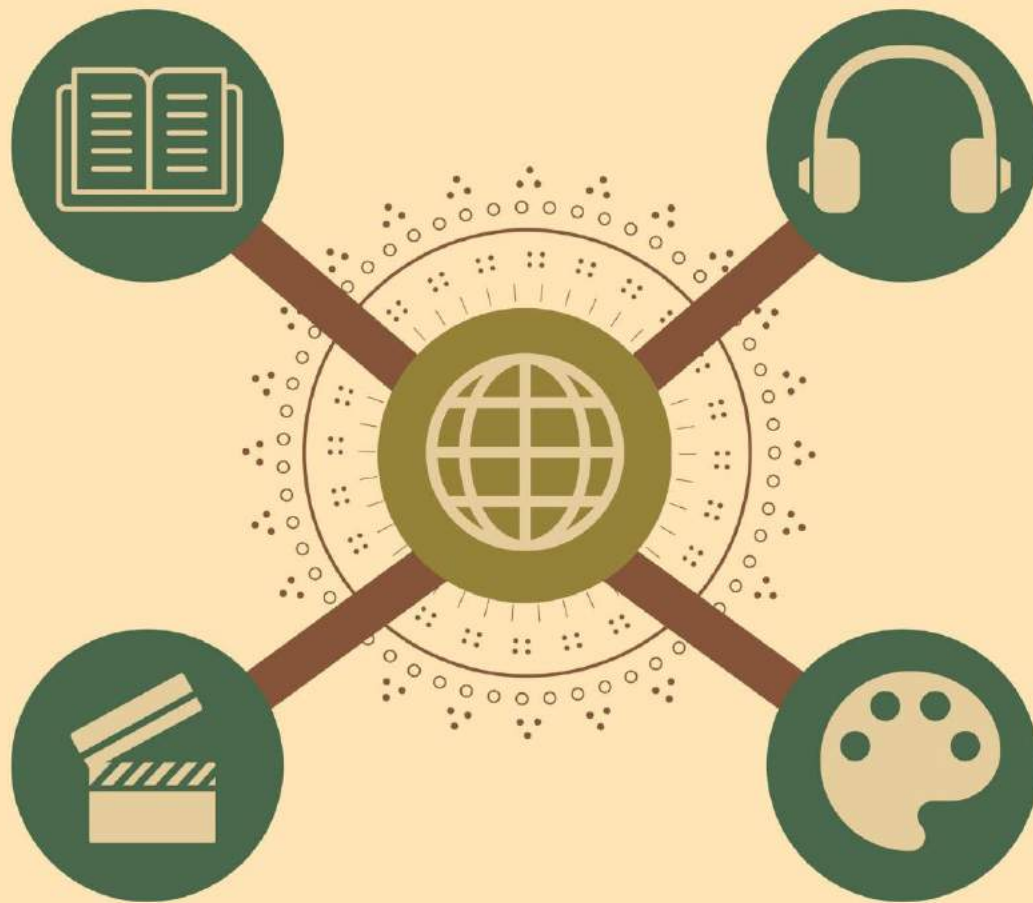


THE NETWORK

OCTOBER 2021 VOL. VIII

SPECIAL EDITION



Editorial
Board

Shiv Nadar School, Noida



SHIV NADAR SCHOOL
Education for Life

TRIGGER WARNING

This edition will address several sensitive issues which might be triggering for some. Along with this, it will also have the opinions of different individuals. Our only intentions are to stand in solidarity with the Afghans and to spread awareness about the situation. We do not wish to hurt or offend anyone through what we are putting out. **This edition contain mentions of rape, sexual harassment, death and violence. Please read at your own discretion.**

EDITORIAL NOTE

By: Navya and Nirali

'It's been 8 days. At least that's what I think.

8 days since the invaders came. 2 weeks since warnings were whispered. One month since the enemy knocked on our doors, and 10 years since we thought the war had finally ended. Now, little fires dot the lush paddy fields, scattered like orange glitter on green velvet. They are a blazing reminder of betrayal from old friends, a forgotten fear the city had buried deep within its heart until it clawed a way out. People flee their precious homes and blood snakes the streets. The night is full of despair. The night is never-ending.

I run as fast as my feet carry me, past the winding alleys and littered shops. I duck behind the grand library, its former glory reduced to dust and stone, making my way through the back. The landscape stretches in front of my eyes, soft mud replacing the hardened concrete. The fields I run on sprawl till the edge of the world. My lungs ache and my head whirls, panic rooted in each thought, the increasing distance from the city doing nothing to lessen it. Amidst this agony, just for a split second, my eyes catch the starry night above. I look up at the stars. The smoke is not strong enough to reach them, and so the sky looks peaceful, unaware of the horrors that dwell under its blanket. Its indigo blues and silver whites roll in blissful waves, their calmness in sharp contrast with the chaos I've left behind. They look as if nothing has happened. *The stars mock me with their indifference and I am non-existent against their might.*

EDITORIAL NOTE

By: Navya and Nirali

I am everywhere and nowhere. I am too close yet too far. The world fractures, reforms, and breaks again. This terror has consumed me, wrapped its talons around my neck but given me a little space to breathe. A little hope persists, making me think that it will be alright, all while it feeds me sweet poison till my last moment. They say there is no greater illusion than fear. *But what if that illusion slowly seeps into reality and makes nothing else visible?*

The world we live in is dysfunctional. It is chaotic, it is crumbling, it is cunning. It pieces together a serene picture, of lavender skies, of violets and of sweet coffee. But deep in its core, the power it holds to corrode, grows and grows. It nurtures us to believe in hope and beauty, but those feelings stay only temporarily and leave right at the brink of dawn. The cruelty does pause, but it never stops. When I was younger, seeing a child begging for food on the street was the extent of it. However, now that I am older and have more access to outlets and better connections, I see news of famine, torture, assault and rape. Every. Single. Day. I can't avoid the world, I can't shut it out because that's selfish. It's selfish because each morsel of rice I waste, someone else would appreciate. It's selfish because every time I hug my mother, someone is losing theirs. It is selfish because as I'm writing this, a girl is screaming because she is being violated. I am privileged. *But the word privilege changes itself in every dictionary.* I have the privilege of education, of love, of a family. Of life.

I can look out of my window and admire the outside. However, in this false reflection I see, ripples will appear. They always have. Because in Afghanistan, every time a child looks out of their window, they see death. *They see the world.*

EDITORIAL NOTE

By: Navya and Nirali

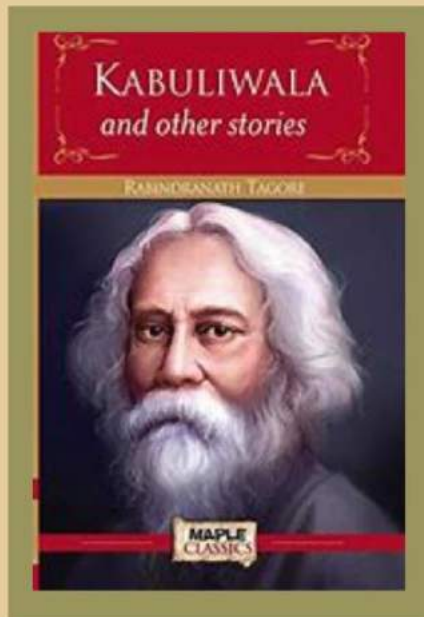
This edition of The Network is a means to stand in solidarity with all the Afghans because they have been stripped off their rights. Stripped off their sovereignty. With this situation and how heartbreaking it actually is, we wanted to come up with a special edition addressing these conflict and crises. This is a tribute to the Afghans who are accustomed to hearing gunshots and bombs. A country that was once so beautiful has been broken for over 4 decades; It hasn't experienced true freedom since 1978. And the worst part is that even though their pleas are being heard, we can't do anything to help. The most this edition can do is spread awareness. The most a campaign can do is add a few donations. The most we can do is sit and wait. Wait until time catches up. However, if the people in Afghanistan are reaching out, have been hopeful for 4 decades and are waiting, isn't it our responsibility to do whatever we can? Here's a tribute to the women, the children. To the ones who have lost and might keep losing until the day they take their last breath.



BOOK REVIEW

Kabuliwala

By: Rabindranath Tagore



This month's book is among the most famous stories told by Rabindranath Tagore

Set in the alleys of Calcutta, Kabuliwala is about the relationship between a 5 year old girl and an Afghan dry fruit seller. It touches on the themes of homesickness, and how people's background and looks can lead to prejudice against somebody who comes from a different one.

We open in the home of one of our main characters, Mini. Mini is a five-year-old girl who keeps on pestering her poor father with her curiosity, while he tries to write a book. Meanwhile the Kabuliwala, Rahmat, is a dry fruit seller who comes bearing goods cultivated in Afghanistan. While he's passing by, he hears a little voice shouting "Kabuliwala-Kabuliwala." The voice is from none other than Mini who after getting bored of pestering her father, sees Rahmat passing by and for some unexplained reason calls him over.

At first Mini is apprehensive and rightly so since Rahmat is like a tall giant. After her father's encouragement, however, she finds the courage to go and talk to Rahmat. The story unfolds from here and takes us through a series of events that cause Rahmat and Mini to form a close bond to the point where they share inside jokes with each other.

BOOK REVIEW

Kabuliwala

By: Rabindranath Tagore

A good reason for their unlikely friendship is that Mini, through her behavior, reminds Rahmat of his home in Kabul and his daughter who he loves immensely.

The conflict which occurs in the story is about how Rahmat is treated by others in Kolkata. People in Kolkata are excessively apprehensive about his presence probably because, to them, he is a stranger from Afghanistan, a far off place they know little about.

It makes me think that as human beings we are uneasy about anybody who comes from a background different than ours.

The plight of the people of Afghanistan today, whether in Afghanistan or as immigrants elsewhere is similar to that of the Kabuliwala, where it is imminent that they will be judged by others who do not understand their history.

The book is not the only way that you can experience this story. There is a poignant but beautiful movie made by Shri Tapan Sinha, which brings the characters to life from the pages of the book in more detail.

The movie added a depth to the characters and the conflict that I felt was not captured well in the translated version of the short story that I read. The story was originally written in Bangla. I am told that not all translations capture the essence of the language it is written in. However, I highly recommend reading the short story prior to watching the movie, as the movie is in Bangla and the subtitles are not very accurate.

BOOK REVIEW

Kubilawala

By: Rabindranath Tagore

Kabuliwalas (the people from Kabul) as they were known, still reside in the city of Kolkata. A 2015 news report by BBC documents their life in India, especially in Kolkata. The journey of the lost world of Kabuliwalas still thrives amidst our lives here in India.

I feel that we should not welcome them only as Kabuliwalas – with prejudices, but instead with love, faith and trust towards them as fellow human beings. Afghanistan needs this now, more than ever. Hope you enjoy reading the book, watching the movie and love the company of the people of Afghanistan if you ever happen to meet them.



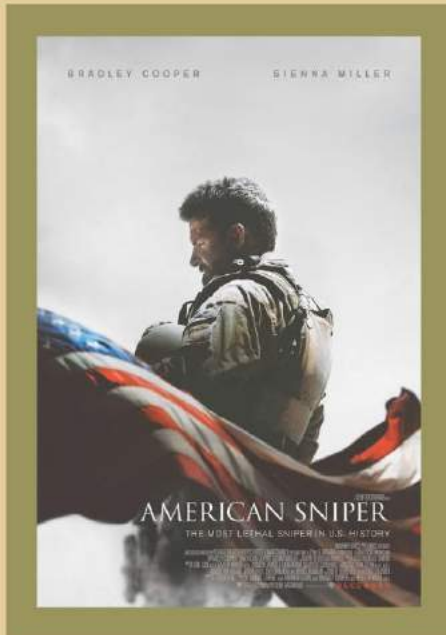
By: Devarya Madhukar

FILM REVIEW

American Sniper

Director: Clint Eastwood

Main Cast: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller,
Luke Grimes, Jake McDorman



My parents and I are movie aficionados. Ordering pizza and binge watching movies is a typical Sunday night at our place. On one such night, after much squabbling, we decided on watching the movie American Sniper together. My mom being a rom-com person wasn't thrilled. Nevertheless, she agreed. After all, it was movie night. Plus, who can say no to something when there's pizza involved?

The movie American Sniper is a non-fiction story about a man named Chris Kyle, played by the renowned actor, Bradley Cooper. Chris was an American, brought up in the state of Texas. As he grew up, he tried many different avenues including sports and becoming a cowboy. Ever since he had been little, he'd learnt traditional American values which resulted in him adopting nationalist beliefs. He always said that America was the greatest country in the world, and that he'd do anything to protect it. Ultimately, he found his calling. He joined the military and became a US Navy SEAL (United States Navy Sea, Air and Land Teams). He was trained as a specialist sniper. During his rigorous training, he met a woman named Taya whom he married later on and started a family with. When Kyle was sent to Iraq to fight in the war, his fantastic shooting skills were unveiled.

FILM REVIEW

American Sniper

Director: Clint Eastwood

Main Cast: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller,
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Driven by the love he had for his country, he performed extraordinarily well in his task as a sniper. In fact, his skills were almost eerie. He attained the title of America's most successful sniper after the war was over. However, Chris' success as a sniper was something that bothered him long after the war was over. He suffered from PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder).

I, as a viewer thought that the reason for his disorder was the fact that he killed many people in the war. However, to my surprise, it was later revealed that the actual reason was that Kyle felt that he could have *saved many more lives*.

Reflecting upon the movie, I now understand why.

During the war, Chris not only saw the enemies die, he also witnessed many of his friends dying in front of him. One day when his kids were playing with their pet dog, Kyle ran towards them and almost beat up the dog with a rock, thinking that the dog was trying to hurt his children. But in reality the dog and his kids were only playing around and having a good time. Eventually, he was able to recover. He managed to do so by figuring out what made him feel comforted and relieved.

Reaching out to veterans with physical and emotional disabilities calmed Chris' anxious and troubled state of mind. The time he spent with them helped him greatly through which he was finally able to let go of the fact that there were people who he could do nothing to save.

FILM REVIEW

American Sniper

Director: Clint Eastwood

Main Cast: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller,
Luke Grimes, Jake McDorman

After I finished watching this movie, I had a discussion with my father and discovered that this movie had a deep historical backdrop. I got to know that the Iraq War in which Chris Kyle fought, was, in itself, a major historical event. Being a history nerd, I researched more. US led forces, Chris Kyle included, invaded Iraq in 2003 to overthrow Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain and destroy the weapons of mass destruction that were possessed by his government. Talks about invading Iraq had been going on for a long time in the US. It ultimately happened after the 9/11 attacks; under Bush's administration. The question that arises is what was the relation between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussain? After a varying set of answers, I came across the interesting viewpoint of Dick Cheney- former US Vice President. *"It has been confirmed repeatedly in Iraqi government documents captured after the invasion, that Saddam had deep, longstanding, far-reaching relationships with terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda and its affiliates. It is undisputed that Saddam's Iraq was a state based on terror, overseeing a coordinated program to support global jihadist terrorist organizations"*, he wrote in the Weekly Standard.

I can connect this to the current, heart wrenching situation of the people in Afghanistan. America first invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the presidency of Bush.

FILM REVIEW

American Sniper

Director: Clint Eastwood

Main Cast: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller,
Luke Grimes, Jake McDorman

Their invasion followed the 9/11 attacks, like they invaded Iraq. The American military was sent to overthrow another government's rule. Instead of Saddam Hussain it was the Taliban. Similar to the perspective of Cheney's regarding Iraq, the US military went to Afghanistan because they sought the Al-Qaeda militants who bombed the Twin Towers. The Al-Qaeda militants had received support from the Taliban. Bin Laden was in Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban, the Islamists who had been in power since 1996. When they refused to hand him over, the US intervened militarily, quickly removing the Taliban and vowing to support democracy and eliminate the terrorist threat.

Today after 20 years, the US has withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan, leaving behind innocent civilians who are now at the mercy of terrorists.

There are restrictions over women's freedom to work, to dress as they choose, or even to leave home alone. Fear is spreading like wildfire as people make desperate attempts to flee.

They would do anything rather than go back to living life in constant dread, waiting for the moment the Taliban captures them. Afghans are jumping on planes that have already taken off.

FILM REVIEW

American Sniper

Director: Clint Eastwood

Main Cast: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller,
Luke Grimes, Jake McDorman

There is chaos and madness everywhere. The Afghans don't know what the days will look like for them. There is uncertainty in the eyes of mere children. Another major fear is that the country will once again become a training ground for terrorism. Kids will grow up watching violence everywhere. As of now we can just help in whatever way we can. My heart aches for the people of Afghanistan. May they find peace and solace.



By: Karissa Gupta

ART WORK

Artist: Sara Rahmani
Credit: sara_official_artgallery/Instagram



SONG REVIEW

When the President Talks to God

By: Bright Eyes



In 2005, “When the President Talks to God” was written and sung to numbers of people by a band called “Bright Eyes”. If you close your eyes and shut out the words, this piece to you will sound like a bar fight where everyone loses every last bit of inhibition and *blurts out with aggression and honesty, their pain.*

As the first strums of a guitar ring out, it’s like walking through the dust trails of Tennessee, rolling up your sleeves and saddling your stallion, getting ready to march in a rally. And as Conor Oberst’s raspy peaks fill our ears, the stallion trots full speed ahead. This song though, as violent as it’s made out to be, is not an attack. It’s a blunt, direct, and cold bucket of truth. In the singer’s voice you can hear the reproach, repressed anger, and the “WHY?” as clearly as the gunshots in streets, but it’s not an attack. The continuous and mellowing lull of instruments in the back pours a layer of honey over the defence, making it a sweet yet insistent stroke on the back to wake the beast up. You might think that the repetitive, tuneless vocals will bore you and put you to sleep, but then, come the words.

This song was written when Afghanistan was drowning in tough times and it’s heart-breaking to see that this song should make a comeback for the exact same reason. By the 11th of September, America will have completely withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan, and the suffering people will ask again about the time,

SONG REVIEW

When the President Talks to God

By: Bright Eyes

“When the president talks to god, are the conversations brief or long?”

Are these life changing decisions taken in a minute with the luxury of being away and up or are they well thought out decisions, laced with self-preservation?

“Is every issue black or white? Does what God say ever change his mind?”

Is every situation just a game? Just an animated simulation where consequences and emotions don't exist? Does the president actually listen to 'God'?

“Do they drink beer and go play golf? While they pick which countries to invade, which Muslim souls can be saved?”

Is choosing which lives to breach as simple to them as picking a folded chit out of four? Is it that simple for them to just snatch a soul?

“When the President talks to God, does he ever think that maybe he's not? That that voice is just inside his head?”

Are those divine voices we hear in our dreams our own? Do they say what we want to hear but are too scared to tell? Are the careless and cruel decisions of the President advised by God, or are they his own thoughts?

“Does he ever smell his own faults? When the President talks to God? I doubt it.”

Can he feel the ever grave gravity? I doubt it.

These lines will burrow their way into your skin and make you question almost every good thing you've heard about this situation. Women are being robbed of their rights, their independence. The opportunity to live their own lives is being taken from wee children. Innocents are getting convicted, and those who are trying to leave are being tied down. Violence encountering violence is resulting in blasts and the people of Afghanistan are running out of options.

SONG REVIEW

When the President Talks to God

By: Bright Eyes

Sitting on my desk right now, I'm cursing the people in power for not doing anything while all I can do is write this. But, they do say that words are the strongest force, so I'm going to give Afghanistan my words. My words, and my songs, and my hymns, and my prayers. They've gone through this before and they're wading through this moat now. I'm awed by their power while I send my own to them. *Afghanistan may have lost their belief in god but there's still the sun. There's still that light and I pray with all I have, that it falls on them.*



By: Anoushka Verma

ART WORK

Artist: Hangama Amiri

Credit: <https://www.freewomenwriters.org/2017/08/15/art-can-let-afghan-women-celebrate-express-unique-selves/>



ARTICLES

Five Lessons on Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises from The Tragedy in Afghanistan

The once peaceful and culturally rich nation of Afghanistan has once again descended into chaos. After twenty years of relative stability, during which the United States led Afghan army fought a long war against the Taliban, the US is finally receding, leaving Afghanistan to hardened militants with no respect for human rights. As it is expected, once again, the very basic rights of girls and women shall be trampled upon; music, art and cinema will be banned, and violence will become a common part of everyday life.

During such times, as school students, it's imperative that we use this crisis to learn important lessons about world order, about war and peace, about the good, the bad and the ugly. As we try to build a more sustainable world, ensuring peace and human rights for all is necessary. The lessons from today might come in handy tomorrow. Here are five major ones:

1. During war, personal interests and political agendas triumph over the fate of innocent people.

During the late 1970s and 1980, Afghanistan was a battleground between the US and USSR, who were also fighting the Cold War during that time. While the Soviets tried to bring communism to Afghanistan by supporting Nur Mohammad Taraki, ruler of the Afghan Communist Party at that time, the US funneled money into the Mujahideen, radical Islamists who wanted to make Afghanistan a strictly religious country. The influx of foreign aid greatly increased corruption, and might have been one of the reasons behind the Taliban's uprising. But did the big superpowers care? No. What they wanted was power and profit, no matter how it affected the ordinary people.

ARTICLES

Five Lessons on Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises from The Tragedy in Afghanistan

Similarly, the Taliban is currently supported by China in exchange for safety in the Muslim majority Uighur region and propagating its business interests in Afghanistan. It is also supported by most Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE etc), almost all of which are monarchies headed by Muslim men, who'd do anything to suppress women and minorities and see the Taliban as supporting their cause. We saw a similar situation in Iraq, where the main concern of the US was to stop terrorism on its own land and had nothing to do with the fate of innocent Iraqi citizens, and in Vietnam and Northwestern Pakistan.

Developed countries and world powers fight wars in developing countries because they don't care about the ordinary people of the country they're fighting for, however much they might pretend so. When it comes to foreign policy, altruism doesn't exist.

2. Most radicals are a product of brainwashing and a troubled childhood

'No one is born evil.' Such an idea might inspire one to find how the Taliban became the oppressive, radical militants they are. The Taliban, or 'students' in the Pashto language, mostly studied at Saudi Arabia funded religious schools in Pakistan, where they were taught an austere, radical version of Islam. Many of them grew up in refugee camps and remote areas, which might be the reason behind their stringent opposition to development and modernization. Similarly, the fact that most members of the Taliban studied in boys-only schools in remote areas, with few interactions with females, might be the reason behind their misogyny.

ARTICLES

Five Lessons on Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises from The Tragedy in Afghanistan

One finds a similar narrative for other famous extremists. Osama Bin Laden, though he had a billionaire father, was the son of his father's 10th wife, quite obviously not the best situation for a child to be raised in. Belarus's dictator-like ruler, Alexander Lukoshenko grew up fatherless with a mother who worked menial jobs to keep them alive.

3. We must accept that 'westernizing' developing countries shall be a gradual process, as it shall be faced with resistance and opposition

From Vietnam to Cuba to Iraq to Afghanistan, the US and other Western countries have fought wars all over the world in developing countries with the aim of introducing so-called 'Western' values such as democracy, equality, human rights and the fight against communism. But the interesting part is how often it has failed.

Let's take a closer look at Vietnam, where the US stepped in to fight North Vietnam's communist ideology, fearing it would spill over into the rest of Asia. Indeed, the recent scenes at Kabul airport have been compared to those at the Saigon airport in 1975, as an overconfident American side lost and was forced to conduct the largest helicopter evacuation in history.

To help a country develop doesn't mean to condescendingly overthrow its government, bring rapid, unpopular changes, and expect little resistance. Communists and Islamic radicals might have unique views, but that doesn't make them stupid or powerless. In order to help the world become a better place, the West must understand this and aim for gradual but lasting change.

ARTICLES

Five Lessons on Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises from The Tragedy in Afghanistan

4. Diversity isn't always a good thing

A major reason the constant conflict in Afghanistan exists is diversity. Not only is Afghanistan ethnically diverse, it's also diverse in terms of perspectives. There are people who want development, secularism, women's rights and modern education, while there are also Taliban sympathizers who want to officially make Afghanistan a Muslim country intolerant of other religions. And unlike India, where the fight against the British was an event which saw people of all religions, ethnicities, and political viewpoints come together, there hasn't been a similar event in Afghan history. Countries like Iran and KSA, though openly unaccepting of other religions, are at least stable. Afghanistan, however, doesn't have that privilege. Similarly, Pashtun nationalism was a major cause of conflict before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

5. Even during tough times, one can always find signs of hope, resilience, and cooperation

Afghanistan's former vice president, Amrullah Saleh, didn't leave the country fearfully, but still continues to wage resistance against the Taliban with famed commander Ahmad Massoud, from Panjshir Valley, one of the only areas not annexed by the Taliban yet. An American soldier who refused to leave his Afghan translator behind to die. Photos from just a short while ago of Afghan schoolgirls cheerfully going back home from a school in Kabul, signifying years of progress.

ARTICLES

Five Lessons on Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises
from The Tragedy in Afghanistan

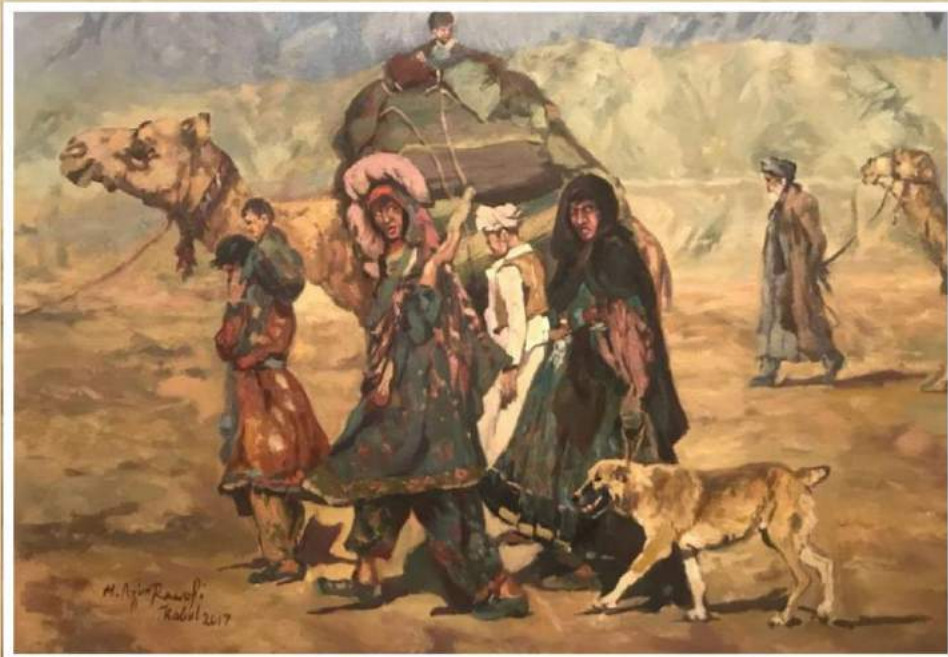
When there is desperation, hate and misery, there are signs of hope. Never has a government ruling against the people's will lasted long. The Taliban has been defeated before. As long as the people are spirited, there is still hope that Afghanistan shall someday once again become the culturally and naturally rich country it once was.



By: Nimay Gupta

ART WORK

Artist: Azim Rawofi
Credit: Devina Buckshee/The Wire



ARTICLES

A Place Called Afghanistan

In the extreme west of South Asia is a place bound by heavenly mountain ranges, notably the Hindu Kush, famed for its delicious food. This place is called Afghanistan; the land of Afghans. The Pashtuns, The Tajiks, The Balochis, all live here in supposed peace and harmony.

But in recent times, Afghanistan has not been remembered for its beautiful landscapes and delicious food, but for terrorism, for war and for people dying and leaving their home, forever. Is this justified? No, not at all, the Afghans, like Indians, Americans and Europeans should be free! Why are they not? Why are they ruled by a regime they don't want to be ruled by? Why did the head of the civilian government leave them in crisis and run away?

These are questions that often come to my mind. Despite knowing these things, I just want to un-know them! I keep praying for the people of Afghanistan but I want to be of some help to them, I want to see people regarding Afghanistan as a wonderful country for tourists and not for the bloody war that took place and or for the Taliban which terrorizes women, children and religious minorities!

For those of you who don't know, on August 15, the Islamic militant group Taliban, reached the city of Kabul (the capital of Afghanistan), took over the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRA) and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) which is controlled by the Taliban. This is not the first time this terrorist group has come to power in Afghanistan.

ARTICLES

A Place Called Afghanistan

They were dominant in 1996 as well. For the next five years, they executed anyone who spoke against their ideologies, tortured women, children and religious minorities and destroyed the Buddhist architecture of Afghanistan as they found it to be against Islam.

In 2001, the civilian government was restored but for 20 years a war continued between the US backed civilian government and the Taliban. All of this made a country with boundless potential in the tourism sector, the 13th least visited country in the world! In 2021, while talks between IRA and IEA were happening regarding the future of Afghanistan, the Taliban forces stormed into Kabul and took over the country.

The saddest part was when President of IRA, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country, leaving his people in the brutal regime of the Taliban allegedly with bucket-loads of cash!

To me, the worst part was not that he took money (which he denies) but the fact that he left his people at the hands of the Taliban. How could he do this? He has betrayed the Afghans who entrusted him by voting for him to represent the nation!

Unlike ex President Ghani, since the other citizens of Afghanistan do not have luxuries like a private helicopter to evacuate the country, they are forced to risk their lives and head to the Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul (locally known as Khwaja Rawash International Airport) where soldiers from USA, UK and Turkey may help them evacuate their homeland.

ARTICLES

A Place Called Afghanistan

I was deeply saddened when I read in the newspaper that Afghan women threw their babies from the razor wire at Khwaja Rawash airport, begging British soldiers to take them. I couldn't bear to imagine what would have been the mental state of those mothers who had to forcibly separate themselves from their children and how many would see them again. With tears in my eyes, I was determined to help the people of Afghanistan in some or the other possible way, I just have to figure out how I will do that...



By: Sanidhya Mehta

ART WORK

Artist: Shamsia Hassani
Credit: www.instagram.com/shamsiahassani



ARTICLES

Loss of Humanity: Afghanistan's Brutal Journey

Husain Haqqani, the former Pakistani Ambassador to the US noted that "Taliban's definition of peace is very different from that of the US or the Afghan government. The Taliban believes that once their Islamic Emirate is restored, peace is restored."

The war between U.S. and Taliban commenced when the former launched attacks on the latter after the devastating effects of the 9/11 attacks by the Al-Qaeda militant group that is alleged to have taken refuge with the Taliban. If we accelerate to 19 years later, we get news of the Doha agreement being signed between the two parties at war which freed over 5,000 Taliban terrorists who were charged with serious crimes, in exchange for 1,000 government officials held by the group. Along with this, "intra-Afghan talks" were set up, encouraging direct talk between representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban, which began in September 2020. However, there was little to no representation of women and major conflict victims in either of the two sides, leading to impotent discussions. The Taliban were also expected to abide by "reduction in violence" pledge, and now, exactly 20 years later, one of the longest running wars in history finally comes to an end.

The aftermath of the withdrawal of the U.S. army came as a surprise to few, and the events shaped exactly how they were expected to occur. Regardless of the diverging views, Taliban taking over almost the whole country in just over a month couldn't have been anticipated.

ARTICLES

Loss of Humanity: Afghanistan's Brutal Journey

They captured Kabul, the capital, and one of the most secure cities by the 15th of August. With this oppression by the militant group, a lot of International Humanitarian Laws are being violated on multiple levels.

Thousands of people are waiting at international airports, leaving their homes, memories, their entire lives and daring enough to start anew, waiting for flights to take them anywhere- anywhere but this epitome of violence they called their homeland. Since January 2021, it has been estimated that over 2,70,000 people have been forced to leave their livelihoods and flee, making the total displaced population 3.5 million. These situations have been aggravated to their extremes because of the ongoing pandemic and the occurrence of sustained droughts around the country. This long-lasting conflict has destroyed many people, especially women and children. Minors are being recruited to groups they don't know the motives of, and are being brainwashed into standing with them. Young girls and women are being molested and robbed of their human rights. Along with this, there has been repression of peaceful protests, and any expression of discontentment or dislike towards the Taliban agenda is being faced with severe consequences. People who work with the Afghan government or the international community are in constant fear for their lives and the ones of their families. Some people are being threatened just because their lifestyle, beliefs and work differ from that of the ideology of the Taliban.

ARTICLES

Loss of Humanity: Afghanistan's Brutal Journey

Very recently, there was an explosion in Kabul airport, causing multiple civilian casualty and instilling more terror in the already distressed people. For now, they would have to think more than twice before going for a run to an unknown destination just to escape the bloodshed. Aside from physical harm, the trauma that comes with sights like these never really goes away.

A child seeing their parents die in front of them, or a mother being separated from her daughter because she was shot for breaking the rules and going out alone. Two friends meeting each other after years- just to see one of them inevitably coming after the life of the other for they chose different paths; the mental damage and the loss of a dear one never leaves you. The people of Afghanistan long to see a sky with stars, and roads with greenery, and a life with dignity and freedom. But what they are getting is fire jets between clouds, loud sirens, trucks loaded with ammunition, dead bodies in sight, and a lifelong struggle. By no means do any of them deserve that. A country can only flourish when people get to speak up for what they want, demand change when necessary, call out unfair treatment, and receive basic rights. The current powers need to incorporate people's wellbeing and guide the country through turmoil by abiding by International Humanitarian Laws.

ARTICLES

Loss of Humanity: Afghanistan's Brutal Journey

The goal should be to exist in harmony, respect, celebrate differences and learn how to compromise for the sake of peace and happiness. However, what we see now is a group of people forcing their ideas on others and pressurizing them into believing their version of how a perfect life and a perfect world should be. But they seldom lose sight of the fact that humans are not robots- you cannot feed data in them and expect the desired response.

Let us not forget that the struggles that the Afghans are facing right now call for us to take action. We must help them as much as our abilities allow, and spread awareness of their mistreatments. In the end, they are humans too. They have emotions that are buried, pasts that are scarred, a present that is difficult, feelings that are hurt, and hope that still lasts.



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