CASE STUDY ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

“USING TRADITIONAL COVENANT RELATIONSHIP FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NORTH EAST INDIA”

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INTRODUCTION:

We live in a world of conflicts today. The media is full of news coverage of conflicts taking place locally, regionally, nationally and globally. In many ways conflicts are destroying the very fabric of society everywhere threatening even the very existence of mankind. The world has seen more conflicts in the past 20 years than at any other time in the last century. More than 50 countries have been involved in major protracted intrastate conflicts since 1980.
KINDS OF CONFLICTS

Depending on factors causing it, conflict may broadly be classified into

- Geo-political conflicts,
- Socio-economic conflicts,
- Racial or Ethnic conflicts,
- Religious or Communal conflicts and
- Inter-personal conflicts.
Geo-Political conflicts are those conflicts which are related to the political geography of an area or people groups. Disputes over land have led to several wars and bloodshed and still remained one of the main reasons of conflicts. Most often these conflicts have historical backgrounds which continue to haunt successive governments and generations. Some examples of these conflicts are the West Bank conflicts of the Palestinians and the Jews, conflicts in Kashmir between Pakistan and India, etc.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONFLICTS

Socio-economic conflicts grow out of socio-economic differences or imbalance between various groups and may take the form of class conflicts or caste conflicts as is the case in India. Caste in India is still a predominant factor of the social fabric and continues to breed serious rivalry and antagonism in many parts of the country.
RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Based upon the idea of racial supremacy or for maintaining ethnic identity and dominance, the world has witnessed a reign of terror and horrific incidents of genocide in the name of ethnic cleansing. The gas chambers during the Hitler regime, the brutal massacre of indigenous people in many parts of the world, the oppressive rule of the apartheid era in South Africa, genocide in Rwanda as a result of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict are all grim reminders of this kind of conflict.
RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

There has been a steady rise in religious fundamentalism in the last few years. We witnessed not only inter-religious conflicts but intra-religious feuds among the various sects of the same religion. The civil war like situation in Sudan between the Muslim north and the Christian south, communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in India and even the formation of nations in the name of religion points to this kind of conflict.
INTER-PERSONAL CONFLICTS

Inter-personal conflicts affect and influence human lives more than the above mentioned conflicts because they occur at the very basic level between spouses, parents, and children, families, workers and management, among colleagues indeed in all spheres of human relationships.
IMPACT OF CONFLICTS:

HUMAN COST

About 35 million people are currently displaced as a result of conflict. In 30 countries more than 10 percent of the population has been dislocated and in 10 countries the proportion is more than 40 percent. In many cases this displacement has persisted over an entire generation or longer and will have serious long-term effects. The physical conditions of these displaced population is very pathetic. There is poverty, ill health, poor infrastructures and more sadly the loss of hope that is destroying the very human spirit.
IMPACT OF CONFLICTS:

FINANCIAL COST
Conflicts have become a major constraint on the alleviation of poverty. A recent study by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict estimated that the cost of the seven major war since 1995, not including the conflicts in Kosovo and East Timor was around US $ 199 billion. Adding the two conflicts, the total cost rises to US $230 billion. This amount of money could easily have wiped out the international debt of the owned by the world’s poor countries. All over the world more and more money is unfortunately allocated for national security and less and less amount is being allocated for human development.
RECONCILIATION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

The need for preventing and resolving conflicts, peace building and reconciling parties that have been at conflict is very critical in the midst of such a growing worldwide phenomena of conflicts. National governments, international government agencies, international and national NGOs, faith based organisations and local communities need to assess the gravity of situations caused by conflicts and accordingly make serious efforts in identifying and supporting conflict resolution initiatives.
RECONCILIATION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

It is more critical for faith based organisations to be involved in preventing conflicts and promoting conflict resolution and peace building.

Religion is a strong force for peace-building and conflict resolution.

It can provide a platform from which to tackle the causes of conflict such as social tensions, ethnicity, language and history.

Religion is a powerful agency of peace because virtually every world religion teaches the principles of peace, justice, love, humanity and co-operation.
A Christian as an individual or as corporate members of the Church do not have a choice as to whether reconciliation is important or not. To be Christian is to be involved in the ministry of reconciliation. That is what the Lord Jesus did and He entrusted the same ministry to His followers.
The ministry of reconciliation is spoken of in these terms in the Bible:

“God, who through Christ, has reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors of Christ, God making His appeal through us”. (2 Corinthians 5:18)
RECONCILIATION IS A PROCESS NOT AN EVENT

Peacemaking and reconciliation is a process. Peace is not an abstract goal but a process and it must be built-up over a long period of time. Building peace must be an organic process, growing at all levels of society.

Reconciliation cannot be dispelled in one single action. They have to be consciously worked at, with the earnest desire to reestablish former bonds and relationships.
RECONCILIATION REQUIRES NOT JUST CURATIVE MEASURES BUT PREVENTIVE ACTIONS TOO

While the process of reconciliation is initiated, it should not only address the present situation of discord but should also ensure that hostilities do not recur. Prevention of possible conflicts would defuse many conflict situation and acting upon the warning signs could mean crises are avoided.
RECONCILIATION NEEDS TO BE DEALT AT THE MACRO AS WELL AS MICRO LEVELS (1)

At the macro level the process of reconciliation could be initiated by holding peace talks, peace summit meetings, negotiations and signing of peace accords and pacts, etc.

Intervention and mediation by international bodies like the United Nations are important and do contribute towards re-establishing peace.
RECONCILIATION NEEDS TO BE DEALT AT THE MACRO AS WELL AS MICRO LEVELS (2)

However it is also important to start the process of reconciliation at the micro level, among the people, because relationships have to be rebuilt from the grass roots. The use of some of our cultural traditions and practices could be very helpful in this regard.
Reconciliation is a mutual process in which all the parties have a part to play. It cannot function if it becomes one sided initiative.

Conflict resolution at any level is possible, only when both of those in conflict are prepared to give what it takes to sort things out, discuss and dialogue with each other. Each admitting their weaknesses and mistakes.
Reconciliation has to be seen as a process where both parties lose some, in order to gain a friendly and cordial relationship. The process defeats itself when one begins to think that the other alone is going to gain from it.
Forgiving and being forgiven is the basic essence of all initiatives of peace making and reconciliation. Unless a person is capable of forgiving others and receiving forgiveness from others it is just impossible to be engaged in any peacemaking and reconciliation initiatives. Forgiveness opens doors to make reconciliation possible, whether the conflict is between individuals, families, communities or nations. Very often a single act of forgiveness can change the course of events radically.
CASE STUDY ON JOLPA/NU RELATIONSHIP AS A MICRO LEVEL MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION
CASE STUDY ON JOLPA/NU

Jol is a fascinating practice among the Kuki tribes of the Northeast India and Myanmar in which a family enter into friendship covenant with another family.
CASE STUDY ON JOLPA/NU

The tie in Jolpa/Jolnu relationship is so strong that the covenant would pass on from generation to generation unless the tie has to be canceled under unavoidable circumstances.
This act of friendship covenant or adopting each other as friends binds the two families together very strongly, supporting each another in times of need and celebrating together moments of joy and happiness
CASE STUDY ON JOLPA/NU RELATIONSHIP

This friendship is not just a casual acquaintance but a close, intimate and trusted relationship
Families who have entered into Jolpa/Jolnu relationship maintain close contact, direct access and confidential information of one another.
Usually a tribal shawl would be presented to each other as a sign and symbol of the Jolpa/Jolnu covenant.
Families who enter into Jol relationship addressed each others as Jolpa (pa for man) and Jolnu (nu for women).
CASE STUDY ON JOLPA/NU RELATIONSHIP

This Jol (friendship covenant) relationship among the Kuki tribes can be used as a model for conflict resolution.
FRIENDSHIP COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN IN THE BIBLE IS SIMILAR TO JOL RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE KUKI TRIBES

The Bible records a beautiful friendship relationship of David and Jonathan in I Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:9,42; 2 Samuel 9:1-13. I Samuel 18:3 records that Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved David as himself and a token of the covenant Jonathan presented David his robe, his tunic, his sword, his bow and his belt.
The friendship tie between Jonathan and David was so strong that even when king Saul, Jonathan’s father wanted to harm and kill David, Jonathan would save David’s life.

FRIENDSHIP COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN IN THE BIBLE IS SIMILAR TO JOL RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE KUKI TRIBES
The friendship of Jonathan and David extended even to their children. When David became the king and Jonathan had died, David searched for Jonathan’s son Mephiboseth, restored to him the land that belonged to his grand father king Saul and let him eat at the king’s table.

FRIENDSHIP COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN IN THE BIBLE IS SIMILAR TO JOL RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE KUKI TRIBES
The Jol Relationship among the Kuki tribes illustrates what Miroslav Volf described in his book "Exclusion and Embrace A Theological Exploration of Indentity, Otherness and Reconciliation "

- The power of Embrace;
- The power of accepting the Other so far an excluded entity into the inner circle of inclusion as Our Fellow.
A personal testimony of the application of Jolpa/Jolnu relationship among the Naga and Kuki Church leaders of Manipur in Northeast India and its positive impact in the society.
Map of North East

- China (Tibet)
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Bhutan
- Assam
- Meghalaya
- Manipur
- Nagaland
- Bangladesh
- Myanmar (Burma)

- West Bengal
- Itanagar
- Shillong
- Dispur
- Kohima
- Imphal
RECONCILIATION IS POSSIBLE

THANK YOU