

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



February 18, 2015

## Afghanistan and The Valentine's Day Debate

With every passing year, the celebrations or in true sense, the less discussion about Valentine's Day is increasing in our country and it is gradually getting the shape of another matter that is going to divide the society into two classes of different mindsets. Valentine's Day is celebrated all over the world on 14th February as a day of lovers when different lovers send gifts to each other and special gatherings are arranged to celebrate this day.

In a number of countries, where this day is celebrated on a large scale and gifts of billions of dollars are bought and exchanged, the day is not welcomed with a similar reception in Muslim countries of the world. According to majority of the Muslims, Islamic rules don't permit any such interaction between a couple and this sinful act cannot be tolerated by anyone. With these views, the Muslim world seems to be divided about the issue. On one side are those young members of society who desperately wait for this day and on the other are those, who are willing to go to any extreme to stop this. It would not be correct to claim that no one in Afghanistan is interested in Valentine's Day and it is not a problem at all but at the same time, it is also a fact that there has not been any visible evidence that this day has been celebrated by some people in the country. However, it is a sad fact that without having any clear proof, there are many who consider themselves to be so-called protectors and saviors of religion and are talking against it on different forms of media.

As the Valentine's Day was approaching, the discussion got heated up on media as whether this day should be celebrated or not. Majority of the posts and comments on social networking sites showed it to be Non-Islamic and much bitter language and expressions were used against those who celebrate this day. On the other hand, there were also present many who were opposing them due to their extreme behaviors. Unfortunately, it appears that it is going to be another issue in coming years to influence people towards religious extremism and it would be very unfortunate that this small problem should be taken as a divisive factor in our society.

Without having a look at the comments in favor of and against this day, it is again unfortunate that number of people in our society is still high who try to intervene in personal issues of others on the name of religion. In a society like ours, where majority of people are dishonest to their jobs and country, it is like making a fun of religion when people of similar characters should try to implement it on others without proper knowledge. In almost all the comments and posts given on internet, a single fact was badly felt that these posts and comments needed more maturity, compassion and similar traits. On the other hand, it is also a helpless situation that trend of imposing good qualities of religion by a bad strategy not only persists but thrives with every passing day. It is a fact that religion and similar gentle thoughts are related with the internal desire of people and none of it can be imposed by force. If we have to make people realize the importance of religion, it is never going to happen by force. We will have to look for better ideas in this regard.

However, it is also a fact that some media outlets have also acted irresponsibly. If a day or event is against the general desire of majority of people, it falls on the shoulders of media outlets not to give it extraordinary and unnecessary coverage with the intention of some monetary profit. It is a fact that majority of people in Afghanistan are much sentimental about religious issues and they show immediate extreme reaction in this regard so it is needed that media outlets should broadcast programmes that should not be against the wishes and sentiments of the majority. This sensitivity is not shown by media and on the occasion of Valentine's Day, such programs are shown as if every young couple in the country is actively participating in these celebrations.

The present shape of Valentine's Day is not acceptable to our society and religion. Our religion strictly prohibits the open interaction of young couples. But it is also unwise to conceal this issue by force and taking an extreme path to tackle it. If young minds are getting attracted to this Western celebration, a proper and well-planned strategy is needed so that they should realize all the evils associated with this celebration. They should realize that it is for their own good if they keep themselves away from this. With this strategy, we would be sure that no one's feelings would be hurt and there will not be any need of shouting or scolding others. Such mature strategy of mutual respect and understanding would bring a lasting and wise solution to this problem. For this, the intellectual class needs to come forward and not leave the arena empty for those young and emotional minds who are yet to cover a lot of distance to handle such fragile issues carefully.

## TAPI Project: Corridor to Politico-economical Riches

By Asmatyari

Strong and appalling economies serve the basis of steady and constant progress. It, not only supports socio-political affairs, but also pivots general welfare initiatives taken by state. To chase this goal Afghanistan is bound to establish friendly relation with the neighboring countries based on trust and confidence. This will only crystallize when trusts are earned by demonstrating an impartial diplomacy. Luckily this war-torn piece of land is surrounded by rich capitals: the energy rich, central Asian countries and the fastest growing economies; South Asian countries.

India is the potential economy in South-Asia that just follows China in Asia. It has earned great deal of material success during the short course of time. To reap the fruits of industrial progress India made, Afghanistan should strengthen its bilateral ties with India. To pursue this dream Pakistan ought to equally be taken on board. President Ghani has made visits to countries owing potentials to help out Afghanistan to do away its security and economic tribulations. He paid visit to Pakistan to revitalize its resolve undoing the battered relation and work together fighting the menace of terrorism. His visit to Pakistan led to fruition to certain extent, seeing a joint venture launched against terrorism on the troubled Af-Pak border. Subsequently, he paid a visit to United Arab Emirate, in the bid to earn the confidence of potential investors that would create employment opportunities.

Formerly, Mr. President paid to a two-day visit to Turkmenistan which is one of the world's fastest-growing economies. President, Ashraf Ghani and his Turkmen counterpart have stressed the need for cementing economic relations, trade and cultural links between Kabul and Ashgabat. According to concerned official the two premiers, hoped that bilateral trade volume between the two neighbors, which stood at \$1 billion in 2014, would double this year.

Afghanistan at present is facing extreme power shortages. It relies on imports from its neighbors to meet its needs. The Turkmen premier afforded willingness to export 500 megawatts of power to Afghanistan. It's indeed a great step ahead, to cope with increasing power demand. In the meanwhile, the Turkmen head of the state, also hinted at plans to construct maternity home in Torg'hondi district, an orphanage in Jawzjan and two mosques in Aqina and Andkhoi.

Turkmenistan is largely a desert country with intensive agriculture irrigated areas, and huge gas and oil resources. In terms of natural gas reserves, it is ranked 4th in the world. Being the fourth largest gas reserves; it has been actively on the lookout to build transportation routes to large markets and the route through Afghanistan has been the most feasible and economical. The rise of India as an economic giant and its increasing energy needs make Turkmenistan and Central Asia energy markets of choice for that country and also China.

Gas, oil and electricity are principal imports from Turkmenistan. The Turkmen president said his country wanted to increase energy exports to Afghanistan and was currently working on centre for exporting gas to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan, especially under the new President, is trying to play a small, but positive role in Afghanistan's development and reconstruction. Ashgabat has de-

livered humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and forgiven much of Kabul's debt for Turkmen electrical power. Turkmenistan continues to supply Afghanistan with energy at a deep discount and Ashgabat has reconstructed a portion of the railway that will connect the two countries.

Turkmenistan is rich in natural gas, and currently sells most of its gas to Russia and Ukraine. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project undertaken between three countries is of immense significance. Ashgabat has often wanted access to India and the markets of Asia, which desperately need Central Asia's energy supplies to sustain their rapid economic growth.

The proposed Trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline, or the TAPI pipeline, named for the four countries that it would pass through (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) would bring natural gas from the Dauletabad gas field in central Turkmenistan along a highway to Herat in eastern Afghanistan and further to Helmand and Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. From there, it would go on to Quetta and Multan in Pakistan, terminating in Fazilka in northern India. The nearly 1,800-km-long proposed pipeline project worth around \$10 billion aims to export up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year and integrate economies of the four partnering nations. It is said Afghanistan would earn \$300 million dollars annually in transit fee besides finding thousands of employment opportunities.

To finalize the course of action of proposed project, a meeting of steering committee consisting of ministers from four countries met in Islamabad formerly. The fact that Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired a meeting of the petroleum ministers of the TAPI member countries in Islamabad today would signal that the project is likely approaching the takeoff stage. The project of course helps Pakistan and India get away with the battered relation. This in turn will help Afghanistan travel easily across avenues of material success. The project's uniqueness is that it could make Pakistan a 'stakeholder' in stable relationship with India - and vice versa. More importantly, it enables the two countries to bury the backlog of the past and move on to a new phase in the geopolitical arena where the stabilization of Afghanistan becomes a shared concern rather than an issue of rivalry. The single biggest element of distrust in the Pakistani mind about India's intentions would also get removed - namely, Pakistan's suspicions regarding Indian activities in Afghanistan.

The central Asians and South Asians countries bridged via roads and rails facilitate the fastest business between these countries; it in fact opens the new avenues to financial development. President, Ghani stressed a railway line between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries including China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkmenistan. He believed such a track would pave the ground for spurring regional trade.

The exercise of neutral politics should be the main feature of Afghanistan foreign policy. The incumbent government must prioritize, establishing and continuing a balance relationship with the countries both regional and extra-territorial, given it encompasses more gains than expected.

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## Fashionable Girls

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan girls seek to embellish their world according to their own ideals. Their eye-catching dresses, pungent perfume and ostentatious styles seem inevitable. The girls evince keen interest in advertisement gimmicks and amorous films. The fashionable fetishes of modern age have captured their imagination to a large extent. Our children and teenage girls are highly susceptible to glamour of Hollywood, Bollywood, etc. deluding themselves about the lugubrious story of abortive love. After watching a love scene, a girl may cultivate friendship with her neighbor's son seeking to walk and talk as her favorite actress. After all, their egoistic attitudes and indifference towards their senile parents culminate in hot tussles. Although, they are not the stay of their parents' old age and fly the nest when they mature physically, yet they do not falter to practice temerity and asperity in their domestic life.

Some disregard their fathers who work up a sweat with doddering hands. A sense of egotism permeates Afghan families which precipitates aversion and domestic strife. How do the parents react to this bitter fact?

The parents rue nostalgically the simple life of old days. Their deplorable state, caused by the bizarre acts of their progeny, nettles them seriously. Since their children are deaf to their sage advice or supplication, they heap invective and hurl abuse upon their daughters. Moreover, the conservative parents believe that the eye-catching style of their daughters, such as mini-skirt and flamboyant dress, besmirches their reputation among their kith and kin. They give precedence to the traditional styles of clothing over the current fashion. They deem that their daughters break their moral and religious taboos via succumbing to the temptations of Western ways of clothing. Do their parents' vitriolic attacks fetter them from their idealistic styles?

The girls' parental rebukes are not cogent words for them. Their advices, with harsh tone, go in one ear and out the other. The plight, which hurts the parents' feelings, continues unabated and their attempts to nurture religious feelings in their scions are fruitless. Seemingly, the girls remain adamant not to yield to their parents' trenchant words, fractious behaviors or puissant persistence to dress up according to the taste of their old fathers or mothers.

It is a matter of great worry for the traditional parents who fail to hand down their own religious beliefs and moral norms to their daughters. They believe that media have jeopardized society's moral norms. According to them, the eruption of immoral programs, inundation of foreign cultures and inchoate democracy

threaten their kids and teens. The schism between religion and new generation widens with each passing day. Hence, our youths, including male and female, wander in the tortuous path of modern fashion and our moral values are on the verge of erosion.

The girls, particularly the urban residents, are badly attracted to the allure of foreign fashions - which outweigh their beliefs - on a scale that their elders' advice cannot palliate the problem. The unchaste actresses, who lack moral sense, are perfect idols for many Afghan girls.

Charlie Chaplin points out critical points in a letter to her actress daughter Zheraldin as, "Your body is covered only with a piece of silk. Because art can and will appear naked on stage, but to come back from there in wearing and cleaner ..."

But nothing and no one else in this world deserves to see even the nails of the feet of a girl. Nakedness is a disease of our time.

I am old and my words might sound funny. But me, your naked body must belong to one who loves Face your soul. It is not scary if your belief that is ten years from the time you go. Fear not - those ten years they will not sastaryat. But as it is, I want you to be the last person who is subject of the island of bare! ..."

A woman can and should be beautiful - God designed her to be that way.

Her skin, hair and other features were created to be soft and appealing, and her body was fashioned to be attractive and beautiful to men. A woman was designed to be attractive, and most women want to be beautiful. However, the physical side of beauty is just a small part of what makes a woman truly beautiful.

It's the quality that elevates a woman from just hot. It's in the way she walks, talks and presents herself. It's the way she radiates from the inside, out. It's her soul and her spark and that thing you just can't put your finger on.

A physically attractive woman is one who dresses modestly. Our society teaches women to flaunt their physical attributes by displaying scantily dressed women on billboards, magazines and most other media outlets. Many women feel they must also dress this way to be considered attractive. This is not true. A woman dressed in a modest, feminine way is very attractive. She is not only attractive, she gains honor and respect from those who see her. A woman's body is designed to be attractive and arousing to men, and when a woman is revealing too much of herself in public, she is stirring up the wrong kind of feelings and will attract the wrong kind of attention. A truly beautiful woman aims for respect in the way she dresses.

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