

Speech of Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS-HRD (HE)
On “International Peace”
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I am delighted to have been invited at this seminar on “Universal Peace”. The Organizers could not have chosen a more relevant subject in the context of the present day scenario. Peace is urgently sought for by individuals and the nations alike in the fast moving world which is throwing up all comforts and luxuries of a high level material existence. Humanity has been hankering for peace since almost the dawn of civilization both at the cosmic and the individual level; but alas peace has been eluding us all along.

One of the things about which humankind has sought through the ages from time immemorial is peace. And we have defined peace not just as the absence of a conflict, but the existing of a human psyche for a positive approach to promote a spirit of brotherhood, fellow-feeling and mental contentment which we have considered to be the bedrock of universal peace. We have always considered that peace, like happiness, is a state of mind, a mental disposition, which comes from within a man. As the Upanishad says “ (I quote) “ a man may roll up his skill, roll up

the sky, and yet there will be no end to his sufferings unless he finds the Luminous one within” (unquote)

It is not so easy to forget one’s motherland which has nurtured us in the early part of our life and has provided education and upbringing and made us, to stand on our legs. In Indian tradition we assign mother and motherland a position superior to heaven, as the following adage goes:

{Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi}

Our love for our motherland and patriotism are therefore unquestionable. However to us, India is not only a physical entity, or a mere geographical expression but a concept, an idealism which represents the high watermark of our ancient culture and civilization. Our patriotism is based on this rational principle of enlightenment and not on blind love of the country. Gurudev Tagore has expressed this in the following beautiful words: (I quote):

“I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, nor because I have had the chance to be born in her soil but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones”. Unquote.

However in spite of this staunch patriotism which is ingrained in every right - thinking Indian, our civilization does not encourage or foster exclusiveness. Indian society is a vast ocean into which numerous streams have come down through the ages from time immemorial. It is a pluralistic, multi - faceted, multi - polar society which has always been open to good idea wherever they come from. The message of the Rig Veda is clear – “Let noble thoughts pervade and permeate us from all directions”. Our seers and saints dedicated themselves to this philosophy inspite of great upheavals in history. They inspired our society towards a global feeling. These thoughts, developed into a magnificent philosophy, and has been nurtured by tolerance, compassion and dignity of human life without discrimination of big or small.

Unfortunately in contemporary national and international life, in most countries the accent today is on competition rather than co-operation. This naturally leads to an unhealthy rivalry not only among the nation-states but also among individuals. We tend to forget that a man’s love for his family does not diminish only because he cares deeply for his country, or that a man does not become less of a patriot just because while cherishing his country and its culture he feels concerned for the welfare of humanity as a

whole. We have to remember that there is in fact no contradiction in at all in the micro, macro and the cosmic levels of existence and remain simultaneously committed to all the three. For us peace is a call for a never ending exhortation to a man to pray for the good not of one individual but of all human beings in this vast universe.

Indeed we regard the whole world as but one family - ***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*** From the concept of the world as a family; and the concept of the essential unity of mankind, we naturally come to the concept of welfare of all beings, **Bahujana sukhaya, bahujana hithaya.** The message of the Upanishads is clear: **“Let all walk together, eat together and work together so that we all shine and prosper”.** What a noble thought! Indian philosophy never looks at the world with a divided or fragmented vision. It has bestowed on all of us an intense love and feeling for the entire humanity.

Since time immemorial, the Indian civilization has been preaching the message of universal brotherhood which is the very basic foundation of world peace. Our seers and saints have developed the concept of global feeling nurtured by tolerance, compassion and dignity of human life casting aside all barriers and differences of fragmented national boundaries. Our scriptures have gone a step further when it highlights that our prayers are not for us human beings alone but for our environment too. Let us all be in peace. Let the nature

be in harmony with human beings; let the human beings be in harmony with nature. Thus the Atharva Veda prays:

***Peace be to the Earth
And to the Air !
Peace be to Heaven.
Peace to the Waters!
By this invocation
Of peace, may peace
Bring peace.***

Thus our prayers are never for ourselves alone but all objects existing in the scheme of nature. Man is permitted to utilize the vast riches of Mother Earth without despoiling or denuding Nature. As Gandhiji used to observe that **Nature has enough stock to take care of every man's needs but not to respond to every man's greeds**. This in short the contribution of Indian philosophy to the concept of peace based on world fraternity and unity of mankind.

In our own days, Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest apostle of peace in the modern world made ceaseless efforts to promote peaceful activities in the world and ensure peace between individuals, peace between classes and communities and peace between nations. Indeed his life itself represented an unending struggle for peace and happiness in the world over. Peace, as he envisaged, was not merely absence of war or hostilities alone but a positive frame of mind with a disposition for benevolence, equity and egalitarianism. This message is still relevant and continues to remain as the bedrock of our civilization and an unfailing message of universal peace. These concepts are becoming increasingly relevant having been ingrained in our psyche as we go along.

It may be relevant for me to point out that our Government since the years of independence has pursued steadfastly a policy of peace and peaceful co-

existence with all countries in the world including our next door neighbours. Art 51 of the Constitution of India bestows on the Union Government the duty to a) promote international peace and security: b) maintain just and honourable relations between nations: c) foster respect for international law : and , d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

The provisions of article 51 of the Constitution of India as stated above embody an affirmation of India's commitment to the philosophy and ideals of peace. The promotion of international peace and security as a constitutional directive is a declaration made by the people of India addressed not only to the Indian society but indeed to all people of the world. Thus, it is obvious that the provisions of this article are unique, propounding a great Indian philosophy which creates awareness and acts as a beacon light for international peace and harmony. It can serve as a guideline for all the foreign governments to frame international law based on justice, equality, co-existence and human dignity in this strife-torn world for the ultimate objective of human advancement and universal peace.

The foreign policy of our country has been so conducted as to follow the above provisions in letter and spirit. Thus in regard to Pakistan which invaded as early as 1947 Jammu and Kashmir which is an inalienable part of the Indian Union, we did not resort to violence against the aggressor and opt for a military solution but referred it to the United Nations for a peaceful settlement of the dispute although it is unfortunate that even after nearly 60 years of its referral the U.N could do precious little to solve the issue and bring the aggressor to books.

More than 50 years back, Prime Minister Mr. Nehru gave a new orientation to India's foreign policy by enunciating the Panchsheel or doctrine of five principles governing our foreign relations based on peaceful relations and co-existence with other foreign countries. We have all along responded pro-actively to all the United Nations' call for raising U.N. Peace Keeping Force. Also India has taken active role in organizing regional outfits such as NAM, SAARC etc with the sole object of advancing the cause of world peace. This has been specifically acknowledged by the former Secretary General of U.N Mr. Kofi Annan in the following words I (quote)

The famous English Poet, Milton observed that "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war". And yet we have not been able to discard wars and armed conflicts from the annals of human history. Even now peace and tranquility of the world stand seriously threatened by terrorism and violence, which of late, have been spreading like cancerous growth in both parts of the hemisphere. The result is that governments throughout the world have been hiking their defence budgets to a sizeable proportion a huge chunk of which is being spent on stockpiling arms and ammunitions. It has been estimated that the world could eradicate poverty in only a few generations if only a fraction of the expenditure on defence preparations were spent on peace. An average of \$22 billion is spent on arms by countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. This sum would have enabled those countries to put every child in school and to reduce child mortality by two thirds by 2015. Thus fulfilling two of the Millennium Development Goals. Time has come for us to realize that reckless pursuit of arms race by nations would force the developing countries to a life of abject starvation, poverty and depravation.

In October 2006 a resolution was set down at the UN General Assembly for working towards an arms trade treaty. That treaty was based on a simple principle: no weapons for violations of international law. In other words, a ban was sought to be put for selling weapons by one nation to another if there was clear risk that they would be used to abuse human rights or fuel conflict. This

resolution, it appears, has remained indecisive. This could have been a forwarding step for discarding terrorist activities and furthered the cause of peace.

Today humanity is standing at the crossroads. One path leads to unity, peace and prosperity and the other leads to disunity, chaos and uncertainty. After the end of the so-called 'Cold War', the United States tried to act as an international policeman and maintain law and order, but its actions lacked legitimacy and have often been criticized sometimes even by the traditional US allies. However, since the 11th of September 2001, international terrorism has emerged as the biggest threat to civilized living and to the modern nation-states. In India, cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and attacks by suicide squads on Indian Parliament building and on several places of worship have taken a heavy toll of innocent lives during the last fifteen years. In order to successfully meet the deadly threat of international terrorism, unprecedented levels of international cooperation and global efforts are needed. This is one international problem that can in no way be solved by any national government alone, even if it be the world's only super power. Also, it has to be realized that the vehicle of war cannot take humanity very far. If ever there is to be effective international cooperation, such as was hoped for by the League of Nations and the United Nations, then there has to be a very widespread effort at inculcating globalism in children all over

the world and shaping their mindset towards globalism. Only then will a true generation of world citizens arise. Like wars, terrorism too begins in the minds of men and it is in the minds of men only where the defences of peace have to be constructed. This can best be done in schools when children are young and impressionable. True education releases capacities, develops analytical abilities, promotes confidence in oneself, will-power and goal setting competencies, and instills the vision that enables one to become a self-motivated agent of social change, serving the best interests of the community. At a certain moment in history, education must also act as an effective catalytic agent and a powerful instrument for profound social transformation and metamorphosis. Such a moment it appears has arrived. It is now or never. We must realize that there is no alternative to peace. As has been well said, **there is no way to peace, peace is the way. I would like to end this address with a very optimistic quotation of Dr. S.Radha Krishnan,the India's leading philosoph**

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this seminar.

Thank you and Jai Hind.