

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



June 20, 2015

Ramadan and Societal Responsibilities

The holy month of Ramadan has started and the Muslims around the world are observing fast. Fasting in month of Ramadan is fundamentally abstaining from any kind of food or drinks from the Chanting of the clergyman in mosque in the morning to the other one in the evening. Although mostly fasting has been considered as a way of making virtue and guaranteeing and producing better record to be able to secure a better place in the world henceforth, it has many social consequences, too.

Fasting, in real sense, is not just keeping oneself away food and water for the entire day; it has an opportunity for its observers to bring about positive changes in their social life. One of the most dominant teachings of Ramadan is tolerance. Tolerance is not only advisable for a person in his individual life but also for his social undertakings. It helps a person in managing better social interactions and at the same time invigorating social relations. Tolerance is one of the highest qualities to have as it helps build the society, which largely depends on cooperation and trust. Unfortunately, today the bearers of religion are considered as the most intolerant people around the world. Nonetheless, Islam has always emphasized on the superiority of tolerance.

Tolerance for others is necessary in today's multicultural world. Muslims are all around the world and there are many Muslim countries that have different religious groups living in them; therefore, Muslims need to show great tolerance and respect for them and fasting is one of the ways of learning tolerance. Remaining without food and water throughout the day and at the same time keeping oneself normal and pleasant requires a great deal of tolerance. Moreover, it is one of the requirements of fasting that a person must not get too much rough in his social dealings and must not lose his temper. Being angry and abusive easily are the factors that spoil a person's fast and are not at all allowed.

Another important quality that may be learned through fasting is the self control, which can play an important role in changing the society and bringing about positive changes. The people who are able to control themselves are able to change the society, while fasting is one of the ways of practicing the self control. As there are certain things that a person has to abstain from during the month of Ramadan, this teaches him to control his self. This self control can afterwards be used in changing the society for better.

Realizing the vices and evils in the society and abstaining himself from them is the first step that a person can take in the way to virtue and betterment of society. Being in fast, people are not allowed to be part of the vices and crimes in the society and must play a positive and assertive role to shun those vices and crimes, otherwise he does not deserve to observe fast.

Another important social aspect of Ramadan is to feel the hunger and realize that there are many people who have to remain hungry in our society not just for one month but for the entire year or may be their entire lives. Therefore, fasting must not only make them realize this fact but also take steps to reduce their sufferings. Fasting must make the people realize the disparities that exist between the ways of living of the poor and the rich. It must make them feel how the poor spend their lives without having enough to eat and to feed their children, while the rich have all the luxuries of life - much more than human beings require.

Unfortunately, the above said qualities are not seen frequently during the month of Ramadan. It can be observed in Muslim societies during the month of Ramadan that people are less tolerant in their social interactions. They get angry on pity matters and even become abusive on minor incidents. They seem to lack self control and do not learn what fasting has to teach them. They are not able to abstain from the evil and vices and in fact become a part of them and strengthen them.

A simple example of trying to earn extra profit from the business dealings can be cited in this regard. The businessmen and shopkeeper, though observe fast, are not able to avoid the attempts of earning more and more money in every possible way. They increase the prices of the items they sell without taking into consideration the regulations of the state law or the negative impacts this increase may have on the lives of other people, especially those who suffer from destitution.

In addition, during the month of Ramadan, instead of feeling that the class disparity is negative and evil, it is further strengthened. The poor can hardly get food to break their eternal fast, while the rich have different types of dishes on their tables while breaking their fast. Even the thirst and hunger of Ramadan are not able to make the people realize how painful the starvation may be for those who suffer from it and how insensitively the rich keep on their luxurious life without even caring what is going in their immediate neighborhood.

In short, fasting is not just to earn virtues; it has certain social aspects as well, which should be learned through the process of fasting. If it is not able to make its observer an active and responsible member of society, there is no need of keeping oneself hungry and thirsty the whole day.

Peace Talks Should be Held on Government's Term

By Asmatyari

The newly installed government in Kabul affirms security the top most precedence. Nonetheless, the peace dream of Afghans can not materialize, given multiple factors hindered the way to this triumph reach to a consensus. The in-depth trust deficit found between disgruntled factions, served as a dominant factor restraining this settlement. Taliban never relied Kabul government to be the sole authority that should be talked, to chart out the future course of action. Purposeful, negotiations renders the sole political solution to put an end to this predicament, pleading a trust-worthy guarantor.

Previously it was reported by credible media that Afghan government and the Taliban were preparing to hold face-to-face talks in the following days. The report added that efforts were being made to arrange the talks in Kabul in an effort to show that the process is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. The first prediction came true but not the later. It was strived to initiate talks before Taliban's spring offensive begin, provided the first round talks focusing on ceasefire, could not led to fruition. Earlier, vehemently the government expected truce but Taliban turned it down by launching successive brutal attacks. It is evident Taliban wants to talks in the position of strength -nonetheless not the government. This bewildered stance may complicate governments' position. Though the president asserted the talk with Taliban would continue in the government's term, is contradicted with Taliban's present gallant gesture. This deliberately seems a political statement.

Moreover, a great degree of leniency is observed on government's part for getting the Taliban convinced for peace talks. Afghan authorities have repeatedly tried to jumpstart talks with the Taliban in the hope of ending a 13-year conflict, but the militants have set tough conditions, including the withdrawal of all foreign troops in Afghanistan, affirms the aforementioned reservations. Seeking quicker drawdown of international forces has never been a priority of Kabul's central government; instead it hastened to accredit the status of BSA that ascertains the residual force stay for another decade to carry out the assist, advice and train mission of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). How would the incumbent government persuade Taliban given in to its term -is an unarguable posture.

In the latest development, talks between Taliban representatives and members of Afghan society, focusing on women's rights in Afghanistan has taken place in Norwegian capital, Oslo. Reportedly, Taliban has demonstrated willingness to let women partake in socio-political endeavors and chase their academic goals unhampered. Previously, in informal talks in Qatar, the Taliban, condemned for their misogynistic ideology and lack of respect for human rights, pledged support for women's education and their right to work in "male-dominated professions. Most of the people fears, Taliban gave in, with regard to display a human friendly outlook -this very reservation do not coincide with the on ground truth. Taliban has make compromises, making them convenient fit in the new setup of democracy. There are some hard born reservations Taliban still assert to be primarily considered on peace talks agenda; they eye constitution to be Islamized, Taliban be given greater share in the new setup. The government displayed complete

silence about over all developments. Earning concession in women's right can not be deemed as if they would go rational on every account. The constitution certainly will be bombarded with Islamic clause -making the rule of business difficult for ordinary masses and religious minorities. This is the richest price the country will have to pay in the long run.

Afghan government has been seeking a mediator that could facilitate the peace talks -depended on Pakistan and US for its formal instigation and finalization. The round of conference being staged by the Oslo Forum is being co-hosted by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and the Geneva-based Center for Humanitarian Dialogue between conflicting factions. Reportedly, the head of Taliban political office in Qatar, Syed Tayyeb Agha, led a three-member Taliban delegation at the Oslo Forum. The delegation of government consists of six members, led by Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, the Second Deputy of Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. This setting is nothing more than a confidence building measure that might draw the conflicting factions comes close together.

The purpose of the rendezvous is to discuss the potential modalities of comprehensive peace negotiations. Following the successive developments, Afghan Taliban and the government may devise a roadmap to begin peace talk on mutually agreeable condition. The delegation's trip to Oslo comes after months of formal and informal dialogue between the government and the Taliban at different venues over the past three months, meetings were held in Qatar, China, Norway and Dubai. The Oslo Forum says it is a "unique opportunity for senior conflict mediators, high-level decision makers and other major actors in peace processes to share their experiences, identify challenges and reflect on their own and others' practice in a discreet setting and informal atmosphere." With the onset of talks ceasefire is crucially important -undeniably, it is sane both the factions agree on complete adherence to cease fire as long as peace talks are underway. Nevertheless, just as it appears the peace process may finally be picking up steam, the Taliban recently rejected a call from the Afghan Religious Scholars' Council to put in place a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan. In response to the militant group's continued enmity and desire to continue fighting through the holy month, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has reportedly ended restorations on the use of artillery against insurgents. Taliban, the claimant of champion of Islamic instruction turned harsh -even vowed not to spare the people in forthcoming holy month.

Putting a glance at the political outlook of Afghanistan, chaotic state of delusion is reflected. The incumbent government tries to push for peace talks whilst insurgents resorted to parallel bloodletting must be kept in consideration. It is believed that lasting can only be installed given all factions of the decade long conflict is brought to common terms. The most significant are the demonstration of shift instilled in Taliban's resolve to disband militancy, dissociate Al-Qaida and surrender to constitution of the country. This move practically is unachievable given that Taliban deem to having upper hand in the fight, never surrender to government's demands instead dreams of ousting Kabul government.

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The Taliban's Warning to the Islamic State

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The Taliban leadership has sent a letter to the Islamic State's leader in Iraq/Syria, warning not to attempt to open a new jihadi front in Afghanistan. In the letter, it is said that there is only room for "one flag and one leadership" for jihad efforts in Afghanistan. According to a Taliban spokesman, the letter is sent by Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor, a senior Taliban leader and member of the Quetta Shura, who is called as the head of the Shura in the letter. The Taliban has warned the Islamic State that if it attempts to open a front of jihadi activities in Afghanistan, it may result to a response from the Taliban. The Taliban leadership has stated in the letter that activities of various jihadi groups "would not be in interests of Jihad and neither the Muslims". The tone of the letter is cautious and respectful, and the jihadi group which is controlling large swathes of Iraq and Syria is called as "mujahedin".

The letter from Taliban's Quetta Shura to the Islamic State is coming after reports of intense clashes between the Taliban and militants loyal to the Islamic State in some eastern and southern provinces of Afghanistan. According to the reports, hundreds of families are displaced as result of clashes between the Taliban and the Islamic State in eastern province of Nangarhar. The Islamic State has been recruiting in Afghanistan, and some disgruntled members of the Taliban have joined the group. The Islamic State in Afghanistan is mainly made up of the breakaway Taliban members who have switched their allegiance to the Islamic State leader Abubakr Al-Baghdadi. In the letter, the Taliban has tacitly warned the Islamic State not to recruit members of the Taliban who are disgruntled for any reasons or members shunned by the Taliban.

The letter is indicating that power struggle by means of military confrontation between the two jihadi groups is already triggered. In the letter, it is said that the Taliban will be forced to defend its achievements if the Islamic State makes decisions for jihad in Afghanistan. Confirmed reports suggest there have been increasing clashes between forces loyal to the Islamic State and the Taliban leaving dozens dead from both sides. A former Taliban commander who has switched allegiance to the Islamic State has warned the Taliban the will defend itself against any Taliban attack and stage war against the group. Despite the soft tone of the letter, the matters raised in the letter are fundamental and existential issues for both sides and the two militant groups do not seem to be able to resolve these fundamental matters peacefully. The Taliban sees itself legitimate group carrying out jihadi activities against American presence in Afghanistan as well as the Western-backed government in Kabul. However, the Islamic State, seeking to foothold in Afghanistan, is pursuing a larger agenda for Afghanistan and beyond including Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asia, Russian and Chinese Muslim-inhabited territories and the Caucasus. The region is called as 'Khorasan province' for the Islamic State operating in

Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State sees Afghanistan as a strategic area for promoting its jihadi activities in their so-called 'Khorasan province'. Afghanistan, as a conflict-ridden country, provides a conducive area for the Islamic State to recruit, train and equip their fighters for not only taking grounds in Afghanistan but also for backing their jihadi branches in the Central Asia and elsewhere in the region.

Therefore, given that the Islamic State operating in the Middle East sees Afghanistan as a strategic location for advancing their global agenda, seeking a foothold in Afghanistan is some sort of existential matter for the group in their efforts to advance their global jihad in the region. On the other hand, the Taliban has followers not only in Afghanistan, but also beyond the birth country of the group. Some other groups operating in Pakistan and elsewhere are loyal to the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar, who has the title of Amir-ul Momineen, or the commander of the faithful. From Taliban perspective of jihad in the Muslim world, Mullah Muhammad Omar is the only legitimate leader of the Muslims in the world. This is, in fact, the ground for fundamental discordance between the Taliban and the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

The Taliban's spring offensive this year against the Afghan Government was also a show of muscles to the emerging Islamic State in Afghanistan. Usually, the seasonal fighting in Spring and Summer seasons is a routine fighting for the Taliban against the Afghan government and the international coalition that was fighting the Taliban before 2014. Prior to the launch of the spring offensive this year, there was uproar over Islamic State's emergence in Afghanistan. However, the talks on Islamic State's presence in Afghanistan dwindled with the launch of the Taliban's spring offensive across the country. Perhaps, the Taliban hoped the spring offensive would also reaffirm that it still has a firm grip on jihadi activities in Afghanistan. However, with the creeping emergence of the Islamic State and its recruitments in Taliban-held areas, it has become evident for the Taliban that the Islamic State is going to emerge as a rival jihadi group in Afghanistan.

The letter from the Taliban leadership in Quetta to Islamic State is suggesting confusion among the Taliban on how to deal with the newly emerging threat to the long-established militant group in Afghanistan. The Taliban have mostly avoided a full-scale confrontation with the Islamic State and its own breakaway factions joining the Syrian-born group. However, now it is finding itself in an inevitable position in dealing with the threat of the rival Islamic State. The recent clashes could be the harbinger of a large-scale confrontation between the Taliban and the Islamic State. As indicated in the letter, it is expected that the Taliban take military actions against the Islamic State in a foreseeable time in the future. The rising Islamic State and the likely confrontations between the two militant groups would further complicate the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

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