

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



August 10, 2016

Our Living Standards

Different villages, towns and cities all over Afghanistan have a wide range of disparities in the living standards and quality of life. These dissimilarities are because of many factors and issues about the residents and location. Every town, in itself, is individual and distinctive, nevertheless a pattern in the dissimilarity of living conditions may be observed. On most of the part, disparity in the living conditions can be attributed to the residents in the area. Looking at the, socio-economic, financial, and environmental standards, it is easier to tell why people are living in the conditions that they do.

Observing the economic aspects of residents in an area can reveal for us things like their profession. In certain cases the criteria will consist of looking at the unemployment levels in an area. This would mainly include gathering the unemployment statistics. This is a very tangible way to measure the living standards of an area as it identifies the percentage of people who are jobless and claim benefits. The higher percentage suggests that there are many residents who bring only a little money into the home, and thus have enough to survive difficultly. Consequently, they cannot pay for many extravagances and coziness.

Figures pertaining to income can be put into this category of money, and how much is brought into the home. The yearly incomes, number of doctors in every thousand people, and proportion of people who work in professional jobs are all good indicators to the living conditions of an area. Fundamentally, the more money people bring into the homes, the more it shows that they want to do well and prosper. It is these kind of people who have the higher living standards because of their jobs and the money that they earn.

Criteria relevant to social criteria of living standards comprise things like crime rates. Crime rates are a very solid meter measuring the living standards. Generally, higher crime rates in an area displays that the living standard is reduced and people even violate the law for higher living standards.

The environmental conditions of an area are also reliable indicators to the living standards. The higher the amounts of pollution in an area, the lower is the living standard. Higher pollution or dirtier environment may be because of several things; like, living at the places with no proper development. Therefore, the decreased levels of pollution in an area may suggest that the area is perhaps an excellent place to live, and probably affluent.

In fact, overcrowded conditions are not enjoyable to live in and that is why the housing density and absence of open space are very good indicators. People who have enough income, clearly, want to live in environments that do not include a lot of houses. As an alternative, they want to live in the areas not largely crowded and where the houses are spacious. The areas with very low living standard, must be improved or regenerated for better living conditions.

There are numerous improvements that can be carried out. For solving the problem of crime, the obvious solution would be to have more police patrol in the area, and on more regular basis. This, however, may not be probable for the police force to do this as they have limited resources. So having more neighborhood watch arrangements may act as a warning to the criminals.

Undoubtedly, for majority of the people it is a matter of money that decides the quality of life that they live. Hence creating more job opportunities for people would positively increase the income of most of the families. As far as the issue of basic amenities are concerned local councils or legal bodies can play a role. They can force property owners to make sure that the basic amenities are up to the mark and provide basic facilities.

To solve the problems of youths and vandals, the education in schools should be cautiously observed, different approaches should be used towards teaching certain problem children within the school. One of the reasons why most vandalism and graffiti occurs is that teenagers are get bored. Consequently, if improvement occurs in an area, areas of open space should be left and parks should be built between roads. This will, optimistically, keep people away from criminal behavior to a certain extent.

Generally, the major stimulus to the living standards of the people is the amount of money that they earn. This afterwards affects the area in which they can afford to live in, and thus they basically buy their living standards. However, the people also affect the living standards of the areas where they live.

An area can be regenerated as much as wanted, but the people who live there basically decide how they want to regenerate them. The way the people live may soon turn an area back to the way it was before regeneration. Thus, it is important that the residents of a place must also desire and strive for better living standards, if they want an improved way of living.

Quality of Life Depends on Quality of Thoughts

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Most of us are not what we could be. We are less than we could have been seeing that we have great natural capacity and potential. But most of it is dormant; most is undeveloped. Improvement in thinking is like improvement in sports, or in playing the music instrument. It is unlikely to take place in the absence of a conscious commitment to learn. As long as we take our thinking for granted, we do not do the work required for improvement. Development in thinking requires a gradual process requiring plateaus of learning and just plain hard work. It is not possible to become an excellent thinker simply because one wills it. Changing one's habits of thought is a long-range project, happening over years, not weeks or months. The essential traits of a critical thinker require an extended period of development. How, then, can we develop as critical thinkers? How can we help ourselves and our students to practice better thinking in everyday life?

No one always acts purely objectively and rationally. We connive for selfish interests. We gossip, boast, exaggerate, and equivocate. It is "only human" to wish to validate our prior knowledge, to vindicate our prior decisions, or to sustain our earlier beliefs. Also a large number of people are imitators rather than thinkers they are easily incensed, misled and rarely propelled to an accurate deduction. For this reason, critical thinking, also called critical analysis, prescribed as an intellectual tool to guide one to a deep understanding or to gain a clear picture about an issue. Critical thinking is not a matter of accumulating a lot of information. A person with a good memory and who knows a lot of facts is not necessarily a good at critical thinking. A critical thinker is able to deduce consequences from what he knows, and he knows how to make use of information to solve problems, and to seek relevant sources of information to inform himself. Critical thinking should not be confused with being argumentative or being critical of other people. Although critical thinking skills can be used in exposing fallacies and bad reasoning, it can also play an important role in cooperative reasoning and constructive tasks. Also it can help us acquire knowledge, improve our theories, and strengthen arguments.

It is an essential part of creativity because we need critical thinking to evaluate and improve our creative ideas. It can be used to enhance work processes, produces new thoughts and improve social institutions. The first important skill is rational thinking, each day one can choose a problem to work on when has free moments. It can be family problem or social problem. Figuring out the logic of the problem by identifying its elements. In other words, systematically think through the questions - if one do not ask question, It is not possible to get the answer, like: What exactly is the problem? What are the causes? What is the root causes of the

problem? What would you do if you were in the position of that organizer? Thus you can discuss and communicate with yourself? Whiling remembering not to focus on the problem focus on the causes, contexts and circumstances? And always look from different dimensions? Indeed, this strategy relies on ability to reason rather than to using emotion and imitation. It relies on evidence and following evidence wherever it leads. It also relies on being an active learner or analyst rather than a passive recipient of information. It rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value. They will always seek to determine whether the ideas, arguments and findings represent the entire picture and are open to finding that they do not. Critical thinkers will identify, analyse and solve problems systematically rather than by intuition or instinct. Hence, it is called the art of using reason to analyze ideas and dig deeper to get to our true potential. Critical thinking isn't about thinking more or thinking harder; it's about thinking better. Honing critical thinking skills can open up a lifetime of intellectual curiosity. But the journey is not all rosy. Critical thinking requires a lot of discipline. Staying on track takes a combination of steady growth, motivation, and the ability to take an honest look at ourselves, even in the face of some uncomfortable facts. The second thing which is worth to note is not to take information from authority until you've investigated it yourself. Taking information on authority can be useful. Instead of double-checking everything anyone says, we tend to label information as either coming from a trustworthy or not trustworthy source. This keeps us from double-checking every piece of information that comes our way, saving time and energy. But it also keeps us from getting to the bottom of things we perceive as coming from a trustworthy source, even when they don't. Just because it was published in a magazine or broadcast over TV does not mean it's necessarily true. Get in the habit of using instinct to investigate questionable pieces of information.

If your gut is not satisfied with an explanation, ask to elaborate. If you do not question a fact, read about it or test it yourself.

Soon enough, you will build up a pretty good sense of what deserves more research and what you have determined to be true in your own judgment. The last step is to understand your own biases. Human judgment can be subjective, frail, and spiteful. One recent study found that parents who were given corrected information about the safety of vaccines were less likely to have their children vaccinated. Why? The hypothesis is that parents given this information accept that the information is true, but push back people it damages their self-esteem - something that is very important to most people. Understanding what your biases are and where they may affect how you deal with information.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

Challenges of Red Panda Conservation in India

By Saikat Kumar Basu

Red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) conservation is a monumental challenge in India. The beautiful mammal which is reported to be found in the Himalayan forests of the Darjeeling district of northern West Bengal in Eastern India; and in the states of Sikkim and western Arunachal Pradesh in North-East India is considered to be an endangered mammal by IUCN. Red Panda, also referred to as Lesser Panda is believed to be surviving in the bamboo forests in the hills and mountains of neighbouring NE Indian states of Meghalaya and Assam. A disjoint sub population is also reported from the Meghalaya plateau. However, unlike Arunachal Pradesh they have not been recorded in video footages in Assam or Meghalaya and hence need to be surveyed properly before confirmation. It could be that the latter two states may have been part of the species former range stretching vast areas of Eastern Himalayan bamboo forests spread across northern West Bengal into NE India. In addition to India the species is also found in neighbouring Nepal, Bhutan, southern China and Myanmar. Two sub species are known: one that occurs in Nepal, Bhutan and India (*Ailurus fulgens fulgens*); and the other found in southern China and Myanmar (*Ailurus fulgens styani*).

Across the entire range spreading across five different nations, the Red Panda habitat has been significantly impacted due to severe anthropogenic pressures resulting in rapid destruction of bamboo forests causing habitat destruction and habitat fragmentation. Furthermore, intense pressure of indigenous communities hunting, poaching and capturing Red Panda illegally for active wildlife trade and trafficking rackets prevalent in the region is further decimating wild Red Panda populations. Current estimates indicate that most probably less than 10,000 individuals may be surviving in the wild across five nations. There are only two captive breeding centers for Red Panda in India, one in the state of West Bengal and the other in Sikkim. The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal has been successful in the captive breeding of several Himalayan mammals and birds including Snow Leopard and Red Panda. This is the largest as well as the oldest Red Panda captive breeding centers of the country. The Red Panda captive breeding facility at the Himalayan Zoological Park; situated in the capital city of Gangtok, Sikkim is relatively new. Both centers have reported live births in their corresponding captive Red Panda populations. However, attempts of releasing captive bred Red Pandas into the wild have not yet achieved any major success. Almost 50% of the released individuals died due to their inability to cope with their natural wild habitats. Hence, it has been a stumbling blockade in the success of Red Panda captive breeding and introduction to the wild program. Another issue has been that defenseless Red Pandas are often violently attacked by feral dogs in India from villages or human settlements adjoining wildlife sanctuaries or nature reserves.

It has been a matter for grave concern for those unfortunate animals that accidentally move out of their forest homes and venture close to human settlements. Furthermore, surviving Red Pandas returning to the forests from the villages run the risk of contracting diseases from domestic animals that graze in the encroached lands in and around the wildlife reserves; and also from the bites and scratches made by packs of feral dogs attacking the unfortunate Red Pandas. Often these dogs are provoked by

the villagers in attacking wildlife for an easy access to bush meat, animal skin and bones and other body parts.

Poaching and illegally capturing wild Red Pandas in India has been a serious issue and need to be addressed immediately. The remote, rural communities adjoining forest reserves in India are economically backward; and as such completely dependent on the local forests for their daily sustenance. The indigenous communities, fringe dwellers and forest residents has been repeatedly encroaching the forested areas out of economic desperation; and the resulting human-animal conflict has been taking heavy toll on the local wildlife populations and scanty forest resources. The rise of insurgency in some of these forested areas has further promoted poaching and other activities detrimental to the security of forest guards and associated forest staff members; as well as the local wildlife including Red Pandas. The porous international borders within the region has been responsible for the illegal trafficking of drugs, people, live wildlife as well as wildlife products between the adjacent countries making conservation extremely challenging. The high demand for Red Panda cubs as pets in the illegal wildlife industry operating in the region and across the international borders has further enhanced the risk for the Red Panda populations. Often the parents are brutally killed for capturing the helpless young cubs; many of which die in the process of transportation due to lack of appropriate veterinary care, malnutrition, dehydration and trauma. Overall, the complexity of several anthropogenic issues existing in the region has further complicated the successful conservation of the Red Pandas in India. The captive breeding program and introduction of the captive bred Red Pandas to the wild need adequate funding, trained personnel and advanced technical skills in their rewilding approaches. Adjoining nations need to coordinate and collaborate with one another to reduce cross-border wildlife trafficking and poaching. Intelligence sharing in border management among border security groups of adjoining countries; and their active coordination with forest staff members of the adjoining forests of neighbouring countries through Joint Conservation Management (JCM) or Joint Conservation Initiative (JCI) will be important for successful conservation of endangered wildlife in the region.

A formal agreement between SAARC and ASEAN member nations with China can significantly improve the conservation scenario of South China, South and SE Asia. Such an initiative will be beneficial for the forest and wildlife management of this highly biodiverse region. Joint surveillance and monitoring, joint surveys, exchanging breeding stocks, experience and technical skills could help in the successful conservation of major wildlife in the region including Red Panda in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, economic conditions of the people living around the forest reserves and wildlife sanctuaries need to be improved and should be made stakeholders in the process of conservation. Unless the anthropogenic issues are dealt with successfully, no conservation efforts could be effective in any region. Furthermore, awareness regarding the conservation of local forests and wildlife need to be inculcated among local village residents, fringe dwellers and forest residents slowly over time for generating sensitivity about local wildlife will be important.

Saikat Kumar Basu is a Canada and India based freelance journalist. He regularly contributes to newspapers, newsletters, bulletins, magazines and journals in Asia, Africa and the Americas



Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

افغانستان
The Daily Afghanistan

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.