

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



November 28, 2017

Art Promotes Colors and Sounds of Peace

There are different aspects of life and existence. Human beings need to satisfy all those aspects of life to live a stable life. These are not only linked to physical reality but also to the aesthetic, emotional and spiritual realities. In order to satisfy the latter realities, it is imperative that human beings must adopt the art as a tool. It is through art and artistic endeavors that they are able to satisfy these aspects of their reality and their existence. Though in the modern world, the importance of science and technology has culminated, it has not been able to overshadow the importance of art and culture. Even modern art uses scientific and technological tools for its creativity and productivity. Moreover, art also has an imperative role in the development and preservation of culture and traditions.

It also imperative to realize that art searches beauty, finds it and brings it to human life. It is through art that human beings have found the real meaning of beauty and they are able to make it a reality in their lives as well.

This has also gifted human beings the love for nature, for each other and for the entire humanity. It has also given them the opportunity to achieve beauty in their social life and existence and thus transform the world in a better place to live.

It is also through art that human beings get the opportunity to express themselves. Art is like a door towards the outer world. Through this door the human feelings, emotions and thoughts flow outwards. And it is not just any sort of flow that qualifies to be called as art but the skilled and the fine-looking ones that reach to the level of true art. Thus, art functions as exhaust for human's true nature, which, if closed, can cause human's true self suffocate in a solitary confinement.

The true artists are the ones who pursue true art and thus pursue beauty and refined skills. They are always innovative and creative and long for a world that is filled with love and affection. They, at certain times and in certain societies, may be considered as evils and destructive but that may be because of the standard or the criteria through which they are judged. They may be highlighting the shortcomings and the defects within the society and the societies that do not have the capacity to absorb such criticism tend to discourage the artists and the art as a whole.

Artists are a very important stratum of society and they should be encouraged to continue their work in every possible manner. They may prove to be the guides of human emotions and their aesthetic sense. They may lead human soul towards satisfaction and contentment. Human beings, in today's busy world have become very much mechanical. Their lives are mostly influenced by the routines and they are the victims of monotony. They require change and novelty and artists can support them achieve such novelty and change. Therefore, it imperative that artists must be supported so that they are able to support the society in the best possible manner.

Artists dare to dream, dare to think differently and dare to change and all these can support human beings towards a different life - a life that may be quite better than the one they are living. Therefore, the societies must respect their artists, value their work and realize their worth; otherwise, they may not be able to live life fully.

The societies that are liberal and democratic have a very favorable environment for their artists. The artists in such societies are free to pursue their skills and grow as artists and, thus, become a positive part of society and become the agents of change and progress. On the other hand, the conservative societies that are dominated by rigid rules and extremist religious sentiments tend to undermine the artists and art.

They do not have any sort of tolerance for them, neglect them and make their lives miserable. Afghanistan is also one of the societies where the artists are not given their due rights and they do not have the role and the position they deserve. In fact, the country has been caught in so many other problems that the issues pertaining to artists and art have never been pondered upon. Now that country is moving towards a relatively peaceful era, it is important that the artists should be valued.

They should be supported both by the government and the people. Moreover, the institutions that support and promote art must be strengthened. Music, painting, acting, dance, singing and all forms of art must be given proper chance to grow and to evolve.

Afghan people require them not only for erasing the memories of war and instability but also for maintaining peace and tranquility and providing satisfaction and contentment to their souls.

Artists can also provide support in embellishing the country with the color and sounds of peace and creativity, instead of bloodshed and war. They have the capacity to engage youth in constructive endeavors, instead of violence and terrorism. They can, without any doubt, put the society on the track towards sensitiveness, beauty and attraction.



High Time for Peace Talks With Taliban

By Manish Rai

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

The Taliban recent attacks on the Afghan security forces in the southern province of Kandahar and Farah intended to demoralize Afghan forces beset by casualties and desertions since NATO combat forces pulled out in late 2014. Recently the insurgents have stormed a number of major police and army bases and government facilities across the country it clearly demonstrates that security is deteriorating across the country and the Afghan government is losing the grip.

The Taliban has increased its territorial and population control in the past year according to a recent Pentagon report Taliban are controlling not less than a third of the country. It is very much evident that there can not only be a military solution to the Taliban insurgency. Peace process with the Taliban is almost certainly the best way to end the war in Afghanistan as a negotiated settlement is more achievable than a military victory and more desirable than an endless military stalemate. This ongoing conflict is severely affecting the reconstruction efforts and increasing the sufferings of Afghans. Moreover, it's making the country instable and a fragile state which is helping Islamic State (IS) and other extremists to increase their local footprints.

The Taliban has condemned and countered the Islamic State in Afghanistan, which suggests that the group is not allied to the global jihadist outfits that currently pose the greatest threat to the Western interests.

Hence it is comparatively easy to engage Taliban in talks as compared to Jihadist outfits of Middle East which have global aspirations. One of the main conditions for any peace talks to succeed is the realization that both sides cannot win the war. Both the parties that are Afghan Government and Taliban are aware of this aspect.

Taliban also is feeling pressure from the growing body count and from defectors who have claimed allegiance to IS. Afghan government also realizes that without the support of its foreign allies its security forces can not tackle Taliban insurgency on their own. There should also not be any pre-conditions from any side to start the peace talks like- Disarming of insurgents or withdrawal of foreign forces.

The peace process can even be launched with continued fighting. As history has demonstrated that this kind of peace talks has been successful. During the American Revolution, the end of the Algerian revolt against the French, and civil wars in Namibia, El Salvador, and Angola, fighting continued during negotiations and sometimes spiked as one side

tried to break the will of the other. A variety of diplomatic initiatives should continue to work very closely but fundamentally, there is a need to get the parties to talk to one another directly.

It is notable that Taliban still maintain its representative office in Doha. This political office has authority to negotiate on behalf of its leadership. This office only was able to secure the release of five Taliban members from the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in 2014, in exchange for American captive Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. Starting point of any future peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban can be through this political office of Taliban. Direct line of communication between Afghan government and Taliban Doha office can be established.

Employing indirect communication lines can also prove effective, including forging ceasefires at local levels, detainee releases and engaging intermediaries, such as tribal leaders, who maintain contacts with both sides. A political settlement could take years to conclude and there should be no rush to launch premature formal negotiations.

This does not detract from the urgency of undertaking informal preparations. Later on, when a right environment is achieved for launching of formal talks than measures like-interim cease-fire on national level which halts the fighting to allow a more comprehensive accord to be cobbled can be discussed.

In addition to this, the Afghan government should also work upon the grievances that are fuelling the insurgency such as corruption, injustice, warlordism, and marginalization of various tribal and ethnic groups.

Given the advantage of its strategic location, Afghanistan functions as a land bridge connecting South Asia, Central Asia, Eurasia, and the Middle East. Peace and security in Afghanistan will be vital for broader economic cooperation in the region. It is also noteworthy that peace in Afghanistan means peace in the region therefore the regional countries can play a vital role in bringing peace and security in Afghanistan. So, a whole hearted regional support should be given to any Afghan peace process.

The international community and regional powers should be actively involved in any Afghan peace-building initiative may be as interlocutors or observers. Their engagement is crucial for the success of any peace efforts. The role of a third party can be significant in bringing impartiality, a greater degree of patience, and balance to the negotiating table.

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Still Not Hearing the Death Knell of IS

By Hujjatullah Zia

The self-styled Islamic State (IS) group left a tragic history behind. Under the mask of religion, the IS carried out bloody war and shed streams of blood not only in Iraq and Syria but in many parts of the world. Although the IS group, which declared caliphate in 2014 in Iraq under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is on the run, it filled many hearts with pain and anguish. Many heads were cut off, many children were orphaned, and many women were disgraced.

People still mourn over the death of their dear and near ones. A number of girls and women are still reeling from losing their honor. Worst of all, the IS group is still believed to be a threat to the world since its loyalists carry out deadly attacks. Some members of IS group is likely to have been amalgamated in other militant factions, mainly in Syria and seek to continue their militancy wherever possible. Now they will carry out large-scale attacks since they have nothing to lose. In short, the caliphate has come to an end but the threat remains serious and the IS loyalists will pledge allegiance to other militant factions so as to be able to carry out systematic attacks.

It is said that the IS militants are still spreading propaganda online and there are people who will fall for its bogus claim. The IS militants spew forth their venom through social media and will probably recruit youths from around the world. They will poison the minds of youths who come from religious backgrounds but without sense of distinction between right and wrong. Brainwashing the youths is highly perilous in our era as many individuals are brainwashed and sent to battlefields. Propagandizing online was the strongest technique of IS group which was really essential in recruitment.

Now it is time to combat against IS group online. Counter terrorism experts say that the priority is to now destroy the "virtual caliphate" of IS. Patrick McGuinness, Britain's Prime Minister's top security adviser, said that the speed at which vulnerable young Britons could now be radicalized and plan attacks made them almost impossible to stop.

His comments came as a senior European Union security official also warned of the prospect of jihadists using biological warfare or cyber weapons to cause havoc. McGuinness called on web giants to do more to tackle the threat. Large companies such as Google had made promising steps towards taking down extremist content,

but he questioned if it was a high priority for them and "whether or not it is the A-team on this".

Gilles de Kerchove, the European Union's counterterrorism coordinator, suggested a "Daesh 2.0" may emerge after the fall of the caliphate as the militants join forces with al-Qaeda. According to him, there was growing consensus among intelligence chiefs that foreign fighters who had travelled to Iraq and Syria to join IS would either die there or flee to other "hotspots" as the caliphate collapsed.

An early issue of an al-Qaeda propaganda magazine offered instructions on "how to make a bomb in your mum's kitchen". Kerchove said, "What if anyone will have a similar article on how to process a virus in your mum's kitchen?" Jihadists could tap into networks of cyber criminals to develop or buy the expertise to launch a devastating cyber-attack, he suggested.

The sudden and swift growth of IS group shows that there were many political masterminds behind the smoke-screen. Capitalizing on sacred terms of religion, exploiting the religious senses of simple boys and girls, smuggling oil and resources, etc. were all suggested to IS by masterminds. Otherwise, a ragtag group without intellectual and financial supports will never ever grow so fast and send threat to the entire world. Those recruited by IS mostly knew how to shed blood. They knew nothing about policy. They were engaged in the quagmire of brutality.

To root out the IS militants and other terrorist groups, the world will have to campaign against the propaganda of such networks and keep them under surveillance in social media, too. The support of companies like Google will be highly effective in this regard. Furthermore, the world needs experts in cyber issues to detect those who propagandizing online. That is to say, a regional or global campaign will reduce terrorism, which has been changed into a global issue.

In brief, spreading propaganda online by terrorist networks is highly threatening and must not be underestimated. Therefore, campaigning against IS, which is one of the major propagandists, should continue to reduce militancy. Although the IS faction has been swept from Syria and Iraq, it still seeks to carry out attacks or poison the minds of people.

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