"Changing Nature of Conflicts, Violence and Environmental Crisis"

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Every day, we are confronted on our televisions and in the newspapers by a relentless tide of tragic events and crises, by violence terrorist attacks and conflicts in all regions of the world. There is, in consequence, an intense and deep public concern about the state of our world, about relations between peoples and ethnic and religious groups and about the prospects for a stable, peaceful world for future generations. Viewed from the perspective of the rich, developed countries, a major change has occurred.

In the past, when we spoke of and studied conflict, we principally envisaged conflict as between sovereign states. However, in recent decades, the nature of most conflict has changed. Today, the overwhelming majority of armed conflicts take place within, not between states. This has important consequences for the conception and implementation of international action to prevent and manage conflict. There is also a wide concern in the world community to focus more efforts on the prevention of conflict to avert the immense human and material costs. Prevention is clearly better and cheaper than reacting to crises and conflicts once they occur. But the subsequent building of peace and of just, progressive societies in a post-conflict situation is an intensely difficult task.

Conflicts are endemic to human societies and are as old as mankind itself They vary in degree, type, period and societies. It could be 'either between individuals, groups, organizations, classes, section of communities or between nations Some scholars divide conflict into interpersonal, intergroup and international In the contemporary world on one hand, there are forces of integration as the world has contracted into a global village, evolving a vision of borderless world On the other hand, there are equally strong forces fragmenting the nations into pieces. Humanity stands shocked and bewildered in the wake of tyranny, social injustice, distrust, terrorism and rampant violence, affecting almost every aspect of life. If these are not addressed properly, they may lead to rupture of relations and ultimately result in violence. In resolving the 'conflict it must accept that humankind has just one future or no future at all.

All 'paradigms from liberalism, communism and globalization have failed to solve the basic problems of conflict, tension, violence, poverty, hunger, unemployment on one hand and alienation, dehumanization, ecological threat on the other. These problems need to be resolved by peaceful means combined with societal development from the grass root level. Here the Gandhian philosophy and techniques become relevant, thus a broader and deeper understanding of the Gandhian ideas are urgently required in the era of globalization.

The world community too, has now recognized the importance of the 'culture of peace'. The year 2000 was declared by the U.N. as the 'Year of Culture of Peace' and the decade 2000 to 2010 as the 'International Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World'. Change in society cannot be achieved by surface reforms or isolated efforts, therefore, the 'need' of the hour are to bring about changes in social organizations and mindset of people eim-iasse. At this juncture, there is urgency for the development of some alternative paradigms for conflict resolution and establishment of durable peace. There is also need of a comprehensive approach on this issue for the all round development and growth of the soci.ety. Compartmentalized views both at the horizontal and vertical levels need to be discarded. An integrated view of individual, state, society and international institutions is required. Peace should not be taken in a narrower term rather a broader perspective is not only a pre-requisite

but is also inevitable. Thus the changing global scenario along with the failure of existing models for the establishments of peace needs re-thinking. It is in this regard that an alternative humanistic moral and peaceful world view is required, which can serve as a timely corrective to the misplaced priorities of globalised era.

There is a serious thinking among the intellectual circles that Gandhian ideas and alternatives have & the potentialities to fill this gap At a time when the world was only aware of war and violence as weapons for subject nations to achieve freedom, Gandhi proved to the world by practice and precept that subject nations could achieve liberation, through peaceful and nonviolent means. The spectacular progress of decolonization through voluntary transfer of power during the second half of the last century bears testimony to the efficacy of non-violence and solution to national and international problems. In Gandhi's definition violence does not mean mere physical injury but also includes mental agony as ill will, anger, cruelty and torture of all life forms. And the prime mover in the evolution of the culture of peace will no longer be the state but the individual, in other words each and every one of us. It is an important saying that as 'wars begin in, the minds of men, surely the defenses of peace must be constructed in the minds of men. Road to peace starts within our selves-in set of values, attitudes traditions and modes of • behaviour and ways of life. The capacity to talk and listen to the others and be receptive to their needs, can pave the way to peace through an acceptance of a shared responsibility towards other people as well as towards us.

Many crucial problems evolving the world were anticipated by Gandhi. It was because of his insight into the problems of societies that he had offered an alternative world vision, alternative life style and viable set of strategies and peaceful methods for eliminating dehumanized development and resetting ecological balance by harmonizing man and nature. For heralding transition from a culture of conflict to culture of peace, he wanted to involve everyone and at every level of society in human centric and eco-centric development.

According to Gandhi ji sustained peace and development also depend essentially on the availability of many motivated and expert men and women in and from the countries concerned who can work to achieve reconciliation, to reconstruct equitable societies and to. build the foundations of peace and progress. And peace and progress can only be sustained if deeply-entrenched attitudes and behavior throughout society at large can be changed i.e. away from hatred, intolerance and violence and towards solidarity, respect for human rights, gender equity and reconciliation. In both these vital respects, the role of education for peace through many channels and at every level is of fundamental importance.