

## Peace Education, Environment Education and Human Rights

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### **Abstract**

*Human existence on this planet is besotted with so many problems and conflicting situations. This state of affairs was not what was expected by our ancestors about their progeny. The man began his life on earth in a total barbaric state, living in jungles in small families with not yet gregarious status, feeding on hunted animals. With time, he started living in groups and enhanced his control over a fixed territory. He became powerful studded with arms and fought to either protect his enclave or to satiate his zeal for more lands through battles. As his thirst for territory increased, more casualties followed. This mad race for wealth and territory is a blemish on the fair name of human civilization. The need of the hour is to teach values to human beings to stem the tide of fast-dwindling values among people. Not only this, man has become selfish and in his mad race for self-growth, he has defaced the earth. He has made an insensible use of natural resources and exploited the bounties on the surface of the earth in a reckless manner. He never for once realized that the resources he is extracting will come to a precarious end. The industrial and vehicular emission has assumed a dangerous proportion. The CFCs have caused an environmental imbalance where human existence on this very planet is in shambles. After the Second World War, the Universal Charter of Human Rights gave every man the right to live in comfortable conditions. But the question is-Is man really living as per the declaration? Across the length and breadth of the earth, man is facing battles and heavy loss of life and property. Not only this, the mad race of industrialization and urbanization is taking its toll upon the health of humanity. This paper is an effort to raise these interrelated problems and find a feasible solution.*

**Key Words:** Gregarious, satiate, precarious, shambles.

If you are asked what type of life would you like to live, your answer will be a peaceful, well contested, healthy and salubrious life. This might perhaps be the answer of a majority of people. And it is quite expected too. All expect their life to be a gift of God, a boon in itself. However, no one wants to contribute to the making of earth worth living by humanity. From petty trifles to the battles between the nations, people are engaged in issues of conflicting nature. They do not want to live a calm and peaceful life, free from territorial issues. Thinking and ideologies different from each other make it all the more difficult to commingle different varieties of people. Some of them want a separate identity; some want power, some territory, and some dominance of the ideology of the majority.

All these things gather to create a very complicated future for man. The man was contented when he used to live in forests, in the family circle, and with few needs. Ironically, as man has become civilized, his instinct for cutthroat competition and the urge to dominate the weak has increased manifold. Today no corner of the world is free from conflicts based on racial, religious, or territorial nature. From Sudan to Kashmir, from the USA to Baluchistan, the earth is burning. Every ethnic group has a reason to wage a war. They want their ideology or viewpoint or their religion to dominate the proceedings of the world.

This feud is a horrible thing in itself. The reason is that the urge to dominate a region has led to the decimation of the inhabitants of that region. What is going on in Kashmir is an affirmation of this fact. When in 1948, the King Hari Singh of Kashmir had sought the help from Indian union against the Kabailis from Pakistan; he accepted the supremacy of the Indian government. However, the Pakistani government claims its right over Kashmir even though it has illegally occupied a tract of land called Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Also, Pakistan continues to add fire to the so-called struggle for independence by the Kashmiris. The Kashmiri youth is incited against the Indian forces by terrorist leaders like Azhar Masood and Lakhvi. The terror funding in the Kashmir valley was recently busted by the Indian security forces. The beautiful land of Kashmir is burning because of the separatist tendencies of some vested interests.

The land of Iraq, the cradle of ancient Babylon civilization has degraded into a battleground of the Islamic State. Every day, videos are released by them showing hostages being butchered by 12-14 years old children in a barbaric and cruel manner without any hint of fear or sensitiveness. Can humanity hope to salvage those innocent minds polluted by fanatic thinking? The fear of the

Islamic State terror outfit has gripped a vast stretch of earth. The USA and European nations never took this outfit seriously. It was only when the USA, France, and other European nations were targeted by this group that the need was felt to crush this menace to humanity in a strong manner. Now the allied forces are occupying the regions lost in Iraq and Sudan to ISIS. Dwight D. Eisenhower has rightly commented on the havoc of war when he says- Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This statement by a former President of the USA shows the hatred of the affluent nations for war and strife but they continue in the same vein.

The moral fiber of society is crashing at large. Everyone in his ego and a false sense of superiority is unwilling to accept others. This is where people should be summarily taught about the value of peace, mutual understanding, co-existence, cosmopolitan attitude, and universal brotherhood. People should be made to realize that differences exist and they should be accepted. Peace education can play a vital role in easing down the scenario witnessed at present. Children, from a tender age, should be taught about the value of peace, the foundation of human growth through the history of mankind. History bears a testimony to the fact that only those nations have made an all round growth that has devoted their time and energy to constructive projects.

Nations like India that have been plagued by the problem of terrorism have not been able to add pace to their growth. A sizeable amount of Indian wealth is allocated for the defense budget as the inevitable need is to protect the sovereignty of the nation from the vile tendencies of her neighbors like China and Pakistan. If at all levels, peace education is inculcated into the school and college syllabi, the students will develop the sensitization that peace is the hallmark of any forward-looking nation. Instead of fanaticism, it is the peace that should be propagated. National interest should be first and foremost. The Sanskrit dictum of 'VishwaBandhutwa' can be the watchword for the world.

Another problem that is as imposing for humanity as the need of peace in the wake of international conflicts is the awareness of environmental protection. Sadly this aspect is least important for the people who take it for granted that nature will keep on bestowing its gifts upon humanity till times immemorial. How can we forget the Kuwait war in 1991 when the fleeing Iraqi forces had set fire to oil wells, therefore, causing a natural holocaust? The smoke out of those wells was found to envelop a very substantial region. A threat to the ecosystem indeed,

such manmade disasters are readily forgotten and forgiven by humanity. Everyone wants natural surroundings but ironically no one wants to plant and protect a sapling till it assumes the proportions of a majestic tree. The Supreme Court has observed that the right to life as mentioned in Article 21 includes everyone's right to pollution-free air, water, earth, etc.(1)

The wastage of a resource as precious as water by spilling it in the streets speaks volumes about the callous attitude of a man about a resource on the verge of drying up. Sadly, many water zones in India have been declared as dark zones on the basis of underground water left in these zones. Our elders tell us how about 50 years back, they used to dig up a small pothole in the earth and water was for the offering. Today the water table is depleting fast. Submersible pumps that used to be installed at 250-280 feet now need to be installed at 350-400 feet to obtain water. The insensitive approach of man is responsible for it. Pollution of water has attracted attacks from all across the world, a major among them is from Friedrich Nietzsche who says- One must be a sea to receive a polluted stream without becoming impure. (2)

Our misery is that we do not wake up when it is high time for us to act. The saying- There is many a slip between the cup and the lip is aptly suitable under these circumstances. We are madly exhausting every natural resource without thinking of our progeny. Ironically, we are the same people who fill bank accounts for the safe future of our next generation. But that day is not far when our progeny will accuse us of mad exploitation of the natural bounties. Water, trees, and fossil fuel are not inexhaustible. They have a limited volume. The way there are being harnessed, the store will end at an alarmingly early date. Sadly, we shall be left with no option but to repent. However, the truth is that repenting alone will not solve any purpose. The need of the hour is to take some concrete steps in this direction.

In this context, I would like to cite the example of Mussourie in Utrakhand and the weather there. It was once a famous hill station with sylvan surroundings and extremely cold weather. But rapid construction and the decimation of green cover led to a rise in day temperature and nominal snowfall. This led to the Queen of Hills lose its glory and a steep fall in the number of tourists thronging this much-hyped hill station. However a Major of the Indian Army was instrumental in the plantation of innumerable saplings on the blotches of sand on the hills. With proper care and upkeep, the saplings blossomed into trees thereby bringing a change in the weather of the region. Snowfall is again witnessed on the hills of Mussourie and the tourism sector has replenished again.

Thus, the fact is very much evident that with awareness and collective responsibility towards nature, we can make the earth a comfortable place to live for generations. Sadly, the common conscience is not attuned to this fact. Talking specifically of the Indian subcontinent, we witness this ignorance and callous attitude towards natural resources in abundance. Awareness does not always come with education. It is the byproduct of human sensitiveness and understanding of facts. The countries of the Indian subcontinent like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan suffer from similar problems like population explosion, poverty, illiteracy, hunger, lack of proper implementation of governmental policies, and lack of will to implement and follow official orders. In these countries, the pollution control boards are the least functional. Through a PIL decision in *M.C.Mehta V/S Union of India (3)*, the Apex Court gave directions to check the pollution of the Ganges. About 250 towns and cities were ordered to install sewerage treatment plants and 600 tanneries working in residential areas of Kolkata were reallocated.

The need of the hour is to teach people about the havoc they are causing to natural resources. At present, looking at the scenario in India, the school level of environmental education is not sufficient. Even at the college level, the students are expected to clear the exam in Environmental Education and Road Safety, an appreciable step. But the awareness level of that student is a disappointing fact. A few lectures on environmental education are not sufficient to make responsible denizens for the protection of the environment. Actually, this subject should be taught at the onset of schooling of the child like other subjects till the end of schooling. In between, the parents should also be sensitized about this supreme responsibility towards nature. At every Parents' Teacher Meeting, a session to this effect should be conducted.

The government at the Centre and State level should conduct awareness drives in every nook and corner of the nation sincerely and effectively against the hazards of pollution, educate people to ensure proper disposal of garbage and protection of the environment. Until or unless the government pays due attention to this fact, environmental protection remains a far cry. The fact remains that since man came to this earth up to 1960, human civilization had not seen as much pollution and harnessing of natural resources as the last fifty years have seen. It is time humanity realizes that they will perish if they do not ensure a sensible use of natural resources.

`An overview of both the points discussed at length brings out the fact that humanity is in grave danger. Both the battles for supremacy and the grave misuse of natural resources have put a question before mankind. Can humanity survive with these accusations before it? The obvious

answer is no. For humanity to prosper, it needs to curb down the vile and wasteful tendency witnessed in abundance. After all, why should all human beings suffer for the wrongdoings of some miscreant elements? Man has the right to live peacefully and lead a safe life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a testimony to this fact. Out of the four stages of the theory of human rights, the third and the fourth namely- Socio-economic rights: rights and welfare, education and leisure, and right to self-determination, a clear environment are the lighthouses for the world powers and callous dictators of the earth should watch out.

A welfare state is always expected to give good governance to its citizens. How human development leads to the realization of human rights and human rights in their turn lead to complete human development could be viewed from the UNDP Human Development Report, 2000 which states-Many countries- poor and rich are already demonstrating a new dynamism in taking initiatives for human rights and human development. South Africa, since ending apartheid has put human rights at the core of its development strategy, with the government establishing one of the world's most forward-looking structures of rights. In India, the world's largest democracy the Supreme Court has insisted on the rights of all citizens to free education and basic health care.(4)

On an urgent basis, governments all across the world should keep human rights at the center of their policymaking and take stringent steps to curb down the ideologies which are separatist in nature and lead to genocide. At the same time, it is the duty of the governments to provide a clean environment to their citizens. The effort should be to negate a conflict with the neighboring states as the loss of civilian life, property and the adverse effect on the environment are a direct violation of human rights which the states are bound to protect. WE call governance effective if it fulfills all the parameters of human rights protection. Therefore the right manner of government is to avoid altercations, protect and enrich the human environment and educate humanity about the need to protect our ecosystem without which human life on this planet is endangered.

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