

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



September 21, 2017

“Together for Peace”

Every year on 21st September, most of the countries of the world celebrate International Peace Day. This year, as well, it is being celebrated under the theme, ‘Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All’.

This day was first established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981. And, in 2001, the UN General Assembly voted to designate the day as a period of non-violence and cease-fire. On this day the United Nations urges all nations to honor a cessation of hostilities and to commemorate the day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace.

Peace is really vital for today’s world, particularly, when different nations and groups can be found fighting with each other. For the developing and under-developed countries, it is a prerequisite for other sorts of development. Without sustainable peace, thinking of prosperity is nothing more than a figment of one’s imagination. With peace, a society would be on the track of a healthy evolution and it would be able to concentrate on many other issues that are hurdle in the way to bliss and contentment.

Unfortunately, no peace has been for ever and fortunately, no war has lasted long. Wars have always devastated human civilizations, killed millions of human beings, brought miseries and pains and yet they have not been rejected as unnecessary and this fact is really very painful.

It is difficult to believe that knowing the horrors of wars, human beings have always considered them necessary and almost all the nations in the world are really ready for wars. There are many important requirements that are neglected in the society and most of the energy and efforts are utilized to make a nation ready for launching war and strong militarily.

It is weird to note that there are many countries on the face of earth that would not utilize the resources of the nation for improving the standard of the living of the people but would spend them magnanimously on acquiring modern weaponry. In fact, human beings are preparing for their own destruction and extinction consciously.

Just consider the amount and the characteristics of modern weaponry; they have the tendency to raze human beings from the surface of the earth completely. The magnitude of weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of world nations can even destroy the entire earth several times.

Unluckily, some of the human beings are of the view that peace can only be achieved through wars and therefore, wars are necessary in human societies. This is the biggest misconception human beings have ever had. War does not and cannot bring peace; it in its nature is destructive. Even if war brings peace that is only after the entire human civilization is erased. Would a peace, in a world without human beings, be required at all?

Most of the wars have been possible because the nations have been very much interested in dominating each other and gaining power as power has enabled them to play major role in international politics and power game. In the meanwhile, they have forgotten the basic philosophy of the development of politics and states. Politics is really a game of power but the same power can be used to bring peace and tranquility within the world.

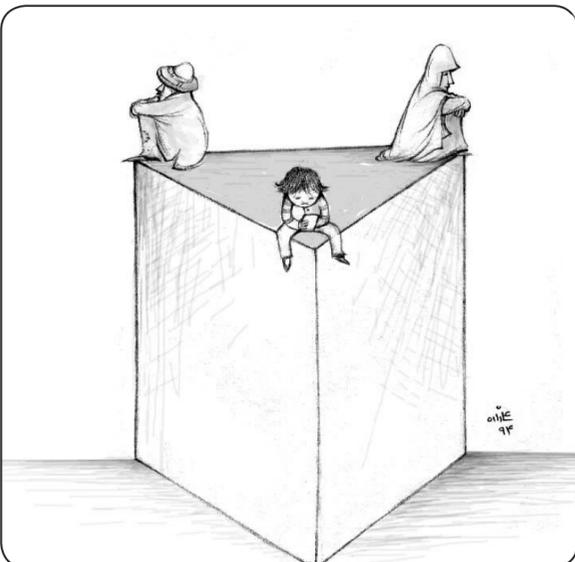
Moreover, if all the political achievements of human beings are not able to bring them peace, what is the purpose of all those achievements? If they are not able to use their tendency to love each other what is the use of their sensitive feelings? In words of Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest propagators of peace and harmony, “The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know true peace.”

One of the basic reasons of wars has been the tendency to subjugate others and try to revenge them for any perceived misdeed. And the series of retaliations have mostly formed an unbreakable chain of recurring circle and the wars have devoured several generations. This fact is true both in collective and in individual lives. Nations and individuals who have kept on retaliating have only been able to achieve great loss, nothing else.

Mahatma Gandhi had rightly quoted, “An eye for an eye would only make the whole world blind.” That is how human beings in today’s society behave. They behave as if they are blind towards all the ugly manifestations of bloody wars and to all the miseries; therefore, they are making themselves ready for more and more wars, more seriously than ever before.

For our country Afghanistan, peace stands paramount as the country is suffering from war, instability and resultantly from poverty and misery.

On this day the efforts to restore lasting peace in the country should be further strengthened and the national, regional and international stakeholders should come together so as to establish lasting peace. And, it would be in the benefit of everyone.



The Need for Keeping Public Order and Performing Religious Rituals in Afghanistan

By Abdul Hamid Arifi

Freedom of religion is one of the fundamental rights of mankind in human societies and the legal demands of citizens.

Protecting this right symbolizes the intellectual maturity of a society. The nature of men is fed up with imposed faith and religion and consider it in conflict with their humanity and freedom. Freedom of religion means that mankind should be able to adopt their religions and exercise their religious tenets and rituals without being subjugated. Religion has also stressed this fact that there is no subjugation in accepting religion since the path to the right and wrong is enlightened. Faith and belief in religion and religious values need to be based on reason rather than imitation or bias. On the other hand, the state does not have the authority to interfere in people’s religious affairs but its responsibility is to campaign against religious discrimination and provide the opportunity for exercising religious rituals for all citizens.

In brief, ensuring the security of practicing religious rituals and proceedings is the significant responsibilities of the government so that citizens be able to perform their religious rituals with peace of mind. This right has been also recognized in international instruments and was emphasized that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Similarly, Afghan Constitution stipulates, “The sacred religion of Islam is the religion of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Followers of other faiths shall be free within the bounds of law in the exercise and performance of their religious rituals.” It further says that liberty is the natural right of human beings. This right has no limits unless affecting others freedoms as well as the public interest, which shall be regulated by law.

On the other hand, religious followers in Afghanistan are in dire need of peaceful existence. All are supposed to fulfill their responsibilities in protecting public order and respect the social, political and religious rights of one another and avoid humiliating one another or resorting to violence which are against a peaceful existence. That is to say, religious followers in Afghanistan which share some common religious principles as well as common interests are in need of peaceful coexistence more than ever before. All those who live in this land, including the followers of other religions, are entitled to live in peace. According to Islam, the dig-

nity and fundamental rights of all individuals who live peacefully in Islamic territory should be protected.

Although Afghans show great tendency in living peacefully with one another, yet they are the casualty of mysterious hands interfering in their destiny. In another item, they are left at the mercy of futile conflicts and destructive violence. Fueling religious issues out of ignorance had necessarily led to bloody wars which inflicted irreparable loss on society.

Hence, it is our responsibility to play our role in spreading awareness and have our say against radicalism and religious discrimination. Performing religious rituals and practicing upon religious tenets in the society are the requirements for religious freedom. It should be noted that one cannot ignore the rule of law under the pretext of having such rights. Thus, performing religious rituals is not supposed to hurt the feelings of the followers of other religions. It has also been emphasized in Afghan Constitution that followers of other faiths shall be free within the bounds of law in the exercise and performance of their religious rituals. Their religious education and personal matters, marriages, divorces, inheritances, wills and related lawsuits are also recognized by Afghan courts.

Rationality and maintaining public order require our moderate performance of religious rituals and avoiding extremism. That is to say, we have to consider public order while performing mourning ceremonies or religious rituals, mainly in Ashura (10th of Muharram) and shun any attitudes that might be detrimental to religious values. Needless to say that if conducting the Ashura ceremony results in violating law or hurting the feelings of religious followers – no matter to which religion they belong to – or cause public disorder, it will never be in accordance with the philosophy of Ashura and will be a blow to the sacred culture and objective of the revolution carried out in Ashura. So, considering the human and valuable philosophy of Ashura, we should act upon religious tenets in terms of performing religious rituals so as not to violate the sanctity and high values of Ashura. We are supposed to uphold the true philosophy of Ashura revolution. It rightly said, “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”

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Catharsis through Martial Art in Afghanistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

The strong tendency towards martial art in Afghanistan will lead to widespread violence. Martial art has been changed into a constructive pastime for a number of Afghan youths unaware of its adverse effect. The nation stricken by violence and bloodshed is still inclined to cheer the punches and kicks exchanged in martial art leagues or sport shows. The psychologically negative impact of violent shows on the minds of Afghan youths is undeniable.

Afghans are also engrossed in football since the social media is replete with an outpouring of approval and disapproval about football teams. A large number of youths burn the midnight oil to watch football matches. Besides this, their keen interest in martial art is crystal clear. Afghanistan has been beset by violence within three decades and so. Therefore, violent practices – be it through sport, movies, game, etc. – will have its ill impact on younger generation.

Perhaps, this is a cathartic practice for Afghans. Catharsis – which is defined as “the process of releasing strong emotions through a particular activity or experience, such as writing or theatre” – manifests itself in the “Romeo and Juliet” drama by William Shakespeare. For example, feeling pity and fear, the audience burst into tears when Romeo drinks poison believing erroneously that Juliet had drunk, too. Since losing loved one will happen to anyone in real life, the audience are not able to resist their emotional senses. In other words, tragic scenes will fill the viewers with a strong sense of “pity” and “fear” and force them to tears. But the viewers will feel refreshed afterwards, which is called catharsis. Now the martial art viewers will feel “pity” and “fear” for the competitors and release their emotions booing and cheering. On the other hand, the competitors will unfold their feelings in harsh manner. Now the question is that do we need to create such cathartic scenes?

Afghans are believed to view catharsis in their real life. Warring factions, mainly the Taliban and self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), create tragic scenes through spilling the blood of combatants and non-combatants. Their cruel and inhuman practices regarding women and children trigger pity and fear in the public. No one will be able to resist their tears with the bloody scenes. Thus, our nation does not need to create tragic or cathartic scenes. It is self-explanatory that violence lies in the nature of martial art. In this sport, athletes hit each other hard out of anger and the more violent you are the higher score you will get. Martial art will remind one of gladiators – the most brutal sport that has ever existed in ancient Rome. Gladiatorial game aimed to entertain the public by engaging in combat with another person. “Early gladiators were prisoners of war or slaves or condemned criminals but soon free citizens became gladiators hoping to win fame and fortune.” In this bloody game, men’s rights and dignity were trampled upon. Their lives had no value since the loser had to be killed before the spectators. Might was right and the stronger was the winner. In brief, both their lives and honor were at stake in this cruel game. However, the viewers simply cheered and booed while one’s blood was being spilt. This tragic catharsis went beyond the red border of humanity and ethical code and would fill the viewers with strong pity and fear – if they had a tinge of human feelings. Physical power was deemed a superiority centuries back. For example, in the state of nature men hunted for prey to make the ends meet. The more powerful one was physically, the

more prey they would hunt. After all, they lived in tribal structure and were involved in violent physical fights. Barbarity and bloodshed were their daily practices both in individual and collective life. Their life was void of moral values and social norm. Therefore, men were violent and aggressive in the state of nature and physical power was a real supremacy.

Currently, we live in modern world where democracy and civilization have come to the fore. Men’s rights to life, liberty and property and democratic discourse are debated hotly in human societies. Unlike gladiators or the state of nature, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” No one is born slave and one is not supposed to be the casualty of discrimination on the grounds of their racial, religious or sexual backgrounds. In the current civil society, violence has no room, at least in the minds of modern men, national laws or international instruments although it is practiced widely. In another item, violence and physical aggressiveness have no legal or moral bases. Superiority lies in humanity and philanthropy rather than physical power. Hence, cathartic or tragic practices in daily life reveal one’s adventurous nature or tendency towards violence.

Despite altruistic mindsets and unique principles in national and international laws, our life is cursed with violence. Acts of violence and aggression are spread in one way or another. That is to say, violence increased from horror movies and martial art of athletes to dogmatic beliefs of fundamental groups. People, mainly women and children, fall prey to mental, verbal and physical violence practiced in social life.

Violent acts rehearsed widely in collective life is a matter of great concern. The children who are affected by the violence of a horror movie or martial art will tend to be violent via copying the same attitudes and engaging in adventures. Since some members of militant fighters are believed to be adventurous figures, the horrible consequence of violent shows and sports is beyond doubt. Our society is supposed to do its best so as to prevent from violence in public life. Movies, sports and TV shows are to be depleted from violent acts. It will be constructive for the nation to divert its attention from martial art and watch football, volleyball, cricket, etc. instead. Harsh sports belong to centuries back when mankind lived in tribal structure. For instance, logic and reason had no room in the state of nature or in tribal fabric. Villains were the heroes, too. It is believed that cheering in martial art leagues will encourage the competitors to act more harshly. Human societies, especially the war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, will have to free all spheres of all from harshness.

Sports are useful in soft manner without bleeding. To mitigate violence, people are supposed to socialize their children in sound and violence-free environment. Since children and youths are highly vulnerable to social ills, a society has to put an end to violent and aggressive acts. Similarly, the younger generation needs to channel their time and energy to more constructive sports rather than gladiator-like games. We live in civil society – which is to be void of violence – and will have to uphold civil and non-violent rehearsals. It is hoped that Afghan nation will breathe a sigh of relief in a civil society, free from violent and tragic catharsis.

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