

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



August 22, 2015

## The Stratification of a Society

The social and political changes in Afghanistan, in the post-Taliban scenario, have been able to cast diverse effects on Afghan society. Among different changes the stratification of society into rich and power classes is a dominant one. The differences have been intensified and are affecting the society as a whole. It has not been the stratification of a society in different classes that causes much trouble to a society rather it is that the stratification has become intense, which has caused the society to suffer or even suffocate.

The wealth that has poured in the country in the last decade does not seem to have benefited the needy people of the society rather that has been accumulated by certain authoritative people who use it for their own benefits and grandeur. Though the stratification into rich and poor classes existed in Afghan society earlier as well, but it has changed its primitive shape; and in the urban regions the stratification is more like modern upper class and lower class division.

Some may consider the stratification of the society in different strata as a necessity. They believe that it is because of interaction of various strata that the society tends to function as whole. However, this argument is debatable. Actually the class based setup in a society is mostly the outcome of the practice of Capitalism. Capitalism, at least in theory, tends to follow justice and demands that everyone should be gifted according to his ability. Thus, people with more ability can have as much as they deserve lawfully. Further, the system of Capitalism also allows the individuals to have lawful private property.

This system seems to be working for some of the countries, but there are controversies regarding the future of the system. In fact, if this system has been working for those countries, there are few pre-requisites that are maintained to a varying extent by these countries that have been helping the system to develop instead of facing a failure. First, it has been made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other two classes; namely, lower, middle and upper classes.

In those countries, in fact, social stratification has not been changed to social injustice. Second, social mobility has been made very easy in such societies. For example, it has not been very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class. There have been equal opportunities for almost all the members of the societies to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse has been maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard have been pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility has been able to provide some oxygen for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living.

In certain cases the stratification of a society into upper and lower classes can be very much detrimental. The division of society into upper and lower classes can become the root cause of all the exploitation in the society. As the upper class has the means of production in its control therefore it has the control of the entire society, wherein the labors just suffer for the self-centered incentives of the upper class.

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that in practice there are some major problems in some of the stratified societies. The intensification in class differences have given birth to so many social problems. This has also led to the stagnation of societies and made only few enjoy the most.

The societies like Afghanistan where the wealth has poured in without much accountability and weak check and balance system, the stratification has led to sufferings. The upper class in Afghanistan cannot be said to be in the form as it exists in an industrialized society. Rather, it includes the landlords, tribal heads and religious leaders. Both political and economic systems tend to revolve around these people who are in total control of entire wealth and its distribution. Further, it is also true that all these people do not seem to have the ability for what they are gifted.

They, in pursuit of their own benefits, have only made the opportunity of development favor themselves. The poor people of Afghanistan, who have been badly stricken by decades of wars, have only suffered the worst manifestations of poverty. There are millions who do not have the basic requirements of life and are compelled to live their lives in the remotest areas, without much support and attention. Food, cloth, shelter and other requirements like education and security are non-existent for them. And at the same time there are people who own properties worth millions of dollars. These are all the results of an intense stratification. The poor do not seem to be having many opportunities of improvements in their lives and that means that social mobility, which can provide oxygen to a stratified society does not exist, while the social injustice is on the rise. The law and order system, instead of treating everyone alike, has served as the slave of the upper-class. The current scenario if goes unchecked can bring further misery to Afghan society.

## Soaring Violence Can be Checked with Ratification of EVAW Law

By Asmatyari

Both woman and man should be deemed as an operational wheels of a vehicle i.e. society, that head it towards a set destiny. The non-acceptance of women's due position, contribution and participation in structuring a developed and advanced society may deepen our miseries. In contrary to the facts and figures the ruthless killing of the proven innocent lady Farkhunda earned Afghans infamy and the minimum the least temperament when it comes to treating women. The world witnessed the miserable account of chunk of hatemonger turned to a woman who could have contradicted a man's view on a subject. Equating it to man's disgrace the hapless lady was pushed to meet her fate. The fate of those involved in that hardnosed murder still are not ascertained. Previously, Farkhunda's murderers—due to receive severe punishment by preliminary court was reversed by Appeal Court—intimating the murder of justice by a justice. The case hitherto lying in the court and the culprits are awaiting fairer trial. This is a premeditated aversion of the former ruling, shocking but damaging the cause for maintenance of rule of law and dignity of sinless woman killed. Throughout the length of history the despotic, feudal and theocratic regimes strived hard marginalizing women from socio-political circle of human endeavors. The contemporary society of Afghanistan does not lag behind in this regard the hindrance to former ratification of law safeguarding the women's right is the manifestation to underlying fact. It should not stereotype women's isolation and dependence, as an emblem of decency and modesty;—it is meant to plague the half of resourceful human resource. There is a single EVWA law awaiting its fate whose approval can check the violence against women.

The international humanitarian organization, Afghan civil society groups and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) equated the non approval of the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law by the parliament basis of increasing crimes against the gender. This law provides safeguards against illegitimate offence against women given it criminalizes child marriage, selling and buying women to settle disputes, assault and more than a dozen other acts of violence and abuse against women. Subsequent to formation the parliamentary approval was required to turn it into law. However, receiving a cool response from parliament the bill was decreed into law through an executive order by former president in July 2009, when the parliament was in recess. During such periods, the Constitution allows the president to issue decrees for emergency purposes, but the Constitution also requires such decrees to be forwarded to parliament for approval. After getting finally approved from parliament it would earn its legal status—nonetheless, due to utter negation from parliament the EVAW still awaits its fate. The humanitarian organization doubts the parliament showing the height of indifference into making it a law. The denial to turning it into law depicts women nothing more valued than an object that could be turned and twisted to any direction devoid their mutual consent. Therefore, good news of appointment of female judge in the apex court could not last longer—as the lower house of Parliament Wolesi Jirga turned her down discriminating her

—deeming them both physically and mentally inferior. Afghanistan reserves the worst image in the international community pertaining to maintenance of basic human rights in general and women rights in particular.

The social participation of women deemed a taboo at large—makes them difficult to head to public offices on a distinct position. Afghanistan is the land where women are treated as a third class citizen, and a household commodity, whose fate rests to parental sightless ruling. Women found exercising her willingness contrary to parental dictate is subjected to severe castigation and humiliation; is recklessly shunned to depth of utter hopelessness. The society where negation of unsound commandment is deemed immodesty and conceit, and pursuit of a rational discourse unpardonable sin, lies at the depth of moral abyss. Hence, a woman is bound to lead a life, at utter submission of her family associates.

Going through detailed account of credible statistics women are primarily demeaned and left vulnerable to violence. According to the AIHRC, more than 2,000 cases of violence against women were registered during the first three months of the ongoing solar year, compared to 2,500 cases during the entire last year. The official claims most of the victims of suicide attacks, roadside bombings, illegal courts, harassment and torture happened to be women. There are numerous heart wrecking incidents, equated anti-norms go unreported. The flawed cultural practices back growing gender biases and disparity. A woman is considered inferior, incompetent and mentally impaired, consequently is held liable of punishment even for a minor disobedience. She is, neither a partner in decision nor is known about the decision that dictates her fate. Ultimately, an absolute submission to the say of parent is the standard for decency.

The government instead of taking measures to uphold women rights is backlashes by enforcement of stoning in Afghanistan penal code. Human Rights Watch registered grave distress said that a working group led by the Justice Ministry that is assisting in drafting Afghanistan's new penal code had proposed provisions on "moral crimes" involving adultery that call for stoning. Adultery currently is a crime in Afghanistan punishable with up to 15 years imprisonment. A week ago, Taliban militants killed a couple on adultery charges in the Warduj district of northeastern Badakhshan province. More or less the Afghan laws treating women seems to replicate Taliban's irrational laws. The wretchedness does not end here as the incidents of violence against women remain largely under-reported because of cultural restraints, social norms and religious beliefs. Widespread discrimination and women's fears of social disgrace or threats to their lives discourage them from seeking to prosecute their offenders.

The widespread ignorance provides strong reason to ongoing violence. The flawed cultural practices supported by high degree of illiteracy ratify intense violence against women, stand legitimate and justified. The culture deeming women as subordinate citizen multiplies their receptiveness to greater tendency of being subjected to worst treatment. Apart from formal education, community based adult education and awareness campaigns on momentous right's issues complementary to Islamic teachings might assuage the stringency of standard customary law.

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## Afghanistan-Iran-India Economic; An Emergent Asian Economy

By Saikat Kumar Basu and Peiman Zandi

India, the biggest global democracy is also the largest country in South Asia constituting the second largest global human population. The country is projected to become the most populous country of the world in the next two-three decades; and hence is in dire need for expanding her economic base and foreign investments significantly to cater to substantially huge population in the future. Unfortunately, due to the turmoil and pressures of domestic politics the foreign policy of the largest democracy has been rather neglected and as a consequence the economy has not expanded to the expected dimension. Vital geo-political, strategic and socio-economic relationships with adjoining neighboring countries were neglected and compromised in the recent past. The Ministry of External Affairs has been cutting funds and aids in the past promised to other dependent countries on the context of pre-budget cut reducing the credibility of the Indian government in the field of foreign affairs and mutual cooperation with other countries in Asia. It clearly indicates lack of planning and coordination among different foreign government departments, bureaucrats, ministers, advisers and planners. In spite of the potentials, the country has been extremely slow in making steady economic progress in the last two decades. However, with the new federal government in office since May 2014 (with an enviable majority in the parliament); India has restructured her economic and foreign policy and has been increasing her presence and interaction in the Asia-Pacific region appreciably. This brings new hope for the stagnant South Asian economy. The general agreement with major global powers and Iran on an acceptable nuclear deal has opened new doors of opportunity for the economy of Iran. Now the sanctions against free trade and commerce will be withdrawn; and Iran would be able to participate more actively in expanding her economy without restrictions beyond her borders; and trade more efficiently with adjacent neighboring countries.

The political situation in Afghanistan has been turning quite alarming not only for the regional peace and security of Central and South Asia; but for the entire planet as reflected by recent repeated insurgent activities and failure in establishing peaceful power sharing formula. Afghanistan is a multi ethnic nation which includes Pashtun, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens and other minorities. Peace negotiation and a long term power sharing formula including all ethnic groups across a dialogue table will be crucial to bring peace to the war ravaged nation. The withdrawal of NATO forces, repeated insurgent attacks in different parts of the nation, deepening economic crisis and poor socio-economic conditions of the local inhabitants is pushing the nation backward from the roads of progress. It will be important for all the regional powers like Pakistan, India, Iran, China and Russia in addition to the United Nation, the United States and European Union to extend their support and cooperation for the long-term peace negotiations between divergent ethnic and sectarian groups in Afghanistan. If peace is successfully established in Afghanistan that would bring in great socio-economic stability to the Asian heartland and more importantly economic progress for the local people. An important boost to the peace process in Afghanistan should be rapid economic progress. For achieving this, closer economic relation of Afghanistan with major emergent economies of the region will be important.

Based on the above circumstances, a comprehensive strategic and economic cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and India will be mutually beneficial for these three friendly nations. It will be to the best of the interests of these na-

tions to explore this economic opportunity for regional and global peace, prosperity, progress and development. A future Afghanistan-Iran-India economic corridor is therefore welcome news; and a long-term strategic and diplomatic success for the three nations with unique history, culture, multiple ethnicities, languages and religions. The three national governments have initiated cooperation in building new grounds for stronger mutually beneficial economic, strategic and diplomatic ties; but this need to be expanded further and faster. India in close cooperation with Iran has been developing and expanding the Chabahar port in the Gulf of Oman as a future gateway to energy rich Central Asia via Iran and Afghanistan for establishing economic and energy security for the entire region.

If Afghanistan-Iran-India is successful in establishing a new economic corridor to the energy rich Central Asian states by a close knit network of roadways and railways through Iran and Afghanistan; and by finally connecting the Iranian port of Chabahar in the Sistan-Balochistan province with Indian ports on the west coast; it can transform the economic scenario of the entire Central and South Asian region dramatically. India, Afghanistan and Iran are three emergent Asian economies and lucrative, future, foreign investment destinations that need to work together with Central Asian states for tapping the huge mineral and energy resources of the region for joint economic development of the vast Central and South Asian region.

The BRICKS and SCO have opened up new economic opportunities for the rapid economic transformation of the Eurasia including South and Central Asia. This will not only open up new economic ties but also serve as an important dialogue platform for major global powers of Eurasia to communicate with equal rights and status; and help in resolving many bilateral/multilateral concerns and issues among them both peacefully and respectfully in a friendly and cooperative environment. India, Iran, Afghanistan now to further extend their economic engagements with China and Russia for building a stronger economic zone across Eurasia from the Central Asia highlands across Afghanistan and Iran to the vast Indian subcontinent. It will be an excellent gesture for the SAARC member nations to now also include Iran and Myanmar as full members to expand the SAARC trading and economic zone and build a new history of economic cooperation in the region for better future prospects. If connectivity could be established successfully from Central Asia via Afghanistan-Iran-India economic corridor passing through Bangladesh and Myanmar to the South East Asian region; thereby connecting the ASEAN or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; that could bring in further magical economic developments for the vast region stretching between Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Indian subcontinent and South East Asia. Such regional cooperation if successful could connect Central and West Asia via India to South East Asia opening up a gigantic economic corridor and a grand Asian market for the future. Thus an Afghanistan-Iran-India economic corridor is a new possibility for an emergent Asian economy that could link energy rich Central Asia to the lucrative markets of the South East Asia. A broad market with substantially huge global population can transform the economic future of the Asian continent significantly.

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