

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



December 24, 2017

“Iron Will Can Move Earth”

It can be observed that there is no match between water and a stone as far as the rigidity and solidity is concerned. The stone is firm and not easily breakable while the water is liquid and flows softly. If a person has to break a stone with water, it seems unimaginable; however, it is also true that the water has the capacity to make a hole into a stone – that is a task that can be performed even by tiny drops of water. All the drops require consistency and determination.

Put a stone under a tap of water and let the drops of water fall on the stone. You may not be able to observe anything within a day, not even within weeks and months but if the drops keep on dropping for years the firmness of the water would definitely have to be defeated by the soft minute drops and a hole has to be made.

The above example clearly indicates that the consistency, determination and iron will have the capacity to make great and sometimes impossible achievements. Though talent and aptitude have their own importance, they can never reach to the status of persistent efforts.

Talented people can be tired of the situation, can lose hope and even be disheartened but not the ones who are persistent. They may fail at first and fall again after rising for the second time but they can never give up. Not giving up means there is always a hope and the doors to blessings are never closed.

A determined person has to lose nothing. Even if he fails to achieve what he has set for, which seems very improbable, he loses nothing as throughout the process he has learned the invaluable gift of patience and perseverance. Moreover, such a person is never dispirited as he has had faith and hope alive within himself and he has acquired the quality of keeping his spirits high and his willpower undefeated.

You might have heard the story of a person who was digging somewhere in search of gold and after digging for some days and being only few inches away from a large chest of gold had given up. He had lost hope and therefore the opportunity and the reward. The reward is always for those who wait for it and for those who earn it. In fact, what he had lost was not the gold but the determination.

Unfortunately, today the new generation that is living in a fast moving technological world, does not have the stamina for persistence. They are always in search of shortcuts. They want to acquire all the success and wealth within no time. They don't seem to have the temperament to earn their rewards through untiring efforts. That's why we see them lost in their imaginations away from the real world and most of the time we find them involved in so many illegal and non-ethical activities to achieve what they desire in a short span of time.

In order to achieve their shortcut goals, they give birth to so many other social evils, which they do not seem to realize as they are intoxicated with the drug of their own personal benefits. Such an attitude has, in reality, loosened the social fabrics and the race for the achievements of personal goals has gained momentum but that has been done with the sacrifice of cooperative and normal social life.

They resemble the person who used to have a hen that laid a golden egg every day. But the person was not patient enough to wait and get one golden egg a day. Therefore, he decided that he would slaughter the hen and get all the golden eggs that were in the belly of the hen at a time. Unfortunately, when he slaughtered the hen and cut its belly he could not find even a single egg as egg would nourish each day.

Louis C.K. had beautifully quoted, “I've learned from experience that if you work harder at it, and apply more energy and time to it, and more consistency, you get a better result.

It comes from the work”. However, it is also important that the consistent and persistent efforts must be guided towards the right direction. There must be preliminary understanding of what target to choose and what direction to follow. Blindly following a wrong path and pursuing a wrong target with persistence would only mean colliding ones head to a rock and keep on doing it.

Provided that the target is suitable and the direction is properly chosen, there is no doubt in the fact that hard work and untiring endeavors would enable a person to achieve even the most difficult targets in the world, as was said by Yamamoto Tsunetomo, “Nothing is impossible in this world. Firm determination, it is said, can move heaven and earth. Things appear far beyond one's power, because one cannot set his heart on any arduous project due to want of strong will”.



No One Deserves Inhuman Treatment

By Hujjatullah Zia

People sustain inhuman treatment in times of war and peace across the world and their rights and “inherent dignity” are violated in one way or another. Although there is a set of globally accepted moral and human principles which form the foundation of international instruments, the pain and sufferings of human societies and individuals continue unabated. During the war, civilians; including women and children, war prisoners, the wound and sick; undergo violence and atrocities. Warring sides hardly observe the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Both warring sides – be it states or state and militants – have to observe humanitarian law and human dignity.

In some cases, atrocities, cruel practices, and inhuman treatment in civil conflicts outshined international conflicts. For instance, the harsh practices of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the acts of violence and barbarity of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, etc. were highly offensive and outraged the human conscience. Therefore, both governments and anti-government parties have to practice upon international instruments, human acts, and ethical code.

Governments are neither allowed to humiliate the militants or violate their human rights. On the other hand, human rights and dignity of all individuals, including combatants and non-combatants, are inviolable. Combatants are not allowed to target civilians at all. Similarly, war prisoners, “the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field” should be treated with humanity.

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” this is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Although human or inhuman treatment is widely stated in international instruments, it is still ambiguous to some extent. It is said that inhuman treatment includes an act which leads to indescribable mental or physical pain and sufferings or practices which are contrary to the fundamental principles of human treatment especially violating one's “inherent dignity”.

Even degrading a dead body of a human being is considered inhuman treatment. To realize inhuman treatment, for which there is not a unanimous definition, one is advised to refer to public conscience, human principles, and the “golden rule” which is beyond cultural or geographical restrictions. Golden rule, which says do to others what you want to be done to you, is deep-seated in all cultures and

religions and agreed upon globally.

There are a number of fundamental principles accepted globally and prevailing in all cultures. Generally speaking, there are four intra-cultural principles: First, commitment to the non-violent culture and respect to life.

It is stated in religious tenets and ethical code that do not kill anyone or respect one's right to life. Based on this fact, one will be free to exercise their rights to life and liberty to the extent that others' rights or freedoms are not harmed. Resolving social and political conflicts in a non-violent manner is strongly advised.

Second, commitment to the culture of solidarity and fair economic system. It is widely advised by religions that one has not to rob anything and treat individuals with honesty and justice. It indicates one's right to property.

Third, commitment to the culture of tolerance and honest life. Individuals and human societies will have to exercise tolerance toward one another and accept one as s/he is regardless of their race, sex, color, or creed.

Fourth, commitment to the culture of equal rights and participation of men and women. Religious tenets and ethical codes suggest that one is not supposed to commit immoral sexual act and people have to respect one another. Sexual exploitation or discrimination is deemed one of the ugliest sorts of humiliation.

Exploiting one – be it a man or a woman – sexually, forcing children into sex labor, or treating one in inhuman way are not acceptable at all. The mentality of inferiority or superiority on the basis of gender is not tolerable. Patriarchal system, which promotes violence, should come to an end and men and women need to hold each other in respect. These aforementioned principles are accepted widely in different cultures and religions.

Human rights norms are deeply rooted in ethical codes and moral conscience. Fundamental rights and freedoms are based on moral standards. Thus, morality is the mainstay of human rights and humanitarian law. It is said that the principle of respecting human dignity is the cornerstone of humanitarian law. To view the globally accepted principles that are based on humanity and universal ethics, individuals and human societies need to practice upon them so as to put an end to violence and atrocities. Indeed, if we do not observe international instruments, ethical code, or humanity, people will suffer inhuman treatment and violation of their rights and dignity.

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Racing the Machine

By Robert Skidelsky

Dispelling anxiety about robots has become a major preoccupation of business apologetics. The commonsense – and far from foolish – view is that the more jobs are automated, the fewer there will be for humans to perform. The headline example is the driverless car. If cars can drive themselves, what will happen to chauffeurs, taxi drivers, and so on?

Economic theory tells us that our worries are groundless. Attaching machines to workers increases their output for each hour they work. They then have an enviable choice: work less for the same wage as before, or work the same number of hours for more pay. And as the cost of existing goods falls, consumers will have more money to spend on more of the same goods or different ones. Either way, there is no reason to expect a net loss of human jobs – or anything but continual improvements in living standards.

History suggests as much. For the last 200 years or so, productivity has been steadily rising, especially in the West. The people who live in the West have chosen both more leisure and higher income. Hours of work in rich countries have halved since 1870, while real per capita income has risen by a factor of five. How many existing human jobs are actually “at risk” to robots? According to an invaluable report by the McKinsey Global Institute, about 50% of time spent on human work activities in the global economy could theoretically be automated today, though current trends suggest a maximum of 30% by 2030, depending mainly on the speed of adoption of new technology. The report's midpoint predictions are: Germany, 24%; Japan, 26%; the United States, 23%; China, 16%; India, 9%; and Mexico, 13%. By 2030, MGI estimates, 400-800 million individuals will need to find new occupations, some of which don't yet exist.

This rate of job displacement is not far out of line with previous periods. One reason why automation is so frightening today is that the future was more unknowable in the past: we lacked the data for alarmist forecasts. The more profound reason is that current automation prospects herald a future in which machines can plausibly replace humans in many spheres of work where it was thought that only we could do the job. Economists have always believed that previous waves of job destruction led to an equilibrium between supply and demand in the labor market at a higher level of both employment and earnings. But if robots can actually replace, not just displace, humans, it is hard to see an equilibrium point until the human race itself becomes redundant.

The MGI report rejects such a gloomy conclusion. In the long run, the economy can adjust to provide satisfying work for everyone who wants it. “For society as a whole, machines can take on work that is routine, dangerous, or dirty, and may allow us to use our intrinsically human talents more fully and enjoy more leisure.”

This is about as good as it gets in business economics. Yet

there are some serious gaps in the argument. The first concerns the length and scope of the transition from the human to the automated economy. Here, the past may be a less reliable guide than we think, because the slower pace of technological change meant that job replacement kept up with job displacement. Today, displacement – and thus disruption – will be much faster, because technology is being invented and diffused much faster. “In advanced economies, all scenarios,” McKinsey writes, “result in full employment by 2030, but transition may include periods of higher unemployment and [downward] wage adjustments,” depending on the speed of adaptation.

This poses a dilemma for policymakers. The faster the new technology is introduced, the more jobs it eats up, but the quicker its promised benefits are realized. The MGI report rejects attempts to limit the scope and pace of automation, which would “curtail the contributions that these technologies make to business dynamism and economic growth.”

Given this priority, the main policy response follows automatically: massive investment, on a “Marshall Plan scale,” in education and workforce training to ensure that humans are taught the critical skills to enable them to cope with the transition. The report also recognizes the need to ensure that “wages are linked to rising productivity, so that prosperity is shared with all.” But it ignores the fact that recent productivity gains have overwhelmingly benefited a small minority. Consequently, it pays scant attention to how the choice between work and leisure promised by economists can be made effective for all.

Finally, there is the assumption running through the report that automation is not just desirable, but irreversible. Once we have learned to do something more efficiently (at lower cost), there is no possibility of going back to doing it less efficiently. The only question left is how humans can best adapt to the demands of a higher standard of efficiency.

Philosophically, this is confused, because it conflates doing something more efficiently with doing it better. It mixes up a technical argument with a moral one. Of the world promised us by the apostles of technology, it is both possible and necessary to ask: Is it good?

Is a world in which we are condemned to race with machines to produce ever-larger quantities of consumption goods a world worth having? And if we cannot hope to control this world, what is the value of being human? These questions may be outside McKinsey remit, but they should not be off limits to public discussion. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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