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## Can Education combat the seeds of terrorism and fundamentalism”

Terrorism is a subject that has dominated the global psyche for quite some time. Bombings from Beirut to Baghdad and Madrid to Mumbai have threatened peace. Anti-terrorism strategies have been mostly centred around use of force, with varying degree of success. In this context, the use of education to counter the tide of fundamentalism need critical examination.

### Terrorism as global phenomenon

Religious fundamentalism has been at the core of terrorist activities. Post 9/11, it has gained immense currency. The so-called GWOT (Global War on Terror) launched by USA under George Bush has seen vicious cycle of violence, alienation and more bombing. Technological superiority and asymmetry in power have failed to subdue terrorism. So, a question arises, where does lie the solution?

## An ideological war

Fundamentalism is deeply rooted in ideology. It is therefore impossible "to bomb" an ideology. Education perhaps, offer <sup>a</sup> solution.

Education based on "Sulh-i-Kul", "Sarvadharm Sambhav" and "Vasudhivaikutumbakam" can surely answer the twisted ideology propagated by terrorist organisations like Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Security analysts have time and again pointed out towards the radical education spreading through religious seminaries and madararas. Students from poorer sections are indoctrinated with radical ideology of Wahabism. Anti-semitism in Europe is another manifestation of extreme ideological propaganda. It goes without saying that secular education is needed to face fundamentalism. This alone could answer <sup>1</sup> ~~extremism~~ <sup>extremism</sup> of all kinds.

Education that promotes humanism and fraternity could break the walls of differences. It enables cross-cultural understanding and religious syncretism. Imagine the power of education that produced "non-violence satyagraha" led by

Mahatma Gandhi against an alien rule which was despotic and unjust.

### Education with Morality

Terrorism often uses local grievances to mobilise alienated youths. It subscribes to the philosophy of ends justify the means.

Value-based education could alter the above scenario. The ideals of fair, reasonable and just means could appeal to human rationality, if these are rightly spread. Disapproving violent means for fulfilling any objective would certainly mean end to ~~violence~~ fundamentalism. Teachings of all religions with humanity as the central thrust seem to offer alternatives to violent means for curbing terrorism.

Tolerance as a shared value could be cultivated by education. It should prepare people to appreciate differences in the world. Living with plural characters could produce harmony in difference. This is the best ideology to answer religious intolerance and fundamentalism. Appealing to the reasoning of human mind, such an education could enhance the potential of citizens; immune from radicalisation.

## Democracy and Education

'Let noble thoughts come from all sides' says the Rig Veda. Education thus should be all inclusive to accommodate all sections of society. This would be needed to ensure integration of different people in social setup. For instance, the European society has so far done little to adopt this inclusive education for mainstreaming of migrants from Arab world and South Asia.

Exclusive character of education on the other hand could produce minds entrenched with prejudice, Xenophobia and superiority over ones own culture.

We need to further democratise value-based education. It is essential to bridge the trust deficit among citizens. More importantly, it could give true definition to the identity of an individual. Terrorism often invokes narrowly defined identity to fuel violence. Identity which is shaped by moral education could remain steadfast in the path of humanism and universal brotherhood. The situation in Middle East could be cited here. Identity as an Arab, Shra, Sunni, Alawite, Kurd, Muslim, Jews, woma and so on, need to be reconciled with 'human' identity.

Education as a potent tool should not remain confined to students at school. Radicalism has won over people of all ages and groups. Therefore, education should be spread among teachers, employees, workers, men and women of all sections.

Family as an unit of social discourse should be the first point of education. Community education could also be fruitful in improving civic duties and consciousness as citizenry.

### Use of Technology

We have seen how terrorists have exploited social media to get recruits. People from <sup>far off</sup> countries like Australia, France, Indonesia, UK and USA have flocked to middle East because they were indoctrinated online.

Internet technology alongwith mobile communication should be used extensively to spread value education. Civic debate and discussion could break the differences and narrow beliefs. Nothing would <sup>hurt</sup> ~~more~~ terrorists <sup>more</sup> than lack of support from global netizens. The brutal tactics of terrorists and propanganda war could be countered with secular material and broad-based deliberation via Twitter, Facebook and Youtube.

Education should pursue human rights, gender sensitization and minority protection to answer the exclusivism propagated by terrorism. This would heal the wounds of the past and open doors of reconciliation.

### Challenges of Education against terrorism

The quality of education acceptable to all stakeholders is the foremost obstacle. Resource constraint further delay action in right direction. Moreover, the regions under terrorist foothold have seen mass migration and displacement. Digital illiteracy acts as obstacle in full exploitation of technology for spreading religious tolerance and inter-community faith.

The recent carnage in Paris acts as eye opener for global community. Any knee-jerk reaction would mean playing into the hands of terrorists. This is a right time to evolve global consensus over terrorism and its definition. The narrow definition should ~~now~~ go and comprehensive strategy should be developed under the aegis of United Nations.

The cycle of violence should be stopped by putting ends to geopolitical rivalry. Choking of funds to terrorists should be prioritised. The thin line separating 'good' and 'bad' terrorists should be rubbed.

There needs to develop radical means to combat the seeds of terrorism. Apart from above security strategies, educating the masses should be given top priority. The primacy of human values should win over narrowly defined 'national interests'. Education could heal old wounds and repair the broken social fabric. Education could transform the nature of people: †

From untruthfulness to righteousness

From ignorance to enlightenment

From morality to immorality

Education seems to have the force to counter the tide of fundamentalism. From Sahel to South Asia, it could bring dramatic transformation. It could produce global citizens committed to pluralism and anti-theftical to radicalism and fundamentalism.

(2) Have the environment movements in India achieved the desired objectives?

The Jal Satyagraha in Narmada Valley, protest movement in Niyamgiri and ~~Kudanku~~ Jaitapur are some of the few environment movements that have caught the imagination of ~~policy~~ nation in last few years. These have acted as catalyst for shifting the debate to a larger plane. Infact, it has released democratic zeal for protection of rights and livelihood issues.

India post independence sought to embark upon the path of industrialisation through planning. The second five year plan, particularly emphasised on setting up of basic and key industries. Construction of river valley projects and their role as "temples of modern India" brought far reaching changes in socio-economic life of people.



## Chipko, the beginning

The march of industrial development got first resistance in the serene valley of Kumaon in present Uttarakhand. In 1973, a group of villagers prevented a commercial company from cutting trees. Activists led by Gaura Devi and Chandi Prasad Bhatt hugged the trees, and hence, ~~the~~ India got its first environmental movement — "Chipko Movement".

Villagers of the region were dependent on forests for their day to day life. Moreover, the same piece of forests was denied for collection of woods for household requirement. People thus, saw this denial grossly unjust and inhumane. After days of protests, government had to concede to the genuine demands of people. Commercial exploitation of trees was banned for a period of ten years and villagers were allowed to collect dried woods and leaves from the forest.

Chipko in many ways was revolutionary. It stood for its 'innovative' means plus the impact of collective bargain. It realised its objectives to a large extent and thus, often, later days movements drew inspiration from it.

## Narmada Bachao, the second wave

The success of Chipko movement was followed by brief period of lull. Inflation, unemployment and subsequent emergency had diverted the attention to democratic political debate.

Multipurpose projects like Damodar Valley ~~Proj~~ Corporation, Bhakra Nangal Project were seen as pancea of economic woes. Many state governments vied for such gigantic initiative in their own backyard. Narmada project was one such programme. It was seen to solve the water crisis in Saurashtra region, while providing power to the demands of evergrowing industrial cities like Surat, Vadodra, Bombay among others.

The grand scale of Narmada project could be gauged from the fact that it conceptualised 12 big dams 30 medium size and 300 small dams spanning Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The project was to submerge hundreds of villages, displacement of tribals and loss of their livelihood.

'Narmada Bachao Sangarsh Samiti' was an umbrella organisation which brought many smaller bodies under its ambit to articulate the grievances of people impacted by the project.

It got new momentum with leadership of Medha Patkar. People in Omkareshwar region went for 'Jal Satyagraha' to bring focus on the ill-effects of such project.

The judicial intervention lead to settlement of the displaced people. Narmada Project went ahead for its completion. So, was the movement successful?

The movement did not accomplish its objective in the short term, But it created nationwide debate on 'development versus environment'. Political class were quick to garner the support for from the aggrieved citizens.

In the long term, however, Narmada Bachao brought a number of favourable changes in development projects.

The government had to formulate policy on rehabilitation of displaced population in 2003. It created an environment informed for discussion at a larger platform.

### Post 1991 Phase

The advent of liberalisation has affected the production process and environment. The protests movement have acquired different shape with new strategies.

Easing of industrial licensing, allocation of mining rights and growth of SEZs (Special Economic Zone) brought sharp increase in environmental degradation. Private sector with its commitment towards bottomline and profit ~~was~~ seen as antithesis to environmental protection.

Movement of fishing community in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Sundarban (West Bengal) against machine based trawlers led to banning of fishing in certain pockets. The agitation in Niyamgiri against bauxite mining was also successful in putting end to the activity. The campaign of "Save Tiger" has led to increase in number of tigers substantially.

### The Flip Side of Environment Movements

There have instances of violation of democratic means in some environment protest movements. For instance, Kudankulam nuclear protest involved threat to police and government officials. ~~For~~ Cases of coercion on people supportive of development have emerged from tribal areas of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

The trust deficit between ~~of~~ the state and people have often been exploited by extremists including Maoists.

Recently, international environment organisations like Greenpeace, 360.org among others were found in violation of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). Such unlawful act could discredit the environmental movement and hence, must be discouraged.

### Way Forward

The debate between protection of environment and development should not lead to extremity of postures. Gandhian views of moderation and restraint hold answer to the consumer-centric human behaviour.

Several forward looking measures have developed in last few years. Due to the activism of environmentalists Environment Impact Assessment have been given prime spot in developmental projects. Capitalist domination has been moderated by pro-environment policy of 'Eco-sensitive Zone'. New boost to 'Save Ganga' has emerged in the form of 'namo ganga' initiative. Participation of people in the environmental movement remains critical to its widespread success. Reduction of man-animal conflict should be the next focus of environmentalists. This seems achievable with the active support of the state.

Environment movements in India have been quite different from the west and thus need different benchmark to measure their success. Environmentalism in India is a "bottom-up" process <sup>in</sup> which <sup>common</sup> people participate to protect their livelihood concerns. It's a continuous journey and so far it has able to bring attention of all stakeholders.

Environment movements in India have been globally hailed for its democratic character and innovative strategies. While the full realisation of objectives is a distant goal, they have acted as ~~conscia~~ conscience of the people. They <sup>have</sup> provided inputs to policymakers for course correction and there in lies their success. More public participation could further add to their achievements.