

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

# Daily Outlook

## AFGHANISTAN

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### Violence – A Reason behind Criminal Tendency

**A** violent and unsavory milieu fills one with a strong sense of antipathy and human frailties. If you just watch horror movies twenty-four/seven, you will acquire violent attitudes. If you hear heresy, foul languages and vitriol, you will become inured to them, and if you watch people involved in a spate of moral wickedness such as honor killing, defaming the reputation of modest women, preying on simple girls to satisfy their carnal desires, etc. you will be affected mentally and emotionally.

Men are highly susceptible to environmental factors. It is believed that with watching carnage and tragic scenes, a persistent sense of nightmare will haunt you. You will lose your hope for living. However, if the scene repeats in your surroundings, you do not only become used to it but will also feel like engaging in the same activities. With murdering first person, your hands will tremble with fear and your conscience will be shaken, but the more one gets involved in inhuman acts, the crueler s/he will get. Gradually, criminal acts will whet their appetite for cruelty and immoral practices. The life story of Shirin Gul, a notorious killer who is imprisoned in Nangarhar province, substantiates this fact. She is in the 12th year of a 20-year prison sentence for a killing spree that claimed the lives of 27 men. When Shirin Gul confessed to murder in 2004, she told investigators that she had lured her victims to her home with the promise of sex. There, she said, Rahmatullah, her son and several other men helped her poison and strangle the victims. Their bodies were buried in the courtyards of two homes the family kept, one in Kabul and the other in Jalalabad. The dead men's cars were stripped of license plates and sold along the border with Pakistan and in Khost Province.

Shirin Gul was born in the Shewa district of Nangarhar Province, in the east of the country. She says that her parents died when she was 2 and that relatives married her off to an older man when she was just 11. Her husband, who was a colonel in the communist government, beat her and mistreated her, she said. One of her cousins, Rahmatullah, the driver for a Taliban strongman, visited the family often. The more Rahmatullah visited, Shirin Gul said, the closer the two became. He brought food and gifts to the house, sometimes just for her. Eventually, he told Shirin Gul's husband that he was in love with her and that he planned to take her away. The husband, fearful of resisting Rahmatullah, conceded. It was then, she said, that she and Rahmatullah decided to kill her husband.

If we ponder over Shirin Gul's life, she was bereft of compassion when her mother left her behind and she was coerced into marrying an older man – who treated her fractiously. Seemingly, her life was replete with violence and anguish. Finally, she succumbed to a man's sexual desires expressed under the guise of love and plotted to kill her husband. Therefore, it is believed that coercion and lack of sympathy led to forming a lump in her throat and filled her with a sense of aversion and revenge. The puissant sense of revenge outweighed her humanity and virtue and she resorted to violence as a result of being treated violently.

Additionally, financial problem was one of the major reasons behind her complicity. Those who live in slums covet the luxury edifices, sumptuous meals and wealth of the rich. On the one hand, their mouths water with fortuitous sight of flamboyant and stylish clothing of the rich and on the other hand, they suffer derogatory remarks on streets. To palliate their wounded hearts and painful feelings, the poor seek to get rid of hapless life at the cost of their religious beliefs and moral values. Therefore, they violate the rights and dignity of people without a sense of guilt.

It should be noted that domestic violence, which is rife among Afghan families, will change a woman, who is supposed to nurture human feelings, into a dangerous killer. Parental tussle and conjugal strife will affect the members of family psychologically. Suppose, when a girl is forced to live her whole life under the same roof with a senile man, or she falls prey to a gang rape and her character is besmirched in her neighborhood, the life will be meaningless for her and she would react with a fit of pique to give vent to all the injustice. A person in such a deplorable state is justified to yielding her anger. To put it succinctly, since her rights and dignity are trampled upon, she would not care to violate the rights of others and engage in crime and corruption. We have to stop treating women as a pariah and stand aloof from violence. As long as there is a vestige of feeling that women are inferior, then we will never be able to perfect our social and domestic problems. Our fractious attitudes and conservative mentality towards women are really detrimental to our social and cultural structures. The propriety of practicing religious guideline and ethical code should not be underestimated. Since mankind is born with inherent rights and dignity, let them live freely.



## Being One Human Family

By Dilawar Sherzai

**I**t is absolutely weird to see human beings to promote differences and discrepancies among one another even though they have been suffering from its negative consequences to a large extent. Though, it is a natural fact that there are distinctions among different human beings and human groups, highlighting these distinctions to such an extent where they become disagreements and conflicts are not natural. There are so many difference that human beings have created themselves, use the same to separate themselves from and others and have, as a result, spoiled their societies. One of the main differences that human beings have in their societies is the class difference. Human beings, by the dint of the socio-economic setup that they have created, have been divided into rich and poor. Only few people have access to most of the wealth in the world and thus enjoy all the luxuries of life, while on the other hand there are destitute who do not have even enough food to eat. This class distinction has promoted a sort of imbalance within the society, and is the root of so many social evils. People, mostly of the poor class, are not contented with the way of their living and thus strive to bring about changes; therefore, they, in the process, violate laws, forget ethics and question the very existence of a socio-economic order wherein they have only suffering as their fortune.

Then there are religions and different sects in religion that have divided human beings into different groups. Even though, the existence of different religions and religious sects can be accepted as necessary, the distinctions and discrepancies that are promulgated by the so-called guardians of the religions have only given rise to conflicts and wars. It is not impossible for the followers of different religions to think and talk of similarities among each other and, thus, create an environment that is peaceful and supportive; nonetheless, they have pursued the differences and, in the process, have made one another enemies, instead of friends. Even the followers of the same religion, on the name of different sects, have become each other's foes and do not hesitate to kill each other mercilessly. Consider the example of Syria, Iraq and even Pakistan – the wars between different sects of Islam take the lives of many innocent people every day.

Nationalism is also a set of beliefs that encourage human beings to divide on the basis of race, origin and culture. Blinded by extremist nationalistic beliefs, human beings have carried out such cruelties against one another that it is hard even to imagine about them. From the rise of the nation-states to the world wars, the national-

istic beliefs kept on widening the gap among human beings and took them to the threshold of extinction. Extremist nationalism under the leadership of Hitler promulgated nothing except hatred and war and it carried out the worst sort genocide against the Jews. Although, currently, especially after the rise of globalization, the phenomenon has become less devastating, there are still the nations in the world that consider themselves the superior to all others and even believe that others do not have the right to live and must, therefore, be annihilated. There are now talks and discussion about 'clash of civilizations' that considers that our world is divided in different civilizations with clear distinctions and that the history would evolve by clashes among these civilizations. Voltaire had rightly quoted, "So it is the human condition that to wish for the greatness of one's fatherland is to wish evil to one's neighbors. The citizen of the universe would be the man who wishes his country never to be either greater or smaller, richer or poorer."

That's what we require – the citizens of the universe; the individuals who consider themselves not connected to minor and limited groups like sects, nations and classes but to the entire human race; who have big hearts where people from all the corners of the world can be compensated without any distinction.

It is time for human beings to understand the fact that distinctions, conflicts, and wars have given human beings nothing except misery and troubles. It is really essential for human beings to think above all these differences. They have to consider this very basic fact that they are human beings and this alone is enough to bring them together. Dalai Lama puts it very nicely, "Despite the superficial differences between us, we need to have a sense that all 7 billion human beings belong to one human family." That is how we require thinking – we need to realize that we can be one family; though we may have distinctions, but not discrepancies. As a human family we have many challenges to face and we have to strive to overcome those challenges instead of creating hurdles for each other and pushing each other in thorns. We have the curse of poverty, the horrors of wars, the menace of pollution, the indiscriminate use of weapons and the whole universe to discover. These should be our aim as human beings, not bombing others in their houses in mosques, not attacking others because they belong to other race and their skins are of different color, not discriminating others because they belong to a poor family and do not have proper cloth to wear and no nothing of civilization. We have to think bigger; we are human beings and we are blessed with the most intelligent of the minds, and we have to prove it.

Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at Outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

## Role of Men in Women's Rights!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

**T**his year's 'Women's Day' meant a lot for Afghans. It was an occasion to cry for the group that is getting vulnerable and less secure with every passing day. Last two to three months were very alarming in this regard. The incidents of killing, raping, torturing, kidnapping and others were reported one after the other and with increasing outcry against them, attacks and violence against women also increased. The situation was bizarre and not easily understandable. There was something seriously wrong. The pledge of the Unity government to protect women, the activities of Ministry for Women's affairs and the functionality of hundreds of local and international NGOs for protecting the rights of women could not make even a small impact in decreasing these inhuman acts against Afghan women.

It is the reason why, when this year's 'Women's Day' was approaching, many had to say many things. The bombastic conferences and seminars were held, the streets and squares were filled with banners, signboards, and brochures in favor of women, walks were arranged in solidarity with the victimized women and many other things were done but no one was fully confident of the achievements of these worn-out methods. For the last 14 years or so of our democracy, thousands of similar gatherings and efforts have been done but the actual condition of women is getting worse. In a sense, our past governments, the concerned ministry and all the NGOs have failed to serve their existence. According to some, the condition of women was far better in the time of Taliban when they were safe inside their houses and they feared the lashes of Taliban police force only but today's Afghan woman has to fear so many lashes and so many groups worse than the police of Taliban.

The biggest problem is the lack of understanding of the whole situation. It may be either due to the lack of enough knowledge and understanding of Afghan culture and society or due to their deliberate efforts to achieve a certain objective. In many cases, the efforts of so-called saviors and protectors of women have resulted in the exact opposite outcome. In order to encourage the women to be more bold, open and demanding for their rights, a number of advertisements were run on television in which confident and beautiful girls, dressed in the finest modern clothing (far away from Afghan culture and tradition) were shown to be playing, running, singing or doing similar activities.

The motive behind any such advertisement may be either too stupid or too cunning. It may contain a message to all Afghan women that they should also enjoy the life by wearing similar clothes and doing similar activities which is unfortunately, impossible for more than 97% of the women's population. If this stupidity is the motive behind any such advertisement, it was never going to achieve its objective as it clashes with religious, cultural and social sensitivities of Afghan society. On the other hand, if the objective of such an advertisement was to infuriate majority of the menfolk, it definitely did its work and it is the reason why, I used the term 'cunning' earlier. I watched such advertisements on a number of places and at all of them, I came along such dangerous comments, 'If this is the rights of women, it is better to keep them without any right,' 'I think it is the policy of West to color our women like their own,' and many more. In short, these advertisements have in a sense, hurt the feelings and

sympathy of men towards the rights of women.

Another important factor that needs correction is to target women instead of men for women's rights. It may sound strange but it remains a fact that Afghan society is still a male dominated society and any effort to protect the rights of women starts and ends with the willingness and role of men. And unfortunately, this area has either been left unnoticed or dangerously ignored which has resulted in the present scenario. Just like the advertisements on television channels, the billboards or signboards in different parts of major cities has also resulted in the anger of men and some cases, women as well. The women have been shown to be playing tennis, working as a doctor, teacher and others and all of them read a title, 'Women Can Do,' in both the national languages of our country.

No one has any doubt that women cannot do these but it is not the matter of 'can' but it is a matter of if women are allowed to do so or not and again, the point comes to the willingness of men to permit women to do so. More appropriate could have been showing the women doing them with the permission of men. Though I seem to be repeating too much the role of men in this case but it is a harsh reality which must be accepted if we want to resolve this situation.

And the most dangerous of all is the increasing general disrespect towards women in the society. Weak laws and their implementation against the violations of women's rights, deteriorating religious and cultural values to safeguard the rights of women and other factors have given rise to a society where teasing and disturbing girls is getting quite normal with every passing day. But the most pernicious role has been of media where women are portrayed as the symbol of beauty and utilized like a show-piece. Seeing such women, people often pass sarcastic comments and these comments continue in bazaars and streets as well. It is the reason why, it is taken quite normal to insult or tease a passerby girl on the roads or in public transport.

But the ground realities show another alarming situation of women's sufferings. They suffer more due to lack of proper transport, poor working conditions, discrimination in their pays and wages on the workplace due to their gender and lack of educational facilities in schools and universities. If so-called saviors of women's rights are really interested to bring meaningful change for women, they must work on these areas. The education of thousands of girls are discontinued in schools and universities when their family members don't allow them further education due to lack of proper and separate educational facilities. In the same way, they become the target of men's insult and hatred when they keep waiting for public transport where they hardly find a seat.

And most importantly, a wide-scale campaign must be launched to increase the respect of women in society. This cannot be done by showing women playing tennis or dancing in clubs. This can be done by involving those who have actual influence and effect in this society. Mosques and religious scholars can play the most important role and they should be made the permanent part of this process, the writers and public figures can also be made the part of it who should make the people realize the true worth of women. In such conditions, there would be change in the minds of men that would then change the conditions of women. Till then, we can keep deceiving ourselves with so-called stupid gatherings and slogans who have done more harm to the miserable women of this society.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 27/1777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Omeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan

Sub Office: Shora Road, Street 10, District 6, Kartey 3, Kabul, Afghanistan