

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



September 22, 2016

Freedom of Choice

One of the most important factors of freedom is that a person should at least be able to choose from a set of choices that is best for him. Definitely, thinking of choosing from unlimited choices is not practically possible but having enough freedom to choose basic requirements of life and basic necessities that are required to shape one's personality is the right of every citizen. The societies are not made only to consider the collective good but to keep in consideration the rights and freedoms of the individuals as well, and that is what a democratic system basically claims to provide.

It is also important for the collective good of the society that an individual is provided a certain level of freedom of choice.

How could a person value a society where none of his wishes is valued? Where he has to spend his life by following the orders of others? No one would like to follow those rules and regulations willingly, which are formed without his involvement and are forcefully implemented on him. He would definitely question the authority of those who impose their decisions on others.

He would ask who has given them the right to do so. No one among us has been sent from the sky and all of us have the same relation with the time and space. It is not right if some of the people start considering themselves superior to others as all belong to the same earth and live through the same time.

Moreover, the individuals within a society would not be demanding any sort of freedom if all the inhabitants of the society had the same level of liberty.

If the all could choose only what the society offered them. But that is not the case. There are few who have many choices available for them and they can easily use the best for themselves. They possess most of the wealth, luxuries and comforts while others can only dream about them.

In such a world, it is the right of every individuals to question the system that provides them nothing except misery and demand freedom of choice for themselves.

If a person is not able to choose an option from amongst different choices, he, in fact, does not exist. And, if he is free but he has sold his right of decision to someone else, it means he has lost himself willingly.

While, he has lost himself, he does not have the right to live life with all its beauties. He, actually, resembles a nonliving being, that is lying uselessly on the face of earth without contributing anything positive to it.

Both for the personal growth and the betterment of the society, it is vital that the individuals should have a certain level of freedom of choice. If people are given such a right, they would definitely choose the best for themselves and attain bliss and contentment which would ultimately result in the development of the whole society. However, today's societies have failed to do so.

Though today most of the societies chant the slogans of democracy, they have failed to implement it in true sense. Democracy, at least ideally, stands for the freedom of thought, expression and decision, but today's men living in democratic societies are deprived of their choices. They are enslaved in the invisible chains of deterministic systems.

In backward democracies, like the one in our country, the decision are made only by few authoritative people who seem to have great freedom and the choice that is given to the people through the right to vote is also a fake one.

There are many who cannot cast their votes and many others who do not know even the concept of casting votes. Moreover, it is not always the votes of the people that decide who should be the rulers. As a matter of fact most of the people are only free to choose between the bad and worse. They either have to suffer extreme poverty or opt for a criminal life.

They, on one hand, have the option to live a pathetic life or welcome the untimely death. Is it really democratic? Is it really a choice, wherein you are given a limited set of options to choose from when none of the choices is better than the other? On the other hand people are not encouraged to choose; they are taught to compromise with what they have. Through different social institutions they are conditioned to live a life they are dictated to live. Parents, teachers and guides all have failed to teach the children and the students the capability to choose and to choose rightly.

As quoted beautifully by David Foster Wallace, "But someone sometime let you forget how to choose, and what. Someone let your peoples forget it was the only thing of importance, choosing. . . How to choose any but a child's greedy choices if there is no loving-filled father to guide, inform, teach the person how to choose? How is there freedom to choose if one does not learn how to choose?"



NUG Facing Fiasco and Illegitimacy Crisis

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

It seems that Afghan National Unity Government confused with enormous challenges Unprecedented in recent history of this country. They are harshly accused of failing and not fulfilling their promises given during election: growing Insecurity, joblessness, poverty, refugees repatriation, administrative corruption, discrimination, pollutions, and health issues are considered as a result of the bad governance. Social insecurity such as robbery, kidnapping and explosions in all parts of the country including the capital has become a common practice. In addition, illegitimacy crisis is a new raised issue widely debating in the public media.

The legitimacy of the National Unity Government (NUG) derived from a political agreement is due to expire in a few days from now. Two years ago, an incompatible, two-headed government system under the national unity government was imposed on contrary to the national law. Although the people of Afghanistan defied the Taliban threats to go to the polls under tough conditions, the two front runners accepted the proposition of US Secretary of State John Kerry in lieu of respecting the will of the voters, and created a national unity government.

The fiasco of the so-called government of national unity formed from the two opposing presidential tickets was certain from its start. A number of civil activists and patriotic politicians opposed the make-up from the very beginning. Their concern came true, and all Afghans, except the two leaders, acknowledge the debacle of the government two years after its inception. The government not only has failed to deliver in areas of good governance and development affairs, but it also has not fulfilled any of its main commitments agreed upon in the power-sharing agreement. No tangible progress has been made so far with respect to the convention of constitutional Loya Jirga (grand assembly), and the electoral reforms.

Since the commencement, there have been seeing Hypocrisy and inconsistency, and even turning down the decisions of each other, and disagreeing for a 50 percent share in nearly everything, from key national issues to low-ranking appointments. Over the past two years, they did not make any significant changes in economic and political arena. Also, reported that they repeatedly blocked the appointments of individuals who are politically at odds with his team despite the fact everyone has the right to hold a different political vision or standpoint in democratic systems. Similarly, they mostly focused on appointing his own team members in the government, and even their interpretation of the electoral reform is to equally divide the seats of electoral commissions with the both team, though the people will never tolerate the division of electoral commissions under the so-called electoral reforms.

The constitutional Loya Jirga, as envisioned in the power-sharing deal that can legitimize the post of the chief executive officer

through changing it into an executive prime ministerial slot but there are some unwillingness to support the convention of the Loya Jirga. The pre-determined, two-year legitimacy term of the National Unity Government, particularly of the Chief Executive Office whose legitimacy was under question from the very beginning, will expire just within a few days from now, so it is necessary to explore other solutions in the light of the Constitution and other applicable laws. Both leaders should admit their failure, and provide a chance for the people to find a solution to steer the country out of the existing problems, and the Loya Jirga is the best way to accomplish.

The National Unity Government (NUG) not only has failed to honour its biggest promise - the fight against corruption-, but the vicious phenomenon and national shame has also become more rampant. Some anti-corruption watchdogs say the NUG was initially expected to take concrete anti-corruption steps, but its performance over the past two years dashed the hopes. As in the previous government, the current government has also made sham promises in the battle against corruption, and has not taken any practical step thereof so far. While the government leaders are bragging about addressing the Kabul Bank scandal case, and the termination of fuel contracts of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) as achievements of their anti-corruption drive, none of government bodies involved in probing the two cases shares the details with mass media. Also, there are many questions and concerns about the work of the National Procurement Commission (NPC), which are yet to be addressed.

Public contracts which were the biggest source of corruption over the recent years still remain a point of serious concern. Even the Chief Executive Officer of the NUG, without further elaboration, accused President Ghani's close aides of corruption in public contracts a while ago. The massive scale of graft in the National Unity Government finally prompted the US as its biggest supporter to criticize the government. A number of US Senators have blasted Afghan government for failing to curb corruption, and warned of scaling back American assistance to Afghanistan. Robert Menendez, a senior member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warned President Barack Obama that failure to address the problem of corruption in Afghanistan could lead to a reduction in the \$5 billion yearly aid to the country. Leaders of the National Unity Government have to understand that not only Afghans, but also their international supporters no longer can tolerate the continuance of corruption. Corruption is not only the second biggest challenge for Afghanistan after war it is also one of the root causes of the war. Therefore, given its significance, anti-corruption needs be prioritized, and the struggle against this phenomenon should yield palpable, positive results through practical steps.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammad-zahirakbari@gmail.com

The Dark Page of History

By Hujjatullah Zia

The deadly episode in Afghanistan's history reveals the ugly face of the kings' despotic regimes who ruled under the mask of religion. Afghans' rights to life, liberty and estate were violated on the grounds of their caste, color and creed and the political figures, who were accommodated in courts, played the role of fox and wolf and betrayed their nation. The violent practices of the kings and their men, with few exceptions, led to great destructions and large casualties across the country.

The regime of Muhammad Nadir Shah, who succeeded Habibullah Kalakani through insurgency, was initiated with bloodshed. He made a written vow to Kalakani not to kill him and his dedicated men, but soon after his presence, Nadir Shah had him shot along with his men. Shah is said to pay tribute to Abdul Rahman's tomb and said that he, pointing to his tomb, was the king who knew the people well and controlled them appropriately - this uncovered his policy and the public believed that he would follow Abdul Rahman's footsteps.

With the establishment of Nadir Shah's regime, the reformation and democratic movements of King Amanullah Khan were proved abortive and freedom fighters, liberalists and the Kabul intellectuals (members of Afghan youths' Party) - including Shah Abdul Rahman Khan Lodi, Taj Mohammad Khan Paghmani, Faiz Mohammad Khan Barut Saz, Mohammad Wali Khan, etc. - were executed without an iota of mercy. To justify his acts of cruelty, Nadir Shah solicited religious decree from the so-called clergy to state the infidelity or insurgency of his political opponents and those who posed threat to his reign.

Nadir Shah also terminated the penal code approved during Amanullah's regime, which restricted the authority of judges. Under Shah's regime, a large number of people were punished in the worst possible way without standing trial. Torture, mutilation, chaining, dangling one upside down, using foul language, etc. were revived again after being banned by Amanullah. In a nutshell, Shah followed the very steps of Abdul Rahman and exercised his violent policy.

In case of any backlash from the public, Nadir Shah, stoked racial issues and channeled the public attention to sectarianism. Therefore, he spilt the blood of people on the grounds of their race, color and creed and mobilized an ethnic group against the other - this policy sparked tension among the ethnic groups and led to bloody skirmishes. Similarly, following the massacre of individuals, he proclaimed them "insurgent" resorted to militancy against his caliphate and solicited the approval of some individuals who introduced themselves clergy. So, Afghan nation - who fought bloody battles against the British Empire and gained victory at the cost of millions of lives - were butchered under an Afghan king.

More painful tragedy is when despotic kings rule a country under the term of religion and claim that they will protect religious tenets and national values through their sultanates/caliphates and introduce themselves religious caliphs. In other words, the sacred term of religion has been constantly used as vehicle for political interests throughout the world, in Islamic and non-Islamic societies. Currently, the insurgent groups, including the al-Qaeda, Taliban and self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), resort to terror and violence under the mask of religion whereas their fundamental ideologies are against religious instructions and void of moral standards.

Under Nadir Shah, female schools were closed and Kabul Women Council and Ershad Neswan (women guidance) Journal were ended. Afghan women were supposed to wear burqa and were restricted within the four walls. Moreover, primary and secondary schools were closed and some dictator instructors were employed, in symbolic high schools in Kabul, to torture and demoralize the students. Lately, some primary schools were established, though, where unqualified teachers taught. Freedoms of the public, mainly freedom of speech, were curtailed and non-governmental newspapers were ended. Governmental newspapers had to praise the officials and were not allowed to state a single word not only against the regime but also against the British Empire. Those who crossed the red line, determined by regime, were tortured severely.

The honor of epic wars against the British Empire and great sacrifices made to protect religious values, ethical code and national norms, eroded and the nation suffered painfully under Shah's regime. Moreover, the progressive movements of Amanullah came to a standstill and education, economy and culture declined immensely. The flagrant violation of rights and liberty and the regime's violent practices were a slap in the face of democracy and a tragedy for the nation.

Needless to say, Afghanistan has left bloody incidents behind under different regimes and fought for their rights and freedom - the greatest harm they sustained was by the sinister regimes that ruled despotically under friendly mask and shed crocodile tears for the nation. They always justified their cruelty through sympathetic remarks. For instance, the Taliban regime that occupied the country via religious rhetoric played a highly destructive role in the country and massacred a large number of men, women and children in the worst possible way. Now, it is the government to heal the bleeding wounds of nation through protecting their rights and liberty and combating insurgency and terrorism. Afghan officials should uphold the nascent democracy and form a civil society void of violence and carnage. The Taliban fighters, who never stop spilling the blood of soldiers and civilians, must be fought against strongly.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net



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