The Growing Gulf Between What the World Needs and What Is Happening Must be Bridged Before It Is Too Late

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Imagine a situation in which some residents of a skyscraper notice a fire that can spread to the entire building and ring the alarm bells.

However the manager of the building instead of taking urgent steps to extinguish the fire, throws even more inflammable things into the fire so that the flames start rising and spreading much further, spreading the risk of fire to the entire building.

When the alarmed people raise questions, the manager says—this particular floor is of my rival and I must destroy this. People shout that in the process he may destroy the entire building including his own floor, but the manager continues to escalate the fire instead of extinguishing it.

Most people will say that such an absurd situation is never likely to occur.

But take a more careful look at the situation of the entire planet during the last two years or so.

This is a time when senior scientists have been warning increasingly that threats to the life-nurturing conditions of the planet due to climate change, other environmental problems and very dangerous and destructive weapons have been escalating, and yet, despite these warnings, several of the world's top leaders have gone ahead and created the conditions for several new and high-risk wars to start and escalate, so much so that the talk of the third world war and a nuclear war breaking out has been heard more during the last two years than during the last two decades.

Doesn't this appear eerily close to the analogy of a building's manager, when told about a

fire, responding by throwing inflammable materials into it? Also any analysis of the present-day world situation would reveal that the most dangerous risk-escalations are being caused recklessly with the aim of maintaining dominance of the world, maintaining the number one position, regardless of the enormous harm caused to the safety of the entire world in the process.

This in face is where we are at the moment in early 2024, with thousands of people dying in most painful ways on daily basis in dangerous wars and other man-made disasters, and in addition the possibility of all this rising further due to the world leadership being too busy in escalation of risks rather than in remedial actions.

Anyone who doubts this should merely look up the information on how fast the military-industrial complex is growing, how other high-risk and high-hazard industries are growing, how decisions jeopardizing human life are being taken for monetary gains and how a small number of persons are accumulating increasing power which they unhesitatingly exercise in ways which increase their power and wealth further but also increasingly endanger the life of this and future generations.

In the process the gulf between what the world needs and what is actually happening has been becoming wider and wider.

This must be bridged before it is too late. This must be our topmost priority.

The most important issue of our times is that the basic life-nurturing conditions of our planet are badly threatened and this threat should be checked with a sense of the utmost urgency. This threat comes from two sides—firstly, various environmental crises and secondly, weapons of mass destruction.

To check these, the most obvious first step is to minimize the possibility of war, to eliminate (or curb in various significant ways) all weapons of mass destruction and check the overall arms race as well.

Ideally, the most powerful countries including the permanent members of the UN Security Council can get together and put their collective strength into securing a no-wars future for the world.

With no international wars and the weapons race curbed, the creative energies of the world's people can be devoted to checking the environmental crisis while meeting the basic needs of all people. People display amazing creativity once the goals and tasks are set out clearly, the does and don'ts are clear and a system of encouragements and discouragements is in place too. There should be the political will to check powerful polluters, and in addition people should be motivated and educated enough to avoid luxurious, polluting lifestyles.

This would be the ideal situation, but this does not appear to be on the horizon at all just now, and with new wars breaking out the already dangerously perched world appears to be moving further and further away from the real solutions, with agencies like the United Nations looking on more or less helplessly.

The extremely unfortunate reality is of worsening wars and weapons race, increasing power

of polluting industries, bigger spread of consumerist thinking and lifestyles related to this. Environment protection is being promoted in some ways but there is more rhetoric than reality, more lip service than real change, so that the basic factors which cause environmental ruin remain in place or may even be becoming stronger in some ways.

Where do we go from here?

Of course there are still some outstanding, brilliant, very well-intentioned political leaders in various countries of the world, **but the overall record of world's political leadership in recent times, particularly in some of the most powerful countries, does not inspire confidence that they will be able to give top priority to the challenge of protecting the life-nurturing conditions of our planet.**

Increasingly, therefore, there must be greater role of people's non-violent mobilization and actions for meeting this greatest challenge of our times, and of the next generations, although of course there will be constant need for engaging with the political leadership and world organizations like the United Nations, creating conditions in which they are sometimes encouraged, sometimes compelled to take bigger decisions for protecting the planet.

This means that people's movements with understanding and deep concern for this crucial issue of protecting the life-nurturing conditions of our planet must get together in various countries, and then must get close to each other across various countries. They must create conditions for more democratic freedoms to be available to them in all parts of the world. They must work together to create a common, broad agenda of achieving the essential conditions of saving the planet and all its inhabitants in time, within a framework of justice, peace and democracy.

Even highly relevant tasks such as climate chance are sometimes hijacked to powerful interests to serve their narrow interests. This brings serious distortions, so that environmental agenda which will displace and harm poor people (while promoting and benefiting the interests of the super-rich) is promoted, something which must be resisted strongly by people.

It is therefore important to assert that the best way of tackling the survival crisis (S) is by walking on the path of justice (J), equality (E), protection of environment and bio-diversity (P) and of course peace (P). To be able to identify this path in one word, this writer has been calling this the JEPPS path. It is this combination of principles and policies which is our best hope for protecting the life-nurturing conditions of our planet while at the same time resolving and reducing several other serious problems as well.

This will not be easy. Apart from the formidable organizational challenges of creating a worldwide movement, there are the problems relating to reaching broad agreement on the basics of a common agenda. Reductionist and narrow thinking is also common in several movements, which are more concerned about rather narrowly defined aims. As against these problems and constraints, there is the strength that any movement dealing with the most relevant issues and mobilizing people sincerely and honestly on these issues acquires with the passage of time, and the fact that with the threats to life-nurturing conditions manifesting in more fierce ways, the younger generation may be more rapidly and more firmly drawn to such a worldwide movement. This movement is also likely to get increasing strength from women.

Despite several uncertainties remaining, there is no doubt that the coming together of the movements of peace, environment and biodiversity protection, justice and equality, women and youth movements, movements for child rights will be good for humanity and will help to create a better world. Even if this does not lead to spectacular success in checking and curbing life-threatening conditions, it will at least help to place the world on a safer path. Another reason for hope is that while the initial progress may be slow and cumbersome, if the efforts are sustained with continuity for a certain time, once the base has been prepared, there can also be perhaps very quick success then, even the kind of success which may appear far-fetched at present, even spectacular success.

These efforts necessarily involve a very big educational and mobilization effort at various levels. This necessarily involves trying to change prevailing human values in ways that are more in tune with the needs of a world based on protection of environment, peace, justice and equality. As a beginning in this direction, this writer has been proposing that the next decade should be observed as the decade for saving (the life-nurturing conditions of) earth, a decade when humanity learns to give this the highest priority within a framework of justice, peace and democracy. So another consideration of high value just now must be to get the UN to declare 2025-35 as the Decade for Saving the Earth, with many highly creative programs being crafted and planned around this basic theme, particularly at community level and at the level of schools, colleges and other educational institutions.

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