

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



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We Need to Guide the Changes

Changes within individual and social lives of human beings are indispensable. They are bound to occur. In fact, changes are responsible to make human personalities and human societies evolve. There is no way to escape them, therefore, it would be better to understand them or the patterns in them so that the way to prognostication and planning can be paved, and there could be efforts to cope with the changes.

However, within social life, prognosticating the changes and planning for them are a very difficult task as there are different variables involved within the making of social reality.

It is imperative to look at the changes in a scientific manner so that they can be comprehended properly. It is believed that if human beings do not understand the changes and guide them towards desired directions, the changes are bound to guide human beings. In such a scenario, the changes become dominant, while human beings and their society are determined by those changes. This generates a situation wherein human acumen and understanding are undermined and their capacity to be called as the best of the creatures is questioned. Therefore, they must strive to control the changes by managing themselves and bringing order and stability around them.

The changes in the societies that are comparatively more ordered societies are easier to understand. Such societies are marked with political and economic stability and cultural integrity. The paradigmatic approaches can be very helpful in such societies, wherein the course of the changes can be easily traced as they are not marked with frequent fluctuations. Nevertheless, the societies that are marked with instable socio-political and socio-economic setups are difficult to be comprehended and the changes are not traceable even after much struggle. Another important aspect of the social and political changes is their scope of influence. Some of these changes are not very intense, therefore, they cannot cast much effect on the surroundings, but others may be greater in magnitude with far reaching consequences. The scope of these changes have to be seen in relation with time and space, a particular change at a particular intersection of time and space may prove to be very much meager, while at yet another, it can be of immense impression and importance.

The social and political changes have always bothered human beings. They have been in constant struggle to comprehend their nature and have control over them. In this regard there are researches, studies and mechanisms in societies, with the objective of curbing them appropriately. One of the basic reasons of the formation of a political system was to introduce control within states. This control mechanism is guaranteed by the government in a political system along with other pillars of state. A part from that, the political parties and institutions also play a major role in addressing these changes.

At present scenario, our country Afghanistan is going through a phase of important changes. These changes are not only limited to security and terrorism; rather, a broader and wider change is underway. Afghanistan is moving, though to a very limited extent, from a tribal society to a democratic one. Though the real democratic signs are yet to be found in most parts of the country, there have been movement in that direction to a certain extent.

Unfortunately, this phase of changes is facing myriads of hurdles. The instable political and social setups have further made this period uncertain. The control mechanism itself seems to have lost the focus and devotion. It seems perplexed in the interwoven web of frequent social changes and has been contaminated with intense corruption. It lacks clear vision itself, so how it is possible for it to guide the social and political changes towards a definite goal.

The country at the moment is marked with swelling wave of terrorism. Even the securest of all the people are insecure, the international allies do not see eye to eye with the national authorities, the national forces are not completely ready to face the security challenges, the political system is marked with certain incapacities to deal with the diverse political requirements and all these changes have been magnified because of prevailing insecurity. So, the economic future is clearly uncertain and the most tragic fact is that we are completely unprepared.

This period has to be over one day, as happens with every phase of history; but what could this period lead to is of immense importance. This period can either lead us to another chaotic state of affairs wherein we have to wait for a couple of more decades for a transition or it can lead us to position from where we can move towards a successful democratic state. Definitely, the second option is what most of Afghan people desire for, but that is achievable only after prudent, agile and above all sincere efforts on the part of the control mechanism. Closing our eyes towards changes cannot solve our problems. We need to face them, comprehend them properly and design mechanism to deal with them. It is better to be the master in the process of change, instead of being the slave and being led to the unknown corridors of history.



Orange Wishes for the Black Days of Zahra

By Fatima Faizi

These days, elimination of violence against women is debated hotly by civil society activists, media, and social media. The effectiveness of annual ceremony, which is celebrated with great interest, for women is under question. Who seek to be violent toward women? I will not defame those who are involved in violence against women; this is not my responsibility. But the fact is that each and every woman has been subject to violence in this land for several times. Although there is no clear statistic in this regard, we, Afghan women, can claim that we have been the victims of violence for several times either by family or society.

There are many women who fall victim to the overt and covert violence in the society. The spate of incidents that took place in recent days, including a girl that corrosive acid was sprayed on her face in Herat province and Zahra who committed suicide. What will force Zahra and many others like her to resort to suicide? There are many reasons behind Zahra's death such as society, the atmosphere in university, lecturers and their relations with their students.

The social atmosphere in society

In our society, there is not a safe environment for girls or women. To do social activities, girls must be very bold, energetic, and hard-working in this environment or else they will not be able to tolerate this atmosphere. Those girls who live or work alone will encounter more challenges for lacking a supportive force namely family.

Psychologists believe that there is a cycle for violence which causes one use violence against another. This issue starts from family and extends to the society and will change members of family to rulers. This is easily noticeable.

When we enter an administrative environment, the relations are based on the same cycle and everyone is violent toward those who are in lower rank. This cycle is hierarchical and continues from individuals of higher position to those with lower position. This will happen to individuals who cannot change the system or stoop so low to continue this cycle. The prevailing environment generates patriarchy in the society and one will put pressure on the other as much as they can.

The university atmosphere

The same trend rules in universities. The atmosphere ruling universities shows that relation between lecturers and students has never been reasonable or appropriate. Their relation is the same as master and slave. Lecturers are of the opinion that their students are supposed to obey them as slaves and no one has to show reaction.

When we talk about teachers/lecturers, it means that we talk about paragon of virtue and guidance. Teacher is one who will show the right path to even a disobedient or stubborn student

without violence. Teacher's behavior is either a positive or negative example; and a tinge of misbehavior will make students lose their trust in teachers. Now the question is that how much university teachers will pay attention to such issues?

It is believed that both teachers and students have to mend their behavior in the academic atmosphere of university and create an environment for tolerance. Is such an atmosphere ever important for Afghan lecturers? In modern world, one will learn many things through technology or cyberspace but what makes teachers distinct from all these is their human behaviors and moral characteristics. Besides conveying knowledge to students, teachers have to transfer values and morality to students, too.

Relation between teachers and students should not be reduced to conveying information. Teachers' attitude and personality are also lesson for students. Hence, a positive relation between teachers and students is an important social issue. Relation between teachers and students is highly significant and will promote students' attitude towards many issues. On the contrary, a teacher's maltreatment will fill students with a sense of humiliation and disappointment, which will be a blow to the society.

Teachers can play highly significant role for students and their prominent roles are: Playing the role of a guide and teacher which is showing the right path to students. The role of facilitator, i.e., teacher should pave the ground for students to experience new things through using technics. The role of a kind adviser, which means that advise students similar to kind parents. These are the salient roles of teachers toward their students.

Students' dormitories

During the university period, many students go from homes to dormitories. In such a case, they will encounter many emotional challenges. As a second home to students, dormitories should be arranged in a way that help students in some issues so that they be able to pass four years of their education in this environment. That is to say, dormitories should not be arranged in a way that students feel as if they are in prisons. Dormitory is a place that lets students exchange their ideas with their roommates and analyze what they learn. Therefore, dormitories must not be the silent killer of students' talents or morale. Unluckily, violence infiltrated every layer of society. This is easily noticeable in Zahra's suicide. Students lack support and dormitory is not suitable. Students are not relied by the guards of dormitories, which will shatter their morale and self-confidence. Hence, not only a lecturer but a flawed educational system and a flawed society, which is full of violence, are the reason behind the death of Zahra and others like her.

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The Endless Talks vs. Endless War

By Hujjatullah Zia

Within the past two years, the Taliban carried out large-scale attacks against Afghanistan and killed scores of Afghan soldiers and civilians. With Mullah Haibatullah at the helm, the Taliban did not show tendency toward peace negotiation. They targeted people indiscriminately to put pressure on Afghan government. The Taliban's deadly attacks reflect their lukewarm response to peace process.

Mullah Haibatullah, who became the Taliban leader on May 25, 2016, is a religious scholar and the issuer of the majority of the Taliban's fatwa (religious decree). The Taliban also bestowed upon Akhundzada the title Emir-al-Momineen (Commander of the Faithful) that his two predecessors had carried. Rather than a warlord or military commander, he has a reputation as a religious leader who was responsible for issuing most of the Taliban's fatwas. Akhundzada comes from a traditional Taliban stronghold and is known for his role in major decision-making on bombing attacks when he served as a deputy to the slain Taliban chief, Mullah Mansoor.

"He is known for his ruthless role during the Taliban rule when he served as a judge in Kandahar. He maintained his position as a traditional mujahed [fighter] actively taking decisions ... whenever Mullah Mansoor was not available," Akbar Agha, a former leader of a Taliban's breakaway faction, is cited as saying. "He will help run the Taliban movement exactly the way Mullah Omar did because of his traditional mujahedeen mindset."

With the death of Haibatullah's predecessor, Mullah Mansoor, it was hoped that the Taliban would hold talks since Mansoor was deemed as obstacle before peace talks by the US government. To one's unmitigated chagrin, the condition did not change and Haibatullah turned out to be more radical. In other words, he cherishes a fundamental ideology and called an ideologue rather than a political figure. He will judge and decide everything on the basis of his religious mindset.

On the other hand, since his appointment did not trigger much controversy, the Taliban show strong tendency toward a traditional or radical leader. The bulk of the Taliban militants also come from traditional background with radical mindset and will favor a leader like Haibatullah.

The intensified attacks of the Taliban within the two past years also reflect Haibatullah's ideology. The Taliban carry out indiscriminate attacks and kill civilians without a tinge of guilt. After all, Afghan soldiers, who sacrifice their lives for nation, are butchered in cold blood. For example, in one recent massacre in Kandahar Province, the Taliban nearly wiped out an entire army unit of 60 men. In April, insurgents

drove into the army's headquarters in the northern province of Balkh and killed at least 140 soldiers in a rampage that lasted several hours.

The Taliban militants violate humanitarian law through killing civilians and war prisoners and destroying roads, hospitals, and local infrastructures. In fact, the Taliban are highly responsible for killing civilians and widely involved in war crime. Now considering the aforementioned facts, the Taliban are unlikely to hold negotiation with Afghan government. Haibatullah is a greater obstacle before talks and he will hardly ever succumb to the frequent calls of Afghan government for negotiation.

Despite this fact, Afghan government established High Peace Council (HPC) in 2010 to hold talks with the Taliban. There are two issues about HPC: First, it was established by Afghan former president Hamid Karzai without involving the National Assembly members. The fact is that both executive and legislative powers are supposed to decide about the national security issues.

So, disregarding the role of National Assembly, which is the legislative power, in establishing HPC is not a right decision politically. Second, the HPC has not gained any palpable results. From its establishment up to now, there was no achievement in terms of peace talks rather the security situation has been deteriorated. Although Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar reached an agreement with Afghan government, the HPC was said to have no role in this respect.

To reduce militancy, the international community will have to combat terrorism militarily and target both their hideouts and financial resources. Moreover, religious scholars are also responsible to campaign against terrorist networks and their ideology.

It is believed the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) is a highly positive step in combating terrorism if it fights in a more strong way. The IMCTC has to reinforce solidarity and collaboration to present a unified front against terrorist networks. It needs to counter radical ideology through strategic communication campaigns to refute the radical and extremist narrative and propaganda. The coalition member countries should reaffirm the moderate values of Islam and its principles of peace, tolerance and compassion.

Islamic countries also need to form a religious and cultural counter-terrorism coalition to condemn the harsh practices of terrorists through religious decree and publish global magazines in different languages to foil the terrorists' propaganda and spread tolerance and the spirit of brotherhood. Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

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