

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



November 20, 2017

World Philosophy Day

November 19 celebrated as the World Philosophy Day. The day was proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference in 2005 with the objectives to renew the national, sub-regional, regional and international commitment to philosophy and foster philosophical analysis, research and studies on major contemporary issues so as to respond more effectively to the challenges that are confronting humanity today. Some of other objectives of the day include raising public awareness of the importance of philosophy and underline the importance of the universalization of philosophy teaching for future generations.

There is no doubt in the fact, that philosophy can guide individuals and nations towards better destinations and can support them in creating a life that can be more meaningful and blissful. It can also lead them towards the new vistas of knowledge by developing a thirst for knowledge and curiosity to ask more and ultimately know more.

It is important to realize the fact that it was the philosophical curiosity that solved some of the very basic questions about human existence, life and about the universe as a whole. It then culminated into science and then the scientists took the difficult task of running after the truth. However, the role of the philosophy and philosophers is still very much imperative as there are many areas that can never be touched by science but philosophy has a big part in them. And, it is philosophy that supports the faculty of wonder and appreciates human beings to strengthen it in their search for the truth.

Unfortunately, there have been authorities and teachings that have seen the philosophy with doubt. They argue that doubts and questions will lead human beings astray and may even lead them to the paths that can never reach to some destination. They on the other hand favor blind beliefs. Their arguments seem to have some strength but in fact fail to address the exact issue. If questioning, as they believe, does not necessarily lead to the fact and may even lead to infinite paths of questions, how satisfied would human beings be without knowing the truth and without asking questions? Can human beings be totally contented with the knowledge that cannot go through the simple test of their thinking and their rationality? And, what can human beings build on the beliefs that may be totally wrong?

Inaccurate knowledge may not compel human beings to be really forceful against others and may not make them make others follow their thinking, but beliefs, whether right or wrong, will compel the believers to be forceful against others and force them to follow their blind beliefs.

Those who possess blind beliefs are, as a matter of fact, deprived of the true awareness of life. They are the ones who themselves have locked their minds and do not know that their minds are locked and the keys are with themselves. Nothing is able to change such people as they are not open to any view or any discussion. Even education cannot change such people. If such people even go to educational institutions, there is no chance that they would improve as they take with themselves their dogmatic beliefs. It is also important to note that the type of education the educational institutions are disseminating in our society is really controversial. The educational institutions have become the factories, where robots are generated who, themselves, cannot think anything, but act as per the commands that are fed into them.

There is no room for doubt and questions in our educational institutes. Those who have the faculty of wonder and ask philosophical questions are punished in the severest way. Such institutions can only produce students who get education to negate education, and unfortunately such people are the most suitable for our society and most educated for our so-called education scholars. However, they are those puppets who play in the act based on education but themselves do not know the purpose of their act. This is really weird that our youth is being kept away from better and thought-generating attributes of philosophy.

The endeavors are being made to keep the young and capable minds away from the food that can nourish them and make them discover the world, universe and their mysteries. True philosophical education can even reduce hatred in the hearts of the youngsters and teach them the lessons of love and brotherhood for the fellow beings. In fact, there are certain people who strive to keep such education away from youngsters because they know that it would generate so many views and perspectives which can even unveil the realities that they want to keep hidden.

Our youth have to be emancipated from following the forced ideas. They have to be given the freedom of free thinking and their faculty of wonder must be nourished through philosophy. The educational institutions must first of all develop a tolerance for philosophy and philosophical attitude. If they are able to do so, the students will themselves yearn for more and more knowledge and make their education and knowledge more meaningful for themselves and for the society as a whole.



From Ethnicity to Democracy

By Hujjatullah Zia

Basically, Afghanistan was established in 1747 through tribal confederation. The form of state was sultanate and all tribes could not convene in the session when Ahmad Shah Abdali was appointed as a first king. The legitimacy of state, which rooted in tribalism and ethnic superiority, was under question. The constitutional state (1343 - 1352 in Afghan calendar) was also colored with ethnicity and tribalism. The attitude of nation's representatives reflected the fact that they deemed themselves the representatives of certain ethnic group rather than the nation.

This mindset still rules in many parts of the government and MPs represent a certain ethnic group.

Islam is considered one of the significant sources of legitimacy around Islamic states. Kings in Islamic societies operated under the aegis of caliph and sultan. Afghanistan also suffered from the same issue as kings gained legitimacy under the terms of emir and proclaimed to defend the society against non-Muslims.

With the wave of reformation during Amanullah Khan's regime, the source of legitimacy switched from Islam to nationality. During Amanullah's kingdom, the written constitution was approved for the first time in Afghanistan and all Afghan people were deemed citizens without any racial or religious discrimination. In short, the legitimacy of state rooted in ethnicity or Islam throughout the Afghanistan's history.

Based on first article of current constitution, "Afghanistan shall be an Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible state." Unlike monarchy, republic is government by elected representatives and led by president for a limited time rather than being ruled by a king or queen or being inherited. Public will play a key role in both republic and democracy and people participate actively in political power. According to Thomas Hobbes since man in the "state of nature... has no idea of goodness he must be naturally wicked; that he is vicious because he does not know virtue". On the contrary, Rousseau holds that "uncorrupted morals" prevail in the "state of nature". Hence, all men submit some of their rights to an institution in return for having order and security, and being provided public services, etc. and this institution is called state.

This is an unwritten contract between state and nation which is called "social contract". According to Rousseau, by joining together into civil society through the social contract and abandoning their claims of natural right, individuals can both preserve themselves and remain free. This is because submission to the authority of the general will of the people as a whole guarantees individuals

against being subordinated to the wills of others and also ensures that they obey themselves because they are, collectively, the authors of the law.

In a democratic and civil societies, there are many necessary elements such as freedom, equality, political pluralism, etc. Freedom is a highly significant element of democracy which is paid especial attention in Afghanistan's current Constitution. For instance, article 24 states, "Liberty is the natural right of human beings. This right has no limits unless affecting others freedoms as well as the public interest, which shall be regulated by law. Liberty and human dignity are inviolable. The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity." So, freedom is recognized as inherent and inviolable rights of mankind and will be respected and protected by the government. Freedom of thought, expression, correspondence, etc. are mentioned in the constitution.

Equality and lack of discrimination are also one of the elements in democracy. People are not supposed to be discriminated on the grounds of their race, sex, color, etc. People are equal and have equal suffrage and "equal rights and duties before law".

Political pluralism such as the existence of civil society and other institutions to monitor the government's performance is also necessary in democratic system.

To cut short, the source of government's legitimacy has been switched from ethnicity and Islam to democracy and Afghan past and present presidents were elected through elections and people have active part in political power.

Despite the fact that elections were conducted, constitution was approved, and president and people's representatives were elected, there are still many obstacles before democracy in Afghanistan. For instance, elections were not transparent and the existence of electoral fraud led to great arguments among officials.

As a result, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) announced the outcome of election after many months and the final result was announced even after the establishment of National Unity Government (NUG). Second, there are many obstacles before the implementation of the constitution and it is largely violated, mainly by officials and influential figures. So, when all the elements of democracy are trampled upon, a country will hardly be called democratic. Although the source of legitimacy shifted from ethnicity and Islam to democracy, there are still ethnic tendencies in the country, which is a strong blow to democracy. Thus, the government will have to implement the constitution strictly and prosecute the violators regardless of their political, social, or economic status.

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Shyness and Superstition – Options for Women's Death

By Fatima Faizi

The labyrinth of life has brought no changes in the world of Afghan women whose life is simple and sad. There is no clear census about their health. In the turbulent state of Afghanistan, there has been no remarkable outcome for women despite the mouth-watering promises. In annual ceremonies, only urban women are taken into account; whereas the bulk of Afghan women live in rural areas and they are deprived of basic facilities. Afghan women form a large population of the country, however, their share of education and facilities is the minimum. Their health is at stake. It comes as woman is the beating heart of a family and having basic facilities and sanitation will affect the health of a child, family, and society directly. Do women have the opportunity in rural areas to simply think over such issues?

Women are not allowed to discuss their monthly period or sanitary issues, these are all taboos. A large number of women are not ready to talk about their illness to doctors or nurses. Moreover, there are lack of sanitary centers or expert female doctors or nurses in many districts and provinces.

Many women have no access to sanitary tools. In some cases, poverty will preclude them from protecting themselves and in other cases those tools are lacking in stores in some districts. Shyness is very crucial that prevent women from doing what they are supposed to do. Afghan women feel shy to go to store or drugstore, which are run by men, for getting access to their necessary kits. Moreover, fear and dissatisfaction of family's head will be an obstacle before getting access to basic kits. Due to shyness, women may not ask the head of family to provide them with the necessary kits.

These are all the issues behind women's vulnerability to diseases. Women are prone to illness more than men. They are in need of better care, especially during their period or giving birth. But lack of access to sanitary centers or lack of education in protecting their health will lead women to illness or even death.

Believing in superstition is the next obstacle before women's health. Women are more superstitious than men and unawareness causes them play with their life and life of their children.

For instance, women believe that after giving birth to a baby, strangers must not go their homes for forty days or else women will be in kind of danger. Due to this fact, many women are not willing to give birth in hospitals rather they tend to give birth in their homes with the support of an old lady. Therefore, some women lose their lives

during giving birth without doctor.

Likewise, many women and children will not be carried to doctor after falling ill. The first choice is that they have to go to mullahs for talisman but carrying them to doctor is the last resort. That is why the mortality rate of mothers and children are so high.

Within the past years, small steps have been taken in this respect. But there are many regions which are deprived of basic tools and information. As it was mentioned above, only cities and the centers of districts and maybe some suburbs will be informed from awareness programs; whereas the residents of remote areas live with the past view and the life of women is still cheap. That is to say, although the life of all is cheap in this country, women are extremely worthless.

In spite of all the hustle and bustle taking place in cities on Mother's Day, rural areas are not aware of such a day and people live there centuries back. Although rural women run a part of country's economy, they have always been bereft of facilities. One will say that men also live with small amount of facilities in this country. That is true. But the main issue is that men have more freedom than women. They have access to economic facilities and they are less vulnerable to diseases than women. The said issues leave women highly vulnerable and lead to mother's death.

Mother's morality rate is extremely high during pregnancy and afterward. In many cases mothers or children lose their lives. The infant mortality rate depends on mother's health condition. Since many mothers are unaware of their health, they lose their children as a result of their own diseases. This is a true fact in Afghanistan and mother's good health condition will ensure the health of children. Sound and aware mothers will have sound family that will ultimately lead to a sound society. Hence, all mothers will have to take care of their health in proper way.

After all, the government must support women and provide them medical and sanitary facilities. It is said in article 54 of Afghan Constitution, "Family is the fundamental pillar of the society, and shall be protected by the state. The state shall adopt necessary measures to attain the physical and spiritual health of the family, especially of the child and mother, upbringing of children, as well as the elimination of related traditions contrary to the principles of the sacred religion of Islam." But the government yet to take necessary measures for protecting the health of mothers and children.

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