

## Peace and Goodwill in Our Troubled World

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A speech delivered by Former India Supreme Court Justice and Member of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, P. N. Bhagwati, at an ILO meeting in Geneva Switzerland, 9 July 2004

Brothers and Sisters,

I am addressing you as brothers and sisters because we are all part of one common humanity. All religions – whether Christian, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim – recognize the essential unity of mankind and our ideal must be to break down all differences that divide us and to demolish all barriers that prevent us from coming together as human beings regardless of the language we speak, the colour of our skin, the race to which we belong and the religion we profess and practice.

Today we see a paradoxical situation in the world. On the one hand, science and technology with the modern means of transport and communication have brought about a near revolution in our lives and the world has shrunk into a global village. While on the other hand, the world is being torn apart by strife and violence, hostilities and massacres. Men forgetting their in-dwelling divinity are engaged in killing one-another. We thought that after the holocaust of the Second World War, peace would rein on earth and there would be no hatred and violence, but this dream is shattered to pieces. We do not find peace anywhere and that is why we long for universal peace, peace not only in my country, not only in yours but throughout the world. How can we attain this universal peace which can be a blessing for humanity?

Everyone in this world has a system of values to guide his thoughts and action. Whether these values are articulated or not, they are always there, governing all that we do or think. To have the right value system is essential for our individual good as well as for the good of society and humanity. For that alone can bring peace and tranquillity of mind, radiating joy and happiness to all. Under the ancient Indian value system, the values of truth, righteousness, love and respect for parents and teachers were instilled in the minds of our youth. But these values are unfortunately on the decline, and that is why we see hatred and violence around us. The social fabric is breaking up.

It is thus clear that there cannot be universal peace without a transformation in the lives of men and women who inhabit the globe. The emergence of narrow ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism and parochial loyalties, and the strife and violence we see around us are due to the absence of human values.

There are five human values which are permanent and which must always guide individual and social action. They are Truth, Righteous action, Love, Peace and Non-violence. These values alone can save humanity. It is only through inculcation of human values that we can change the attitudes of men and women, their mind-set, their behaviour, individual as well as societal, without which there can be

no hope for universal peace. It must be remembered that war and peace are born in the minds of men and it is the minds that have to be transformed and this can be done only by inculcation of human values.

Let us not forget what the Great Masters like Buddha, Jesus Christ and Sathya Sai Baba have said, namely that every human being is the embodiment of the Divine, and the encrustment which overlays this divinity has to be removed in order for the human being to shine forth in all his resplendent glory. This realisation of the Divinity in every human being can take place only one if one practices the five human values of Truth, Righteousness, Love, Peace and Non-violence. Because then one can realize the essential unity of mankind which is the message which has been preached by all the Saints and Sages whatever be the faith or religion they practice. These human values help men to realize the basic Truth that it is the same Divinity which pervades the entire universe and animates the entire human race. These five human values are preached by all faiths and religions. They are universal and their practice in daily life by every human being, whatever be his faith or religion, is essential in order to bring about peace within and peace without.

The first human value which must be cultivated is Truth. Truth is something that does not change; otherwise it cannot be truth. If it is true today, it must be true tomorrow. If it is true today, it must have been true yesterday and, by the process of induction, it will be true on the day after tomorrow, and the day after that, and this goes on to infinity and also equally it goes back in time to infinity. So, truth is eternal, it cannot change. Otherwise, it cannot be absolute truth. But if we look around us and think for ourselves dispassionately and with discrimination we will soon realize that there is nothing that is really eternal in the world of object and perception. Science tells us everything is energy and that energy and matter are really the same thing. Everything is just energy full of vibration and the real truth is that everything is vibrating and changing. If there is nothing that is constant then, where is the Truth which is constant and never changing? We can realize this only by raising our consciousness upwards so that we discover within ourselves the cosmic consciousness which is the Truth underlying the entire creation.

The second human value is Dharma, i.e. Righteous action. Righteous action on the part of individuals in society is most essential for peace and harmony. It is also vital for the full development of the human personality. It is beautifully epitomized in the adage "See no evil, hear no evil, and do no evil."

The third human value which is the bedrock of all the others is Love. What the Great Masters of the past and the present are asking us to follow is the path of Love – pure and undemanding Love. Love not only for the near and dear ones, but for the entire humanity. It is the same message of universal Love which was given to us 2500 years ago by the Great Buddha and some 2000 years ago by another Messiah, Jesus Christ. And it is the same message which is being given in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries by Sathya Sai Baba who has said, and I am quoting him "Start the day with love, Fill the day with love, End the day with love. That is the way to God!"

The fourth human value is Peace. When I talk of Peace I do not mean mere absence of war. Peace is a state of mind where there is no anger, no jealousy, no craving and no disturbance. There are enemies of Peace which are described in all scriptures and they are lust, anger, greed and jealousy etc. These enemies disturb the Peace of mind and it is only if we can conquer these enemies that we can attain the real Peace of mind. This Peace where the mind is serene, un-disturbed and un-agitated

is one of the five great human values which every human being must try to attain if there is to be real happiness in individual as well as societal happiness.

The last value is Non-violence. Let me again make it clear that Non-violence does not mean merely non killing of human beings. It has a much wider meaning and significance. It includes not only not hurting others physically but also not hurting the interest of another except where larger societal interest is involved. Non-violence also includes not causing injury to the environment. If we start killing or harming animals then the environment and the whole process of life in the world are up-set because all life is interrelated and there is a delicate balance maintained by nature. At the Earth Summit in 1992 all the countries signed a Convention on "Bio-Diversity" to look after all the living things in the world. By disturbing the environment, we up-set the balance of life on the earth. It can harm us and can eventually destroy human life. So, Non-violence means not only not hurting other people but also not harming other living things and not harming the nature.

These five human values are essential for peace and harmony and indeed for human happiness. I may also point out that at the base of these human values lies character, individual as well as societal. Character in fact forms the bedrock of human values in as much as it confers the power of discrimination between good and evil, guides mankind along the path of virtue, and brings about peace within and peace without. It is necessary to cultivate character in order to instil the five human values in every human being. There is a beautiful saying of Sathya Sai Baba which I would like to quote before you:

*"Where there is purity of heart there is beauty of character.  
Where there is beauty of character there is harmony in the home.  
Where there is harmony in the home there is order in the nation.  
Where there is order in the nation there is peace on earth."*

The whole concept of purity of heart and beauty of character could not have been more epigrammatically described than in these words of Sathya Sai Baba. These beautiful words indicate for the benefit of mankind the path to universal peace and brotherhood where there will be no wars or conflicts, no hatred or bitterness but everyone will be suffused with love and happiness.

From these human values of Truth, Righteous action, Love and Non-violence springs humanism which is so vital to the realisation of universal peace and happiness. Humanism is an essential attribute of enlightenment where one human being recognizes and regards every other human being as like himself, with the same hopes and aspirations, with the same feelings and emotions, with the same indwelling divinity, and identifies himself with the trials and tribulations, with the happiness and suffering of the other human being, irrespective of his caste, colour, race or religion. This is the spiritual basis for another saying by Sathya Sai Baba: "Help ever, hurt never."

This humanism is possible to be achieved by the common man only if he realizes that humanism lies at the basis of human rights. Humanism is nothing but human rights in action for it is only the practice of human rights which can bring about the true and genuine feeling of humanism. I would, therefore, like to emphasise very strongly that if we want to change the world and bring about transformation in the minds and hearts of men and make of them real human beings imbued with humanism, it is absolutely essential that a human rights regime should prevail throughout the world and inspire every action of human beings.

The concept of human rights is not a new concept. It has come down to us through the ages. Even in ancient Hindu law human rights were prized very high because they are inherent in every human being and are essential for human happiness. Human rights have existed ever since humanity was born but its importance came to be highlighted only after the devastation of the Second World War when people all over the world realized that we cannot have peace without implementation of human rights.

Today human rights have become a subject of animated discussion not only at the international level but also in national jurisdiction. Every country, whether developed or developing, expresses concern for promotion and realization of human rights and strives to attain their realization and fulfilment. We have several international instruments on human rights adopted by the United Nations, and worldwide discourses on human rights are going on. But at the basis of all the discussions and discourses lies the fundamental principle of preservation and maintenance of human dignity and basic human values. I may point out as a Member of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations that I firmly believe that all the human rights instruments which have been adopted by the United Nations are intended to ensure the dignity of every human being throughout the globe and the establishment and maintenance of human dignity is not possible without instilling humanism in the hearts and minds of people. Can there be a true and genuine regime of human rights in action without human values guiding and motivating the thoughts, words and deeds of all people?

There is a close and intimate interrelation between human rights and human values. The observance of human rights cannot be secured only by judicial process, or only by national or international public opinion, or only by censure of international or regional organizations. These are the external compulsions which have limited efficacy. It is only by internal compulsions generated by adherence to human values that we can really bring about observance of human rights – by transforming the quality of the thoughts, words and deeds of the rulers as well as others. It is only through inculcation and practice of human values that human consciousness can expand and envelop the entire humanity as part of divine consciousness. Only by banishing and for ever putting an end to the violations of human rights of citizens by the State or of the nationals of one State by another, or the exploitation of the people in developing countries by the developed countries can we make human rights a reality and bring universal peace on earth.