

NAM'S (Non- Aligned Movement) RELEVANCE

Synopsis: The scepticism and doubt about relevance and meaningful role in Non-Aligned Movement in the now changed unipolar world is full of cynicism and unsustainable. Great visionaries and stalwarts established NAM for the achievement of noble ideals of equality, independence, peace, mutual trust, development and exploitation-free world. Many of these aims are yet to be achieved in respect of the developing countries. NAM has to get its acts together and redefine its goals and priorities with more unity and understanding among the member nations. It has to see that the U.N. is genuinely representative in word and deed. It should have result oriented, time-bound policies and programmes with full backing of its entire following. Moreover, cold war may again begin soon, and China may emerge as the other bipolar power.

Has the Non-Aligned movement lost its relevance in the present day unipolar world, when cold war is over the Soviet Union has disintegrated? Should NAM be now wound up? These questions of a doubting Thomas can be effectively answered by asking some counter-questions. Is NATO now relevant when cold war is over and there is no scenario of two super powers opposing each other? Was NAM simply a reaction and response to cold war and rivalry between two super powers? Do their peace and security prevail and are nations free to follow their own independent decisions? Has the U.N. Security Council been restructured to make it a democratic organization? Are its five Permanent Members willing to give up their veto? What about the sinister re-emergence of the new avatar of imperialism in the shape of economic and industrial apartheid, protectionism, restrictive trade practices, new labour laws etc? These are some of the significant questions and in their answer lay the answer of the relevance of NAM.

NAM came into being in September 1961 with its first summit at Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Pt. Nehru was one of its three founding fathers. The two others were President Nasser of Egypt and president Tito of Yugoslavia. In the first NAM summit 25 nations participated. Its aims and objectives were defined in the Bandung, (Indonesia) Declaration of 1955 and reiterated in the Brioni, (Yugoslavia) Declaration of 1956. Based on the principles of Panch Sheel, its basic objectives are keeping away from power blocs, close and friendly relations with all means, discussions on world issues and problems in the forum, collaboration, cooperation and exchange of views in matters of mutual interest etc.

With the emancipation and independence of more Asian, African and Latin-America nations, NAM grew in size, numbers as well as in its acceptance, with the passage of time. Now it has 113 members, besides about 35 observers and guests who include Germany, Canada, Australia, China, Russia and Italy. Now, it is not looked down upon and pooh-poohed even by the U.S., as she did in its formative years. But sheer numbers are not enough. If numbers are its strength, they are also its weakness. They make NAM unwidely, uncohesive, unassertive and somewhat a divided house. Because of its such large size, diversity and lack of perseverance and unity of purpose, it has done nothing significant in relation to its basic objectives and thrust of world peace, disarmament, non-discrimination, equality of status, development, independence of judgement and freedom. NAM failed to prevent Iran-Iraq war. What has had been happening in Afghanistan, Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, Somalia, the Middle East etc. is a sad commentary on its effectiveness and relevance as a forum and commentary on its effectiveness and relevance as a forum and organization representing the Third World countries comprising the majority of the world's population.

In many of the NAM countries there prevail appalling poverty, malnutrition, hunger, starvation, illiteracy, fundamentalism and terrorism. According to an estimate about a billion people of these countries struggle to subsist on less than \$1 a day; 2 hundred million children die each year from poverty related causes. They depend on dole and help of the West for their convenient tools to prevent NAM as an effective pressure group in the U.N. and outside on many vital issues affecting the interests of the member-nations. Many of its member-nations are not democracies; they do not have representative governments. These are some of the basic problems which undermine its strength and curtail its leverages.

It is high time that NAM gets its acts together, has a well-organised and professionally rim secretariat to coordinate its programmes, policies and priorities. There is a need for introspection and self-reform before it can effectively undertake to reform the world and cure its ills. It should revitalize itself by mobilizing full and enthusiastic support of its members-nations who represent millions and millions of the Third World Population. It has a majority on its side. No other forum or organisation has this advantage except the U.N. The developing and under-developed nations represented by NAM have had been on the receiving ends in matters of social justice, economic development, environmental protection, trade practices, etc. NAM should re-assess its strength, reorganize its activities, resist the economic apartheid, charter a new course and address the unfinished agenda covering disarmament, re-structuring

of the U.N., particularly the Security Council, South-South cooperation, North-South dialogue, and human rights. It should put up a meaningful common front against big-brother attitude and dictation by the G-7 nations. NAM should assert its rights resist any encroachment on the interests of its member-states by the developed countries. It can avoid being reduced to a "cold war relic" by working in unison instead of pursuing separate and individual agendas by member countries. Notwithstanding independence of judgement, views and identity of its constituent countries, NAM can be a very effective instrument of resurgence, growth, development, disarmament, peace and mutual benefit in the now radically changed realities of the unipolar world. It should not be under any pressure from industrialized big powers on such vital issues as the urgency of elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner, removal of discriminatory labour laws and standard social clauses, environmental conditions, etc.

No doubt, now the world is not divided into two clear-cut power blocs, the cold war has ended and ground realities have radically changed and yet the continued relevance of NAM is beyond doubt as a pressure group against the interests of its member-nations, as a forum for the like-minded nations and as an organisation against any kind of discrimination by wealthy and advanced countries. In the absence of rival power blocs, it cannot be considered to have lost its relevance and purposefulness.

NAM's constituents should hold sincerity and indepth consultations among themselves; reform its strategy, redefine its goals, develop its cutting edge and use aggressively its bargaining power. It should revise its agenda to establish strong trade links and ties among members-nations, and unitedly fight against commercial encroachment of the western countries. It should see that the U.N. Security council is restructured and expanded to give NAM nations adequate representation as early as possible. It would certainly change the way the world is being governed by the few powerful countries. NAM should also see that the rich countries fulfill their promises made at Rio conference in regard to the help and compensation to be given to developing countries in matters of pollution control, environment protection and economic growth.

The U.S. has recently developed very dangerous nuclear weapons called "nuclear freefalls bombs" which are more powerful than the earthquake bombs used in the last Gulf War against Iraq. These earthquake bombs could reach the enemy's suspected underground nuclear launchers, reactors and stockpile of chemical weapons etc. This new development makes the NPT, CTBT and MTCR a mockery. In this changed unipolar world scenario, with these new and

dangerous developments, NAM's role and relevance becomes all the more important and imperative. NAM may have only a few friends but certainly it has many foes and evil forces to contend with. NAM countries can no more afford to go their own way separately in their own interest and in the interest of the organisation they belong to. The destruction and death, is blatantly against NAM's cherished principle of peace and disarmament and should provide it a new incentive and inspiration in redefining its goals and role.

Initially, NAM was founded, shaped, inspired and guided by such stalwarts, visionaries and luminaries as Jawaharlal Nehru, Josip Broz Tito and Gamel Abdel Nasser. In keeping clear off the nations of the two rival power blocs, these leaders were helped by Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus, U. Nu of Burma, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nkrumah of Ghana, Emperor Haile Sallasié of Ethiopia and King Mahendra of Nepal. It has celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1986 at Harare.

Time has come when NAM should reawake itself to its duties, responsibilities and readjust to the reality that now U.S.A. is the only super power. It must reflect the concerns, interests and aspirations of the Third world and not confine itself only to holding summits, meetings, conferences, lectures, discussions and exchange of views. The member-countries should take bold, positive, united resolute and hard decisions and the world issues. NAM should no more allow the rich nations breathe hard on the neck of developing countries on the pretext of labour standards, improved human rights, etc. It must resist the restrictive trade practices of these affluent countries.

India, as one of the founding fathers of NAM, can take initiative and spearhead to non-aligned movement in cooperation with likeminded countries, in bringing the member countries closer to one another in implementing developmental projects and in getting NAM its legitimate status and dignity in the community of world-countries. Inaugurating the 12th NAM Ministerial Conference recently held in New Delhi, (April, 1997), the then Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda said that globalization was generally accepted as the direction of the future, but it "cannot be equated with the interests of only the powerful economies and corporations. It must be accompanied by the empowerment of all economies". In regard to the nuclear disarmament he said, "NAM must continue to exert its full moral pressure and generate public opinion towards arriving at a nuclear weapons convention as agreed upon in the last summit.

Addressing the conference the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said that he was trying to make the world body “more responsive to the needs of its membership and more able to tackle the real issues of the world today”. South African President Nelson Mandela has identical views on the expansion of the U.N. Security Council and revitalising of the Non-Aligned Movement. During his recent visit to Delhi (April, 1997) he spoke critically about “a few countries dictating to the world by exercising veto power.” NAM can look forward to new dimensions and meanings under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the great hero who waged a long and successful struggle against colonial rule and apartheid. He can hopefully lead the developing half of the world, comprising NAM countries to wage another struggle against vested interests so as to have meaningful interaction on equal terms with the remaining super power and its allies.

The argument that in the present unipolar situation when there is only one super power, the NAM has lost its relevance is not valid. Moreover, the surmise that another cold war is in making and soon again there would be bipolarity in the world politics is not far from truth. The guess is that this time it would be West versus China. China is being seen as economic, political and military threat by the West. Political pundits and analysts are sure that China is shaping up like a super power and the U.S. has already started its campaign against it in many fields such as human rights and intellectual property rights. Come what may, NAM has to play a significant role in the years to come.