بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

News & Comment

Capitalism Creates Luxury for Some, Whilst Creating Poverty for Others

News:

British department store John Lewis reveals in a study that the contents of women's handbags are worth an average of £1200. The numerous contents on average include designer scarves, purses, beauty products and ipads which total up to over a thousand pounds.

Comment:

The need for having endless 'things' has grown in the Western world, where society is founded on Capitalism. A society which let's businesses have full space to battle for the attention of their buyers, and potential customers to buy their products through endless marketing and advertising schemes. A society where the absence of the reverence of God in the public sphere, means that the satisfaction of one's own desires and interests has become the focus. A society where material gain is lauded above all else. It is in this society that women succumb to all the lucrative advertising and fill their handbags with products which go far and beyond the essential items we may need in life.

However this materialistic lifestyle that women enjoy in the West does not appear from nothing. Capitalism has not been able to provide such luxuries for women in the West, as a win-win success story. No, rather Capitalism has only been able to create wealth and luxury for some, by perpetuating poverty and oppression for others.

Products that women in the West readily purchase one after the other, which form the contents of that bottomless handbag only are available at the price often because people in the third world have been exploited to make it. Apple has been flagged up for exploiting people in the Far East for making parts of their products and the building collapse in Bangladesh alerted to the dire exploitation of women in Bangladesh who make clothes for a range of British shops, Gap to Primark. Long working hours, terrible working conditions, wages that are not even enough to survive on are all hallmarks of sweatshops in places like Bangladesh. A woman in Bangladesh earns an average of £25 a month in a factory – This is about half of what she needs to cover living costs.

So ultimately what we see is Capitalism cares not about the people that it is supposed to care for and organise, as a system over human beings. Rather it cares only where the money is – In the West multi-national businesses under Capitalism love the money of the wealthy who buy their products, and in the East and Muslim world they love the cheap labour of those who make them their products.

The Islamic economic system on the other hand holds as its' aim distribution wealth amongst the people, so that you do not have this great disparity between the rich and the poor – As the aim of the Islamic system is to actually look after the needs of the people. Islam does not prohibit people from buying things, however it does not make the material possession the most important thing in society which is only celebrated. This is because the higher value of pleasing Allah (swt) is perpetuated across society and holds the most weight over other values. Even how you spend your wealth is linked to your Hereafter by how you can aid the poor and needy in the society:

((وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلاَ تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا))

"And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveller, and do not spend wastefully." [Surah Isra: 26]

Additionally no business would be allowed to exploit and underpay the poor and vulnerable in order to make maximum profit. Everyone who works would have to be given a due wage and treated well, as employers would not only be accountable to the Government but their taqwa in answering to Allah (swt) on how they treated their employees, would be enough of a regulator.

Thus Islam is the only system which would end this disparity between extreme rich and extreme poor, to create a society which would aim to cater for everyone.

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