

Third Generation of Rights: Lament of the Contemporary Society

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Right to peace, development and environment belong to the category of solidarity/collective rights or the third generation of rights. It is universally recognized that people of the earth have a sacred right to peace the preservation of the right of the people to peace and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligations of each state.²

The greatest resource for building a culture of peace are the people themselves, for it is through them that peaceful relationships and structures are created. The Philippines and the whole world as well have many problems and challenges that arise from many forms of violence. Our young people in particular need new perspective, skills, value orientation that will enable them to build relationships and structures that lead to positive change and human well-being. A culture of peace must replace the current culture of violence if we and our common home, planet Earth, are to survive.

A new way of thinking about peace is so important today. The power of our own understanding and views of peace both as a condition and as a value cannot be underestimated. It is because our ideas shape our feelings and our actions, as well as how we live and how we relate with others. Thus, there is a need for a change in thinking, about concepts and values, as a necessary first step to solve our many problems today.

Early secular writings on the subject of peace indicate that peace was defined as merely the absence of war or direct violence. This negative formulation was first given by Hugo Grotius in 1625 (Dobrosielski, 1987). The simplest and most widespread understanding of peace was that of absence of death and destruction as a result of war and physical/direct violence.

However, an alternative view started to emerge, beginning with the late 1960's. Attention started to shift from direct to indirect or structural violence, i.e., ways in which people suffer from violence built into a society via its social, political and economic systems (Hofstede, 1997). It was realized that it was not only war and direct violence that caused death and disfigurement. Structural violence also led to death and suffering because of the conditions that resulted from it: extreme poverty, starvation, avoidable diseases, discrimination against minority groups and denial of human rights. It was further that a world marked by said conditions is a world devoid of peace and human security; it breeds anger and generates tension leading to armed conflict and war. In this connection, Johan Galtung, a renowned peace theorist and researcher, argues that

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² Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, 1984

structural violence occurs when the wealth of affluent nations, groups or individuals is based on the labor and the essential resources drawn from nations, groups and individuals who, as a consequence, are required to live diminished lives of deprivation (Burbules, 2000).

Indeed, peace researchers and educators now seem satisfied to split the concept of peace in two, stating that the meaning of peace can be captured by the idea of a negative peace and the idea of positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of war or physical/direct violence, while positive peace refers to the presence of just and non-exploitative relationships, as well as human and ecological well-being, such that the root causes of conflict are diminished.

The non-exploitative relationships refer not only to relationships between humans but also to those between humans and nature. Peace with nature is considered the foundation for "positive peace" (Mische 1987). It is because the earth is ultimately the source of our survival, physical sustenance, health and wealth; it is not possible to provide for human survival if nature's capacity to renew itself is seriously impaired. It must also be remembered that human behavior is intimately related to the availability of basic resources. When a shortage of resources threatens lifestyles or life itself, rivalry for resources can lead to aggression and violent conflict.

Right to development is another example of a solidarity/collective right. Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals through their meaningful participation (Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986). Amartya Sen defines it as a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy and requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom like poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance or over activity of repressive states (Barua-Yap, 2003). Poverty embraces the spectrum of conditions where freedoms are diminished and denied.

This highly uneven distribution of wealth and resources is situation of violence known as structural violence. This violence refers to the systems, institutions and policies that meet some peoples' human needs, rights, or wants at the expense of others. Hunger and poverty are symptoms of this violence. These systems, institutions and policies are well-entrenched in a global economic international order controlled by powerful nation-states; international agencies, and transitional corporations where inequitable trade practices prevail resulting in more tragic gaps between the rich and the poor.

There is a huge number of people who live in absolute poverty while there are those who are extremely wealthy, demonstrating the great contrast and financial divide between these groups. Those who lives in absolute poverty died quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world.

There are factors that can explain this poverty and economic inequity. Historians, social scientist and peace educators among others, have offered explanations for these phenomena. The causes more frequently pointed to are war and armed conflicts which disrupt the people's livelihood and all productive activities; political systems created by local political elite that have combined with profit-motivated economic systems that reduce opportunities for the most people to earn enough to meet their needs; inequitable distribution of wealth and resources; lack of opportunities such as employment; lack of education; corruption; overconsumption; and greed.

The right to environment is seen today as an important right because of global warming, climate change, the damaging effects of environmental pollution on human beings and the degradation of the world's environment that includes land, water and air. But the global recognition that human rights and environmental protection are connected and that man has a fundamental right to an environment that permits a life of dignity and well-being became explicit only in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference. This conference is considered an important starting point in developing environmental law at the global and nature levels. Stockholm Declaration linked environmental protection and human rights by stating that "man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations."³ Some places are blessed with more abundant resources while others have to contend with lands that cannot yield crops. Over-utilization of resources. Coral reefs have been destroyed, forests have been over logged, and agriculture lands have lots much topsoil due to over-application of pesticides by the previous generations causing reduced yields.

Upholding human dignity is at the center of the values system that we associate with social peace. Human dignity is the fundamental innate worth of a human being, a principle that is now universally accepted but has not taken root in the actual practices of many governments, communities and other non-state actors. In peace education, one of the central concerns is the promotion of human dignity and well-being because of the conviction that this is foundation of peace.

UDHR indicates that there are five major types of human rights. These are civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social rights and cultural rights. Human rights are sometimes expressed as the freedom to be, to have or to do something and also sometimes expressed as the right not to be subjected to an in human condition.

The convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is also known as the International Bill of Rights for Women and is the only international treaty that comprehensively addresses women's rights. Thus, it features women's rights in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural spheres.

³ The Right to a Healthy Environment, <http://www/umn.wdu/humanrts>. Accessed on October 4, 2013 as cited by Sarmiento 2014

Discrimination against women has been a long-standing problem in many parts of the world. Many women have suffered indignities and inequalities on the basis of their sex and therefore have been hampered from the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

While we expect our rights to be respected, protected and promoted, we should also be willing to undertake the corresponding responsibilities. We cannot think only of the promotion of our own rights without thinking of rights of others. When we exercise our rights we need to take care that we do not violate or deny other people's right. However, it is also your responsibility to give your best efforts and to contribute your personal witness to respecting other people's views and ways of life that may be different from yours. Likewise, you need to treat your colleagues with respect at all times.

While the first and second generation of human rights are considered to be the manifest functions of the state in the exercise of human rights of its people, the third generation of human reflects its latent functions in which, though existing are unseen which results to a taken for granted reality.