

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



April 05, 2016

## International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

April 6th is celebrated as International Day of Sport for Development and Peace by United Nations (UN). UN believes that Sport, as a tool for education, development and peace, can promote cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, understanding, social inclusion and health at the local, national and international levels. Its intrinsic values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game are understood all over the world and can be harnessed in the advancement of solidarity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. For these reasons, states, the United Nations system and, in particular, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, relevant international organizations, and international, regional and national sports organizations, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and all other relevant stakeholders are invited to cooperate, observe and raise awareness of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. Sport can be useful in development and peace because it strives for cooperation and unity. It brings nations together and urge them to come closer to one another. Different countries, in different international sports events have matches and compete one another and in the process push away the barriers that differentiate or divide them. Different international sports events are very much useful in bringing different countries culturally closer as well. In this way it can provide opportunities to shun adversaries and open the prospects of peace and unity.

At the same time, different types of sports can divert the attention of the people of a nation away from many social evils, such as drugs and terrorism. Youngsters who opt for any sort of sport do not mostly get caught in the quagmire of the drug addiction and the terrorists. The developed countries of the world use sports as one of the major factors that can play a comprehensive role in fighting the social evils. They even consider that sports can be used to promote development with a country. However, the underdeveloped and the developing countries have not been able to achieve much in this regard.

In Afghanistan, as well, there are different types of sports that are played by the people in different parts of the country. Instability and disorder, however, influenced the growth of the sports in the country. Nonetheless, since the downfall of Taliban and establishment of a so-called democratic government efforts regarding the promotion of sports have intensified. And, there are certain games, in which Afghans have shown great talent and they have achieved international recognition. Among them Football, cricket and Taekwondo are the noteworthy ones.

Afghan football team won the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship 2013 for the first time by beating India. The cricket team on the other hand qualified for World Cup Cricket 2015 and it also qualified for T20 World Cup 2016 and even reached to the Super 10 round. Moreover, Afghan Taekwondo hero, Rohullah Nekpa, won bronze medal in 2012 Summer Olympics.

Keeping in mind the preparations and the facilities that the Afghan sportsmen get, it is really encouraging to see such great achievements by Afghan sportsmen. Afghan government requires doing more so as to facilitate different sportsmen in their respective fields. The sportsmen of the other countries enjoy all sorts of facilities that are required; therefore, they are able to show their distinction in different games.

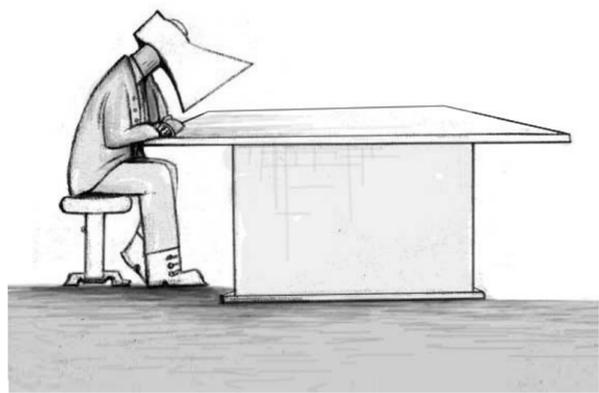
On the other hand, our sportsmen also require support from the people. The love and support of the people fill the hearts of the players with motivation and determination and, therefore, they are able to perform at their best.

Our country is largely suffering from the influence of war, instability and disorder. The enemies of the nation have nothing else to offer except bloodshed and tyranny. The people are totally fed up of the situation and they want entertainment and amusement. And, they can achieve all these only through sports.

Recently, it has been observed that what the politicians have not been able to achieve, what the sportsmen have been able to acquire. They have brought the down-trodden people of Afghanistan a ray of hope and a realization of the fact that the Afghans are capable of performing well in all fields of life. Politics has only brought rifts within the people and has divided them on ethnic lines, but the games have saved their unity and their honor.

It is really important for the authorities in Afghanistan to understand that the games and sportsmen have a higher role than just playing games; therefore, they should be given due attention and they should be provided with the facilities so that they are able to compete with other nations of the world. They have proved that having less facilities and opportunities they are able to perform very well, so if they are given facilities they will really polish their abilities and will be able to perform extraordinarily on international level.

If sports are promoted properly, they have the potential to divert the attentions of the people towards positive activities and will be able to keep them away from the social evils and International Day for Sports can be best used for this purpose. Though, one day will never be sufficient to raise the standard of sport in the country, it can definitely highlight some of the key issues and acquire the attention of policy makers.



## Tolerance - A Panacea for Troubled Societies

By Hujjatullah Zia

Tolerance means not opposing one's beliefs or behaviors maturely, which are disagreeable, despite having the authority and free will. Tolerance is based on particularly reasonable morality rather than being unconcerned without a reason behind. When parents do not react regarding their children's impoliteness, it is called permissiveness rather than tolerance. In other words, tolerance means showing respect for the race, belief, age, gender, opinions, and ideologies of other people or groups. This concept means different things to different people, but it is when something is disagreeable that tolerance is expected, and in more politically correct cultures, demanded.

Violence is defined the antonym of tolerance. A society lacking tolerance, violence, bloodshed and cruelty emerge. As a result, a large number of Afghan ethnic and religious minorities lost their life for the sake of their faith and creed under the Taliban. The Taliban's dogmatic faith and lack of tolerance led to national carnage across the country and yet Afghan citizens lose their lives in terrorist acts. The acts of terror carried out by the Taliban and self-styled Islamic State (IS) group stem from lack of tolerance.

It is believed that there are two major factors in breeding intolerance. Stereotype is one of the main reasons behind intolerance. For example, whenever we do not have a good understanding of a group, culture, people, etc. then we tend to make assumptions about them. Stereotyping makes people generalize things. Because these assumptions are made with very little true knowledge, most often they are false. People generally stereotype out of bias against a particular group of people or ethnic minority. Stereotyping becomes a way of conveying their dislikes.

Ethnocentrism is the second factor for creating intolerance. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to believe that one's ethnic or cultural group is centrally important, and that all other groups are measured in relation to one's own. The ethnocentric individual will judge other groups relative to his or her own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with concern to language, behavior, customs and beliefs. These ethnic distinctions and sub-divisions serve to define each ethnicity's unique cultural identity.

To know better, let's see a simple example of ethnocentrism in English term barbarian. Originally a Greek word, the term was used to refer to tribes that lived around the edge of ancient Greek society.

The Greeks referred to these people as barbars because they could not understand their speech. Bar-bar was the Greek word for the sound a dog makes, like the word bow-wow. The Greeks, in a classic example of ethnocentrism, considered those whose speech they could not understand to be on

the same level as dogs, which also could not be understood. They did not grant such people the status of human being. Moreover, the term eskimo, used to refer to groups that inhabit the arctic and subarctic regions, is an Indian word used by neighbors of the Eskimos who observed their strange way of life but did not share it. The term means "eaters of raw flesh," and as such is an ethnocentric observation about cultural practices that were normal to one group and repulsive to another.

In Afghanistan throughout the history, the ethnic minorities have suffered strong violence and bloodshed. The ethnocentric views resulted in racial tensions and, finally, in civil war which led to the deaths of thousands of individuals - including children, who have happened to be born within a certain group with a certain race and color. Moreover, thousands were displaced and many others emigrated from their homelands.

The social and political tolerance will be practiced in a society where human rights are acceptable in their modern term and where all the sources of power will tolerate the citizens' belief, including the religious beliefs of minority groups, patiently. Honoring the beliefs and values of others means respecting the inherent personality of mankind.

We will pave the way for tolerance if we entitle one socially and politically for simply being human regardless of their belief, religion, ethnic origin or any other status. And when we grant the minorities equal rights, we believe the concept of human rights in modern way and respect the varieties of beliefs and moral values.

One may ask that shall we show tolerance towards those who harm us and take our lives such as the extremist groups, who spill the blood of people out of intolerance? In this regard, the answer is negative. When it comes to controversial issues, tolerance may also represent a "let's agree to disagree" stance. It does not mean that a person has to accept or embrace words, actions, or ideas that are against his or her values or beliefs.

It simply means that each person agrees to respect the other's right to his or her feelings on the matter. When both sides have expressed their opinions, and it is obvious that neither is likely to change position, agreeing to disagree is often the most amicable outcome.

It is believed that nourishing tolerance will alleviate the pain and sufferings of societies wherein violence and militancy are going on. It should be noted that all individuals have the rights to life and liberty irrespective of being born in any culture, geography, race, etc. Hence, being born in a certain part of the world with certain backgrounds is neither a superiority nor inferiority. We are to live and let live.

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## Learning Without Theory

By Ricardo Hausmann

How can we improve the state of the world? How can we make countries more competitive, growth more sustainable and inclusive, and genders more equal?

One way is to have a correct theory of the relationship between actions and outcomes and then to implement actions that achieve our goals. But, in most of the situations we face, we lack such a theory, or if we have one, we are not sure that it is correct. So what can we do? Should we postpone action until we learn about what works? But how will we learn if we do not act? And if we act, how can we learn whether we did the right thing?

New advances in machine learning and biological anthropology are shedding light on how learning happens and what makes a learning process successful. But, while theories are important, most of what we learn does not depend on them.

For example, there may be a theory of what makes a cat a cat, but that is not how toddlers learn to recognize them. As Harvard's Leslie Valiant argues in his 2013 book, we learn the concept of "catness" in a theory-less way by inferring it from a set of pictures of animals that are appropriately labeled as either cats or non-cats. And the more examples we see, the more we become "probably, approximately correct."

We learn to recognize the spoken language without knowledge of linguistics, and voice-recognition software uses a theory-less learning algorithm called a "hidden Markov chain" on a set of audios and their texts, rather than by using linguistics, as Ray Kurzweil tells us in his book How to Create a Mind. To the chagrin of many of us academics, theory is often dispensable.

Biological evolution is also based on a theory-less algorithm, one that learns which genotypes generate better-adapted individuals without having a theory of which changes in the genome will improve performance. It just uses random variation and selection of the fittest, over and over again.

While biological evolution through sexual reproduction requires generations, we can learn from each other much more quickly through cultural evolution, explaining why humans have made so much progress. According to Robert Boyd, Peter Richerson, and Joseph Henrich, our ability to imitate is at the core of our success as a species. It is what makes cultural evolution possible, cumulative, and powerful. It is what allows us to learn from others and hence to make progress much faster than if we were to learn by ourselves. In addition, because imitation, like genetic replication, is not perfect, we accidentally discover other ways of doing the same thing (or even new and better things). We humans are wired to imitate others, and we especially prefer to imitate the most successful among us. This makes evolutionary sense, as the features of the successful are more likely to be related to their success than those of others. But this may lead to errors when what we imitate is unrelated to success. Advertising has exploited this weakness in our wiring, making

us think that if George Clooney is cool and wears something, maybe we can be cool by wearing it, too.

More constructively, the business world uses imitation through the practice of benchmarking, whereby companies share performance information so that they can all learn what is achievable and whom to try to imitate, thus facilitating the identification of "best practices." To improve, you can start by imitating what successful companies do, without a good theory of why.

Benchmarking has been moving to the policy arena, including issues such as sustainable development, the business environment, competitiveness, gender parity, and, more recently, inclusive growth. Some of these applications create good measures of performance, allowing users to assess outcomes and track progress.

Good examples of these benchmarking exercises are the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index or the United Nations' Human Development Index. They are theory-less in the sense that they do not tell you how to improve performance; but they do tell you if you did improve - that is, they inform about changes in "fitness."

Other indicators, in my view, confuse measures of performance with measures of hypothetical causes of performance. They confuse the "what" and the "how," and they inappropriately put both in the index. They attempt to be more theory-driven than our knowledge allows. Two examples of this are the WEF's Global Competitiveness Index and its new Inclusive Growth and Development Index. For example, competitiveness has to do with the ability to increase market share without sacrificing margins or lowering wages, something that reflects superior productivity. The inclusiveness of growth has to do with the disparities of income and growth across different regions and social groups. But this is not what these indexes really measure. Instead, the indexes include variables - what they refer to as the "policy space" - that are supposed to cause either competitiveness or inclusive growth. And the authors do not even check whether they do. (In the case of competitiveness, my co-authors and I have found that they don't.) Confusing "what" and "how" is counterproductive. It has led country after country, including Colombia, Mexico, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, to try to improve their competitiveness ranking by working on things that are in the index but that do not really improve their performance. And they are late in finding out, because they do improve their ranking in the index. We do not really know what could make growth more inclusive, countries more competitive, and development more sustainable in each country and region; and we should not pretend that we do. We can help the world make progress by measuring the outcomes we care about, facilitating imitation and tracking performance. But confusing means and ends will have us all dressing like George Clooney and wondering why we do not really feel all that cool. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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