

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



July 11, 2017

## On World Population Day

11th July is celebrated as World Population Day around the world to enhance awareness regarding issues that related to population and their relations to the environment and development. It was basically established by the then-Governing Council of the United Nations Development Program in 1989, an outgrowth of the interest generated by the Day of Five Billion, which was observed on 11 July 1987. By resolution 45/216 of December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly decided to continue observing World Population Day every year on 11th July.

One of the main issues that the societies face today is the rise in population. The size of population greatly influences the nation. In today's societies, the size of population has to be maintained as per the resources of the state because the larger population does not always bring prosperity. There are many examples wherein the states do not have enough resources as per their large population and, therefore, they suffer. It is important to manage the population and try to keep it under control, otherwise, it may give rise to different sorts of problems which would prove to a hurdle in the way of development and progress of the nation. Therefore, if a country has enough resources to support large population it may keep that population, but states that cannot support larger populations should limit their population, or else, they will suffer from different types of economic and social problems.

Afghanistan is one of the same sorts of countries that suffer from myriads of economic and social problems. Severe poverty prevails in most parts of country because of continuous wars and natural catastrophes. The political and economic infrastructures are almost non-existent. In such circumstances Afghanistan is having a considerable population. The number of people living in Afghanistan at the moment is more than 29 million, which is just a rough estimate. As a matter of fact, this number is deduced from an earlier census that was half-finished, and does not represent Afghan population correctly. The actual number may be more than the one mentioned above. It has been one of the greatest misfortunes of the country that there has not been any comprehensible scientific population census in the country, which is really necessary for better political, social and economic decision making. It is really difficult to administer a population without knowing its composition correctly. Regrettably, the population growth rate in Afghanistan has been in elevation, as well. Currently if it is accepted that the population of Afghanistan is around 29 million, in 2025 it may reach to more than 35 million. This clearly indicates the serious nature of the growth taking place in the country. Definitely, this growth rate is going to test the capabilities of Afghan resources and Afghan government in the times to come.

The most dominant reason behind the rapid population growth in Afghanistan is that the people are not cognizant of the issue at all. Most of them consider children as the blessing and never ever think that they can turn into curse if not nourished properly and there are not enough resources to feed them, educate them and make them responsible members of the society. Ill-fatedly, most of the people in the country do not know that many of the problems that prevail in their personal lives and in the country are linked to unchecked population growth.

Especially, the people belonging to the remote areas of the country do not understand what their basic right and responsibilities are. It is, therefore, impossible to expect from them to have right understanding of the issue. Unfortunately, even the well-educated people in the urban areas do not deliberate on this issue completely. One of the greatest troubles with the Afghan society is that it has been vehemently dominated by strict tribal norms and values and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Therefore, most of the people consider it against their traditional norms or religious teachings to have a family planning. They consider it a sin to go for birth control. There have been many occasions when such endeavors have been opposed violently. Furthermore, the rise in health facilities has been able to control the mortality rate to a certain extent, which would ultimately have effect on the growth rate.

Apart from that there are financial barriers that restrict the families to go for a luxury, like birth control. People thrive for their basic requirements like food, cloth and shelter; how should they cogitate about the problem which they consider very much supplementary in nature?

Population growth rate in our country has been unchecked and can really lead to numerous problems. The government in this regard has to take serious and practical steps to control the issue as soon as possible. There should be intensive awareness programs for the people as a whole. Such programs should rather be started from the college and university level, wherein the citizens must be given complete understanding of threats that can be faced because of unchecked population growth. As far as the remote areas are considered, the endeavors must be doubled as in such areas it is not just about communicating the message to the families; rather the endeavors must go through strict and narrow-minded tribal norms and religious teachings.



## Nostalgia for Cultural Values

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghanistan has a rich culture and glorious history. To keep its cultural values intact, Afghanistan made a lot of sacrifices. A number of great scholars and poets grew up in the heart of Afghanistan's Islamic culture. The ancient monuments and soulful local music reflect the country's valuable culture. However, bloody wars imposed on Afghan nation throughout the history led to irreparable harm.

Afghans' cultural values stem from Islamic tenets and virtue. For instance, practicing religious tenets was a serious dilemma for Afghan people. In the past, the graph of moral corruption, death and immoral practices were very low.

Men and women sought to practice their religion in a peaceful environment and the air was filled with the spirit of peace and brotherhood. They upheld humanity and moral standard. People respected the rights of one another in the best possible way.

They treated one another very kindly and were tolerant towards one another. Neighbors were deemed as members of family and supported one another in case of facing any problems.

In the past, people were far more generous and hospitable than the present. Guests were considered the blessing of God and served in the most generous way. People welcomed guests with open arm and provided them food and shelter freely although this tradition still prevails in villages to some extent. This custom was part of culture across the country.

Local music performed with traditional instruments unraveled the pain and sufferings of locals, the soulful sentiment of lovers, and the loneliness of poets rather than appetite for sex. Lovers were shy as a result of virtue but still dared convey their message perhaps through writing on a piece of paper or dictating a child to convey their message to their beloved.

Unlike the false lovers in movies or in modern world, they were true lovers and would do everything in their power for their beloved. If one's love was proved abortive, they would reveal their profound pain through music and poem. No one ever dared be in touch with many girls just for pleasure. The idea of "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" did not exist in one's mind. Our culture originated in pure virtue and religious values.

Afghan nation paid heavy casualties to protect their cultural values and social norm. For example, they fought bloody battles with heroism and bravery against invaders to safeguard their culture from erosion. The unique bravery of Afghan people is praised

by history. They sought to save their culture at the cost of their lives and blood. Afghans would tolerate if their brothers' blood was shed for safeguarding the cultural values but would never ever tolerate if their sisters' hijab (Islamic clothing) was at stake. The nostalgia for the past is strongly felt among the old. Now they are highly dissatisfied with the clothing of their granddaughters and deem it against the Afghan culture.

There are many factors paving the ground for cultural erosion. The hegemony of movies and serials is beyond doubt. The younger generation who pass their time mostly in watching movies are vulnerable to non-Afghan culture. A large number of Afghan youths, including men and women, are dressing in western style. After all, our singers show keen interest in western music like pop, rock, etc. struggling to change this type of music into a culture in Afghanistan.

Second, the decades of war and violence targeted not only individuals but also cultural values and historical infrastructures. Armed invasion, sectarian violence and civil unrest undermined the moral standards and cultural norms of Afghan people. Suffering from oppression and violence, people had no time to uphold their culture. The carnage and casualties affected them mentally and emotionally and changed their kind characters into violent ones.

They were filled with strong sense of revenge and animosity as a result of cruel practices of those involved in war. Take the Taliban, for example. They killed people on the grounds of their race, color and creed. The Taliban's ethnocentric orientation stoked sectarianism and spread hatred. They blemished culture through their violent practices. Moreover, they also destroyed the Buddha statues in Bamiyan province, which was an irreparable damage to our culture. Afghan culture is vulnerable to foreign cultures which are being spread through movies, serials and fashion shows since the younger generation succumb to their charm and attraction regardless of Afghanistan's moral norm and cultural values. The way of people's dressing today is highly different from the past.

The past modesty and chastity remain no more than nostalgia. Moral corruption, violent and anti-religious practices, and unkind treatment are widespread, which is a great cause for concern. Do you not think that religious institutions, clergy and the media are responsible to safeguard cultural values? The banality of foreign serials will certainly spoil the morality of our younger generation and invade our culture.

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## Facebook Users' Unwise and Emotional Approach to Issues

By: Mohammad Baqirian

The necessary ground for using an instrument needs to be paved. That is to say, capacity is to be built in a society before using an instrument or else it will be used negatively and its harm will be more than its good. One will not get the desired result and its negative point will be salient.

Social capacity plays a key role in the positive usage of phenomena and products. If there is enough capacity in a society, the positive usage of an instrument will be possible in the best way. However, if there is no sufficient capacity, a society will be prone to risk. Using the social network of Facebook is one of such issues in Afghanistan. How much positively Facebook users utilize this instrument? Does this network support our society in different aspects or vice versa? How true are the words and statements posted on Facebook? Will our baseless reaction and unreasonable sentiments not increase the crisis?

The views and discussions expressed by Facebook users in Afghanistan are not in accordance with the ongoing facts. Preference in our social life is marginalized by reaction shown in social media and thought and precision have been replaced by sentiment and projection. In addition to targeting our true relations and the emotional wall of families are being collapsed, our patience became zero and our deep thought is ended. Inappropriate, sentimental, unreasonable, unfair, and untrue reaction on Facebook are the worst part of the issue. It is wished that the capacity for using Facebook was built and then this product entered the society so that we could avoid inaccurate and bitter reaction.

If we ponder over our present attitude, we will come to know how in a hurry we are.

As soon as we receive a true or false issue, we react in an extreme and surprising haste. Our sudden judgment is increased more than ever before no matter if the issue is true or false. We simply jump in writing something in social media with hearing an issue. We never think if the issue is based on fact or not. We can't help ourselves responding to an event and seek to appreciate or condemn it immediately just for not missing the train of Facebook users.

This type of attitude is highly unfair and unreasonable. Just think of the tragic death of Farkhunda - a woman who was lynched by angry mob in Kabul - as a number of Facebook users jumped into writing sudden state-

ments on Facebook and chanted the slogan of long live Islam and Allah-o-Akbar without knowing the accuracy of the issue. They cursed infidels and condemned her. After the revelation of the fact, the same people changed their views and expressed their sympathy. A number of those who pelted her with stone and cursed her, went to her grave to mourn. So, this haste made waste. The second reaction filled the cyberspace of Facebook was "the news about Dostum and Eshchi" as all condemned Dostum. After a while, the same people sided with him. There are tens and even hundreds of such issues as we show quick reaction and then we are ashamed after the revelation of fact. This type of attitude is going on relentlessly in social media these days. Just as soon as a hot issue is received by Facebook users, everyone will be changed into tribune to repeat it loudly.

Vigilance and cleverness are strong need for a society. That is to say, we are responsible to be sensitive towards our destiny. However, this does not necessarily mean to hurl abuse at someone, show sudden reaction without knowing the truth, and put a cursory look at an issue. This kind of action is tantamount to the issue that we happen to see a group of people chanting the slogan of "long live" or "death to", we join them without knowing the issue and chant positive or negative slogan in louder voice.

Is it fair? First we need to be aware of the fact, then chant slogan. In addition to social, economic, political and cultural changes, we have a serious problem in thinking.

We are highly distant from the art of thinking and act emotionally. Although we live in a world that logic and reason are highly significant, we act emotionally and unwisely, which will lead us to a quagmire. Our emotional and unwise reaction will lead to great harm that include confusing the public and distorting the fact. Sometimes our unreasonable reaction will pose a threat to social order and boost the morale of the enemy. This will further add insult to collective wound and lead to nationwide despair. Similarly, we will imperil social interests and public welfare and cause disorder. Besides social responsibility, our human and moral responsibility necessitates it not to talk baselessly or without knowledge.

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