

Materialism is Wreaking Havoc in Society Causing Widespread Depression and Anxiety

News:

Associated Press reported, “About 49,500 people took their own lives last year in the U.S., the highest number ever, according to new government data posted Thursday (10 August). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which posted the numbers, has not yet calculated a suicide rate for the year, but available data suggests suicides are more common in the U.S. than at any time since the dawn of World War II.”

Comment:

The US is the richest country on the Earth, with a \$26.854 trillion GDP. It has the most cars, gadgets, appliances and on-person items than any other place in the world. These CDC-reported suicide numbers beg the question, why are people, so unhappy in the wealthiest place in the world?

Approximately fifty thousand people ended their own life by giving up on the struggles of life in the last year alone. Moreover, there is an increasing year-on-year trend in the numbers of people lost to suicide. All indices to measure the quality of life and healthcare available for the people of USA are amongst the best top ten in the world. Yet there is so much despair and hopelessness in life.

Religion is continuing to cede ground to atheism, besides being limited to an ever-shrinking role in life and society. This has allowed utilitarianism to become one of Western civilization’s philosophical foundational ideas. Benefit is the measure of actions. Utilitarianism only considers the material possessions of an individual as standards for happiness and success. It creates a herd mentality for cutthroat competition. Utilitarianism incites a race for wealth accumulation, on the false premise that more is better.

This sole focus on material gains, at the expense of all other values, has resulted in a society where escapism, through soft or hard drug abuse, is normal behavior, as well as wretched narcissism. The society the Westerners live in has become disturbed. The wickedness and every type of corruption have spread within it.

Any decent human being will feel suffocated in such an environment. Robin Williams (July 21, 1951 – August 11, 2014) was an American actor and comedian. He is regarded as one of the greatest comedians of all time. He received numerous accolades including an Academy Award, two Primetime Emmy Awards, six Golden Globe Awards, two Screen Actors Guild Awards, and five Grammy Awards. With \$50 million net worth, a family and children, successful career, he had everything that would constitute success and happiness by all Western standards. Nevertheless, he hung himself to end his life.

Today, anxiety and depression have become household names in the West. The latest population estimates from the 2021 Census in the UK, published on 28 June 2022, suggest 14.7% of the population, which totals 56.5 million people, received at least one prescription item for antidepressant drugs in 2021/2022. Similarly, in the US, antidepressants were the third most common prescription drug taken by Americans of all ages in 2005–2008 and the most frequently used by persons aged 18–44 years. From 1988–1994 through 2005–2008, the rate of antidepressant uses in the United States among all ages increased by nearly 400%. This race to false grace has a heavier toll on women. Females are two and a half times as likely to take antidepressant medication as males.

This utilitarian materialism has become a curse for human existence, exhausting people in spending inhuman efforts, to gain that elusive happiness. This happiness only exists at the end of a life's imaginary rainbow, only to discover that along the way everything else has been lost, irrevocably. This self-contradicting reality, in which one can be at the extremes of despair and possession simultaneously, is a testament to the fact that human beings cannot devise a value system for a society. An elevated society has the correct balance between the values sought in an action. It has the correct balance of material, humanitarian, moral and spiritual values.

Islam has demanded that human life be regulated by what the Creator Al-Mighty, Allah (swt), has revealed. Therefore, it is the Divine Law (Shar'a) alone that determines for society the values in an action one targets and assigns to them, at the time when they are performed. The Shariah solved life's problems by prescribing commands and prohibitions for them. It obliged man to proceed in this life according to them.

Allah (swt), being All-Knowing and Ever-Living, is the only One that can, with authority, provide a value system that is balanced and produces the best results. Hence, the Shariah describes the actions that achieve spiritual value through the Fard (obligatory) and Mandub (recommended) worships. Then the Shariah integrated morals into its Ahkam to achieve moral values. A brilliant solution, which produces inevitably a society seeped in high moral standards.

Besides the Shariah rulings being infused with moral values, all human life's segments are organized in different systems. These systems are built on a guiding philosophy and elaborate structure of related Ahkam. Islam permits a human being to attain material values as per his or her capacity and requirement. It allows them to satisfy with it their necessities and basic needs. It secures that which is beyond the necessities, within the revealed systems, namely, the ruling system, social system and economic system. Human beings have but to act to achieve these values in accordance with the commands and prohibitions of Allah (swt), to attain an elevated and balanced society.

The fact that human happiness and satisfaction is built on this attempt to please the Al-Mighty Allah (swt) has the greatest influence on human beings. It creates a society filled with contentment and happiness, despite trial in wealth and health. Allah (swt) says, **﴿رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ﴾** **“Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. That (reward) is for him who has awe of his Lord.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Bayyinah 98:8]. Allah (swt) said, **﴿أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَةً﴾** **“Come back to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing.”** [TMQ Surah Al Fajr 89:28].

This conceptualization of happiness in the Islamic civilization is revolutionizing and liberating. It allows Islam to stand in stark contrast to the materialistic viewpoints of life offered by capitalism and socialism. The Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood will offer a superior culture to the world, as compared to whatever the West has brought to humankind. InshaAllah the world will witness again people flocking to the serene and tranquil life Islam offers.

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