

Catching Them Young: Gender, Terror, Environ & Issues in IR – In the Eyes of Young School Children-An Empirical Study in an Indian State

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Abstract

IR is so important in our daily life with which are intractably linked such issues as Gender, Terror, Environ, Globalization, Trans-Border Migration etc & etc ! How are the school children, who will be the leaders of tomorrow in different walks of life and shape their environment, perceive these issues? Do such issues as Iranian and North Korean Nuclearization, Global Warming, Conflict in the South China Sea, the Syrian Crisis, ISIS and Cross-Border Terrorism or Global Jihad and a host of others bother them? Do they find some linkages between domestic politics and international politics? Do they take interest in the developments, happening outside their country? How would they approach conflict resolution of some festering problems? How their leaders or other leaders have helped to shape the world through their foreign policies? What are their sources of information, their level of cognition and how is their political socialization going, i.e. are they going left or right or are they going forward? How important is IR study for them? This empirical study through structured questionnaires and supplemented by some personal interviews in the higher grade classes of Schools in an Indian State seeks to address these questions.

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Introduction:

As this research report was being worked out, the horrific news of cold blooded murder of innocent people in two Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, otherwise a peaceful nation, by a stun-gun wielding Australian citizen pumping out bullets mercilessly, that was also simultaneously videoed and net cast by the terrorist himself on social media was pouring in which would send shivers down any body's spine watching it! More than 40 people were instantly killed and many sustained severe injuries, some of whom succumbed to it later in the hospital taking the toll to more than 50. Not surprisingly the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern described the attack as one of her country's "darkest days." But significantly she said that the suspects held "extremist views" that have no place in New Zealand or anywhere else in the world. (1) However, the gory incident suggests that Terrorism by an organised group or a self-radicalized lone wolf has become a reality of life spread all over the globe.

A few weeks earlier to this incident, in one of the deadliest terror attacks in the Pulwama district of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed when a Jaish suicide bomber rammed a vehicle carrying over 100 kg of explosives into their convoy of buses. The attack also left many critically wounded some of whom succumbed to their injuries later. The Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed, which has orchestrated numerous strikes in the Kashmir Valley in the past, had claimed the responsibility for the attack. (2) The attack outraged the feelings of people in India as news media made it, from breaking news to prime-time news to virtually 24x7 news, the principal story for a few days, leading naturally to a public outcry for action against the perpetrators of such dastardly act. On February 26, 2019, in early hours, a group of Mirage 2000 Indian Air Force's Fighter jets in a, what was described as, non-military pre-emptive action, destroyed some major terrorist camps of JeM across the LoC (Line of Control) in Pakistan (Balakot).

Though Pakistan Prime Minister promised to act if proof of the complicity of Pakistani elements were given, India was tired of such promises from Pakistan side, (when you remember the Mumbai attack of 2008 or cross-border terrorism happening every now and then), but launched the pre-emptive strike in Pak territory giving rise to fear of escalation into a full scale war between the two hostile nuclear-armed neighbours. Thanks to the turn of events, an Indian Airforce pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman flying MiG21 and destroying a Pakistani F-16, but falling into Pak territory while in action to be taken into custody by the latter's armed forces, but released within two days (announcement to that effect being made at the earliest possible), that lowered the temperature between the two countries and helped de-escalation of hostilities, though India's diplomatic effort to isolate Pakistan for allegedly sheltering terror-outfits in its soil and putting pressure on it to extradite JeM leader Masood Azhar said to be the mastermind behind 26/11 (Mumbai) attack and the latest Pulwama one continues.

The world is ridden with many a hostilities and crises in the contemporary world that one experiences at present. Though the Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind of September 11, was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan in a dramatic and bloody raid by US Navy Seals on 2 May 2011, terrorism did not die down. The Al Qaeda is now perhaps been decimated but has been increasingly overshadowed by the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) (that emerged as an offshoot of Al Qaeda) in many parts of Africa and the Middle East. With regard to ISIS as one Major General Michael K. Nagata, the Special Operations Commander for the United States in the Middle East had said sometime in 2014 that figuring out the Islamic State's appeal was difficult. His statement is worth quoting: "We have not defeated the idea, we do not even understand the idea." (3)

However, it is well-known that ISIS had quickly taken control of large parts of Iraq and Syria, raising its black flag in victory and declaring the creation of a caliphate and imposing strict Islamic rule. Point to be underlined here is that war and terrorism influenced by varieties of ideologies –ethno-nationalism to religious fundamentalism/extremism- continue unabated in spite of efforts to fight it militarily or diplomatically or by a mix of hard and soft power.

Natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, tornadoes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, snowstorms, and severe thunderstorms are happening so frequently these days which are but related to climate change, something that has been the outcome of human interferences with nature for last few centuries without care for future generations.

As the World Economic Forum Report 2015 stated “The Earth’s average land temperature has warmed nearly 1°C in the past 50 years as a result of human activity, global greenhouse gas emissions have grown by nearly 80% since 1970, and atmospheric concentrations of the major greenhouse gases are at their highest level in 800,000 years.” (4)

The story of the plight of school girls being kidnapped by Bokoharam in Nigeria or Afghan Women suffering under Taliban diktat is well known. From Drug Trafficking, to proliferation of small arms, to the hunger in the third world countries, the global economic inequality, the growing armament race in certain regions, the ethnic conflicts in many parts of the world leading to large exodus and refugee crises, the very existence of nuclear weapons and the missile systems, the list is long and would affect every individual directly or indirectly.

Yet it is the individuals in some way or other who can make a difference to their lives by developing interest in and taking active part in politics. An awareness of world affairs is badly essential for everybody, but particularly for young school children who should develop a critical perspective in understanding issues which will continue impinging their lives today and tomorrow.

Research Questions:

- (1) With IR being so important today in daily life of individuals, how informed are the school children about events happening around them?
- (2) What are the views of school children regarding certain important issues such as Chinese over-reach in the South China Sea or US pressure on Iran and North Korea to denuclearize?
- (3) Are school children pessimists as the die-hard realists or they harbour optimism like Liberals in a troubled world, particularly with regard to relations with the arch rival neighbour (Pakistan)?
- (4) How do young school children perceive conflict resolution possibilities in dealing with rival countries like Pakistan?
- (5) How are the minds of young school children shaped with regard to issues of gender, terror and environment?
- (6) Do the young school children follow news regularly and what are their sources of information?

Methodology:

The paper is an empirical study of the perceptions and the political attitude of school children in an Indian State, Odisha and their cognition of issues that have bearing on the policies, domestic and international, that would ultimately affect them in near or distant future. A sample study was done during the month of March 2019 through a structured questionnaire in three schools of the twin city, Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, the first being the millennium city and the second the capital city of the state concerned.

200 Questionnaires were administered in the class room settings of three government schools in the presence of one of our investigators, a teacher of the concerned school and one or two student volunteers. The respondents belonged to Class IX in a school system that runs up to Class X. The students were explained the motto of research and were impressed upon to be free to answer questions honestly and sincerely. Respondents were asked not to write their names in the questionnaire so that their identities will not be revealed. After the Questionnaires were collected, students were asked verbally to answer a few questions regarding the survey instrument. The collected answers to the questionnaires were reviewed and after discarding some questionnaires with incomplete responses to a number of questions, 131 questionnaires were considered acceptable for data analysis. On some vital questions like the ones in the open ended part (Section-C), again a sample study was done in a relatively higher grade in a College (UG –I) and some of the characteristic answers were reproduced in the research report. Prior to constructing the questionnaire, a literature review of a limited scale was done on world affairs, past and present. Additionally, secondary sources, such as books, articles in journals, newspaper reports and internet publications were also reviewed. Thus the research paper draws on both secondary and primary sources.

Although, some researchers in this team were miles apart or even continent’s apart from each other, there was proper coordination and exchange of ideas in the formulation of questionnaire, data analysis, and preparation of the research report because of today’s system of excellent Information Technology.

Theoretical Perspective:

While our effort is to look at the burning issues of world affairs through the eyes of the school children, we cannot escape from the known theoretical approaches in the discipline and relate it to the responses we get through our empirical exercise. The two established foundational theories – Realists / Neo-Realist and Liberal-Neo-Liberal strands hold the ‘State’ to be the primary and principal actor in International Relation (IR) that operates in an anarchical system without an overarching hierarchical authority . For the realists ‘National Interest’, ‘National Sovereignty’, ‘Power’, ‘National Security’ or ‘Balance of Power’ are key elements. The Realists see stability through power/ balance-of-power and are generally known as pessimists.

The Liberals while holding that IR is conflictual have still faith in human nature that they take it to be good, and the belief that the States can live in peace with principles through cooperative relationship. To them the conflicts are manageable, and they lay importance on the role of Inter-Government-Organisations (IGOs). Yet to the Liberals the “States” are still the primary and vital actors, In contrast to the above two ideas, the Radical Theory, rooted in economics, looks at the issues that affect people across national borders in terms of the “Classes”- the ‘owning’ and the ‘working’ ones – that is the Capitalist Class that holds the major means of production and therefore political power and a vast army of toiling people who give their labour for production in the system but own only their labour power and are truly deprived of political power and privileges. The glaring inequality in social, economic and political life is explained on the basis of unequal distribution of resources in an exploitative relationship that it aims at correcting. To them international system is dominated by an international capitalist system.

The Feminists, who wonder, ‘Where are the Women?’ in the discourses on IR say that State is masculine and so also Capitalism that is exploitative of Women both within and out-side the nation-state. War and violence are the making of men in collaboration with the Capitalist State that puts women to the most precarious situation and lets them suffer the most. Thus Feminism is an argument against militarism and positively an advocacy for peace and nonviolence. They also lament the under representation of women in institutions of power and argue that given their constructive , caring and nurturing nature their more and more inclusion in high decision making bodies will usher in peace.

The Post Modernism on the other hand asks people to consider alternative views, truth having many sides and shades – fixing away our gaze from the nation-state to non-state actors to the individual human beings, from national security to human security.

Constructivism which could be subsumed in Post-Modern Approach, lays importance on the perception of the people, that ‘reality’ is nothing but a mental construct; the key structures in the state system are not material, but social and dependent on ideas. We are particularly using Constructivist Theory here as it deals with the spread of ideas and its acceptance by the concerned population. Idea here is to understand the developed level of sensitization among the school children on concerned issues or the troubling issues of the day. Thus this paper seeks to link theory to practice in the ‘Summation’ at the end of the paper.

Demographic Profile:

Part: A - Social Background of Respondents :

Age -----

12	01 (0.76%)
13	08 (6.10%)
14	90 (68.70%)
15	27 (20.61%)
16	02 (1.52%)
NA	03 (2.29%)

Gender -----

Male	55 (41.98%)
Female	70 (53.43%)
NA	06 (4.53%)

Religion-----

Hindu	119 (90.83%)
Muslim	02 (1.52%)
Christian	03 (2.29%)
NA	07 (5.34%)

Area to which you originally belong (Urban/Rural.....)

Urban	90 (68.70%)
Rural	29 (22.13%)
NA	12 (9.16%)

Father's occupation -----

Business	41 (31.29%)
Govt. Employee	16 (12.21)
Private Job	16 (12.21%)
Farmer	03 (2.29%)
Labourer	30 (22.90%)
Advocate	01 (0.76%)
Driver	01 (0.76%)
NA	23 (17.55%)

Mother's occupation -----

House Wife	111 (84.73%)
Labourer	07 (5.34%)
Farmer	03 (2.29%)
Govt. Job	01 (0.76%)
Business	03 (2.29)
NA	06 (4.58%)

Family Annual Income (approximately): Below Rs 50,000-----/Between Rs 50,000 – 100,000-----/ above Rs100,000----- /

Below Rs 50,000	100 (76.33%)
Between Rs 50,000 – 100,000	13 (9.92%)
Above Rs100,000	02 (1.52%)
NA	16 (12.21%)

The above data sets reveal the following points: Students in grade IX range from 12 to 16 in age, though most of them are 14 . Voting age limit being 18 in India ,vast majority of these respondents will be eligible to cast their votes in a few years from now for local bodies to state legislative assemblies to the House of People. In the sample we find the female (53%) outnumber the male students (42%).Due to various incentives by both the State Government and the Union (Federal) Government in India the percentage of girls/women is fast increasing in schools and colleges in the state .Odisha, the state where the survey has been conducted , women are showing academic excellence and begging top positions in different examinations in Boards and Universities.

Again on the basis of religion , the Hindus in the sample constitute 91% while Muslims and Christians hardly approximate between 2 to 3 % . This is practically reflective of the population of the different religious denominations as can be seen from the Census data of the state given below.

Percentage	
Hindu	93.63%
Muslim	2.17%
Christian	2.77%
Sikh	0.05%
Buddhist	0.03%
Jain	0.02%
Other Religions	1.14%
Not Stated	0.18%

(Source : Orissa Religion Census 2011 (5))

As the survey is conducted in two cities ,it is not surprising that as nearly as 70 percent of the students say that they belong to Urban areas, while 22 % respondents mean to say that they hail from Rural areas though they happen to read in urban schools.

A cursory glance on the data also reveals that the students in these government schools come from working class families and only 12 % of their parents (fathers) do government jobs, though their ranks may be in question.

Mothers of most of the respondents are home makers (85%).In the sample only one respondent says that her mother is doing a Government job. Again 76 % of them come from families whose annual income is less than 50,000 Indian Rupees (Roughly 1000 Canadian Dollar). In other words they come from low economic background. It implies that government schools in the state are not preferred destination for many middle or upper class people in so far as schooling of their kids is concerned.

From which of the sources you get information about world problems/affairs?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Oriya news Paper ----- | 125 (95.41%) |
| 2. T.V. ----- | 125 (95.41%) |
| 3. Radio | 67 (51.14%) |
| 4. English News Papers----- | 08 (6.10%) |
| 5. CNN----- | 00 (0%) |
| 6. Al Jazeera | 00 (0%) |
| 7. News Magazine ----- | 12 (9.16%) |
| 8. BBC----- | 00 (0 %) |
| 9. Internet | 45 (34.35%) |
| 10. NA ----- | 02(1.52%) |

95% of students say that they watch Television and equal percentage of them read vernacular newspaper . Only 6% of them read the English daily while none of them access CNN, BBC or Al Jazeera . While in India there is IT revolution sweeping the country, only 34 % of students say that they are familiar with Internet as a source of Information. Radio is still popular with them , 51 % of them listing it as a source of information.

The type of news which interests you most: (political,/social,/ business-economics,/sports,/culture,/cinema, /any other?-----

Political	08 (6.10)
Social	05 (3.81%)
Business	00 (0%)
Economics	04 (3.05%)
Sports	62 (47.32%)
Culture	17 (12.97%)
Cinema	27 (20.61%)
NA	08 (6.10%)

i. Do you regularly follow news either through TV or Radio or News Paper-----Yes / No ----

Yes	113 (86.25%)
No	12 (9.16%)
NA	06 (4.58%)

Though overwhelming number of school students (86%) say that they follow news regularly (either through TV, Radio or News Paper), only 6% of them say that they are interested in happenings that are political. Sports (47%) is their first love ,while cinema comes next to that (21%).

ii. Your future occupational choices? (Rank in order).

Option	1 st	%
Doctor	18	13.74
Engineer	20	15.26
Administrator	12	9.16
Cricket Player	09	6.87
Soldier	11	8.39
Police	10	7.63
Advocate	04	3.05
Teacher	26	19.84
Social Worker	04	3.05
Dancer	04	3.05
Business	02	1.52
Painter	01	0.76
Model	01	0.76
Singer	01	0.76
Good Human Being	02	1.52
NA		

Students had been asked to give their career choices in order of three preferences, first, second and third. But while analysing the data on this section we chose only the first preference, just to get a glimpse where the school children want to land in choosing a vocation. About 20% of students desire to be nation builders (Teachers), while 15% of them want to be Engineers. Almost equal number of students want to be in health service as doctors. And similarly 15 % of them want to join security services as soldiers for guarding the borders or as police men or women for internal security.

iii. Do you want to join politics and contest elections when you are of age -----Yes/ No-----?

Yes	26 (19.84%)
No	90 (68.70%)
NA	15 (11.45%)

iv. Is there anybody in your house who holds any political post ?---Yes/No (If yes, mention the post)

Yes	13 (9.92%)
No	100 (76.33%)
NA	18 (13.74%)

v. Do you have interest in international or world news? -----

Yes	123 (93.89%)
No	00 (0%)
NA	08 (6.18%)

Only 20% of the respondents show interest in joining politics and contest elections when they come of age . Only 13 % of them say that there is somebody in the house who holds any political post .While 94 % of students assert that they have interest in international or world news .

Part B

1. Which one of the following five problems in your opinion is the **most challenging** one for India and the World respectively? Please briefly explain why?

a) For India -----

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| i) Possible Nuclear War | 10 (7.63%) |
| ii) Global Warming and Climate Change | 36 (27.48%) |
| iii) International Terrorism. | 54 (41.22%) |
| iv) Current Economic Recession | 13 (9.92%) |
| v) Violence against women | 10 (7.63) |
| vi) NA | 08 (6.15%) |

b) For the World -----

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| i) Possible Nuclear War | 11 (8.39%) |
| ii) Global Warming and Climate Change | 72 (54.96) |
| iii) International Terrorism. | 32 (24.42%) |
| iv) Current Economic Recession | 05 (3.08%) |
| v) Violence against women | 02(1.52) |
| vi) NA | 09 (6.92) |

We had posed certain common problems before the School Children asking them to name the most challenging one for India, and similarly the most challenging one for the world .41% of school children say that top most problem facing India is Global Terrorism. India has been subjected to cross-border terrorism for long .Since the option was Global Terrorism 41 % have gone with it. However 27% of them recognise global warming to be a major problem for the country.

On the World stage , to the School children , the villain is Global Warming and Climate Change.55% of them list it as the most dangerous problem. Next serious problem to these students for the world is International Terrorism. "Environment" as a young college student said is right from standard IV in the School curriculum, taught again and again up to graduation level. Very often there are rallies by school children sponsored by the School and Mass Education Department of the state government. They observe 'Erath Day, 'World Environment Day' & 'World Water Day' and some discussion take place either in the school or in the city to which they have been exposed ,hence know its significance.

2. Listed below are some general statements on contemporary issues .Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each one of these statements (Please tick mark each item)

	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
i	Women suffer the most in war and armed conflict.	73(57.25%)	27(20.61)	31(23.66%)
ii	Terrorism truly does not have support in any religion	86 (65.15%)	33(25.38%)	12(9.23%)
iii	In your opinion Indian Supreme Court legalizing LGBT rights is a right decision.	26(19.84%)	58(44.27%)	48(36.64%)
iv	Women should be allowed equal rights for prayer in Temples like Sabarimala.	75(57.25%)	45(34.35%)	08(6.10%)
v	ISIS is a threat to the present world order	60(45.80%)	31(23.66%)	40 (30.53%)
vi	War is not a solution in solving problematic issues between India and Pakistan	72(54.96%)	46(35.11%)	13(9.92%)
vii	UN Security Council should be expanded to include India	70(53.43%)	24(18.32%)	34(25.95%)
viii	Mission Shakti in Odisha is truly innovative scheme in empowering women	90(68.70%)	26(19.84%)	14(10.68%)
ix	Rohingyas should be given shelter in neighbouring countries like India on humanitarian grounds.	46(35.11)	41(31.29%)	41(31.29%)
x	Recent move by the Odisha Chief Minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik for 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha should be supported by all political parties for necessary law.	77(58.77%)	23(17.55%)	29(22.13%)

There were certain statements posed before the young school students to know their opinion on issues both international and domestic. Of these, the highest i.e. 81 % school children say that Women should be allowed equal rights for prayer in Temples like Sabarimala. Recently the Supreme Court of India delivered a 4:1 verdict, in Indian Young Lawyers Association vs. State of Kerala, opening the doors of the Sabarimala temple to women of all ages. Yet there were protests from some political parties and organisations against this ruling by the highest court. Those who favoured the ban on the entry of women to Sabarimala Temple had based their arguments on mainly two grounds: First, the temple, they had argued, enjoyed denominational status under Article 26 of the Indian Constitution, which allowed it to determine the manner in which it managed its religious affairs .Second, prohibiting women of menstruating age is supported by the temple's long-honoured custom for the deity's celibacy concern. Interestingly while a woman judge in her dissenting judgement had opposed the temple entry of women in special case of Sabarimala, the CJI had found that entry ban was dispensable, in that the "nature" of the Hindu religion would not be "fundamentally altered" by allowing women to enter the temple. Of all the statements, the statement that allows women into all temples including Sabarimala finds overwhelming support (81%) from school students.

Mission Shakti was launched in the state of Odisha on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8th March, 2001 by its Chief Minister ,Mr Naveen Patnaik. Odisha is a State (province) of the Indian Union/Federation where this program has been tremendously great success story. The Mission aims at empowering women through formation and promotion women's Self Help Groups at the grass root level. The project has been transformed into a movement with 70 lakh women being members of six lakh self help groups (SHGs) (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/on-the-job-for-womens-quota/article26391184.ece>). These women have Rs 5,000 crore savings and Rs 2,000 crore annual bank exposure. Speaking about Mission Shakti, the Chief Minister Mr Naveen Patnaik has recently observed that loans are being offered to the members of the group at one percent interest. Under the scheme loans are provided at concessional rate for women entrepreneurs. About 67 per cent of school children are aware of the program, appreciate the Mission Shakti, the flagship program of the state for women empowerment.

Interestingly the same percentage (67) of school students approve of the initiative of the Odisha Chief Minister for 33 % of reservation of seats in the Parliament and State Legislatures in India .The State Chief Minister Mr. Patnaik formed groups of senior leaders of the party (including MPs, MLAs and state Ministers) to influence different political parties in favour of the reservation of women in law-making bodies. In fact there are very low representations of women, hardly 10 per cent of women in such bodies. The party , Biju Janata Dal , a regional party has also taken the lead in announcing that it would field 33 percent women as candidates from BJD party (Biju Janata Dal) whose supremo he is, to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly in the upcoming elections in April 2019.

About 50 % agree with the statement that “Women suffer the most in war and armed conflict.” About 60 % say that War is not a solution in solving problematic issues between India and Pakistan. Same number of students also holds that “Terrorism truly does not have support in any religion”.

Only 21 percent school children feel that Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a threat to the present world order while about 30 percent consider it not to be a threat. But nearly 50 per cent of students have no opinion on it or are ignorant about it. Of course the large expanse of territory occupied by ISIS from Iraq and Syria has been own over by US backed forces.

Only 43 % of respondents accept that Rohingyas (refugees from Myanmar) should be given shelter in neighbouring countries like India on humanitarian grounds. Rohingya issue was hot issue debated in India as their deportation was being taken up by the BJP Government at the Centre.

There has been a talk of UN restructuring for a long time and India has claimed a permanent seat in the Security Council. 50 % of respondents say that UN Security Council should be expanded to include India. Significantly, 25% of students have no opinion on it.

3. We wanted to know if some world renowned personalities are known to the students. The names of these great personalities in their different callings are given bellow with a description about them and the percentage of responses in recognising them is also discussed with each.

Sergey Lavrov is the Foreign Minister of Russia. India has had long standing good relationship with India. In spite of growing India-US bonhomie, the traditional close India-Russia relationship has been maintained and of late has been upgraded to a “special privileged strategic partnership.” It was assumed the school children will be knowing the current Foreign Minister of the friendly country which was a super-power till the other day.

Wang Yi is the Foreign Minister of China who has been described by the leading Indian newspaper ,The Hindu, as a rising star in the Chinese establishment. **(6)** At Wuzhen in China there was a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India, China (RIC) i.e. the 16th Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Ministerial Meeting on 27 February 2019, where Sergey Lavrov, Wang Yi and Sushama Swaraj had met. Worthwhile to mention that the meeting came just after 24 hours of ‘punitive’ action by the Indian Air Force fighter jets eliminating terrorists at major terror camps in Balakot in Pakistan. In this post –Pulwama terror attack meet , significantly China and Russia agreed for a closer policy coordination to eradicate the "breeding grounds of terrorism".**(7)** External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj along with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov called on the international community to strengthen UN-led global counter-terrorism cooperation. This meeting was highlighted in newspapers and television channels in India and the Foreign Ministers of Russia and China are supposed to be remembered by all who follow news. Moreover they have featured in bilateral meetings between their respective countries with India. In our survey we find that School students are not able to figure out these two Foreign Ministers of two important countries. Only a miniscule of them (**2 percentage**) have said that they know Sergey or Wang.

Michael Richard Pompeo holds the very important position as the United States Secretary of State since April 2018 (the 70th). He is a former United States Army officer and was Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from January 2017 until April 2018. **(8)** Pompeo, as US Secretary of State is always very visible in the world arena and becomes often the focus of the global media. But only 5 % of school students seem to know him.

Trupti Desai is a social activist in India (a gender activist) who has been in the news for her movement for women’s temple entry and particularly into Sabarimala Temple .The latter had given rise to a lot of debate and controversy .She had spearheaded the campaign for women to be allowed into various religious places including Shani Shingnapur temple, the Haji Ali Dargah, the Mahalakshmi Temple and the Trimbakeshwar Shiva Temple in India. **(9)** She is the president of an organization called Krantiveer Jhopdi Vikas Sangh and of Bhumata Brigade, and has helped in the rehabilitation of slum dwellers. It is because of her courageous struggle Supreme Court overturned centuries-old tradition to allow women of all age entry into the hilltop shrine of Sabarimala. She had announced that she along with six other women would visit Sabarimala temple on November 17, 2018 to “exercise their right to pray guaranteed by the constitution though that could not be carried out as she was not allowed to exit from the Airport on her way to the Temple due to security reasons.

Among other things, from 2007 to 2009, Desai had staged protests against the financial irregularities at the Ajit Cooperative Bank involving a fraud of Rs 50 crore. In 2011, she also participated in the anti-corruption movement.

But this young brave woman who has been creating history is known to only 20% of students though 81% of them say that there should be equality of approach between sexes as temple entry is concerned.

Asma Jahangir

Asma Jahangir is Pakistan's iconic human rights activist and lawyer. She has been posthumously awarded the 2018 UN Human Rights Prize. (10)

The first woman to serve as the president of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association, Asma had fought her battles on the streets and in the courts of that country, had opposed military strongmen and steadfastly championed the rights of women, minorities and LGBTs.

From 1998-2000 Jahangir served as the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and was the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion Or Belief of the UN Commission on Human Rights. (11)

Jahangir, who co-founded the Women's Action Forum in 1981, advocated equal rights for women and was outspoken about the sexism and inequality confronting women in the workplace, particularly in the legal profession. (12)

Asma was one of the pioneers of the India-Pakistan peace movement, who always stressed the importance of involving women in the peace process. She was a co-founder of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, and South Asians for Human Rights. (13) However this iconic figure and inspiration for many is not known in India to school children.

Angela Merkel

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been nicknamed "Climate Chancellor" for her long-standing international engagement for emissions cuts. Merkel led the EU to adopt emissions reduction targets. Chancellor Merkel's decision in 2015 to keep her country's borders open and give shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees was praised by commentators and leaders around the world. Her decision was also approved of by thousands of German citizens who welcomed refugees and provided clothes, food, and other support. The term welcome culture, or Willkommenskultur, was frequently used in political debates and the media to describe the events of autumn 2015 as it led to a decision to welcome more than a million migrants into Germany. (14) However, there is no response from school students as regards their awareness about her.

Sheikh Hasina of Awami League Party of Bangladesh perceived as a close friend of India was sworn in for the fourth time as Prime Minister — third in a row since 2009 — of Bangladesh in January, 2019. An overwhelming 59% school children know this lady, the Prime Minister in our neighbouring country.

Kim Jong-un is the President of North Korea, very much in news due to the country's nuclear program and American pressure over the years to re-roll it. Months after trading insults and threatening each other with nuclear annihilation, US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had met and had shaken hands at a historic summit in Singapore and signed an agreement. Kim Jong is in news as he and President Trump are going to meet in another summit in Vietnam towards the end of March 2019. 39.69 % of school students know this leader who has his own style of haircut as one student answered me in an open house.

In a sample survey of UG I students however 51% of students were very clear in identifying Kim.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a world famous Burmese politician, diplomat, author, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1991) who struggled for the restoration of Democracy in Myanmar. She is the leader of the National League for Democracy and the first and incumbent State Counsellor, a position akin to a prime minister. However, she is not known to any in the sample survey.

Nirmala Sitharaman is a woman politician of India belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party, who has been serving as the Minister of Defence since 2017. She has been a Member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, since 2016. Sitharaman is India's second female defence minister who has been seen in parliamentary debates and press meets as a fiery speaker. She has been seen flying in a Sukhoi supersonic jet in the past. As the party spokesperson since 2010 for quite some time, she is a well-known face. She has a good score as 58.77% say that they have known the current Defence Minister of India. The score is much higher with UG I students who know her (75%)

Part C:

4. Students were asked certain open ended questions and given limited space to answer those briefly. The questions and selected answers to these questions are reproduced below .

(i) What are the ways the developments happening outside your country do affect you? (74% answered it)

War outside our country would affect us in many ways .

Even if war happens away from our border, we will be affected economically as cost of prices of essential items may go up.

Carbon emission and pollution from other countries lead to global warming and will affect us adversely.

Nuclear Weapons anywhere is a potential threat to people everywhere and we are no exception to it. In the event of a nuclear war all of us will be annihilated.

Terrorism inside and outside have their linkages and we ordinary people may be victims of it at anytime.

A senior (UG I) says that countries are affected by Globalisation – both positively and negatively. Similarly another senior says that countries are affected by MNCs, Brexit, USA-China Trade war. Economic Recession in far off countries like America affect us.

(ii) Have you heard about Sustainable Development Goals? Is there any provision for Education?

Only 20% respondents have heard about it though they have faintly mentioned that it relates to global effort at meeting the environmental challenges.

However at a little higher class (UG I) 72% showed their knowledge of Sustainable Development Goals .They say the Development should be kind to Nature, does not unnecessarily deplete resources, leaves enough for future generations. They know that Education is a part of Developmental Goals. The universalization of primary Education and Right to Education in India is a part of it.

(iii) Are you familiar with the phenomenon called” Globalization”? How does it affect your country?

27 % know it .29% don't know it and rest have not answered it.

It creates job opportunity for our young people to work in foreign countries.

It helps in creating good relationship with people of other countries.

We get information about other countries, sitting at one place. It gives information and entertainment.

Free trade leads to healthy competition and our consumers benefit.

Environmentally speaking it at times affects countries through pollution.

72 % seniors are familiar with Globalization. While it enhances employment facilities, it has adverse effect on environment by locating polluting industries in third world countries. To some it is a comprehensive plan for the established economies, while to many others it undermines indigenous goods and local markets.

(iv) Explain the significance of Paris Climate Treaty? What is India's responsibility in this regard?

35 % of students know the problem

It is aimed at reducing greenhouse effect, warm temperature, carbon and countries are working together to achieve some target within a time frame.

Young school students, though many of them aware of the climate challenge and global effort to counter it do not know exactly the onus of India in relation to the Paris Climate Treaty.

But 95 % of seniors (UG-I) know about Paris Climate Treaty and many of them mention about UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Many of them also speak of India's commitment : India's greenhouse gas emission intensity of its GDP will be reduced by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030. Alongside, 40% of India's power capacity would be based on non-fossil fuel sources. At the same time, India will create an additional 'carbon sink' of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Co2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.(though not in order, nor all three commitments in one answer)

(v) Do you think women in governing positions as Presidents or Prime Ministers can bring peace to the world? Yes or No? Give reasons for your answer.

66% students agree with the statement while 11 % disagree and 22.22% have no opinion. (out of 81)

Women are peaceful by nature and they can work with peace and patience.

Yes, they can as they are equal to men in every field.

They are rather courageous to take right decision.

They can create friendship with other countries.

They have power to win the world as they are perfect in their work.

One student gives a characteristic answer with 'No' that women in governing position is a bad proposition as nobody will obey them.

77% seniors believe that women can bring peace to the world as Prime Ministers or Presidents. Many of them say that crime against women can be strongly dealt with. In 21st century women can do everything. Women have more patience and tolerance that works for peace. Women are more rational , can take stand against violence. They cite the case of current German Chancellor, Bangladesh PM and British Prime Minister. Women can establish friendship.

(vi) Have you heard about the Belt Road Initiative? Should India join it? Give reasons.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) , earlier known as One Belt one Road , is a project initiated by the Chinese President Xi Jinping. Its objective is to build trade routes between China and the countries in Central Asia, Europe and Indo-Pacific littoral countries.

India stayed away from the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) summit which took place in Beijing in May 2017 citing sovereignty, procedural and leadership issues. Described as the "project of the century" by President Xi Jinping, as many as 120 countries, including 29 at the top leadership level, attended the inaugural .

The BRI passes through the Pakistan occupied Kashmir and if India joins, it will have to officially recognize POK which goes against the Kashmir policy The Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson pointed out that mutual agreements on infrastructure projects should be transparent and debt repayments be made easier for recipient countries. As a commentator wrote ,the latter element is fast emerging as the key ideological difference between the two Asian powers as they expand their sphere of influence in South Asia.(Indian Express May 15, 2017

There is general ignorance about Belt Road Initiative.

(vii) Iran and North Korea cannot be trusted with the possession of Nuclear Weapon. Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.

44% have agreed with the statement while 31% do disagree while the rest are blank about it.

Opinion is divided among seniors. North Korea with a dictator cannot be trusted. Countries who give threats cannot be trusted. Countries which are not liberal cannot be trusted. Iran is not as notorious as North Korea and has friendly relations with India.

(viii) What do you know about China's role in the South China Sea? Why there is some controversy? How it can be resolved?

One student in the sample study only mentions that China is illegally trying to control the South China Sea area.

However 22% seniors vouch to know about it. China is trying to dominate the region , control the sea lanes , exclusively exploit the oil resources. America is protesting .It can be resolved by agreement between China, US and some East-Asian Countries.

(ix) In your opinion what is to be done to establish peace between India and Pakistan?

80% students answered the question while 20% have remained reticent.

42% Youngsters advocate peaceful resolution of conflicts with negotiations and dialogue.

Pakistan should dismantle the terrorist training camps in its soil and take action against such elements.

Pakistan to have credible good relations with India should handover Masood Azhar, the leader of Jaish –e-Mohammed and the master-mind of Mumbai and other attacks in India to the latter.

Pakistan should give up the attitude of violence.

India and Pakistan should set their priorities in a fresh peace treaty.

Seniors emphasise that Pakistan dismantling terror infrastructures will help peace. Trust building measures must be taken. Clear Terrorism, Spread Education, maintain Brotherhood. People to people contact is a way out.

(x) What is to be done to maintain communal harmony in India? Do you think secularism is a good project in this context?

90 % of respondents agree that secularism is a good project for communal harmony in India. Only 1.7 % disagrees, while 8.7 % have chosen to keep their mouth shut.

There should be equal treatment to all religions. Secularism gives equal treatment to all religious denominations.

All religions are equal and there should not be quarrel between them.

In our school students of all religions are treated on equal footing. Religion does not make a difference.

Seniors say that Secularism is the culture of India. Government and political parties should follow idea of secularism.

5. Which of the following, do you think, is most helpful to your country in times of crisis?

i)USA (50.54 %) ii)Russia (31.21%) iii)China(2.05) iv)Germany(5.10) v)Japan (10.68%) vi)France(1.25) v)Canada (2%) vi)Any other Country-----

Without giving explanations the student have mentioned their preferences for a country they perceive to be helpful in times of need or crisis for India. In this survey of school students, they view USA to be number one country in terms of assistance (51%). May be in recent times Trump administration has talked very tough on Pakistan on issue of Terrorism. Russia the old friend is still popular with 31% of students. As Japan is involved in certain projects like JICA(Japanese International Cooperation Agency) and many developmental projects in India and the state , nearly 11 % students feel that Japan could be a friend in need.

However we find a different note when we come to a little higher class. The sample study in UG I shows that 50% of students consider Russia to be more helpful than others in crisis.33% of students here give that position to US.

Summation :

The survey reveals deficiency on the part of school children with regard to information about burning issues of world affairs as they show ignorance of issue related to South China Sea , or China's Belt Road Initiative and the like. They fail to identify important personalities as the Foreign Ministers of US, Russia and China. This is so when 86% of students say that they follow news regularly and 93% of them claiming that they take interest in international or world news.

Sports and Culture interests them more than Political News .Though 20% of School Children say that they would like to join politics and contest elections in future ,but that is not reflected in their career choices. Again only 6 % of them read English news paper which generally covers world events than the local ones.

The Demographic data reveals that the School Children surveyed belong to lower socio-economic strata as high economic groups sends their children to private schools which are very costly with better infrastructure. The survey in such schools as private schools would have perhaps revealed different data, that would be kept in mind for a future occasion for getting a comparative perspective.

Barring a few, all have said that all religions to be respected and treated equally. They say that Secularism is a good project for national unity and communal harmony. Young school children also strongly advocate for dialogue between India and Pakistan as a measure for peace between the historic arch rivals. Thus we could argue that the young school children are of Liberal persuasion, are optimists, (unlike the realists who are pessimists) as they advocate dialogue as a means of sorting out issues with Pakistan. Soon after Pukwama and India's air strike on terrorist camps in Pakistan there were also peace movements in Pakistan against war with India. Some peace movements also took place in India. The school students and even students in some classes when asked, overwhelmingly had said that they were not in favour of war but wanted peace.

Majority of school students (57%) say that Women suffer the most in war and armed conflict. 68% students support 33% reservation for Women in elected bodies. Equal rights for women for worship and entry in to temples are supported by students in large number (57%). An overwhelming 66 % say that women in governing positions as Presidents or Prime Ministers can bring peace to the world. Nearly 70 % of young respondents support women empowerment and Mission Shakti for that purpose as they take it to be a truly innovative scheme in empowering women. In a sense they agree with the Feminist arguments and would go with its agenda – making women visible in power structures. The survey indicates that students are vindicating Feminist approach, i.e. peace and nonviolence, at a time when war clouds were hovering above country and there were war cry from certain sections.

This was a time when social media was leaving almost no space or very little space for rational deliberation in India, as it was spreading the messages of ultra-nationalism, militarism, exclusiveness, intolerance and hatred, questioning certain foundational principles of the Constitution like Secularism, Equality and Special Rights for Religious Cultural Minorities and policy of positive discriminations. Research found that the spread of rightist narrative have not found a sink in the young minds. While media is one important agent of socialisation or political socialisation, there are other competing agencies as family, peer groups, work place, political parties and most importantly educational institutions. It seems the rationalist secular democratic ideas taught in the government school system have a strong sway over the minds of the young ones. Odisha is a state where a secular political party, BJD (Biju Janata Dal, a regional party) has been ruling for a long time, nearly two decades. May be in family circles its long standing Chief Minister, Mr. Naveen Patnaik would have been the subject matter of talk for his progressive ideas like Mission Shakti, many welfare schemes for socially weaker and backward sections, mid-day meals for school children, infrastructural developments, instead of the narratives of the radical left or right.

The social background of the students of Government Schools as revealed in their demographic profile, reveals that they belong to social periphery but with a strong value system and share the basic ideas of India's tradition and constitution. A similar study for comparative purpose may be necessary to map the minds of the young school children being brought up and taught in another social environ, that is those belonging to middle class/upper middle class in the so-called public schools in India, i.e. the high /higher cost private schools.

Surveys in schools in India/Odisha is a rare phenomenon. But vast majority of them liked the survey and do welcome such exercise in future. But since the survey instrument was worded in English and their teaching pattern is mostly vernacular, English being a paper very late in the school curriculum, young students have perhaps found it difficult to answer the open ended questions in the part 'C'. Obviously they find the Part 'B' (the close ended ones) to be more comfortable to answer.

This is a pilot study that needs to be replicated in future to validate or contradict the findings. But a suggestion can be made that such surveys through questionnaire should be done to stimulate young students to know and think about world affairs. Some voluntary groups or associations could engage the students in their classes to expand their cognitive horizon on issues and problems very objectively through talks, debates, audio-visuals and seminars.

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