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## UNIT 15 PEACE INITIATIVES IN INDIA

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### 15.1 INTRODUCTION

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Peace is an eternal desire of a human being. It is considered to be one of the highest values of life. The quotations like “Peace at any price”, “The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war.” “Peace is more important than all justice.” “I prefer the most unjust peace to the just war that was ever waged.” “There never was a good war or bad peace” show how precious peace has been and continues to be. The New Testament defines peace as absence of dissension, violence of war. Peace is also considered as concord, harmony, agreement between the two or more, tranquility, quiet, etc. Peace is contrary to antagonistic hostilities, violence or war. Peace is freedom from or the cessation of war. It is a state of freedom from war. The idea of peace is probably as old as humanity. But secular or political movements for peace, what we have called peace movements, are not just two hundred years old but much older; these have evolved largely in the western and northern countries. Those peace movements with religious orientation are older and have arisen in many different periods and in all parts of the globe. Before the first modern popular mass movement against war emerged in the late nineteenth century, there existed a myriad of peace sects and traditions which included peace and renunciation of war as a principle or goal. The publication of Saint-Simon’s “The Reorganization of European Society” coincided with the foundation of the peace societies. The first peace society was founded in the United States. Europe followed suit. Early peace societies were engaged in the debates over the issues like just and unjust wars, need of violence, colonialism, etc. Debates gradually arose over the subjects such

as linking peace with social issues, like the slavery, the emancipation of women, universal education and other human rights.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The meaning of Peace Initiatives;
- India's initiatives towards peace; and
- The impact of these initiatives on world peace.

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## **15.2 PEACE INITIATIVES**

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A **peace initiative** seeks to achieve ideals such as the ending of a particular war, minimize inter-human violence in a particular place or type of situation, often linked to the goal of achieving world peace. Means to achieve these ends include advocacy of pacifism, non-violent resistance, diplomacy, boycotts, supporting anti-war political candidates, creating open government and transparency tools, and national political lobbying groups to create legislation. The political cooperative is an example of an organisation that seeks to merge all peace movement organisations and green organisations which may have some diverse goals, but all of whom have the common goal of peace and humane sustainability.

### **15.2.1 India and Peace**

India, the land of ancient culture and civilisation, holds a comprehensive, extraordinary and unique place in context to peace. Thousands of years ago the message of peace conveyed by this country had a deep impact on the entire world. The main reason behind this influence is that approach towards peace that has directly or indirectly been built by contribution of knowledge obtained and deed and real experience.

India is a peace loving-nation. It achieved independence from centuries old British Colonial rule through peaceful non-violent national movement. India has a long tradition of peace and apathy towards war of any kind. Ashoka, the Great, renounced the use of weapon and abandoned the principles of war. This is one of the earliest examples of disarmament. Till the arrival of the Europeans in India, the Kings had fought wars and battles. But these battles did not affect the lives and properties of the common citizens. Pursuing the tradition of peace, India- at the very dawn of its independence- declared peace as the cornerstone of its policies. In 1954 India took the initiative to ban the nuclear tests. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru proposed at the U.N. a standstill agreement in respect of the atomic tests. He knew that the total destruction of the existing weapons was not possible; so he wanted to stop the tests so that there might not be further escalation of nuclear weapons. Many countries of the world supported the view, but the big powers hardly paid any heed to the proposal. However, the proposal set the ball of disarmament in motion and countries in the UN became vocal in support of peace and disarmament. Consequently, from early 1960s, new initiatives towards the direction of disarmament started.

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## **15.3 PEACE INITIATIVES BY INDIA**

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**15.3.1 Gandhi and Peace-** Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) has been acknowledged as

one of the greatest figures of human history. He was an indefatigable fighter for India's independence, an outstanding mass leader, social reformer, pacifist and, above all, a prophet of non-violence and truth. He lived, fought and died for the ideals of peace, non-violence and tolerance. He was the architect of the Satyagraha movement – the firm resistance against tyranny through mass civil disobedience truly founded on ahimsa (total non violence). Truth (Satya) implies Love, and firmness (Agraha) implies force. When put together this describes a force that is born of truth with love or nonviolence. His nonviolence movement, the only revolution of its kind, ultimately succeeded in the independence of India in 1947 from the British rule. Mahatma Gandhi said that *there is no way to peace and that peace is the way. Peace, as Gandhi envisaged it, is far more than the absence of war and violence. It implies a state of positive and constructive world order, where individuals, groups and nations do not dominate or exploit one another and live in cooperation and mutual aid. Peace is thus a cementing force for the society and the world. Mahatma Gandhi said that peace and truth cannot be separated. "The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness."* For Gandhi peace based on truth is stable and also promotes internal spiritual growth in man and social progress. Gandhi did not treat war and peace as isolated problems. Instead, he offered an integrated vision of peace which is based on his philosophy of life. The concern for peace in Gandhian approach leads to the realisation of the oneness of humanity and interdependent character of nations. Gandhi saw the entire humanity as one and argued for universal brotherhood. Mutual goodwill and friendship among all the peoples are necessary condition for peace.

The Gandhian approach to peace is essentially different from pacifism practised in the west. Gandhi's non-violence shares with pacifism a general rejection of violence. The distinction is that, while pacifism may take the form of opposition to violence and refraining from military service, Gandhian non-violence involves advocacy of social action for peace and justice. Too often, the western pacifism becomes passive rather than taking the form of active resistance against the evil and injustice that result into violence and warfare. Gandhi's Satyagraha is a new and aggressive form of pacifism, even as it shares the high moral ground and belief in non-violence with western pacifism.

**15.3.2 Support for United Nations-** India's concern for peace is not a negative or passive one but a positive and constructive one. Peace meant not only avoidance of war, but also reduction of tension and if possible end of war. For this, India considered United Nations as an effective and desirable agency. As such India decided to give unqualified and active support and allegiance to the United Nations. India started as a founding member of the UN, has travelled a long way since independence and has earned a formidable reputation for its versatile experience and contributions in UN activities. India's record in the UN bears out that the positions India took on all key issues had been those which helped strengthening the United Nations as a non-partisan and effective organisation free from domination by any single power or group of powers.

**15.3.3 Panchsheel-** Panchsheel was born fifty years ago in response to a world asking for a new set of principles for the conduct of international relations that would reflect the aspirations of all nations to co-exist and prosper together in peace and harmony. India is a believer in world peace. It understood the linkage between peace for development and survival of mankind. It had seen the destruction caused by the two world wars and therefore realised that for the progress of a nation a long spell of peace was needed. In

its absence, social and economic priorities relating to development tend to get pushed to the background. The production of nuclear weapons strengthened India's faith in the peaceful philosophy even more. Hence India gave utmost importance to world peace in its policy planning. India's desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighbouring nations; while signing an agreement with China, on April 28, 1954, India advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as **Panchsheel** for the conduct of bilateral relations. It includes the following:

- I. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- II. Mutual non-aggression.
- III. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- IV. Equality and mutual benefit.
- V. Peaceful co-existence.

The Panchsheel agreement enumerates best the principles of peaceful co-existence with neighbours. It is an important component of India's foreign policy.

**15.3.4 Nuclear Disarmament-** Since independence, India has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament based on principles of universality, non-discrimination and effective compliance. India has always believed that a world free of nuclear weapons would enhance global security and India's own national security. Thus India has always been advocating that the highest priority be given to nuclear disarmament as a first step towards general and complete disarmament. As early as 1948, India called for limiting the use of atomic energy for peaceful purpose only and elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments. India was the first country to call for stoppage of nuclear tests and made a formal proposal for total cessation of nuclear testing in the UN General Assembly. In 1961, India and other Non- Aligned countries tabled a resolution in the UN General Assembly which declared that the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons would be a direct violation of the UN Charter and any state using such a weapon would be acting contrary to the laws of humanity and committing a crime against mankind and civilisation. In 1964, India suggested that "all proliferation of nuclear weapons, be it horizontal or vertical, should be stopped simultaneously and altogether, so that all nuclear facilities everywhere become peaceful and problem of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons could then be contained and tackled more effectively." In December 1978, at the first special session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament, India moved a resolution which declared that the use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the UN Charter and demanded that pending nuclear disarmament, the use and threat of the use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. This resolution was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in 1978. India also proposed negotiations for an international convention that would prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. This was followed by another initiative in 1982 calling for a nuclear-free world, prohibition on the production of fissile material for weapons, and their delivery systems.

The seventh conference of NAM held in Delhi in March 1983, forcefully accentuated the danger of a nuclear war and the necessity to fight for peace. Subsequently, India has been making consistent efforts to bring nuclear arms race to a halt. At the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament, India put forward a number of serious proposals including the 1988 'Comprehensive Plan for Total Elimination of

Weapons of Mass Destruction' in a phased manner. It was a matter of great regret that the proposal put by India, along with several other countries, did not receive a positive response and instead a limited and distorted non-proliferation agenda, meant above all to perpetuate nuclear weapons, was shaped. This compelled India not only not to sign the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) but also itself go nuclear in consideration of its national security and failure of big powers to agree on complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

**15.3.5 Arms Control-** While disarmament is based on the assumption that the existence of weapons is the fundamental cause of uncertainty and conflicts, arms control approach is based on the assumption that the existence of weapons is not a cause but a consequence of inter-state conflict. Typically, arms control policies aim at negotiating limits on development, stockpiling and use of weapons. India, right from the beginning, has not only been an active supporter of arms control but has also been playing a leading role both in UN and at other fora for this cause. The table below summaries the major arms control conventions and treaties and position taken by India on that.

#### Major Multilateral Arms Control Agreements and Treaties

Agreements and Treaties	Signed	Ratified
Biological Weapons Convention	1973	1974
Chemical Weapons Convention	1993	1996
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty -Only supports the treaty in the context of general nuclear disarmament.	---	---
Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) -Has developed nuclear weapons outside the treaty.	---	---
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons -Party to all protocols.	1981	1984
Outer Space Treaty	1967	1982
Ottawa Mine Ban Convention -Employs landmines for border defense.	---	---
Antarctic Treaty	1983	1983

**15.3.6 NAM-** As an element of foreign policy, non-alignment means independent of blocs (in the Cold War context, Western and Communist blocs), peaceful coexistence, global peace, struggle against all manifestation of injustices like imperialism, colonialism, apartheid etc. The essential purpose was to maintain equidistance in Cold War rivalries and advocate principles for the promotion of world peace and cooperation. In due course of

time, NAM became the largest membership movement as also the largest peace movement in the history of humanity. In both, in its founding and later consolidation and development, India played a significant role. In fact in many ways India has been considered as a non-formal leader of the NAM.

The two essential, though inter-related, constituents of the Non-Alignment concept are the primary of national independence and active, peaceful coexistence.

1. The rejection of military alliances, refusal to be yes-men of this or that power and opposition to all forms of colonial domination and racial discrimination.
2. The second component of the Non-Alignment related to the struggle for a new structure on which to base relations amongst people and countries- relation characterised by equality, peace and cooperation than perilous confrontation.

**15.3.7 Colonialism and Neo-colonialism-** It is known that India's vision about foreign policy and world affairs had emerged as a part of its struggle for liberation from colonial rule. In that leadership saw its own movement as a part of struggle against colonial domination and the entire imperialist system of oppression and discrimination. Cause of liberation of subject people, therefore, became an important objective of India's foreign policy.

A special committee was formed by United Nations on implementation of the declaration on decolonisation was established to study, investigate and recommend action for ending colonialism. India was appointed the first chairman of the decolonisation committee. As a member of committee, India has ceaselessly struggled for ending colonialism. India also took up the decolonisation issue in trusteeship committee, the special committee on non-self governing territories. It also sponsored and supported numerous resolutions in United Nations on Decolonisation. India has raised this issue also at Non-Aligned and Commonwealth meetings. In the early years, it took up the cause of Indonesian freedom. It sought to protect the interest of the Arabs by taking a clear stand on the division of Palestine. India played a significant role in the freedom of French colonies of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. India's role in liberation of various African countries is well known.

**15.3.8 Anti-Racism-** India aimed at opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. India firmly believes that racialism is one of the sources of conflict in the world and a threat to international peace. Therefore, India at various fora has strongly formulated, defended and elaborated the ideals of freedom for all, elimination of racism and racial discrimination. India's role in struggle against racialism of various African countries, particularly the Apartheid, is well known.

**15.3.9 Human Rights-** People in general, whether living in the developed, developing or under developed world, cherish the enjoyment of rights in one form or the other. The rights are the claims of the individual recognised by the society and enforced by the state. These rights are moral, legal, political, and economic in nature and a combination of all these rights is termed as human rights which all men and women should enjoy.

In India, the concern for human dignity, opposition to exploitation and injustice and inequality has been a part of her civilisation traditions. It has had a long tradition of acceptance of contrary view points, tolerance towards others, non-violence, love and compassion, religious universalism and an emphasis on the brotherhood of all men. Colonial oppression and opposition to it and contact with the west in the modern period

brought in India a new understanding of human rights. During this period, while the social reformers led the intellectual movement and contributed to the human rights situation, the freedom movement produced great champions of human rights. The British colonial rule in India affected the common man, woman, children, labourers, workers, peasants, either directly or indirectly. The police and security forces were used as basic tools to suppress the rights of the individuals. In this context, the national movement in India incorporated in its values issues of democracy, universal franchise, freedom of the press, education, etc. It took these issues to the people and educated them about their political and economic rights. In fact, the national movement took up the battle for human rights in a variety of ways. The Indian Constitution, which was enforced in 1950, showed its full respect to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the third part of the Constitution, they have given the most elaborate description of the basic rights of the Indian citizen. The political and civil rights are made fundamental by this provision of the Constitution. This part assures the people equality and freedom. Rights in this part are judicially enforceable. The economic and social rights are also made basic to the governance of the country through provisions in Part- IV that is the Directive Principles of State Policy. Apart from Constitutional provisions and statutes, the Indian Government has taken up several institutions under different acts of Parliament to give effect to these provisions of human rights of all persons. Most important of these is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). In addition to NHRC, there are also National Commission for Women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities and Other Backward Castes. Their functions include protection and promotion of rights of these specific categories and suggest measures for their welfare so that they can exercise their rights.

**15.3.10 Environment and Peace-** The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development emphasises (UN, 1992) that “Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.” For the United Nations, environment is an important aspect of its peace-building goals:

“Safeguarding the environment is a crosscutting United Nations activity. It is a guiding principle of all our work in support of sustainable development. It is an essential component of poverty eradication and one of the foundations of peace and security”. Realising the importance of environment for peace, India actively participated in all International conferences such as Earth Summit, Montreal protocol, Kyoto Protocol etc. to save the environment. India’s international negotiation position regarding environment relies heavily on principles of historical responsibility, as enshrined in UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). This acknowledged that developed countries are responsible for most historical and concurrent greenhouse emissions, and emphasised that economic and social developments are the first and overriding priorities of the developing countries. The Indian government is already participating in global efforts through a number of programmes. For example, India’s National Auto Fuel Policy mandates cleaner fuel for vehicles. The Energy Conservation Act, 2001, outlines initiatives to improve energy efficiency. Electricity Act of 2003 encourages the use of renewable energy. Similarly, there are Biological Conservation Act, Forest Conservation Act, National Mission for Biodiesel, Water Pollution Act, Air Pollution Act etc. to protect our environment. We have seen that government reacted at various levels to challenge the environmental degradation but some of the most significant responses to this challenge have come from the civil society. During the past twenty years people in various regions of India have formed nonviolent action movements to protect their environment, their livelihood, and their ways of life. These environmental movements have emerged from the

Himalayan regions of Uttar Pradesh to the tropical forests of Kerala and from Gujarat to Tripura in response to projects that threaten to dislocate people and to affect their basic human rights to land, water, and ecological stability of life-support systems.

Among the main environmental movements are Chipko Andolan and Save the Bhagirathi and Stop Tehri project committee in Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand regions; Save the Narmada Movement (Narmada Bachao Andolan) in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; youth organisations and tribal people in the Gandhamardan Hills whose survival is directly threatened by development of bauxite deposits; the opposition to the Baliapal and Bhogarai test range in Orissa (now Odisha), the Appiko Movement in the Western Ghats; groups opposing the Kaiga nuclear power plant in Karnataka; the campaign against the Silent Valley project; the Rural Women's Advancement Society (Gramin Mahila Shramik Unnayan Samiti), formed to reclaim waste land in Bankura district; and the opposition to the Gumti Dam in Tripura.

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## 15.4 SUMMARY

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It is clear that a concern of peace activists is the challenge of attaining peace when those that oppose it often use violence as their means of communication and empowerment. Some people refer to the global loose affiliation of activists and political interests as having a shared purpose and this constituting a single movement, "The Peace Movement", an all encompassing "Anti-War Movement". The two are often indistinguishable and constitutes a loose, responsive and event-driven collaboration between groups with motivations as diverse as humanism, environmentalism, anti-racism, decentralisation to say a few. A large number of peace concepts, proposals and plans have been put forward so far for the realisation of the everlasting peace all over the world.

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## 15.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. What do you understand by peace?
2. What is the meaning of peace initiatives?
3. Analyse various peace initiatives taken by India to promote peace.
4. Do you think that more peace initiatives should be taken by the countries?

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## SUGGESTED READINGS

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