



**Role of Young Men and  
Women in Peace  
Building Processes in  
India's North-Eastern  
with Special Reference  
to Manipur and Nagaland  
States**

# Role of young men and women in Peacebuilding processes in India's North-eastern with special reference to Manipur and Nagaland states

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## **Key words:**

Insurgency, 'disturbed areas', ethnic conflicts, ceasefire, peace processes, suspension of operation, 'negative peace' and 'positive peace', violent conflicts, intra-state conflicts, peacebuilding, UN Peacebuilding Commission.

## **Abstract**

This paper makes an attempt to take close a look at the legal, political and policy framework at the national and international levels for role of youth in peace and security, more particularly, their participation and involvement in peace processes in the northeastern region of India. It is observed that youth policies in India overlook the international legal and policy frameworks that promote active youth, both young men and women equal participation and involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and rebuilding societies in violent conflict ridden and deeply divided societies. Subsequent youth policies in India are based on statistical patterns look at youth not more than resources for economic development and seriously diverts the youth energies from their participation in the post-conflict peace processes. The paper was developed based on personal experiences of framing state level youth policy in Manipur, years of observations on Govt's responses to violent conflicts, youth movements and studies of existing researches, articles on the situation of youth in northeastern region and policies and programs at international and national levels.

## **North-eastern region of India**

North-eastern of India comprises of 8 states namely: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura under the federal structure of the Constitution of India. Of the eight states four namely; Assam, Manipur, Sikkim and Tripura were pre-existing states, before merging to the Union of India. The remaining four were created as new states out of Assam to address political demands of major identity indigenous communities starting with creation of Nagaland State in 1960 as negotiated settlement with a section of Naga political leadership. The region occupies a total area of 262,179 sq.km which accounts for 7.9% of India's total political territory with 39 million people (3.8% of national population, Census India 2001). The region lies in the eastern Himalayan foothills and is surrounded by five neighbouring countries; Bangladesh in the

south-west, Nepal in the north-west; Bhutan and China in the north and Myanmar in the east sharing 96% of the region's boundary in the map of South Asia, The region has a troubled history and geo-politics (North East Council, Govt of India). The region is landlocked and isolated from the rest of the world and is connected to the rest of India by a 27 kms wide Siliguri corridor through regular surface and air transports. The national capital Delhi is 2000 kms away.

There are 160 indigenous tribal communities inhabiting the region who are all listed as Scheduled Tribe provided with special protection and provisions for socio-economic development of the peoples. About 220 languages are spoken in the region belonging to Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Kra-Dai and Austro-Asiatic families. Meitei/ Manipuri is the official language and spoken as lingua-franca by thirty-six indigenous communities as link language in Manipur. English as official language and Nagamese, a variation of Assamese language, is spoken as link across several linguistically distinctive tribes in Nagaland. Nagamese is also serves as the link language between Nagaland and Assamese peoples in their immediate neighbourhood. Nagaland is largely a Christian state and Manipur is multi-religious /faith state with Hindu as mainstream alongside with Christianity, Islam and *Sanamahi* as the indigenous religion of Meitei people in the valley.

Despite its own diversities of peoples, histories and cultures the region has been known to the rest of India by several stereotyped at different stages of history such as the "Kirates" as mentioned in the Hindu epics, "Naga hostile", "restricted area" regulated by the BEFR Act, 1873, "North East Frontier Region", and "un-administered region" during and after the colonial period, "tribal region", "insurgency region", "disturbed areas", "backward region" and "seven sisters" under post-independent Indian administration. There is also recent efforts to redefine and rename the region as the "Gate-way to Southeast Asia", "region of investment opportunities", and "destination of tourism" under the Look East Policy framework since 1993 which has become more forceful since 2014. Across the time the region has been framed and reframed according to the changes in the central policy perspectives on security and development of the country at the peripheries but never seen as equal partners. Participation in law making and policy exercises has either selective, partial and absent. The state and its national political parties have been consistently working at integrating the region in the national cultural and political mainstream following the one way to human evolution theory. Hence, the region remains either over or under estimated but never as equal partners in the attitude from either ways.

The region which has been predominantly looked at as 'insurgency region' for decades and kept under militarized administration though entire country is affected by different kinds of violent conflicts. The internal armed conflict situation has also been kept outside the purview of the international humanitarian and human rights laws in exercise of the sovereign rights of the independent India. In fact, communal riots and violence conflicts have become part of the national political culture in India since its independence. According to a study carried out by Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights the Indian government is involved in 'non-international armed conflicts' (NIAC) against several armed groups operating in central, northern, eastern and north-eastern regions

(RULAC, 2020). One of them, the Communist Party of India – Maoist also known as the Naxalites operating in natural resources rich central and eastern regions since 1967 is classified as non-international armed conflict (Bellal, 2015) based on its intensity<sup>1</sup> in 2000s.

Further, South Asian Terrorist Portal (SATP, 2020) while reporting a declining trend in ‘insurgency-linked fatalities’ in the Northeast, since 2015 for the year 2019 considered as the lowest ever since 1992 against civilian fatalities also provided clue to the scale of violence. The fatalities peaked in the year 2003 with 1,165 lives lost. The number again peaked in the year 2000 with 519 civilians and 145 SF and 607 insurgent cadres. Of the eight states in the region seven, namely; Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura are affected by ‘insurgency’ related violence, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland more severely. As a pattern it is the youth who are most actively engaged in the arms struggles making extreme sacrifices for the cause they thought was most important in their lives.

## **Nature of the state and violence in India**

Insurgency is understood as a rebellion within the national territory of a country and involves the citizens of the same country. Even though insurgency has political aims of secession and uses violence as instruments to resist and fight against the government the racial and cultural differences of the north-eastern peoples makes it apparently as a Chinese threats which has to be dealt only with military might. Insurgency in the north-eastern region for this reason may also be seen as India fighting the Chinese within its own house in exercise of its sovereign rights and monopoly over use violence albeit against its own citizens. Such engagement of state violence against its captive peoples does not give any room for or willingness to analyse underlying causes or proximate causes of the problem for more appropriate and authentic response to the conflicts such as the deep-rooted ones in the region.

The use of violence by any such rebellious armed group is enough for the government to use its armed forces against its own peoples as the solution to the problem. It may also be noted that no political armed group operating in India did not start with arms in their hands from day one rather they were forced upon to raise arms in self defence for their population and territory. Because the Constitution does not allow any elected Government to deny right to life simply because they have diverse political aspirations based on their histories and cultural differences frustrating such group of people or indigenous community to an extreme situation to pick up arms in self defence may also be seen as tactical military strategies to banish any diverse political aspirations. The list of ‘Out-law organizations’ from the Ministry of Home Affairs simply strips any persons bare of his/her fundamental right to life for the army to do their job with full legal impunity – AFSPA, 1958. Under this act killing and raping any outlaw person or group is considered national duty for the uniform personnel. This is precisely and evidently the case of most of the political movements in the north-eastern

region and J&K. The origin of Naga national movement and subsequent militarization is a glaring example in this regard.

### **Diversities, state security and Indian nationalism**

Though India occupies a special place in the international community for experimenting with democracy at the largest scale it also has built-in structural issues to cause deep-rooted conflicts within. The state formation within its territory is based on linguistic criteria which are centred around historically founded dominant cultural communities or pre-existing state. Since India is multicultural society linguistic groups are of relative population strengths resulting disproportionate representations of people in the highest decision making bodies undermining the non-negotiable 'human needs' of the minority groups belong diverse racial and cultural backgrounds (Burton and Dukes, 1990).

Furthermore, whereas democracy is built on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity the linguistic minority groups across the state legislative assemblies and national the national parliament, so also and the bureaucracy are either voicelessly present or ever absent. The most populous linguistic communities which are also more industrialized states in the central, northern, western and southern India gets away with everything and weighs upon the political struggles of the minority identity groups. The majority communities who are most represented in the legislative bodies may also consider themselves more Indian nationalist as maximum benefactors of the state than others who are minority belonging to the other cultures. Hannah Arendt (1970) explains that in multiethnic societies anytime the power in the hands of majority community is challenged or slipping out of their hands temptation to use violence as substitute is irresistible. However, she adds, violence destroy the very power one wants to have.

There may also be other reasons why the Central Government consistently thinks the region inhabited by indigenous peoples deserves to be declared as 'disturbed areas' or 'insurgents region' and subjected to de facto military rule under the AFSPA 1958 and all other kinds of security laws such as UAPA 1967 and Disturbed Area Act 1976, etc. Without having to repeat the usual argument: military response to political issues is not only contradictory to the spirit and foundation of democracy: liberty, equality and fraternity there are cultural reasons to explore more in India's multi-racial and cultural social fabrics. Paul Salem (1997), a critique of western conflict resolution theories finds that the very meaning of conflict itself is different as it is culturally constructed. Conflicts in multi-cultural societies viewed as "worldview conflicts". According to Mary Clark (1989, p. 160) culture is always a dimension within conflict which are triggered by contradictory 'values, beliefs and cultural expressions' in close encounters of peoples belonging to diverse cultural backgrounds. These worldview conflicts make the conflicting parties believe in 'taken-for-granted-ness' of wars and violence as unavoidable against the others, thereby, closing possibilities of constructively resolving the conflicts.

It may be easy for the politically and culturally dominant communities to presume India as 'one people, one culture and one nation' without realizing that such ideas are contrary to factual diversities of cultures and histories in the country. It may also be difficult to see India as a socially constructed post-colonial independent nation of nations in the light of its federal structures provided in the constitution to develop culturally healthy and sensitive centre-state relations to draw the collective strengths of this new nation. However, the relative differences in linguistic populations, territories, cultures and histories among different indigenous communities of India create unequal power distributions, varying capacities of influencing decisions and representations in the governance and administration of the country. This imbalance in power constantly creates and sustains politics of majority and regional dominations over the minority linguistic and cultural groups in the society.

Sociologists in India identified three key problems minorities face. These include (1) problem of identity leading to problem of adjusting with majority communities; (2) problem of security about their life, assets and well-being in relations to majority communities and (3) Problems relating to equity: deprivation of the benefits of opportunities of development as a result of discrimination based on identities and sense of inequity. If these are the real problems of the contemporary times in India at its 70 years of independent existence as a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic then something is seriously not going right, here!

### **Internal-armed conflicts in India and state responses**

India uses multipronged strategies to deal with armed resistance within its territory. This includes; 1) military engagements with full legal impunity to weaken to armed resistance to bring them to negotiating table for co-option into the national political mainstream; 2) creation of dependent economy by pumping money in conflict situation in the conflict affected region and 3) push for infrastructural development programs. As result of these multipronged strategies several armed groups have been brought to negotiating table while weakening others who would not come to negotiate. Peace processes with at least 13 different groups have reached varying stages of settlements. Apparently, there has been sharp decline in the violent activities over the last two decades.

While the Central and State Governments may take relief by the declining trends of violent incidents in several 'disturbed areas' and for having to successfully engage around thirteen different armed groups in peace processes since 1997 (Chandan, 2020). These peace processes are unlikely to resolve the conflicts as the peace talks are limited to the top level leaderships. Most of these negotiations at the top level end up agreeing to terms for the settling the difference in mutual interests and exclude aspirations and interests of the people at the middle and bottom level (Lederach, 1997). Top level negotiation invariably excludes the issues of peace, justice and interests of the middle and bottom level communities of the society (John Paul Lederach, 1995). Such processes are at best symptomatic treatment of the

problems without considering the root causes even when these processes have successfully reduced violent incidents. Unresolved conflicts and unhealed trauma in the violent conflict affected communities will resurface for another cycle of violence sooner or later while state will remained armed tooth to nail to counter, once again and again. Cycle of violence is highly likely to continue if there is no political will and efforts to transform the underlying causes of violent cycles.

No violence, according to Johan Galtung, a Norwegian peace researcher and activist, in an ongoing unresolved internal armed conflict situation is 'negative peace'. For him peace processes must lead to transforming the underlying roots causes of the violent conflict through appropriate structural changes to satisfy the core human needs: 'identity and security' for achieving 'positive peace'. Positive peace is a condition where underlying root causes have been addressed and institutional systems and structures are created for justice and nonviolent mechanisms for responding to conflicts are functional and inclusive democratic processes are outcomes. John Burton (1990), based on the works of American Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954), posited that violent conflicts emerge from the denial or undermining of core human needs which he identified as 'identity' and 'security' especially in a country of diverse histories and cultures. Country with diverse identity groups and histories are vulnerable to violent conflicts anytime when dominant communities holding the power of the state is challenged by other minority groups.

## **Youth and armed conflict situation in India**

Political nature of armed conflicts directly affects youth in diverse communities differently and passionately gets involved in it irrespective of their education and employment status. Role of youth can be judged right or wrong depending on which side one may identify. If one identifies, more because of being part of a majority community, with the state then youth involved in armed struggles within the country are 'outlaws' or 'insurgents' and they must condemned to death without any legal procedures. And if one identifies with any minority/ tribal struggling community for its identity and political space with or without arms against the state then such youth are 'patriots', 'heroes', 'martyrs' and 'national workers'. Thousands of youth for generations together since India's independence have sacrifice their lives in this internal armed conflicts in India without any efforts to understand why the same youth killed as 'insurgents' in India are also honoured as 'martyrs' by the community they belonged and fought for. Multiplicity of truth in India continued to be denied

The official understanding of root causes of the violent conflicts in India may be broadly categorized into two; (1) high rate unemployed among the youth populations and (2) backwardness and lack of development as the major causes of youth participation in the armed movements in the region. These theories are also applied to explain drug addiction among the youth in the region without considering the nexus of drug cartel involving state and non-state actors in the region that ensure easy availability of the drugs. Evidently, the National AIDS Control Programs (NACP, I-III; 1992-2012) focused exclusively on 'drug users' separating them from their families, clans and community ties to provide institutional services for prevention and treatments of Drug addicts and HIV/AIDS positive peoples.

In order to woo many youth away from joining armed political groups Government engages itself in promoting voluntary surrender for a small rehabilitation package without any plans and process for re-integration of the ex-combatants into their families and communities, on one hand and organizing huge recruitment rallies for security sectors and defence services and 'weeding out' those who resist and challenge the state as 'outlaws', on the other. These approaches and methods to engaging with armed conflict situations also allows the state to design desk-tops development and push it down without necessarily considering the importance of involving the people in the processes for who it is meant. While these strategies may be convenient for the limited official understanding of the conflict, people and cultures to use violence and top-down development as the only means any alternative analysis of the historical processes remains foreclosed. The cycle of violent conflicts continues to manifest in the same forms on different issues.

Generations of youth in the region pursuing education in schools and higher education institutions are known for 'out of the campus' activities than academic advancements. Youth are agitated by and many passionately get involve in various issues pertaining to deep rooted socio-political issues and human rights abuse by security forces deployed with full legal impunity under the counter-insurgency operations. Many youth joined the rank and file in both state and non-state forces as victims of the internal armed conflicts with sense of ethnic patriotism and heroism. Many youth in the region also make extreme sacrifices of their lives for the cause they fight. These youth unrests apparently have less to do with their employment status but the deeply militarized conflict situation make them extremely vulnerable all kinds of provocations.

The 'disturbed condition' and the uncontrolled state violence against the unarmed civilian populations with complete legal impunity also causes thousands of youth migrate outside their home states to save their lives and also in search of better education and employment opportunities across the states and overseas as the armed conflict situation prevent normal functioning of educational institutions, corruptions and absence of stable jobs (Marchang, October-December 2019). Hundreds of youth who could not leave the battle fields fall easy prey to drug-nets as escape route from their hopeless and terrorized living conditions. In Manipur alone approximately 30,000 have died in their youthful days due to drugs, HIV/AIDS and armed struggles leaving behind huge population of widows and orphans. Many of those highly educated and employed productively also continue to passionately get involved in the political movements in their intellectual and scholarship capacities but the official understanding of the conflict, apparently, remains blind to the truth and newer facts of the conflict situation.

However, a shift in the centralized tendencies began to take place from 2010-2011 NYP exercises when large sections of youth were caught in drugs and HIV-AIDS as outcomes of various violent conflicts affecting the lives of youth in central Indian tribal belt, J&K and North Eastern region. The focus was then to engage the youth in community works and skill development for productive activities through NYK and NSS programs. A further shift in the current NYP 2014 was taking note of 'youth affected by conflicts' in LWE



affected areas, J&K and North-eastern region. But the policy stopped short of engaging the youth in transforming the violent conflicts by tangentially taking the issues as ‘unemployment’ rather than looking at the root causes of those conflicts locally and disengaging them from the global building processes for culture of peace and nonviolence.

## **National Youth Policy 2014 (India)**

Youth policy in India is evolving for the better. National Youth Policy 2014 may be considered a step towards for the better as it intends to set up National Youth Council (NYC) while keeping the traditional perspective on youth as economic ‘resources’. Moreover, if the proposed NYC continues to be the domain of the majority community it can be more damaging institution without fair representations of diversities of youth populations and their experiences and imaginations. With all good intentions, the NYP 2014 has certainly drawn inspirations from Swami Vivekananda’s belief in the power of youth that greatly resonate with the changing times in India. Looking at the youth as ‘most important segment of the population witnessing demographic shift and the policy intends harness the latent power of young people to ‘find India’s rightful place’ at the international community.

NYP 2014 is considered as the bedrock of youth engagement in years to come. The policy identifies 11 priority areas for process of youth participation, efforts to set up YAS and Youth Council comprising of exceptional young people from across the country to monitor the implementation of NYP 2014. it also promises youth have the appropriate education, skills, health awareness and other enablers to productively **contribute to the economy** and commits investment of more than Rs 90,000 Crores/year on youth development programs which boils down to approximately Rs 2,710/- per youth per year for their higher education, skill development, healthcare, etc and non-targeted food subsidies and employment, etc

Of the total budgetary commitment 80% of expenditure will be targeted to a) education; b) food subsidies; c) employment programs and d) health and family welfare through key departments such as Food & Public Distribution; Rural Development and Agricultural Co-operation. Most of targeted money is spent on education, through Ministry of Human Resource Development (various programs) and Ministry of Small Industries and Employment (scholarship).

NYP 2014 provide holistic vision to empower the youth to achieve their full potential to get India into rightful place in the world with 5-key objectives with 11 priority areas of actions. This includes 1) creating a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India’s economic development; 2) developing a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges; 3) instilling social values and promote community service to build national ownership; 4) facilitating their participation and civic engagement at all levels of governance and 5) supporting youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all disadvantaged and marginalized – economically backward youth, women, youth with

disabilities, youth living in conflict affected regions including left wing extremism, youth at risk due to substance abuse, human trafficking or hazardous working conditions. What conspicuous by absence is any mention of youth active engagements in addressing violent conflicts in line with roles of youth and women in UN Peacebuilding mission.

## **India and UN Peacebuilding**

UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict affected countries and is a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda. PBC is composed of 31 Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The top financial contributing countries and the top troop contributing countries to the UN systems are also members. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are among top five troop contributing members in PBC. China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States are selected members by the UN Security Council, and Canada, Germany, Japan, Netherlands and Sweden are the five top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budget and of voluntary contributions to the United Nations Fund.

India has been one of the top contributors of troops in the UN Peacekeeping force since long besides making financial contributions, too. Thus far, India has made a financial contributions USD 5.65 million to the fund while investing heavily in military engagements in several political issues inside the country. India's responses to conflict, outside and inside the country has been predominantly, military engagement which is contrary to the beliefs and practices in the power of nonviolence professed by the father of the nation: Mahatma Gandhi.

UN Peacebuilding Commission was set up in the year 2005 during the UN Decade for Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for decade 2000-2010. Culture of peace and nonviolence is founded on the 20<sup>th</sup> century frontiers of scientific researches which established the fact that violence is not biological necessities of human behaviours. Like gender, wars and violence are social constructs. Therefore, peace is possible only by peaceful means and ways (Galtung, 1996) as *nonviolence for Gandhi is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind*.

UN Peacebuilding Commission sidelines 25% of the UN PBF committed to women and youth empowerment for peacebuilding. Focus areas of PBF is: implement and sustain peace agreements through 'political dialogue'; 'rule of law and transitional justice', 'security sector reforms', and 'disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and dialogue and peaceful coexistence through national reconciliation, conflict prevention and management and democratic governance. UN Peacebuilding calls upon the youth and women active involvement and participation on peacebuilding processes around the world. However, India has been shielding itself from the benefits of UN Peacebuilding Fund and peacebuilding interventions.

## **Women's role in peace processes: UNSC 1325/ 2000**

UNSC 1325 aims to ensuring women's active participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes with efforts towards achieving gender equality. The resolution called for incorporating the needs and concerns of women in relief and recovery efforts. However, instead of empowering women for their active participation in peacebuilding and peacemaking works India has been engaging in high-profile first ever all-female formed police unit (FFPU) to the UN Peacekeeping Operation in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2007. A few studies on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 and programs related to UN Decade on Culture of Peace and Nonviolence in 2000-10 in India particularly in the states of Manipur and Nagaland (Paula Bannerjee, 2010) substantiate the neglect for the UNSC resolutions which bear critical importance in peacebuilding in the country. Paula Bannerjee in her study noted, 'India remains as one of the many member states that are yet to develop Women, Peace and Security (WPS) national action plan (Khullar, 2020).

The reports further suggested participation of FFPU officers was restricted to supports and care-giving roles which did not aligned with the spirit of equal participation as provided in the UNSC 1325. Government report claimed the Indian all women UN Peacekeeping operations to 'inspiring impacts on Liberian women to join operations with high spirit of professionalism in protecting their nation (Mukerji, 2019). The report also further underscored India's fear of losing its 'sovereignty' control over its territory and internal situation if UNSC 1325 is implemented as evidenced in the case of US war against Afghanistan which aimed at liberating women structural violence. For this reason successive governments in India have been denying existence of many 'armed conflicts' within its territory to avoid international inference in the internal affairs by capping the armed conflict situations in J&K, NER, Maoist movements, communal and ethnic violence as 'disturbed area' conditions or 'law and order' situation. This has helped India to wilfully evade WPS obligations, so far.

One of the fundamental researches conducted by the UN on the issues of Women and Natural Resources highlighted diverse and different experiences of women in violent conflicts and stressed the importance of integrating these experiences in any peace processes and peacebuilding works in four key areas. The first is to *promote women's participation in formal and informal decision-making structures and governance processes related to natural resource management in peacebuilding*. The second is to adopt proactive measures to protect women from resource-related physical violence and other security risks early in the peacebuilding period. The third is to *remove barriers and create enabling conditions to build women's capacity for productive and sustainable use of natural resources* and the fourth, *(within the UN systems), is to increase inter-agency cooperation to pursue women's empowerment and sustainable natural resource management together in support of more effective peacebuilding*.

India, given to the fear of losing its hard won sovereignty, apparently seems to prefer to go slow in making structural changes while cautiously following the global change processes through the 1990s though it took a plunge into transforming its economy from socialist welfare economy to capitalist economy. This is evident in the constitution of the National Women Commission in 1992 by an act of the Parliament in 1990 in anticipation of global women's movement for structural changes. National thinking on women's rights have been largely confined to *Beti Bachao; Beti Badao* (Save girls; promote girls) and 33% reservation of women in local governance institutions, protection of women from domestic violence under CEDAW framework (Women, 2014) while the state continues to successfully exclude 'the different experiences of women in violent conflict situation or armed conflicts' from informing the national policy exercises and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes inside the country. The two decade long Naga peace processes is a glaring example to show how women may be kept outside decision-making processes. Such exclusionary policy applies to the country's strong population of youth.

### **UNSC 2250/ 2016 and Roles of Youth in Peacebuilding**

UNSC 2250 of 2016 also known as Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) program came in the heels of the implementation of the UNSC 1325 in transforming women's status from victimhood to active and equal participants in post-conflict reconstruction decision-making processes in some countries devastated by intra-state armed conflicts in 1990s and in wake of launching the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in 2015. The UNSC 2250 of 2016 also aimed at transforming the youth, young women in particular, from being resources and soft targets for wars and violence to one becoming resources for peace by promoting their active involvement and participation in preventing wars and peacebuilding processes in most countries experiencing armed conflicts under the agenda: "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace".

The Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) were drawn on 5 pillars of actions including Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership and Disengagement. UNSC 2250/ 2016 stressed on youth's potential roles in (1) Participation: *inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels; and participation and views of the youth in negotiating and implementation of peace agreement;* (2) called upon the parties in armed conflict to protect civilians and youth in particular *from all sexual and gender-based violence and human rights of all individuals including youth within their territory;* (3) urged the member states to *facilitate an enabling environment for young people implement violent prevention activities and support social cohesion* and also all stakeholders to promote and involve youth in *a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities;* (4) increase their *political, financial, technical and logistical needs* to enable youth to participate in peace efforts and developing *strategies to counter the violent extremism narratives;* and (5) consider the needs of the youth affected by armed conflict at the time *disarmament,*

*demobilization and reintegration activities* through evidence-based *gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities* and inclusive labour policies and invest in educating and skilling young persons in promoting culture of peace.

## **Sustainable Development Goal 4 & 16**

The need to educate and prepare the younger generations in schools, colleges and universities to face the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century was also well reflected while drafting the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 with greater participation of civil societies groups from across the world. SDG4.7, particularly focussed on ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through;

- education for sustainable development and
- sustainable lifestyles,
- human rights,
- gender equality,
- promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence,
- global citizenship and
- appreciation of cultural diversity and of
- culture's contribution to sustainable development.

It also included building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. SDG 16 was set to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels in the face of climate change and global warming and increasing violence within the state systems.

## **The Challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century and third millennia**

Overcoming violence in all its forms as an instrument for power over and methods of changing desired situation at all levels is critical to creating culture of nonviolence and peace by 2030. Violence is perhaps the most destructive challenge to the development, growth, wellbeing, and to the very survival of human societies around the world. Fatalities resulting from armed conflict are rising in some parts of the world, causing mass displacement within countries and across borders, and resulting in massive humanitarian crises that adversely impact every aspect of our developmental efforts. Other forms of violence – crime and sexual and gender based violence continue to be a global challenge. Young people are especially vulnerable. UN sources reported 43% of all homicides globally involve young people between 10 and 29 years of age, and children make up a third of human trafficking victims worldwide. But violence can also take more insidious forms such as institutional violence of unaccountable legal and judicial systems and depriving people of their human rights and fundamental freedoms all constitute forms of violence and injustice. Corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost developing countries around USD1.26 trillion per year.

It is important take the first step to fulfilling any aspect of the global sustainable development agenda for 2030. This is possible when member states begins by restoring security and human rights to individuals whose very lives and basic freedoms are under threat either due to direct violence or through institutional restrictions to justice. UN reports that many of the countries that did not achieve their Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015 were also countries experiencing armed conflict and instability. Global statistics show;

- 590,000 Lost their lives violently in 2016 which means that on an average, interpersonal or collective violence killed at least 1 person every minute of every day of the year
- Over 338,000 crimes against women reported every year
- Over 200,000 refugees get asylum and direct assistance in India

## **India and SDG 4 & 16**

In India, the judiciary is struggling to clear out large number of pending cases, with the backlog touching 35 million in June 2019 – 31 million cases pending in subordinate courts, 4.35 million in High Courts and 58,669 cases in the Supreme Court. In order catch up with global pace towards sustainable peace India has prioritised the strengthening of justice through government initiatives including *Pragati Platform*, a public grievance redressal system, and the Development of Infrastructure Facilities for the Judiciary including Gram Nyayalays for villages. India has long way to hit some of critical targets under SDG16 which may include; 1) promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all, 2) reducing illicit financial and arms flows, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets and combating all forms of organised crime, 2) ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels, 3) ensuring public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements, 4) strengthening relevant national institutions, including through international co-operation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime, and 5) promoting and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

India has shown credible actions taken to achieve the remaining targets, namely; 1) significant reductions in all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, 2) ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, 3) substantially reduced corruption and bribery in all their forms, 4) developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, 5) broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance, and 6) providing legal identity for all, including birth registration.

In India, significant progress had been made in universalising primary education, with improvement in the enrolment and completion rates of girls in both primary and elementary school. The net enrolment ratio in primary education for boys and girls was at 100%, while at the national level, the youth literacy rate was 94% for males and 92% for females. The new

National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 share the goals of universal quality education and lifelong learning. The flagship government scheme, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, is aimed at achieving universal quality education for all Indians, and is complemented in this effort by targeted schemes on nutritional support, higher education, and teacher training.

## **Concluding remarks**

A scientifically appropriate approach to the problems of armed resistance/ struggles including insurgency, ethnic nationalism, communal riots, and LWE in India will lead appropriate diagnosis of the problems for authentic responses. These problems in its myriad forms are by definitions internal to the Indian nation. But habitual denial of existence of the real socio-political problems in a multi-ethnic, racial, historical and cultural society that is India, exteriorizing the roots of the problems elsewhere in hostile neighbourhoods and labelling them as 'anti-national', 'extremism/ terrorism', 'ethnic problems', etc at convenience of using state powers against its own people do not help solving the problems but it can be self prescriptions for shortening life of the nation.

Nations take birth and die after living full life as long as it is part of the living natural processes and do not become a tyranny against its own people. Nations can evolve to new heights of human civilization and spirituality based on human capabilities if it is aware and conscious of own health situation and engages in proper diagnosis of problems that it may face during its lifetime. Some nations may live longer and others die younger depending on health consciousness of the nation and so also the state as a social contract within a nation or across nations. Every nation would want to emerge as the best among others by solving all kinds of problems with own ingenuities, innovations and adapting to changing global processes. The third millennium seeks for nations that would be sources and resources for sustainable development process on this earth by generating new knowledge that advances the human capacities for culture of peace and nonviolence with one and all, and natural environment.

India as the world's largest democracy will be celebrating its silver jubilee in the next four years. At its early 70s wisdom must dawn upon this post-colonial new nation. Insurgency or all kinds of violent conflicts are serious nation's internal health problem that may threaten own life, premature. It is time for the Indian nation to own up insurgency and all kinds of violent conflicts within it as own creation and adopt the right human approach diagnose and use appropriate nonviolent technologies to resolve them by transforming all structural issues. Any true Indian nationalist political party of government would do everything possible in creating institutions preparing its youth with new knowledge and skills for transforming India in response to the call of the international community in the contemporary world.

Cultures and histories of the people cannot be denied or shunted by legislative processes as they are undeniable roots of the diversity of India. The present challenge to the Indian constitutional democracy by the rightist politics of the Hindutva ideology is to be taken seriously as real phenomenon in India politics. Denial of Hindutva ideology or confronting it is to deny the cultural and historical identities of this post-colonial India. Supporting the Hindu nationalist politics or coalition with by any individuals or groups whose roots are originally non-Hindu/Hindi cultures and geographies may have their own vested interest. Such coalition can be self-denial or *harakari* of the diversity and identities unless the purpose of coalition discovering spiritual heights of human societies. Diverse cultures exist as product of the living interactions between human groups and different natural environment and ecosystems. Restoring the Earth's ecosystem in response to climate change and global warming is also to restore cultural harmony with nature.

National politics that aims to homogenize the diversities of India will only continue to strengthen systemic violence in the state system and in the societies neither it is desirable for the world that is making efforts to restore its natural environment, ecosystems by recognizing the rights to the indigenous peoples and their diverse cultures in their own regions.

Less or more than equal attitude towards north-eastern people and tribal community must be challenged in all fronts to develop creative and productive relationships that is possible from respecting diversities of people of India. Integrity of India lies in restoration of its cultural and historical diversities and weaving interdependent relationships in the larger global human societies in line with Gandhian approach to development and peace building.

Violent conflicts in India are caused by structural problems in the Indian democracy and society. Both foundation and formation of new states, to accommodate political demands, are based on linguistic domains of majority community. This is true at the central and state levels. Hindi is being pushed by the largest Hindi speaking groups as the national language across the diverse linguistic regions. This has always caused tensions and violence in India society. Similarly minority linguistic identity groups/community are either marginalized voicelessly or excluded in decision-making bodies. Furthermore, practice of multiparty party electioneering system has worked in favour of the powerful sections of society by breaking apart community solidarity or communalizing politics. The Constitution is seriously being challenged by the linguistic and cultural politics. It is time India reinvent itself by acknowledging its own problem. This is possible only when the National Youth and Education Policies are designed to transform the violent conflicts and in tune with the 21<sup>st</sup> century global responsibilities for sustainable development.

Gap between formal education and political practices on the ground must be addressed by providing autonomies to academic institutions in higher education systems to developing locally relevant curriculum that prepare young generation of politics for problem-solving rather politics on problems at local and global levels

India must not only be known as top contributors of UN Peacekeeping Force but also increase funding to the UN Peacebuilding Fund and open its doors for the UN international



peacebuilding expertise to help resolve the intra-state armed conflicts by transforming the underlying structures and cultures.

The NEP 2020 which has already taken a giant step to prepare the younger generation competent to tackle development challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by adopting outcome based learning methodologies. It must also fine tune in tandem with UNSC 1325/2000 and 2250/2016 to promote active participation of youth in transforming India by enlarging national ambition beyond the 5 Trillion economy and 'knowledge superpower' in the world.

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<sup>i</sup> Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions refers to a 'conflict not of an international character', but does not provide a definition. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) stated that a non-international armed conflict exists when there is 'protracted armed violence between government authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State. Thus, there are two core elements constituting a non-international armed conflict: (1) Protracted armed violence is taking place, meaning a certain intensity of armed violence and (2) The actors taking part in it must exhibit a certain degree of

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organization. The question whether the requisite levels of intensity and organization have been met is assessed on a case-by-case basis.