

“Towards a World Government”

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I deem it a privilege and an honour to be invited to deliver the Keynote address of the 138th Celebration of Kolkata Port Trust. Kolkata Port Trust is renowned almost throughout the world, not only for its immense size and high operational efficiency but also for promoting social sensitivity and intellectual thinking, among its fellow members. I am very glad to note that it is paying very special attention to the children of the lower staff of the organization.

The topic that I have chosen for today’s lecture, may seem to some of you as transcendental and utopian, but I hope to convince you with a few brief arguments that world Government is not only empirically necessary in the reality of contemporary international relations, but that it is the only way for achieving world peace, human development and welfare.

In the historical perspective, we have to note that there was no world order or international relations in the medieval ages. The first global dimension to foreign policy was opened up by the French Revolution when the architects of the revolution declared that its objective was to establish ‘liberty, fraternity and equality’ all over the world. Of course, it ended

in failure and after the Napoleonic invasions in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, the concert of Europe was established. It was in many ways, a reactionary historical development because its main purpose was to restore the monarchies of Europe and to destroy all working class and democratic movements in Europe and elsewhere. However, there was one contribution that the concert of Europe made to the development of world order. It established a system of balance of power. Although the international system was imperialistic at that point of time, it, however, maintained a sort of stability for about a hundred years in the international systems, through the strategy of balance of power and through conference diplomacy. It was an oligarchic international system but, nevertheless, there was considerable conference diplomacy and, to some extent, it led to the growth of emergence of international organisations like the Universal Postal Union, the International Telegraph Union, the International Red Cross, International Peace Bureau etc. Ultimately, there were the Hague Peace Conferences at the end of nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which laid the foundations of international organization, not yet in a very institutionalized and crystallized form, but in an inchoate and embryonic form.

Then, as you all know, after the First World War, the League of Nations was established, mainly through the

initiative of President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, who was disowned by the US Congress and was defeated by a single vote; and who, later on, was ridiculed for his idealism by the contemporary realists who framed the foreign policy of the United States. However, Woodrow Wilson, succeeded in making the charter, the covenant of the League of Nations, a part of the Treaty of Versailles. So the League of Nations came into existence. It didn't succeed, mainly because the United States did not participate in it, the erstwhile Soviet Union was not allowed to participate in it for a long time, and then it was briefly allowed in the 30's, only to be expelled later by the League.

So the League of Nations failed, as we know, on account of its inability to punish deviant or recalcitrant behaviour in international relations in violation of international law. It failed to prevent the invasion of Abyssinia, or the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, or bringing about disarmament and, in many other ways, it collapsed under its own weight, because, it remained, primarily, an intra-European affair. And since the powers were, more or less, equally balanced, it did not succeed in maintaining international order and world peace. In the inter-war period, the League failed, the disarmament failed, and all attempts to ensure collective security failed and therefore this led to the Second World War. And after the Second World War, as you all know, the UN

came into existence. It was established on 24th October, 1945, the day, incidentally, is also my date of birth and therefore it was appropriate for me, perhaps, to speak on UN and its future .

We know that UN has not succeeded in every way that we can think of. But at least, for better rather than for worse, it has succeeded in maintaining itself for a longer period than the League of Nations. I will discuss it in a moment about how UN was formed and so forth. But we know today that in spite of the existence of the UN and despite the latter being a 'union of nations' , most of the global problems remain unresolved. And, we are today in a midst of multiple crises. I shall briefly touch upon each of these global problems, which face us today.

We all talk about global democracy; especially the US and West European Governments claim to have geared their foreign policies to the task of establishing democracy and changing regimes of such countries, which according to their perception, are not of democratic nature. This again, is a sort of reappearance of the zeal of the French revolution of changing Governments on the basis of the principle of 'Liberty, equality and fraternity'. And although, the states which claim to be democratic today, have used their democratic ideal in foreign policy in a rather selective manner, backing totally authoritarian and dictatorial regimes

throughout the history of their foreign policy in many countries, and have supported democratic governments very rarely (not even in the case of India – their appreciation of India is a very recent phenomenon – in earlier times, there was always a tilt against India and in favour of democratic, militaristic regimes elsewhere). Despite this talk of global democracy as an ideal foreign policy, these so-called democratic and advanced states do not show any inclination to establish global democracy in any form, whatsoever. On the other hand, they have stoutly resisted all attempts at democratizing the UN or the international systems. They have been strident advocates of an oligarchic international order, which they zealously support and maintain. In theory, it is said that all human beings should be assigned equal weightages in a democratic set up – but in practice they claim that those who are powerful and economically advanced and wealthy, have the right to control the international relations in the world order. They do not count more than two thirds of the under-developed economies of the third world, as equal participants in the international system.

A few years back, I was invited to a conference in the United States on the commemoration of their own independence. And I told them that you believe in your country and you have struggled to establish this ideal that black or white, rich or poor, has but one vote and in law, and

in theory, they are equal before the State. If that is so and if you are striving to establish this ideal in your national life, then why is it that in international relations, you do not advocate the same principle and you do not try to realize in practice the same ideal of equality among nations ? Why should you believe that those who have greater wealth and more muscle power should dominate the international systems ? Is it the basic principle of democracy that those who have greater muscle power and wealth should control the world political system ? If that is not so, why is there no international democracy and why are you opposing any democratization of UN Charter, every time a proposal is made for that purpose ? Initially, the famous professors and scholars assembled there, were shocked and later on, they congratulated each other, almost in a self-righteous zest that the idea did not occur to them earlier !

This is the reality; while at one hand they talk about global democracy, they even attack and destroy states like Iraq for changing a regime which they considered to be undemocratic, which was in no way involved with the terrorist attack in the New York or perpetrated any kind of threat on the United States or, for that matter, any other country. They have destroyed that country and have kept it under imperialist occupation for years on the ground that the regime was autocratic and that they wanted the regime changed for introduction of democracy in Iraq. What about the UN and the

international system ? Why should only five nuclear states control the policies of the UN ? Why should only five nuclear weapon-powers constitute the five permanent members of the Security Council and control the global operations of the UN ? Why should not the Security Council be subordinated to the General Assembly and the latter, democratized in such a manner that all states, rich or poor, big and small, could participate equally in the democratic world order ?

Therefore, while we pay lip-service to the ideal of democracy, in reality the international system is oligarchic and autocratic. They say, there is governance without government in the international system. It is true but whose governance is it ? It is not public governance, which is democratic and just. It is only private oligarchic governance by only a few states of the world, having money and muscle power and that is not a democracy. There is thus, a basic and central contradiction between the ideal of democracy and the present structure of the international regime. Therefore, we cannot say that we have a true world order, true globalization. Economic globalization without global political democracy is bound to be totally oppressive, exploitative and unjust.

We are all today threatened by a global economic disaster. This is not an isolated incident. It is an integral element of economic globalization, which we hear about so

much. It is true that there has been a kind of globalization in the world, at least economically. It is true that there has been an exponential growth of communication technology. There has been a revolution in international communications and as a result of it, from the view of communication at least, the world has become something of a global village, in terms of a somewhat clichéd expression, which we all know. But a global village is an integrated unit. In a village, everybody looks after the welfare of the others. In a village there is face-to-face community. In today's world we have too many divisions and structures of dominance and dependency, too many systems of oppression and exploitation, to call it a global village. Mere fastness of communication does not make it a global village. A village may have a landlord, a landless serf and there may be communication between them. But that does not make that global village, a very democratic institution. Therefore, this talk of global village through the process of economic globalization, hides the reality of the great economic disparities, inequalities and injustices which permeate the entire economic systems today.

As you know, the advanced states have very high GNPs which are many times those of the third world states, but in many cases, a single Multi National Corporation(MNC) of US of A has a much bigger budget than many states of the third world. It was the Non Aligned movement (NAM), which was fighting for a new international economic order because

without a democratic restructuring of the economic order, globalization can only mean the imposition of the will of a few wealthy and powerful states on the rest of the states, constituting the great majority. The few states, which control the world system today, may be very wealthy, militarily powerful but their number is too small! And the great majority of the states in the world also constitute the overwhelming majority of the world population, although they may be poor and militarily weak. If we live in a democratic world, if we live in an economic world, which is just and equitable, then this structure has to be de-constructed and the global economic system, reconstructed on the basis of democracy and justice.

One example of this is today's global economic disaster, what some of us are still euphemistically referring to as recession. We are actually in the midst of a deep depression and there is no doubt about it, reminiscent of the depression of the 1930s and it is still rolling down the hill. We have not come to the end of it. And India will also, undoubtedly, be very badly affected by it. It has not yet been so severely affected because of greater state control, which we still have on our economy viz. over banking, insurance and other sectors. But this will not last. This has been possible on account of opposition of some of the political forces against complete deregulation which seems to be the ideology, reflective of the *neo-liberalism* adopted by the present

government. But even this will not last, because a large number of factors are going to affect us. If there is an economic disaster in the US of A or Europe, as it seems to be the case, they are, however, trying to get rid of this disaster through state intervention, state doles, 'buying' banks and insurance companies and so on , with poor peoples' money. The super rich were engaged in unbridled speculation and extension of credit, and as a result of this, they are now incurring loss. And the state is coming into the picture with peoples' money to salvage the profits of those who were the super rich MNCs. It is inherent in the structure of the economic systems – both in their own and in the global system which is being imposed by them on the rest of the world in the name of globalization.

Therefore, we find again that this is not possible through the intervention of individual states. Eventually, unless there is global co-ordination and some sort of democratic global regulation of the international economic systems, it will not be possible for any single state, not even for USA, Europe and Japan taken together, to save the world from the present and impending economic disaster. So globalization, by itself, is a hollow slogan. The reality is much more difficult, for the states, for the poor people of the world and for the structure of the international economic system.

There are many other problems, as you know - we are in the midst of reaching an international civil nuclear energy treaty with the USA. There is a problem of collective security in the nuclear age. The nuclear weapons are monopolized by a few states and in order to safeguard their monopoly, they establish the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a few other statutes which are referred to as international regimes. When you call these as regimes, the propaganda point or their Unique Selling Point(USP) is that these are democratic organizations for regulation of international affairs. However, the fact is that there is a governance but no ideal government running through these regimes. Here, again, you will notice that there are only of a few nuclear weapon states which control the system-a large number of members who do not have any nuclear energy, nor any industrial capability, nor any future possibility of ever manufacturing nuclear weapons, support it , because they were dragooned into signing it through threats, temptations, promise of rewards, etc. In reality, it was a form of bandwagoning- you have a wealthy, militarily strong super power , so you bandwagon with it, in order to safeguard your sovereignty. So, again, a few nuclear power states are controlling the entire international security arrangement and now, we have become, more or less , unwillingly or perhaps willingly but not showing it, a member of these regimes. Without formally signing the NPT, we have committed

ourselves to nuclear non-proliferation. I will not go into the details of it, for there are many arguments which may be advanced in its favour or against it.

But the point is, that there is still no global democratic regulation of international collective security. It is still a bandwagoning system - you need the support of a superpower in order to have nuclear energy, even in its civilian form and they can withdraw their support, whenever they want to and other states will not give you any nuclear fuel if that superpower asked it not to do so. The Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) is nothing but a subordinate agency of the US of A. Therefore, even in this case, you can have true collective security, not through bilateral arrangements, or superpower compulsions, or through bandwagoning, but through collective intervention by a global democratic authority or through a just and democratic world government. And, Einstein was also saying this throughout the world war and even in the post world war period, as long as he lived, very strongly and relentlessly, not only to the intellectuals but to the whole world, that there is no alternative to world peace and security and human development except through a democratic and a just world government. He was ridiculed afterwards by the advocates of the cold war, but to this day, I think, his arguments are invincible.

Now, as you know, there are a few other problems we talk about today. One of the major problems is that of climate change and the resulting chain effect in the human environment and the disaster, which may be staring at on our face, due to the melting of the polar Arctic ice-caps, the rise of the sea levels, changes in temperature and so on. And especially in the tropical countries, the danger is all the more pronounced because already, our temperatures are almost unbearable in summer, and if it goes up further, then it will be rather intolerable. And we already have numerous diseases on account of our tropical climate and its incidence will increase and human life will be threatened in the tropics, if the temperature climbs by another 2 degrees or so and it is precisely the forecast for the next fifty years or so. As you know, it is due to the industrialization that emission of Carbon-di-oxide and other noxious gases (due to the evolution of supersonic aircrafts) get trapped in the atmosphere and thus get heated (because the sun's rays come to the atmosphere in long waves and go back in short waves) leading to a rise in the earth's temperature. Because of the rise in temperature, there are climatic changes, like, rise in the levels of oceans, seas. In fact, there are many areas in the world, including Calcutta, which will drown, go under the sea level, if there is a seven feet rise in the sea level of Bay of Bengal.

Therefore, this is the international system- i.e., the carbon-di-oxide is generated mostly in the advanced industrialized nations, on account of their industrial advancement. US of A is generating and releasing more carbon-di-oxide and other noxious gases in the atmosphere than any other countries in the world but it has not signed the Kyoto Protocol, which is part of the regime that is trying to bring down the level of carbon-di-oxide emission. So again, there is a problem of disparity or problems of dependency. For those, who were responsible for global warming and the climatic change are totally avoiding their responsibility and blaming the poor countries of the Third World, which have not yet fully industrialized themselves for polluting the atmosphere and asking them to give up the use of coal and other fossil fuels and release less carbon-di-oxide in the atmosphere. And here again, you'll find that for two reasons , we need a global democratic authority- one is that there should be an equitable distribution of responsibility and 'cost of change', and the cost of transformation into new technology. Another is, emission of one country adversely affects human life in another country. It is not possible to find a national solution to the environmental problem, to climate change, to environmental degradation and all the other issues of environment that is threatening us today. This cannot be solved either unilaterally or bilaterally, because the effect is global; although the origin of the threat may be national.

Therefore, this is another reason why you need a global regulatory authority, and if this authority is democratic and just, we call it a democratic world government.

Finally, there are many other issues and I will mention the other important issue of disaster management. The tsunamis, typhoons, floods etc seem to be growing in number and these are averred by the scientists who are associated with the problems of global warming and climate change. Whatever the reason , the fact is that they are assuming alarming proportions during the last decade or so and today, we do not have a global system like a Central Fire Brigade Office or something like that, which can rush to the aid of any disaster afflicted zone. Today, you have a case where the religiously inclined, preach you not to change the social or economic state, or the history, but they ask you to practise charity, i.e. if a poor man does not have money to eat, then they ask you to give him money so that he doesn't starve, but never asks you to change the social system. So also in this case, you find that there is a global charity system. There is a flood in Bangladesh- USA sends some blankets, France sends some medicines, India sends some wheat. These are all voluntary, optional and, in most cases, very inadequate and essentially it is a form of charity for which there is no obligation.

Now, the global human system cannot develop on this basis. There have been natural disasters in the past, there will

be such in the future and you cannot tackle them through charity. It is necessary to organize the world in such a manner that there is a global regulatory authority, which like a Fire Brigade, rushes to any endangered area, and provides relief as a matter of global obligation of mankind, not as a matter of personal or states' voluntary charity. For this also, you need a global order, which is democratic and just.

And this is only the last point, which I would like to mention, but as you know, there are many other such compulsions, which necessitate a forward movement of history towards a democratic and just world order. This, of course, is not a new demand or a new proposal. For the last two or three hundred years, many scholars and thinkers of political movement have demanded the establishment of a just and democratic world government. At the end of the eighteenth century, Kant wrote several essays, one of which was referred to as, "Perpetual Peace", incidentally, one of his very famous essays, where he proposed establishment of a world government. But he realized that it would be very difficult at that time to induce the warring states of Europe to establish a world government and surrender their sovereignty. He therefore suggested, a half-way house in the form of Union of Nations, in terms of an agreement, something like the present UN, but he said that eventually, through the teleological movement of history, there will be a world government which will be the ultimate stage of human evolution. Due to the

spirit of commerce, he said, essentially that states and nations will forget their quarrels on account of the imperative necessity of global trade and commerce, because there is a mutuality of interests in that field.

Now Kant, of course could not implement what he said and the next period of history was also referred to as the period of conflict, what is sometimes called 'armed peace'. But in the inter-war period, not only many scholars and intellectuals wrote treatises, justifying the movement for a world government, but also professors at Harvard, Columbia Universities, in the UK and in the Continent and everywhere, wrote scholarly articles showing the reasons in favour of an imperative necessity of a world government. There were political movements demanding world government both in Europe and US of A. Unfortunately, at that time they did not think of the colonies of the third world, they mostly thought of the White-Christian, Euro-American democratic states of the world, as per their perception. In the late 30s and 40s, even after the end of the second world war, Einstein went on arguing in favour of a democratic world government, primarily on account of nuclear weapons, being used on Japan, (incidentally, it was the only time when nuclear weapons were used by a nuclear state against a non-nuclear state). Einstein was very much against it and as we know, historically, he was indirectly one of the architects of the atom bomb but, nevertheless, he also became one of the staunchest

protagonists of world government in the 30s and 40s. In the “Atlantic Monthly”, he penned a series of articles and gave many interviews to this effect. There are many scholars and academicians who even now, have been asking for a world government. I have also, in my own way, written a book on world government, making a strong case for it.

So, in this way, we find that it is not simply a transcendental, utopian, unrealizable, totally futuristic sort of a proposal. There is a history of human evolution, of institutionalization of international relations upto the UN, there is also a history of an intellectual and a political movement for a world government. On account of a Cold War, it did not happen. Now the Cold War has ended. In India, as you know, there has always been a profound thinking on the need for a world government. Nehru, while justifying India’s membership of the UN had incessantly talked of the need for one world order. Sri Aurobindo is probably one of the greatest intellectual philosophers, who wrote extensively on the need for a world government, primarily in his two books, viz., “Human Cycle” and “Ideal Of Human Unity”; and especially, in the latter, he argued that the empirical movement or the teleological unfolding of history will one day, inevitably lead to the establishment of a world government. He argued that the contemporary tendencies of centralization (including administrative, economic and political) in international relations indicate the ineluctable tendency towards the

establishment of a world government. He, however, said that it is possible that the humanity will learn the lesson only out of necessity and not due to idealism. He himself believed in the descent of the super mind and so on and that the super mind will lead to a new consciousness and that, of course, is a field of study where the social scientist cannot enter. But, at least he said that one day, may be out of necessity, though not out of volition or idealism, we will attain it.

The last question which I want to raise before you is that are we, as Indians or the state in India, following that path? At one time, India was leading the NAM, demanding a new international economic and political order, the reform of the UN Charter, in order to make it even more democratic; and it was basically an ideology which was between two contending ideologies. It was maintaining a distance from the superpower, especially the military alliances headed by the West. Today we find a complete reversal of that foreign policy orientation. We find that India has strategically aligned itself with the only superpower which is in existence which is militarily powerful and economically wealthy, and has been oppressing and terrorizing the rest of the world for many years. Can the leader of the NAM, form a strategic alliance with a state, which for no logical reason whatsoever, has destroyed the old civilization of Iraq and has been occupying it for the last four years or so, without any proven violation of any international law or

international delinquency on the part of Iraq? Is our democracy or global outlook, so bereft of ideas and morality that we should make such a total about-turn in our foreign policy? Moreover, we have always been demanding, along with other third world states, as the leader of the NAM, the democratization of UN, restructuring of the international economic and political system. We are opposing military alliances, we have been demanding complete nuclear disarmament. One of the reasons we didn't sign the NPT is that it is discriminatory, that the nuclear powers should disarm themselves, and that our policy is of total nuclear disarmament. And today, we are trying to become the sixth oligarch, militarily and economically, in an international system, where the five founding oligarchs govern the international system privately, without any democratic government.

When you say all this is practical necessity and that you cannot ignore the reality, I will say that I do not wish to ignore the reality. Tomorrow is founded on today's reality. It is said that 'yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery and today is a gift' and that is why it is called 'present'. I do not know about that; all I know is that today is built up on yesterday, and tomorrow is built up on today. Because today's reality is unwholesome, there is no reason why you should remain fully satisfied, wallowing in this reality which is so full of conflict

and contradiction. Today's reality has to be the basis for building tomorrow's ideal. But it is not necessary to remain engrossed in today's reality. It is not the goal of human life.

We have to consciously strive for making the tomorrow's ideal a reality.

The above is the textual transcription of the lecture delivered by Professor Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya.