

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



October 06, 2015

## Curiosity is a Worthy Gift

Throughout most part of human history, contemplation has been treated as a crime. Same has been the reaction to being inquisitive. It seems as if contemplation and inquisitiveness are considered against the social setup. However, there have always been few people who have never understood this view or they have intentionally ignored it. They are the same who have a fire of restlessness and curiosity in their hearts, which keeps on burning and compelling such people to show the same to the world.

The people who question and doubt are never satisfied of what they already know and they keep on finding for more so as to satisfy their minds, but the search goes on forever. Such people will never let the blind beliefs dominate their minds and they never let them to pollute their conscious endeavors. They, as a matter of fact, believe that such beliefs create misunderstandings in the mind and hatred in the hearts.

Those who have blind beliefs are actually deprived of the awareness of the life. They are the ones who themselves have locked their minds and do not know that their minds are locked and the keys are with themselves. Nothing is able to change such people as they are not open to any view or any discussion. Even education cannot change such people. If such people even go to educational institutions, there is no chance that they would improve as they take with themselves their dogmatic beliefs. They have already decided everything for themselves and made final decisions. For them, it would be better even not to go to the institutions, as they have already filled their minds and there is no empty space to learn new ideas or concepts. Education must support in understanding new things and when there is not such a chance, there is no need of education as well.

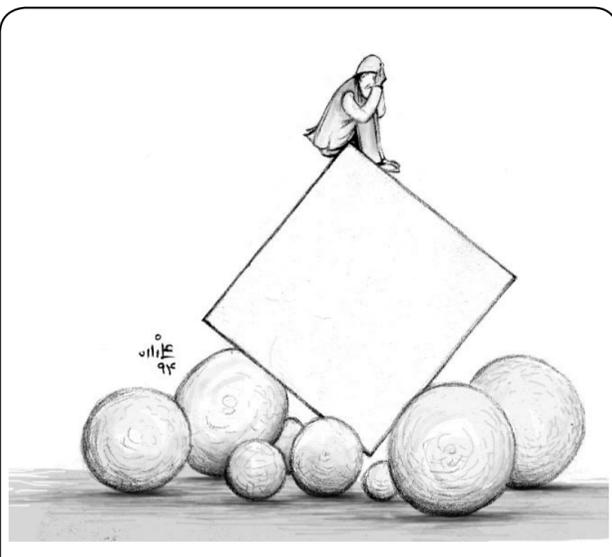
It is also important to note that the type of education the educational institutions are disseminating in our society is also debatable. The educational institutions have become the factories, where robots are generated who, themselves, cannot think anything, but act as per the commands that are fed into them. There is no room for doubt and questions in our educational institutes. Those who commit the crime of asking too many questions are punished in the severest manner. Such institutions can only produce students who get education to negate education, and unfortunately such people are the most suitable for our society and most educated for our so-called education scholars. However, they are those puppets who play in the act based on education but themselves do not know the purpose of their act.

This is really weird that our youth is being kept away from better and thought-generating education system. The endeavors are being made to keep the young and capable minds away from the food that can nourish them and make them discover the world, universe and their mysteries. True education can even reduce hatred in the hearts of the youngsters and teach them the lessons of love and brotherhood for the fellow beings. In fact, there are certain people who strive to keep such education away from youngsters because they know that it would generate so many views and perspectives which can even unveil the realities that they want to keep hidden.

We should teach our youngster not to emphasize on a single perspective and try to learn how to live with different ideas and thoughts. They need to know that others can differ from what they think and what they feel and they need to realize that others can be right as well. They even need to go deeper and assume that there are many ideas that have not been thought yet and with open minds they can have the opportunity to discover such thoughts. They also require to understand that whatever has already been thought for them can be wrong; this way they can come to know about the mistakes in the history and know the real truth.

Unfortunately, in our society the blind beliefs and careless claims have been given free hand. However, it has to be comprehended that the moment a person lets blind belief enter his mind, the next moment the possibilities of having better understanding and gaining knowledge run away from him. And, this phenomenon is totally against the requisites of education.

Our youth have to be emancipated from following the forced beliefs. They have to be given the freedom of free thinking. Only those youngsters have the right of getting education who understand that they can doubt and challenge what is already known and who want to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong through their own minds. The educational institutions must first of all develop an attitude of learning, which requires a questioning nature. They should not be the places where the students are spoon fed. It has to be understood that if the educational institutions are able to generate an attitude of learning the rest will follow itself. Then the teachers do not have to force or punish the students to learn; they will learn themselves as they would be thirsty to do so.



## We Love All the Afghans!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

With every remark, every tweet, every post and every argument, I feel as if someone hits a blow to my heart and pain and disappointment engulfs me. It is such painful to see the national unity decompose slowly and secretly. Our enemies have almost achieved their target. They are, once again, going to divide the country on the basis of ethnicity and language and push the fellow citizens into a civil war against each other. It is unfortunate that we are becoming the tools in their hands to make their dreams come true.

There have been such attempts in past as well but this time, we got into the trap. It all started when a number of people came out into the streets, demanding that words 'Afghan' and 'Islam' should be included in the upcoming computerized National Identity Cards. In politics, two or more groups may have different viewpoints but this does not permit them to cross the limits and talk against the unity and solidarity of the country. On the occasion of intensive suicide and bomb attacks in Kabul in August, large number of videos and posts were shared that were against different ethnic groups. Similarly, the incident of Kunduz gave our enemies another opportunity to make the people talk against each other. On all these occasions, so many baseless and irresponsible remarks were passed on almost all the social networking sites especially Facebook. Members of different groups were tactfully drawn to talk against each other and they filled the pages with blames and accusations. Members of different ethnic groups blamed each other to be ignorant, to be terrorists or direct or indirect supporters of terrorists, to be backward and uncivilized and even some of them went so far to say that, the country should be divided between different groups on the basis of race or language. Of course, tit-for-tat answer was given from both the sides. Then different group members targeted the language, religious beliefs, traditions or elders of each other. A war of words broke out in which all the limits of civility, dialogue and sound reasoning were crossed and respect for fellow citizens and humanity was left on a side.

As I mentioned before, it was painful to many who were understanding the actual hands involved in this and were crying silently and praying to Allah to save the country of another bloodshed on the name of race and language.

As expected, common people on both the sides were not wise enough to understand the conspiracy of our enemies and they went on and on in worsening the situation. Another painful reality was the silence of those who make the public opinion; they were either afraid of telling the truth and disclosing the plots of our strong enemies or were a part of this dirty game. Whatever may be the reason, it is still not so late and we can immediately start the remedial action.

To start with, we need to know the ground realities. For many decades, people of different groups have been living together peacefully and they like and enjoy the diversity in language

and culture. In almost all the provinces and cities of the country, Pashtoons, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens and others have lived together happily. They share the sorrows and pleasures of each other, they have even strengthened the bounds by developing blood relations with each other, they work together and there has never been any problem in this unity. It is because of a fact that the strong bond of Islam unites us and our similarities exceed the limited number of differences.

In the same way, almost all the ethnic groups have equal share in education and working in public and private sector.

As far as terrorism is concerned, I would like to represent few points that once I mentioned in one of my previous articles as well. The biggest factor feeding the terrorism and running big organizations like Taliban is of heavy funding and strategic support. In case of Taliban, this is provided by a number of international powers who are using our country as their battleground. The extremism or provocation of radical thoughts and sentiments is possible only in the absence of education. It is the reason why, the areas backward and less educated become victims of Taliban and other terror groups who use the name of religion for their objectives. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and a number of African countries, this fact has been found that less educated and backward areas provide the workforce for terror organizations working on the name of religion. In Afghanistan, unemployment and poverty is also one of the major reasons of the expansion of Taliban. It is no more a secret now that Taliban pay handsome salaries to their soldiers and majority of them fight for economic gain and not as a religious obligation.

In all these factors, it has been found that no specific group or race can be blamed for terrorism. On the other hand, I can give thousands of examples that all the ethnic groups hate terrorism. There are anti-terrorist writers and activists from almost all the groups of the society. Similarly, our national army is bravely fighting the menace of Taliban and they were on the frontlines when Kunduz was to be cleaned from Taliban and they did their duty without any discrimination.

In the light of these realities, it would be unfortunate if we keep chopping our own legs. If the same condition continued, it may widen the drift between different ethnic groups of the country and may eventually lead the country to another civil war. This condition is also hurting the brave soldiers of our National Army who are fighting terrorists and they comprise of all the groups.

If we truly love our country and want to see it as a developed and strong country in future, we must immediately work to correct the wrong acts. All of us should avoid any post, video or comment that promotes hatred among different groups. We should also boycott all those pages who are busy in spreading this poison. The responsible and educated minds of society who can change public opinion should promote unity and love among the different ethnic groups.

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## ISIL Poses a Threat to Afghanistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

The self-styled Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) poses a threat to Afghanistan as it has ushered in practicing their fundamental ideology - i.e. imposing strict rules on women, killing tribal elders, etc. - and made inroads. There are reports that ISIL holds sway in 25 provinces and seeks to further extend its sphere of influence. Moreover, the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) group has led to splinter party among the warring factions as a number of Taliban militants pledged allegiance to it. Perhaps, the IS intends to outdo the Taliban insurgents and spearhead terrorist attacks in Afghanistan.

The "war on terror" did not bear the desired fruit within the last decade. In spite of counter-terrorism strategies, the Taliban are able to carry out deadly attacks across the country. Their strong assaults in Faryab, Kunduz, Helmand and many other provinces demonstrate their influence. The Kunduz takeover was the militants' biggest victory since the Taliban government was ousted in 2001. After all, the Taliban are backed by Haqqani network, al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e Tayyeba - whose commanding officer Harris was purportedly killed in Kunduz province by Afghan soldiers just few days ago. Now, the IS has also gained a shaky foothold in restive parts of the country, which is a note of caution for the government. In short, Afghanistan is highly prone to war and violence following the withdrawal of foreign forces.

"The fact that the Taliban can actually take the sixth largest city in Afghanistan, and hold it for a couple of days, sends a signal to the government and the international community about the future of Afghanistan," said David Sedney, a former deputy US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He added, "The Afghan government doesn't even have a defense minister after one year of unity government. This is a government that needs to get down to business and not just talk about having a better security situation." He pointed out as, "Afghan soldiers are great fighters ... They're willing and able to fight but they need a good leadership." The world has realized that the withdrawal of NATO soldiers has precipitated militancy and threat posed by IS group in Afghanistan. Addressing the Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism at the United Nations, Barack Obama said, "We're pursuing a comprehensive strategy that is informed by our success over many years in crippling the Al Qaeda core in the tribal regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan." He said the US was harnessing all its tools to combat the extremists. Obama reiterated, "This is not going to be turned around overnight because it is not just a military campaign that we are involved in. There are problems that have built up over decades

that are manifesting themselves in organizations like ISIL."

In recent weeks, IS in Afghanistan has regrouped, wreaking havoc among Nangarhar's communities, barbarically murdering tribal elders, clashing with the Taliban, imprisoning families and enforcing strict rules on women. Afghan security forces are reacting but remain overstretched due to operations against strong Taliban offensives elsewhere.

Franz-Michael Mellbin, a Special Representative of the European Union in Afghanistan, writes, "For now, the overall conclusion is that IS does not yet represent a significant strategic threat to Afghanistan. What it has become is a complicating factor politically, as it affects how government actors and other insurgent groups formulate policies, including towards peace talks. For that reason, IS in Afghanistan must be countered. And fast."

It is believed that if the counterinsurgency proves abortive, the scenario of Iraq and Syria will occur in Afghanistan. The fundamental practices of ISIL remain no mystery for the world. The ethnic minority groups suffer serious discriminations and despicable deeds enforced by the IS militants - which highly outrage the world's conscience. In other words, the IS sow the seeds of racism and sectarian violence in the soil of Iraq and Syria and discriminate them on the basis of race, religion, creed and sex. Based on its radical ideology, ISIL has gone about systematizing rape, sexual assault and slavery by embedding the buying, selling and gifting of slaves into a system of rewards for its fighters. Of the estimated 3,500 Yazidi women held by ISIL, survivors report being interrogated and in some cases stripped for sorting and categorizing. They have been rated according to desirability, labeled and transported across ISIL-held territory. They have been traded between fighters, and awarded by leadership as prizes.

The stronger foothold of ISIL group will pave the way for the same scenario in our land. A spark of sectarianism, such as abducting and killing ethnic minority group in recent times, seems to be the product of the IS's presence in the country. No ethnic group will be immune to the poison spewed forth by IS insurgents. Moreover, it is self-explanatory that the IS group seeks to consolidate its presence in Afghanistan so as to fish in troubled water and hunt its prey in restive parts of the country - it will threaten the fragile political structure and democratic system. Afghanistan, where religious tolerance is practiced among the nation to a high extent compared to many Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc., must not be let fall into room for sectarian and racial violence - as hands are working behind the veil with this sinister intention. Strong counterinsurgent strategy is needed to tackle the issue.

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