

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



September 17, 2017

Reiterating Our True Responsibilities

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 acquired 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 same 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, 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 beings.



Only Nobles Deserve the Nobel Prize

By Hujjatullah Zia

The "ethnic cleansing" and flagrant violation of the fundamental rights of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar on the one hand, and the silence of a Noble Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi on the other hand, have outraged the collective conscience. The heartrending tears of women and children and soulful reports regarding the merciless killings of Rohingya Muslims under the watch of Suu Kyi triggered an outpouring of grief. The UN and other human rights organizations have warned that the mass exodus following killings, rapes, and burned villages are signs of "ethnic cleansing", pleading for the international community to put pressure on Suu Kyi and her government to end the violence.

UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein described it as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in the wake of systematic killings and violent acts of Myanmar security forces. A number of laureates challenged the Myanmar's de facto leader Suu Kyi to recognize the suffering of the Rohingya - a Muslim ethnic group in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest for more than two decades by the Myanmar's military junta, showed great fortitude and refused to surrender to junta even when her husband was dying abroad and was called as "one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia". Able to travel freely to Norway after 21 years, Suu Kyi made a wide-ranging, deeply personal lecture, which touched on her feelings of isolation under house arrest, the Buddhist concept of suffering, human rights and her hopes and fears for her country's future, and the importance of the peace prize itself.

"What was more important," she said in her Noble Lecture, "the prize had drawn the attention of the world to the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma. We were not going to be forgotten.

When the Nobel committee awarded the peace prize to me, they were recognizing that the oppressed and the isolated in Burma were also a part of the world, they were recognizing the oneness of humanity ... The Nobel peace prize opened up a door in my heart."

Despite the fact that she spoke about human rights and fought for democracy in Myanmar, now Suu, along with Myanmar officials, refuses to use the word "Rohingya" and might believe that they are outsiders which prompted the public to call Suu to be stripped of her Nobel. Notwithstanding the mass killings, Suu kept silent. Worst of all, she maintained that the Rohingya are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. She also blamed international aid groups and complained about "a huge iceberg of misinformation"

aiming to help "the terrorists" - presumably meaning the Rohingya. When a Rohingya woman recounted how her husband had been shot dead and how she and three teenage girls had been gang-raped by soldiers, Suu mocked the claims, on her Facebook page, as "fake rape." Condoning the butchery of Buddhist majority is unacceptable for the world.

According to the UN reports, 400,000 Rohingya have fled the state of Rakhine in western Myanmar since August 25 in the wake of indiscriminate violence against civilian populations. Heart-wrenching stories about the gory incidents, horrific issues of murder, and appalling human right crisis of Rohingya men, women, and children are cited in international media. Rohingya Muslims suffer in the worst possible way.

The Myanmar military would embark on several campaigns to ethnically cleanse the nation of the Rohingya following 1948, when the British left Myanmar, despite the claims that the Rohingya have deep historical and ancestral roots within the pre-colonial borders of Myanmar.

With the series of violent acts, rape, and arson attacks, which have inflicted indescribable sufferings upon Rohingya women and children, the world expects Suu Kyi to remind the words spoken in her Noble Lecture that "the oppressed and the isolated in Burma were also a part of the world". They are parts of the world and should, similar to other individuals, be able to exercise their rights, freedoms and religious faith without barriers.

It is really painful to observe when the entire nations raise their voice against injustice and cruel practices of Myanmar security forces, a Nobel Laureate keeps silence. This prize was awarded to her based on the belief that she would impute nobility and moral standards and prefer altruism to individualism. A large number of women is dishonored on the grounds of their race and religion in the homeland of a Nobel winner, but she calls it a "fake rape" and closes her eyes to the issue.

This apartheid in 21st century and widespread violence against the Rohingya is really outrageous. Therefore, the world has criticized Suu severely for her silence and deems her unfit for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Indeed, she must stop discrimination and violence against the Rohingya. There is no doubt that the harsh practices toward the Rohingya are not only against the international instruments but also against moral standard and sound conscience. In brief, Suu Kyi, as a human if not as a Nobel Laureate, will have to put an end to the ongoing barbaric acts and flagrant violation of human rights and dignity in Myanmar.

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Fundamentalism in Ashura and the Responsibilities of Preachers

By Mohammad Ishaq Arifi

Religious fundamentalism has changed from encouraging religious faith and mentality with jurisprudence into social and objective facts. Regardless of the fact that which religious mindset resulted in establishing this issue or which one will defend it as value, this should be pointed out that how to campaign against this horrific issue and how to ensure the peace and security of Muslim citizens, who suffer the most.

It is an undeniable fact that one of the frightening issues which has infiltrated our social life, mainly in Shiite culture, is the fundamentalism of Ashura which will curtail the rights, freedoms and tranquility of scores of our citizens. During Ashura (the 10th of Muharram) destructive religious teachings are fueled by some religious circles that will implant historical hatred and propaganda in the minds of people, which is against the behavioral attitudes and Sunnah. That is to say, harsh rhetoric and sarcastic words are spoken which are considered an insult to some other sects. For instance, flags and symbols are carried around the city that necessarily hurts one's feelings. In tents of Muharram, the streets are bursting with a number of unaware individuals who come out for flagellating themselves with knives. This will not only arouse the sense of hatred of some people but will be shown reaction at international level.

It should be noted that fundamentalism in Ashura is an objective issue which has infiltrated the culture of Shiites. Therefore, it is the responsibility of religious preachers to enlighten the Islamic issue in its true soul. In other words, it is the responsibility of religious preachers, intellectuals and all citizens to reflect Ashura with its capacity and potential and strengthen peaceful coexistence and abandon spreading hatred and fundamentalism.

Ashura and the great revolution of Imam Hussein (A.S) bears extensive capacities that will be the salient epitome of empathy and peaceful coexistence for the citizens. The popularity of Imam Hussein (A.S) is part of deep religious culture that all religious schools of thought, and intellectual and Islamic elements are respectful in this regard believing that empathy with the grandson of our Prophet and his household will form the heart of Muslims' faith. Hence, this capacity should not be easily left at the mercy of ignorance, superiority or the means of disunity, violence, instability and fundamentalism in the society. The revolution of Imam Hussein (A.S) also has a salient aspect regarding human rights that one can use it for human right teaching. Ashura's revolution

is replete with deep human attitude that has emerged with the encountering of those who fought a religious war with their enemies. There is no doubt that spreading and describing such human attitude and human rights will be a fruitful paragon from the spiritual society of Karbala and enrich the behavioral culture of Muslims. Putting light over this aspect from the perspective of human attitude and right-oriented revolution of Karbala underlines the greatness of this movement against despotism, which is also a need for the war-torn countries of Muslims. The need for the teaching and human right-oriented attitudes seems more necessary than ever before in Islamic societies - where in the blood of scores of people is shed with fundamental interpretation of religious texts and symbols of development of human societies are destroyed. Thus, a strong need and thirst are felt for human and peace-oriented teaching and attitudes that is reflected in the practices of Imam Hussein (A.S) and his companions.

Religious preachers, scholars and intellectuals have a heavier responsibility, comparing to other layers of society, to emphasize the cultural aspect of this issue and pave the ground for the media to explain the true spirit of the teaching of Ashura and point out the issues which will lead to coexistence. They should also reduce the opportunity for fundamental and violent elements regarding Ashura. What is more, religious scholars must not let mosques be changed into tribune for the individuals who have less knowledge or those who might hurt the feelings of others through blasphemy. They must not let those who seek to promote their anti-human intention through sowing the seeds of hatred and disunity.

Therefore, religious scholars and intellectuals need to conduct continued meetings so as to adopt their preaching strategy based on religious principles and urge all religious preachers to act upon the same strategy and programs regarding Ashura. They have to conduct congress with the presence of scholars and other social layers of the society so as to plan their preaching programs.

It is crystal clear that such congresses will form the preaching program in the best possible way during Ashura and all preachers be committed to practice upon it. On the other hand, there should be much enlightenment regarding proceedings and carrying flags in cities and ask the security officials to keep the social order.

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