

Approach Paper

“Towards Knowledge, Development and Peace: Outlining Road Map for the Future”

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The emergence of development theory during 1960s was supposed to give quick solutions to problems of hunger, disease, conflict and poverty. The hope was that generation of abundant resources with the help of rapidly encompassing technology would bring about distributive justice for all. It was anticipated that humanity would be comfortable to solve its problems as abundant resources would be justly distributed among the deprived and marginalised sections. The 21st century has shown no signs of such developments. On the contrary, there is tremendous advancement in technology with a lot more new challenges, threats and violence. A global revolution ushered in by the flowering of IT on unbridled liberalisation of markets etc. has generated serious concern over human wellbeing, instead of solving most of the problems supposed to have been solved by all this.

The world at the beginning of the 21st century presents a grim scenario: the rising spectre of global insecurity and terrorism, the emergence of a new mutant of imperialism represented by hegemonic and expansionist elite nations, stark inequality and the widening divide between the rich and the poor, the evident human development deficit in large parts of Africa and Asia, growing apprehensions about food security, escalating ethnic, religious and political conflicts in many parts of the world, the plight of millions of refugees driven out of their homes, marginalisation and stigmatisation experienced by minority groups and other disadvantaged sections of society in the face of rising intolerance, racism and xenophobia, and social and cultural fragmentation across large parts of the world. Modern information and communication technologies have brought to our awareness the magnitude of these challenges in all their vividness.

Thankfully, the rather gloomy scenario has not deterred a fairly large number of far-sighted individuals, public intellectuals and international organisations from holding aloft the torch of hope and optimism and from disseminating the message of relentless struggle in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges and impediments to the attainment of a just and peaceful world order. There is a growing realisation in large parts of the world that though it is impossible to root out conflicts and tensions, it is well within our reach to make efforts to contain and resolve them. The need to build bridges of intercultural understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence is being acutely felt across large parts of the world. International organisations, civil society organisations, inter-faith groups and sections of the media are playing a laudable role in giving shape to the emerging international movement for promoting human understanding.

The present situation requires an array of solutions. Human wisdom can efficiently create solutions if the power of peace is at play. Creating mutual human understanding requires a

culture of knowledge, development and peace. There is a need to build a paradigm based on knowledge, development and peace to strive for drawing a road map for future.

A new and integrated vision of society is emerging as a result of disillusionment with the western civilisational ethos and its belief in individual rights and material progress above all else. There is a strong emphasis being laid on spiritual values, religious ideals and shared beliefs that unite societies and define progress not merely in economic terms, but across the entire gamut of life. Spiritual roots and religious moorings, which shape human personality and motivation, are being integrated into community developmental activities.

It is felt that knowledge and ideas, insights and practical measures that emerge are likely to be those that promote self-reliance and preserve human dignity rather than aggravate and institutionalise economic disparity. An approach to development that incorporates spiritual, religious and moral values will more likely lead to enduring changes in both individual and collective behaviour.

In sharp contrast to the western propagation of consumerism and material advancement, devoid of spiritual and religious beliefs, the emerging paradigm of development incorporates, integrates and welds together the material and spiritual aspects of life at both the individual and community levels. The spiritual precepts of equity, trustworthiness and altruism become part and parcel of individual and social change. Instead of fostering greed and acquisitiveness, this new paradigm engenders compassion, cooperation and equitable justice for all.

Role of Leadership, Governance and Planning

The emerging paradigm is questioning the critical **role of leadership, governance and planning** at the global, national and regional levels.

It is felt that there is a need to nurture truly global leaders who have a grasp of global affairs and share the vision of an equitable and peaceful world. Quite clearly, the present system of global governance is very poorly equipped to handle the challenges of the global agenda.

National interest continues to dominate to the detriment of global wellbeing in an antiquated system based on national sovereignty. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the world has been split bitterly over what is meant by global leadership. Perhaps the one thing that unites is a sense that today's leaders are somehow smaller than the giants of the past.

Existing institutions – at the global and national levels – tend to be compartmentalised with separate organisations for security, health, labour, environment etc; these are ill-equipped to address the inter-related challenges facing the globalising world. The role and decision-making capabilities of politicians are also being questioned in times when solutions require a global vision. The inter-disciplinary systems and bureaucratic frameworks need to be inclusive and integrating all the stakeholders. These institutions have to be designed, or reformed, not just for understanding but for crafting solutions.

The challenge for governance in an age of economic uncertainty has never been greater. The concept of governance at the sovereign, corporate and the individual level is being severely

tested throughout the world. The fall out of the 2008-09 recessionary spiral in the United States has had a domino effect across our globalising world. It has once again underscored the myopia and momentary expediency of leadership from the developed world.

The developing economies – especially in large parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia – are also witnessing violence and disruption as a result of dysfunctional governance: Maoist-Naxalite violence in large parts of India, for example, has added to turmoil and volatility in the region. The paternalistic stance of development planners and their reliance on science and technology to provide all solutions are now being freshly examined. It is again focussing attention on people-centric development that requires the unifying vision of life and society, value-based norms and goals, without which there can be no holistic, integrated, inclusive growth.

Peace in the Era of Globalisation

Globalisation, championed by the developed economies led by United States of America, has irrevocably transformed economies of both the developed and developing worlds. While the US remains the world's leading economic power, it is no longer the world's economic leader. In an increasingly globalised and prosperous world, competing centres of wealth and power have emerged, no longer just Europe and Japan, but also Brazil, China and India.

The forces of globalisation have achieved their objective of forging economic linkages at an immense socio-political cost. Civilisational values and ethos that had been lifelines of nation-states, communities and religious faiths have been eroded, marginalised and, even worse, made irrelevant.

The United States 'War on Terror', unleashed after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, continues trying to find a military solution in the West Asian and Asian geo-political theatres, there is an upsurge in terrorist-related violence across the world that has made lives of millions of ordinary citizens more insecure, unstable and susceptible to localised riots, generating hatred among communities and religious faiths which had peacefully co-existed for centuries. The need for global peace and conflict-resolving mechanism has never been greater.

Politics, business, finance, trade and commerce have to become enmeshed in the globalised village. It is becoming imperative for global leaders to champion the cause of peace and rise above the demands of either politics or business. The US and European leaders have, in the first decade of the 21st century, seen their power bases erode gradually. Military gains and calculations are off-set and diminished by unforeseen economic crises.

The quest for peace, stability and security remains paramount in the age of globalisation and poses the greatest challenge for global leaders.

Importance of Capacity Building and Education

The enterprise of building human capacity to foster constructive personal, community and institutional change is increasingly being recognized as the fundamental purpose of development. When viewed from the perspective of **capacity building**, development is concerned principally with the generation, application and diffusion of knowledge which is inherently spiritual and

material in nature. The new challenges of capacity building encompass the entire spectrum of collective human activities designed to be non-adversarial and inclusive at all stages.

Education plays an important role in the creation and perpetuation of a peaceful, just and equitable social order. Education should strive to develop an integrated set of capabilities – technical, artistic, social, moral and spiritual – so that individuals can lead lives with meaning and become agents of positive social change.

Justice is an underlying prerequisite of all developmental activities and it cannot be viewed as an unapproachable ideal. Justice is an evolving capacity that individuals, communities, institutions and nations must continually seek to develop. Creating a culture of justice, or more specifically human rights, is intimately bound up with a process of moral and spiritual development. Over the centuries, all religions have endorsed justice as the central plank upon which the edifice of morality, values and ethics is based in any society.

At this cusp of history, in the 21st century, when diverse cultures, religions and communities across the global village are interacting, and the process of globalisation continues to enmesh nation-states, new road-maps for the future may be drawn up. These road-maps need to reflect the changing paradigms, aspirations, hopes and beliefs of all humanity; covering the entire spectrum of human activities, be it economic, social, cultural or political. Humanity is a single people with a common destiny: a peaceful and just global society is waiting to be born.