

Physical Threats

We have reviewed the threats to humanity in its abstract form. But abstract form is important only if its physical form is intact. The threat to physical form from some natural calamities beyond our control have no use to be included in this discussion. It is not deniable that endeavors at scientific level have to be continued as we will gain ability to survive most of the natural disasters only through developing scientific methods to face them. But that aspect is not in the scope of our discussion and the domain of discussion is confined to the self inflicted threats, which have a potential to destroy us much before the nature can do so. Man made threats are many, like pollution, global warming, depleting natural resources, atomic arms, religious terrorism and many more. But these are basically the parts of two major threats and can be shooed away if the two are tackled properly. These two are 'lack of world order' and 'population explosion'. In fact the threat of population explosion is also a part of lack of world order.

We hear about the term world government and feel the need of it. But the diversity of views amongst the sovereign nations has not let us form one with effective control over the world affairs. We are having UNO, security council and various other institutions to look into the matters of global concern. But their limited authority is much below the required level. There is an urgent need of true world government; the government capable of controlling the affairs of the world in democratic but effective way. The present systems of governance make us nationalists. We are ardent followers of our national interest, but behave a bit casually on global issues, especially the ones conflicting our national interests. Watching of national interests is not bad in itself but ignoring global issues of immense importance due to unbalanced cost sharing or similar

reasons put breaks on a much needed action. Most of the world conferences to discuss issues of global interest end up in blame game for accusing the others for causing the problem and expecting them to shoulder the major responsibility for rectifying it. National interests block the road to any consensus and sovereignty of individual nations make it difficult to arrive at a solution. And the pace of damage we are causing to the globe is alarming, demanding an immediate action.

Threat to human survival in the absence of a centralized global authority are many. We are sitting on a huge heap of atomic arms with potential of wiping out humanity from this planet for ever even if only ten percent of it is ignited in a barren corner of the earth. Any conflict in atomic powers seems a potential threat to whole of the planet. The pace at which the technology is advancing may make it easy for even the minor nations to possess such arms. How long shall we be able to keep restraint in using them, is an important question. What if the technology or the arms reach to the terrorist groups? What can be done if a nation passes these arms to such groups deliberately? This is an evident threat. But many threats are such that they do not attract attention of the general public, though they are growing slowly but steadily to become big enough to swallow the planet. Global warming, our depleting resources, air and water pollution, decreasing green cover on the earth are a few examples. But major threat at the time is population. We are already 7 billion here and expecting to reach 14 billion within a few decades. It has become difficult to feed the present mouths properly despite a significant increase in agro-yields by putting pressure on the land. But over utilizing of land, coupled with dependence on fertilizers and insecticides, has contaminated the fertile land and underground water. The land is already under acute pressure, unable to withstand more. In many areas the yield is decreasing despite maintaining the same level of fertilizers and pesticides. How shall we be able to feed additional population, will

be an important question. Will the globe withstand the additional pressure of such a great population? Will the soil be able to absorb the additional doses of fertilizers and pesticides? Can we develop a technology for higher yields without any health hazards? The additional population will need additional milk and meat for which more animals will be needed. And these additional animals will put additional pressure on already insufficient land.

The problem of population will not be limited to just the food problem only. The entire population will need other amenities as well. They will need more houses, more roads and more factories, thus leading to additional pressure on land. They will exert a huge pressure on already depleting resources. Air and water pollution, which is already unbearable, is likely to be out of control, leading to complete break down and further warming of the globe. Our search for ores and minerals will be intensified further resulting in further deep holes in the breast of mother earth, thus providing the molten lava an easy way out. Pressure on oceans for food will be immense leading to damage to ecology and give further boost to global warming. The global warming will melt the ice on the poles and the huge stock of methane gas stored under it will be released to air, further increasing the pace of warming. The melting of ice will result in increase of water level of all the oceans by about 40 feet, leading to immersing of coasts and decreasing of land. Global warming will affect agro-yields, resulting in food crisis leading to clashes, conflicts and chaos in the society. The ultra-violet rays of the sun, which are blocked by the ozone layer, will enter the atmosphere and play havoc with health of people, leading to further unrest and chaos.

It is general perception that our planet is overpopulated, which is, no doubt, true. But the matter for more concern is the pattern in which the population is scattered. The countries with lower density and good resources are not much bothered, because they are not feeling the pressure, although they are bound to be affected in the

long run. And the countries with high density are not having enough means for the control. The resources available to a country due to its geographical positioning may appear to be the sole ownership of that country. But that is only an illusion. In reality the resources are used by the other countries as well. The best example is the oil resources of the Middle East. Are they not consumed by the whole planet? And as long as the consumption of the resources remains in excess than their natural formation, they are bound to deplete and exhaust. The need for population control is, therefore, universal and should not be restricted to some over populated countries. We have to work out a system for population control, not before it is too late but immediately as it is already too late. The concept of world government may be handy in dealing this problem, but that is a distant dream and the problem is so vast to afford waiting for a world government.

The factors responsible for continued increase in population can broadly be identified in natural, psychological and social behaviour of man. Desire for owning a child may be out of natural love for children. Or, sometimes, the birth of a child may be just casual. Such natural childbirth suited the primitive man and is best suited to the animals now, though is still prevalent in some people, especially the ones below poverty line, in third world countries like India. But when we have attained a mental level to understand that such unplanned childbirth does not augment social standing of the family, society or of the nation, we need to feel the responsibility for planned family, so that the child born could be raised to become a national asset, rather than a social liability. Psychologically, the desire for the child arises out of fright of death. Every one is to die some day, and all know the fact. Our religious and social structures tend to exploit this fright for their benefits, deliberately or otherwise, by inflicting the feeling to live after death through their children, especially the sons. Though no one is clear what happens to a person after death, yet the so called religious scholars

paint such a picture of the other world that most of people, including the educated ones, continue believing them, which may be due to the religious belief cemented in their psyche at an early age. The basis for this belief may be due to our desire to live for ever, though people do not take this belief as absolutely free from all doubts. But they keep fearing because of the thinking that what if the other world theory is true. This doubt is responsible for our desire that, at least, our name be remembered after our death. And birth of a child is considered as the best and the easiest way for this. Social factors play a bigger role for continuation of this problem in developing countries, where there is no support for the people in their old ages. The child, nay the son, is considered as the only hope in the old age. But how far this hope is to be sincere is as uncertain as the future itself is. But even if the hope is materialized in to reality in some cases, has the parenthood gone so selfish to seek favors for bringing up our children? All other creatures lend support to their little ones without expecting any return of favors. We need children for our support in old age and still we are proud to be humans!

It is general feeling that these psychological and social barriers can be crossed through education, I mean, modern scientific education. The conception, no doubt, is not untrue, but its implementation certainly is not free from problems. And till we achieve the target of perfect education, universally, which, I am afraid, will remain ever doubtful, the damage we would have done to this globe by then would lead us to the point of no return. Some immediate measures are, therefore, necessary. The countries where there is no provision for social security need to develop a system to provide such security, at least to the people having no offspring. The countries having such schemes in operation need to offer special additional benefits for such people. The desire for a son, needed either for family lineage or for support in old age, sometimes leads to excessive birth of girl children. Our religion and customs give such

an importance to sons that daughters are not considered as part of lineage. The problems of dowry and other unwanted expenses required for bringing up the daughter make her a liability. And to get rid of this liability we indulge in unethical pre-natal tests and killing of the girl child in the womb. The need is not just to control and plan the childbirth, but also to change the mindset of differentiating between the sons and daughters. This problem can be tackled only if the daughter is given the same status as enjoyed by the sons, including their right to be the part of lineage of the family. And that is possible only with extra care for quality education based on morality and science with courage to break the religious enigmas attached to our psyche.

For better pursuit of the goal of single child norm, which is necessary for the overpopulated countries like India, the child may be allowed liberty to use the name of father or mother or both. Similarly it should be free will of the child to support the parents, parents-in-laws or both. The governments should come up with legal regulations for such framework, but well augmented with good education policy. The persons having regard to the set norms of family planning need to be rewarded with proper incentives; and those violating them need be denied these provisions. Benefits like cheap supply of ration to the people below poverty line, reservations to the poor for jobs in public offices, lower fees and taxes, lower rate of interest on loans or additional interest on savings and many other similar benefits should have direct bearing on the family planning behavior of the person. The persons having no children should be given old age pension and the people with children above a declared limit should be barred from such pension. I would also prefer additional weightage to children of planned families in lucrative public services. This sounds unethical with the logic that why the children should be punished for no fault at their end. Then on what ground we punish the poor children of the so called upper castes when we snatch their jobs and give to the rich and affluent

‘dalits’? What is the fault of children of poor people who have to spend their childhood in penury? If people are aware that their action of overcrowding the planet would result against the interests of their children, leading to their wrath against them, with the fear of no old age benefits for themselves, will make them tread a cautious path. And, since the problem is universal, its effects also being universal, the endeavors for its check also need to be universal. Overpopulated and developing countries need more funds than their capacity. The developed countries need to create such funds and UNO need expand its Funds for Population Activities. UNFPA should come up with positive active support for population control programs of the overpopulated but underdeveloped or developing countries.

As I have already submitted, these suggestions are not exhaustive. Many more solutions can be worked out. The suggested solutions may also be modified for better implementation. But there certainly is the need for action, an early action. And with so many wise men at the helm of the affairs, I am sure, the action would not be far away. But that will not be a lasting solution. I feel this problem can be tackled more effectively if the whole world is under one governance. The present system of federal governance can be extended to form a world government in which the elected members of the present day countries can be authorized to send their representatives for general house and the cabinet is elected by the house members. Some rules for representation of certain areas for key positions may also be worked out in the constitution, which can be adopted after extensive research. The idea sounds sheer absurdity at this stage. But if we imagine the benefits it may contain, then there is no reason why a wave can't be created in its favour.

All of us know the negative effects of separate nations behaving as per their sweet will. Even if there are no conflicts or wars, the costs of maintaining the huge armies by the separated nations are such

that we are to burden our people with taxes cutting their earning by 40 – 50 percent. In the event of war the costs are further escalated. How fine the world would look when there would be no need for such armies! The multiplier effect of this expenditure used in development and social security needs will boost the economies of the world to an astonishing level. The present countries can work as a state in a federal structure with responsibility of maintaining law and order in that state. The centralized governing body can keep its own centralized police force, like the CTPF in India, to be used in emergency in a state or as a helping unit to locate proclaimed offenders. How fine the world would look when we shall be having only one unique identity number and free to travel anywhere in the world without visa problems. If implemented, which is bound to happen sooner or later, as per the model described above or in some other way, the present era would be considered as the most dark age on the earth; more primitive than the stone age when there were no national boundaries. For some of us this freedom of movement may sound like an alarm bell, like an attack by the aliens. But, believe me, the huge expenses on national security when used in development work will achieve prosperity and the need to leave home will be minimum, except for pleasure tourism, for which we always remain ready even now. If still it is felt that some cities might face overcrowding, then domicile rules, as prevailing in many states in India, can be enacted and used for checking it.

The problems of population control, spreading of literacy, checking of irrationality, education and terrorism can be tackled more effectively if the globe becomes one nation. But the problem will be there for its becoming a reality. Our differences of opinion and vested interests of the heads of dictatorial regimes will never let it happen. The pollution of minds through religious fanatics by these selfish people will never let their minds to see the light. We have to change our mindset and stop taking the breaking of other countries

as beneficial to us. Our preferences should be to encourage joining similar nations to form a bigger country in stead of breaking the bigger ones. We can, initially, convert this idea of single nation on earth in to a partial reality, i.e. by grouping some likeminded governments pooling to become one government. The cost of their security will still be far less than the present one. And watching the benefits being reaped by these groups may induce the people of closed groups to force their regimes to join the mainstream, except, perhaps, the fanatically polluted societies. But they will also join the stream later if not sooner. The ideas given here are not the exhaustive ones or foolproof. The need is not to implement in totality, but to take a step forward; not to tackle all the issues together, but to tackle them one by one; not to ridicule this concept away as impractical, but to strive for searching more effective ways to make the humanity prosper and survive.