THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WAR, PEACE AND HARMONY

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Bhagwan Das in his work *World War and Its Only Cure* wrote 'if we do not end war, war will end us.'[1] According to Kant, 'What drove human beings to live in the most inhospitable regions of the earth was probably nothing but war.'[2] The reasons behind devastating war include territorial, political and humanitarian issues. A war leads to displacement of millions of people, loss of lives, sexual violence, collapse of several services and so on. The populace at war, according to Kant, 'must do their poor best to make good the devastation which the war leaves behind; and finally, as a crowning ill, they have to accept a burden of debt which will embitter even peace itself, and they can never pay off on account of the new wars which are always new impending.'[3] It is a humanitarian catastrophe. As M. Campbell Smith has emphasized that 'war ... is ever the natural consequence of human passion and human prejudice.'[4] Different peace groups while promoting world peace are confined to mainly military, social, and political issues. Peace is not merely the absence of war as defined by Martin Luther King, but a state of harmony where justice, equity, respect and brotherhood prevail. It is the 'ability to cope with it.'[5] Radhakrishnan also upholds that, 'Peace is not a possession but a perpetual aspiration.'[6] According to Kant, 'a state of peace among men who live side by is not the natural state.'[7] It 'must be established'.[8]

The problem of peace is an exclusive concern of human beings. No organisation or mere dialogue could be as effective. Kant in his *Perpetual Peace* emphasised that 'all theoretical schemes, connected with constitutional, international or cosmopolitan law' will 'crumble away into empty impractical ideas.'[9] Science and technology cannot solve all human problems. Man should enjoy the benefit of scientific advancement. But at the same time, he should be aware of the degradation brought about by the advancement science and technology. The problem is that of humanisation. Michael Ignatieff wrote: 'Being

human is an accomplishment like playing an instrument. It takes practice. The best of us is historical, the best of us is fragile. Being human is a second nature which history taught us, and which terror and deprivation can batter us into forgetting.'[10]

Besides many Western and Indian thinkers, Tagore, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan's perspectives provide profound insights into human experience of conflict and means of conflict resolution. They advocated a peaceful world order. In moments of crisis that we face today it is good to be reminded of Tagore, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan whose ideas contribute to the present. They remind us of the need of embodying positive possibilities for the future destinies of human kind in spite of the 'crooked timber of humanity'. War manifests intense inner conflict and Mahatma Gandhi emphasised that 'Spiritual experiences are shared by us whether we wish it or not by our lives, not by our speech.... Spiritual experiences are deeper even than thought.'[11] Plato in his *Republic* argues that 'it is peace in which each of us should spend most of his life and spend it best'[12] as no goal can be achieved in life without peace. In the same tune Gandhi also said: 'Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the Godliness of human nature.'[13]

Man has to overcome the ill consequences of his inevitable subjugation to his struggle for existence and realise the essentiality of selves to each other so that he is able to live with internal contentment and external harmony. Tagore, a 'bard of human glory', wrote: 'I felt sure that some Being who comprehended me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experience. To this Being I was responsible, for the creating in me is His as well as mine. I felt I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the Infinite becomes defined in humanity and comes close to me to need my love and co-operation.'[14] He further emphasises 'The perfect harmony of relationship which we realise in this world – not through our response through knowing but in being.'[15] This is the 'unostentatious religion of man'[16] as N.V. Banerji puts it in his *Towards Perpetual Peace*. Bonds of love, friendship, universal

brotherhood, compassion, respect and so on are some of the virtues which act as regulative principles of human conduct to bring about peace during periods of national and global upheaval. Gandhi wrote: 'To see the universal and all – pervading Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life.'[17] He was convinced that 'We have to work within the limits of our strength with our feet on the hard earth.'[18] From the peace at the individual level we have to strive to attain peace in the society. According to Kant 'It is (our) duty that we should labour for this end, an end which is no mere chimera.'[19]

Man is above religion, race, caste, nation and so on. What is required is sinking all differences of religion, caste and community as all shared a common humanity. Adopting a welcoming acceptance of diversity and going beyond tolerance, and taking a stand against what harms human beings, are essential for creating a harmonious society. Mahatma Gandhi's concept of 'enlightened anarchy', envisioned an ideal society in which 'everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour.'[20] States should not be concerned only with the interest of his own people but should look into the interests of humanity as a whole. Gandhi's vision of the 'oceanic circle' put forward on July 22, 1946 in *Harijan*, is a metaphor for a harmonious, non-violent and democratic society. He writes: 'Ultimately it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces'[21] without sacrificing self-dignity. Seeking help from outside without sacrificing self-interest will foster mutual benefit, each for all and all for each. Heart unity, by sacrificing individual egoism, leaves no place for mistrust between me and you. Individual should give up egoity. You and I transcend either you or I. 'Ah! Remove with your "I am" my "I am" from between us.'[22] (-Al-Hallaj).

Feeling of exclusiveness, self-righteousness and infallibility vis-à-vis religion, race, caste, community, nation and so on lead to war. As Gandhi

puts it in *Young India*, 14.10.1926, 'ultimately one is guided not by intellect but by the heart. The heart accepts a conclusion for which the intellect subsequently finds the reasoning. Argument follows conviction. Man often finds reason in support of whatever he does not want to do.' Each individual is distinct in his own way but everyone should enjoin deep regard and veneration for everyone so that peace prevails over disharmony. Gandhi cites the metaphor of a tree and its branches. No two branches are alike, yet there is no conflict between them and the tree on which they grow.

Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru and Radhakrishnan rejected narrow nationalism and advocated intense nationalism through cordial international relation. If a state is concerned exclusively with the welfare of its own people to the exclusion of the rest of the world, then conflicts and war are inevitable. Radhakrishnan wrote: 'There is only one race, human race. It is above consideration of politics and nationality.'[23] Similarly Tagore had said, "I am not against one nation in particular but against the general idea of all nations.'[24] Gandhi paraphrases the same message in the following words: 'I do not want my house to be walled in all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.'[25] Mazzini wrote: Just as individuals are the citizens of a nation, 'nations are the individuals of humanity.'[26]

Making humanity more humane is the *summum bonum* for which the world must endeavour. Unfortunately, 'The song remains unsung to this day'[27].

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