

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



January 09, 2018

Countering the Evils in our Society

There have been many evils in human societies that have been disrupting the smooth development and improvement. Though there have been efforts to overcome them, they have kept on existing in some way or the other. They clearly depict that human societies are never perfect and there are always certain shortcomings. It is important to understand those shortcomings and strive to find out the main causes of those evils and their appropriate solutions in order to support the societies move towards perfection.

Though it is a matter of concern that a social evil erupts in a society, more concerning, however, is when the evil keeps on increasing or gaining strength and starts penetrating within social fabrics. One of the basic reasons that any evil gets promoted within a society is the appreciation and support it gets from within the society members. Or there may be indifference on the part of society members towards the evil. The members of the society may neglect the evil and thus support in promulgating it. Therefore, it is necessary that an evil must be considered an evil and must be treated in the same manner; i.e. an evil must be punished; otherwise it may get out of control very soon. The indifference of the members of the society plays a significant role in helping the social evil gaining magnitude and penetration.

The example of Afghan society in this regard is very much relevant. There are different social evils that get no proper attention by the members of the society. For instance, the evil of corruption has penetrated deep within Afghan society and most of the institutions in the country are being influenced by it in some way or the other, yet it is not being taken as much seriously as it should be taken. People consider it an integral part of their social life. They complete their tasks through corrupt ways without even feeling guilty. Corruption, unfortunately, is a now a routine. It is no more weird to find corruption; the weird incident is to find someone being honest. Such a social value is really very much pathetic and it has kept on feeding corruption to a great extent.

People's indifference towards corruption around them is really very sad; there has not been any comprehensive movement or there have not been series of protests to condemn corruption within Afghan society.

It is common to find people, who complain against corruption, getting involved in corruption easily. It is easier for them to get their tasks done through some bribery and recommendation than to follow the honest, lengthy and tiring process of 'honest means'. They quite easily forget their demands for corruption-free society and higher standards of honesty.

It is not to deny that the people responsible for controlling the corruption must play a role in controlling the corruption, but the importance of social movements is very much vital in facing a social evil.

The control mechanism within a society can enforce a law and can control a social evil by force to a certain level but if the society members do not support the mechanism it is very difficult to control the situation. For example, the violence against women in Afghanistan has been identified as social evil by the control mechanism, yet it has not been controlled as Afghan society is not yet ready to accept it as social evil.

The society members do not consider it inhuman and unlawful to carryout violence against women. It is very much normal in patriarchal Afghan society to find husbands beating their wives, fathers beating their daughters and brothers being violent to their sisters. And when there are cruel incidents of violence against women, the society members, except few, do not come to the roads to protest and shun such incidents as social evils.

Same is the case with the evil of drug use. The people of Afghanistan use drugs as if they are part of their normal lives. People use it as painkillers and as medicine to fight against cold weather.

Though in some cases people do so because they are not fully aware of their negative consequences but at others they just do so because they are totally indifferent towards the issue. They know that using such drugs may lead them towards negative consequences, yet they are not ready to avoid them and find out ways of getting rid of them.

It is really imperative to note that the sustainability of any social evil within the society largely depends on the attitude of the society members towards the evil. If from the very beginning the society members realize that social evils are negative and they are hindrance for the development of the society and may generate problems for them, there are possibilities of fighting the social evils properly, but if the society, either due to ignorance or negligence or individual considerations, remains indifferent towards evils, it would be very difficult to control them.

Therefore, it is necessary that as a part of society, we must feel our responsibility and be very much vigilant. It is our responsibility to rise against the social evils, stand against them and raise our voice. Unless we respond to those evils we do not have the right to complain about them and we do not have any way of avoiding them.



Has Public Attitude Changed Toward Women?

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Despite the establishment of democratic system in the post-Taliban Afghanistan, Afghan women are not able to exercise their rights and freedom. There are many obstacles before women. They are treated as pariahs in some parts of the country, mainly in the Taliban dominated areas. To view Afghanistan's history, women left tortuous path behind. The emergence of liberal and fundamental mindsets in the past affected the liberty of women to a great extent.

The historical ups and downs played a crucial role in terms of women's rights and freedom in Afghan society. For instance, during the kingdom of Amanullah Khan and the last decade of Zahir Shah's regime, Afghan women were treated equal to men and they were able to take part in social, cultural, and political issues. In this golden time, no cultural restrictions could hamper women's progress or curtail their social or political role. Within the last decade of Zahir Shah's kingdom, which is also known as the decade of democracy or decade of Constitution, Afghan Constitution was approved and a free parliamentary election was conducted.

This Constitution was said to be the best one comparing to the past. It also put a significant effect in the current constitution. The Constitution forbade any kinds of discrimination between men and women and treated all Afghans equal regardless of their race, color, or creed.

After all, women also had part in the assembly of endorsing the constitution. Similarly, in the parliamentary election, four women were elected as MPs for the first time in the history of Afghanistan and two more were appointed in the Senate by King Zahir Shah. The first female minister - in the ministry of health - was also appointed during the last decade of Zahir's kingdom.

However, to view women's status in the time of Mujahideen's rule, their role was curtailed on a large scale. Women played no social or political role since they were deemed inferior to men. There were no female minister or MP. They had to stay aside from social or political activities.

Worst of all, if women's rights and dignity are considered during the Taliban's regime, they were treated as pariahs. The misogynistic view of the Taliban kept women within the four walls and put an end to their social, cultural, or political activities.

Women were viewed inferior to men and their human rights and dignity were violated in the worst possible way. The Taliban exercised extremely dogmatic view regarding women for two reasons. First, they did not know

women's rights from Islamic perspective. Second, they foisted their own mindsets upon Islamic tenets and applied their dogmatic ideology under the cloak of religion. To view the aforementioned facts, Afghan women left two different periods behind. A golden time, when they were deemed equal to men and were not discriminated on the basis of their gender. However, a dark age that they suffered from patriarchal system, misogynistic view, traditional restrictions, etc.

In the post-Taliban Afghanistan where a nascent democracy has been established and human rights discourse is debated hotly, women are supposed to be able to exercise their rights and freedoms without obstacles. Constitutionally, women must not be treated unfairly on the grounds of their gender. That is to say, there is discrimination between men and women neither from legal perspectives nor from religious views. Therefore, they have to be held in esteem.

Nonetheless, there are still many obstacles before Afghan women. In fact, the two kinds of the aforementioned mindsets still prevail in the culture of country.

With the emergence of democratic discourse in the post-Taliban government, where women's rights and freedoms are supported, a number of people approved of the fact and raised their voice in support of women. They argued that women could not play their role during the Taliban's regime and their rights and dignity were trampled upon and now they should be able to play their role actively in all aspects of social and political life.

On the other hand, scores of individuals were against the freedom of women and approved of the Taliban's approaches towards them. According to them, freeing women from cultural restrictions and misogynistic view could spoil the society and result in moral turpitude. They raised their voice against democratic system and women's rights and freedom.

To sum up, historical changes affected the rights and freedoms of women in the country.

They strongly suffered under dictatorial regimes, dogmatic beliefs, and patriarchal system, especially during the Taliban's regime. Currently, women are not free from traditional cultures or dogmatic practices. They still suffer from discrimination.

Afghan women suffer in one way or another and the democratic discourse could alleviate their challenges to some extent but could not put an end to their sufferings. Although women are equal to men constitutionally, they are not treated equal in collective life.

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Giddy Markets and Grim Politics

By Kenneth Rogoff

Economic growth worldwide picked up in 2017, and the best guess is that the global economy will perform strongly in 2018 as well. At the same time, a rising tide of populism and authoritarianism poses a risk to the stable democratic institutions that underlie long-term growth. And yet headlines seeming to portend political instability and chaos have not prevented stock markets from soaring. What gives?

First, the good news. Surely the largest single factor in the synchronized global upswing is that the world economy is finally leaving behind the long shadow of the 2008 financial crisis. Part of today's good fortune is payback for years of weak demand. And the rebound is not over, with business investment finally picking up after a decade of slack, thereby laying a foundation for faster growth and higher productivity gains in the future.

True, economic growth in China is slowing somewhat as authorities belatedly try to contain a credit bubble, but many other emerging markets - notably including India - are set to grow faster this year. Rising stock and housing markets may fuel inequality, but they also drive increased consumer spending.

Investors and policy wonks are also cheered by the resilience of central bank independence in the major economies. US President Donald Trump has not only largely spared the Federal Reserve the not-so-tender mercies of his wee-hour tweets; he has also nominated highly qualified individuals to fill Fed vacancies. Meanwhile, the German right has failed to pull the plug on European Central Bank policies that have helped prop up Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and the ECB remains by far the most respected and influential eurozone institution.

Elsewhere, things are pretty much the same. In the United Kingdom, British Prime Minister Theresa May, early in her tenure, once took a swipe at the Bank of England, but quickly retreated.

As Mohamed A. El-Erian has noted, many investors regard central banks as "the only game in town," and they are willing to overlook a lot of political noise as long as monetary-policy independence is upheld.

But while politics is not, at least for now, impeding global growth nearly as much as one might have thought, the long-run costs of political upheaval could be far more serious. First, post-2008 political divisiveness creates massive long-term policy uncertainty, as countries oscillate between governments of the left and the right.

For example, the recent US tax overhaul has been advertised as a surefire way to boost corporate spending on long-term investment projects. But will it live up to its bill-

ing if businesses fear that the legislation, passed by a thin partisan majority, will ultimately be reversed?

Part of the case for trying to secure bipartisan agreement on major long-term policy initiatives is precisely to ensure stability. And policy uncertainty in the United States is nothing compared to the UK, where businesses face the twin disruptions of Brexit and (potentially) a Labour government led by the far-left Jeremy Corbyn.

Harder to assess, but potentially far more insidious, is the erosion of public trust in core institutions in the advanced economies. Although economists have endless debates about whether culture or institutions lie at the root of economic performance, there is every reason to be concerned that the recent wave of populism is a threat to both.

Nowhere is this truer than in the US, where Trump has engaged in unrelenting attacks on institutions ranging from the mainstream media to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, not to mention adopting a rather cavalier attitude toward basic economic facts. At the same time, the left seems eager to portray anyone who substantively disagrees with its proposals as an enemy of the people, helping fuel both economic illiteracy and a hollowing out of the center.

Beyond existential risks, there are near-term risks. One, of course, is a potential sharp growth slowdown in China, which more than any other major economy in the world today seems vulnerable to a significant financial crisis. Perhaps the number one risk to the global economy in 2018, however, is anything that leads to a significant rise in real (inflation-adjusted) interest rates.

Low interest rates and easy monetary policy have papered over a multitude of financial vulnerabilities around the world, from Italian and Japanese government debt to high corporate dollar debt in many emerging markets, and perhaps account for political support for trillion-dollar deficits in the US. Admittedly, markets see little chance of any significant rise in global interest rates in 2018. Even if the Fed raises rates another four times in 2018, other major central banks are unlikely to match it.

But market confidence that interest rates will remain low is hardly a guarantee. A plausible pickup in business investment in the US and northern Europe, combined with a sudden slowdown in Asian economies with surplus savings, could in principle produce an outside rise in global rates, jeopardizing today's low borrowing costs, frothy stock markets, and subdued volatility.

Then, suddenly, the economy's seeming disconnect from politics might end, and not necessarily in a happy way. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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