
Chapter 9

Peace

❖ Peace– Meaning

- Peace is often defined as the absence of war; however, this definition is misleading.
- Social institutions and practices that reinforce entrenched inequalities of caste, class and gender can also cause injury in subtle and invisible ways.
- Structural violence of this kind may produce large-scale detrimental consequences.

❖ Types of Structural Violence

- The traditional caste system is a kind of structural violence that treated certain groups of people as untouchable.
- Patriarchy entails a form of social organisation that results in the systematic subordination of women.
- Colonialism in the sense of prolonged and direct subjugation of people to an alien rule is now a rare phenomenon.
- Racism and communalism involve the stigmatisation and oppression of an entire racial group or community.
- The psychological and tangible harm suffered by the victims of violence often creates grievances that persist over generations leading to a cycle of violence and retribution.
- Thus, a just and lasting peace can be attained only by articulating and removing the latent grievances and causes of conflict through a process of dialogue.

❖ Peace and Violence

- The elimination of structural violence necessitates the creation of a just and democratic society.

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- Peace is **not** an end-state but a process involving an active pursuit of moral and material resources needed to establish human welfare in the broadest sense of the term.
 - It has also often been asserted that violence can sometimes be a necessary prelude in bringing about peace.
 - It may be argued that tyrants and oppressors can be prevented from continuing to harm the populace only by being forcibly removed.
 - It is for this reason that pacifists, who consider peace to be a supreme value, take a moral stand against the use of violence even for attaining just ends, as it leads to perpetuation of violence.
 - Civil disobedience is a major mode of such struggle and it has been successfully used to make a dent in structures of oppression.

❖ **Peace and the State**

- It is often argued that the division of world into separate sovereign states is an impediment in pursuit of peace.
- State sees itself as an independent and supreme entity and tends to protect its own perceived self-interest.
- The state should be made more accountable for maintenance of peace through meaningful democratisation via an effective system of civil liberties.

❖ **Approaches to Pursue Peace**

- Different strategies have been used for the pursuit and maintenance of peace.
- The first approach accords centrality to states and respects their sovereignty and treats competition among them as a fact of life. Its main concern is with the proper management of this competition, and with the containment of possible conflict through inter-state arrangements like 'balance of power'.
- The second approach too grants the deep-rooted nature of inter-state rivalry. However, it stresses the positive presence and possibilities of interdependence.
- The third approach considers the state system to be a passing phase of human history. It envisages the emergence of a supra-national order and sees the fostering of a global community as the **surest** guarantee of peace.

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- The United Nations is said to embody elements of all the three approaches.
 - The Security Council, which gives permanent membership and veto power to five dominant states, reflects the prevalent international hierarchy.

❖ **Contemporary Challenges**

- The dominant states have asserted their sovereignty and sought to shape regional power structures and international system itself in keeping with their own perceptions and priorities.
- The rise of terrorism is partly a response of the self-serving and high-handed conduct of the aggressive states.
- Terrorists currently pose a great threat to peace through an adroit and ruthless use of modern weapons and advanced technology.
- The global community has failed to curb the rapacity of the domineering powers and the guerrilla tactics of the terrorists.
- It has also often served as a mute spectator of genocide.
- The contemporary era has witnessed the rise of numerous popular initiatives aimed at fostering peace.
- These are often collectively described as the peace movement.
- The movement has also created a body of knowledge called Peace Studies and effectively used new channels of communication such as the internet.
- Thus, the means to acquire peace are as important as the objective of peace itself.