moral principles is strongly felt in our dystopian world. In his Nobel Lecture on December 11, 1964, Martin Luther King aptly said, "Modern man has brought this whole world to an awe-inspiring threshold of the future."

He has reached new and astonishing peaks of scientific success. He has produced machines that think and instruments that peer into the unfathomable ranges of interstellar space. He has built gigantic bridges to span the seas and gargantuan buildings to kiss the skies.... Yet, in spite of these spectacular strides in science and technology, and still unlimited ones to come, something basic is missing.

There is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually". In fact, indifference to public suffering is the great malady of our time. Human societies will have to revive moral principles and enhance the rights and dignity of mankind.

To change our dystopia into utopian world, we must fill the moral vacuum and the rift between nations. Inequity should come to end. If we do not ameliorate the current trend, life will remain as cheap as ever and Thomas Hobbes words that "man is man's wolf" will be an impeccable theory in contemporary world.

## Why Should Protect Freedom of Expression?

By Aminullah Amini

In a simple term, democracy is defined as a manner for collective decision, in which all have equal role. Human societies are gradually inclined to move toward democratic decision. Outlining various tendencies, interests, and viewpoint is one of the most significant privileges of collective decision in democratic way. In a democratic system, citizens will gain this opportunity to participate in their self-determination. The right of effective participation in self-determination is one of the fundamental rights of mankind and an effective manner for involving the rights and interests of the public in policy-making and planning social, political, and economic issues. The second priority of democratic decision-making is reducing the possibility of error. Since the participation of various social groups in the process of decision-making is based on comprehensive awareness and information, it is mostly reasonable. The possibility for citizens' effective participation in their self-determination will lead to the development of their moral and civil personality. Those who are able to play a pivotal role in their self-determination, they will be independent and responsible individuals. Civil learning teach them better way of listening, clear way of expressing their ideas, and manner of considering the public interests in their decisions. Now the question is that why should we uphold the freedom of expression?

In fact, freedom of expression is the significant part of democracy. That is to say, democracy will be superior to despotic system and elitism if it recognizes freedom of expression as a fundamental pillar. With lack of freedom of expression, the opinion of the majority and voice of minority will not be heard. One of the reasons expressed for protecting freedom of expression is the fallibility of mankind. Men are fallible and will not always get the truth. To discover the truth, the door to criticism should be opened, which is possible through freedom of expression. Critics should have the opportunity to express their views without any obstacles and point out the defects. Men are often narcissists, which will not let them listen to criticism. On the other hand, others do not have this interests in our ideas - this will let them express their ideas and uncover the defects in an impartial way. Hence, freedom of expression will polish our thoughts through criticism. After all, if our ideas are impeccable, freedom of expression supports us to trust the truth of our words and ideas. So, we should have evidence for the truth of our ideas. Those who accept an idea, albeit being true, will hesitate over it with the emergence of small suspicion. Freedom

of expression will provide us this opportunity to trust the truth of our beliefs and ideas. Suppressing false ideas is not right, either. Outlining false belief will motivate one to ponder over true ideas and words. The free expression of false ideas will also be for public good. Ultimately, freedom of expression is effective in developing citizens' creativity and moral personalities. Representing yourself in the frame of artistic, literal, social, and political activities will be a distinction between mankind and other creatures.

Similar to other rights and privileges, freedom of expression is not absolute, either. In spite of the fact that freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights of mankind in social life, this right should be in accordance with civil rights of citizens in the society. The frame of language is one of the restrictions of freedom of expression. Based on a principle, words are free unless they lead to the harm of others. In other words, one's words must not violate the rights of others directly or indirectly. For example, accusation, false advertisement of goods, advertisement of dangerous products, telling lie in contracts, disclosing a country's security secret, are not allowed and should be prohibited. However, there is a distinction between moral and legal prohibition. If they are forbidden morally, there is not sanction or penalty behind; whereas violating a legal prohibition will be followed by penalty. For example, one issue will be prohibited morally but not legally. Here, both moral and legal prohibitions exist here.

Recognizing the right of wrong will be one of the fundamental principles of an open society. For instance, a number of issues will be wrong from my idea, but in a plural society, I should practice this tolerance for others to exercise the same issue which seems wrong to me. Recognizing some rights are often as asset in a society for protecting the freedom of expression. It does not necessarily mean that one can insult a sacred issue under any circumstances or spread hatred or hostility in a community. Rational dialogue with equal position is the fundamental principle of democracy. Thus, any negotiation which reduces the position of citizens or imperil their reputation or simply restrict the opportunity of rational words will be against human values. It is aptly said in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Aminullah Amini is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at the outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

## Kabul University and the Prevailing Challenges Awaiting it

By Hamid Bamik

Kabul University is still bearing the grave and heavy aftermaths of the long period of civil wars. When it was young, it was the center of social, cultural and educational attraction, attention, and flourishing. When it grew up further, it became the hotbed for germinating various political movements, but unfortunately, its growth did not last for a long time that Kabul University fell asleep and went to hibernation. After elapsing 85 years, recently once again it became the hope for thousands of students to brand their academic future.

Affordability and accessibility of higher education, public trust and public interests in higher education, gender equality and inclusion of low-socioeconomic status students and underrepresented groups in higher education, lack of public awareness among the families in the remote areas of Afghanistan regarding the importance of education, resistance against decentralization of educational institutions, opposing with the secularization of higher education by cleric stratum of the society, poor quality of higher educational services, lack of knowledge production at higher educational institutions, antiquated and abortive curriculum, lack of student activism and civic education at higher educational organizations, competitive and tough job market for university graduates, increasing unemployed degree holders, soaring escaping of masterminds from the country, booming population, promulgating fundamentalism at some higher educational organizations, and financial crisis are the most notable and considerable challenges in Afghanistan that higher educational institutions at large but in particular Kabul University is struggling with.

Initially, universities and colleges have been founded for three central promises such as (a) teaching, (b) public services, and (c) conducting academic research.

The main questions arises here that does Kabul University have a vivid and concise mission statement? And, do Kabul University president, Collegium, and faculty have the necessary and enough potentials to fulfill the above three promises of higher education? The answers to the abovementioned questions all lie in the capacity, determination, and competency of Kabul University authorities. But in my mind, Kabul University did rarely and poorly fulfill two of its promises so far - teaching and public services. While exerting academic research which is the cornerstone of higher education institutions, unfortunately, it was and is inert and stagnant in this respect. In the United States, where I am doing my master's degree, the faculty is selected mainly based on two criteria - academic publications and having a doctoral degree. I know that comparing American higher education with Afghanistan's higher education does not make sense.

I wanted to articulate that how much academic publications are instrumental for higher educational organizations' authorities in the USA while at Kabul University it is not considered intentionally in the recruitment process of the faculty. It does not mean that we do not have proficient and professional educational cadres, we have many, but they are not hired in order that the ceiling glass at Kabul University is not broken.

At Kabul University, professors are rarely publishing academic articles. They are immersed in teaching and making a living for their families. To say the fact, shortage of knowledge production is one of the biggest challenges that is eroding the academic cul-

ture. Indeed, in the absence of the academic publications and dissemination, educational organizations are dead because mobility is enlivened in discovery, advancement, innovation, academic upheavals, and transformation that are all originated from academic research at higher educational institutions.

At Kabul University, there is an excessive emphasis by the faculty on memorizing and learning the teaching materials for the tests, and there is less urge on learning for exploration and application. I still remember very vividly that how much the instructors were focusing on memorizing the chapters word by word. Once I had written the synonym of a word on the test paper, and the instructor gave me zero for that question due to not writing the exact word of the chapter. The real problem of such an inexorable didactic mechanism is showcased that when students are graduating from Kabul University, and when they are not able to compete with their rivals in the job market who study abroad or at private universities.

Thomas Friedman, a well-known American author and analyst argues that in today's world, the companies and corporations hire only those applicants that they have to. In other words, the companies will pay only what you can do, not what you know because knowing is not the main concern in today's job market. You can find the answer of any kind of questions potentially through googling on the internet. Hence, companies are not looking for those staff who know well but cannot do well. Unfortunately, the extant academic system at Kabul University is obsolescent, and even it is feeble to help students know well, let alone doing well.

Despite all the predominant challenges at Kabul University, one cannot simply overlook its significant and constructive role in educating thousands of students. After collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, Kabul University was the main hope of Afghanistan's youths for pursuing their higher education and since then thousands of students graduated. I think in the absence of Kabul University, we would have faced a big gap in our higher education that Afghanistan's higher education authorities might not be able to bridge it for years. On the other hand, it would be very complacent to claim that Kabul University improved expansively and exponentially over the past 16 years.

In comparison to elapsing a huge amount of time - more than a decade along with a vast infusion of America and other foreign countries finances into Afghanistan, Kabul University has been transformed very trivially. So, Afghan high ranking higher education officials must invest and pay attention to invigorating and mobilizing the higher educational institutions because there is much room for growth in higher education. I personally think that in the 21st century - in the era of technological explosions, entrepreneurial development, business expansion, and the world in which information is dispersed across the globe faster than the speed of light, Kabul University faculty must teach creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking skills for students rather than just filling out their memories with some incongruous information. As Shashi Tharoor, an Indian author, columnist, diplomat and intellectual says very appropriately and profoundly that in the 21st century we need a well-formed minded student, not a well-filled minded student.

Hamid Bamik is a Graduate Student in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis University of Missouri-Columbia. He can be reached at the hbqwf@mail.missouri.edu



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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