CHAPTER VI

:: INDIA'S POLICY ::

- General Policy.

- Policy on Chemical & Biological Warfare.
INDIA’S POLICY

Mankind is today at a turning point of its history. In this scientific age, the choice before mankind is survival or total extinction. Peace has become a life and death question. The dread of chemical and biological holocaust haunts us all the time. The stockpiles of deadly weapons are enough to wipe out human species many times over, destroying the civilization built over thousands of years. Naturally prevention of war and preservation of peace is today the supreme issue before mankind. That is why all our actions and efforts have to be directed towards ensuring peace. This fight for peace, for survival of mankind, cuts across all political, religious, ideological and all other barriers.

Development, independence, peace and disarmament are closely related. Can there be peace along with weapons of mass destruction? Without peace said Mrs. Indira Gandhi, all our dreams of development turn to ashes.¹ In Pt. Nehru’s opinion² “Mankind has to awaken itself to reality and face the situation with determination and assert itself to avert the calamity”.

As the present chapter deals with India’s policy on chemical and biological warfare, it is worthwhile to consider various aspects of general policy of India too.
The chapter, therefore, has two parts:

i. General Policy.

ii. Policy on chemical and biological warfare.

i. GENERAL POLICY:

In 1947, when India emerged as a free, sovereign, democratic and independent country, it became imperative for its leaders to evolve a policy which not only kept it away from power blocs but also ensured its independence and sovereignty. Pt. Nehru, the first Prime-Minister of India, realized that freedom brought a tremendous burden of responsibility and the people of India had to shoulder it to play an important role in the world affairs.

The policy of India, a newly independent nation, did not emerge over night. Pt. Nehru, with general directions clear in his mind, set about building up the foreign-policy of India brick by brick, in the process discarding the generalizations which had taken the place of rigorous thought. With his powerful vision and foresight, Pt. Nehru could easily visualize the vital part India had to play, not only within her own vast boundaries but in the world, as she had done in the past before being dominated by muslims.

One of the major questions of the post independence
era was the readjustment of relations between Asia and Europe and India had to play a vital role in it. India became the meeting ground for various trends and forces between East and West. In the past, especially by virtue of her economic and political domination, the west ignored Asia. But the attainment of freedom by India and other countries of Asia, the circumstances changed and India had to be viewed in a new perspective.

On closer analysis, it became apparent that there was a vast difference between the approaches of Europe and Asia. India was quite alive to the situation and was struggling hard against any possible involvement of her or any other country of Asia in the wake of conflicts in Europe. Although under prevailing global situations, it was not possible for any country to remain apart when there was major conflagration, her effort was to direct the national thinking towards avoiding such conflict and entanglement in it.

The Indian security concept, while attempting to find-out effective ways of laying the foundation for stable peace, has been consistently based on the assumption that security is something concerning each and all. It requires purposeful action by all states, NBC and non-NBC, big and small, involved in military alliances and neutral and non-
aligned. Today, as never before, it is imperative to show political will in order to bring the world back to peaceful development, to limit the arms race and expand international co-operation.

However complicated the world situation may be, there is no theoretical insuperability of this situation, or fatal inevitability of the catastrophe. It is in this context that an ever stronger and more insistent voice is heard from the non-alignment movement against the policy of confrontation and for the solution of current global problems, the main of them being aversion of nuclear, biological and chemical war and curbing the arms race. 6

Today the non-alignment movement envelops two-third of humanity. This movement originated from the common desire of newly independent countries to survive politically and develop economically in an atmosphere of international peace. War, cold or hot will certainly hamper and halt the growth or development of economically poor nations. It is impossible to eradicate poverty and unemployment without world peace. The policy of non-alignment does not imply neutrality in international relations. It does not certainly mean "sitting on fence" or isolationism. It is on the other hand, a positive, active and constructive policy seeking to lead to collective security which can really be ensured. 7
India right from the days of Pt. Nehru has been wedded to the policy of non-alignment. The present Prime-Minister Mr. V.N.P. Singh is a great promoter of this movement. India's determination to pursue this policy and her consistent efforts to enlarge the area of peace reached the climax when she proclaimed the principles of co-existence in 1954. As Pt. Nehru said "The alternative to war, hot or cold, was peaceful co-existence". Non-alignment and peaceful co-existence are positive dynamic concepts.

The concept gained world wide recognition when it found a place in the Sino-Indian agreement on 29 April, 1954. The agreement embodied in its preamble the five principles, which later came to be known as "Panchsheel". Panchsheel points the way. Will the world take to it or be destroyed? As Pt. Nehru said, in the final analysis, the only alternative to peaceful co-existence is violent mutual destruction.

Pt. Nehru was a great exponent of Gandhian principles. He worked for framing permanent structure of national policy, the aim of which was to bring peace and security to the nation as well as to the whole world. This is the fundamental feature of the Indian policy that comes down from Pt. Nehru to Mr. V.N.P. Singh with strong and consistent support from other Prime Ministers of India, Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri,
Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

It is clear that the milestones of India's policy since independence are the non-alignment, the panchsheel agreement of 1954, Tashkent declaration of 1966, Indo-Soviet treaty 1971, Shimla pact, Indo-Bangladesh treaty 1972, Indo-US agreement 1974 and Indo-Soviet declaration 1986. In fact, ever since India became independent, its policy has pursued the goal of general and complete disarmament.9

India believes that10 there is a close relationship between disarmament and development. Therefore, there is an urgent need to change the attitude of the nations from a 'destructive' to a 'productive' use of the resources released as a result of the implementation of the disarmament measures, to use these resources for the economic and social development of all the nations. It would contribute to bridging the economic gap between the developed and the developing countries. This change of attitude and its consequential realization would accelerate the process of disarmament negotiation.

The horror of war and destructive capability of modern dreaded weapons made the people of the world think in terms of disarmament. The Govt. of India also adopted a
well defined and systematic policy towards disarmament and attached the highest importance to it. By making the Gandhian ethics of purity of means and non-violence as a corner stone of the disarmament policy, India sought to project the disarmament problem as a moral one.

As the experience of many years has shown, a decisive turn towards disarmament and the signing of concrete agreements on limiting the arms race will not come of themselves. It requires massive and combined efforts by all who are aware of the danger implicit in the continued arms race. The main thing today is to move from disarmament negotiation to concrete steps signifying the beginning of disarmament. Nothing but this will meet the aspirations of the peoples who want lasting peace, who emphatically denounce the actions designed to increase the threat of another world-war, and openly condemn the arms race.

In the disarmament negotiations, India's role has been in conformity with the principles of non-alignment. Its role was limited to narrowing down the differences between the United States and Soviet Union. India's support for collateral measures in the field of disarmament was conditioned. It did not want the collateral measures to be conceived in isolation and given preference over the
ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. It called for the elimination of the war-making capacity of all the nations on the earth.

In India's view, war, and defence against war, and the methodology of defence are dangerous and complicated questions. Peace is the most crucial issue of present time, not only for India but also for human race. India, therefore, intends to pursue its policy for peace, in the knowledge that success will be won through small and careful steps and not through miracles, with passionate concentration on what is possible, and an abiding healthy scepticism about some of the prognoses and propositions being offered these days.

ii. POLICY ON CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE:

Chemical and biological warfare is fraught with dangerous consequences. It can eliminate the very existence of mankind. It is a matter of concern for all nations how to do away with such weapons of war as threat into wipeaway every living being on earth. India which believes in Gandhian ethics of non-violence and Nehru's policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence, is more concerned than any other nation to take steps to outlaw such weapons of war, and her policy envisages not only the elimination of those weapons that can cause mass destruction but
disarmament in toto. India has, therefore, pleaded for gradual reduction and ultimate elimination of conventional weapons. Her concern about chemical and biological weapons is greater and she wants that the world be completely free from their threat. She is, therefore, in favour of complete elimination of this category of weapons.11

The advancement of science and technology in the past few decades has given a boost to the development of highly potential Chemical and biological weapons which are capable of causing casualties on a far greater scale than those caused by conventional weapons. The discovery of highly toxic compounds has brought humanity under the threat of total elimination. There are nerve agents which if used, could poison the nervous system and disrupt vital body functions11A; blister agents which could burn and blister the skin within hours after exposure; choking agents which could bring about death by injuring the lungs; blood agents which could cause death by interfering with the utilization of oxygen by the tissues.11B

The disaster that this type of weapons are capable of causing makes every nation, may every man shudder. India voiced her concern that once the door was opened to "this kind of warfare, escalation would in all likelihood occur, and no one could say where the process would end".12
The very existence of chemical and biological weapons has contributed a lot to mounting international tension. International community is simply horrified to imagine the uncontrollable and unpredictable injurious effects of such weapons. India, therefore, expressed her full support to the prohibition of the use of these weapons of mass destruction. India wanted strict observance of the principles and objectives of the Geneva protocol by all states.¹³

Prohibition 'to use' can not solve the problem unless the development, production and stockpiling of all chemical and biological warfare agents is stopped and their gradual but complete elimination from the arsenal of weapons is achieved.¹⁴ Chances of peace would brighten significantly if chemical and biological agents are gradually put to an end and ultimately completely eliminated.

During the discussion on the question of chemical and bacteriological weapons, a controversy arose regarding the distinction between tear gases and poisonous gases or lethal and non-lethal chemical agents. India made it clear that the prohibition contained in Geneva protocol applies to all biological warfare agents, including tear gases and other harassing agents which now exist or which may be
developed in future. India is not in favour of making any distinction between chemical and biological weapons, she does not want to give a separate and preferential treatment to the biological weapons on the ground that they are more devastating than chemical weapons and therefore should be eliminated first. India pointed out that both are the weapons of mass destruction. Azim Hussain, insisted that there is no difference between the two categories of weapons. He supported his contention by quoting the report of the secretary general: All biological processes depend upon chemical or physico-chemical reactions and what may be regarded today as a biological agent could tomorrow be treated as a chemical one.¹⁵

Both types of weapons had been jointly dealt with in international agreements since 1925. The United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 2603 A (XXIV) deals with both types of weapons together. It declares that the use in international armed conflicts of:

(a) any chemical agents of warfare—chemical substances, whether gaseous, liquid or solid, which might be employed because of their direct toxic effects on man, animals or plants,

(b) any biological agents of warfare—living organism, whatever their nature, or effective material derived
from them—which are intended to cause disease or death in man, animals or plants, and which depend for their effect on their ability to multiply in the person, animal or plant attacked, is contrary to the generally recognized rules of international law. India has been against giving a separate treatment to biological weapons. If only biological weapons are banned, it can boost chemical weapons race\textsuperscript{16} and pose the threat of most heinous disasters. India attaching great importance to the Geneva protocol declared that separate treatment of biological and chemical weapons would weaken the protocol and it would be difficult to justify to world opinion why biological weapons, which have never been used so far, should be dealt with first and chemical weapons, which have been used several times with disastrous effects, should be dealt with later.\textsuperscript{17}

Moreover the world opinion could become shaky and prefer to give priority to biological weapons in the matter of disarmament and postpone consideration of banning chemical weapons on the pretext of this priority. Hence India always stressed that the problem of chemical and biological weapons should be tackled simultaneously and jointly as both are fraught with disastrous consequences.
India stands firmly for disarmament of both types of weapons simultaneously. She believes that it is not an unnecessary preoccupation or a minor procedural matter to consider them separately. Delinking the two types of weapons would mean a fundamental departure from the accepted policy of dealing with both types jointly, and instead of solving the problem it would further complicate it. An agreement reached in respect of one category of weapons would only mean continuance of discussions on the other category and arms race for that category. Hence for the purpose of an agreement, India stands for treating both biological and chemical weapons together and does not like the idea of eliminating only biological weapons from the arsenals without touching chemical ones.

The problem of elimination of the two categories of weapons was by no means easy. The United States and United Kingdom were ready to accept immediate and total elimination of biological weapons from their arsenals on the ground that these weapons were more devastating and had long term ecological effects. The elimination of these weapons was more urgent and therefore required a priority treatment. The chemical weapons, on the other hand, could affect only a small area and were capable of being used with precision, so any discussion about their elimination could be postponed to a later date. If both were tackled
jointly there would be no progress in the matter.

Further they both realized that biological weapons are not reliable and are incapable of destroying tanks, planes, and artillery etc. so they are of no use for the purpose of deterrence or retaliation. Hence the United States did not consider it worth while to develop biological weapons further and stockpile them. A similar view was also adopted by the United Kingdom. Both of them expected that their unilateral decision should be followed by other states and sealed by a universal international agreement. The convention on the prohibition of development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons and on their destruction was, therefore, concluded without considering the prohibition of chemical weapons.

While welcoming the happy developments in respect of biological weapons, India posed a question to the super powers: If biological weapons are of such little effective military use and so dangerous for a country itself to use that they have been unilaterally given up by important countries possessing or capable of possessing them, what is the urgency for concluding an international agreement in regard to biological weapons without waiting for an agreement on chemical weapons.  

Any how, India supported this separate convention
on biological weapons on the ground of commitment by the parties to the convention to work actively for concluding an agreement on the elimination of chemical weapons. India thought that this would preserve the link between the two categories of weapons. Although she reiterated time and again her stand for taking up the matter of biological and chemical weapons simultaneously, yet her supporting the separate convention and ultimately accepting and signing it was in line with her policy of giving encouragement to collateral and confidence-building measures in the field of disarmament. She stated that a beginning in eliminating biological weapons would culminate ultimately in the elimination of chemical weapons. Thus the link between these two categories of weapons would not break.

But the problem of eliminating chemical weapons is complex. Chemicals are important for national security and their use is envisaged on an extensive scale in war. In the first world war about one lakh military personnel were killed by poison and about twelve lakh other casualties were reported by the end of that international holocaust. This is enough to demonstrate the utility of chemical weapons in war. Therefore, various nations were reluctant to give up this capability at the risk of their own security. It is possible only when all possible opponents give up chemical weapons and stop developing them. Such
assurance would be difficult to achieve even with extensive inspection. How can the absence of chemical weapons be guaranteed? The problem is directly linked with production of chemical substances for peaceful uses. The two power blocs want a fullproof device to be fully confident of the non-existence of these weapons with the other block. So long as a device acceptable to both the power blocs is not forthcoming, both are reluctant to give up such weapons. So long as suspicion exists, international control would not work.

India, adhering to her policy of disarmament and abolition of all means of mass destruction, remained worried over the issue of reaching an agreement on the elimination of chemical weapons. She suggested an on-site-inspection of the stockpiles of either side by the two power blocs. The two supermost powers could determine the extent, nature and frequency of inspection they deemed necessary. Inspection by challenge or other such methods could be agreed upon. A verification could be based on a combination of national and international measures. This could provide an acceptable system capable of ensuring effective implementation of any prohibition of chemical weapons. But the process was thought to be too extensive and difficult and no-body was sure how long it would take to formulate new prohibitions on the possession of chemical weapons. Thus there were a
numbers of difficulties in reaching an agreement on chemical weapons and the position remained static ever after the biological weapons convention. Many technical as well as political issues involved in the matter proved a stumbling block and a deadlock in the matter continued.

The difficulties in the way of reaching an agreement on chemical weapons were too many. Discussions regarding a ban on chemical warfare in the committees on chemical disarmament remained confined to the question of control and verification method and ended without reaching a conclusion. In the year 1976, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to start bilateral negotiations for reaching an agreement on effective measures for the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of all chemical weapons and their destruction. The United Nations General Assembly in its special session on disarmament in 1978 also emphasized the early conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons for which negotiations had been going on for several years. As a result of the anxiety expressed by the General Assembly and the urge made by a number of members on the committee on disarmament, the super powers reported in July 1979 about the progress in their bilateral talks. They recommended that the parties to the convention would not develop, produce, acquire, possess or retain any means of chemical warfare under any circumstances and
would not transfer the means of chemical warfare to anyone directly or indirectly and would not encourage any state to carry out prohibited activities and would destroy the stocks of means of chemical warfare with in ten years and means of production with in eight years and that the parties should be subject to adequate verification based on a combination of national and international means. Above all, they declared that negotiations were continuing on several issues relating to the scope of prohibition.

It appears from the joint report that the differences between the United States and Soviet Union in respect of chemical weapons have considerably narrowed down. Although the negotiations were not completely successful yet they have paved the way for further consideration and understanding of the issues involved in and associated with the chemical weapons—political, military, legal and technical. It can easily be felt that a ground has been prepared for debate on the question of concluding an agreement. But the complicated problems of capabilities, scope and verification are inter-related and they provide endless opportunities to the states to delay and avoid any agreement. Concrete results can be achieved by a strong will on the part of the government to overcome the intricacies involved in the elimination of these dreadful weapons.
India took a positive stand and her policy of total elimination of all sorts of weapons of mass destruction remains unaltered. India's representatives in their statements on different occasions always pleaded for the Geneva protocol and even after biological warfare convention never missed an opportunity to speak for the abolition of chemical weapons. India's views and policy are fully expressed in utterances made by her representatives from time to time. Some of them which reflect India's policy on chemical and biological warfare, are quoted below.

Vijayalaxmi Pandit in the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 1948 said:

It was obvious that the threat of war could not be banished from the world unless the present race for armaments was abandoned. As has been emphasized by the Secretary General, almost as important as the elimination of atomic weapons was the outlawing of biological and chemical warfare, which was said to have been perfected to such an extent as to threaten the very existence of mankind. The General Assembly must devote serious attention to these matters.

Ambassador Hussain in Aug, 1968 supporting the Geneva protocol of 1925 said:
I reiterate the full support of the Government of India for total prohibition of the use of these weapons of mass destruction and the need for strict observance by all states of the principles and objectives of the Geneva protocol of 1925 and accession thereto of those states which had not adhered.

Ambassador Banerjee speaking in the first committee, on November 29, 1971 laid stress on the importance of Geneva protocol, and said: 26

"It should be safeguarded, and nothing should be done which might either adversely affect the protocol or cause doubts on its continuing validity."

Addressing the Committee on chemical disarmament on 23rd March, 1972, he said: 27

The question of elimination of chemical weapons is to be given high priority.

To sum up, India, in accordance with her ethics of non-violence and her ideal of peaceful co-existence, stands not only for total abolition of all weapons of mass-destruction but also for reduction in conventional weapons. India has always pleaded and worked to create an atmosphere to induce the power blocs to come nearer to each other, and
to build and create confidence between them. She wants that conflicts should be settled through negotiations and not through war; only then could an era of peace emerge and humanity heave a sigh of relief from tension and coercion. By and large India shapes her policy to achieve this goal.