

Editorial

To Ensure that the Present 'is not an era of war'

The United Nations' resolution dated December 6, 2022 declared 2023 as the International Year of Dialogue (IYD). It is hoped that IYD initiatives would facilitate Peace through dialogue. IYD, it can minimally be assumed that, at every possibility of a conflict, would remind nations to promote initiatives and interventions for 'mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace and trust among nations based on, *inter alia*, political dialogue, negotiations, mutual understanding and cooperation, in order to build sustainable peace, solidarity and harmony' initially during 2023.

This IYD declaration is in tune with United Nation (UN) Charter mandating respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. The declaration of IYD also resonates the mood of the world captured in India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's homily that this 'is not an era of war'. War torn and war wary citizens may even expect to see end to few grand scale conflicts including Russia-Ukraine War and Yemen Conflict during this period, albeit a tall order.

The United Nations underscored the importance of mediation by influencers to bring parties in the conflict to a condition for peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution of long-pending issues. It sought mobilising efforts of international community. International community is an euphemism for powerful states who can make others to toe their decided lines with help, pressure, division and coercion tactics.

This period needs a powerful state urgently that can withstand such pressures and threat of being sidelined by other powers without losing its own growth path. Such sovereign must have restraint of not dividing people in other countries, and not coercing smaller states in any manner.

At the same time, smaller states have a bounden duty too. Showing same sensitivity to big neighbour with restraint to play in those others' hands who disturb the neighbour is to be practiced by them despite provocations of ideology and baggage of history.

Mediation for negotiations towards nonviolent conflict resolution warrants deployment of different tools of dialogue founded on logic and ethics. Differing logic and ethics of conflicting parties, based on perception of experience tinged with ideology driving politics, culture, economy and inter-relation are the real challenges to be ironed out. However, it depends on a trustworthy mediating sovereign who can see both sides from today's world reality and conventions.

Few scenarios of conflict and war emerge from not so old experiences of humanity in 20th century and first twenty years of 21st century. Such scenarios are to be studied threadbare from all angles for developing effective dialogical process.

First Scenario

World history is witness to the reality that peace has been weaponised by most of the powerful or preparing-to-be-powerful as guarantee of time of absence of conflict for building assets bidding time for assertion. Almost every such actor relishes upon such animal instinct. For them, to cite a cause of starting conflict are many. It is thinly veiled by ideology, history and geography in tandem in almost every case of conflict of small or grand proportion. It appears as the aspiration of all within a real or fictional territory of geography and

culture to be recognised by others as special to be reckoned and given preference by every other. Exceptions to this megalomania in powerful or with ambition to be powerful are very few. However such leadership of USA once averted the huge 'Cuban Missile Crisis' by dint of restraint followed by negotiation from moral and physical strength.

First scenario is followed by the rhetoric of persuasion, following the ancient Greek city states' practice before Christ to win supporters within the city and other cities as allies and neutrals. Today, rhetoric in support of the specific interest is woven in full communication spectrum, comprising all modes in all layers of rhetorical expansion beginning with the secret.

Second Scenario

There are cases of neighbouring countries whose ideology, history and geography have commonality as well as problems of geography including river, boundary, common race and different religions or sects. The geopolitical interest of powerful states from outside the region foments tension and conflict, sometimes by capturing the ruling elite and mostly through economic facilities. Such is the case of South Asia. Mal-governance and corruption by successive regimes made few countries in this region chronically weak to be dangerously dependent on others. Being patronised by outside powers suiting their goals in situations of instability of government and weak economy, such countries fall easy prey to invite troubles with neighbours for such reasons which could be solved by dialogues. There are several such pockets across the globe.

Third Scenario

Quest for tribal identity driven power-mongering and territorial domination are causes of internecine strifes within few pockets across the globe. No amount of Western models of education and economy could abate the propensity. Rather good number of tribal leaders, armed with such weapons escalated fratricidal wars. In few cases, tribal conflicts span few states. This scenario is more complex than the original strife as the supply of ideological, economic and military weapons has ensured that the solution would get distant day by day. Many African states desperately need a solution to this.

Fourth Scenario

Conflicts between drug lords and cartels created war like situation in many low development countries. Though such conflicts devastate affected countries, the contraband trade of drugs fuel many an industry in clandestine manner in few other countries. Therefore, Dark Capitalism of illicit trade and supply is often turned blind eye, and drug addiction is never tried to be eliminated from the root. South American states have faced worst conflicts of this nature.

Fifth Scenario

Civil war between state and any within-state group of citizens, or between two groups of citizens has been many. Such a situation of intra-state breakdown of law and security, leading to anarchy often takes huge toll of human lives and property. Often civil wars are fought without declaration of war or revolt against the existing order.

While third, fourth and fifth scenario are limited within state, their repercussion within and outside state in terms of displacement, migration, poverty and pressure on economy is taken note and care by the international community as per international covenant. It is a better option to save a country's economy from such obligations in crisis by helping to mitigate emergence of such situations. However all five scenarios pose challenge to human emotion for peace and intelligence for peace negotiation. Can we traverse this path of global transformation without following the absolute evolutionary truth about human kind?

The Evolutionary Truth

Biological evolution, coterminous with ecosystem progress places Human at a level which is different from other organisms. While almost all mammals, with whom Human share ancestry progressed with higher development of musculature for its dominant use as strategy of survival, we evolved differently in the nature's grand design. Human is designed for higher brain development with endowment of emotion, intelligence and trans-generational 'being and becoming' instinct which is different from muscular instinct of aggressive protection seen in other creatures. Every Human is also endowed with spirituality, the act of unison and concord with all through the process called mind with brain as the physical site for the process. Spirituality is the core which brings joy and aesthetic pleasure in inter-interestedness and inter-connect between humans and transcending human-only unison. Joy and aesthetic pleasure flowing from these two dimensions of living together dissolves fear of defeat, insecurity, hate, inferiority.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra aptly described that superiority and inferiority, both complexes are two sides of the same coin called ego, an aggression which utilises memory to run amok creating fantasies of exposed weakness. Gandhi said that only the love for truth can bring peace in person, leading to conflict resolution mindset. Melting two opposing complexes for future generation of leaders of countries, communities and families can only resolve conflicts by releasing action potential for the truth of ours.

This truth is utilising faculty of mind by the leaders to resolve frictions without anger translated into aggression, which is animalistic. Here, it would be mention worthy that in Sanskrit of Vedic period (about two thousand years before Lord Christ), the root of Truth i.e. *Satya* is 'Aass' - denoting, connoting and suggesting various shades of existence in full circle around 'I'. In Gandhi's practice of truth all these shades are clear within the human limitations.

In this evolutionary path of humankind, inter-interestedness and inter-connectedness for Ecologically Sustainable Trans-Generational Progress (ESTGP) are to be realised. The holistic education is the only way to realise our inter-connect with joy and pleasure in expanding circles (from couple, family, locality, community, country and globe) in graduated manner through years of increasing neural activation. Such leaders, exposed to this realisation would firmly believe that violence is self-defeating which belittles own endowment of mind leading to the culture of truth i.e. contributing towards existence. This would gradually melt ego of superiority with sense of serving the nature and humanity in integral fashion. With this reality as the backdrop, a proposal is mooted to ensure that we transform this era into 'an era of no war'.

A Proposal

Climate change disaster and war are intertwined in the animal instinct to defeat nature and other human beings for short term greed. This violence in any state's DNA negates the purpose of human evolution. To work in favour of the evolution, United Nations is so far the best mechanism. Can UN innovate a mechanism of peace in short duration and long duration where the honour of a state increases with its quest for expanding circle of absence of high conflict among states and with nature? IYD perhaps may offer the occasion to dare to innovate going against the tide of animality swaying over Human. Perfecting the regime of dialogue before crisis looms large in horizon, as IYD moots, requires investing more into holistic education, not in terms of money but from pluri-dimensional approach of civilizational sustainable traditions. Peace Scholar, Dr Daisaku Ikeda summarised the tradition in three sentences, "Dialogue is not some simplistic assertion of one's own position, nor is it necessarily about persuading others to one's point of view. Dialogue is about demonstrating respect for another's life, and being determined to learn when confronted with differences in personality and perspective.....Dialogue is the ultimate constructive undertaking of the human spirit."

Biplab Loha Choudhury

Editor-in-Chief