

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



December 11, 2017

## Let's Not Forget the Rights of Women

With the voices of human rights still echoing nationally and internationally, it is imperative to remember one of the most vulnerable sections of society in Afghanistan, i.e. Afghan women. They are the ones whose rights have been forgotten. Though there are certain voices being heard every now and then in the country; and certain sections even arrange different sorts of programs and projects for them, practically, there are no tangible measures being taken to safeguard their rights. Unfortunately, it is not just the matter of discrimination against them but there is a threatening level of violence as well, that have made their lives very difficult.

It can be easily observed in Afghan society that women become the victim of all sorts of violence. They are forcefully married, mostly to the aged men, when they are still children. It is not unusual in Afghan society to arrange the marriages of the girl before they are mature and in most of the cases before they are ten years of age and they really do not understand the dynamics of marriage and are sandwiched in the complexities of life. Another aspect of traditional marriage system in Afghanistan is that the girls after marriage are basically considered as a commodity that has been bought by the men so as to utilize it the way they please - in most of the cases they are no better in their parents' houses as well.

It is not necessary that the men should have the capability to shoulder the responsibilities of married life. On many occasions, the women are married to the men who are unemployed and drug addicts. Though while being married, different qualities are sought in women, for men there are no strict inspection. It is enough that they are men and they are old enough to marry. Women are required to be docile and obedient. They are required to be able to work hard along with having beauty and chastity. The suitability is searched only in women, while men are above all such considerations. Moreover, after marriage women are asked to compromise with men in every situation and condition. They are required to sacrifice their entire lives for the betterment of their husbands' houses and lives. When they want to change such a scenario and want to pursue a life of their choice, they are stoned to death.

This situation has given rise to every sort of discrimination and violence against women. The unjust and ill-treatment of women in our society has given rise to every sort of trouble the women face. The whole social structure and behavior are designed in such a way that supports discrimination against them and they are expected to tolerate all these without even raising their voice.

The incidents violating women rights in Afghanistan have not been stopped though there have been comparative developments made in the last 14 years or so and billions of dollars spent. In fact the changes are prevalent only on the exterior while from within the Afghan society still lacks the modernity and development it needs in order to reach to a respectable position. The support and assistance of the international community has only been able to provide clean and beautiful attire not a praiseworthy soul to Afghan society and this attire is going to get dirty very soon. The Afghan social structure has been vehemently dominated by religious extremism and tribal nepotism. Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Unfortunately, these norms and doctrines have even gone to the extent of violence and have tortured women physically - mostly in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in fact degraded them.

There is no doubt in the fact that instability has further fanned the flame as far as violence and discrimination against women are concerned. They bear the brunt of the conflicts and war and have to give sacrifices in different ways. The same can be observed in our country Afghanistan. Decades of conflicts and wars have influenced them to a large extent and today, when there has been some sort of development in different fields of life, there is still margin of considerable development regarding the emancipation of women.

There is no doubt that the social and economic conditions in Afghanistan, to a large extent, are responsible for the deteriorating standard of living for all the people but the negligence of women's rights and dignity are also a dominant reason. On most of the occasions the rights of women are not only violated by the mere compulsions; rather they are choices made by the people.

With such a situation prevailing around, it is really difficult to see improvement in condition of women who have been suffering discriminations since ages. Afghan authorities and all the Afghan people, especially women themselves, must strive to change the scenario as it would benefit the society as a whole as women are an integral part of it.



## The Importance of Morality

By Hujjatullah Zia

God has been profoundly real to me in recent years. In the midst of outer dangers, I have felt an inner calm. In the midst of lonely days and dreary nights, I have heard an inner voice saying, "Lo, I will be with you." -Martin Luther King, Jr. Praying with tearful eyes and a soulful heart in the privacy of midnight or at the crack of dawn will quench your spiritual thirst. In other words, the lump in your throat and the ambiguous feeling of pain in your heart will melted away when tears run down your cheek during a spiritual dialogue with your God, at the altar of worship. Indeed, there is a great solace and mysticism in these prayers when you realize the sanctity of the Creator.

It is beyond doubt that human beings naturally feel a strong vacuum in their souls, and it can only be filled through worshipping God. Whenever you communicate with your God through sentimental prayers, you will find solace and peace of mind. Of course, your spiritual thirst can be satiated this way and prayer is the only sound food for one's soul.

The idea that the moral sense is an innate part of human nature is not far-fetched. A list of human universals collected by the anthropologist Donald E. Brown includes many moral concepts and emotions, including a distinction between right and wrong; empathy; fairness; admiration of generosity; rights and obligations; proscription of murder, rape and other forms of violence; redress of wrongs; sanctions for wrongs against the community; shame; and taboos.

Unfortunately, nowadays the spiritual feelings of our youths are poisoned by many toxic beliefs which lead either to fundamentalism or liberalism. Currently, the young generation is flooded with various worldviews and religious ideologies which are indigestible for them and therefore they either throw up or feel spiritual sick. Both are perilous for the social health.

For example, the religious extremists who are endangering the lives of people came into being through one of the religious ideologies. Their spiritual appetite has been fed by the toxic beliefs which have strongly brainwashed them; this results not only in their own death but leads to the death of many other innocent men, women and children.

On the other hand, some lose their appetite for religious feelings due to being fed by different irreligious and secular ideologies. Many of our youth have deviated from their religious and moral paths. They are influenced by the bombarding schools of thought. Therefore, they give no importance to their own cultural norms and moral values and they experience life devoid of virtue and morality. This is the very disease of our age. Indeed, our younger generation is highly vulnerable to wrong moral in-

fection.

Morality is of a big value in individual and social life. "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them," wrote Immanuel Kant, "the starry heavens above and the moral law within." These days, the moral law within is being viewed with increasing awe, if not always admiration. The human moral sense turns out to be an organ of considerable complexity, with quirks that reflect its evolutionary history and its neurobiological foundations. These quirks are bound to have implications for the human predicament. Morality is not just any old topic in psychology but close to our conception of the meaning of life. Moral goodness is what gives each of us the sense that we are worthy human beings. We seek it in our friends and mates, nurture it in our children, advance it in our politics and justify it with our religions. Disrespect for morality is blamed for everyday sins and history's worst atrocities. To carry this weight, the concept of morality would have to be bigger than any of us and outside all of us. The first hallmark of moralization is that the rules it invokes are felt to be universal. Prohibitions of rape and murder, for example, are felt not to be matters of local custom but to be universally and objectively warranted. One can easily say, "I don't like brussels sprouts, but I don't care if you eat them," but no one would say, "I don't like killing, but I don't care if you murder someone." The other hallmark is that people feel that those who commit immoral acts deserve to be punished. Not only is it allowable to inflict pain on a person who has broken a moral rule; it is wrong not to, to "let them get away with it." People are thus untroubled in inviting divine retribution or the power of the state to harm other people they deem immoral. Bertrand Russell wrote, "The infliction of cruelty with a good conscience is a delight to moralists - that is why they invented hell."

Much of our recent social history, including the culture wars between liberals and conservatives, consists of the moralization of particular kinds of behavior. Even when people agree that an outcome is desirable, they may disagree on whether it should be treated as a matter of preference and prudence or as a matter of sin and virtue. Rozin notes, for example, that smoking has lately been moralized. Until recently, it was understood that some people didn't enjoy smoking or avoided it because it was hazardous to their health. But with the discovery of the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, smoking is now treated as immoral.

I would like to conclude my article with the statement of Khalil Gibran, "I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church, for you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit."

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## The UK's Multilateral Trade Future

With Brexit looming, the UK has no choice but to redesign its future trading relationships. As a major producer of sophisticated components, its long-term trade strategy should focus on gaining deep and unfettered access to integrated cross-border supply chains - and that means adopting a multilateral approach.

By Giancarlo Corsetti and Meredith A. Crowley

As the United Kingdom negotiates the terms of its divorce from the European Union, it would be wise for the country's leaders to begin looking further into the future to determine what approach to international trade relations would serve it best. Does the UK really want to hang its future on bilateral agreements with a long list of individual trade partners? Or would it be better off joining existing mega-regional free-trade agreements, while working to strengthen the global multilateral system under the World Trade Organization?

The bilateral approach would demand a huge amount of time and resources, with UK negotiators engaging in a series of discussions with each and every country with which they wanted to do business. The end result would be a tangled network of deals that would only exacerbate the balkanization of the international trading system.

This approach limits gains from trade. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank reports that the trade gains from Latin America's 33 small regional trade agreements have been meager. The key to boosting those gains, according to the IADB, is to adopt a new strategy that expands access across and within markets.

This suggests that, for the UK, mega-regional trade agreements - which provide access to multiple markets, but entail lower levels of fiscal and regulatory integration than the EU - are the best way forward. After all, it is this approach that would enable UK firms to position themselves in well-developed and integrated supply chains, serving much larger markets than those to which a bilateral agreement would grant them access.

The argument can be made that a multilateral approach is not just the better option; it is the only one. Consider the recent challenges faced by Bombardier, a Canadian multinational that produces 100-150-seat passenger jets using globally sourced parts, including wings made by Bombardier UK, the largest manufacturing employer in Northern Ireland.

Bombardier negotiated the sale of up to 125 of its jets to Delta Air Lines. But the American aviation giant Boeing challenged the sale, alleging that, enabled by subsidies at home, Bombardier was selling the jets at below-market rates, giving the company an unfair advantage. Despite loud protests from Canada and the UK, the US Department of Commerce now seems set to impose an extremely high import tariff of about 300%. The effects of that duty will radiate throughout the supply chain, hitting the 4,200 employees of Bombardier UK.

This experience demonstrates the limitations of bilateral agreements, especially in a world where supply chains and markets extend far beyond the countries involved. The UK may negotiate a bilateral free-trade agreement with, say, Can-

ada, but UK firms will secure few benefits, unless Canadian firms can sell products with UK components to their other trading partners.

The Bombardier episode also highlights the importance of engagement in - and reform of - the WTO, under whose rules the US-initiated proceedings against Bombardier are taking place. The impact of WTO rules and resolution mechanisms is far-reaching, as 164 countries worldwide subscribe to them. Yet WTO rules have their flaws. For example, they allow exporting countries to provide financial support and subsidies to specific industries; but they also give importing countries the right to use tariffs to offset these subsidies. The WTO has heard countless disputes over its subsidies and dumping rules, and it is now sure to hear one more, over the Bombardier case, because the US and Canada have different ideas about how to interpret these rules.

Though no one is happy with the current WTO rules, efforts to reform them have so far ended in deadlock. But recent high-value cases involving high-tech products like airplanes, semiconductors, and green technologies, including solar panels and biodiesel, make clear that the problem cannot be ignored. And the fact is that concerns over state aid and competition policy can be addressed only in a multilateral forum like the WTO. Because the UK has historically shown far less appetite for industrial subsidies than its trading partners have, it stands to gain from clear international rules on industrial support and anti-subsidy tariffs. Given this, the UK has a strong incentive to engage with - and help to upgrade - the WTO.

Another multilateral forum that could prove invaluable to the UK is the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a mega-regional trade agreement that provides for duty-free trade and includes modest commitments in areas like state aid and competition policy, without requiring EU-level integration. Though the TPP suffered a setback last year, when Donald Trump withdrew the United States, last month the 11 Pacific Rim countries remaining in the deal committed to keeping it alive.

The TPP does not have to limit its membership to the Pacific; the UK could engage with it. Given its free-trade credentials and international stature, the UK could help to breathe new life into these and other trade negotiations that have been thrown into disarray by the Trump administration's protectionist impulses. With Brexit looming, the UK has no choice but to redesign its future trading relationships. As a major producer of sophisticated components, its long-term trade strategy should focus on gaining deep and unfettered access to integrated cross-border supply chains. That means pivoting away from bilateral deals, toward a multilateral approach that enables the country to rebalance and expand its trading arrangements around the world. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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