

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



August 23, 2016

Are we Disturbing Balance in Life?

Throughout our journey in history, we have been required to adjust by perfecting ourselves physically, socially and technologically so as to guarantee our existence. In the race for survival there is a fragile balance between nature and humanity and that stands crucial to all species. Human beings shifting this balance slowly with the purpose to control nature. As a matter of fact, by doing so we are putting the wellbeing of all species at danger.

Nature is a dynamic phenomenon that requires balance. It possesses a harmonious organization that initiates and maintains a state of equilibrium.

Nature is generally believed to be the physical world and its living organisms. Some say it is everlasting and expendable, some others say that we can use but must substitute, and others that we can look but not touch. Although opinion on nature's definition differs extensively, most of people agree that we are part of nature and therefore depend upon it.

According to certain religions, nature presents the character of God, in its goodness and power, uniformity and apprehension to sustain human life. They also state that man is created from the soil of the ground. If man is made of nature and meddle with it, he is tampering with himself. Hence, if he tries to change the world around him then it will change him as well.

Scientists are now altering nature by modifying a variety of species genetically through the use of a somewhat new process known as genetic engineering. Genetic manipulation, the main substance of genetic engineering, is the carriage of one or more genes from one species to another with the purpose of introducing new characteristics within an organism. This process is meant to form species that are more prolific and generally resilient to disease. Some people consider this new technology valuable as they believe that it can cure illness, improve health, profit agriculture and lessen world hunger.

They argue that we must eat better and more resilient foods and fight diseases with different methods at our service as it would help us in survival. As, it is a low of the nature that only the fittest survive. Simultaneously, we must accept that the careless use of new technology in other fields has given rise to more problems. It can be noted that there has been harm to the environment because of the same. There is a depletion in ozone layer; water has been polluted and many species are being killed. It is our primary responsibility to study the repercussion thoroughly before we move ahead and continue using genetic engineering.

Supporters of genetic engineering may argue that we have been using genetic manipulation all over history in processes like in grafting, cross-pollination and hybridizing and therefore, there may not be something wrong with it. In actual fact, in these processes we have used natural breeding techniques not technological ones, primarily with individual organisms, and only now are we opening to comprehend the details of why and how they work. Before using a new method or creating a new organism, we have to be completely sure of what will be the outcome, otherwise we may be endangering the whole human race.

With genetic engineering we are playing with the basic building blocks of our existence - the DNA - in the ways that could never, under any circumstances, occur in nature. Through this process of executing irrevocable changes into the code of life we are providing new information and instructions never seen before. We are not confident about its repercussion and do not know how nature will respond back upon us. There are not many researches available that could study the side effects of deliberate gene manipulation. Upbringing new species to carry specific characteristics can be advantageous in certain ways but it also creates homogeneity in the species genetic profiles. This will ultimately result in genetic erosion. Additionally, we do not know what unidentified features, viruses, and ailments might be brought forth by a new combination of genes.

It is important to note that biotechnology does not only change plants and animals but it can also alter humans. It is probable that we could obtain genetic information and contribute in genetic selection. One day this could open up the options of engineering our own children, it may have shocking results. The artificially engineered children would most probably see their life in a different manner, experiencing a severe identity crisis that may result in interminable emotional damage.

The fact is that we are not sure of the effects of what is being done but, unfortunately, we are persistent to proceed anyway. We, with arrogance and self-centered attitude, are taking the subtleties of creation and changing it into a dominant motive of power in which everything revolves around ourselves. In its place, we should favor harmony and shield the valuable balance of existence. We should use science to help us in our lives and solve our problems, not generate more problems for us. Only with this objective science could contribute a better perception into our lives and stop us from disturbing the balance of the environment that we are highly dependent upon.

When You Educate A Woman, You Educate A Generation

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

In spite of remarkable efforts for women rights made, but potential factors of violence such as undulation, economic dependencies, sociopolitical issues, health and so on remain extremely hard for women. All major social indicators continue to show a consistent pattern of women's challenges in nearly all dimensions of their lives and Afghanistan remains one of the worst countries in the world to be born as a woman. The political instability intensified issues as a result they are suffering unprecedented frustration in recent history. Illiteracy among women remains high (87.4 per cent); only 6 per cent of women over the age of 25 have a formal education, resulting in gaps in the labor market. Due to severe restrictions on mobility, only 8 per cent of women are involved in wage employment outside the agricultural sector. Women's mortality rate is higher than men's, even when factoring in male combatants as evidenced in the fact that life expectancy is 48 years for men and 44 years for women. Violence against women and girls remains endemic, with severe consequences for women's education, health, security, mobility, and unemployment and political empowerment.

Many issues are interconnected and have reciprocal effect on each other - making lasting solutions even more difficult. According to past surveys, lack of education for women is consistently seen as the biggest problem. Only 23.5 percent of the population above 15 years old is literate, while the rate for women is even worse at 12.6 percent. At 36 percent, Afghanistan's enrollment of girls in primary schools is low compared with 90.4 percent in Iran, 67 percent in Saudi Arabia, and 62 percent in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, 40% of Afghan girls attend elementary school, but only one in 20 girls attends school beyond the sixth grade. There are approximately three times more boys attending school than girls. Many Afghan families will only permit their daughters to attend all-girls schools close to home and few such schools exist. Other families believe it is unnecessary for girls to be educated. Schools for girls have been burned down, hundreds of teachers educating girls have been threatened or killed, and girls and have been physically harmed while attending or walking to or from school. Many men were killed in the armed conflicts, and older husbands are likely to die sooner than their child brides.

Despite current critical conditions, Afghanistan has obtained a few major achievements in the education sector for women, including the adoption of certain written guarantees in the national constitution (Article 44) regarding development of balanced education for women; the enrollment of 2.2 million girls in primary schools (extraordinary in Afghanistan's history); and permission to establish higher education institutes in specialized fields and basic literacy schools (Article 46). However, many written guarantees have not implemented yet and many obstacles lie ahead, such as local traditions and discriminations against women's education; lack of female schools in villages; lack of proper education infrastructure; lack of personal security; and lack of female teachers, to name a few. There are also socio-tribal beliefs that consider education unnecessary or even hazardous for women, further preventing girls from

attending schools. Even in seminaries, the number of female students is very low due to lack of interest in women's education and lack of female religious teachers. Other impediments such as violence against women, underage marriages, forced marriages, economic problems, considering girls as temporary family member and marriage as a solution to family disputes (known as baad), also hinder them from education. In addition, lack strong commitment to National laws and modern values.

Unemployment
From 31 percent up to 35 percent unemployment is cited as the second biggest problem Afghan women face. A separate study indicated that only a quarter of government positions are occupied by women. Although Article 48 of the constitution stipulates that every Afghan has the right to work, the government does not pave the way for women to gain positions in government. Other factors also contribute to unemployment, such as low literacy rates and professional skills among women; disagreement over a woman's right to work outside of the house in most uneducated tribal area. Parents often hold a double standard regarding children's education, with more attention given to the education of boys than to girls as boys are considered to be the permanent member of the family.

Early marriage
Almost 60% of girls are married by 16 and it is estimated that up to 80 percent of marriages in poor rural areas are either forced or arranged. Most girls marry far older men - some in their 60s - whom they meet for the first time at their wedding. The implications of child marriage cannot be underestimated. Married girls do not continue their education and remain illiterate. They have babies while still young teenagers, increasing health problems and risking death for themselves and their children (the risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth for girls under 14 is five times higher than for adult women).

Security
Risk of kidnapping, explosions and poisoning can also cause to prevent from education and force them into early marriage. Moreover, wrong cultural interpretations such as insisting women and girls stay at home, and can only leave if they are fully covered and accompanied by a male relative.

Finally, Education can be suggested as one the best strategies to more empowerment and independence of women in a man dominating country. When you educate a man; you educate a man but when you educate a woman; you educate a generation. In fact, Women are the real architects of a society. It is a big shame that almost half of population (female), the architects of a nation, isolated in cages of superstitious customs. In addition, men should understand that women's rights are human rights and Islamic rights; there is no good reason to fetter them at homes. On the other hand, women should understand that rights are not bestowed; rights are obtained.

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The Mournful Taliban Heighten Militancy

By Hujjatullah Zia

Since the Taliban are reeling from the death of their leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour, they have intensified their attacks in Afghanistan. Their newly appointed leader Mowlavi Haibatullah Akhundzada, the radical clergy, came out a great obstacle before peace talks and surpassed his predecessor. The Taliban have sustained heavy casualties, by the operations carried out by Afghan soldiers and US forces and will seek to revenge the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour and Khalifa Omar Mansour, who was killed last month in a US drone strike in Nangarhar.

Last year was a bloody year for Afghan nation as the Taliban declared their spring offensive. As a result, in September 2015, the Taliban overran Kunduz, their first takeover of a major city since their fall from power in 2001. Akhtar Mansour, who called peace talks "the enemy's propaganda" orchestrated heavy attacks against the nation to strengthen his position. Currently, Haibatullah intends to gain the charisma of Mullah Omar through intensifying attacks under the "Omari Operation" which was declared earlier by the late Mansour. Therefore, he has also centralized his attacks on Kunduz and captured Khan Abad district, which is around 30 kilometers east of Kunduz city, on Saturday, but has been, reportedly, recaptured by Afghan soldiers. Earlier this month, the Taliban launched a major offensive in volatile southern Helmand province, surrounding the capital Lashkar Gah, a town of 200,000 inhabitants, but were stopped by Afghan forces supported by American air strikes.

Last year, the first since NATO ended combat operations, civilian casualties hit a record 11,002, with 3,545 deaths and 7,457 injuries. It was estimated that 60 percent of casualties were caused by anti-government forces including the Taliban and other groups such as the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group. Based on the UN's report, at least 1,601 civilians have been killed and 3,565 others wounded in the first half of the current year, showing a record surge of four percent compared to the same period in 2015. In addition, children sustained almost one-third of the nearly 2,000 casualties caused by the escalated militancy in the first three months of 2016 and there was a five percent rise in women being killed or wounded, which reflects an increase in fighting in built-up areas as the Taliban intensified its insurgency.

The Taliban have warned earlier that they would "employ large-scale attacks on enemy positions across the country" during the offensive dubbed Operation Omari in honor of the movement's late founder Mullah Omar, whose death was announced last year.

The death of Mullah Omar and appointment of Akhtar Mansour as his successor resulted in splinter group between the Taliban. A group of Taliban, led by Mansour Dadullah, pledged allegiance to the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Subsequently, Dadullah was killed along with his fighters by Akhtar Mansour's people about ten months back in

southern Zabul province. Last week, a video message revealed by loyalists to Dadullah shows that they have appointed Mullah Emdadullah Mansour as Dadullah's successor to fight against US forces in Afghanistan. Moreover, Mullah Emdadullah promised revenge for the death of his predecessor.

The Taliban suffer from both the death of their leaders and tug of war between their own groups. Being filled with a sense of revenge, they intensified their attacks against Afghan government. The sporadic clashes between the Taliban splinter faction and emergence of the IS group are also a headache for Haibatullah's fighters.

Encountering these challenges, the Taliban resorted to indiscriminate killings and spilling the blood of Afghan non-combatants, including women and children, which is a great cause of concern. They have constantly violated humanitarian law and slew the wounded in action and civilians in the worst possible way. In other words, the Taliban's ideology lacks humanity and moral standards and their acts of violence outrage humans' conscience.

It is believed that a leader with radical ideology will harm the Taliban more than ever before as Akhtar Mansour was killed for being called "an obstacle before peace talks". The Taliban have always played a delusive role in peace talks which went beyond the tolerance of Afghan officials and prompted them to take serious actions. The peace talks did not go with the satisfaction of Afghan authorities and the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which consisted of Afghanistan, Pakistan, US and China, to bring the Taliban to negotiating table also came to standstill after the death of Akhtar Mansour as Pakistan called it violation of its territory and condemned the attack. Additionally, Islamabad's role regarding peace talks was not acceptable for Kabul which aroused a sense of mistrust between the Afghan-Pak officials for being orchestrated in the Taliban's safe haven located in Pakistan - according to Afghan's authorities.

Although the peace negotiation was ended without fruition, Pakistan's Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said recently that Pakistan believed that a politically negotiated settlement through an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process is the most viable option for achieving durable peace in the war-torn country adding that terrorism remained a common threat to both Pakistan and Afghanistan. "In our view, close cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is important for eliminating the scourge of terrorism from our region," he remarked. It is believed that resuming peace talks will not bear the desired result as the Taliban played a foul game. After all, the gap between Afghanistan and Pakistan will be hardly bridged while the good relationship will be built on trust. They have to rebuild the trust and combat terrorism with strong force rather than pushing for peace talks.

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