
UNIT 13 GLOBAL PEACE INITIATIVES

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

International relations, global political issues, questions of peace and security have long been taught and researched with little or no mention of women as role players or victims of circumstances. Pundits and pupils alike considered international affairs as domain of only men's business and preoccupations.

When international relations, as a subject, evolved in the midst of World War I, critiques of women organising for peace were not even considered. However, things have changed substantially in recent decades and the role of women in politics, war and peace making have come to be more earnestly studied, analysed, researched and even promoted.

Early feminist critiques raised the question—"Where are the women"?—alleging no factoring of women who were employed in military bases around the world or working in export processing zones. Now one hears about women suicide bombers. Women in the American armed forces constitute seventeen percent of the total. Women have joined the armed forces of many other countries around the world. Examples are replete in history as to how women inspired their men to fight to win. But sincere effort to examine the role of women in war and peace is of relatively very recent origin.

This Unit discusses the relevance of studying the role of women in issues related to war and peace and global security and stability. Inter-state armed conflicts, both major and minor, are part of the grim realities of international relations. Hundreds of wars have been fought over the centuries. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes. Millions have been killed or injured. But none has suffered more than women. They have lost their near and dear ones in the wars. They have been raped, insulted and humiliated during and after conflicts. But simultaneously, women have been systematically excluded from peace negotiations and post-conflict settlements and reconstruction.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand

- The need for greater women participation in peace making, peace building and peace keeping operations;
- The importance of developing a gender perspective on questions of peace, security and development;
- Contribution of women groups and organisations to global peace;
- The hurdles faced by the women's organisations in peace making and peace building efforts.

13.2 WHY STUDY THE ROLE OF WOMEN?

It is not at all difficult to find sufficient rationale to incorporate the role of women in peace making, peace keeping and peace building endeavours in several corners of the world. First of all, participation of women in legislative processes in various countries has increased to an extent where their perspective on peace and conflict cannot be ignored. Secondly, women have different perspectives on politics, power, economics and even conflict and it is important to include their views in peace and conflict studies. Thirdly, women- throughout history- have played a significant role during war and after war directly or indirectly and their contribution to peace cannot be neglected. Fourthly, a large number of women constitute an important part of the “market” that adequately justifies investigation of role of women in economic affairs of the world. Finally, women have been at the receiving end of most international wars as well as internal armed conflicts and thus deserve a place in studies of peace making and peace building.

But more significantly, women are increasingly aware of the injustice meted out to them in diverse forms and women's organisations are proliferating worldwide to promote participation of women in politics, economics, education, and security and other fields. There are many who deplore the current subhuman conditions of women around the globe and argue that such conditions are partly responsible for conflict and social tensions. For example, more than 70% of poor people in the world are women. About 80% of women refugees around the planet are women. Poverty is a major cause of social conflict and refugees are by and large the victims of conflicts.

It is worth noting that Betha von Suttner, a German lady dedicated to the cause of peace, was instrumental in influencing Alfred Nobel's decision to set aside some money for instituting the Nobel Peace Prize. Most of the women's human rights organisations of late 19th and 20th centuries recognised the need for world peace as part of their vision for a new society. Despite all these, women's role in peace found little space in academic studies.

Mahatma Gandhi regarded women as personification of nonviolence. He was of the view that distinct socialisation processes not only made women more peaceful but also endowed them with a special capability to resolve or moderate conflicts through nonviolent means. According to him, peace starts in the minds of women. Other thinkers had similar views on women as nurturers and men as perpetrators of violence.

13.3 WOMEN: VICTIMS OF WAR AND CONFLICT

Women's issues deserve a prominent place in peace studies and peace efforts also because of the truth that they are the worst sufferers during internal and external conflicts. They are physically injured and psychologically wounded when combatants and non-combatants rape them during conflicts in the society or armed conflicts between nations. Women are also forced into prostitution by an occupying power or winning side in a conflict. The case of comfort women used by the Japanese during the Second World War is a bright example. And the number of Filipino, Korean and Chinese women used as comfort women by the Japanese armed forces were not small, but an astounding 2,00,000. Similar horrific incidents were reported during the war in Bosnia and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda Burundi.

Brothels are encouraged around military bases established by foreign powers. The US military in South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand after the Second World War symbolised the unequal relations between a superpower and Third World Allies. Sexual abuse, prostitution, violence and rape have given rise to a sex-industry that not only reflects power disparity between nations but also inequity between genders.

As a matter of fact, rape is used as an instrument at the time of war to inflict psychological pain and hurt and humiliate the enemies. While some analysts argue that rape and sexual abuse is the product of war, Amnesty International views them as "deliberate military strategy". According to the War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo, 20, 000 women were raped by the Japanese soldiers during the first weeks of their occupation of Nanking in China. While rape during the war is illegal and is considered a crime against humanity under the Geneva Convention, sufferings of women in conflict zones have not ended till date.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) figures, about half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide in the African country of Rwanda. Internally displaced women during the internal conflicts in 1990s faced similar sexual abuses to the tune of 64, 000. News from the Darfur region of Sudan is not very different. Figures for countries located in Europe are equally horrific. During the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, an estimated 60,000 women were raped.

Another acute predicament faced by women is at the time of their flight and while in exile in refugee camps. Millions of displaced women during wars and conflicts try to hold their families together in one of the most grueling and inhuman circumstances. They relentlessly face the risk of violence, sexual abuse, rape, hunger and abandonment.

There are several instances of women's groups taking modest steps against injustices originating from wars and conflicts. Women certainly did not start World War I, but soon after the war started, women from about 13 countries held a meeting in The Hague and protested against the war. They then went ahead and established the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Long before the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1975 recognised women's contribution to peace, women in various parts of the world were already in the forefront of anti-war and anti-nuclear movements. Two bright examples set by women's groups were the Dutch Women for Peace and against Nuclear Weapons and the Nordic Women for Peace which vociferously pressed against all kinds of aggression. The Women of Greenham Common in Wales

(United Kingdom) marched more than 100 miles in 1981 to press against their government's decision to deploy cruise missiles in NATO bases in the country. There were reports that women, more than men, opposed large military expenditures and deployment of new weapons and military equipment in the thick of Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union.

13.4 ROLE OF THE UN

Since the 1970s there has been growing awareness in the community of nations that women's participation in promoting international peace should be recognised and encouraged. This new consciousness was clearly reflected in the steps taken by the United Nations, UNESCO and international women's conferences in organising frameworks of activities by women centred on the theme of "equality, development and peace." Women were supposed to be encouraged to play a role in promoting, what UNESCO referred to as, "Culture of Peace". This concept was very much similar to the goals set by women's movements and was grounded on the conviction that equality, development and peace are inseparable. Lasting peace is impossible without durable development and sustainable development is not feasible without gender equality.

The UNESCO's concept of "Culture of Peace" could be realised only with women's participation and women were expected to bring new "breadth, quality and balance of vision to a joint effort of moving from a culture of war to a culture of peace". As rising number of women vigorously and explicitly demanded a role in conflict resolution, peace negotiations and peace building with the backing of a growing number of nations and non-governmental organisations, the United Nations Organisation took due note and stepped forward to facilitate the effort. In the year 1975, in the midst of celebration of the International Women's Year, the UN determined to celebrate 8th of March every year as International Women's Day. The United Nations also declared that 1976 to 1985 would be considered as the "Decade of Women." Two years later the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted an international bill of Human Rights for Women that aimed at "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) then came forward to champion the cause of women empowerment by advocating the following:

- Increase the number of women in public office.
- Enhance women's leadership by helping to reform electoral processes, change political parties, and strengthen parliaments, judiciaries and the civil services.
- Strengthen the ability of women's organisations to advocate and implement projects that promote women's rights.
- Promote judicial reforms to ensure equal legal protection to poor women and men.
- Ensure that essential public services like health and education benefit poor women, men, girls and boys equitably.
- Promote the ratification, implementation, and reporting on women's international and regional women's instruments, including the convention of elimination of discrimination against women.
- Reduce gender-based violence.

As a follow up to all these developments, several international women's conferences were organised to give shape to the concept of development and peace and notable among them were the ones held in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing. All these endeavours legitimised the demand for ending the gender bias by promoting women empowerment, but not much had been done yet in addressing women's role in issues of peace and conflict. The UN General Assembly noted in its "Declaration on the Participation in Promoting Peace and Cooperation" in 1982 that notwithstanding the incessant efforts by the women NGOs in the field of arms control and disarmament, more women participation in peace discussions, conflict resolution and disarmament in the UN Security Council was called for.

Two decades later a more telling resolution was passed to ensure a place for women in peace dialogues and peace building. The UN Security Council passed a historic resolution, no. 1325, in the year 2000. While role of the UN in promoting women empowerment was not new, this resolution took into account "unrecognized, under-utilized and undervalued" contribution of women to preventing war and building peace. Among other things, the resolution categorically mentioned that it:

"Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

Urges the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard *calls on* Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;

Further urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;

Expresses its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and *urges* the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;

Requests the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace building measures,

invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment, and *further requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;

Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective.

Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls.

Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants; submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;

Requests the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls.”

It was in the same year that a “Global Peace Initiative of Religious and Spiritual Leaders” was organised by the UN at its headquarters in Geneva. Hundreds of women representatives from 75 countries were part of this conference and took part in discussion on international politics, peace and conflict. About 100 business women at the conference launched a Business Council for Peace to provide programmes, finances and markets for women business persons in conflict zones around the world, including in West bank, Gaza, Rwanda and Afghanistan.

13.5 IMPACT OF RESOLUTION 1325

The resolution passed on the eve of the dawn of the 21st Century was truly comprehensive. It was a monumental step and this resolution appeared to have invigorated many women organisations struggling to prevent conflict or achieve and sustain peace in several conflict zones. Governments, regional organisations and civil societies certainly became more conscious of the significance of gender equality and the need for empowering the women for preventing social tension and societal conflict and sustaining peace.

Realising the importance of enrolling women in peace keeping forces, police forces and civilian services, such as trauma counseling etc., many countries, including Argentina and Mexico in Latin America, Croatia, Slovakia and Romania in Europe, South Africa in Africa and Vietnam in Asia reportedly undertook measures to recruit women for services in the armed forces and to encourage women participation in other professional activities. Developed nations, such as Britain, Canada, Germany and a few others advocated greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations and armed forces through financial and other support.

Resolutions highlighting similar issues were also adopted by the Group of Eight, the European Union, Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The African Union, significantly, began to mainstream gender in many of its activities and established a “Women, Gender and Development Directorate” under the Office of the Chairperson of the organisation. Impact of the Resolution 1325 was reflected in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, which included Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. In addition other regional bodies, such as Southern African Development Community and (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also made action plans to implement the 1325 Resolution.

In the meantime, the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs agreed in 2007 to set up a working group on gender peace and security to take up gender issues in peace and post-conflict processes. The following year, even the Arab countries witnessed some positive movements in this regard. The Arab Women's Organization convened a conference to discuss the role of women and the concept of human security.

Moreover, partial success of this resolution is reflected in the increase in the percentage of women military personnel in UN peacekeeping forces. It almost doubled from 1 percent in 2004 to 2.2 percent in 2008. There was also a modest rise in the percentage of women police personnel in peacekeeping operations. Women representation in civilian posts of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and in the Department of Field Support also witnessed a steady expansion.

According to experts, there was visible advancement in six broad areas in the aftermath of the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council: 1. Awareness of importance of women participation in peace building activities; 2. Development of Gender Action work programs in disarmament and humanitarian activities; 3. Deployment of advisors to train and improve gender sensitivity; 4. Prevention as well as appropriate response to violence against women in conflict zones; 5. Development and execution of code of conducts to deal with cases, such as sexual harassment; and 6. Greater women participation in post-conflict reconstruction activities.

13.6 WOMEN AT THE PEACE TABLE: LIMITATIONS AND DRAWBACKS

Notwithstanding the relevance of the Resolution 1325 and its positive impact worldwide, its limitations are found in the detail. One of the most regrettable aspects of the plight of women emanates from their deliberate exclusions from peace negotiations. Women representatives at the peace table in almost all conflict zones around the planet are almost nil to a few. In ten years time beginning 1991, twelve agreements to end conflict and arrive at some kind of peace were concluded in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kosovo, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. With the exception of just four agreements in El Salvador, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, the rest had absolutely no provision for women participation. Women were not even allowed to sit through the dialogue to end violence in Sudan.

Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council was expected to expand women participation in conflict prevention and peace promotion. But even after about a decade of its adoption, a small percentage of people around the world knew about it. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reported to the Security Council that "enhanced inter-governmental oversight, monitoring and follow up on implementation of resolution 1325" was required. Two years later, Banki-Moon, Annan's successor, drew attention to the need for the creation of a central mechanism for tracking the execution of the 1325 resolution. Recently, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 2009 reviewed 21 major peace processes held since 1992 and discovered that less than 8 percent of delegates to peace talks were women and less than 3 percent were signatories to peace agreements.

The main reason behind such a state of affairs can be attributed to the utter lack of women empowerment in the conflict zones and, in fact, in countless other countries as

well. The long struggle of women to raise their status in the society is manifested in various women's movements is yet to succeed to a satisfactory level. According to some estimates, only one per cent of women in the world own landed property. While about forty percent of women are now economically active and earning money, sixty percent remain jobless. Worse still, they earn only 30 percent of what men earn in West Asia and North Africa, 40 per cent in Latin America and South Asia, 50 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 60 percent in developed countries of Europe and Asia.

Women's participation in governance likewise is exceptionally inadequate. According to one approximation, less than 17 percent of women were elected representatives in national legislatures by 2006. It has been argued that at this rate gender parity in democratic governance cannot be achieved for another half century or even more. Furthermore, until 2001 no woman found a representation in the International Law Commission in its more than half a century of existence, while only one judge served in the International Court of Justice in eight decades of the court's existence. Women constitute less than ten percent of mayors around the globe.

Nonetheless, the world seems to be slowly waking up to the grim reality of injustice, income inequality, disproportionate representation of women and the critical need to fill up the gap. With the solitary exception of the West Asia, participation of women in local governance has been rising in other parts of the world. Women representation as councilors, for instance, is about 30% in Africa, 26% in South America, 24% in Central America, 23% in Europe and 17% in Asia.

Another major limitation is reflected in difficulties faced by many women's organisations to sustain themselves in the face of inadequate funding. Others clearly need more training in the fields of management, leadership and lobbying skills. Only invitation to women for participation in post-conflict peace negotiations is insufficient unless women have right education, training and confidence. It is also a fact that marginalisation and stigmatisation of women and physical harassment from local men and security forces in post-conflict situations are highly discouraging.

13.7 CONCLUSION

Difficulties have not discouraged several women organisations from continuing the struggle for peace and development. Women are progressively more energetic in fighting for a place around the peace table as well. They now develop various strategies and work through the mushrooming non-governmental organisations to make their voice heard in various peace processes. In the Philippines, for instance, women created peace zones to insulate their children from the recruitment by the military as well as the militias. When men were away and busy fighting, women in Northern Island cutting across the sectarian divide came together in generating grass-root movements to bring about peace and demanded positions in the peace table.

Various research findings have shown that peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance succeed better, if women are part of the process. Peace building cannot be a complete success, if about half of the global population are marginalised or kept out of the process. It has been rightly observed in a study prepared by the Institute of Inclusive Security that when "women are actively involved, peace agreements are more credible and cover a broad range of issues. Their participation widens negotiations beyond topics of military action, power, and wealth sharing, while promoting a noncompetitive

negotiating style and building bridges among negotiating parties. Women negotiators help establish positive relationships and steer talks away from zero-sum games over political domination.”

Resolutions have been adopted, promises have been made, international organisations, national governments and civil society bodies have been sensitised, yet the goal still remains distant. Nowhere is it better mirrored than on the finding that out of more than 300 reports prepared by the UN Secretary General for the Security Council between 2004 and 2008, there was hardly any mention of the issue of gender equality in more than 60 per cent of them.

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom has a project “PeaceWomen”. In a special report dated January 2011 on “The Role of Women in Global Security”, it examined women’s role in peace-building, post-conflict and economic development. The report observed that:

1. Ten years after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on increasing women’s participation in matters of global security, the numbers of women participating in peace settlements remain marginal.
2. While improvements have been made, women remain unrepresented in public office, at the negotiating table and in the peacekeeping missions.
3. The needs and perspectives of women are often overlooked in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.
4. Building lasting peace and security requires women’s participation. Half of the world’s population cannot make a whole peace.

It is downright clear that the goal of adequate women participation in global issues of peace and security is still elusive.

13.8 SUMMARY

We have learnt from this Unit that women have been the worst sufferers of wars and conflicts from time immemorial. In recent decades, women’s groups and organisations have proliferated seeking a role in conflict prevention, development, governance and peacemaking. There has been growing awareness among national governments and international organisations about the urgent need to enhance women’s participation in regional and global efforts to manage or prevent conflicts and promote peace and stability. The United Nations and its sister organisations as well as regional groupings, such as the European Union, Organization of American States and several others have taken up this cause. However, all these efforts have only minimally increased women’s role in various conflict zones in peacemaking and peace keeping operations. Traditional biases, inadequate legal provisions, lack of sufficient funding and limited training facilities, among many other causes, have hampered the implementation of the United Nations’ goal to improve and enlarge women’s participation in global peace missions and efforts.

13.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Is it relevant and important to study the role of women in global peace and security issues and processes? If yes, why so?

2. Do you agree that women are the principal victims of armed conflicts—internal or inter-state? Briefly explain the reasons with appropriate examples.
3. Analyse the role of the United Nations and its sister organisations, such as UNDP in promoting women participation in peace negotiations and conflict resolutions.
4. What is Resolution 1325? What are its main provisions?
5. Examine the impact of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on national governments and international organisations.
6. What are the main benefits of including women representatives in peace negotiations?
7. Explain the reasons behind continuing marginalisation of women in peace building and conflict resolutions processes.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, the UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. Various reports of this organization are available at <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/>

UNIT 14 ASIAN PEACE INITIATIVES

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

Women, urban and rural, educated and uneducated, Indian and Asian, are always part of the peace initiatives across the places. While some rose to the prominence, others went unnoticed but played the role of untiring heroines in the crusade against injustice and conflict. Armed conflict, in any part of the world, is bound to create adverse impact on the society as a whole and lives of people, especially women. So does the community under the autocratic leaders. Time and again the international society at large recognises this. Since the spread of colonialism and emergence of state system, women lost their representation in peace building decision making process altogether due to a masculine paternalistic approach resulted out of it. In the mid 1990s some of the women started moving such exclusionary drive by forming the network of women worldwide. Eventually, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) has correctly identified the perspectives of conflict and lives of women in different parts of the World and recognised the role of the State in it. Later in 1999, UK-based organisation called International Alert launched Women Building Peace, a global campaign where almost 100 civil organisations came together across the world. Finally this led to the October 2000 signing of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

There are conceptual tensions on how women and women's concerns are being received inside the debate of peacebuilding process. The 'gender' concern is emerging as a central focus in entire process where women demand their space and raise their voice to be heard in every corner of this world today. Historically, it has been found that the

conflict and its impact on Asian women always unfolded the untold stories of women who held a crusade against the curse it brought it on women and society as a whole. Here we discuss some of the initiatives taken up by the women leaders in the Asian context.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The role of women in the peace initiatives in the Asian context.
- The need for peace initiatives in the Asian context.

14.2 AFGHANISTAN

“Sustainable peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation of women”, said Elizabeth Gibbons, Associated Director of Gender Rights and Civic Engagement in UNICEF’s Division of Policy and Practice. The devastation of social orders that resulted in justice and lack of human rights that happened during the Taliban regime is unthinkable. More than eight years after the fall of Taliban regime the lives of women and children in Afghanistan have not inched forward. The continued violence and surmounting insecurity impedes the access of women and children to basic rights and services. The most affected sectors are health and education.

There was a forum called Jirga, a national level meeting of leaders and elders was convened in the month of May 2011 where Ms. Gibbon urged the organizers to place issues affecting Afghan women and girls high on their agenda. “... peace building is not about formal negotiations alone. It is about ensuring the tangible benefits of peace – including access to basic social services, such as education, health care and protection, access to livelihood opportunities and the creation of an enabling environment for the realization of human rights of all. These peace dividends need to be secured in the daily life of women, men, girls and boys on an equal basis”.

As coordinator of the Afghan Women’s Network, an umbrella group of non-governmental organizations advocating gender equality, Afifa Azim brought somewhat a frontline perspective to the peace building panel discussion. She pointed to significant progress made in the country since 2001, including gains in girls’ education and women’s access to professional opportunities. “We all want stability and peace, but not at the price of women’s rights. We are told that women’s rights are a development issue, not a security issue. But women’s rights are part of what the fighting is all about. The world should not forget us. We want peace, but with social justice.”

Contextually, it is found in a report “*Afghan Women Speak: Enhancing Security and Human Rights in Afghanistan*” from Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at University of Notre Dame expressed the argument that a militarised environment does not help Afghan women and girls move forward in securing and protecting their rights.

David Cortright and Sarah Smiles Persinger observe that Afghan women become the victims of the violence between the foreign forces and the insurgents, crime gangs, local government and the police chiefs. This insecurity not only directly impacts women’s access to education, employment and healthcare but also reinforces their seclusion and their family’s control over them.

Dr. Sima Samar, a Doctor by profession, has been tirelessly working in war-torn areas

of Afghanistan for the healthcare and education to women and children. Born in February, 1957 in Ghazani and a Hazara woman, one of the most persecuted ethnic minority herself, Dr. Sima Samar had to face an uphill journey to settle herself as professional Doctor. She worked with Anti-Soviet Resistance Movement and fled to Quetta, Pakistan to serve as doctor in a refugee camp for Afghan women who were forbidden to visit male doctors. With the help of other women she established her first hospital in 1987 and later in 1989 she established, Shuhada, a non-governmental Organisation, committed to reconstruction and development of Afghanistan with special emphasis on women and children. She and her medical staff run four hospitals and ten clinics in Afghanistan, and provide medical training courses at the hospitals. She started schools in rural Afghanistan with more than 20,000 students and another in Quetta for Afghan refugee girls with food aid and information on hygiene and family planning. Two of her hospitals have been forcefully closed down by Taliban but she relentlessly worked for the betterment of women. She successfully networked with the outside world through her alliance with the International Network of Women Living Under Muslim Law and has a voice in United Nations too. She received Raman Magsaysay award for Community Leadership in the year 1984.

14.3 BANGLADESH

Bangladesh emerged as an independent State after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Bangladesh's secession was the outcome of the suppression of its linguistic and cultural identity and the unequal terms of socio-economic contract. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, visionary freedom fighter, with his unchallenged capability led the country to the much awaited freedom from Pakistan and established Bangladesh as unitary and homogenous State. He ruled out the self rule aspirations of the people from the Chittagong Hill Tract. The successive military regime and democratic government bent on military suppression of Hill Peoples' movement. Eventually, although a peace agreement was concluded in December 1997, it did not bring the desired result to end the violence in the Hill Tracts simply because the agreement does not adequately address the Hill peoples' demands. The extremist groups do influence in public sphere which resulted out of its unsettled foundational principles of Bangladesh Constitution, especially of secularism. The democratic political terrain of Bangladesh is torn between the two dominant political formulations, the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party. The former is led by Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the latter is led by Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of assassinated President General Ziaur Rahman.

The post independence era in Bangladesh is always witnessing the tension of socio-economic and cultural identity in building the nation. The world famous work of Bangladesh Grameen Bank and self-help groups of women founded and promoted by visionary noble laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus, originally from Chittagong, brought in a wave of economic upliftment of thousands of Bangladeshi women. The entrepreneurship approach of development helped many women from remote corners of Bangladesh to earn a modest livelihood.

14.4 BURMA/MYANMAR

The emergence of Union of Burma in 1948 was the resultant effect of mutual understanding that the Union would be of one of co-equal, co-independent states, which was the prime spirit of Pang Long Agreement in 1947. But unfortunately post-independence, the mutual

understanding between the ethnic people was lost and decades of civil war ravaged the entire country. These wars severely impacted the lives of women and children. Women belonging to ethnic minorities have witnessed unbearable suffering like death of family members, forced labour, rape, torture, extra-judicial killing, forced relocations, extortion and confiscation of land and property by the military regime. The suffering of the people escalated after the crackdown on the 1988 pro-democracy movement. This propelled the large-scale migration of people from Myanmar to the neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh and Thailand. But there too they receive hostile atmosphere.

The majority of state violence incidents have been committed in the ethnic areas. Women's groups from Burma based along the border presented this issue at international fora including UN annual sessions of CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) and CHR. In June 2002, the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), a founding member of WLB (Women's League of Burma), jointly produced a report, "Licence to Rape" with the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) documenting 173 rape incidents involving 625 women and girls in Central Shan State from 1996-2001.

While the second Forum of women's Organisation of Burma was held in Chiang Mai from December 7 to 9, 1999, women who attended the forum, share their views on ways and means to find a common platform. Thus the Women's League of Burma comprising of 11 women organisations, who work for women's issues in Burma, was established on December 9, 1999.

The current membership is comprised of the following organizations.

- Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
- Kachin Women's Association-Thailand (KWAT)
- Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
- Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
- Kayan Women's Organization (KyWO)
- Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
- Lahu Women's Organization (LWO)
- Palaung Women's Organization (PWO)
- Pa-O Women's Union (PWU)
- Rakhaing Women's Union (RWU)
- Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
- Tavoy Women's Union (TWU)
- Women's Rights and Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB)

The aim and the objectives of the WLB as laid down by the first Congress include working for:

- The empowerment and advancement of the status of women
- The rights of women and gender equality

- The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women
- The increased participation of women in every level of decision making in all spheres of society
- The movement for peace, democracy and national reconciliation.

The impact of the report and the international support given to the campaign was a tremendous morale boost for SWAN and WLB members and non-members. They became more motivated to work in their coordinated and collective efforts to fight back effectively to protect women against the state violence being committed by the Burmese military. In August 2003, WLB decided to launch a “Stop State Violence against Women” campaign. Activities of regional working teams include documenting women’s stories or data on violence against women cases and providing practical assistance to women who have suffered from violence, including counselling, temporary shelter, medical support and also linking with other NGOs for legal redress.

The contribution and struggle of Dr. Aung San Suu Kyi, a great woman leader who is leading the country to democracy, is enormous. Aung San, her father, founded the modern Burmese Army and negotiated Burma’s independence from the British in 1947. Aung San Suu Kyi, educated in some of the most prestigious institutions abroad, returned to Burma in 1988 to cater to her ailing mother but later she led the prodemocracy movement. From 1989 she was put under house arrest by the Military Junta. She remained separated from her family but eventually was released from her house arrest on 13 November, 2010.

While her personal life went through painful span due to separation, she did not stop fighting for the people of Burma. On her return to Burma in 1988, she led the prodemocracy movement on resignation of long time Military leader General Ne Win. She addressed half a million people at a mass rally in front of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, calling for a democratic government. But in September 1988 a new military Junta came to power. Later the National League for Democracy (NLD) was founded of which Suu Kyi became General Secretary. She decided to work on the philosophy of non-violence of Buddhist ideology as well as Gandhian philosophy. She received Nobel Peace Prize in the year 1991 for her distinguished accomplishment for the struggle and used the entire 1.3 million USD prize money to build a health and education trust for Burmese people. Even as late as in 2009, on his visit to Burma, Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of UN wanted to meet her only to be refused by the Military regime on the pretext that her trial was on at the court of Burma. One of her most famous speeches is the “Freedom From Fear” speech, which begins: “It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.” She also believes fear spurs many world leaders to lose sight of their purpose. “Government leaders are amazing”, she once said. “So often it seems they are the last to know what the people want.”

14.5 INDIA

Traditionally woman has been defined as *abala* (*without strength*) in Indian scripts. In Sanskrit, *abala* means one without strength. If by strength one denotes strength of character and endurance as an individual, s/he would be called as *sabala* i.e. strong in his or her character or personality. Gandhi, at the All India Women’s Conference in 1936, said, “When woman, whom we call *abala* became *sabala*, all those who are helpless will

become powerful”. Gandhi worked not only for the political emancipation of the nation, but for the liberation of all the suppressed and oppressed sections of society (Thakkar, 2004). Gandhi had tremendous confidence in women’s inherent capacity for non-violence. Here we would learn of some of selected women comrades of Gandhi who extended great support during freedom struggle of India.

Sarojini Naidu

An accomplished and distinguished woman, Sarojini Naidu was the eldest daughter of scientist, philosopher, and educator Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, and Baroda Sundari Devi, a poetess. Her father was the founder Principal of the Nizam College, Hyderabad and also the first member of the Indian National Congress in Hyderabad, India. He was later dismissed from his position as Principal and even banished in retaliation for his involvement in political activities. Sarojini herself was a significant poetess too. After her studies abroad, on her return to India, she joined the Indian independence movement, just when Lord Curzon announced the Partition of Bengal in 1905. Gradually during 1903-17, she came into contact with personalities like Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Annie Besant, M. K. Gandhi, C.P. Ramaswamy and Jawaharlal Nehru.

From 1915 to 1918 she lectured all over India on welfare of youth, dignity of labour, women’s emancipation and nationalism. She got herself involved with the cause of the indigo workers of Champaran. In 1925, she was elected as the President of the Congress, the first Indian woman to hold the post. In March 1919, while Gandhiji organised the Non-Cooperation Movement, Naidu was the first to join the movement. In July 1919, Naidu became the ambassador of Home Rule League to England. In 1928, she became member of Congress Working Committee. She courted arrests on different occasions. In 1931, she participated in the Round Table Summit, along with Gandhiji and Pundit Malaviyaji. On October 2, 1942, she was arrested during the “Quit India” protest and stayed in jail for 21 months. Naidu said, “When there is oppression, the only self-respecting thing is to rise and say this shall cease today, because my right is justice.” She adds, “If you are stronger, you have to help the weaker boy or girl both in play and in the work.”

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

Rajkumari was a member of princely family of Kapurthala in Punjab province. She finished her college education from Oxford University. She met Gandhi in 1919 and felt drawn to his thoughts and vision. She joined Indian National Congress and began to participate in freedom struggle. She co-founded All India Women’s Conference in 1927 and went on to become its secretary in 1930 and president in 1933. She was imprisoned by British authority due to her participation in Dandi March in 1930. She joined Gandhiji’s Ashram in 1934 to embrace an austere life. She took part in Quit India Movement in 1942 and again got jailed. She worked relentlessly against illiteracy, to eradicate child marriages and the purdah system. She became part of Nehru’s Cabinet as the first woman to hold so; was elected President of World Health Organisation in 1950 as the first Asian and first woman to hold such post. She also pioneered the establishment of All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. She became the chairperson of the Indian Red Cross Society, initiated Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute in Chennai and established College of Nursing and the National Sports Club of India.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya

Coming from a family of freedom fighters, Kamaladevi came into contact with many noted freedom fighters and the seeds of freedom were sowed in her mind quite early. Married and widowed at an early age, she defied all social norms and continued her studies. She graduated from Queen's Mary College in Chennai and married Harindranath, the younger brother of Sarojini Naidu against much of social anguish and norms.

She joined the national freedom movement and founded All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and became its first Organising Secretary. During Salt Satyagraha in 1930 she entered Bombay Stock Exchange to sell packets of contraband salt and imprisoned as result of such act. She later associated with stalwarts like Jayprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia. In the post-Independent India, she set up the Indian Cooperative Union; worked untiringly to settle the refugees in Faridabad town; did massive work to enliven the lost craft of people from North West Frontier to rehabilitate them; she initiated the Central Cottage Industries all over India to help the women in unorganised sector. In 1964 she initiated Natya Institute of Kathak and Choreography (NIKC) at Bangalore under the aegis of Bharatiya Natya Sangh, affiliated to UNESCO, National School of Drama and also headed the Sangeet Natak Academy. She received some of the distinguished awards like Padma Bhushan in 1955, Padma Vihusahan in 1987, and Raman Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1966. The Visva Bharati University conferred on her Deshikottama, its highest award for her contribution to Indian Culture.

14.6 INDONESIA

Indonesia is enjoying a period of relative peace and calm as the violent conflicts that wrecked the country at the dawn of the country's democratic transition have been resolved, for the most part peacefully. It was a question of bringing peace to Aceh, Maluku, Poso and West Kalimantan, where thousands died and many thousands more were displaced due to the ugly ethnic and religious violent conflict after 1998. The governments had considerable achievements in conflict management and peacemaking but the promotion of the role of women remains an area of attention.

Women are profoundly underrepresented in peace negotiations around the globe. In 2009, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) reviewed 21 major peace processes held since 1992 and found that women constituted less than 8percent of delegates to talks and less than 3 percent of agreement signatories.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, the needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

In the case of conflict in Ambon, Poso, and Aceh, for example, women have led many inter-religious and peace dialogues at the grassroots level. It was the actions of women that helped pierce the religious polarisation between Christian and Muslim communities in the vicious 1999-2001 Ambon and Poso conflicts by insisting on keeping markets open and crossing religious lines to bring their produce to sell.

The role of women are especially important in conflict situations, prevalent in Indonesia certainly, where complex social and economic issues are the drivers of violence rather than the traditional disputes over territory or sovereignty. In peace talks to end such

conflicts the critical issues relate more to matters of community relations and local economic wellbeing that women are more centrally involved in than men.

It is conspicuous that it is not about deploying women because they are more peacefully inclined or less prone to violence but because women's perspectives are directly relevant to resolving conflict. Consultations with communities affected by conflict in Ambon, in Poso and in West Kalimantan, for example, all reveal a lack of attention to the resettlement of IDPs, to compensation for lost property and other vital ingredients for long term reconciliation and peace in the community.

The lack of participation of women in government-led peacemaking efforts directly resulted in attending very important social and economic issues at the policy level. Whilst it is evident that women in Indonesia do play an important role in conflict management at the grass roots level, elevating their involvement to higher political levels remains to be done to help promote and share experiences in other conflicts, both in Indonesia and farther afield. The work of promoting women in peacemaking should not be confined, as is so often the case, to periodic workshops and meetings, but should become the basis for an active campaign by women in positions of political power and influence primarily at the policy making levels. It is noteworthy that the decision by the Indonesian Parliamentary Caucus for Women to encourage more of the 136 women in both the parliament and the regional assembly to get involved in international and regional affairs. Indonesia has a respected history of involving women in important national and political issues. Women were at the forefront of the country's nationalist struggle in the years before independence, with the first national women's congress held in 1928.

In a country that has already elected a woman as president it seems appropriate that Indonesia should spearhead efforts regionally and internationally to enhance the role of women in peacemaking.

14.7 NEPAL

A landlocked Himalayan country which witnessed the birth of Buddha, an ardent advocate of eternal peace, Nepal is yet to be peaceful in all respects.

A decade long armed conflict ended in Nepal with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006. The dialogue process led to the ceasefire that preceded the CPA, as well as the CPA itself, but failed to ensure women's participation at the formal negotiating table. Nepal's peace process involved Track 1 and Track 2 initiatives simultaneously. The Track 1 actors included both the bureaucracy and political parties while women's NGOs and groups undertook several of the Track 2 initiatives. The missing element was the link between the two tracks. Therefore, a Track 1.5 process was initiated in 2005: the Nepal Transition To Peace Initiative (NTTP). The idea was to create space for informal dialogue where the seven major political parties and civil society representatives could discuss their differences before making formal decisions. With many stakeholders, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction acted as the executing agency liaising between the political parties.

The NTTP was recognised not as a settlement-oriented negotiation process, but as a consultation that may probably generate new insights and be a source of technical knowledge and inspiration for the parties involved. Local facilitators received technical assistance from international peace building experts, which built ownership in the process.

The NTTP made a number of important contributions. It helped draft the CPA, propose how cantonment of combatants would be managed, and envisaged the setting up of peace structures such as Local Peace Committees (LPC). It also supported the creation of the Women Peace Building Network which was made up of 11 large associations, mostly with a development background, with widespread membership in Nepal. This Network tried to create links between Tracks 1, 1.5 and 2, and to link leaders with peace forums. In addition to organising rallies to demand greater women's participation in the peace process, they held several rounds of discussions with the Prime Minister and the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction to ensure women's participation in state structures. They also approached the Election Commission on the selection of 26 women to be nominated to the Constituent Assembly (CA). At a community level, the Network sought to raise awareness of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (SCR 1325).

The Network acted as a connector to the NTTP to ensure that women's rights were articulated and heard, and that women were included in the peace process and transitional justice mechanisms. At least three women from the Network sat in the NTTP forum meetings and one was nominated to the Ministry-level meetings and Peace and Conflict Management Committee (PCMC) at a later stage. As the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections approached, the Network became actively involved in educating people about voting systems, seeing that proportional representation would help ensure a larger number of women members in the CA. They also approached the Election Commission on the selection of women for 26 nominated seats in the parliament.

The peace process, regrettably, was driven by male-dominated political parties and a bureaucracy that was not sensitive to the needs of women. Though large in number, the Network was not as assertive as some ethnic groups and so was often shunned by political leaders. While this restricted the impact of the Network in some ways, these challenges also forced the Network to develop organisational and advocacy skills which allows them to contribute to the peace process more meaningfully today.

14.8 PAKISTAN

Since its inception Pakistan's civil society is fighting for the basic human rights to be observed in all quarters of common people's lives. The state not only actively pursued policies that sought to restrict women's basic rights, but also encouraged non-state entities to force conformity through violence or the threat of violence. Women resisted this. Not just as individually, but as movement that was confident and forceful. Amid conservative extremely male dominated society of Pakistan, there came some few brave women who dedicated their lives to protect women's rights. Asma Jahangir, a leading Pakistani lawyer and an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, is most renowned for her role as a human rights activist, a role which has made her confront military dictatorships of General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf and the civilian autocrats. Her resistance to army's role in politics has been legendary.

In 1980, Asma Jahangir and her sister Hina Jilani partnered with a few rights activists and lawyers and formed the first law firm established by women in Pakistan, named the AGHS Legal Aid Cell. To date, AGHS has provided legal services to several women and members of minority groups and continues to be the benchmark against which legal profession and public law in Pakistan will be judged in the annals of Pakistani history.

Asma was also at the vanguard of activists who created the Women's Action Forum (WAF). She used these platforms to organise protests against the enforcement of

fundamentalist laws, specifically the Law of Evidence (which made a woman's testimony inferior to that of men). WAF (Women Action Forum) was the first spark of resistance against the military rule and inspired Pakistani men and women of all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds to rally against a repressive dictatorship. Her struggles continued through the 1980s and later when the civilian governments were ruling Pakistan. She was as outspoken as before and refused to adopt a partisan line. She received global acclaim and became a symbol of progressive and liberal-democratic elements within Pakistan. She stood for peace, equal rights and a discrimination-free society and was honoured by The United Nations and Asma Jahangir has been serving as a Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Religion or Belief of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. From 1998-2004, she also worked as a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary or Summary Executions, a job which took her to Afghanistan, Central America and Colombia.

At home, another key contribution has been the establishment and nurturing of the formidable Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Today, it is the biggest network of rights' activists with a presence in all corners of the country and is doing commendable work of alerting the citizens about how the state continues to abuse rights. Asma Jahangir has remained the Co-Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan for several years until earlier this year when she resigned to contest for the elections for the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) which she subsequently won. In addition, Jahangir has been one of the founders and Co-Chair of South Asia for Human Rights since 2000. She has been the recipient of several national awards, including Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Star of Distinction) in 1995; for her contribution in the field of human rights, she was awarded the American Bar Association International Human Rights Award in 1992; and the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders; and the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1995. She was also honoured with the Bernard Simons Memorial Award of the International Bar Association in 2000.

14.9 SRI LANKA

In Asian context, Sri Lanka has very commendable human development indicators for women, which include high literacy rates and exceptional educational achievements. However, despite almost 70 years of female franchise and the election of the world's first woman Prime Minister, the country lags far behind most of the developing world with regard to women's representation in political institutions at local, provincial and national level. Women make up a mere 5.8 per cent in the current Parliament; 5 per cent in Provincial governments and a lower 1.8 per cent in local government. This has had a direct impact on Sri Lanka's peace process and its transition towards a post-conflict society. The mainstream political parties have consistently kept women's nominations down to an appalling average of about 5 per cent. Denying women equal opportunity to contest elections, coupled with patronage politics and a bartering of nominations among privileged men have restricted women's access to representative politics in Sri Lanka.

Women Parliamentarians were not present at any of the formal peace negotiations, which were conducted entirely by male politicians. Instead, the Government chose to appoint five women from the non-government sector to a sub-committee on gender issues that was established to advise the plenary of the peace process in 2002/2003. A Tamil speaking Muslim woman parliamentarian was brought into the process only in 2005 in an attempt to initiate the stalled peace talks. Women politicians engagement with formal

peacemaking has therefore been absolutely minimal. Despite these challenges, some women have stepped forward to run in elections in the conflict affected north east at critical moments although when it has been unsafe to contest. In the Municipal elections in 1997, held after a gap of over fifteen years, Sarojini Yogeswaran was elected as mayor in Jaffna only to be assassinated a few months later by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. At the next elections to the Jaffna Municipal Council in the aftermath of the war in 2009, 30 per cent of women contesting won, defying the national norm of 2 per cent. But, disappointingly, no political party came forward to nominate women to stand for parliamentary elections in 2010 from any of the conflict affected north or eastern districts despite women's commendable electoral triumphs post-war at the municipal level.

Sri Lankan women, from local activists to academics and politicians, have advocated for an increase in women's representation for more than 15 years. In the current post-war period, the Government has proposed to introduce hybrid proportional representation. This initiative is widely perceived as partisan and was challenged by eleven petitioners in the Supreme Court. The proposed amendments include a non-binding provision to increase nominations for women and youth to 25 percent. Two petitions by women's groups argued that the provision was a violation of women's right to equality guaranteed in the Constitution and submitted that the persistent failure of political parties 'to give even a semblance of equality to women' in the nominations process 'casts a duty on the state to take affirmative action'. It further argued that women should not be grouped together with youth and that the provision to increase women's representation should be mandatory and specific. However, the court upheld the provisions of the Bill, refusing to accept that unequal nominations were a departure from equal treatment.

Sri Lanka requires a desperate attempt to make the transition from a post-war to a post-conflict society. Conflicts inevitably produce structural transformations for some women, opening up new social, economic and political opportunities which challenge and reframe gender hierarchies and roles. One way to consolidate such positive gains is to ensure women's participation and representation in post war decision making processes. By ignoring historical discrimination against women, both the executive and the judiciary in Sri Lanka have missed a vital opportunity to redress a patent wrong and allow the Sri Lankan polity to benefit from the invaluable experience of more than half its population. This will make an already difficult transition to a post-war society even harder.

14.10 SUMMARY

The above mentioned cases bring to the forefront the participation and initiatives of women from the Asian region in different field ranging from freedom struggles to human rights struggles. Asia has been home to numerous women prime ministers but the women in this region continue to remain grossly underrepresented in their home turfs and need further efforts to make their voice heard. Nonetheless, these efforts continue to inspire others to work towards the goal of women empowerment. After all, a peaceful regional order would go a long way in contributing to peaceful world order.

14.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the peaceful efforts taken up in the conflict-ridden Afghanistan.
2. Analyse the role of women freedom fighters in India who sowed the seeds of women empowerment.

3. Briefly enumerate the efforts Nepalese women to consolidate their empowerment.
4. What are the peace initiatives taking place in Pakistan and Sri Lanka? Examine at length.
5. Discuss briefly the peace initiatives taken up in Burma/Myanmar.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 15 PEACE INITIATIVES IN INDIA

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

Peace is an eternal desire of a human being. It is considered to be one of the highest values of life. The quotations like “Peace at any price”, “The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war.” “Peace is more important than all justice.” “I prefer the most unjust peace to the just war that was ever waged.” “There never was a good war or bad peace” show how precious peace has been and continues to be. The New Testament defines peace as absence of dissension, violence of war. Peace is also considered as concord, harmony, agreement between the two or more, tranquility, quiet, etc. Peace is contrary to antagonistic hostilities, violence or war. Peace is freedom from or the cessation of war. It is a state of freedom from war. The idea of peace is probably as old as humanity. But secular or political movements for peace, what we have called peace movements, are not just two hundred years old but much older; these have evolved largely in the western and northern countries. Those peace movements with religious orientation are older and have arisen in many different periods and in all parts of the globe. Before the first modern popular mass movement against war emerged in the late nineteenth century, there existed a myriad of peace sects and traditions which included peace and renunciation of war as a principle or goal. The publication of Saint-Simon’s “The Reorganization of European Society” coincided with the foundation of the peace societies. The first peace society was founded in the United States. Europe followed suit. Early peace societies were engaged in the debates over the issues like just and unjust wars, need of violence, colonialism, etc. Debates gradually arose over the subjects such

as linking peace with social issues, like the slavery, the emancipation of women, universal education and other human rights.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The meaning of Peace Initiatives;
- India's initiatives towards peace; and
- The impact of these initiatives on world peace.

15.2 PEACE INITIATIVES

A **peace initiative** seeks to achieve ideals such as the ending of a particular war, minimize inter-human violence in a particular place or type of situation, often linked to the goal of achieving world peace. Means to achieve these ends include advocacy of pacifism, non-violent resistance, diplomacy, boycotts, supporting anti-war political candidates, creating open government and transparency tools, and national political lobbying groups to create legislation. The political cooperative is an example of an organisation that seeks to merge all peace movement organisations and green organisations which may have some diverse goals, but all of whom have the common goal of peace and humane sustainability.

15.2.1 India and Peace

India, the land of ancient culture and civilisation, holds a comprehensive, extraordinary and unique place in context to peace. Thousands of years ago the message of peace conveyed by this country had a deep impact on the entire world. The main reason behind this influence is that approach towards peace that has directly or indirectly been built by contribution of knowledge obtained and deed and real experience.

India is a peace loving-nation. It achieved independence from centuries old British Colonial rule through peaceful non-violent national movement. India has a long tradition of peace and apathy towards war of any kind. Ashoka, the Great, renounced the use of weapon and abandoned the principles of war. This is one of the earliest examples of disarmament. Till the arrival of the Europeans in India, the Kings had fought wars and battles. But these battles did not affect the lives and properties of the common citizens. Pursuing the tradition of peace, India- at the very dawn of its independence- declared peace as the cornerstone of its policies. In 1954 India took the initiative to ban the nuclear tests. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru proposed at the U.N. a standstill agreement in respect of the atomic tests. He knew that the total destruction of the existing weapons was not possible; so he wanted to stop the tests so that there might not be further escalation of nuclear weapons. Many countries of the world supported the view, but the big powers hardly paid any heed to the proposal. However, the proposal set the ball of disarmament in motion and countries in the UN became vocal in support of peace and disarmament. Consequently, from early 1960s, new initiatives towards the direction of disarmament started.

15.3 PEACE INITIATIVES BY INDIA

15.3.1 Gandhi and Peace- Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) has been acknowledged as

one of the greatest figures of human history. He was an indefatigable fighter for India's independence, an outstanding mass leader, social reformer, pacifist and, above all, a prophet of non-violence and truth. He lived, fought and died for the ideals of peace, non-violence and tolerance. He was the architect of the Satyagraha movement – the firm resistance against tyranny through mass civil disobedience truly founded on ahimsa (total non violence). Truth (Satya) implies Love, and firmness (Agraha) implies force. When put together this describes a force that is born of truth with love or nonviolence. His nonviolence movement, the only revolution of its kind, ultimately succeeded in the independence of India in 1947 from the British rule. Mahatma Gandhi said that *there is no way to peace and that peace is the way. Peace, as Gandhi envisaged it, is far more than the absence of war and violence. It implies a state of positive and constructive world order, where individuals, groups and nations do not dominate or exploit one another and live in cooperation and mutual aid. Peace is thus a cementing force for the society and the world. Mahatma Gandhi said that peace and truth cannot be separated. "The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness."* For Gandhi peace based on truth is stable and also promotes internal spiritual growth in man and social progress. Gandhi did not treat war and peace as isolated problems. Instead, he offered an integrated vision of peace which is based on his philosophy of life. The concern for peace in Gandhian approach leads to the realisation of the oneness of humanity and interdependent character of nations. Gandhi saw the entire humanity as one and argued for universal brotherhood. Mutual goodwill and friendship among all the peoples are necessary condition for peace.

The Gandhian approach to peace is essentially different from pacifism practised in the west. Gandhi's non-violence shares with pacifism a general rejection of violence. The distinction is that, while pacifism may take the form of opposition to violence and refraining from military service, Gandhian non-violence involves advocacy of social action for peace and justice. Too often, the western pacifism becomes passive rather than taking the form of active resistance against the evil and injustice that result into violence and warfare. Gandhi's Satyagraha is a new and aggressive form of pacifism, even as it shares the high moral ground and belief in non-violence with western pacifism.

15.3.2 Support for United Nations- India's concern for peace is not a negative or passive one but a positive and constructive one. Peace meant not only avoidance of war, but also reduction of tension and if possible end of war. For this, India considered United Nations as an effective and desirable agency. As such India decided to give unqualified and active support and allegiance to the United Nations. India started as a founding member of the UN, has travelled a long way since independence and has earned a formidable reputation for its versatile experience and contributions in UN activities. India's record in the UN bears out that the positions India took on all key issues had been those which helped strengthening the United Nations as a non-partisan and effective organisation free from domination by any single power or group of powers.

15.3.3 Panchsheel- Panchsheel was born fifty years ago in response to a world asking for a new set of principles for the conduct of international relations that would reflect the aspirations of all nations to co-exist and prosper together in peace and harmony. India is a believer in world peace. It understood the linkage between peace for development and survival of mankind. It had seen the destruction caused by the two world wars and therefore realised that for the progress of a nation a long spell of peace was needed. In

its absence, social and economic priorities relating to development tend to get pushed to the background. The production of nuclear weapons strengthened India's faith in the peaceful philosophy even more. Hence India gave utmost importance to world peace in its policy planning. India's desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighbouring nations; while signing an agreement with China, on April 28, 1954, India advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as **Panchsheel** for the conduct of bilateral relations. It includes the following:

- I. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- II. Mutual non-aggression.
- III. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- IV. Equality and mutual benefit.
- V. Peaceful co-existence.

The Panchsheel agreement enumerates best the principles of peaceful co-existence with neighbours. It is an important component of India's foreign policy.

15.3.4 Nuclear Disarmament- Since independence, India has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament based on principles of universality, non-discrimination and effective compliance. India has always believed that a world free of nuclear weapons would enhance global security and India's own national security. Thus India has always been advocating that the highest priority be given to nuclear disarmament as a first step towards general and complete disarmament. As early as 1948, India called for limiting the use of atomic energy for peaceful purpose only and elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments. India was the first country to call for stoppage of nuclear tests and made a formal proposal for total cessation of nuclear testing in the UN General Assembly. In 1961, India and other Non- Aligned countries tabled a resolution in the UN General Assembly which declared that the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons would be a direct violation of the UN Charter and any state using such a weapon would be acting contrary to the laws of humanity and committing a crime against mankind and civilisation. In 1964, India suggested that "all proliferation of nuclear weapons, be it horizontal or vertical, should be stopped simultaneously and altogether, so that all nuclear facilities everywhere become peaceful and problem of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons could then be contained and tackled more effectively." In December 1978, at the first special session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament, India moved a resolution which declared that the use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the UN Charter and demanded that pending nuclear disarmament, the use and threat of the use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. This resolution was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in 1978. India also proposed negotiations for an international convention that would prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. This was followed by another initiative in 1982 calling for a nuclear-free world, prohibition on the production of fissile material for weapons, and their delivery systems.

The seventh conference of NAM held in Delhi in March 1983, forcefully accentuated the danger of a nuclear war and the necessity to fight for peace. Subsequently, India has been making consistent efforts to bring nuclear arms race to a halt. At the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament, India put forward a number of serious proposals including the 1988 'Comprehensive Plan for Total Elimination of

Weapons of Mass Destruction' in a phased manner. It was a matter of great regret that the proposal put by India, along with several other countries, did not receive a positive response and instead a limited and distorted non-proliferation agenda, meant above all to perpetuate nuclear weapons, was shaped. This compelled India not only not to sign the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) but also itself go nuclear in consideration of its national security and failure of big powers to agree on complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

15.3.5 Arms Control- While disarmament is based on the assumption that the existence of weapons is the fundamental cause of uncertainty and conflicts, arms control approach is based on the assumption that the existence of weapons is not a cause but a consequence of inter-state conflict. Typically, arms control policies aim at negotiating limits on development, stockpiling and use of weapons. India, right from the beginning, has not only been an active supporter of arms control but has also been playing a leading role both in UN and at other fora for this cause. The table below summaries the major arms control conventions and treaties and position taken by India on that.

Major Multilateral Arms Control Agreements and Treaties

Agreements and Treaties	Signed	Ratified
Biological Weapons Convention	1973	1974
Chemical Weapons Convention	1993	1996
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty -Only supports the treaty in the context of general nuclear disarmament.	- - -	- - -
Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) -Has developed nuclear weapons outside the treaty.	- - -	- - -
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons -Party to all protocols.	1981	1984
Outer Space Treaty	1967	1982
Ottawa Mine Ban Convention -Employs landmines for border defense.	---	---
Antarctic Treaty	1983	1983

15.3.6 NAM- As an element of foreign policy, non-alignment means independent of blocs (in the Cold War context, Western and Communist blocs), peaceful coexistence, global peace, struggle against all manifestation of injustices like imperialism, colonialism, apartheid etc. The essential purpose was to maintain equidistance in Cold War rivalries and advocate principles for the promotion of world peace and cooperation. In due course of

time, NAM became the largest membership movement as also the largest peace movement in the history of humanity. In both, in its founding and later consolidation and development, India played a significant role. In fact in many ways India has been considered as a non-formal leader of the NAM.

The two essential, though inter-related, constituents of the Non-Alignment concept are the primary of national independence and active, peaceful coexistence.

1. The rejection of military alliances, refusal to be yes-men of this or that power and opposition to all forms of colonial domination and racial discrimination.
2. The second component of the Non-Alignment related to the struggle for a new structure on which to base relations amongst people and countries- relation characterised by equality, peace and cooperation than perilous confrontation.

15.3.7 Colonialism and Neo-colonialism- It is known that India's vision about foreign policy and world affairs had emerged as a part of its struggle for liberation from colonial rule. In that leadership saw its own movement as a part of struggle against colonial domination and the entire imperialist system of oppression and discrimination. Cause of liberation of subject people, therefore, became an important objective of India's foreign policy.

A special committee was formed by United Nations on implementation of the declaration on decolonisation was established to study, investigate and recommend action for ending colonialism. India was appointed the first chairman of the decolonisation committee. As a member of committee, India has ceaselessly struggled for ending colonialism. India also took up the decolonisation issue in trusteeship committee, the special committee on non-self governing territories. It also sponsored and supported numerous resolutions in United Nations on Decolonisation. India has raised this issue also at Non-Aligned and Commonwealth meetings. In the early years, it took up the cause of Indonesian freedom. It sought to protect the interest of the Arabs by taking a clear stand on the division of Palestine. India played a significant role in the freedom of French colonies of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. India's role in liberation of various African countries is well known.

15.3.8 Anti-Racism- India aimed at opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. India firmly believes that racialism is one of the sources of conflict in the world and a threat to international peace. Therefore, India at various fora has strongly formulated, defended and elaborated the ideals of freedom for all, elimination of racism and racial discrimination. India's role in struggle against racialism of various African countries, particularly the Apartheid, is well known.

15.3.9 Human Rights- People in general, whether living in the developed, developing or under developed world, cherish the enjoyment of rights in one form or the other. The rights are the claims of the individual recognised by the society and enforced by the state. These rights are moral, legal, political, and economic in nature and a combination of all these rights is termed as human rights which all men and women should enjoy.

In India, the concern for human dignity, opposition to exploitation and injustice and inequality has been a part of her civilisation traditions. It has had a long tradition of acceptance of contrary view points, tolerance towards others, non-violence, love and compassion, religious universalism and an emphasis on the brotherhood of all men. Colonial oppression and opposition to it and contact with the west in the modern period

brought in India a new understanding of human rights. During this period, while the social reformers led the intellectual movement and contributed to the human rights situation, the freedom movement produced great champions of human rights. The British colonial rule in India affected the common man, woman, children, labourers, workers, peasants, either directly or indirectly. The police and security forces were used as basic tools to suppress the rights of the individuals. In this context, the national movement in India incorporated in its values issues of democracy, universal franchise, freedom of the press, education, etc. It took these issues to the people and educated them about their political and economic rights. In fact, the national movement took up the battle for human rights in a variety of ways. The Indian Constitution, which was enforced in 1950, showed its full respect to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the third part of the Constitution, they have given the most elaborate description of the basic rights of the Indian citizen. The political and civil rights are made fundamental by this provision of the Constitution. This part assures the people equality and freedom. Rights in this part are judicially enforceable. The economic and social rights are also made basic to the governance of the country through provisions in Part- IV that is the Directive Principles of State Policy. Apart from Constitutional provisions and statutes, the Indian Government has taken up several institutions under different acts of Parliament to give effect to these provisions of human rights of all persons. Most important of these is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). In addition to NHRC, there are also National Commission for Women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities and Other Backward Castes. Their functions include protection and promotion of rights of these specific categories and suggest measures for their welfare so that they can exercise their rights.

15.3.10 Environment and Peace- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development emphasises (UN, 1992) that “Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.” For the United Nations, environment is an important aspect of its peace-building goals:

“Safeguarding the environment is a crosscutting United Nations activity. It is a guiding principle of all our work in support of sustainable development. It is an essential component of poverty eradication and one of the foundations of peace and security”. Realising the importance of environment for peace, India actively participated in all International conferences such as Earth Summit, Montreal protocol, Kyoto Protocol etc. to save the environment. India’s international negotiation position regarding environment relies heavily on principles of historical responsibility, as enshrined in UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). This acknowledged that developed countries are responsible for most historical and concurrent greenhouse emissions, and emphasised that economic and social developments are the first and overriding priorities of the developing countries. The Indian government is already participating in global efforts through a number of programmes. For example, India’s National Auto Fuel Policy mandates cleaner fuel for vehicles. The Energy Conservation Act, 2001, outlines initiatives to improve energy efficiency. Electricity Act of 2003 encourages the use of renewable energy. Similarly, there are Biological Conservation Act, Forest Conservation Act, National Mission for Biodiesel, Water Pollution Act, Air Pollution Act etc. to protect our environment. We have seen that government reacted at various levels to challenge the environmental degradation but some of the most significant responses to this challenge have come from the civil society. During the past twenty years people in various regions of India have formed nonviolent action movements to protect their environment, their livelihood, and their ways of life. These environmental movements have emerged from the

Himalayan regions of Uttar Pradesh to the tropical forests of Kerala and from Gujarat to Tripura in response to projects that threaten to dislocate people and to affect their basic human rights to land, water, and ecological stability of life-support systems.

Among the main environmental movements are Chipko Andolan and Save the Bhagirathi and Stop Tehri project committee in Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand regions; Save the Narmada Movement (Narmada Bachao Andolan) in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; youth organisations and tribal people in the Gandhamardan Hills whose survival is directly threatened by development of bauxite deposits; the opposition to the Baliapal and Bhogarai test range in Orissa (now Odisha), the Appiko Movement in the Western Ghats; groups opposing the Kaiga nuclear power plant in Karnataka; the campaign against the Silent Valley project; the Rural Women's Advancement Society (Gramin Mahila Shramik Unnayan Samiti), formed to reclaim waste land in Bankura district; and the opposition to the Gumti Dam in Tripura.

15.4 SUMMARY

It is clear that a concern of peace activists is the challenge of attaining peace when those that oppose it often use violence as their means of communication and empowerment. Some people refer to the global loose affiliation of activists and political interests as having a shared purpose and this constituting a single movement, "The Peace Movement", an all encompassing "Anti-War Movement". The two are often indistinguishable and constitutes a loose, responsive and event-driven collaboration between groups with motivations as diverse as humanism, environmentalism, anti-racism, decentralisation to say a few. A large number of peace concepts, proposals and plans have been put forward so far for the realisation of the everlasting peace all over the world.

15.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by peace?
2. What is the meaning of peace initiatives?
3. Analyse various peace initiatives taken by India to promote peace.
4. Do you think that more peace initiatives should be taken by the countries?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 16 CHALLENGES AHEAD: THE GANDHIAN ALTERNATIVE

Structure

- 16.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 16.2 Violence and Terrorism
- 16.3 Uneven Development
- 16.4 Erosion of Democratic Norms
- 16.5 Social Divide
- 16.6 Gender Inequality
- 16.7 Summary
- 16.8 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

16.1 INTRODUCTION

The world has changed drastically and dramatically since Mahatma Gandhi breathed his last. The political map of the world has changed; the economic stage has witnessed unleashing of new forces, the social structures too have yielded to changes. Contemporary times are facing unprecedented challenges. It is at this juncture that a re-look in Gandhi's ideas and work is essential to guide us. Gandhi had to face many trials, tribulations and challenges in his eventful life. His quest for Truth by the means of non-violence steered him clear of all the obstacles. The moral issues he raised are still fundamental; and the questions he posed for social, economic and political justice still remain of crucial importance.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would help you to understand

- The impact of Gandhi's ideas,
- The nature of the challenges ahead, and
- Find possible ways to deal with them in the context of Gandhian perspective.

16.2 VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

The results of the conflicts today cross geographical boundaries of the nations and affect the countries across the world. The world has suffered in the last century the ravage and destruction consequent to two world wars and many civil wars. Hunger for power, dogmatic ideologies and skewed political views often stimulate violence. Terrorism, a war without geographical borders or a traditional military basis, has become a global problem

and the available figures about the terrorist activities are frightening. Terrorist groups in India are also getting more strident.

Gandhi had realised very early in his political life that violence is a formidable challenge. His teaching and practice of nonviolence and freedom from hatred can help people find their way in the tangle of violence, distrust and hatred. His well-articulated arguments against violence and terrorism are found in his *Hind Swaraj*, written on the return voyage from London to South Africa (November 13 to 22, 1909), on board the *Kildonan Castle*. In this little yet important book Gandhi puts arguments for supremacy of soul force over brute force.

Juergensmeyer elaborates that the guidelines given by Gandhi in response to the terrorism of the Indian activists in London in 1909 may be applied to the current situation. They are: stop a situation of violence in its tracks, address the issues behind the violence, and maintain the moral high ground. What is important is the fact that a nonviolent response is already an element of political discourse. It is not a new idea, but rather a strand of public thinking that deserves attention, and Gandhi might argue, respect. (Juergensmeyer, 2007, pp.38-39).

Gandhi clearly establishes the relation between truth and nonviolence and the relation between the purity of the end and the means. Truth is the end and nonviolence is the means. Nonviolence and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc (Gandhi, 1980, p.6).

Gandhian perspective tries to understand and then handle the root-cause of violence. For Gandhi, nonviolence is promoted not just by rejection of violence, but also by efforts to build societies through constructive work. He emphatically preaches that the evil must be resisted peacefully without hating the evil-doer. *Satyagraha* is a method of conversion, rooted in nonviolence and love. It aims at changing the attitude and thinking and behaviour of the opponent rather than the external behaviour of the opponent. It relies on the power of persuasion and reason, dialogue and consensus building, and love and understanding of the opponent. It is the exercise of the purest soul force against the injustice and oppression at all levels.

Gandhi's showed that opposing interests can be reconciled by transcending the conflict. His own approach to situations like those in Champaran, Kheda, Bardoli, displayed his unflinching faith in nonviolence. The mass movements of Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India instilled confidence and courage in the people. Gandhi teaches people to be brave, fearless, have faith in the truth in midst of dishonesty and falsehood. Mutual exchange of ideas and understanding the mindset of the opponents as preached and practised by Gandhi provides an alternative to the ruthless repression through violence.

Nations, like individuals, become captives of their own mistrust, suspicions, fears and prejudices and adopt the methods of violence. Increasing militarism in international politics, industrialization in world economy, thoughtlessness in the use of natural resources and dehumanizing human relations aggravate the crisis. It is time the world awakes to the fact that the alternative to violence, coercion, distrust and chaos is restoration of peace, love, faith and trust. The Gandhian technique of nonviolent action and protest is relevant in nuclear age. In the midst of destruction and disturbance there are some positive examples (*A Force More Powerful*: a film).

Gandhi's methods have been used in several cases such as movements for civil rights in US and liberation in South Africa. Martin Luther King summoned the traditions of resistance and maintained that nonviolence can be practised only by the brave. Nelson Mandela has demonstrated the efficacy of nonviolent method in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Lech Walesa of Poland, Benigno Aquino Jr. in Philippines, A. T. Ariyaratne in Srilanka, Danilo Dolci in Sicily and Lanza del Vasto in France have respected the ways shown by Gandhian ideas and practice. Similar developments in other parts of the world. The political events since the late 1980s like the collapse of the former Communist regimes, breaking of the great wall between East and West Germany, have displayed the power of peoples' struggle. It has been realised that nonviolence is a more powerful way of establishing peace in the world than violence can ever be. Those who are resisting war use nonviolent methods and evoke the methods of Gandhi. Even the United Nations has accepted that Mahatma's legacy of nonviolent struggles and peace and has declared 2nd October (Mahatma's birthday) as the annual International Day of Non-violence.

It is true that not all nonviolent struggles yield immediate results. Sometimes the commitment to the principle of nonviolence weakens giving way to violent eruptions and at times the repression by the autocratic rule or the army is too severe to resist. The limited effectiveness of Intifada in Israel is one example. The principles of nonviolence and peace are undoubtedly difficult to practice, they are not mere high ideals, they have practical dimension too. A comparison of 323 nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006 shows that nonviolent resistance methods are likely to be more successful than violent methods and have achieved success 53 per cent of the time, compared with 26 percent for the violent resistance campaigns (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008, pp.7-44).

A mistaken belief still persists that violence can end conflict or that war can bring salvation to the world. Gandhi showed another way, lived it and demonstrated its success. As stated by Joan Bondurant, Satyagraha points directly to a new method of revolution (Bondurant, 1959, p.225). *Satyagraha*, for Gandhi, is not just a political weapon; it is a way of life. Throughout his life he sharpened his focus and innovated different techniques of Satyagraha and remained confident that beginning with the family, and can be effectively individually and collectively. As pointed out by Diwakar, *Satyagraha* is not a mechanical formula or a mathematical theory. It is a living, dynamic principle and philosophy of life which is yet to unfold itself and evolve fully. It may be said to be 'the law of being' of coming humanity. It has yet to replace fully and effectively the operation of physical force and coercion in social evolution and social dynamics. Love, nonviolence, is the law of our species, no doubt; but it has yet to establish itself firmly and fully (Diwakar, 1962, p.44). The virtue of nonviolence has to percolate to all the layers of all the sections of the society.

16.3 UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

The present methods of measuring the economic development in terms of industrialisation, consumption of energy and urbanisation have proved to be inadequate to address the issue of the miseries of the millions. Gandhi was aware of the pitfalls of such a theory and the results of the unequal distribution of wealth between different classes in a society. Today science and technology have taken unprecedented strides, and yet millions live in utter poverty; basic human rights are denied to them, powerful nations dominate over the

powerless ones, innocent people become victims of terrorism, and high sounding words of peace get lost in the din of discord and disruption. It is this dismal situation that forces us to think of alternatives, and in this context Gandhian perspective is useful.

Political emancipation without economic equality is hollow. For Gandhi economics stands for social justice (*Harijan*, October 9, 1937). He emphasises decentralised self-dependent units bound together by the bonds of mutual cooperation and interdependence. He opposes exploitation, over-organisation, mindless drive for economic abundance, accumulation, massive technological progress, severe competitions, ruthless personal aggrandizement, unbridled consumerism and concentration of wealth and power. In his opinion, greed is detrimental to social good; he had hoped that Europe would retrace steps from the demoralizing industrialism (*Young India*, August 26, 1925).

Gandhi maintains that wealth is to be used judiciously, governed by the principle of 'each according to his need'; and emergence of inequality has to be curbed at all levels. According to him, all amassing or hoarding of wealth, above and beyond one's legitimate requirement is theft (*Harijan*, August 11, 1946). His concept of social use of wealth against the prevailing ethos of consumerism demands our serious attention. Values of 'truth' 'non-violence' and 'non-accumulation of wealth' are to be cherished for the very survival of the society, where the weakest has the same rights as the strongest.

Trusteeship for Gandhi is a dynamic concept that can bring change in the established institutions. It is a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. An individual is not free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction (*Harijan*, October 25, 1952). The common property is to be used for the good of one and all, all including the rich have to work for the society according to his/her capacity and they will receive as per needs.

Trusteeship aims at outcomes like capital-labour cooperation, formation of social capital, reduction in concentration of economic power in a few hands, the introduction of the philosophy of *anasakti* (worldly detachment), social development in all aspects or *sarvodaya* and egalitarianism. A programme may fail in realising one objective but may be successful in some other respects. Gandhi knew well that there would be some natural rate of inequality, and it cannot be rooted out from modern society even in the long run. Hence he tried for equality in its relative sense, called equity. The concept then becomes relevant in real world situations (Ghosh, 2007,p.245).

The quintessence of Gandhian philosophy is that the human values and not the market should govern life. Service of the teeming millions, the poor-*Daridranarayan*- is of the utmost importance. Gandhi presents the humane face of development. Ghosh brings out the following basic objectives of the Gandhian scheme of holistic development-(1) human development (including moral development) for capability expansion, (2) development in a balanced way through manual and intellectual labour (development of body, mind and soul), (3) development with social justice, rights and freedom. This is in accordance with the principle of social and human development. (4) Attainment of self-sufficiency and self-reliance through rural development, (5) reduction in poverty through the generation of additional income and employment (Ghosh, 2007, p.213).

Gandhi's emphasis on decentralisation, community-based economics, self-sufficiency, handicrafts, village professions and production, use of low capital intensive appropriate technology indicate his vision for a self-sufficient economy. He disapproved the use of machines that replace men or makes them subservient to machines. He advocates

judicious use of machines; and simple, indigenous technology of non-exploitative nature in tune with nonviolence. He emphasizes the importance of whatever can be produced locally (From Yeravada Mandir, 1980, p.44), and thinks about a decentralised economy. He propagated the use of the spinning wheel and *Khadi* for self-reliance as well as moral and economic regeneration.

Gandhi draws our attention to the need to protect the environment and to guard against the abuse of natural resources. Mighty projects, big dams, giant industries and other massive ventures raise questions about the quality of life affected by them. The quest for the mirage of material development often leads to the destruction of forests, ecological imbalances, scarcity of water, soil erosion, silting of rivers and desertification pose grave dangers to environment.

Gandhi insisted on regulation of wants and use of the goods and material not imported, but made in one's own country. His concept of *Swadeshi*, a dynamic concept of self-reliance, is closely connected with *Swaraj*, political freedom. Another of his important concept is that of 'bread labour', that propagates that some amount of physical labour has to be done by every person every day. It is a great equalising force, and the need for socially useful manual labour is obvious. Influenced by John Ruskin, Gandhi maintained that all works are of equal dignity. He also said that in the conflict situation between the capital and the labour, cooperation and amicable settlements are the way out and not violence.

Gandhi was sure that too much emphasis on materialism leads to violence and unhappiness. He criticised the exploitative and materialistic Western civilisation and believed that India cannot be a replica of that. Many western thinkers also have noticed trends of exploitation and dehumanisation trends of industrialisation. Gandhi's critique makes us aware of the fact that economic progress devoid of moral elements will not ultimately help the people but will make internal divisions and dissensions more intense. Parekh suggests that Gandhi's critique was directed to modern, materialistic society rather than the Western culture in general. He argues that the modern society is built and maintained by massive violence, and relationships are characterized by struggle, mastery, subjugation, domination, victory and defeat (Parekh, 1995, pp.20-26).

Gandhi visualised exploitation-free society, based on cooperation and ethics. He envisioned productive employment for India's millions, schemes for rebuilding villages and creating communities of care and concern, promotion of *khadi* and local handicrafts, production of need-based basic goods, empowering people by imparting basic education and required skills to enable them to create decentralised structures of power, and ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

In Gandhi's political economy, human development and development are inseparable because the two are interactive in more ways than one. Human development includes capability expansion through the improvement of human capital and uplift of morality and also human contestability that can be raised through empowerment, entitlement and endowment by inculcating ethical and moral principles to make the capability expansion operational. Contestability is the manifested overt ability to prove the inherent or acquired capability. Gandhi does not use the term "contestability" but it can be inferred from his various writings and speeches. His idea of contestability cannot be used in the sense of material gain in the arena of the market but it is more a moral force without which there may be the problem of capability failure (Ghosh, 2007, p.214).

16.4 EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS

Contemporary political scenario shows the erosion of democratic values and the decline in ethical norms in public life and the effectiveness of the political institutions. The troubles of implementing a democratic constitution on a traditional and hierarchical society in India are not yet over. Conflicts of all kinds- communal, religious, casteist and regional- and at all levels- from local to national- are on rise. The voice of the deprived is very often suppressed. Political parties lack effective leadership and programme. The vulnerability of the democratic process to criminalisation at all levels is acquiring dangerous dimensions. At this juncture Gandhian perspective becomes relevant.

Gandhi presents a dynamic concept and a unique practice of politics by connecting it with ethics. Spiritual dimension of politics is of vital importance, as spiritualisation of politics changes the present exploitative system and humanises the soulless surroundings. Religion is the element that concerns all human beings, which teaches him to transcend the barriers of passions and which takes him to above the material level. By declaring that Truth is God he revolutionised the approach to see the realities. In his words, “God is Truth and Love, God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and Life and yet He is able and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist” (*Young India*, March 5, 1925). To reach Truth, one has to strive constantly through nonviolence and must overcome fear, violence, falsehood and helplessness. He was emphatic that, “as the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end.” (*Young India*, July 17, 1924).

The rise of fundamentalism and terrorism in our times in the name of religion poses a real threat to peace and tranquility. India experienced unprecedented suffering and holocaust, when it was partitioned in the name of religion. It is a sad commentary on the present condition on our country that even after six decades of independence and despite our state being secular, politics is often marred by appeals made in the name of religion. Gandhi had realised the dangers of interpreting religion with narrow perspective. He advocated equal respect for all religions and provided an original insight in the relation between religion and politics. He believed that the state should maintain neutrality in matter of religion.

Gandhi provided space for different opinions and for persons from different strands of life; and respected diversities. He advocated the practice of gentleness, forgiveness and the methods of dialogue. We must concede to our opponents the freedom we claim for ourselves. Intolerance is also a form of violence and an obstacle in the way of progress. As diversities get accepted, hierarchies will start getting redundant. As common interest takes precedence over individual interests, conflicts will be lessened and violence will be lessened.

For Gandhi democracy is the rule of unadulterated nonviolence (*Harijan*, October 13, 1940). Gandhi had understood the relation between the freedom of the motherland and the international amity. He remarked:” We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries” (*Young India*, September 10, 1925). Nonviolence nurtures the civil society by encouraging changes required for democratic norms. A Freedom House study conducted in 2005 points out that “recourse to violent conflict in resisting oppression is significantly less likely to produce sustainable freedom, in contrast to nonviolent opposition, which even in the face

of state repression, is far more likely to yield a democratic outcome” (Karatnycky and Ackerman, 2005, p.8). Nonviolent movements give credence to people’s power and articulate people’s urge for good governance and stimulate active civic engagement.

According to Gandhi, true freedom is allegiance to the law, law not necessarily passed by the legislature or implemented by the executive, but the higher law rooted in the moral ground. For Gandhi, freedom consists in being true to oneself and to be concerned about others. Each individual has access to the community’s resources, and gets opportunities for his/her growth at his/her pace. He/she is free to speak the truth, but not free to lie, free to serve but not free to kill or injure. The attainment of this freedom is within the reach of all. Gandhi maintained that there is no place on earth and no race, which is not capable of producing the finest types of humanity, given suitable opportunities and education (Gandhi, 1972, p.33). The state by itself cannot create such an atmosphere and impose morality. This has to come from conscious collective social action rooted in social conscience. The social order is to be reconstructed by purifying the inner being of the individuals. Everyone should rule himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state there is no political power because there is no state (*Young India*, July 2, 1931).

Life is to be guided not by external forces of coercion and fear, but by voluntary acceptance of duties, compassion and cooperation. With the increase of virtue in individual lives, the coercive action of the state will be redundant. For him *swaraj* of a people means the sum-total of the *swaraj* (self rule) of individuals (*Harijan*, March 25, 1939). Gandhi had the concept of *Swaraj* as a self-regulated society. Gandhi does not distinguish between the private and the public spheres of life and emphasised commitment to democratic norms for the rulers as well as the ruled. He visualised a free individual in a free society, retaining his self but being a part of the integrated whole. He believed in human beings’ capacity to challenge injustice and to change the unequal power structure.

Gandhi realized that rights cannot be unconditional, there have to be corresponding duties. Rights for Gandhi are inseparable from duties. He believed that the true source of right is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. Gandhian perspective is not utilitarian, but seeks all the happiness of all the people. Resources will be spent not on army but on means to combat hunger, poverty, diseases.

Gandhi’s vision of a system based on complete decentralisation and dissolution of hierarchies holds promise for a better future of mankind. We cannot neglect the fact that contradiction between the private and public spheres of life is stifling for the growth of the individual and the society. Rights have meaning only when coupled with responsibilities. Ethics in politics is necessary because it will change the exploitative system and will humanise the soulless surroundings. Besides bringing ethics to the centre stage, Gandhian perspective also emphasises qualities of discipline, well ordered schedule and time management. There are many obstacles to participatory democracy such as divisiveness, parochialism, communalism and corruption. Corruption is corroding the very structure of the government like the termites and the escalation of corruption at every level is frightening. This situation is indeed alarming. Gandhian values and principles show a way to come out of this situation.

16.5 SOCIAL DIVIDE

Since the independence in 1947, democracy in India has been experiencing tensions

arising from the struggle for political equality against the history of social hierarchy and from the interface between the state and the emerging collective identities. The traditional society resists the forces of change and reforms, and the same society, because of its plural composition and democratic polity, needs changes and reforms to achieve justice and equality for all its citizens. The democratic state promises fundamental rights and equality to all the citizens, and yet suffers from in-built limitations which hamper social change. As collective identities muster strength and demand rights which they consider are due to them, other collectives face the fear of repression and exclusion. Each of such groups, at some point or another, forcefully tries to assert its identity by making demands which it considers are legitimate and at the same time feels threatened or excluded by similar demands of other groups. Today, the civil society in India face unprecedented challenges resulting from such tensions. The situation calls for entrenchment of respect for the Rule of Law as well as measures for nurturing harmony among various communities and groups in the society.

A noteworthy study by Varshney shows the value of a vibrant civil society and the importance of professional and social ties among members of different groups. It argues that inter-communal civic engagement is better for communal peace than no engagement or only intra-communal engagement; and within the former category, as the size of the locality increases, associational engagement is better than everyday engagement. Care has to be taken today to preserve and establish harmony among and within various communities and castes to strengthen the vibrant democracy in India (Varshney, 2002, p.281).

India's freedom movement created a whole range of associations and organisations in India. Indians did interact with one another before that, but pre-1920 civic engagement was basically an everyday and informal engagement. By creating cadre-based political parties, trade unions, new educational institutions, and new cultural and social organisations, the Gandhian shift in politics laid the foundations of India's associational civic order. Gandhi was a master of civic activism and thinking. His reliance on moral transformation of society meant a lot of civic, nongovernmental activity. Principled nonviolence, Gandhi argued, would produce helplessness in the ruler, for it would make the use of violence self-defeating and morally disgusting. By doing so, it would also build strength in a community. Nonviolent resistance to unjust laws would defeat the British and build a strong Indian nation. Education, campaigning, and organizations were important for such a nation-building project (Varshney, 2002, pp.114-115).

Gandhi believed in the unity of life and egalitarian values in all spheres of life. According to him life cannot be divided in sphere like social, political, economic, moral and religious. If one part of the society suffers, all parts suffer. *Sarvodaya* presupposes justice, generates movements for changes, outward as well as inward and strives for egalitarian social order based on truth, nonviolence and purity of means. Gandhi never compromised at the cost of individual freedom, equality and social justice; his principle of nonviolence was not a mere philosophical principle but it was the rule of life. He had visualised India where "all interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether indigenous or foreign" (*Young India*, September 10, 1931).

Gandhi visualised a society based on mutual understanding, mutual cooperation and mutual respect, freedom and equality for all. Gandhi transcends barriers of caste, class and colour. Gandhi opposed untouchability. Susanne Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph show how

Gandhi adopted the language of civil society to communicate with rural, religious and predominantly illiterate people. He created a 'public' focused on matters of common concern imbued with the values of tolerance and civility (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2003, pp.337-404).

Gandhian programme is holistic and multidimensional. The objective of his constructive work is the creation of non-violent society. The need for such voluntary work in the contemporary Indian society cannot be over emphasised. Gandhi's ideas on the system of education were also in tune with the ideal of social reconstruction. The aim of education is character building and development of one's potential that can help an individual to differentiate between right and wrong. Contemporary times, unfortunately, put premium on the education's ability to enhance the earning capacity thereby curbing the creativity of the young generation. The system is not very conducive in the development of a human and humane outlook. Gandhi evolved a value oriented system of education which aims in developing not merely the qualities of head but also of heart and training of hands through crafts.

Gandhi envisages a healthy society based on harmony and dialogue, where the ideas of equality and justice are translated in the lives of teeming millions. It is heartening to know about the persons like Sunderlal Bahuguna, Narayan Desai, Ravindra Upadhyaya and Ela Bhatt translating Gandhian ideas into practice. Many young and old persons and organisations work tirelessly to spread Gandhi's ideas. Such efforts make us aware of the principles of commitment and nonviolent methods.

16.6 GENDER INEQUALITY

Though the Indian tradition equates the woman with the goddess, power has always eluded her. Seeped in traditions she accepts a subservient role in the private sphere and remains powerless. Her development is marred by the social prejudices. Not many women have been able to occupy the positions of power. Apathy to accept her work in the family and unorganised sector raises basic question regarding the definition of work. Statistical invisibility of women's work reflects the deep rooted social bias against them. Statistics of crimes against women are frightening. Woman has to deal with the violence on her body, mind and life in her daily life. Issues like killing of female fetuses, propaganda of use of harmful contraceptives, violence represented in media, and domestic violence demand immediate attention. The women's movement since the seventies has been largely responsible for critiquing the social system, generating new perspective on women's inferior status and initiating measures which could combat the forces oppressing women. Important steps taken by the government such as amendments in the acts pertaining to issues like rape and dowry have been considerably influenced by the struggles launched by women. The promise of justice and equality, however, remains to be translated in the lives of ordinary women.

It is important to have a re-look in our recent past. Women's participation in the nationalist struggle under Gandhi's leadership against the unjust British rule is a glorious chapter of our history. Women's entry into national politics through non-violent methods brought miraculous results. It established legitimacy of moral elements in politics and made women aware of their potential. It proved that women can evolve their own perception of politics and can chart out their own methods.

Gandhi was confident that ‘if nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women’ (*Young India*, April 10, 1931). Gandhi’s presence had an electrifying effect on Indian women-rich and poor, educated and illiterate, urban and rural. Women from all parts of the country came out of their homes to sell *khadi*, to organise meetings and processions, to spread the message of *swadeshi* and to picket near the shops of liquor and foreign cloth. Women in India could non-violently present a critique of the colonial unethical state. The Gandhian critique of authoritarian colonial state that emerged during the freedom struggle contained women’s perspective of politics. As pointed out by Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady, feminism and peace share an important conceptual connection. Both are critical of and committed to the elimination of, coercive power over privilege systems of domination as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups. A feminist critique and development of any peace politics, therefore, ultimately is a critique of systems of unjustified domination (Warren and Cady, 1994, p.6). Women realised that the only factor that would enable them to come out of such situation was the determination and strength of women themselves. Gandhi maintained that ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs (*Harijan*, February 24, 1940). According to Aloo Dastur and Usha Mehta, one of the enduring results of Gandhi’s great life work has been the awakening of women which made them shed their deep rooted inferiority complex and rise to great heights of valour and dignity, of self-reliance and achievements (Dastur and Mehta, 1991, p.1).

The activities of women in the nonviolent struggle for freedom give messages for inner strength, simplicity, self-reliance and the need to identify with the deprived sections. Some of women’s struggles like Chipko movement and anti-arrack and anti-dowry agitations indicate the strength of nonviolent methods, nurtured by women. Women in different places are raising their voices against injustice and inequality.

Women’s movement has brought the women issue to the centre stage, and has also played a pivotal role in empowering women to stand up against forces that curb their freedom and equality. Women have to recognise, collectively and critically, the forces that limit them, and to work collectively and continuously to change the unequal power structure. Gandhi had tremendous faith in the abilities of women. He had conveyed in his message to All India Women’s Conference in December 1936 that “When woman, whom we call *abala* (weak) becomes *sabala* (strong), all those who are helpless will become powerful.”

16.7 SUMMARY

In a troubled world with rising tensions and violence, Gandhian perspective offers a sane way to a peaceful and dignified human life. It gives a clear message of nonviolence, balanced development and self-sufficiency. It shows that only the quest for peace, truth and justice is the moving force of human life and not the aggression, exploitation and lust for power. It urges us to rise above the narrow frontiers of caste, class, and religion. It teaches us that the society of diverse people has to be based on mutual respect and mutual understanding. It draws our attention to the dangers of mindless consumerism as well as social, political and economic disparities. It demonstrates that women do not have to follow the accepted norms of male-dominated politics; they can evolve their own perception of power and their own methods. It teaches us that freedom from fear and inner strength is the pre-condition of the effective struggle against inequality and injustice. It emphasises the importance of non-violence for the success of democracy. Gandhian

perspective is a ray of hope in contemporary times of sharp inequalities, because the values of truth, non-violence and humanity as well as the moral and ethical issues raised by him are relevant. Lessons from his insistence on uniformity between preaching and practice, high standard in public life and the purity of the end as well as the means can be neglected only at our own peril. His name and work evoke profound respect across nations and his ideas instill hope in the suffering humanity. They inspire harmony among communities, societies and nations as well as between man and nature. His words “My life is my message” are truly inspirational.

16.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. In your opinion is Gandhian perspective relevant today? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Write short notes on three persons or organisations trying to translate Gandhi's ideas in practice.
3. What, in your opinion, are the important strategies to propagate peace in contemporary times?

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