

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


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Non-violent Mechanism Leads to Peaceful Co-existence

Racial and religious superiority has left no room for peaceful co-existence. "The scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind", rooted in ethnocentric feelings and dogmatic ideology.

Religious fundamentalists are playing highly destructive role around the globe as they have been affiliated to terrorist networks. The ongoing regional conflict is the product of fundamental ideology, integrated with politics.

Seeking to impose their warped mind on the public with the barrel of gun, religious fundamentalists resort to violence and violate the rights and freedoms of men and women. Claiming to establish the divine law on the surface of earth, the Taliban militants killed thousands of people during their regime (1996 - 2001) and continue their insurgency.

However, violence is unlikely to lead to peace or stability. "Violence never," the Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King said in his Nobel Lecture, "brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than convert." He added, "Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue."

Violence and conflict will simply cause pain and suffering for human societies and create "bitterness". Violence will leave no space for the spirit of peaceful coexistence. But as kings used to rule people under religious terms and deemed themselves divine caliphs, religious fundamentalists, including the IS group and the Taliban, also claim to establish caliphate or divine rule on the surface of earth with the barrel of gun. So far, it has been proved abortive.

A vacuum for the spirit of brotherhood on the one hand, and a surge in radicalism on the other hand, have caused suffering for members of human family. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was endorsed to alleviate the anguish of mankind, as it is stated in its preamble, but since it has been marginalized, violence and carnage linger around the globe.

As historical war only brought about casualties and hostilities, the world needs to uphold non-violent mechanism. Practicing upon the international instruments, including the UN Charter and the UDHR, will mitigate the pain and suffering of members of human family. No individual or group has to be discriminated on the grounds of their caste, color, or creed. The principle of non-violence will expand the space for peaceful coexistence. To pursue peace and stability, one has to adopt non-violent mechanism and resolve issues through communication rather than confrontation. In other words, to maintain peace and harmony, all nations have to advocate the fundamental rights, i.e., the rights to life, liberty and property, of all individuals as well as "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" which are stated in the UDHR.

Practicing upon the "golden rule" (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you) is a blueprint for building a peaceful community. The international principles say and the golden rule suggests that one must be treated on the basis of being human - no matter what faith and belief they cherish or which racial and ethnic backgrounds they belong to. This truth transcends nations and peoples and beats in the heart of billions.

The golden rule is highly significant in both individual and collective life. Members of human family have to practice upon this truth to build a utopian society and a civil community void of violence and conflict. In fact, acting upon this truth and ethical code will put an end to one's ideological dogma and egotistic and ethnocentric mentalities and will necessarily pave the ground for tolerance, peace and harmony.

On the contrary, violating international principles and encroaching on an individual's rights and liberties and discriminating them on the basis of their sex, color, and race will narrow the room for peaceful coexistence. Indeed, "contempt for human rights has resulted in barbarous acts" throughout the history and it should not be repeated.

To maintain regional and global peace, members of human family have to exercise tolerance, respect the inherent rights, dignity, and liberties of all individuals and treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood. They have to seek common ground and resolve their issues through dialogue. No one should claim racial, ethnic or religious superiority and treat people on the basis of being human.

Our Schools Need Fundamental Change

By: M. Rasool Shah

The scenes are pathetic; be it inside the schools or outside. Students are the ominous figures of indiscipline, lack of manners and frightening combination of all the symptoms that arise from personal and behavioral deviations and drawbacks. Majority of them are badly dressed, have hairstyle not appropriate for students, they never have the required books and educational materials in their bags or some do not have the bags even. However, most serious and grave symptom is found in their general behavior and attitude. Their behaviors and attitudes can be termed out to be in need of dire correction by the educationists and educational psychologists. They have the worst attitudes in terms of talking, walking, sitting in classroom, behaving with fellows and teachers and of course their seriousness and interest in their studies.

Teachers are in great pressure in teaching such kids who are not ready to listen to them, who do not follow their instructions, who don't bring books or other materials and who misbehave with them.

These students are very weak academically because instead of learning, most of the time passes in killing the time; the time that would never turn back and is considered as the golden part of one's life.

School administration is also in pressure as instead of maintaining the discipline and bringing general improvement in school, most of their time is consumed by measures as how to stop students from breaking the discipline or making the situation even worse.

The above-described scenario is the bleak picture of majority of schools in Kabul. There are exceptions in form of some well-disciplined private schools and tightly held government schools, otherwise, the situation is even more frightening in some cases.

Fighting of students that sometimes turns into a serious mishap in which students stab each other or when a group of students torture a teacher outside the school are few of the examples when the seriousness of the issue reach to its peak.

It would be better explained by the educational experts and other informed and concerned sources as how and when the things went wrong but in my humble opinion and imperfect observation, there are many factors responsible for this ominous situation.

First is the perception that children, and especially students should be brought up in a lenient and relaxed environment; an environment that should be absolutely sterilized of the germs of physical or emotional torture or shouting at a student in a loud voice.

Next is the lack or absence of training of teachers when they do not know as how to tackle the students in different situations and how to treat them keeping in view their psychology and personality traits.

The third and one of the most important factors is absence of well-organized school administration that should be fully aware of latest and proven methods of disciplining and controlling schools and lack of latest institutional equipments and materials that have been found very useful in maintaining a good discipline in schools and other educational institutes.

The condition is absolutely contrary to the schools of our neighboring countries of Pakistan and India where improved methods and techniques have brought into effect a system which makes sure that students be controlled properly within the established limits resulting in the upbringing of students with sound and disciplined personalities increasing their output in academic and extra-curricular fields of achievement.

However, it should not be forgotten that above problem has nothing to do with facilities, resources and advanced equipments. This problem has also been felt badly by the developed countries of Europe and American continents. There, problem still exists and spreading rampantly even with the provision of all the facilities and application of latest techniques.

In this regard, teachers have observed another interesting situation. Students belonging to villages or having family backgrounds with old and traditional beliefs and practices about the importance and respect of teachers mould the minds and attitudes of students in a way that they give more importance to school, the teacher and studies and thus their disciplined behavior results in improved outputs. With such students, the process of teaching and learning becomes more easy and productive.

Success of Turkish schools in improving the behaviors of students in different parts of the world has increased their popularity a lot and now such schools are in great demand in parts of the world where absence of belief in religion has deprived children of an established set of sound and acceptable attitudes and behaviors. These schools are successful as they establish an environment where sound and healthy behaviors are encouraged and these good deeds are present in the teachings of almost all the religions.

It is the call of time that corrective steps should be taken on all grounds and by all the stakeholders of education; ministry, parents, teachers, educational experts and psychologists should devote their energies, expertise and sincerity in order to tackle this worsening epidemic.

First, it needs to be understood that strictness and disciplining are entirely different things. In old times, when teachers had full authority to beat the students and insult them occasionally on pity things, silence was maintained in the classroom but this approach also silenced the students' zeal to ask questions, be participative and develop his or her confidence.

It is usually misunderstood that students or teenagers should be given a free hand in the name of modern psychology so that their personalities should be free of any complexities. Modern psychology has found repeated experiments that a pleasant environment is very essential for children and teenagers to make their personalities groom but it comes with so many conditions and needs to be adopted by those who should have good understanding of all these. On the other hand, almost all the parents, who do not understand the concept clearly and are not good at its implementation, have given their children complete freedom that has resulted in the decline of the manners and attitudes of their loved ones.

Next responsibility lies on the shoulders of teachers who not only need to make their lessons interesting and logical but also require training to handle the behaviors of students and in this regard, they are in dire need of training about educational psychology.

Problems regarding the administration of schools can be solved by improving the expertise of administrators. Mostly, a successful or aged teacher is given with the responsibilities of administrating the school matters but it is not necessary that a successful teacher should become a successful administrator as well.

If this problem persisted and some practical steps were not taken to resolve it, it is feared that we will bring up a generation that will be void of anything; manners, attitude, knowledge and practical expertise and that would be the worst of the treasons ever done with this country.

M. Rasool Shah is the emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Boris Johnson and the Triumph of Gullibility?

By: Raj Persaud

US President Donald Trump has already proclaimed that Boris Johnson, Britain's new prime minister, is popular because he is seen as "Britain Trump" (sic). After all, both politicians are widely seen as having a "populist" style. For cynics, this implies a willingness to tell blindingly obvious untruths if doing so appeals to voters. The populist tag may also refer to such leaders' "disruptive" impact, in the same way that new technologies have shaken up established industries overnight.

More important, some psychologists now suggest that the success of Trump, the Brexit championed by Johnson, and other populist causes might indicate that voters are becoming increasingly gullible. Although it is tempting to blame "fake news" and social media for this trend, recent psychological research suggests a different and perhaps more startling explanation.

Conventional wisdom holds that people vote for disruptive populists such as Johnson largely out of anger and resentment. But in a recent article, The Economist pointed out that populism and support for parties hostile to the status quo are rising at a time when opinion polls suggest that electorates have generally never been happier.

According to national surveys of happiness cited by The Economist, the proportion of Britons who consider themselves very or fairly satisfied with life rose from 88% to 93% between 2009 and 2017, while the share of those declaring themselves very satisfied jumped from 31% to 45%. In the European Union as a whole, the proportion of those claiming to be very or fairly satisfied rose from 77% in 1997 to 82% two decades later.

The Economist offered various theories to explain the paradox of happy people voting for ostensibly angry parties - including the demographically based argument that older voters are both more reactionary and happier than the rest of the electorate. But new research by Joseph Forgas, a psychology professor at the University of New South Wales in Australia, points to a deeper and more persuasive explanation: happy people are more gullible.

In a series of experiments, Forgas found that negative emotional states made people less gullible, while a positive mood made them more so. Moreover, Forgas argues that voters' openness to simple, populist messages has proved surprisingly important in influencing recent political events, such as Brexit, the ascendancy of Trump, and the election of populist autocrats in countries such as Hungary and Turkey.

Forgas's study was partly inspired by past clinical research into the concept of "depressive realism," which posits that one of the benefits of negativity

is that it may produce a more accurate appraisal of just how unpleasant life, the world, and other people are. In a similar vein, other earlier research had found that people in low moods can more readily detect the linguistic ambiguity at which populists and slippery politicians in general seem to excel. As part of his study, Forgas investigated the human tendency to infer meaning in vacuous statements by asking participants to rate the meaningfulness of verbal nonsense texts. These included vacuous "New Age" pronouncements - for example, "Good health imparts reality to subtle creativity" - and meaningless pseudoscientific psychological jargon, such as "subjective instrumental sublimations." Participants in a positive mood saw more "meaning" in these gibberish sentiments.

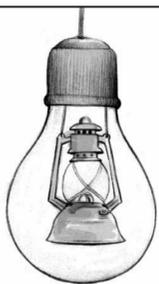
In another of Forgas's previous experiments, students in a lecture hall first witnessed a staged aggressive incident involving a lecturer and a female intruder. One week later, the eyewitnesses received misleading information about the encounter they had seen. Forgas found that having a positive mood increased the students' gullibility, while a negative disposition almost completely eliminated it.

Finally, when asked to rate the genuineness of a range of facial expressions displayed by professional actors - including happiness, anger, sadness, disgust, and fear - participants in a more positive mood believed the expressions to be more genuine than those in a negative emotional state did.

Forgas's main conclusion is that being somewhat depressed can make us less gullible, particularly when we need to pay close attention to the external world. This may even be a survival mechanism wired into our brains by our species' evolution. When humans faced predators, danger fueled anxiety or negative emotional states, making us more vigilant toward environmental threats. Contentment, on the other hand, meant that we could relax and stop watching the bushes for lions.

Negative emotions therefore function like a mild evolutionary warning signal. They promote more attention and vigilance, which increase our sensitivity to false or misleading information - including in political debate. Some say that it is impossible not to like Johnson once you have met him. Yet his likeability and talent for inducing a positive mood also conveniently deflect attention away from the more important question of his ability to govern. The affability of populist politicians such as Johnson may be the real secret of their success, but, according to this new research, it might also be the source of the danger they pose.

Raj Persaud is a London-based psychiatrist and the co-author, with Peter Bruggen, of *The Street-wise Guide to Getting the Best Mental Health Care*.



Daily Outlook
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Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net


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