

Afghanistan\222s Dark Ages  
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Afghanistan was once the wild-wild-east of the Persian Empire. It has been a battle ground for centuries, since the Silk Road trade cities faded into the Soviet Union.

The country has always been divided between lively merchant cities and miserable tribal villages, a modernizing monarchy and the most feudal of Muslim tribal lands. Warfare has always been endemic: from the time of Alexander the Great, through the Arab invasion, then the British and Russians, the United States, and today, with the Taliban.

Afghanistan\222s tragedy has been its almost modernization under Soviet and then American occupation, and now its violent conquest back to the most repellant form of Islam under the Taliban.

Poor Afghanistan has nothing much that the world wants, except for gemstones and opium. The only income now since Afghanistan has rejected help from the United Nations and neighboring countries is charging airlines for flights over their country. No one wants to go there anymore, and few aircraft are coming in.

The country\222s misery is self-inflicted and those who can flee are doing so. Who would want to live in such a place?

What passes for culture in Afghanistan is testosterone poisoned, a place where only men have any rights. Their hold over the female population is so poisonous that one suspects that if the men could manage to give birth, they would be happy to be without them altogether. But until they manage to do that, they hold the women under the most severe imprisonment.

Women have been removed from every occupation they formerly occupied: teaching, midwifery, school students, medical doctors, lawyers and judges, international workers supporting the UN and US, and most necessary of all, charity and care for the needy. One whole occupation has been banished: music. No music or singing at weddings, celebrations, or entertainments. Beauty shops are now closed too.

They are now "un-Islamic." That must also include lullabies sung by mothers to their babies.

Women may not go out of their homes unless completely covered and masked from head to toe and accompanied by a related male. They must also wear rubber-soled shoes lest men hear their steps on the street.

One wonders how many women and children are dying. Nobody is educated enough to take statistics. This too must be un-Islamic.

I don\222t believe that even the Dark Age after the fall of Rome was as horrible as this hell that the Taliban has wrought. But even Afghanistan\222s Taliban manages to find some pleasure for themselves\227men only, of course. They have clandestine men\222s parties where they are entertained by boy prostitutes (called party boys) who dance and sing like women. Somehow this sort of activity is not forbidden---secretly, of course, for high ranking Taliban.

The problem of hatred of women is not exclusive to the Taliban. It is undergoing a resurgence of rejection to the entire era of emancipation of women that the West has witnessed and that we all thought was welcome progress. This progress has experienced pushback by otherwise modern men and some women: forbidding women control over their own bodies, abortion and contraception, control over marriage and divorce, and the full range of occupations recently opened to women.

Fortunately, women are not without power in the modern world. We can vote and can undo some of the damage being inflicted on us, as long as democracy and elections are still with us.

Many years ago, a book was written called "The Disappearance," by Philip Wylie. It told the story of a strange event: women and men suddenly became invisible to each other. The story covers the violence and misery that descended on men and the women missing their boy children. After much misery and disfunction, the genders learn what they are missing and were restored to each other, much wiser.

I don't think that Afghanistan will be so lucky. They are on the path of population plummet and death. Meanwhile, we must complete the visa process (now slowed to nothing) to permit Afghans who helped us to flee to the US. They deserve our help.

678 words

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