

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



December 31, 2017

Individual Development in Social Life

In a tribal setup, family plays a key role. It is the center of the entire social life. In fact, it is considered responsible for all sort of nourishment that a person receives. Moreover, different individuals are also linked to their families in various ways. If they are able to achieve something marvelous, and they become successful people in their lives, their families are praised, particularly, their parents. However, if they fail to become successful individuals in life and some of them are caught in the web of crimes and antisocial activities, again their parents are held responsible. This sort of thinking is, however, very narrow in certain ways.

It is, therefore, essential to see the phenomenon in a greater detail with open mind. As a matter of fact, the development of a personality is highly dependent on various institutions; from family to political system, there is a long list. Yes, the family is the basic one but the institutions like schools, social, cultural and religious institutions and ceremonies, offices, sports and others have their undying influences. All these institutions have different practices and there are different personalities in them that imprint their marks on a person psychology. It is difficult to say that a particular behavior within a person is the outcome of the family or the parents alone as there are different factors involved at the same time.

Parents' nourishment - their care and their neglect have influence on the children, this cannot be rejected. It is believed and believed rightly that a mother's lap is the first academy for a child. But there is a long journey between how a person is treated by his parents and his choice to commit an evil. Moreover, the imprints of parent's behavior on the minds of the children are not like reflection in a mirror - it does not come back in the same form; or it is not like the input and output in the computer, where the output is as per the demands of the users.

If it was so, parenting would not be difficult at all, but it is not so and the parents living in our society are the witness to it. The love from the parents will not necessarily result in a good conduct of the children - observations show that children with great love and attention from their parents have committed crimes and evils that have made history; similarly, their neglect does not necessarily result in the children becoming evil-doers. There are many children in our society, who are the victims of their parents' negligence, yet they show great values and behavior and even hate evils. Simply, human behavior and psychology is not like mathematics where two plus two is equal to four. To understand it, more efforts are required than just to cram the tables; unfortunately, the people do not know anything better than that; therefore, they are not able to understand the complex nature of human existence.

The evils that we see in our society are, in fact, the responsibility of the society as a whole. As Henry Thomas Buckle had said, "The society prepares a crime, the criminal commits it". This suggests that there are many socio-economic conditions that are involved in the preparation of the crimes which are the biggest evil in our society. The social injustice, the economic disadvantage, the political corruption, the religious intolerance, all these factors and many others play their roles in motivating the criminals and the evil-doers to commit them.

Suppose a person steals money and becomes a thief. There are certain possibilities, all of which towards the role of the society in it - the person stole money because he was compelled by his economic conditions. He might have had financial problems and have been incapable of providing basic requirements of life to his family members.

He might have a patient at home, waiting to be cured, which is only possible in today's society through money as health services have become a great business. Thus, there are so many social factors that have nothing to do with the parents alone and which even compel the parents to nourish and guide their children in a certain way.

In fact, if we see from a wider perspective we will soon realize that parents themselves are among the effected, how can they be the cause? The vicious circles of the unjust economic and political systems have bound the people in such a way that they have no way out and no clear idea what to do except blaming each other.

That is why we find parents blaming the children and children blaming the parents, and many others blaming both of them, when in fact both are innocent. However, as mentioned earlier, to understand this concept a wider approach is required while many people are just peeping through the lock hole to see the whole room, which does not assist them in any way to see the whole truth.

Now, if the door is opened for them, they would be able to see the whole truth and realize how big this world is! Much bigger than a narrow-minded tribal perspective!



Is ISIL on the Run?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Using ground in Iraq and Syria, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has extended its reach in other parts of the region, including Afghanistan. 2017 has been a deadly year for Afghan nation as the ISIL fighters carried out large-scale attacks across the country. Kabul also came under severe attacks within the two past years. The Thursday's attack on a cultural center in Kabul, which was claimed by ISIL and left heavy casualties behind, shows that this group has gained firm foothold in the country and pursues its sinister objective in Afghanistan.

Since the ISIL fighters have been targeting ethnic minority groups, it seeks to foment sectarian violence in the country. In other words, fueling sectarian tension was one of the main objectives of the ISIL group in Afghanistan. If Afghans exercise hatred and animosity on the basis of sect or creed, it will support the ISIL militants to approach their aim and exploit sectarian and religious sensitivities. For example, many kings practiced upon the policy of "divide and rule" in the past and aroused the sensitivities of an ethnic party against another simply to prolong the life of their regimes.

ISIL intends to pursue the same policy so as to strengthen its foothold in Afghanistan. To view the Taliban's practices, they colored their regime with the brush of sect and religion during the final years of their regime, to be able to recruit from a certain ethnic group. If the ISIL's sinister aim of sectarianism comes true, this group will also be able to recruit from certain ethnic groups and gain their support.

Secondly, the ISIL fighters seek to demonstrate their power and show that it is still able to send threat to the world. Political pundits believe that the ISIL's defeat in Iraq and Syria does not mark its death knell, it is hunting for safe havens and pursues its reorganization. The ISIL's activities, especially spreading propaganda, continues for the aim of recruiting youths from different backgrounds. Although it acts as a rag-tag group in many parts of the world, a large number of its members are likely to have gathered in Afghanistan.

It is self-explanatory that the ISIL fighters exercise a radical worldview and dogmatic mindset. Its only aim is to shed blood, no matter where and whose. That is to say, any reasons will fall on the deaf ears of ISIL members and they will show no flexibility to reason or logic. Therefore, ISIL will never hold negotiation with any states or parties and the

only way to campaign against this group is eradicating all its contexts and grounds through military deal. Meanwhile, Islamic clergy are supposed to launch an ideological campaign against the ISIL network and condemn its harsh and inhuman practices from religious perspective.

Afghan government has to be particularly cautious about the extension of ISIL group in the country. The Russian government said earlier that a number of suspected helicopters are landing in northern parts of Afghanistan, which might carry ISIL fighters. Meanwhile, the former Jihadi leader Muhammad Ismail Khan said that the removal of Balkh provincial governor by President Ghani will pave the ground for the firm foothold of ISIL in northern part of the country. So, the government has to consider all the possible issues and prevent from the presence of ISIL in any possible way.

The ISIL's presence is very serious in Afghanistan. In 2017, it inflicted heavy casualties upon Afghan nation. The Afghan capital came under attack several times in 2017. On March 8, more than 30 people were killed when gunmen dressed in white lab coats stormed a hospital in the center of the city. ISIL claimed responsibility for that attack, but officials considered other groups could have been responsible. On May 31, a truck bomb exploded near the diplomatic district, killing more than 150 people. It remains unclear who was behind the assault. On October 21, ISIL claimed responsibility for killing at least 39 people at a Shia mosque in Kabul. On December 28, the ISIL claimed responsibility for killing more than 50 people and wounding at least 84.

Although Afghan President said earlier that the ISIL is on the run and it has sustained heavy casualties as a result of strong attacks of Afghan soldiers, the fact shows otherwise. It is believed that 2018 will also be a deadly year for Afghans for two reasons. First, the ISIL will continue its terrorist acts against the nation, particularly ethnic minorities. Second, the Taliban show no interest in peace process and will keep on fighting against the government. So, years are passing, but there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

To campaign against ISIL in effective way, Afghan government and its allies will have to intensify their attacks - not only defensive but also offensive ones. Furthermore, the government has to tighten the border security so that militants no more be able to cross the country's porous borders.

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A Trump New Year

By Elizabeth Drew

As US President Donald Trump decamped to his mansion-cum-private club in Palm Beach, Florida, for the holidays, he left Washington, DC, on edge. It's obvious that Trump and his strong allies in Congress - he has more than one might expect - are determined to torpedo what's supposed to be an independent legal inquiry into whether Trump and his campaign colluded with Russia in its efforts to defeat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The Trump camp's behavior toward Special Counsel Robert Mueller and the FBI, which is aiding Mueller's investigation, makes Richard Nixon and his aides' behavior toward the Watergate investigators look tame and respectful by comparison. Although Nixon did fire the first independent prosecutor, Archibald Cox, in the infamous "Saturday Night Massacre," another was installed and Nixon ultimately resigned rather than face impeachment by the House of Representatives and conviction by the Senate. (In that case, he would have had to leave office without a valuable pension.)

Oddly, Trump and his advisers seem not to have learned from more recent history, either. In firing FBI director James Comey, Trump opened himself up to the appointment of a special counsel. Whether an impeachment effort will be made cannot be known now. But most observers believe that key Republicans in the House of Representatives, where impeachment would begin, have thrown in their lot with Trump, mainly because they fear his loyal base (about a third of the country, clustered in many congressional districts).

That could change if the Democrats take over the House in next November's midterm elections. But even if the Democrats won both houses of Congress, they would most likely be unable to muster the two-thirds majority needed to convict Trump in the Senate. Trump clearly fears that Mueller will find grounds to indict him. One strong possibility is that the president would be charged with obstructing justice - both an impeachable offense and a crime. A criminal charge of obstruction requires proof of intent to convict, but Trump's serial efforts to impinge on or halt the investigation suggest that he worries that he would be vulnerable. Whether a president can actually be indicted is an unsettled question; but if Mueller believes that the president shouldn't be indicted, he would submit his charges to the House, which would then decide whether to proceed with impeachment.

Trump is determined to head off both outcomes, and he's clearly worried that he might fail. But it's not just Trump who could be in legal trouble. Mueller has run a disciplined and tight-lipped shop, free of leaks; but it's widely expected that Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, will be indicted.

That may explain why Trump is treading where Nixon never dared to go, by trying to smear both Mueller and the FBI. Until now, both had enjoyed bipartisan respect. But Trump has been frustrated by the warnings he has received that firing Mueller would set off a political firestorm. (Because Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein must make the call to dismiss Mueller, and has said that he sees no reason to do so, Trump would first have to fire Rosenstein, which would look too much like the Saturday Night Massacre, the turning point

in Nixon's presidency.) So, by raising questions about Mueller's integrity and that of the FBI, Trump and his allies are trying to set the stage for a widespread public dismissal of whatever Mueller reports.

It's been a dismaying spectacle. Trump denounces the FBI in his tweets and other statements. His right-wing allies in the House of Representatives (even more partisan than the Senate) have subjected the new FBI director, Christopher Wray, to hostile questioning in various committee hearings. And they have grilled the deputy director, Andrew McCabe - who was close to Comey and could verify his claims that Trump tried to persuade him to limit the investigation - for eight and nine hours at a time. The bullying of senior Justice Department and FBI officials by House committees has been without precedent since the anti-communist witch hunts of the 1950s. This strategy seeks to force the dismissal or reassignment of troublesome FBI and Justice officials. Sadly, it is having some success. McCabe will reportedly retire in 2018, and a recent poll showed a significant drop in public support for Mueller's investigation over the past six months.

This is what has the capital on edge. No one can be sure that Trump won't take some dramatic action - whether related to international affairs or to the Russia investigation - during his sojourn in Palm Beach. While Trump continues to succumb to Vladimir Putin's blandishments (retired US intelligence official James Clapper recently remarked that Putin, a former KGB agent, is a great case officer in his handling of Trump), US relations with Russia are deteriorating.

Both sides are taking steps that are deepening bilateral tensions. Russian submarines have been trolling near vital Western communications cables on the Atlantic Ocean floor, implying a risk of serious damage to the US and European economies and way of life. In response, NATO plans to establish a new command center to monitor such activities. Russian military planes have also been flying close to NATO aircraft. Moreover, the Trump administration recently announced that it would permit the sale of lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine, to counter Russian aggression there - a move that Russia says will only beget more violence. Then there's North Korea, with which a war is quite possible, according to some retired military officials.

Trump is known to be volatile and impulsive, but so far his major advisers have restrained him. They work hard at this, trying to avoid taking actions or telling him things that might upset him. The Washington Post recently disclosed that his intelligence briefers avoid talking about Russia.

But the constellation of foreign-policy and intelligence officials around Trump is understood to be about to change. It is widely expected that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will be replaced by a more hawkish figure early in 2018. An exodus of White House staff members has begun, owing to dissatisfaction on their or Trump's part. Even if we get through the holidays in relative peace, it's clear that 2018 will be a tumultuous year. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Elizabeth Drew is a regular contributor to The New York Review of Books and the author, most recently, of Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon's Downfall.

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