

Ethnic and Communal Conflicts with Particular Reference to the Indian Subcontinent: An Overview, Causes and Countermeasures

A Summary in One Page

The world is full of unrest mired in bloody conflicts caused by ethnic, religious, caste, colour and narrow nationalistic considerations.

Though the cold war has come to an end following the collapse of Soviet Union and the threat of the third world war has receded considerably, divisions in humanity pose a more potential threat than even a devastating world war with nuclear options might do to our existence. The number of people being killed either in small wars between nations or in domestic ethnic and communal violence has far exceeded our calculations. We cannot shut our eyes to what is happening in Sri Lanka, Bosnia, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Ireland and Chechnya, a Muslim dominated part of Russia. The cult of violence holds the world fast in its grip.

The paper confines itself to analysing ethnic and communal conflicts, their historical background and their causes in the Indian subcontinent. It gives a brief description of the events leading to the company and its subsequent involvement in political intrigues hobnobbing with provincial warlords and Indian Maharajas. The British Parliament established Her Majesty - the Queen of Victoria's rule in India in 1856. There was a rebellion against the British rule by a few units of Indian army in 1857 which was quelled but it ignited the sparks of freedom struggle among the Indian masses.

The British did their level best to divide the Indian society on caste and religious lines and the Hindu-Muslim conflict grew into a major problem with bloody communal riots. The advent of Gandhi changed the nature of freedom struggle. He converted it into a non-violent crusade forcing the British to leave without Bloodshed but leaving behind the spectre of partition of India into two nations - Pakistan and India. It was a catastrophe engulfing the nation into communal bloodbath, killing thousands on both sides and rendering millions as homeless refugees. Kashmir, Punjab and eastern parts of India are still conflict ridden. Counter measures include mass campaigns to create one world awareness based on tolerance, democracy, equality, surrender of sovereignty to some extent, economic packages for eradication of poverty and development and non-violence education and training among youngsters.

A World Full of Unrest

As I sit to write my paper, the news of the barbaric act of bombing an over-crowded train carrying innocent passengers at a suburban railway station near Colombo in Sri Lanka is flashed on my television set. My heart is filled with profound grief at the gruesome killing of 69 people with hundreds of others injured. They were all travelling by the ill-fated train. The

bombs went off in the two caches and the scene of mangled coaches littered with mutilated bodies made even stony hearts melt. Sri Lanka has been in the grip of ethnic conflict for a decade. The Tamil Tigers are waging a war for a sovereign Tamil Elam.

Though the cold war has come to an end following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the threat of a world war has considerably receded, many parts of the world are deeply mired in bloodshed on account of ethnic, religious and racial conflicts. Almost all nations, big or small, are facing the challenge of violence on account of cultural diversity, racial supremacy and discrimination on grounds of caste, colour and religion. We see Sri Lanka plunged deeply into ethnic conflict. Despite sincere efforts to restore peace to this strife-torn island nation, peace continues to be elusive. Thousands of people have lost their lives on both sides.

The Chechnya rebels in Russia are engaged in a fierce war with the Russian troops. All efforts to stop the fighting in Chechnya have failed. Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and many other African states are so engrossed in internal violent feuds and fighting embedded in deep ethnic hatred that the hope for a peaceful existence is belied and the loss of innocent lives continues unabated. Violent conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis, between Khmer Rogues and other groups in Cambodia, between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, between Protestants and Catholics in the Northern Ireland and ethnic conflicts in many other parts of the world have taken a heavy toll of human lives and are still causing untold suffering to the people in these regions. Prolonged civil war in EL SALVADOR has pushed its people to abject poverty and starvation. The most disastrous consequence of these conflicts is nuclear proliferation. Though cold war has ended, regional and national conflicts are on the rise and the loss of human lives resulting from domestic conflicts and conflicts between various nations is no less than the enormous loss another world war could have caused. The entire humanity is fragmented into rival groups. Driven by hatred, jealousy, animosity, greed and desire to dominate and rule, they are determined to wipe out one another.

Almost all countries are grappling with the problem of keeping different cultural groups together. The advent of science and technology has reduced the whole world into a global village leading to unprecedented interaction among the people with frequent cross-cultural movements or emigration. This has given rise to the mushrooming of multicultural societies in all big nations and the cold war has percolated into the fragile social fabric of each nation. Where can we find peace now? Mere absence of a global war does not mean that the people inhabiting this planet are secure in their homes and cities. Suicide bombs, terrorism and militancy have made the lives of the people in major cities extremely difficult and miserable. In America the advent of protest movements like Brown Beret (Mexican Americans living in U.S.A.) and Black Panther Party in self-defence shows racial hatred in its ugliest form.

One World : One Family

We have seen that the world socio-political order is passing through an extremely sensitive and critical situation. There are dissensions, divisions, feuds and quarrels on ethnic, racial, cultural and national considerations. We want no more division in humanity. Every

country is confronted with the problem of keeping its people united. There are secessionist movements. After the break of the Soviet Union, many new sovereign nations came into existence. The former Soviet Republics are now independent sovereign states but the new trends of chauvinism are manifesting themselves and some of the new-born nations are on war-path. The partition of countries on grounds of communal and ethnic considerations will prove disastrous for humankind.

There is an Indian maxim '**Vasudev Kutukumbam**' (the whole world is a family). The partitioning of a country in the name of religion will only lead to a great catastrophe. What is more important now is the rejuvenation of basic human values like equality, democracy, justice, compassion, tolerance, non-violence and non-acquisitiveness. The answer lies in the unity of all human beings irrespective of their caste, creed, faith and colour. There will be no peace in a family, in a province or in a nation unless our attitude towards one another changes and unless we treat one another as brothers and sisters belonging to one family or one world. I would like to quote some of the most important passages from the 1995 NOBEL LECTURE delivered by Prof. Joseph Rotblat - the recipient of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize and the president of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs :

Any international treaty entails some surrender of national sovereignty, and is generally unpopular. As we said in the Russell- Einstein Manifesto: "The abolition of war will demand distasteful limitation of national sovereignty." Whatever system of governance is eventually adopted, it is Important that it carries the people with it. We need to convey the message that safeguarding our common property, humankind, will require developing in each of us a new loyalty: a loyalty to mankind. It calls for the nurturing of a feeling of belonging to the human race. We have to become world citizens.

Notwithstanding the fragmentation that has occurred since the end of the Cold War, and the many wars for recognition of national or ethnic identities, I believe that the prospects for the acceptance of this new loyalty are now better than at the time of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. This is so largely because of the enormous progress made by science and technology during these 40 years. The fantastic advances in communication and transportation have shrunk our globe. All nations of the world have become close neighbours. Modern information techniques enable us to learn instantly about every event in every part of the globe. We can talk to each other via the various networks. This facility will improve enormously with time, because the achievements so far have only scratched the surface. Technology is driving us together. In many ways we are becoming like one family.

In advocating the new loyalty to mankind I am not suggesting that we give up national loyalties. Each of us has loyalties to several groups - from the smallest, the family, to the largest, at present, the nation. Many of these groups provide protection for their members. With the global threats resulting from science and technology, the whole of humankind now needs protection. We have to extend our loyalty to the whole of the human race.

What we are advocating in Pugwash, a war-free world, will be seen by many as a Utopian dream. It is not Utopian. There already exist in the world large regions, for example, European Union, within which war is inconceivable. What is needed is to extend these to cover the world's major powers.

The quest for a war-free world has a basic purpose: survival. But if in the process we learn how to achieve it by love rather than by fear, by kindness rather than by compulsion; if in the process we learn to combine the essential with the enjoyable, the expedient with the benevolent, the practical with the beautiful, this will be an extra incentive to embark on this great task.

In any case, we have no choice. The alternative is unacceptable. Let me quote the last passage of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto:

"We appeal, as human beings, to human beings: Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open for a new paradise; if you can't, there lies before you the risk of universal death."

It is, I think, necessary in these tumultuous years and a period of chaos to keep on remembering what has been stated in the Charter of United Nations:

"WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS"

The Genesis of Ethnic and Communal Conflicts in the Indian Subcontinent

Having portrayed a grim picture of the status of peace on this globe as it is found today and having emphasized that real lasting peace is possible to achieve only if narrow national boundaries disappear and we begin to consider the entire human race as one family, I would like to confine my paper to a critical analysis of the causes of ethnic and communal

conflicts in the Indian subcontinent. India was a British colony till 1947 when she won her freedom.

(i) Alien Invasion of India

From the ancient times to the present, India has been invaded twenty six times. The British invasion was the last. Until the end of the fifteenth century, all of India's conquerors came overland and all except Baber, came via Russia and entered India through the narrow Khyber Pass. Then they came to the banks of the river Indus and went beyond. England dispatched her first expedition into the Indian Ocean in 1591. An East India Company was formed in London in 1600; its renewed charter of 1609 gave it a British trade monopoly in Asia unlimited in time and space. Wars, intrigues with Indian provincial warlords and shrewd trading filled the coffers of the East India Company and enhanced its power. Mogul emperors continued to rule the country till a young British officer Robert Clive came to Bengal. In 1757 the entire province of Bengal was a British colony. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal, continued the policy of British expansion through armed force, enforced tributes, and dynastic conspiracies. Gradually by means of most foul, but considered normal in that age and place, the British established themselves throughout the length and breadth of the vast Indian subcontinent. At some places the East India Company ruled directly through its officials. Elsewhere it stood close behind the thrones of Hindu Maharajas and Moslem Nawabs who pliantly subserved the politics of British empire-building.

(ii) Historical Background of Political Situation

Before I embark upon analysing the causes of conflicts in the Indian subcontinent it has become necessary for me to give a brief historical background of the political situation which was largely responsible for the conflicts in the subcontinent. India is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country dominated by the Hindus. It was in 1857 that some Indian Army units rebelled. East India Company was abolished and in 1858 Queen Victoria assumed the Government of India and appointed Lord Canning her first Viceroy. For eighty nine years thereafter, until August 15, 1947 India was a colony of the British Empire. Writing of the British, Louis Fischer the most famous biographer of Mahatma Gandhi says:

The British in India, however, were a fifth caste, the first caste. They dined with Indians perfunctorily and intermarried seldom. The British were the super-Brahman-Kshatriyas; all Indians were "untouchables". Jealous of her power, England feared the Indians. Conscious of their white skins and racial superiority, the British scorned the Indians. Fear, and the administrator's natural wish to administer with maximum facility, impelled the British to adopt the approved imperialistic tactic of Divide and Rule. Since the Moslems played the leading role in the Mutiny, and were thought to harbour dreams of empire, the British at first preferred the Hindus to the Moslems. When unrest and political ambition stirred the Hindus, the British used the Moslems against the Hindus.' It proves beyond doubt that the British rulers in India sowed the seeds of mutual distrust and hatred among the two major communities of India, i.e. the Hindus and the Muslims. Prior to the arrival of the British in India most Mugal rulers with the exception of Baber and Aurangzeb were neutral and impartial in their attitude towards non-Muslim communities. History bears testimony to

the fact that the Hindus occupied important positions in the Mugal armies and Muslims in the armies of the Hindu rulers. The common men belonging to different castes and faiths were loyal to their rulers. But the Mugal emperors like Baber and Aurangzeb were cruel and ruthless towards the Hindus. They destroyed their places of worship and looted them. But with the passage of time the Hindus forgot the atrocities perpetrated by the Mugal emperors on their ancestors. It was the British who rekindled the sparks of hatred and jealousy in the hearts of the Hindu community who naturally took to unearthing the pages of history replete with stories of barbaric acts of brutality indulged in by the Mugal rulers. If we go deeper into the roots of the present day conflict between the two communities in India, we come to know that it has to do more with politics rather than with sectarian considerations. It is the lust for political power that tempts the community leaders to exploit the communal sentiments. In a span of 89 years of the direct British rule in India, the harmonious character of Indian society which was an example of unity in diversity was completely destroyed. The 'divide and rule' policy of the Raj created mutual distrust and hatred among the different castes in India. It was a well-planned systematic device designed by the rulers that was largely responsible for frequent communal riots that flared up in urban areas of India after 1930. It is abundantly clear that a majority of people in each community are fed up with violence. They are more concerned about their bread and butter. They do not want violence in the name of religion. But politics has vitiated the even tenor of society. The sentiments of people embedded in regionalism, parochialism and chauvinism are being roused by politicians for their narrow selfish interests. Dr. Boutrous Boutrous Ghali, the U.N. Secretary General, has rightly stated in his famous agenda for peace, "The sources of conflict and war are pervasive and deep. To reach them will require our utmost effort to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote sustainable economic and social development for wider prosperity, to alleviate distress and to curtail the existence and use of massively destructive weapons."

(iii) Complex Character of Indian Society

Indian society is extremely complex in its structure. It consists of hundreds of castes, subcastes and diverse cultures and the people are sharply divided by their religious beliefs. The Hindus are the dominant community but they are further fragmented into different sects and castes. The Hindu ancient sacred texts list four major castes consisting of Brahmins who are authorized to interpret religion and to worship, Kshatriyas or Rajputs - the warrior caste, Vaishya - the trading community, and Sudras - the untouchables. Seemingly the Hindus appear to be one community but if we go deeper we will discover gaping schisms within it. An internal cold war has been going on for centuries based on caste prejudices. High caste vanity arising from the consideration of supremacy makes it impossible for the people belonging to a lower caste to live in a dignified manner. Even after 49 years of Indian Independence, caste prejudices in rural areas persist. Despite the fact that the Indian Constitution gives all citizens equal rights and forbids discrimination on grounds of caste, creed and colour, social customs with their unwritten code deprive the vast multitudes living below poverty line of their rights to live as equals. We frequently come across sporadic incidents of violent quarrels on account of in-built prejudices of low and high caste. That is the state of the Hindu society. There aren't subcastes among the Muslims but one can see two distinct groups within it - well off educated and the illiterate poor. However Muslims show a

unique sense of unity based on religious considerations though the rift between the Shia and Sunni Muslims is well-known globally. Apart from these factors there are socially and economically backward castes.

(iv) Hindu-Muslim Conflict

As I have already stated Hindu-Muslim conflict manifested itself after the arrival of the British. Gandhi emerged as the supreme leader after 1920 only. His sole aim was to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. He knew the British would find an excuse and would further postpone Indian Independence. He struggled hard for years for the unity between the two communities but he was unsuccessful. The Hindu-Muslim problem defied Gandhi's efforts, "I am helpless", he admitted. I have now washed my hands. But I am a believer in God ... Something within me tells me that Hindu-Muslim unity will come sooner than we might care to hope. that God will one day force it on us, in spite of ourselves. That is why I said that it has passed into the hands of God". Gandhi felt comforted by this explanation but it did little to ease the tension. Hindus and Muslims kidnapped one another's womenfolk and children and forcibly converted them. The relations between the two communities further deteriorated after Mohammed All Jinnah founded the Muslim League. Jinnah's life style was unislamic. He drank alcohol and seldom visited mosques. He was not religious but suddenly he emerged as the great champion of Islam religion. Jinnah left Congress and launched another political party called Muslim League with the sole objective of partitioning India into two nations i.e. India and Pakistan. The communal situation in the country worsened after two nation theory was advocated by Jinnah. He wanted a separate nation for Muslims in the name of religion. When it became clear that India would be partitioned, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in all cities in India. Gandhi was fiercely opposed to the two nation theory. Vanity, jealousy and dislike undoubtedly play a major role in politics. Some of the great political feuds of history were personal before they became political. Gandhi wanted to use the cement of nationalism to make India one while Jinnah wanted to use the dynamite of religion to make it two.

The wall between Gandhi and Jinnah was the two-nation theory. "By all the canons of international law, we are a nation," Jinnah wrote. "We are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions."

Gandhi did not make an effort to controvert this large statement. He merely said, "I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendents claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. Do people change their characteristics when they change their religion ? Would there be a third nation in India if several million people adopted Christianity, and a fourth if several million joined the Jews ?

Politics is the single-most important cause of perpetual Hindu-Muslim conflict. The leaders in each community with political ambitions shamelessly exploit religious sentiments of the poor illiterate sections. Since most Muslims are economically and educationally backward, they fall easy prey to fundamentalist slogans and are swept away by fanaticism. It

is noteworthy here to quote the observations made by Louis Fisher in this connection. He says,

"The Muslim upper class (the landlords) and the Muslim middle class were ready for Jinnah. But they needed the peasantry for numbers. They soon discovered that they could win it by rousing religious passions. The formula was Pakistan, a separate Muslim state. Such a state would be officered by Muslims, and in it Hindu and Parsi firms would be at a disadvantage. The landlords believed they had less to fear from a country they controlled than from an independent liberal, secular India where a land reform that would dispossess them was expected to be one of the first piece of legislation."

There were more than 500 princely states ruled by Hindu Maharajas and Muslim Nawabs and before the spark of communalism was ignited the two communities in the states of these rulers lived in peace by and large. I am of the firm view that Hindu-Muslim conflict was a by-product of the political ambitions nurtured by a handful of individuals in the two communities.

(v) The Partitioning of India : a Catastrophe

Now I turn to the question whether the division of a nation on the basis of religious and sectarian consideration can bring about an end of our troubles. Whether one is a Hindu or a Sikh or a Jain or a Muslim, he is basically a human being with all the weaknesses. Jinnah's insistence on the two nation theory was motivated not by any consideration of the welfare and alleviation of the suffering of the Muslim Community but by his personal political ambition. A correspondent, who knew Jinnah well, wrote in the London Economist of September 17, 1949 that while Jinnah was practising law in London, someone repeated to him that Nehru, whom he despised and hated, had imprudently said at a private dinner that 'Jinnah was finished'. Outraged by this remark of Nehru Jinnah packed up and sailed back to India at once just to 'show Nehru'... Jinnah's pride was cut to the quick. Can we trace the cause of communal holocaust leading to the partitioning of India to this trivial incident ? To me it sounds credible since we have an example of Mahabharata or the great epic war fought between the Pandavas and the Kauravas in India five thousand years ago. It was Draupadi's insulting remark that stung Duryodhan, the son of Dhritarashtra - the blind king inciting him to seek revenge and the epic war was its inevitable consequence. Gandhi was deadly opposed to the partitioning of India. He had several meetings with Jinnah but failed in his attempt to persuade him to keep India united. Gandhi's heart was torn but he was helpless. The people had great love and reverence for Gandhi, congress virtually adored him but did not approve of his methods. Gandhi was an apostle of non-violence and he foresaw horrible consequences. The British waited for Indian leaders to submit a unanimous proposal but Jinnah was adamant. The result was catastrophic. Communal passions were inflamed to the maximum. The very thought that they would be dispossessed of their homes, property and land made the Sikhs and Hindus in Singh and Panjab tremble. But if it were mere dispossession and no bloodshed, storm would have subsided considerably but the Muslims in the Panjab and Sindh provinces and the Sikhs and Hindus in Northern India were killing one another. India became independent but at what cost ? Pakistan was born amid heaps of tears and rivers of blood. The Government of Independent India headed by Nehru and Patel looked on helplessly as massacres and genocides became the order of the day. Frenzied mobs indulged in ruthless killings and arsenals. Sanity was replaced by madness. Gandhi boycotted the Independence celebrations and went unarmed to the riot-affected areas healing the wounds of the victims and still trying desperately to persuade both the Hindus and Muslims to live as brothers and sisters. Even babies and children were not spared. The heart-rending scenes of individuals belonging to different faiths being beaten to pulps, babies being thrown or torn apart and women being raped were galore. Brutality, savagery and barbarity had gripped India - the land of spirituality. Gandhi regarded the vivisection of India as 'blasphemy' and he was right.

(vi) The Advent of Gandhi

Gandhi will be remembered as one of the greatest men who combined in him enormous spiritual strength and the rare qualities of the leadership of the masses. He is the patriarch of Indian's freedom struggle. The masses in India looked on him not as a political leader but as a saint. He laid emphasis on the practice of non-violence in word, thought and

deed. He assumed the leadership of Congress in 1920 and remained the supreme political leader till January 30, 1948 when he was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic. On the one hand, he struggled hard to educate Indian masses against the evil practices in Hinduism like low and high caste syndrome and untouchability, on the other hand he was to lead the non-violent crusade against the British rule. Millions of people believed him to be an extra-ordinary divine personality. Gandhi's use of non-violence as a weapon to combat the evils of casteism, untouchability, communal-ism and above all colonization will go down in human history as an unparalleled act. He was the first in the world to train masses in non-violence for achieving political freedom. After partition the raging fire of Hindu-Muslim strife gave him no rest. Gandhi's methods consisted of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fast and satyagraha. He fasted several times before and after Indian independence against communal riots and they had magical effect. Riots stopped at many places and calm returned. Gandhi was asked at the Asian Relations Conference in March 1947 whether he believed in One World and whether it could succeed under the present circumstances. Gandhi replied, "Certainly I should like to see this dream realized in my life- time. I hope all the representatives who have come from Asian countries will strive their level best to have only one world."

Mountbatten - the last British Viceroy told the Royal Empire Society on October 6, 1948 that in India Gandhi was not compared with some great statesmen like Roosevelt or Churchill. They classified him simply in their minds with Mohammed and with Christ. Millions adored the Mahatma, multitudes tried to kiss his feet or the dust of his footsteps. They paid him homage and rejected his teachings. They held his person holy and desecrated his personality. They glorified the shell and trampled the essence. Bisection of India was one of the greatest human tragedies in world history. Gandhi had foreseen it and tried in vain to persuade Jinnah to give up the demand of partition. The division of India caused the violent death of hundreds of thousands of Indians. It caused fifteen million refugees to wander unhappily from their homes into distant uncertainty. It provoked the war in Kashmir. It brought gigantic economic losses to all parts of the country. It fed a continuing religious nationalistic bitterness with disastrous potentialities. Gandhi couldn't prevent this tragedy. He went from place to place extinguishing the flames of violence with his torch of compassion and weapons of non-violence and moral courage.

(vii) The Aftermath of Partition : Three Indo-Pak Wars

The birth of Pakistan only added to the woes of both the people of India and the people of Pakistan. On account of the years of hatred and bitterness, the relations between the two countries have been far from cordial. Both the countries have fought three wars by now - first in 1948, second in 1965 and the third in 1971. Both the countries have suffered heavily. It is always the poor people who have to bear the brunt of these ravages. The 1948 war was fought for Kashmir and now it stands divided. The 1965 war was also fought for territorial expansion and later the TASHKENT AGREEMENT was signed but it proved ineffective since in 1971 once again both India and Pakistan went to war. The people in the then East Pakistan rebelled against the brutal suppression let loose by the Military Junta of the mainland and the civil war broke out. The result was the secession of that part from Pakistan and the birth of a new country called Bangladesh. But there is no end to this cycle of war,

strife and destruction that will go on so long as the rulers keep on indoctrinating the people against other faiths and encouraging them to grow intolerant and fundamentalists. If some people think that a separate nation for a particular community owing allegiance to another faith will usher them into a heaven of freedom, they will be disillusioned. In Pakistan where mostly Muslims live, there are murders, rapes, robberies, ethnic hatreds, exploitation, ruthless suppression and corruption. The people practising the same faith continue to fight among themselves and gutters continue to flow with human blood. Jinnah's dream is completely shattered and Gandhi was right. Human salvation lies in unification of nations into one world. Conflicts in the Indian subcontinent have increased. The causes of these conflicts emanate mainly from the rulers' partisan attitude towards the followers of different faiths, discrimination in the allotment of land and distribution of resources. We can sum them as follows:

1. Religious intolerance
2. Discrimination on grounds of caste, colour and creed
3. Favouritism in favour of a particular community for job opportunities
4. Violation of human rights
5. Callous indifference towards the alleviation of poverty and development.

(viii) Violent Conflicts in Punjab, Kashmir and Eastern Provinces of India

India is facing a difficult situation in Punjab, Kashmir and in the Eastern sector comprising Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur. The United Liberation Front in Assam, All Bodoland Students Union, Tripura National Army and some other groups are waging war against the Union Government and want to secede from India. Though they do not get support of the masses the occasional killing of non-tribal emigrants goes on. Mizoram was the hotbed of insurgency in the sixties but later the rebels led by Phizo, the founder of Mizo Liberation Front, were persuaded to give up armed struggle and rejoin the mainstream. Most armed volunteers surrendered and peace returned after the Government of India promised bulk economic aid and development in the area. The emergence of ULFA in Assam is a recent phenomenon. The discontent of the original natives against the emigrants from other parts of India and from the neighbouring country of Bangladesh is the main cause of insurgency in the Eastern Sector of India. We see the rising trends of provincialism and ethnic arrogance. The people of these eastern states think that their employment opportunities are shrinking and their resources are being usurped by those who come from outside. The rebels seem to have created a dent into tribal society. Lack of education, unemployment, poverty and starvation compel them to take up arms. Government of India is now trying to combat the problem of insurgency by announcing economic packages aimed at eradicating poverty. The conflicts in the east are mainly ethnic and economic and the problems cannot be solved by army.

The Sikh insurgency in Punjab caused havoc between the period of 1985 to 1995. This decade was marked by rampant terrorism and thousands of Hindus had fled the state. The Hindu and Sikhs had lived in harmony for centuries. But some ambitious religious and political leaders incited communal feelings. The Sikh youths who were without jobs were misled and they joined terrorists' outfits. Their demand was Khalistan. Sikhism is hardly

different from Hinduism but it is easy to divide people in the name of religion. Thousands of innocent people were killed but after the democracy was restored and elections were held, the elected government handled the problem tactfully and militancy was wiped out. Though there is peace in the state, the Khalistan movement leaders might push Punjab once again into an orgy of violence.

Kashmir is still burning. The most unfortunate aspect of Kashmir problem is that the dragon of religious fundamentalism has raised its ugly hood and almost all Muslims of the valley have been led away by the militants. The Hindu minority community has been forced to flee the state. They have been rendered homeless and converted into refugees in their own motherland. Only a fortnight ago ten domestic tourists were kidnapped and six of them were killed for the sake of Islam. It is the most dangerous trend which needs to be arrested by the sane and wise leaders from the Muslim community. The word Islam means peace. Violence has no place in it.

In the preceding pages I have presented an analytical evaluation of the conflicts in the Indian subcontinent. Now I suggest countermeasures to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Countermeasures

All conflicts have their origin in economic exploitation, ruthless repression, ecological degradation, nuclear armament, injustice, inequality, unemployment, abominable subhuman living conditions, despotic dictatorship, fundamentalism, illiteracy and ignorance. If the roots of conflicts are destroyed, there will be peace all around. Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution alone can bring about a lasting solution to all our problems. Non-violence or ahimsa is central to all his strategies. He demonstrated the power of ahimsa on many occasions. His favourite weapon to meet the challenge of violence was indefinite fasting. On the one hand it was an act of self-purification while on the other hand he used this instrument successfully to bring about a change of heart among those who grew thirsty of each other's blood.

In the midst of the raging flames of communal riots that engulfed the entire country barring a few southern states, Gandhi showed indefatigable non-violent spirit by touring Noakhali - the worst-hit place where a large number of Hindus were massacred. He went unarmed along with his trusted followers and addressed meetings attended by the followers of both the communities. He succeeded through his moral and spiritual power to put an end to violence. He showed that men could live as brothers and sisters and that brute men with blood on their hands can respond, however briefly, to the touch of the spirit. Without such moments humanity could lose faith in itself. The fact that Gandhi restored Calcutta to its senses and peace, the fact that his presence reduced the mass killings in Delhi to occasional outbursts, the fact that his fleeting visit to Dr. Zakir Hussain's Jamia Milia gave it immunity to violence, the fact that hardened bandits laid their arms at his feet, the fact that Hindus would listen to Koran verses and that Muslims would not object to hearing the holy words of Islam from the mouth of a Hindu - all this remains to inspire or haunt those whose actions would suggest that they have forgotten it. His last fast was undertaken in Delhi in January 1948 without consulting Congress leaders. It was in a flash of thought that he decided to end

communal violence in the wake of independence. He had brooded over the situation for three -days.

"I expect a thorough cleansing of hearts", he declared. He would break his fast when Delhi became peaceful in the real sense of the term. Gandhi's fast aroused national conscience. He said, "this fast is a process of self- purification and is intended to invite all who are in sympathy. Supposing there is a wave of self-purification throughout India, Pakistan will become Pak or pure". With the passing of each day, the news of Gandhi's fast spread like wild fire. People streamed to Birla House when he was staying. Gandhi refused to break fast till the whole of India was peaceful. His fast achieved what he had aimed at. It was the non-violent strategy he adopted to end violent communal conflict. I now recommend the following countermeasures to put an end to all conflicts. There are broadly divided Social, Economic, Political and Spiritual and Educational measures.

Countermeasures at Social and Educational level

Social harmony is the first prerequisite for social integration. It is impossible to end cultural and religious diversity. It is but natural to have different forms of beliefs, customs, dresses and languages. No one can eliminate them and have just one religion or just one culture or just one uniform for all the peoples of the world. It is the duty of all the communities in a society to realize this impossible situation. We must respect each other's cultural religious and social traditions. We need to have a global ethic. We need to have a common code of conduct. It would be worthwhile to reproduce the views of the two great saints of India, Gandhipati Tulsi, sponsor of ANUVRAT MOVEMENT, a movement based on individual commitment to basic human values the degeneration of which is the root cause of all conflicts and Acharya Mahapragya - the exponent of the new technique of meditation called Preksha Meditation:

"There may be many aspects of Peace and Non-violence which need thorough deliberations to furnish a feasible solution to the problem of war and violence. But the most fundamental one in our view, is the Instincts of violence, cruelty, aggression and haltered which are innately woven in human mind from the very birth. The communal, racial, sectarian, or ethnic, or even national meanness becomes instrumental in arousing these instincts collectively and we are confronted with the orgy of violence resulting in not only massacres or genocides but also in creation of deep rooted apathy between the conflicting groups.

The viable solution to this fundamental malady lies in a bio- chemical transformation from within which is possible only through training in non-violence through education all over the world. Unless Training in NONVIOLENCE is made a part and parcel of Global Education, we have little hope of wiping out the root causes of war and violence."

ANUVRAT MOVEMENT has left a deep impact on Indian society. ANU means small or basic and VRAT means a vow. In fact no vow is great or small but saint Tulsi realized that there was a tradition of vows

in all faiths. He drew a code of conduct based on the quintessence of all religions and launched a worldwide movement with the aim of ushering in an equitable and harmonious economic world order.

Gandhipati Tulsi or saint Tulsi, whatever you may call. is of the view that only a global campaign to train and orient people in non-violence can end our miseries. In schools, colleges and universities young students should be exposed to the cult of non-violence. ANUVRAT MOVEMENT is a global ethic meant for all sections of society irrespective of their caste, religion or colour. It is open to every body. One who accepts the follows eleven vows becomes an ANUVRATI:

Anuvrat: Code of Conduct

1. I will not wilfully kill any innocent creature.
 - * I will not commit suicide
 - * I will not commit foeticide
2. I will not attack anybody.
 - * I will not support aggression.
 - * I will endeavour to bring about world peace and disarmament.
3. I will not take part in violent agitations or in any destructive activities.
4. I will practise religious toleration.
 - * I will not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour etc., nor will I treat anyone as an untouchable.
5. I will practise religious toleration.
 - * I will not rouse sectarian frenzy.
6. I will observe rectitude in business and general behaviour.
 - * I will not harm others in order to serve any ends.
 - * I will not practise deceit.
7. I will set limits to the practice of continence and acquisition.
8. I will not resort to unequal practices in elections.
9. I will not encourage socially evil customs.
10. I will lead a life free from addictions.
 - * I will not use intoxicants like alcohol, hemp, heroin, tobacco etc.
11. I will always be alert to the problem of keeping the environment pollution free.
 - * I will not cut down trees.
 - * I will not waste water.

University for Peace, COSTA RICA has come out with a similar programme for the education of youngsters. They call it 'Global Education Programme for Peace and Universal Responsibility'. The whole system of education has to be changed integrating into its syllabi and courses global ethic. Such an endeavour alone can end social and ethnic conflicts. Economic inequality is also responsible for social unrest. But unless people decide voluntarily to restrain their greed and refrain from acquiring wealth beyond a point, the poor people will not be able to use the excess wealth willingly renounced. The Global Ethic must Inspire people to renounce their property, land and wealth for the sake of the poor. Government should also frame their economic policy in such a way that the weaker sections of society benefit from it. The much publicized COPENHAGEN SOCIAL SUMMIT was a fiasco since the rich nations refused to commit themselves to spare a portion of their budget for the eradication of poverty at global level.

Countermeasures at Political Level:

Prof. Glenn D Palge of the University of Hawaii has added a new dimension to the teaching of political science at Universities. He advocates the adoption of non-killing politics. Politics is the root cause of wars. So we have to evolve a new non-killing political science so that the future political leaders behave in a responsible manner and think of the global welfare. The ETHIC for political parties and political leaders may consist of the following:

- (1) One world is an ideal. They should strive for its accomplishment.
- (2) Global consideration should precede narrow national consideration.
- (3) Abolition of armies gradually should be aimed at.
- (4) Morality should be the basis of national and international politics.
- (5) Nuclear non-proliferation should be adhered to.

Countermeasures at Spiritual Level:

Unfortunately the world lies steeped in gross materialistic philosophy. Science and Technology have brought materialistic comforts to humanity but war and conflict first originate in the minds of man. Little is being done to elicit the spiritual and virtuous qualities that lie deep in human mind. Science and spirituality should be combined if we want to see a peaceful world.

Other Countermeasures:

As has already been stated, unless exploitation of the poor by the rich stops, unless people develop religious tolerance, unless people begin to readjust themselves to the new situation which makes it imperative to have multi-religious and multicultural societies, unless we put a limit to the acquisitiveness of wealth, conflicts arising from social religious, ethnic, caste and colour considerations will never come to an end.

