

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



November 28, 2016

Finding the Right Path

Our country is going through most fragile and crucial phase of its history. The incidents that have taken place and the ones that are taking place clearly indicate that we are going through a transition phase that might lead us to stability or even chaos – if we do not act wisely. It is very imperative at this juncture that we must not fall the victim of emotions and carelessness and strive to act prudently. The leaders, who have influence over the minds and thinking of the common people, must try to advise the people not to lose their sanity and they need to strive to understand the demands and the challenges of time.

People, at this crucial juncture require thinking above their personal benefits; the groups and the institutions require functioning more than their own profits and most importantly the privileged class of the society must take decision above their self-centered incentives. It is really important to speak the words that make sense instead of uttering the words that are popular and spoken for the sake of earning fame. The objective conditions want us to be more realistic and if we are not able to act in that particular manner are doomed to failure.

The history has taught us so many lessons that by now all of us must have learnt enough lessons and must have acquire sufficient prudence. The world has never given any nations so many opportunities to learn from their past mistakes. But seem not to avail any opportunity and at the moment we are going astray.

The traditions and values in our society are really weird and out of understanding. A limited number of people have decided to devour the entire wealth of the nation. Another group is busy only in the false display of wealth and status. Certain old men have shouldered the responsibility of proving the wrongs of the ruling elite right through holy scriptures; while another honorable group is striving tirelessly to earn fame in every possible manner.

They have, in reality, lost their connection with the actual problems of the time. The most unfortunate fact is that the intellectuals have forgotten their responsibilities. Though they claim their rights from the society but they seem to have forgotten that the society which they ignore cannot be expected to understand their rights, as well. Has earning fame ever been a top priority issue for the sane people of the society? Our society has adopted the non-issues and wasting time on them. As a matter of fact, we are far behind our actual social, civil and philosophical problems.

Our people are behaving like the immature boys and it seems to be written on our foreheads that we do not have any serious issues at the moment and for the times to come God will keep us away from all the problems.

What have the slogans based on extremists sentiments and hatred and division have given us so far? If we still possess the capacity to ponder, we must make use of it and reach to conclusion that our history is one of the most challenging histories in the world and the most tragic fact is that this history has been written with our own blood.

As a matter of fact, we do not seem to have any idea about the gravity of the situation. If we had any idea our reaction would have been very much different from what we are doing now.

Though we are human, we have forgotten the habits of thinking and understanding. The fact is that our people have not been provided the required sanity and boldness to ponder upon the challenges of time and challenge the prevailing values and understandings. We are habitual of saying only those words that seem appropriate to everyone as we are afraid to make others angry.

We, from the very beginnings of our lives, are taught to compromise and adjust. Even if there is a place for one person to sit in a car, we can adjust two persons there. We strive to fit ourselves in the mould of traditions and practices even though they may be obsolete and insane. We have only a single ideal to pursue and that is our 'past'. Unfortunately, the past has not always been glorious and our people seem to follow the same portion of the past that was inglorious. It is difficult to understand why our people do not live their own lives instead of living the lives of their forefathers. If they really want to make difference to themselves and to the world they need to start living their own lives – their present not past.

If we lack a serious consideration to our present and to the life, we would never be able to have a sincere relation with knowledge and even with our beliefs.

Though we seem to have inhabited the cities, but we have deserted our conscience and our spirits. We seem like alien in our own world. We need to wake up; we need to understand that we are pursuing the wrong directions and the wrong destinations. We must realize that we are not using our humanly attributes in their full capacities and we are not fulfilling the responsibility of being true human being.

Nonviolence – A Panacea for the Bleeding Wounds

By Hujjatullah Zia

Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon. Indeed, it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. I believe in this method because I think it is the only way to reestablish a broken community. It is the method which seeks to implement the just law by appealing to the conscience of the great decent majority who through blindness, fear, pride, and irrationality have allowed their consciences to sleep," these words have been spoken by Martin Luther King Jr. War and violence will lead to destruction and compound the pains and sufferings of mankind. The historical wars, which outraged human conscience, left millions dead and wounded and humiliated their rights and honors, however, failed to bring peace and stability. The past and present wars root in racial discriminations, religious intolerance, radical ideology and men's megalomania. Claiming racial and religious superiority and treating others with contempt will arouse public tensions and result in horrible consequence, which was witnessed by the history.

Sadly, the historical wars repeat in the present and violence and bloodshed continue around the world, mainly in the Islamic societies. For instance, the war in Syria, which started in March 2011, killed more than 250,000 people. The war erupted after some teenagers painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall. The freedom-fighters sought to protest against the subjugation and called for liberty and building democratic government – which is widely accepted around the globe. The regime resorted to violence to repress the voice of the public. This voice for freedom sparked off large-scale tensions and led to outpouring of carnage and will end in Pyrrhic victory. This war paved the ground for terrorist activities as the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group, formed in post-Saddam administration in Iraq, is widely involved in the war. It is believed that Syria's war is one of the worst political blunders ever made in the history and an irreparable blow to the region, mainly to the Islamic societies, since the issue led to the proxy war. The war has been highly challenging and complicated and hard to extinguish this fire which devours men, women and children voraciously. Hence, will violence lead to peace?

History shows that violent practices will inflict heavy casualties upon human societies and destroy the world – it is the very repetition of the history. Streams of blood will be spilled, women will be dishonored and ethnic minority groups will be killed in the worst possible way for nothing. War for nothing? What a stupid war it is! Whenever war roots in man's selfishness or radical mindsets of some

ideologues, it will lead to mere casualties and violation of rights and dignity. The current wars largely originate from fundamental ideology and formed radical parties such as ISIL, Taliban and Boko Haram groups. The religious and ideological war has been passed in the history of Europe and lasted for about three decades when large number of Christians, mainly Protestants, was killed.

Currently, the religious fundamentalists repeat the same text in Islamic context and used as pawn in the political game, played by masterminds. However, the violence has increased and almost the entire world is blackmailed by them in one way or another. The insurgents spew forth their venom around the globe and all people, including the children, are affected by the trauma of violence and bloodshed. The question is that why the international community has not taken step to end the killing of the masses?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) found out that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" and declares that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts". Since men and women are bestowed natural rights and dignity, their rights must be respected regardless of their caste, color and creed. In other words, spilling the blood of mankind on the basis of their racial and religious backgrounds is against the international instruments. The UDHR is approved to alleviate the pains and sufferings of mankind and put an end to war and violence. All nations have realized the fact that violence will hardly ever result in peace and war will be the last resort when all diplomatic ways are closed. Whenever superiority is claimed by a nation or a group and radical ideology prevails in the world, violence will never come to an end. All nations must practice tolerance, respect the rights and beliefs of one another and treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood so as to live in peace.

Nonviolence and peaceful treatment will build the utopian world of the mankind and vice versa. The current dystopia, which is filled with fear and hatred and the blood of men, women, and children, is the result of radicalism and intolerance. It is believed that secularizing political issues will decrease violence in the region. After all, the hotbed of radicalism and its supporting factors should be abolished so that the terrorist networks no more find room for their activities. Moreover, establishing regional and international counter-insurgency institutions besides national ones will lead to elimination of terrorism and reduce violence to a great extent.

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Donald Trump's Brave New World

By Nina L. Khrushcheva

What we love will ruin us," predicted Aldous Huxley in 1932. In Brave New World, he described a human race that, by 2540, had been destroyed by ignorance, a lust for constant entertainment, the dominance of technology, and an overabundance of material goods. With Donald Trump's recent election as president, the United States seems to be fulfilling Huxley's prediction more than 500 years ahead of schedule.

America's public culture has long shied away from highbrow thinking, often touting a kind of demotic laissez-faire egalitarianism as a precondition for unrestricted creativity and the unbridled capitalism that it supports. All anyone needs to get ahead are guts and perseverance.

That was once an attractive proposition for countries like the Soviet Union, which was closer to the world of George Orwell's own dystopian novel 1984. In a place where government control had forced all cultural creativity underground, the demotic spirit and imagination that America seemed to embody seemed like a dream.

But in a world like Orwell's, political pressure ultimately builds, and a surging dissident movement sweeps away the system, as the Soviet Union was in 1991. When people are distracted by mindless entertainment and piles of stuff, however, they lose their will to resist. Eventually, they are so lacking in knowledge and skills that they could not reject that life, even if they wanted to.

In other words, the world that Soviet citizens might have hoped for could represent a different sort of prison – less unpleasant, perhaps, but also more difficult to escape. That is what the US now faces. America's culture industry has long lent the country's politics a tinge of Hollywood surrealism. Politicians are characters, from Jimmy Stewart's morally incorruptible innocent in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" (1939) to Orson Welles's Trumpian mogul in "Citizen Kane" (1941) and Robert Redford's earnest crusader in "The Candidate" (1972), not to mention John Wayne's many cowboys and rangers. With the election of the young, tanned John F. Kennedy in 1960, the Hollywood aesthetic moved into the White House for the first time. In 1960, Kennedy was beamed into American homes, standing beside the better-known but far less charming Richard Nixon. More of a playboy than a cowboy, Kennedy captured American hearts. But he was no avatar of philistinism: on the contrary, he declared in 1963 that "ignorance and illiteracy...breed failures in our social and economic system."

America's next screen-friendly president was Ronald Reagan, an actual actor who had played an actual cowboy. But, when it came to openness and knowledge, his view was the opposite of JFK's. Advocating supply-side economics to the white working class, he convinced millions that "less government," which meant cutting federal programs, including education – would bring "morning in America." With his well-rehearsed sunny disposition, Reagan expertly played his role as president, but with a decidedly Hollywood flair. His Strategic Defense Initiative, intended to end the nuclear-deterrence strategy known as "mutual assured destruction," was actually nicknamed "Star Wars." Reagan's enduring status as a Republican icon has much to do with his ability to dole out cowboy

cruelty with movie-star charm, though luck also played a role. After all, victory in the Cold War was aided substantially by Mikhail Gorbachev, whose effort to reform the Soviet Union hastened its collapse.

In the wake of that victory, America doubled down on the proposition that daring beat knowing. James Carville, a campaign strategist for President Bill Clinton (who benefited from his own Southern-infused Kennedy-like charm), coined a phrase – "It's the economy, stupid" – so catchy that it is frequently invoked to this day. And yet it is precisely the American economy that has dumbed so many down.

By 2000, Americans were ready for George W. Bush. At once a prince and an everyman, he combined his father's East Coast blue-blood pedigree with a simple Texan persona, making him a perfect cross between Stewart and Wayne. But Bush was no movie star. Rather, he was an actor in an advertisement, hawking wars.

Today, entertainment has entered a new phase – and so has politics. From reality television to summer blockbusters to social media, what occupies a growing number of people, especially in the US, is more unfiltered, instantaneous, and relentless than ever. The thirst for detailed knowledge and complex discussion seems to have been almost fully supplanted by a far more powerful thirst for memes, likes, and followers.

Enter Trump. With his rowdy rallies and 140-character 2:30 a.m. "policy proposals," the former reality television star knows exactly how to attract an angry population struggling to frame its grievances. Trump himself – who was rumored to have set his sights on launching "Trump TV" in the wake of the election (which he presumably expected to lose) – has attributed his election victory to social media.

Some Trump voters claim that they were driven by "common sense," and that what appealed to them was his message of "prosperity and reducing the debt," together with "a strong military and reforming immigration." But a closer look reveals that that message had no substance; indeed, it was barely coherent.

What Trump supporters really voted for was the mean boss on "The Apprentice," the decisive authoritarian who will fire – or deport – anyone, without a second thought. They voted for the guy they thought would follow Wayne's swaggering mantra: "If everything isn't black and white, I say, 'Why the hell not?'" And many voted for a return to a time when white men were cowboys and conquerors.

With the election of Trump, who has named a white supremacist as his chief adviser and strategist, America could cross into Orwell territory. That would be devastating, but the silver lining is that, eventually, a resistance would rise up and destroy the system. But even if Trump stops short of neo-fascism, he could create an America that works for fewer and fewer people, while voters, so busy sharing cat pics and fake news on social media, gradually lose their remaining capacity to distinguish between lived reality and its virtual shadow. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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