



Vivekananda International Foundation
India



HINDU-BUDDHIST
PHILOSOPHY ON
CONFLICT AVOIDANCE
&
ENVIRONMENT
CONSCIOUSNESS



IDEATION
NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

SAMVAD—A GLOBAL INITIATIVE

Driven by the myopia of profits and an ego that craves superiority over fellow brethren, man is leading a life of wanton devastation, and going through what is perhaps the most violent time in history. At stake is not just our own lives and values, but the environment that sustains us, and, by extension therefore, the very future of our planet.

Is this a one-way street? Or is there still scope for salvation? Can we redefine ethics to suit the broader common vision of all mankind? Can we rise above religious differences to create a common, working philosophy that works for both us, and our planet? If the tenets and essence of Hinduism and Buddhism are anything to go by, the answer is a resounding yes.

Adaptation of a non-conflicting paradigm led by the Hindu-Buddhist values—whose adherents account for more than one-fifth of the world's population and cognates cultures such as in India and Japan—can be used effectively to shift the focus from 'conflict resolution' to 'conflict avoidance' and the path of 'ideology' to 'philosophy'.

It is with this aspiration and conviction that the VIF, New Delhi organised a conference in collaboration with Tokyo Foundation and IBC on 'Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness' at New Delhi.

This book, based on the conference attempts to answer one simple question: Can we offer a new model and vision for a world order based on democratic tradition that espouses the spirit of human cooperation, ethical behaviour, universal responsibility and prosperity of all nations?

If we put our best foot forward, the answer could be yes. The alternative, is not an alternative.

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NARENDRA MODI



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Vivekananda International Foundation
3 San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri
New Delhi-110021, India
info@vifindia.org
Follow us @VIFINDIA
www.vifindia.org

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INTRODUCTION

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WELCOME ADDRESS: NC VIJ

It is my privilege to extend a hearty welcome to our Hon'ble Prime Minister as he is visiting the Foundation for the first time and each one of you in the same way, for coming and joining us. In all its endeavours the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) seeks its inspiration from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. He was a far-sighted thinker. The vision of religious harmony and cooperation that he articulated over a hundred and twenty years ago is very much relevant and is needed even more today. In his message delivered in the Chicago Parliament of World Religions in 1893, he envisioned interreligious relations that would go far beyond the secular ideology of tolerance. He emphasised the need for spiritual revival and warned that sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism will fill the earth with violence, destroy civilisations and send whole nations into despair—nothing could be of more contemporary relevance.

We are meeting at a time when violence, uncertainty and differences amongst nations, between citizens and people of different faiths, and increasing radicalisation are pushing the world into an era of multiple confrontations. Besides traditional, ideological and cultural rivalries, new challenges have emerged in the form of lawless forces backed by extremely violent ideologies that threaten the very existence of de jure states. Our experience over the last century has shown that existing situations and mechanisms for dealing

with these threats have not worked. The current approach towards conflict resolution is largely based on a Western and simplified perspective of conflict between faiths and civilisations. This approach to solve conflicts has been short-sighted and impractical. Apart from conflicts which threaten the world order, humankind also seems to be at war with Mother Nature, recklessly exploiting rich resources to such an extent that the very survival of planet earth has come into question. Similarly, the attempt to end environmental degradation through legislation and regulations is proving to be a failure. It is in this context that the world is increasingly noticing the benign nature of Hindu-Buddhist values which emphasise and espouse democratic and non-conflicting philosophies, not only toward mankind but also nature. The questions confronting us therefore are—one, as to how would we now change the established norms in resolving these disputes, two, how can we now move from conflict resolution to conflict avoidance and three, how can we curb our greed and curtail the damage to Mother Earth.

We are fortunate to have amongst us eminent spiritual leaders, thinkers, scholars, analysts, experts, opinion makers and environmental conservation experts, not only from Asian countries but also from Europe and the United States, attending the conference. We are hoping to evolve a new framework, which will be founded on the strong, non-conflicting philosophical paradigm of two of the oldest and vibrantly active civilisational forces, namely Hinduism and Buddhism. In these, non-violence is a fundamental value, which is compatible with modern democratic values and institutions. It is with this conviction that the Vivekananda International Foundation decided to hold this conference in collaboration with The Tokyo Foundation and the International Buddhist Confederation. I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge here that the main idea and inspiration for this conference came from Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi himself. Conceptual support from others, mainly, Shri Gurumurthy and Ven Lama Lobzang and our Japanese friends from Tokyo Foundation has helped us in organising this important conclave. I am confident that it will end with concrete suggestions and a declaration to carry this process *ad momentum* forward. The success of this conference will be measured by the concrete steps that we take to implement the resolution that we adopt. This will be called the 'Bodh Gaya Resolution'.

BENEDICTION: SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

*Om nama pranavarthaya
suddha jnanaika moorthaye nama
nirmalaya prasanthaya
sri dakshinamoorthaye nama*

I bring greetings also from Swami Dayanand Saraswati—who could not be here due to his ill health—and he has said that, ‘Hinduism and Buddhism offer among various available religions, a pre-eminently appropriate reservoir of thought and practice, which is at once convincing and practicable.’

Now, the very fact that we have said, conflict avoidance, has already sent a message to the world. People, who believe in this philosophy of conflict avoidance, perhaps nearly 3 billion or half the population of the world, also believe in non-violence. But our voice needs to be heard very loud and clear. The world cannot be at peace as long as some people think that they have the key to heaven and exclusive rights to heaven. This is largely due to ignorance. So we need to actually focus on three things: education, education and education. We need to educate the population of the world that there are many ways to one truth. The British believed that ‘familiarity breeds contempt’, but familiarity breeds contempt when there is no truth, no compassion and no enlightenment. We in the East believe something

completely different. We say ‘familiarity builds respect.’ I want to cite an incident here. Once an imam confessed to me, ‘You know Sri Sri Gurudevji, I went to Benaras and studied the Vedas and Upanishads. My intention was to condemn them but when I studied them, I developed an enormous respect for the philosophy of this culture.’ This is to be noted: wherever there is truth, compassion and philosophy, familiarity builds respect not contempt and we have believed this for centuries.

In the known history of the world of over 3,400 years, only a mere 8 per cent of the time, the world has been at peace. That is a recorded 268 years only that we have been at peace. The rest of the time, the world has been at war. In this century, from 2003 onwards, the world has faced thirty wars, both small and large all around the globe.

What can we do? How can we avoid this? I would say by practising the philosophy of coexistence. Even if a small part of the world is left thinking that they have an exclusive right over heaven, they are going to create hell for everybody else. This is possible when through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) we create a curriculum of multireligious, multicultural and environment-friendly education right from childhood, right from primary school onwards. Our Prime Minister took a very beautiful step in declaring International Yoga Day through the United Nations (UN) in 2015. There has been a tremendous response to this from the world over. This is an excellent indication that we are marching in the right direction towards peace and prosperity. If there is no peace, there will be no prosperity. They are linked together and prosperity does not depend on exploitation of our resources, rather on the conscious protection of our own planet and its resources.

We have the power. We can all unite. We are like a sleeping giant. The Hindu-Buddhist confederation can contribute in more than one way to world peace. We have already been doing this in a small way. Hinduism has taken the path of Yoga and Buddhism has been a co-sponsor of this. Buddhism has in many ways been expanding compassion throughout the world and establishing its philosophy in developing countries as well as developed ones. In doing so, they have achieved an informal bonding among people having democratic values and the value of tolerance. I do not like the

word tolerance. You tolerate only something which you do not like. The world is diverse and diversity is in every step. Appreciating this diversity or honouring this diversity is a speciality of Eastern philosophies. Among the ten religions of the world, six from the East and Far East have never been in conflict with each other.

I would like to end this with the recollection of one incident. Once President Nixon of USA went to Japan, where he wanted to meet religious leaders. On one side was a Shinto priest and on the other side was a Zen Buddhist monk. So he turned to the Buddhist monk and asked him, 'What is the percentage of Buddhism in Japan?' The monk responded, '80 per cent.' Then he turned to the Shinto priest and asked him, 'What is the percentage of Shintoists in Japan?' The Shinto priest responded, '80 per cent.' The President got very confused and wondered, 'How is this possible?' Both the priests looked at each other and smiled. We have the same thing here in India, the Jains, Buddhists and Hindus—we have all been in such a beautiful amalgamation of peaceful coexistence. Even today, Hindus in every household, when they take *sankalpa* or in any puja, begin with reciting, *Boudh avatare rama kshetre prabhu adishristi samvatsara nammadhy*. So we definitely take Buddha as part of the Hindu tradition, as one of the avatars. Without the word of Buddha, no religious ceremony begins here in India. Similarly in the Buddhist prayers, the beautiful phrase that says, '*Rakkhan tusa bhudevat*'—'Let all the gods and goddesses protect us', is such a beautiful example that the world can draw from such a coagulation of ideas, philosophies and plans. We need to be loud and clear to the world. The voice of peace must rise above the voice of hatred and violence. Om shanti.

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We are present here with a unique aim to bring a changed view on how to address the present challenges to world peace and security. I will briefly touch upon this important role of religion which contributes enormously to the maintenance of world peace, stability and security. In the present age, people take refuge in the religions, which they believe bless them with peace of mind not only in this life, but also guarantee a better next life. Even atheists enjoy peace of mind, as they believe atheism makes them free from all bondage of the mind. Religion is a particular influence or interest which is very important in one's life. But I don't think that many people might know how religion started. The first Prime Minister of India, Pt Jawaharlal Nehru had said, 'The beginning of religion is fear. Fear originated religion.' Buddha has said the same thing that people from the earliest recorded history took refuge when threatened with danger. According to Buddha, people who lived in fear of the darkness of the night took refuge in the morning and the sun, and with light the fear vanished from their minds. Likewise, forests and mountains became safe refuges for those who had fear of stormy weather. Some islands became refuges for the sea travellers when faced with the idea of tidal waves. Ancient historical records are also evidence of the fact that fear was the root cause of worship of a variety of objects ranging from the

heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon, constellations and inanimate bodies such as forests and mountains, to living beings such as dragons, eagles, etc. Such kind of worship brought people peace of mind as they could remove their fear to a certain extent.

Hinduism, which is one of the four major religions today, started from the Indus River Valley in India. It is the worship of Brahma, a being superior to men, a deity inhabiting the higher celestial plane. For a sublime state of the mind, Hinduism and Buddhism are similar in the Four Noble Truths espoused by the Buddha. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, taught the theory of non-violence or ahimsa. Jesus Christ emphasised loving-kindness and compassion. Leaders of different religions give their lectures under different topics but I believe a common essence can be deduced from their teachings.

I would like to share an example. We are familiar with the names of some of the most famous rivers of the world like the Ganga and Yamuna in India, the Nile in Egypt, Rhine in Europe, Mississippi in the USA, Mekong in South East Asia, and so on. They are different and they are superficial, but the water in them has the same characteristics that help anyone to be free from bodily impurity, quench their thirst and in this, there is no discrimination. So also is the Irrawaddy, the longest river in our country Myanmar, whose water has the same characteristics or properties. Thus, we must accept the concept of unity in diversity. We need to work on this, for we must not dispute on superficial labels. Different religions were safe refuges for people of olden times, as they could remove their fear to a certain degree but the role of religion has declined in this present age. People in some parts of the world are living in fear owing to religious conflict caused by religious extremism. Any extremism, be it economic extremism, political extremism, religious extremism or racial extremism, does not bring good or peace to the world. They pose a great threat to human society.

I will take the opportunity to condemn all forms of threats posed by millions of extremists. At the same time, I honestly ask all religious leaders of different religions to teach their followers the essence of the respective religions so that they may walk on the Middle Path, free from any extreme. I believe every religion has an outer shell and an inner core. One religion can be different from another in its outer shell, like the rivers with different

names, but they have the same essence and inner core like the common characteristics of water. If all the religious leaders are successful in teaching their followers to be correctly imbued with the essence of religion and follow it accordingly, we are sure to walk together on the common way of peace and stability in the world.

The minds of people are filled with extreme greed and anger. This is the root cause of conflict and war almost everywhere. The world is badly in need of peace. The present situation demands that we religious leaders put all our efforts in disseminating the essence of religion to our followers, so that they are able to keep themselves away from extreme greed and anger. Then they will be able to fulfil their aspiration of peace. Every religion has water-like essence, such as loving-kindness, compassion, tolerance, non-violence, morality, concentration and wisdom. These are the common grounds on which we can enjoy peacefully and coexist, and also the common highway on which we have to walk together.

I am pleased to introduce you to the core essence of Buddha's teaching that one who wants to achieve truth and peace, must take the Middle Path, free from extreme greed and anger. These extremes cause never-ending conflict, never-ending fighting and never bring peace to us. The Middle Path propagated by the Buddha meant nothing but morality, concentration and wisdom. Morality denotes our abstinence from evil action, both physical and verbal. Concentration means controlling the mind to be free from evil thought. Wisdom is a technique to search for the truth and reality within ourselves. According to Buddha, all human problems are caused by extreme greed or extreme anger. On the contrary, controlling these extremes is the path to peace. This is the Noble Truth spoken by Buddha. It is a universal truth. May truth and peace prevail in every corner of the world.

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The symposium ‘Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness’ seeks to reflect upon the religions, thought and history of Asia and from the lessons of history, acquire wisdom for our future. This aim of the symposium deeply chimes with my belief. Buddhism was introduced to Japan from India by way of China in the sixth century. Since then, Buddhism has played a significant role in forming the ideological foundation of Japan.

In Japan, Buddhism can be viewed as one of the origins of the ‘rule of law’ on which Japan places great value. Prince Shotoku, who was a devout believer of Buddhism, had, by the seventh century, already formulated Japan’s first constitution. *Golden Light Sutra*, which was reportedly brought to Japan in the eighth century, teaches that unless a king rules under the law, he demolishes his own realm, just as an elephant destroys a lotus pond. *Golden Light Sutra* was viewed as the main pillar of political doctrine by political leaders of that time. The reason why the Western concept of the ‘rule of law’ was able to take root in Japan was because from ancient times similar concepts were already deeply embedded in our psyche through Buddhism. This concept can also be found in the dharma concept of Indian philosophy. Freedom, democracy, respect for basic human rights and peaceful resolution of disputes are also

common concepts in both Hinduism and Buddhism. These are universal values that are inherent in Asian religions and philosophies and run through our ideological foundation. There is one more characteristic of Asia that we should not forget and that is the spirit of tolerance that appreciates diversity. In Asia, Buddhism and Hinduism teach compassion, Confucianism teaches benevolence and Islam teaches fraternity. Vivekananda stated that, 'There is more than one path to spiritual heights. Diversity is not weakness. Diversity is a source of creativity.'

MINORU KIUCHI

I am a Buddhist and at the same time a Shintoist. It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here on behalf of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who found himself unable to attend due to inescapable Parliamentary duties in Japan. As Prime Minister Abe said in his video message, ideas such as freedom, democracy, the respect for fundamental human rights and the peaceful settlement of conflicts have been part of Asian religions and thought since ancient times. This symposium offers a golden opportunity to take a fresh look at their origins and roles in human society and discuss their meanings for the future. This can give us extremely important insight into the future of not only the Asian region, but also the whole world.

From time immemorial, Asia has given birth to and adopted many philosophies. Behind this lies a spirit of tolerance and thus respect for diversity. I believe this very spirit of tolerance constitutes the fertile ground that nurtures democracy in Asia. It is a shared historic asset we should be proud of. Today our Indian friends have created a valuable opportunity for us to discuss this important theme. I will take the fruits of today's discussions back to Japan and put them to good use for a better future.

India's growth and dynamism are so strong as to become the engine for Asia and even the whole world. In September 2013, I had the opportunity

to visit this country as a parliamentary vice minister for foreign affairs. Since then, India has made remarkable progress on the economic and other fronts owing to the able administration of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Relations between Japan and India have been deepening at many levels under the leadership of our two Prime Ministers. In 2014, Prime Minister Modi made an official visit to Japan. During his stay in the ancient capital of Kyoto, he saw how Buddhism has been practised in Japan since the sixth century. During this week's seminar, I understand that there is to be an excursion to Bodh Gaya. There are a number of revered and renowned historic sites in Asia, legacies of the variety of religions and thoughts in the region. Visiting and learning about such sites across Asia, forms an invaluable foundation for mutual understanding and cooperation for the future of the region.

India has a long history of embracing diversity, accepting religions and philosophies. I personally look forward to learning through this symposium and would like to join the other attendees here in leading a wave of diversity and tolerance from India to Asia and Asia to the world.

This conference is a most fitting tribute to Swami Vivekananda, whose vision was one of alleviating poverty and suffering of the masses by giving them secular knowledge to improve their economic condition, as well as spiritual knowledge to strengthen them morally. Education was the tool he wished to employ for this purpose. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission to set in motion the machinery to bring the noblest ideas to the doorstep of the poorest and the meanest. This conference has set itself the noble ideals of spreading the message of understanding, harmony and peace based on the teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism and their great proponents such as Swami Vivekananda. This is a praiseworthy enterprise that I truly hope will help infuse spiritualism and ethical behaviour into our world, which is presently lost and groping in the deserts of extreme materialism and the insatiable thirst for selfish gratification. You have set yourself the task of addressing the threats and challenges to world peace and to the environment, with a special focus on challenges posed by extremist ideologies supported by lawless groups that challenge states and the rule of law. Secondly, you also wish to address global ecological degradation. On the subject of conflict avoidance, you state that you wish to look at possible solutions based on democratic structures and the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, to combine

non-combatance between individuals and states. The two philosophies also propound respect for nature, represented as Mother Nature. The concept of respecting, protecting and loving all living things, including all animals—not only all animals, but also plants—is the best protection against destruction of human and other animal life as well as nature and the environment expressed by any philosophy.

I would like to express some thoughts now, mainly on conflict, before we look at the philosophies of the two religions. Permit me to reflect upon conflict as we know it today. Conflict between humans and human communities has existed since time immemorial. Conflict becomes serious when it threatens the peace and stability of states. In the modern world, conflict has taken a dangerous turn towards extremism and terrorism. Violent conflict and terrorism are the most serious military challenges to the modern world. It is no more contained within the boundaries of one state. It has extensive global outreach. Terrorist organisations born in one country have the capacity to attack the furthest lands. The most militarised states have not been impervious to the activities of the terrorist. The international community, especially the superpowers, has been engaged for the past few decades in searching for solutions to the problems of terrorism and violent conflict. Often employing military strategies, the responses of states appear to be that of meeting the challenges of violence with violence—treating the symptoms, the surface manifestations of the problem. Recognition of the importance of searching out the deep-rooted causes of conflict and seeking to resolve them seems to be a rare occurrence in the planning of counterterrorist strategies of states. However, we can witness all around us the dismal failure of mainly militarist methods to address violent conflict. I believe that military strategies must be employed only as the solution of the last resort. The deep-rooted causes of each conflict must be understood and managed. This will no doubt take time and involve complex operations. However, it is a holistic approach that has proved to finally overcome violent protest and conflict in a durable manner.

In the postcolonial and especially post-Cold War eras, the subject of conflict has moved from territorial or land issues to that of identity as defined by race, language, religion, caste and ideology. Identity-based conflicts are complex and prove difficult to manage as they are highly emotionally charged,

combining perceptions of inequality and discrimination in several spheres. Such perceptions arise from denial of access to resources and public facilities such as education, jobs, land and of opportunities to participate equally in government processes and in decision-making. The perceptions are heightened by the realisation or perception that one's identity, individual or collective, is threatened, generating the fear that one's existence, the sense of who one is, is in danger of destruction. The most potent source of violent conflict today is identity. The denial of rights to or the exclusion of certain groups with a common identity becomes the bedrock of dissent and violent conflict. History demonstrates that exclusion and inequality between distinct groups has been the major cause of intra-national conflict. Perceived injustice as well as frustration and despair caused by continued social marginalisation, economic deprivation and political defeat have been known to result in violence. It has been said that, I quote, 'Young hope betrayed transforms itself into bombs.' The continued existence of inequality gives rise to violence and even terrorism—that most dehumanising phenomenon of our times. Economic regression and political instability follow. Economic development is no doubt the requirement for addressing the challenges of poverty and deprivation, but it is only one part of the solution. Most developing economies have today attained accelerated growth and development. However, hundreds of millions of our citizens have been left behind, continuing to live under conditions of extreme poverty—even becoming poorer today than before. They remain marginalised while the benefits of economic growth are enjoyed by a relatively small number of the privileged classes. Inequality suffered by an ever-increasing number of our people causes frustration and anger. They are no more willing to tolerate inequalities.

We need to adopt a holistic plan of action, which will encompass the sociopolitical aspects of the problem as well as the economic ones. All those communities which have been excluded must be included as equal partners, having equal rights in the economic, social and political spheres. In formulating policies for development, an inclusive approach is required so that the benefits of growth reach the disadvantaged and they are included in the planning and implementation of the programmes. We can see around us that when all communities living within a state are guaranteed

equal opportunities and their separate identities are respected and given free expression, they will become a productive, vibrant part of the state, celebrating the richness of its diversity while building a united, strong and stable country. Such societies are called shared or inclusive societies. The contrary instances are where differences among diverse communities living within a country have been exacerbated by rulers to their advantage. They tend to conjure up an enemy from peoples who belong to diverse groups as 'other' groups. History is replete with examples of states and governments employing the concept of the 'other' represented as the enemy as a tool of government management. For a large part of human history, the enemy has helped to entrench weak or despotic rulers and governments in power. Governments whip up hatred against the 'other' by maintaining the myth of the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'. This leads to the oppression of the 'other' and the denial of their rights. Sustainable development, prosperity and peace necessarily imply that the 'other' be brought in and included fully and honestly into the processes of development as well as full and equal partners of the processes of government.

To end poverty and hunger in a durable manner, we need inclusive and sustainable development. Here I wish to quote the great Indian poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, 'Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hands, with a grip that kills it.' Terrorism is the extreme manifestation of long, unresolved conflicts. However, it is important to understand that conflict is not always a negative thing. Conflict is the result of interaction between different and opposing aspirations and goals and is a place where disputes are processed. It is essential for the proper functioning of democracy and it can mobilise energies for social change and improvement. Conflict becomes negative and destructive when its expression takes a violent form. Democratic governments permit disputes to be expressed and respond to them. Democracy can operate as a platform for conflict management, if the right tools are employed. What is required is not to suppress nor resolve conflict, but to manage it well. The root causes must be alleviated.

Permit me now to examine briefly the teachings of Buddhism regarding conflict and its management. Forgive me if I focus mainly on Buddhist philosophy with regard to this question as this is what I am most familiar

with and I am certain that many other speakers during this conference will speak on the teachings of the Vedas and Hindu philosophy. The fundamental basis of Buddhism is the individual achievement of contentment, through a clear understanding of the human situation. It states that happy and contented citizens give rise to peaceful coexistence between communities and thereby to peace in states. Buddhism enumerates in great detail how this can be achieved. Let us look at a few such instances. First, the Buddha preached in the *Vasala Sutta* of the *Suttanipada*, that all humans are born equal in terms of biological indivisibility. The human mind is given the most important focus and it is stated that the mind can be developed to reach great heights. In the *Vathupama Sutta* it is preached that ignorance or *avijja* pollutes the mind and can cause conflict and distress to the individual. Three root causes are said to be the basis of conflict—craving (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). Sixteen subclauses of these three causes are also enumerated such as envy, hypocrisy, arrogance and so on. These are said to lead to evil deeds such as killing, stealing, slander, using harsh words against others, adultery and so on which in turn lead to conflicts of various types. Then the Buddha has also preached at length to rulers (*licchavin*) on the importance of good governance. He states that democratic rulers should follow seven principles of good governance and that good policies adopted by rulers will avoid agitation by citizens and thereby avoid conflict.

Good governance gives rise to elimination of poverty and grants basic rights to the people as preached in the *Kutadanta Sutta*. This in turn leads to a contented citizenry and a stable and peaceful state. Such a state would be democratic, pluralist and inclusivist, binding together people of diverse communities into one united nation. It is interesting also to note the teachings of the Buddha on the resolution or avoidance of conflict. He states that conflict originates in the mind and is expressed in action and speech. Communication is a powerful means of conflict resolution. However, it needs to be done gently, using kind words and also that the listener be in a sound physical and mental state. A hungry or sick person or someone in mental anguish cannot understand advice given to him or her. The story of *Kisagautami*, in verse 114 of the *Dhammapadatthakatha*, is an apt illustration of this. *Kisagautami*, suffering from utmost anguish due to the death of her

child came to the Buddha, requesting advice. The Buddha kept postponing giving her advice, awaiting the right time until her grief had lessened to explain to her the unpleasant truth that death is universal and inevitable, in order to help her gain wisdom and thereby lessen her grief. Hence even the truth must be communicated in terms that are acceptable to the listener and not in those that anger him, and that also must be done at the most opportune time. The Buddha also advises strongly that the truth must be spoken based on irrefutable facts, if one is to achieve positive results in resolving a conflict. The types of words that should be spoken are given in detail in the *Abhaya Rajakumar Sutta* to Prince Abhaya who sought the Buddha's advice. The Buddha also advises that one who seeks to resolve conflict must focus strongly on the possible outcome of his efforts. The mediator must sincerely wish to achieve results beneficial to the parties of the conflict and not desire to gain personal advantage for himself. The example of how the Buddha resolved the dispute that arose between the Sakya and Kolya clans, recorded in the *Attadanta Sutta* regarding the sharing of the waters of the river Rohini, demonstrates that effectiveness of communication using the right facts at the right time.

The mediator must also possess and demonstrate genuine compassion for the parties in conflict. The Buddha accepted different social customs, practices and cultures. He interpreted them, placing them within the Buddhist norms. He respected diversity and preached the importance of respect for other racial, religious and cultural diversities and how this could lead to happy and contented citizens and peaceful nations. I have only briefly enumerated the most significant teachings of the Buddha relevant to the understanding of the causes of conflict and the resolution or avoidance of them. There exist many more examples relating to our subject under consideration. I hope that I have succeeded in demonstrating the extent to which Buddhist philosophy as much as the Hindu philosophy dwelt upon the subject of conflict which is innate to human nature, as well as the resolution of conflict which is a crucial necessity for the continued existence of humanity as also good and stable governments. We know that the Hindu philosophy too has taught and given advice in innumerable ways on the same subject. What surprises the modern person is that these two ancient and great religions gave serious

consideration to problems such as these as far back as 2,500-4,000 years ago. What surprises me is that we in South Asia have still not learned and lived by these philosophies.

This conference has set itself the objective of seeking out the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism to formulate a vision and a body of thought that could be employed to resolve conflict or avoid it and thereby help establish peace in the world. I would like to assert that if we are to overcome conflict and its extreme manifestation of violence and terrorism, we need to do the following: Engage actively to seek out the root causes of each conflict and implement strategies to manage them. Secondly, states must employ legitimate means in the fight against terrorism—this implies that the rule of law must prevail and that governments must promote open, liberal and democratic societies in contrast to the intolerant, exclusivist monotheism of extremist ideologies of militant organisations. If states respond to the terrorist in his language of violence, he can respond successfully as this is the language he comprehends. On the other hand, if states employ the language of peace the extremist is weakened as he does not possess weapons in his arsenal to respond to the discourse of peace and understanding. This does not eliminate, of course, the essential need for vigilance and strong democratically organised security systems to prevent terrorist activity within states. Religious leaders, thinkers and political leaders must undertake an active discourse on the inexactitudes and claims of certain militant ideologies and demonstrate to people clearly that all major religious philosophies are accommodating and peaceful ones, and that the various claims by some extremists today about the existence of spiritual kingdoms during the Middle Ages are false—that these so-called spiritual kingdoms were not spiritual but temporal, political states and that the theory of a spiritual kingdom is a postmodern construction evolving from the revival of certain extremist sects.

Finally, the fight against challenges posed by conflict situations and extremism must enter a new phase. Let us abide by the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as the other major religious philosophies and resolve to employ the weapons of understanding, accommodation, discourse and negotiation rather than military arms. The concepts of loving-kindness,

brotherhood, understanding and respect for diversity have formed the very basis of our societies in South Asia. Let us use these weapons to strive to achieve world peace. I wish the Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative great success in its noble enterprise.

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This is truly an esteemed gathering of spiritual leaders, scholars and leaders from several countries of the world where Buddhism is a prevalent way of life. It is a matter of immense happiness that this conference is being held in India, including in Bodh Gaya. India is the ideal venue to host a symposium of this nature. We in India are proud of the fact that it was from this land that Gautama Buddha gave the world the tenets of Buddhism. The life of Gautama Buddha illustrates the power of service, compassion and most importantly renunciation. He was born into privilege. The hardships he faced were relatively fewer, yet with age he grew a distinct conscience about human suffering, illness, old age and death. He was convinced that material wealth is not the sole goal. Human conflicts repulsed him and then he set out on the path of creating a peaceful and compassionate society. In those days, he had the courage and conviction to hold a mirror to society and sought to break free from practices of systems seen as regressive. Gautama Buddha was a revolutionary. He nurtured a faith where human beings are at the core, nothing else. The innermost being of man is manifest godliness. In a way he created a faith without God and a faith where divinity is not about looking outside but about looking within. In three words, '*appa deepo bhava*' ('be your own light'), Gautama Buddha gave humanity the greatest management lesson.

Nothing pained him more than mindless conflict that caused human suffering. Non-violence was integral to his world view.

The message and teachings of Gautama Buddha resonate loudly and clearly with the major themes chosen for this symposium—the themes of avoiding conflict, moving towards environmental consciousness and a concept of free and frank dialogue. The three themes may appear independent but they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are mutually dependent and supportive of one another. The conflict in the first theme is not only among humans, religions, communities and nation states, but also between states and non-state actors and even the world. Intolerant non-state actors now control large territories where they are unleashing barbaric violence on innocent people. The second conflict is between nature and man, between nature and development and also between nature and science. These types of conflicts call for dialogue to bring about conflict avoidance, not just the give and take of conflict resolutions or negotiations like those that happen today. Ethical values of personal restraint in consumption and environmental consciousness are deeply rooted in Asian philosophical traditions, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism along with other faiths such as, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, has undertaken great responsibility to protect the environment. Hinduism and Buddhism, with well-defined treatises on Mother Earth can help examine the changes in approach that need to be made. Climate change is a pressing global challenge. It calls for collective human action and a comprehensive response.

In India, faith and nature have had a deep link since ancient times. Buddhism and environment are deeply correlated. The Buddhist tradition in all of its historical and cultural manifestations encourages greater identification with the natural world because from a Buddhist perspective, nothing has a separate existence. The impurities in the environment affect the mind and the impurities of the mind also pollute the environment. In order to purify the environment, we have to purify the mind. The eco-crisis, in fact, is a reflection of imbalance of the mind. Lord Buddha therefore accorded importance to the need for preserving natural resources, created tools for water conservation and forbade monks from polluting water resources. Nature, forests, trees and the well-being of all living things play a great role in the teachings of

Lord Buddha. I wrote a book called *Convenient Action* which was released by the former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. In my book, I have shared my experience in dealing with climate change as a Chief Minister. Personally, it is my reading of Vedic literature that educated me about the strong bond between humans and Mother Nature. We are all aware of Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship. In this context I want to say that we the present generation have the responsibility to act as a trustee of the rich natural wealth for future generations. The issue is not merely about climate change—it is about climate justice. Again, I repeat, it is not the issue of climate change but about climate justice. In my view, the most adversely affected by climate change are the poor and downtrodden. When a natural disaster strikes, they are hit the hardest. When there are floods, they are rendered homeless. During an earthquake, their homes are destroyed. During droughts they are affected and during extreme cold the homeless suffer the most. We can't let climate change keep affecting people in this manner, which is why I believe the discourse must change focus from climate change to climate justice.

The third theme—promotion of dialogue—calls for a shift from an ideological approach to a philosophical one. Without proper dialogue, neither of the two themes of conflict avoidance is possible or workable. The severe limitations in our conflict resolution mechanisms are becoming more and more obvious. We need significant collective and strategic effort to prevent bloodshed and violence. It is thus no surprise that the world is taking note of Buddhism. This is also a recognition of historical Asian traditions and values which can be used to shift the paradigm to conflict avoidance to move from the path of ideology to philosophy. The essence of the entire concept of this conference, including the first two themes—conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness—is contained in the dialogue part of it and it calls for a shift from the 'them' versus 'us' ideological approach to a philosophical one. It is necessary to inform the world about the need to shift from ideology to philosophy.

When I spoke at the United Nations in 2014, I briefly mentioned that the world needs to shift from an ideological to a philosophical approach. A day later, when I addressed the Council for Foreign Relations, I expanded on this concept a little more. The essence of philosophy is that it is not a

closed thought, while ideology is a closed one. So philosophy not only allows dialogue, but it is a perpetual search for the truth through dialogue. The entire Upanishad literature is a compilation of dialogue. Ideologies which close the gates for dialogue have the propensity for violence while philosophy seeks to avoid it through dialogue. Thus Hindu and Buddhist religions are in this sense more philosophies and not just belief systems. It is my firm belief that the solution to the problem lies in dialogue. Earlier it was believed that force indicates power. Now power must come through the strength of ideas and through effective dialogue. We have seen the adverse effects of war. The first half of the twentieth century was witness to the horror of two World Wars. Now the nature of warfare is changing and the changes are increasing. What took a hundred thousand men for battle can now happen through the click of a button in a span of minutes. All of us here have a cardinal duty to ensure that our future generations lead a life of peace, dignity and mutual respect. We need to sow the seeds of a conflict-free world and in this endeavour the faiths of Hinduism and Buddhism have a great contribution to make.

When we talk about dialogue, what kind of dialogue should it be? It is dialogue which produces no anger or retribution. One of the greatest examples of such dialogue was the one between Adi Shankar and Mandan Mishra. It is worth recalling and describing this ancient example for our modern times. Adi Shankar—a Vedantic, who did not give high marks for rituals, was a young man while Mandan Mishra was an elderly scholar and high ritualist who believed in animal sacrifice as well. Adi Shankar wanted to establish through dialogue a debate with the highest authority on ritualism and establish that rituals were not necessary for attaining mukti, while Mandan Mishra wanted to prove that Shankar was wrong in dismissing rituals. This was how in ancient India, debates on sensitive issues between scholars avoided such issues being settled in streets. Adi Shankar and Mandan Mishra held a debate and Shankar won. The more important point is not the debate itself, but how it was conducted. It is a fascinating story that will remain one of the highest forms of debate for all time for humanity. It was agreed that if Mandan Mishra lost, he would cease to be a householder (*grihasta* life) and accept *sanyas*. If Adi Shankar lost, he would give up his *sanyas* and marry and settle down as a householder. Mandan Mishra—a high scholar, offered to

Adi Shankar, who was young and therefore considered unequal to Mishra, to choose a referee of his choice. Adi Shankar chose Mandan Mishra's wife, a scholar herself, as the referee. If Mandan Mishra lost, she would lose her husband. But see what she did—she asked both Shankar and Mandan Mishra to wear fresh garlands and then begin the debate. She said that the one whose garland loses its freshness would be declared as the loser. Why? Because if one gets angry the body will develop heat and as a result the garland's flowers will lose their freshness in that heat. Anger within is a sign of defeat. On this logic Mandan Mishra was declared as having lost the debate and he accepted *sanyas* and became a disciple of Shankar. This demonstrates the vitality of dialogue and that too dialogue without anger and conflict.

Today in this august gathering, we are people of different nationalities, with different lifestyles, but what binds us is the fact that the roots of our civilisation are in our shared philosophy, history and heritage. Buddhism and Buddhist heritage have a uniting and binding factor. They say that this century is going to be an Asian century. I am very clear that without embracing the path of ideals shown by Gautama Buddha this century cannot be the Asian century. I see Lord Buddha doing to our collective spiritual well-being, what global trade did to our collective economic well-being and the internet did to our collective intellectual well-being. I see Lord Buddha in the twenty-first century across national borders, across faith systems, across political ideologies, playing the role of a bridge to promote understanding, to counsel patience and enlighten us with tolerance and empathy. You are visiting a nation that is extremely proud of its Buddhist heritage. My hometown, Vadnagar in Gujarat, was one of the places visited and chronicled by the Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang. The SAARC region is home to the holy sites of Buddhism such as Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Krishi Nagar. These sites draw pilgrims from ASEAN nations as also from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Russia. My government is doing everything possible to give an impetus to the Buddhist heritage across India and India is taking the lead in boosting Buddhism and Buddhist heritage across Asia. This three-day meet is one such effort. I hope the next three days are full of vibrant and rich discussions and we are able to sit together and think about the way ahead towards peace, conflict resolution and a clean and green world.

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VOTE OF THANKS: MASAHIRO AKIYAMA

This conference is being held under a strong initiative taken by the Prime Ministers of both Japan and India. I understand that Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Abe had a lively conversation on Buddhism, our shared Asian values and democracy, especially as Prime Minister Modi first visited many Buddhist temples and statues in Kyoto on his trip to Japan. Today's conference is the first of two that will focus on Buddhism and Asian common tradition. The second one will be held in Tokyo, to be organised by my foundation—The Tokyo Foundation—in collaboration with Vivekananda International Foundation and other institutes. The topics we will be exploring are very, very interesting not only for the political prospects but from academic and philosophical viewpoints as well. Finally again, I would like to express my warm gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi for the opportunity to engage in what promises to be a very interesting dialogue and of course, for his inspiring remarks. I also appreciate all the marvellous remarks provided by the esteemed guests.



Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe's address through video conference



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



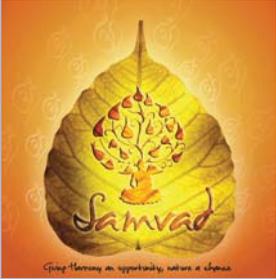
Lama Lobzang welcoming Prime Minister Modi



Gen NC Vij



Speakers with Prime Minister Modi





VIF Office Bearers with Prime Minister Modi



Participants at the Conference



MoS, Home Kiren Rijiju and MoS (IC), Tourism and Culture, Mahesh Sharma inaugurating the Exhibition



Former President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Kumaratunga along with other dignitaries at the Exhibition inauguration



S Gurusurthy addressing the Conference



Participants at the Conference



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj being welcomed by Masahiro Akiyama and Gen NC Vij



Participants at the Conference

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CONFLICT
AVOIDANCE

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The Hindu-Buddhist conference is a profound and landmark event, which has the potential to change the global discourse on the themes of the conference. It is a joint effort of two of the oldest, living, tolerant, non-conflicting civilisations. Unlike other religious ideologies, which believe in the inerrancy of their respective doctrines, both Hindu and Buddhist philosophies accept other religions as valid for their respective followers, which makes them doctrinally tolerant. They also believe, within and outside, in dialogue. In their doctrinal tolerance aided by their propensity for dialogue, inheres their potential for conflict avoidance—a virtue the other faiths seem to have denied to themselves by claiming to be the only true faith and regarding the other faiths as false, which inevitably risks conflicts with the others. Again, both Hindu and Buddhist faiths regard nature as sacred, which makes them exceptionally environmentally conscious. Therefore, their nature-friendly tenets have the potentiality to preserve the environment and ecology.

With their conflict-avoiding propensities and environment compatible nature, the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations have the philosophic potential to build a global, non-violent and tolerant architecture and also ingrain and implant environmental consciousness in people by recalling their spiritual world view that the Divine is immanent as much in nature as in humans.

The conference, which is a joint endeavour of the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations, is conceived as an ambitious, yet not an unachievable goal to shift the paradigm of global discourse on the two critical issues—the first of conflicts, from conflict resolution to conflict avoidance and the second of environment, from environmental regulations to environmental consciousness. In a world which seems to be running short of ideas other than government action to defend and preserve environment, the conference seeks to open up a people participatory paradigm on both conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness.

Appropriately titled *Samvad*, a popular Hindi language derivative of the Sanskrit word *samvadam*—meaning dialogue—the conference intends to seek and urge open and truthful global dialogue on conflicts and environment.

The heart of the conference, captured in the this keynote paper, is centred on seeking three fundamental changes or paradigm shifts:

- From curative conflict resolution to preventive conflict avoidance
- From state environmental regulations to mass ecological consciousness
- From the dialogue-evasive ideology to dialogue-friendly philosophy

The two themes of the conference are not mutually exclusive. They are interrelated through the underlying value of dialogue, which the third limb proposes. As most conflicts among humans and nations today have the underpinning of religions, the present conflict resolution paradigm of the world, which avoids religion, is becoming weak and inadequate, needing an alternative approach. Conflict avoidance paradigm rests on the view that peace among nations is not possible without peace among religions, peace among religions is not possible without dialogue among religions, and dialogue among religions is impossible without investigating the fundamentals of different religions. Thus, open and transparent philosophic dialogue, which is inherent in Hindu-Buddhist traditions, forms the core of the conflict avoidance paradigm.

Again, the current paradigm of resolving conflict between humans and development on one side and environment on the other is government regulation, which does not treat the cause of environmental degradation rooted in the anthropocentric belief, thought and development systems.

The alternative paradigm for resolving the conflict between humans and environment is deeper than even deep environmental consciousness. It is rooted in the cultural and religious principles of environmentally conscious belief systems, which have the potential to transform the present paradigm of the anthropocentric development model into an ecocentric one.

The environmental issues also call for dialogue among religions and belief systems to promote the consciousness that nature is sacred and as sacred as humans. All dialogues on the fundamentals of any ideology, including religions, transform ideologies into philosophies, which govern the paradigm of conflict avoidance.

The conference seeks to transform this event into a new movement—a global intellectual and civilisational movement to create deep awareness about, spread and advocate the three themes in global discourse. This conference is the beginning of the process with a series of conferences to carry and deepen the agenda, first in the different Hindu-Buddhist nations and later in other places.

THEME ONE

CONFLICT RESOLUTION TO CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

Conflict resolution is a post-World War II geopolitical idea to handle more than manage conflicts.¹ It works on Track I and Track II diplomatic interventions.² Geopolitical powers have been leading the conflict resolution paradigm. It still works mainly through state actors and relies on the stability of nation states for its work and success, even when there are signs that the era of nation states is fast fading.³ It rests on give and take and compromises. Its logic is what is practical in a given context rather than what is durable for the future. The renaming of conflict resolution as conflict transformation is more semantic than qualitative.⁴ Though a conflict resolution model had worked in the past, in recent times its efficacy to handle the religious and theological extremes and realities, which has the propensity for, and generates, most violent conflicts of the present day—in which non-state actors challenging

and defeating nation states play dominant roles—is seriously questioned. ‘The limits of rationality in conflict resolution is explored where feelings and ethical, religious and other values may be just as important in conflict engagement and handling.’⁵ Even the preventive dimensions contemplated within the conflict resolution ‘are designed to resolve, manage or contain disputes before they become violent’⁶ and not to diagnose and deal with the causes of the conflict.

With the traditional geopolitical conflict resolution model becoming inadequate to handle the new situation that has emerged, it does not need a great seer to say that an alternative model is necessary, particularly when the nation states targeted by the religion-driven, non-state actors are turning vulnerable and fragile. The alternative of conflict avoidance explored here is similar to the anthropological principle of avoiding actual and potential conflict by controlling deviant behaviour.⁷ There is a paradigm difference between conflict resolution, which is political, contractual and constitutional and conflict avoidance, which is relational, cultural and religious. Most of the conflicts in the world are traceable to religion and if there is no peace between religions, there can be no peace between nations or peoples.⁸ And yet neither the dispute resolution models of today nor the ‘alternative or appropriate dispute resolution’ models consider either the impact of religions or the effect of religious theologies on conflict and peace.

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document on alternative or appropriate dispute resolution model catalogues the different disciplines involved in the multidisciplinary conflict resolution. It says, ‘The field of conflict resolution has matured as a multidisciplinary field involving psychology, sociology, social studies, law, business, anthropology, gender studies, political sciences and international relations.’ The only discipline, which is absent in the catalogue, is religion—which is the most serious cause of today’s conflicts.⁹ Geopolitics recognises that it is beyond its scope and competence to deal with religious causes. Contrary to the misgivings of some on what conflict avoidance means,¹⁰ it is indeed like preventing the contracting of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) by making one not just aware of how it manifests, but being conscious of it and not like resolving it by seeking treatment after one has contracted it. It is in this sense

that distinction is made here between conflict avoidance, which diagnoses the causes of conflicts and prevents the deviance which causes it, and conflict resolution, which seeks to cure conflicts after they set in. The distinction is more pronounced when the issue is environmental—where the conflict is between nature and science and nature and development. Arousing and implanting environmental consciousness is an anthropological, cultural, religious and social model to avoid the conflict while environmental regulation is a national and transnational geopolitical conflict resolution model after allowing the conflicts to arise.

FROM END OF HISTORY OF CONFLICTS TO RE-EMERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS AND CIVILISATIONAL CONFLICTS—UNDERMINING ECONOMIC MONOTHEISM AND GLOBALISATION

The world changed drastically when and since the Cold War ended in 1990 and in couple of decades thereafter, changed ever more radically. Western thinkers began claiming in the early 1990s that the end of Cold War signalled the victory of free market and liberal democratic West over not only socialist nations but also the rest of the world. They declared the final victory of Western civilisation—represented by liberal democracy and free market capitalism with no serious ideological competitors left for liberal democracy—as the end of the history of conflicts.¹¹ The post-Cold War world also saw the United States (US) emerging as the only superpower of the world like no other power ever in history.¹² Soon, the new phenomenon of globalisation began driving the world towards the free market as a fit-all socio-economic model for the rest of the world. This also reinforced the nineteenth century notion of the Western civilisation as the universal civilisation for the rest to adopt and follow. But even as the West rejoiced at the perceived victory of its civilisation, a dramatic anticlimax theory emerged.

In the summer of 1993, Samuel P Huntington, the renowned American strategic thinker prognosticated the re-emergence of conflicts and civilisational clashes based on religious drives and warned the world about the danger of a return to the days of old barbarism.¹³ His thesis, though controversial, became the most debated idea in decades. Many thinkers and policymakers disagreed with him and even outrightly rejected his views. But within a decade

it appeared as if Huntington's exposition had become almost prophetic, as the world began changing drastically. With Islamist terror striking the US in 2001 and with the global meltdown in 2008, coupled with the re-rise of Asia after two centuries, the grammar and the centre of geopolitics began shifting. Huntington had warned about religion-driven fault lines becoming recognised and also about the rest of the world viewing Western universalism as the ideology of confrontation with non-Western societies.¹⁴ The fallout of the re-emergence of conflict and the financial stress that it imposed on the US and also the weakening of the US and the world economy in the wake of the 2008 crisis was that the US was no more perceived as the superpower of the kind which could provide the leadership to maintain the global order.¹⁵ After Islamic terror struck the US in 2001 and Europe in 2004 and 2005, the Western world discarded the fit-all Western anthropological development model it had commended to the rest of the world after World War II. The G20 nations first in 2005, the World Bank reaffirming it later in 2008 and finally the United Nations (UN) in 2010 concluded that the developing nations need to work out development models suited to their own situation.¹⁶ This recognised that economic monotheism through the invisible hand of unregulated market mechanism no more held good.¹⁷ Western universalist ideas, which drove the post-World War II world thus met with a dead end as the third millennium began.

GLOBAL TERROR AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS SEEM TO SUPPORT SAMUEL HUNTINGTON'S THESIS

But the debate on religions and civilisations set off by Huntington was essentially Eurocentric and from the perspective of the world's view of the West. It was derived from the secular version of the monotheistic religious traditions, with virtually no input from the Eastern or Hindu-Buddhist religious or civilisational traditions or philosophies. Even though he had interacted with various civilisations and visited Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan and in Asia, Singapore and India were significantly missing in Huntington's list. He explicitly conceded that he did not get exposed to Hindu civilisation¹⁸— incidentally the most doctrinally tolerant civilisation. To the extent, he was short of exposure to the civilisation of a sixth of humanity, which is the longest

living civilisation with the doctrinal tolerance that is unknown outside India, Huntington's perspective of world civilisations as essentially conflict-prone was truncated and not a comprehensive world view. Though Huntington had said that history, language, culture and tradition differentiate civilisations, he pointed to religion as the most important differential.¹⁹

Huntington spoke of secular values and the separation of state and Church in the European context, but he nevertheless asserted that the European community rested on the shared foundation of European culture and Western Christianity.²⁰ That is to say, the civilisation of European people, whether they adhere to Christianity or not and regardless of the degree of their adherence, is Christian. And noting that, 'Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilisations has been going on for 1,300 years,' Huntington said, 'The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural... The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future.'²¹ He predicted that, 'This centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent.'²² Although Huntington shook the secular West, many thinkers in the West particularly tended to dismiss his prognosis of religious clashes with Islam. Yet, the turn of events with Islamic terror targeting the West and developments in the Middle East after Huntington published his view seemed to lend validity to his thesis.

The advent of global Islamic extremism clearly and increasingly resembles the religion-driven civilisational conflicts propounded by Samuel Huntington. Today, 'most violent conflicts contain religious elements linked up with ethno-national, interstate, economic, territorial, cultural and other issues.'²³ In recent times, Islamic religious terror has taken a more serious shape with the advent of the Islamic State (IS). In 2013, terrorist activity increased substantially with the total number of deaths over the earlier year registering a 61 per cent increase. In the same period, the number of countries that experienced more than fifty deaths rose from fifteen to twenty-four. This highlights that not only is the intensity of terrorism increasing, but the fact that its breadth is increasing as well.²⁴ Since 2000, there has been over a fivefold increase in the

number of deaths from terrorism, rising from 3,361 in 2000 to 17,958 in 2013.²⁵ Religion as a driving ideology for terrorism has dramatically increased since 2000—from 250 incidents to over 1,500. It has doubled during 2011 and 2013.²⁶ The largest year-on-year increase in deaths from terrorism was recorded between 2012 and 2013 increasing from 11,133 to 17,958.²⁷ Prior to 2000, ethno-nationalist separatism was the biggest driver of terrorist organisations.²⁸

THREAT TO DE JURE STATES FROM SUBNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FORCES—BEYOND GEOPOLITICS TO HANDLE

What are the causes of the terror? Not hunger, poverty or other signs of lack of development, which nation states can handle. Global Terrorism Index (GTI) says that terrorism does not seem to be linked to poverty, nor to human or economic development indicators. But political stability, intergroup cohesion and legitimacy of the state correlate to GTI—meaning where there is political instability, lack of internal group cohesion or the state lacks legitimacy, GTI is higher.²⁹ When his critics questioned Huntington's exposition on civilisational clashes, he countered them asking 'if not civilisations, what?' And saying that the very fact that his theory has attracted so much attention and generated so much debate around the world, he asked can any other paradigm do better?³⁰ Obviously, the Huntington thesis seems to have been validated by the turn of events—at least so far as Western and Islamic civilisations are concerned.

Traditional millennial religious rivalries apart, new religious political challenges have emerged in the form of lawless forces unleashed by extremely violent religious ideologies that challenge, and even defeat, de jure states. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) now controls more territory than do the governments of Israel and Lebanon—nearly a third of Iraq alone.³¹ This has threatened the world order as never before. Barbaric killings of non-combatants by slitting throats and other cruel and select episodes of mass murder, supposedly unthinkable in modern times, are now openly and proudly displayed by terrorists on social media, as acts of religious piety. These conflicts are conceptually and clearly beyond the scope and capacity of the weakening and failing nation states, and therefore, beyond the scope of geopolitics

to handle. 'Forces at the subnational, transnational and supranational levels all have a profound impact on global patterns of conflict and conflict resolution, often more important than the effect of nation states themselves, that are not accounted for in geopolitical analysis.... The vast bulk of terrorist incidents, including the attacks of 11 September 2001 or the 2014 beheadings of American and British hostages by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), have been undertaken by transnational, non-government actors with little, if any, relation to geopolitics.'³² Given their religious and cultural drive, the new form of conflicts cannot be managed within the current paradigm of conflict resolution through geopolitics. There are indeed suggestions that, 'analysts and policymakers need to look beyond the shadow of geopolitics in making both predictions and constructive designs for a better world'.³³ But as yet, there has been no effort to go beyond the geopolitical approach to conflicts. Again, once it is conceded that there is need to look beyond the shadow of geopolitics, it must also be equally agreed that the issue is beyond the scope of the existing paradigm of conflict resolution and beyond the capacity of geopolitical skills and institutions to resolve.

WITH RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS ON, A 'NEW GLOBAL ETHIC' NEEDED FOR SURVIVAL OF THE WORLD

There is already realisation in some quarters, particularly in religious domains, that there cannot be world peace without peace among gods and religions. Luc Reyhler, social and political scientist, professor of international relations and director of the Centre for Peace Research and Strategic Studies at the University of Leuven in Belgium, who focuses on diplomatic thinking, sustainable peace-building architecture, peace negotiation, conflict and peace impact assessment, genocide, failed foreign policy, intellectual solidarity and the role of time in conflict and peace dynamics, talks of the critical role of religions in conflict promotion and avoidance. She writes, 'The world cannot survive without a new global ethic and religions play a major role, as parties in violent conflicts, as passive bystanders and as active peacemakers and peace-builders. Hans Küng's thesis that there cannot be world peace without a religious peace is right. Representing two-thirds of the world population, religions have major responsibility in creating a constructive conflict management culture.

They will have to end conflicts fuelled by religion, stop being passive bystanders and organise themselves to provide more effective peace services. Religions and religious organisations have an untapped and underused integrative power potential. To assess this potential and to understand which factors enhance or inhibit joint peace ventures between the Christian religions, as also between the prophetic religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Indian religions—Hinduism and Buddhism and the Chinese wisdom religions, is an urgent research challenge.³⁴ But a new global ethics, which seeks to involve religions in the endeavour for peace will call for acquiring knowledge that different religions stand for. When religion can be the problem, according to Huntington, and equally it can be the solution according to Luc Reyhler, but the foundations of all religions must be studied and openly debated. Without that, to call in a religion, which is believed to be creating the problem, can be counterproductive. This is the first indication that the world is beginning to understand the need to acquire the knowledge of the cause of conflict. Understanding the cause of the conflict is the precondition of any effort to avoid it. This is the very essence of conflict avoidance.

THE ESSENCE OF CONFLICT AVOIDANCE IS TO FIRST ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROBLEM THAT LEADS TO CONFLICT

In his translator's introduction to the Chinese classic *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, Thomas Cleary writes, 'According to an old story, a lord of ancient China once asked his physician, a member from a family of healers, which of them is most skilled in the art. The physician whose reputation was such that his name became synonymous with medicine care in China, replied, "My eldest brother sees the spirit of sickness and removes it before it takes shape, so his name does not get out of the house. My elder brother cures sickness when it is still extremely minute, so his name does not get out of the neighbourhood. As for me I puncture veins, prescribe potions, massage skin, so from time to time my name gets out and is heard among the lords".'³⁵ Citing the tale of the physician, a Chinese Ming dynasty critic writes, 'What is essential for leaders, generals and ministers in running countries and governing armies is no more than this.'

Thomas Cleary further says that healing arts and the martial arts, though

may be worlds apart, are parallel in several senses including that 'both involve strategy in dealing with disharmony, and in both knowledge of the problem is key to solution.' What is that knowledge? Thomas Cleary quotes in *The Book of Balance and Harmony* by Daochun Li, 'Deep knowledge is to be aware of the disturbance before disturbance, to be aware of the danger before danger, to be aware of the destruction before destruction, to be aware of the calamity before calamity.... By deep knowledge of principle, one can change disturbance into order, change danger into safety, change destruction into survival, change calamity into fortune.'³⁶ But, how does one acquire that deep knowledge about the problem? Study of the cause of the problem and dialogue and debate are the only way to acquire deep knowledge of the problem. Here, the Hindu-Buddhist traditions have established a working model, which is worthy of study and adoption by all religions and it comes close to the suggestion of Hans Küng quoted by Luc Reyckler.

ANCIENT DIALOGUE MODEL OF PURVA PAKSHA—THE TRADITIONAL HINDU, BUDDHIST AND JAIN CONFLICT AVOIDANCE MODEL, HELPS ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT LEADS TO CONFLICT

The Hindu-Buddhist model of conflict avoidance is found in the concept of *Purva paksha* in their science of logic known as *Tarka Shastra*. *Purva paksha* promotes dialogue within one's own faith and with other belief systems. It involves, implies, necessitates and legitimises study, scrutiny and criticism of one's faith within and one another's faith mutually, as well as prior study and scrutiny of the other or opposing view. This method is inherent in ancient India's logic and dialectics, referred to as *Tarka Shastra*. *Purva paksha* is a common model for dialogue in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.³⁷ *Purva paksha* has been in vogue in Indian philosophic discourse since time immemorial. In this model of dialogue, the debating scholars would study each others' philosophy and each would critique the others' thought systems. *Purva paksha* comprehends three stages in the dialogue—one, *Purva paksha*—examining the opposite point of view, two, *khandana*—criticism and three, *Uttara paksha*—*siddhanta* or statement of the proponent's own position. The first stage is the study of the opposite view to understand and prepare oneself for refuting it. The second stage is refutation which is criticism of the

other view. The third stage is the establishment of one's or the other's viewpoint by debate. Adi Shankaracharya who expounded the Advaita philosophy, used the tool of *Purva paksha* in his debates and expositions. The *Purva paksha* model is equally applied to intra-religious debates in Hinduism as there are six differing schools of philosophy within the larger umbrella of Hindu philosophy.

Hinduism comprehends six distinct philosophies—*Shad darshana*—each of which differs in its approach to defining and comprehending the ultimate reality or divinity. They are *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Purva mimamsa* and *Uttara mimamsa*. Three of them—*Nyaya*, *Yoga* and *Uttara mimamsa* discuss there is *Paramatman*—supreme self or *Ishwara*—the lord of all souls and the other three are *Nireshwara*, that is they do not discuss *Ishwara* and talk of only *Atman*—self and not *Paramatman*—supreme self. But all of them are rooted in the concept of dharma—system of values. The latter three, which do not discuss *Ishwara* or the lord of all souls are not regarded as *Nastika*—atheist. Only if a *darshana*—philosophy—does not discuss dharma, it is regarded as *Nastika*. The scholars of the six systems debate their *darshanas*—philosophies—applying the principles of *Purva paksha*. This intellectual ecosystem, which promoted and mandated debate about what is truth, divinity and faith within, promoted internal tolerance which aided and manifested in external tolerance. In Hinduism, it also promoted the broad acceptance that others' faiths are as valid for them as one's faith is for oneself. Many Indian scholars have employed the *Purva paksha* method till very recently. But in recent times it has fallen into disuse mostly because of the intellectual taboo in India that the people of one religion cannot comment on another faith. It may even be a punishable offence if it hurts the religious feelings of others. This is the outcome of the entry of the Abrahamic faiths which claim to be the only true ones and therefore do not have the tradition of debating on their claim. Unless *Purva paksha* or an equivalent model is introduced there would not be true debate or dialogue. There has been an attempt to reinstate the *Purva paksha* model in recent years to debate the Western challenge to Indian religious systems.

In his book *Being Different*, Rajiv Malhotra, a well-known author and writer, has employed the concept of *Purva paksha* to counter the Western

challenge to the Indian religious systems. Satya Narayan Das, founder of Jiva Institute of Vedic Studies, Vrindavan has written, 'Many Indian spiritual leaders, lacking a profound knowledge of their own culture and feeling inferior to the West, try to respond to the Western challenge by showing how Indian and Western religions are the same. Rajiv Malhotra's work... reverses the gaze upon the West through the lens of Indian categories. This process is traditionally called *Purva paksha*, and in Rajiv's work it is given a new mission. Rajiv has devised the very interesting metaphor of digestion to explain how the Dharmic traditions are being disassembled into parts for digestion into the belly of Western culture. *Being Different* shows how the West's history-centrism drives it into claims of exclusiveness, this causes anxiety over differences which it seeks to resolve through projects of digestion in order to obliterate whatever seems challenging.'³⁸

Rajiv Malhotra critiques the history-centrism of the West and explains Indian belief systems from the Indian standpoint.

GLOBAL ETHIC SUGGESTED BY LUC REYCHLER AND STRUCTURED BY HANS KÜNG IS IDENTICAL TO *PURVA PAKSHA*

A new, but marginal, stream in the Western school seems to come near the Hindu-Buddhist concept of *Purva paksha*. Luc Reychler relies on the Catholic priest and theologian Hans Küng's famous statement that there cannot be world peace without peace between religions. But Hans Küng said more on how to make peace between religions and his views are extremely relevant for conflict avoidance. Hans Küng's view almost incorporates the Hindu-Buddhist dialogue model of *Purva paksha*.³⁹ As much as what he said is important, who Hans Küng is, is equally so.

Richard H Morgan, professor, School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University writes on and about what Hans Küng had said, thus, 'Hans Küng is a Catholic priest and theologian who has devoted the past thirty years of his very prolific and influential career to these questions about the place of religion and religions in the quest of world peace. In the early part of his career he served as a special advisor to the German Cardinals at the second Vatican Council. He went on to become perhaps the most well-known theologian of the last half of the twentieth century due to his in-depth and best-selling

explorations of Christian history and theology.... Eventually, the controversies which some of his writings stirred up within the Roman Catholic hierarchy led to the withdrawal of Küng's licence to teach as a Catholic theologian at the University of Tübingen in 1979. In 1980, as a means of settling the legal issues involved in such an action against a tenured faculty member, Küng became the director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research at Tübingen while retaining his status as a theologian. It was in this capacity that Küng began to explore the possibilities for both ecumenical dialogue—between Christian denominations and interreligious dialogue—between Christianity and the other religions of the world, particularly those understood as world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism and Islam. Through his work at the institute, dialoguing, writing and lecturing with either representatives of the other faiths or Western academic experts from those faiths, Küng gradually began to develop the insight that world peace is dependent upon peace among the religions.⁷⁴⁰

Richard H Morgan adds, in what became his guiding hypothesis for most of his writing for the next twenty-five years, that Küng summarised this conviction in the following words, 'With the programme I have formulated for the global change of consciousness which is vital for our survival:

- No peace among the nations, without peace among the religions
- No peace among the religions, without dialogue between the religions
- No dialogue between the religions, without investigation of the foundations of the religions.⁷⁴¹

The realisation that for peace between religions, there should be dialogue between religions and the understanding that there could be no dialogue between religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions intrinsically endorses the Hindu-Buddhist principles of *Purva paksha*. The Hans Küng dialogue model integrating the investigation of the foundations of all religions breaks the taboo of political correctness which has been blocking true debate on the fundamentals of exclusive religions. The 'investigation of the foundations of other religions', as suggested by Hans Küng, is as much relevant for the purpose of testing the belief of the faithfuls about their religions, as to debate whether a religion can describe

other religions as false or label the adherents of other religions as heathens or *kafirs* and lay down rules for how to treat them, exclude them or even kill them. The fundamental foundation of one religion to lay down the rules to brand and of how to treat the followers of other religions it considers as untrue faiths, needs to be openly debated as this is a major cause of conflicts between the doctrinally intolerant (mainly proselytising) religions on the one side and doctrinally tolerant (mainly Indic) religions on the other. It is not only that the doctrinally intolerant faiths clash among themselves, they also tend to clash with doctrinally tolerant ones. This issue is extremely important as, because of the hostility of doctrinally intolerant faiths, even doctrinally tolerant faiths are tending to become intolerant when they interface with doctrinally intolerant ones in an increasingly interactive and intrusive world. In another sense, the external doctrinal intolerance is a mirror reflection of the internal doctrinal intolerance. Unless a religion has internal doctrinal tolerance it will not have the potential for external doctrinal tolerance.

DOCTRINAL INTOLERANCE IS THE BREEDING GROUND OF FUNDAMENTALISM, CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

The ancient doctrine of *Purva paksha* for intra- and interfaith debates or the contemporary formulation of Hans Küng for interreligious dialogue, first postulates the need to acquire deep knowledge of the fundamentals of one's own religion and other religions. This step, if it is agreed to by all religions through the medium of dialogue, will overcome objections based on political correctness which hedges against talking about things that may be regarded as discomforting to one or the other faith. Avoiding such discomfort amounts to closing the eyes to the conflict promoting propensities of faiths and their propensity for violence. The dialogue should also be about the approach of one's faith towards another's. Investigation of the fundamentals of other religions is required for three reasons. One, what is the attitude of one's religion towards another's. Two, because of that attitude to another's faith do some religions have wars and violent conflicts within and outside? Three, whether such conflicts within and outside are mandated or permitted by the doctrines of the religions themselves? This calls for a deeper and open analysis. Hinduism, which is the mother of all Indic religions, is universally

regarded as doctrinally tolerant.⁴² And so are the religions that evolved out of it—Buddhism,⁴³ Jainism⁴⁴ and Sikhism.⁴⁵ But, the monotheistic religions are universally regarded as doctrinally intolerant.⁴⁶ The Fundamentalism Project, 1991-95, instituted by the American Academy of Social Sciences had studied, from the perspective of Western academia, the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism that was rising since the 1970s. The Fundamentalism Project is still the most comprehensive study of the phenomenon of fundamentalism, which also analyses how a religion prone to fundamentalism conflicts with contemporary modernity. The Fundamentalism Project editors and authors broadly classified the world religions as Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic. They broadly agreed that the phenomenon of fundamentalism is more accurately applicable to Abrahamic faiths and not to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other Asian faiths. They have also concluded that in non-Abrahamic traditions—namely South East Asian and Far Eastern—sacred texts do not play the same constitutive role as in the Abrahamic faiths.⁴⁷

The exclusive doctrines in texts contain seeds of intolerance. Adherents of two religions clash because of mutual intolerance of the other faithfuls. But religions have the propensity to clash because of their mutual doctrinal intolerance. A doctrinally intolerant religion tends to have clashes with even a doctrinally tolerant religion. Individual believers of different religions, whether doctrinally tolerant or intolerant, will naturally have a tendency to differ, conflict and clash. A doctrinally tolerant religion has the potential to restrain and moderate its adherents. But when a religion itself is doctrinally intolerant, it does not have the potential to restrain its intolerant adherents; it has the propensity to make even the moderate among them intolerant. The nature of human beings fosters intolerance to others with different views, ideals, customs or habits.^{47A} Therefore, because of human propensities, intolerance is spontaneous and contagious, and individuals naturally so prone to intolerance need to be moderated by a tolerant doctrine. If the doctrine itself is intolerant, it even legitimises intolerance as a doctrinal duty. At this point, an intolerant faith tends to make even the tolerant one intolerant and escalate intolerance. When doctrinally intolerant faiths meet with doctrinally tolerant ones, Karl Popper's paradox of tolerance arises, which will tend to erode and destroy the tolerance of the tolerant faith.⁴⁸

Tolerance or intolerance of the religion out of which a civilisation has emerged also impacts on civilisational tolerance and conflicts. The conflicts are as much intra-religious as they are interreligious. In 2013, more than 80 per cent of the lives lost to terrorism occurred in only five countries—all Islamic—Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria.⁴⁹ Intra-religious intolerance justifies and manifests in, interreligious hate. While theological rationales for the fomentation of intra-religious hatred vary, there is commonality in the psychosocial roots of such enmity across religious boundaries.⁵⁰ When a religion regards the adherents of other religions as heathen or infidel, the doctrine of that religion promotes intolerance. Extremist religious tendencies prone to violence articulate that modern religious mainstream has deviated from a true, authentic path, that such deviation from authenticity is heretical, leading to severe intra-religious tensions and ultimately to intolerance and the implicit or explicit justification of violence.⁵¹ A religion with doctrinal propensity for intolerance within lacks the potential to develop tolerance towards other religions. A tolerant faith may become intolerant when faced with an intolerant faith.⁵² A doctrinally intolerant one, therefore, has the propensity and also potential to make the tolerant faith intolerant. Intolerance becomes contagious, endemic and even epidemic. Even adherents of faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism, which are basically tolerant and even accept other faiths as legitimate, will tend to develop intolerance when they confront intolerant faiths. The secular and tolerant states have not been able to ensure religious tolerance. Even a tolerant state is fragile without a tolerant society.⁵³

For this the basic theology or foundational thoughts, organisations and the history of different religions have to be studied by all and there should be open debate among them as suggested by Hans Küng. The debate has to be open and to the view of global and national societies and the followers of all religions. This will bring out in the open, which religion, in terms of its theology, has the propensity to promote or avoid conflicts and which religion has theological potential for intolerance or tolerance so as to promote corrective processes within the intolerant faith. This alone will help promote introspection within intolerant faiths, and also encourage the moderates within them.

PURVA PAKSHA, CONFLICT-AVOIDING DIALOGUE, MADE INDIA
ACCOMMODATIVE, FREE OF LARGE-SCALE VIOLENCE

The *Purva paksha* methodology was not just an ideal or a theory. As it prepared and opened the different schools of thought for facing criticism, it made all adherents moderate. It thus became a tool for conflict avoidance. The believers had to face criticism from non-believers and had to answer them intellectually and philosophically—not handle them physically. In the Indian tradition, even the non-believers were accepted as a reality of life. In Indian discourse, there were continuous debates between believers and non-believers. In olden days, when religion dominated public and private domains, non-believers, who were exceptions, had their own standing in society. Dialogue, in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, was the principal mode of agreeing or agreeing to disagree and living together with disagreement. *Purva paksha* method of dialogue ensured that the differences, even if unsettled, did not spill onto streets and create societal disorder and violence. *Purva paksha* dialogue helped to avoid conflicts and prevented individual or group deviance from peace and harmony. This is how ancient and medieval India could live in harmony despite all differences of caste, community, religion and lifestyle and showed to the world that unity through harmony was possible amid diversity. *Purva paksha* debate works only in philosophic discourse—approximately equal to *darshana* in Sanskrit language. Debates and dialogue became natural to Indian discourse only because all thought systems that originated in India were philosophies, which were open to comment and criticism and avoided physical conflicts. Ideologies, in contrast, are founded on the premise that they are inerrant and other thought systems are wrong. Therefore, they do not accept criticism.

The third part of the keynote address deals with the difference between philosophy and ideology.

It needs no great investigation to show that the culture of *Purva paksha* debate and dialogue has enabled the Indian civilisation to live in peace despite a vast bandwidth of contradictions and diversity. Even the ancient Puranas of India brought out this diversity of not just peoples but also ideals. For instance, Sri Rama, the hero in the great epic Ramayana and regarded by Hindus as the manifestation of God in human form, obeyed his

father Dasaratha. He is celebrated and revered for that. Prahlada, another revered icon, defied his father. He is also celebrated and revered for that! Likewise Sita, Sri Rama's consort, obeyed her husband and she is revered. But Mira, another revered icon in Hinduism, defied her husband and yet, she too is revered. These contradictions are thoroughly debated in India during the Ramayana celebration period. In the temples of South India, devotees of Rama debate whether he was right in sending his wife Sita to the forest or in killing the monkey king Bali the way he did and whether Sri Krishna, in the great epic Mahabharata, was right in advising Arjuna to kill the disarmed warrior Karna contrary to the rules of dharma and so on. Even Hindu divinities were not beyond criticism in the debates in India. This is something unimaginable in monotheistic faiths.

The traditions of India belonging to all Indian faiths, philosophies, institutions and regions whether originating in hills, forests or plains, have internalised the culture of dialogue and debate on all issues. This helped the Indian civilisation to avoid violent conflicts. Consequently, in spite of serious religious issues being openly discussed—including central issues—like whether there was God at all or none and unresolved disagreement, there was no conflict. Disagreement or divergence was not a ground for violent conflict because dialogue became central to handling contradictions and disagreements. Only when someone forced one's view on others, conflicts emerged. That this model had enabled India to lead a life of peace and harmony for almost 1,600 years till the thirteenth century CE, it then seems to bear the testimony of the world history on violence and killing.⁵⁴

DOCTRINAL INTOLERANCE ALIEN TO HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

A contemporary Western civilisational and strategic world view as expounded by Samuel Huntington is that a religion is bound to clash with secular civilisational institutions that evolved out of them and religions are bound to clash among themselves. The experience of Hindu-Buddhist religions and civilisations is contrary to Huntington's theory of adversarial relation between religions and civilisations. Hinduism and Buddhism shared the most unique form of interreligious relation in the history of religions. Buddha, who revolted against animal sacrifice and ritualism in Hinduism, is venerated by Hindus.

Jayadeva, one of the greatest Vaishnavite devotional poets, praised Buddha as an avatar of Lord Vishnu, who took birth to stop animal sacrifice. In contrast, the evolution and emergence of Protestant Christianity led to huge conflicts and bloodshed. Again, Buddhism was founded on the karma and rebirth cycles, which is also the essence of Hindu philosophy as expounded in scriptures like *Kena* and *Mundaka* Upanishads. Therefore, Hindu thinkers regarded Buddha more as a reformer and they did not regard Buddhism as a separate and distinct religion at all. The common relations of including worship between Hindus and Buddhists did not cease.⁵⁵ With the result, the umbilical ties of Buddhism with Hinduism lasted for millennia and continue even today.

Consequently, despite the rise of Buddhism and many powerful rulers like Ashoka, later Harsha, subscribing to it, the relation between Hinduism and Buddhism did not alter and continued as before. The Hindu civilisation continued unbroken, enriched by the contribution of Buddha. Buddhism evolved with a distinct identity of its own with intrinsic philosophic contribution from Hinduism. In fact, with both of them mutually enriching their value systems, the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations are partly distinct but partly so similar as to appear identical. They mutually influenced each other. There is a strong evidence of Buddhist influence in the language as well as in the doctrines of Hinduism, therefore it must be admitted that one cannot imagine that Buddhism was assimilated into Hinduism—actually the latter has internalised some of the important terms and teachings from the former. One view goes as far as to say that it is wrong to treat the Buddha as a Hindu or a great reformer of the Hindu religion, since there was no Hinduism as known now in his time.⁵⁶

HINDU DOCTRINE, MORE THAN JUST TOLERANT AS IT INCORPORATES ALL FORMS OF BELIEFS AND BELIEVERS AND ALSO NON-BELIEVERS

Actually the word tolerance—of other faiths—does not fully capture the essence of Hindu philosophy. Hinduism accepts the existence and relevance of all faiths. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* brings out this core value of Hinduism. ‘In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. The Hindu is inclined to revere the Divine in every manifestation, whatever it

may be and is doctrinally tolerant, leaving others—including both Hindus and non-Hindus—to whatever creed and worship practices suit them the best. A Hindu may embrace a non-Hindu religion without ceasing to be a Hindu and since the Hindu is disposed to think synthetically and to regard other forms of worship, strange gods and divergent doctrines as inadequate rather than wrong or objectionable, he tends to believe that the highest divine powers complement each other for the well-being of the world and mankind. Few religious ideas are considered to be finally irreconcilable. The core of the religion does not even depend on the existence or non-existence of God or whether there is one God or many. Since religious truth is said to transcend all verbal definition, it is not conceived in dogmatic terms. Hinduism is then a civilisation and a conglomerate of religions with neither a beginning nor a founder and not having a central authority, hierarchy or organisation.⁵⁷ Even though the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes Hinduism as doctrinally tolerant, its exposition itself shows that it is more than just doctrinally tolerant. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that the Hindu doctrine incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating particularly ‘elimination of any’ and reveres the divine in every manifestation, leaving particularly the non-Hindus to whatever creed and worship practices suit them the best. The Hindu doctrine regards a Hindu, who follows a non-Hindu faith, as Hindu only. Such doctrine can never conflict with or be hostile to any faith and no religion can have any reason to clash with such philosophy.

IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND EXHORTATION TO RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN HINDU, BUDDHIST AND TAOIST SCRIPTURES

While there is exhortation for religious violence in the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, there is total abhorrence for religious violence in Hinduism. In the Bhagavad Gita, which is a dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and his preceptor and charioteer in the war, Krishna, Krishna exhorts Arjuna to fight. There have been debates on whether it is an exhortation for religious violence. Many even equate the concept of *Dharma yuddha* that Krishna advocates in Bhagavad Gita to the Hindu version of jihad, or holy or just war.⁵⁸ Is this view right? This question has been specifically investigated by many scholars and writers. Here is an interesting analysis by Mike King, an academic and independent scholar:

When Mahatma Gandhi translated Bhagavad Gita into Gujarati he found it most difficult to deal with its central narrative device—Krishna persuading Arjuna to go to war. Gita is part of a vastly longer epical drama called the Mahabharata that tells in mythic form the war that ensues. When Voltaire surveyed whatever Hindu religious texts were available to him, he was impressed by the lack of violence in them. Whether he was aware of Mahabharata or not, there is still a profound difference between violence recorded there and in the Old Testament. The motivation for the great Indian war had not a shred of religious basis.⁵⁹ While it is almost impossible to find an exhortation to religious intolerance in the Mahabharata, as Voltaire noted, it is hard to find a small section which does not speak of intolerance, eternal damnation or punishment in Old Testament.⁶⁰

HINDU CIVILISATION HAD HUMANE LAWS OF WAR FROM VEDIC PERIOD AND HAD BUILT-IN CONFLICT AVOIDANCE RULES EVEN IN WARS. MODERN WESTERN WARS WERE BARBARIC TILL 1897.

The real test of a religion's or civilisation's non-conflicting character is not in its approach to others in peace times, but in its rules of war. Everything is considered fair in war. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes the inhuman state of the rules of war in different civilisations. 'In early history, war appears to have been a matter of almost unrelieved barbarity. Practically no restraints were observed in methods of war, there was little discrimination between combatant and non-combatant and torture, slavery, death and confiscation of property awaited conquered forces and population.'⁶¹ Barbaric practices often accompanied a victory in war. The maxim '*vae victis*' implied that the vanquished nation could expect little mercy.⁶²

'Yet the identifiable features of the present law can be traced back to ancient times in different parts of the world. As a rule however, the mitigating features of law represented only an ideal and so the law was actually applied only during wars between kindred peoples or like civilisations. Such were the conditions that persisted through ancient times, up to Middle Ages, until—prompted by religion and ideas of chivalry on the one hand and by the increase of rationalist and humanist sentiment on the other—a substantial body of law had come into being by the late Middle Ages. Such laws governed certain aspects of war, at least among fellow religionists. Most noteworthy

of these early laws was the insistence that prisoners, if they were Christians captured by Christians, could no longer be slaved.⁶³ It is worth noting that non-combatants were exempted from cruelty only if they happened to be fellow religionists. Much of the existing rules of war, which made wars more secular, were framed in the conventions at the Hague in 1899 and 1907.⁶⁴ Till then, the rules of war in the Western nations were as they had been described in the encyclopaedia. The only exception to barbarity in war that even the West recognised was ancient European, which is no more alive and Hindu civilisation which is in living form. ‘There is evidence that some ancient civilisations prohibited certain methods of warfare—agreements on the treatment of the prisoners of war were concluded in Europe around 1400 BC. The Manu Laws of India prohibited, around 500 BC, the use of poisoned weapons and other inhumane methods.’⁶⁵

Buddhism tended to abhor wars as Ashoka’s renunciation of war altogether demonstrated. But still it recognised the need to wage wars in certain situations.⁶⁶ Hindu civilisation had understood that under certain circumstances wars become inevitable. But it had framed such rules of war that wars were almost impossible to be waged. Hinduism substituted *yagya*—sacrificial ritual—for war. If a king wishing to be an emperor conducts *Ashwamedha yagya*, as he is commanded by the Hindu rules of statecraft—Rajdharm—those kings who attend the *yagya* are deemed to have elected him as an emperor. He wages war only with those who refuse to attend or defy him.^{67(a)} The Rig Veda, the oldest text of the world ruled, ‘Do not poison the tip of your arrow’, ‘Do not attack the sick or old’, ‘Do not attack a child or a woman’ and ‘Do not attack from behind’ and said that a warrior will go to hell if he broke any of the rules.^{67(b)}

In his book *The Wonder that was India*, Arthur Llewellyn Basham says on Hindu rules of war, ‘According to *Arthashastra* there are three types of conquest—righteous conquest, conquest for greed and demonic conquest—in Sanskrit—*Dharma vijaya*, *Lobha vijaya* and *Asura vijaya*. The first was a conquest in which the defeated king was forced to render homage and tribute, after which, he or a member of his family was reinstated as a vassal. The second was a victory in which, an enormous booty was demanded and large portion of enemy territory was annexed. The third involved political

annihilation of the kingdom and its incorporation in that of the victor. The latter two types are generally disapproved by all sources except their mention in *Arthashastra*. Thus, the Mahabharata declares, 'A king should not attempt to gain unrighteously, for who reveres the king who wins unrighteous victory? Unrighteous conquest is impermanent and does not lead to heaven.'⁶⁸ Basham regarded the concept of righteous conquest—the sense of which was prevalent in no other civilisation—as an impediment to empire building over the whole of India. This showed that the Indian civilisation evolved as one of the greatest civilisations without being obsessed with empire building through wars. Basham added that, 'Demonic conquest still took place from time to time, notably under the Guptas, but righteous conquest was the ideal which the Hindu kings were expected to follow and it is evident that they usually did'.⁶⁹ AL Basham added, 'Yet our overall impression is that in no other part of the world were the relations of man and man and of man and the state so fair and humane. In no other early civilisation were slaves so few in number and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well-protected as in the *Arthashastra*. No other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu. In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt but in comparison with conditions in other ancient cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilisation is its humanity.'⁷⁰ Hindu history shows that even in conflicts there were built-in rules of conflict avoidance—like how wars were avoided and if wars took place how inhuman violence was avoided by commonly accepted rules of war.

NOBLE RULES OF WAR OF HINDU CIVILISATION WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY INVADERS TO CONQUER INDIA

These rules of war continued to be practised by Hindu kings even when attacked by foreign invaders such as Alexander, Turks, Mughals, Persians and Afghans. The noble rules of war practised by Hindu kings were one of the reasons for their setback in the wars against the invaders who practised barbaric rules. How the Hindu kings adhering to their noble rules of war was a handicap against those who did not have such rules is captured in

the site, www.historyofjihad.org, coordinated by Robin MacArthur with Mahomet Mostapha and Naim al Khoury, New Jersey, with contributions from professors and members of the faculty from the Universities of Stanford and Michigan (Ann Arbor), Kansas State University, Ohio State University, and the London School of Economics.⁷¹ The site explains with evidence how the noble Hindu rules of warfare including avoiding night battles, not killing the non-combatants or not dishonouring women were exploited by the invaders to defeat Hindu kings. The site also explains how the Hindus were gradually forced to give up some of their noble rules of war to fight the enemy who had or practised no such noble rules.

Noble rules of war were practised in Kerala, a southern state of India as late as in the seventeenth century CE. In his book *History of Kerala*, Padmanabha Menon says, ‘Whiteway in his work on the *Rise of the Portuguese Power in India* gives us the following account of the weapons of the *nayars*—soldiers and their methods of warfare. In arms and methods of warfare the Hindu of the extreme south...war had become a game governed by a series of elaborate rules and to break one of these rules involved dishonour which was worse than death.’⁷² Whiteway adds, ‘There was neither night fighting nor ambushes. All fighting was in the daytime when the sun had well risen, the opposing camps were pitched near each other and both sides slept securely. At sunrise, the soldiers of both armies mingled at the tank, put on their armour, ate their rice, chewed their betel, gossiped and chatted together. At the beat of the drum either side drew apart and formed its ranks. It was creditable to be the first to beat the drum, and no attack was allowed until the other side had beaten theirs.’⁷³ Whiteway adds, ‘This artificial system broke down very quickly under the stress of fighting against the Portuguese.... Thus, it had always been the custom of *zamori* to sound a trumpet that took four men to lift to warn his enemy of an intended attack. In 1536, he nearly surprised the Portuguese by abandoning the custom suddenly.’ Calling the noble war rules as artificial system, RS Whiteway also added, ‘Hindu races, notably Rajputs, laid those adopting them open to the attacks of outsiders, who could reap every advantage from the artificial system that bound their adversaries.’⁷⁴ This account of how the noble war rules of the Hindu civilisation broke down when facing barbaric warmongers, also demonstrates that an intolerant and

less noble war model makes the tolerant and noble model too to give up its tolerance and nobility.

It is evident from the discourse that the Hindu-Buddhist religious and civilisational rules are fundamentally non-conflicting and even in wars they had framed such noble rules that wars did not have the violent ingredient like the wars in the Abrahamic religions. It needs no seer to say that the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations have a huge contribution to make to the global discourse on conflict avoidance. The world needs a philosophy and world view alternative to the Abrahamic world view which has promoted and even celebrated large-scale violence in history. The Hindu-Buddhist conference on conflict avoidance is an endeavour to focus on how to enhance the contribution of Hindu-Buddhist civilisations in the global discourse dominated for the last two millennia by the Abrahamic faiths, ideologies and world view. The Hindu-Buddhist philosophies have consistently practised and fostered conflict avoidance. When the operating paradigm of conflict resolution is failing and religious violence which the conflict resolution theories and state actors are unable to handle, is on the rise, the Hindu-Buddhist world view emerges as the brightest hope for avoiding conflicts in a world torn by religious conflicts.

CONCLUSION

With conflict resolution, which rests largely on the nation state mechanism, failing and religion-driven conflicts involving non-state actors on the rise, the paradigm of conflict resolution needs to give way to the paradigm of conflict avoidance. Conflict avoidance calls for deep introspection on the drives of the world for the last several centuries since colonisation started. It needs to recognise what Hans Küng has said, 'There is no peace between nations unless there is peace between religions, there cannot be peace between religions unless there is dialogue between religions and there cannot be dialogue between religions unless the foundations of each religion is investigated.' The only model for investigation of the fundamentals of different religions is the *Purva paksha* dialogue model of Hindu-Buddhist tradition, where each philosophy can be critiqued by the scholars of the others. And whether they may agree or disagree finally is less relevant, what is relevant is that their positions

will be discussed. No one interested in or committed to conflict avoidance can claim, in the contemporaneous world, to be beyond dialogue on the foundations of one's faith claiming that one's text or faith is beyond debate. On the question whether this discourse is possible, the real need for it will arise because of the festering and deepening internal intolerance in the faiths that claim to be beyond debate. The internal intolerance will force them to discuss within and also dialogue with others on what their fundamentals are and how far they can insist on the textual inerrancy and finality of their fundamentals when the fundamentals concern others' faiths and cultures. This may be the most difficult and longest way. But if that be the only way, that is the easiest and shortest way too.

THEME TWO

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

ENVIRONMENT—THE GREATEST CHALLENGE HUMANITY HAS EVER FACED

In his opening address to the UN, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that humanity has never faced a greater challenge than climate change, as world leaders gathered in New York for a high-level climate summit in September 2014.⁷⁵

According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), we are currently losing about 12 million hectares of natural forest annually. They are in the process of being extinguished at the rate of more than an acre a second. The rate of tropical deforestation in 1989 was almost the double of that in 1979, with roughly 1.8 per cent of the remaining forests disappearing each year. The biologist Norman Myers estimates that worldwide this amounts to 20 million hectares being yearly destroyed or seriously depleted.⁷⁶ Here are some further headlines of the environmental challenges.⁷⁷

- The Human Development Report (HDR) noted that developed countries with only 15 per cent of the world's population still were accounting for half of world emissions. To curb rising temperatures, it concluded that these countries would have to reduce carbon

emissions by 30 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. Clearly there is failure to act to achieve this objective.

- The bulk of emissions still come from traditionally developed countries, which are the very high Human Development Index (HDI) countries. With only one-sixth of the world's population, these countries accounted for 64 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from 1850 to 2005, with the United States responsible for 30 per cent of total carbon dioxide emissions in that period.
- Very high HDI countries cumulatively have generated roughly nine times more carbon per capita than low, medium and high HDI countries.
- In very high HDI countries, a person causes four times the carbon dioxide emissions, two times the methane and nitrous oxide emissions of a person in a low, medium or high HDI country and the activity of a person living in very high HDI countries releases approximately thirty times the carbon dioxide as those in low HDI countries.
- Even though 'carbon intensity of production' has fallen by 52 per cent in very high HDI countries, total emissions and emissions per capita have 'more than doubled' since 1970 and are 112 per cent higher than in 1970. Average world per capita emissions have also risen 17 per cent over that period. Not surprisingly, success in economic development has gone hand in hand with environmental degradation.

Obviously, the developed countries, which set the rules, do not appear to set examples when it comes to safeguarding nature and environment.

It is necessary to examine as to why the huge environmental crisis has arisen. It calls for open and transparent inquiry into the causes and consequences of the developments that have taken place in the last few hundred years in terms of peoples' faiths, philosophies, lifestyles and habits and the impact of these on the economic theories and models that have been universalised by developed nations for almost forced adoption by the rest of the world. There is an organic link between the philosophy of life and social and economic development models, which preserves or changes the relation between humans and nature on which environmental consciousness rests. Here is the sequential and consequential link between philosophy and economic models.

Philosophy of life determines one's world view. World view influences the goal of life and the goal of life guides lifestyle. Lifestyle impacts on habits. Habits determine wants and needs. Wants and needs define what goods and services are needed. That determines the mode and scale of production of what is to be produced. Cumulatively this link structures the socio-economic model. If the philosophy of life is altered it leads to a whole lot of sequential and consequential changes. It is the changes in the theological beliefs in the last few centuries that have altered many people's philosophy of life and world view and changed their lifestyle and habits, which cumulatively yielded a socio-economic model that finally transformed a relation-based society into a contract-based collection of individuals and changed the integral relation between humans and nature resulting in an adversarial relation between them. This calls for deep reflection and critical response, but much of the global discourse on environment has sidestepped this subject, which questions the universality of the current paradigm.

THEOLOGY-DRIVEN SCIENTIFIC ORIGINS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION IN THE WEST AND IN THE WORLD LATER

Climate change which is the main concern of humanity today did not come about without serious intervention by conquering external forces driven by theology first, science and trade next and ideology and politics later—all directly and indirectly influenced by theology. Climate change deceptively appears as the immediate result of the environmental and ecological destruction wrought by the sustained human effort for centuries. The environmental, ecological, animal and forest destruction has gone on unabated for the last four centuries. The consensus of enlightened opinion is that the conquering and domineering Western religious, scientific and social model that evolved since the Age of Enlightenment is the cause of this huge destruction. What is the origin of this huge destruction? In *Ecoscience* (1977), a research book co-authored by John Paul Holdren, adviser on scientific issues to the US President Barack Obama—along with Paul Ehrlich, Anne Ehrlich, the authors state:

Lynn White Jr, professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Los Angeles and past president of the American Historical Association

has suggested that the basic cause of Western society's destructive attitude towards nature lies in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. He pointed out, for instance, that people believed trees, springs, hills, streams, and other objects of nature had guardian spirits. Those spirits had to be approached and placated before one could safely invade those territories: 'By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.' [*The historical roots of our ecological crisis by Lynn White.*] Christianity fostered the basic ideas of "progress" and of time as something linear, non-separating, and absolute, flowing from a fixed point in the past to an end point in the future. (p 809)

Cartesianism, the foundation of modern science, which evolved out of Judaeo-Christian theology says, 'Humankind's task is to make (itself) master and possessor of nature using nature-based technology.'⁷⁸ It explicitly incorporates the Judaeo-Christian view that God created the universe for the enjoyment of man, which destroyed pagan animism which had long protected nature and environment. The combination of Cartesianism and Judaeo-Christianity did not merely undermine human integrity with forest and rivers but destroyed man's relation with wild animals too.

Wild animals have always played an important role in human existence, subsistence, survival and well-being. They have been consumed as food, domesticated as beasts of burden, enjoyed as pets and employed as symbols in human thoughts and rituals. In some preliterate societies, people have identified themselves with wild animals that they hunt for food and through their rituals they have also celebrated the interrelatedness of life. Within the Western world a major shift in such sensibilities occurred within the Judaeo-Christian and Cartesian traditions which insisted on the condemnation of the animal idolatry and separation of human and animal domains. This shift led to despiritualisation of nature to the conception of people in a supernatural image and to the relegation of animals as objects of materialistic exploitation.⁷⁹

Even though science had earlier clashed with religion—read Christianity in the West—the modern science, which altered the relation of humankind with nature and animals had its roots only in the Judaeo-Christian theological belief systems. The conversion of people out of their traditional and ancient

faiths undermined the reverence for nature and animals, which was universal in all ancient faiths. The theology-led science provided the rationale and justification for undermining the reverence for nature and animals. Religious conversions to Judaeo-Christian faiths—and generally monotheistic faiths—became the principal reason for destroying the environmental and ecological balance.

UN ACCEPTS THAT JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION DAMAGED THE ENVIRONMENT

In his seminal work *Ecologic Special Report* entitled *Green Religion and Public Policy* (October 2001), Henry Lamb, founder of the Environmental Conservation Organisation (ECO) (1988), Sovereignty International Inc (1996) and Freedom21 Inc (1999) says, ‘Western civilisations have believed that man was created in God’s image and is the crown jewel in all of God’s creation. This belief too, is obsolete in the minds of many people who implement public policy. The Western world has progressed using plants and animals as resources to meet the needs of people. Plants and animals are no longer resources, they are living beings, of equal value to humans, with equal rights.’⁸⁰

Lamb adds that the UN agrees with this view in its 1,140 page instruction book for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. In the Global Biodiversity Assessment for the United Nations Environment Programme, 1995, it is stated:

The religions that taught the world that ‘In the beginning, God created...’ are condemned by the UN. ‘Societies dominated by...(such beliefs)... have gone farthest in setting humans apart from nature and in embracing a value system that has converted the world into a warehouse of commodities for human enjoyment. In the process, not only has nature lost its sacred qualities, conversion to Christianity has meant an abandonment of an affinity with the natural world for many forest dwellers, peasants, fishers all over the world. These people followed their own religious traditions which included setting apart between 10 and 30 per cent of the landscape as sacred groves and ponds. Most of these people were drawn into the larger market economy and converted to Christianity by the late 1950s. On so converting to a religious belief system that rejects assignment of sacred qualities to elements of nature, they began to cut down the sacred groves to bring the land under cultivation...’ (Ibid. p 839)

THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN AND CARTESIAN ANTHROPOCENTRIC MODEL SHAPED NEOCLASSICAL ECONOMICS

How the present neoclassical modern economic development model emerged needs to be captured briefly. Modernity is defined by the Cartesian idea.⁸¹ The present scientific and economic developmental model is founded on Cartesian division between mind and matter, physical and spiritual and Judaeo-Christian theology. According to Max Weber, Protestantism led to the rise of individualism and Protestant ethic has become the foundation of capitalism.⁸² Max Weber was arguably the foremost social theorist of the twentieth century. He is also known as a principal architect of modern social science along with Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim.⁸³ Weber's theory led to the development of methodological individualism on which the theory of rational economic man evolved.⁸⁴ The development of efficient market hypothesis rested on the rational economic man.⁸⁵ Efficient market hypothesis is the foundation of neoclassical economics.⁸⁶

What is conventionally understood by development is an economic process rooted in the Cartesian tradition. The Cartesian view is that humankind's task is to make itself the master and possessor of nature using science and technology.⁸⁷ At the risk of oversimplification, neoclassical economics can be analogised to utilitarianism in the sense that outcomes are the crucial factor in decision-making.⁸⁸ 'At the one end, the values most closely akin to neoclassical economics can be labelled as anthropocentric, literally human centred. The conservative anthropocentricist believes that only human beings possess intrinsic values and therefore moral standing. This perspective is reflected in numerous works of theory starting from the Platonic dialogues, the Christian Bible and the works of great and enlightened playwrights such as William Shakespeare to the philosophical rebels including Friedrich Nietzsche who urged human beings to transcend the limitations of their environment and become, in Nietzsche's words, "the Übermensch", because humans transcendent all other plants and inanimate objects which are subservient to the fulfilment of human goals. The environmental consciousness of the anthropocentricist preserves nature because it is in humanity's interest to do so. And not because nature of other animals possess special characteristics or moral worth.'⁸⁹ As Professor William E Rees, a pioneer in human ecology,

wrote, 'Modern economics owes much to this scientific world view. The founders of the neoclassical school impressed with the spectacular success of Newtonian physics, strove to create economics as a sister science, the mechanics of utility and self-interest.'⁹⁰

The entire course of evolution transformed the ecocentric human life before the advent of Judaeo-Christianity and Cartesianism into anthropocentric, namely centred on man, as man is the superior creation by God in His own image and the rest of the creation intended for his enjoyment.

EVOLUTION LED TO MODERN WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT WHICH CALLED FOR DESTRUCTION OF THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURES THROUGH WESTERNISATION

This evolution led to the universal idea of modern Western anthropology of development. That is, Western values as the sole escalator for development. This inevitably means the loss of relevance and respect for one's own indigenous values. 'The underlying thesis of modernisation, the belief in a universal Eurocentric concept of truth and the primacy of instrumental reason, cannot be equated with a genuine respect for indigenous norms and values. It is fair to state that modernisation has the most negative effects on traditional norms and values. In fact, today indigenous values are treated with even less respect than before and they are believed to have lost their significance as the major stumbling point on the path to modernity. Talcott Parsons writes that adopting universal values and norms is the key to modernity and that the end product is development. Max Weber based his seminal work on the belief that as Western society develops, more of its members act in ways guided by the principles of rationality and less by customs of tradition. He sees much of this distinction in terms of a fundamental contrast of ideas and values. In his view, the coming of the modern era represents the social birth of the individual as a relatively free agent not bound by rigid and unquestioning conformity to past tradition. Therefore, development according to modernisation theory, depends upon so-called traditional and primitive values being displaced by modern ones and the view that substantial economic growth cannot occur without changes in, say, technology, the level of capital investment and market demand.'⁹¹ The substance of discourse is that modernity and development are coextensive. Unless underdeveloped nations adopt the Western values,

‘Third World development will always take the form of First World charity, with the result that development always will be imposed and will never emerge naturally from within the Third World society itself.’⁹² The substance of the discourse is that traditional societies, if they too want to develop, will have to allow to be invaded by the Western thoughts and institutions.

UN ACCEPTS MODERN WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMENDS THE UNDERDEVELOPED TO COPY THE WEST FOR DEVELOPMENT—FIT-ALL MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT

This scholastic idea became institutionalised by no less than the UN itself in the year 1951. This evolution has been captured in *Introduction: Development and Anthropology of Modernity*.

In his inaugural address as president of the United States on 20 January 1949, Harry Truman announced his concept of a ‘fair deal’ for the entire world. An essential component of this concept was his appeal to the United States and the world to solve the problems of the ‘underdeveloped areas’ of the globe.

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate and they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people.... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realise their aspirations for a better life.... What we envisage is a programme of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.

(Truman [1949] 1964)

The Truman doctrine initiated a new era in the understanding and management of world affairs, particularly those concerning the less economically accomplished countries of the world. The intent was quite ambitious—to bring about the conditions necessary to replicating the world over the features that characterised those concerning industrialisation and urbanisation, technicalisation of agriculture, rapid growth of material

production and living standards and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values. In Truman's vision, capital, science, and technology were the main ingredients that would make this massive revolution possible. Only in this way the American dream of peace and abundance could be extended to all the peoples of the planet.

This dream was not solely the creation of the United States but the result of the specific historical conjuncture at the end of the Second World War. Within a few years, the dream was universally embraced by those in power. The dream was not seen as an easy process, however, predictably perhaps, the obstacles perceived ahead contributed to consolidating the mission. One of the most influential documents of the period, prepared by a group of experts convened by the UN with the objective of designing concrete policies and measures for the economic development of underdeveloped countries, put it thus:

There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped, old social institutions have to disintegrate, bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress. (United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, [1951], 15)

The report suggested no less than a total restructuring of underdeveloped societies. The statement quoted earlier might seem to us today amazingly ethnocentric and arrogant, at best naive, yet what has to be explained is precisely the fact that it was uttered and that it made perfect sense. The statement exemplified a growing will to transform drastically two-thirds of the world in the pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress. By the early 1950s, such a will had become hegemonic at the level of the circles of power.⁹³

The arrogant statement was merely a continuation of the White Man's Burden approach of the colonial days. In this approach to the non-Western nations there was no difference between the socialist bloc and the free market capitalist bloc as both of them would like the indigenous philosophies and lifestyles to be wiped out, while the socialist would like to do it through social engineering, the democratic countries would like that to be accomplished by market forces.

AND NOW AFTER THE DOT COM CRASH AND TERROR ATTACK COMES
THE BIG U-TURN FROM FIT-ALL MODERN WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL
DEVELOPMENT MODEL TO NATION SOCIETY-SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL

And then came the U-turn after the dot com crash in financial markets and the terror attack in 2001. The U-turn came precisely where the universality of modern Western anthropology of economic development model started the field of economics. The central bank governors of G20 nations declared in October 2005, 'We note development approaches are evolving over time and thus need to be updated as economic challenges unfold. We will continue to review the G20 Accord through sharing our experiences in implementation. We recognised there is no uniform development approach that fits all countries. Each country should be able to choose the development approaches and policies that best suit its specific characteristics, while benefiting from their accumulated experience in policymaking over the last decades including the importance of strong macroeconomic policies for sustained growth.'⁹⁴ Later, in May 2008, just ahead of the global meltdown, the World Bank stated in its newsletter, 'In our work across the world, the World Bank has learned the hard way that there is no one model that fits all. Development is all about transformation. It means taking the best ideas, testing them in new situations and throwing away what doesn't work. It means, above all, having the ability to recognise when we have failed. This is never an easy thing to do. It is even more difficult for an organisation to do so, be it the government or the World Bank, which constantly needs to adapt to the changing nature of the development challenge.'⁹⁵ The UN which officially endorsed the modern Western anthropology of development and called for the destruction of the indigenous philosophies and values in 1951 officially joined the bandwagon of 'no one size fits all' paradigm, but, a bit late, in 2010. 'Development must be nationally driven, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Mtengeti Migiro stressed today, rejecting the "one size fits all" approach to eradicate poverty and foster economic growth.'⁹⁶ It took over half a century for the West and the world to realise that the Western model would not work everywhere and every nation and society will have to work out its own model.

UN MOVED FURTHER IN 2013 TO DISOWN UNIVERSAL WESTERN CULTURE AND SAID DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE NATIONAL CULTURE COMPATIBLE

And finally, on 12 June 2013, during the General Assembly debates, the General Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the need to recognise that there is no ‘one size fits all’ development model.⁹⁷ And the Secretary-General went further to declare the importance of culture in development. He said, ‘It is not enough to set global targets for all—we need to adapt to each context. Too many well-intended development programmes have failed, because they did not take cultural settings into account. This must be an overarching principle for all development efforts.’⁹⁸ He further said, ‘Development has not always focused enough on people. To mobilise people, we need to understand and embrace their culture. This means encouraging dialogue, listening to individual voices and ensuring that culture and human rights inform the new course for sustainable development. The fundamental role of culture was not fully acknowledged within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—as a goal, an overarching principle or as an enabler.’⁹⁹

The UN report also said, ‘United Nations officials highlighted the need to recognise the vital role of culture in poverty reduction and sustainable growth and to ensure that it is integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.’¹⁰⁰ ‘The significance of the nexus between culture and development for the post-2015 agenda is not yet fully grasped,’ stated the president of the assembly, Vuk Jeremic, who convened the debate in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).¹⁰¹ He further added, ‘Fully embracing the potential of this nexus will also help promote a greater sense of indivisibility and mutual belonging—a feeling that no community or nation can fulfil its potential until it is accompanied by the advancement of the entire mankind.’¹⁰² He noted that it has not been possible to reach consensus on how to build on the agreed foundations of sustainable development in the discussions that have taken place in recent months. ‘The gap between means and ends has yet to be bridged—in my view, partly because the cultural component has largely been absent from our discussions.’¹⁰³

The UN reported further, ‘In her keynote address, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova told the meeting that no one would like to live in a world

without music, art or dance or with only one language. “Culture is what we are. It is the wellspring of collective imagination, meaning and belonging. It is also a source of identity and cohesion at a time of change. It is a source of creativity and innovation,” she stated.¹⁰⁴ ‘No society in the world can flourish without culture. No development can be sustained without it. Cultural diversity is also a source to find creative solutions to problems. It enhances critical thinking to challenge old models,’ she added. ‘We need to fully acknowledge this power of culture today as we shape a new global agenda to follow 2015.’¹⁰⁵ The administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Helen Clark, highlighted the need to think more broadly about the role of culture in development.¹⁰⁶ ‘As culture is vital to who we are, it is a vital aspect of human development. And to live lives they value, people must be free to choose their identity and to define who they are through their culture. With globalisation, our world is shrinking as we become more interconnected than ever before, she continued.’¹⁰⁷ ‘But commensurate with that, our respect for cultural diversity needs to grow. Indeed, respect for cultural diversity and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing and they provide the necessary basis for peace and harmony, which development needs to thrive anywhere.’¹⁰⁸ Culture, noted the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, affects all the dimensions of development.¹⁰⁹ ‘As such, a human-centred, culturally sensitive approach to development will yield the most effective, sustainable, inclusive outcomes,’ he said.¹¹⁰ ‘Specifically, a culturally diverse approach will contribute to economic development, promote social cohesion and foster environmental sustainability.’¹¹¹ He added that, ‘Among other benefits, culturally sensitive approaches provide solutions to complex development issues in an innovative way. And yet, despite the benefits of cultural diversity, we continue to witness many conflicts and extreme underdevelopment worldwide. This is because culture is either missing, misunderstood or worse, politicised.’¹¹²

MODERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT—OSTENTATIOUS, RECKLESS AND INFLECTS ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE. NEEDLESS CONSUMPTION OF DEVELOPED NATIONS

It needs no great expert to testify that modern consumption-led economic development model damages the environment. One has to only look at the well-established relation between consumption and environment and the

relation between development and consumption. It is the consumption of rich nations which has contributed to this damage. The demands made by the people in industrialised countries and the Third World elite are often ten to twenty times higher than those made by the poor. 6 per cent of the world's population in the United States is consuming 40 per cent of the world's non-renewable resources. The total figures for the world's major industrial nations are no better—20 per cent of the world's population consumes as much as 80 per cent of the world's resources. Unless the developed nations considerably reduce their consumption, there is no hope for the developing and undeveloped nations to markedly improve their standard of living. The idea that they will be able to eventually catch up with the West is not realistic. Should everyone in the developing countries use the same amount of energy as the average consumer in high income countries does, the developing countries' energy use would increase more than eightfold in the next fifty years.¹¹³ Take the cases of consumption by some rich nations. In a study in 2012 by Waste and Resources Action Plan (WRAP), a UK charity whose vision is a world in which resources are used sustainably, the average UK household owns around £4,000 worth of clothes and around 30 per cent of clothing in wardrobes have not been worn for at least a year. The key findings include that the cost of this unused clothing is around £30 billion; extending the average life of clothes by just three months of active use would lead to a 5-10 per cent reduction in each of the carbon, water and waste footprints and an estimated £140 million worth—around 350,000 tonnes of used clothing goes to landfill in the UK every year.¹¹⁴ A 2012 report from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) found that 40 per cent of food purchased in the United States ends up thrown out.¹¹⁵

'If all the grain currently fed to livestock in the United States were consumed directly by people, the number of people who could be fed would be nearly 800 million,' reports ecologist David Pimentel of Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He adds that the 7 billion livestock in the United States consume five times as much grain as is consumed directly by the entire United States population.¹¹⁶ A 2009 study found that four-fifths of the deforestation across the Amazon rainforest could be linked to cattle ranching.¹¹⁷

WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODERNITY SEEKS DESTRUCTION OF TRADITIONS AS A CONDITION PRECEDENT TO TRANSFORM TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES TO THE AGE OF MASS CONSUMPTION—SHOPPING AS THE CULMINATION OF MODERNITY!

In a paper titled *On The Anthropology of Modernity, or, Some Triumphs of Culture Over Despondency Theory* carried in the Australian National University E Press, Marshall Sahlins, a prominent American anthropologist, also a critique of the idea of economically rational man, captures the essence of the theory of modernity as homogenising the world through economic development based on consumerism, thus, 'A late classic of the genre was Walt Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* (1957), with its unilinear sequence of five developmental stages from traditional societies to the age of high mass consumption (Rostow must have been among the first to perceive that the culmination of human social evolution was shopping). Explicitly argued as an alternative to Marxist stages of progress, Rostow's thesis appeared as a mirror image, with the added advantage of turning left into right twice over. Common to many theories of development was a cheerful sense of cultural tragedy, the necessary disintegration of traditional societies that functioned, in Rostow's scheme, as a precondition for "economic take-off". Foreign domination was needed to accomplish this salutary destruction, since otherwise the customary relations of traditional production would set a ceiling on economic growth. By its own providential history, Europe had been able to develop itself, but according to Rostow, other peoples would have to be shocked out of their backwardness by an intrusive alien force. No revolutionary himself, Rostow could agree with Marx that in order to make an omelette one must first crack the eggs.'¹¹⁸

The evolution of the modern United States consumerist culture, which made the United States rise steeply and also fall equally steeply as the 2008 meltdown revealed, is captured by a student Keith Brooks, pursuing his Master in Environmental Studies (MES) through York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies, in a paper titled *Overtaxed, Overwhelmed, and Overdrawn* thus:

It has been argued that consumerism, rather than democracy or capitalism won the ideological battle of the twentieth century (see Flavin, 2003) and is the defining characteristic of modern developed nations. The consumerist

zeal is palpable in the United States where consumerism enjoys near-hegemonic status, tied to notions of freedom, choice and economic prosperity. Consumerism is valourised to such a degree that George Bush Sr declared a National Consumers Week in 1989—American Presidency Project—essentially stating that consumerism is both a right and a virtue. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, George Bush Jr asked Americans to go shopping, claiming that if Americans didn't feel free to shop, the terrorists had already won (Barber, 2007). Consumerism is so central to the American psyche that people who willingly curbed their consumption have been accused of being un-American (Caldwell, 2007). While consumerism may not be as central to Canadian identity as it is to the American, the situation in Canada and other developed countries is not much different. Our malls are just as busy, our public spaces as full of advertisements and shopping is a national pastime.¹¹⁹

The developed countries are so regarded largely because of higher standard of living they ensure for their people. Their people expect better and better standard of life and not less and less from their governments. They are all democratic nations whose government and leadership seeks election and re-election from the very people to whom they promise better standard of life. If the Western nations have to reduce their consumption, they have to ask the very people to whom their leaders are promising higher and better standard of living, to reduce their consumption and standard of living. There is no political leader on the horizon yet who would seek election or re-election except by promising his electorate higher and better standard of living. No political leader can get elected asking voters to forego comfort and lead a simpler life. That cannot be done by law or by taxation. They can at best supplement. It has to be voluntary. For that, people need a transmaterial, spiritual philosophy of life, which motivates them to lead a simple life. Secular modernity has eroded the values which different religions had preached to the world for centuries. Such philosophy will be discomforting to secular modernity and abhorrent to market capitalism which thrives on more and more consumption. Here occurs alignment of interest between economics—business and secular modernity—state against environment. This situation has not been reached in one day or in a decade or in a century. It has taken centuries for the Western world to transit to the present state. It has meanwhile spread its message and

experience as the ideal model to emulate for the world, thereby attempting to universalise its way of life as modern. In most non-Western societies, the elite class has been co-opted to the Western ways of organising their life. With the result the concept of sustainable development promoted by the West, which includes sustainable consumption, is threatening to become meaningless and may end up as a slogan more than as an action plan.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT JUST 'A BIG, NICE WISH LIST', SUSTAINABLE CAPITALISM, BASED ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION, AN OXYMORON—A DISTANT DREAM

The idea of sustainable development does not seem to take off. On the contrary, the West will look at sustainable development, only if nothing else produces better profits, when, in fact, unless the West forgoes immediate gain or incurs immediate loss, it cannot institute sustainable development. The Environment Audit Committee of the British Parliament House of Commons, two years after the Rio Earth Summit, which propounded the idea of sustainable consumption, said that, 'We end up with sustainable development as something we do if there is no immediate economic benefit in doing something else.'¹²⁰ It adds that developed nations can give a global push to sustainable development, 'at an immediate social economic cost to rich farmers and associated communities',¹²¹ and that 'we need to be clear that the strategy fails to confront this challenge.'¹²² As a result, some government partners would seem to have lost faith in the concept. The committee, which is based on the written and oral evidence before the House of Commons, goes on to say, 'As someone recently remarked at a meeting of the DRFA-hosted National Biodiversity, "No one thinks sustainable development got anything to do with environment".'¹²³ Although we do not fully accept this, we do think that sustainable development is increasingly tended to be seen as, and may be for many, just as, a wish list of everything that would be nice as well as a way of keeping vocal and special and well-positioned interest groups on board.'¹²⁴

In a report titled *Capitalism V Environment: Can Greed Ever Be Green?* on the Slow Life Symposium held in Maldives, which is threatened with habitat destruction, raising the question 'Is it possible to run a capitalist economy

without threatening the future of the planet?’ Tony Juniper wrote in *The Guardian* on 26 November 2014, ‘The fact that the now dominant capitalist economic system is unsustainable is not in doubt. It has contributed to the breaching of several ecological boundaries, in relation to climate change, biodiversity loss and nutrient enrichment. At the same time, as damaging the natural systems that sustain it, capitalism is also leading to increasing inequality, in turn creating social tensions that make it still more exposed.’¹²⁵ In an article titled *Is Sustainable Capitalism an Oxymoron?* Allen White, director, Corporation 20/20 and senior fellow, Tellus Institute analyses the concept of sustainable capitalism and concludes, ‘It will take far more than incremental improvements to the current system to disprove those who believe so. Without a steep rise in political will reinforced by concerted citizen action, sustainable capitalism will remain a distant and elusive aspiration.’¹²⁶ Sustainable development, sustainable consumption and sustainable capitalism have all turned into just slogans.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND DEVELOPMENT—CONSUMPTION-LED ECONOMIC GROWTH ARE ANTITHESIS

While the post-Rio world has been sloganeering on sustainable consumption and sustainable development, the world economy continues to be driven largely by consumption. The latest report on the economies of developed nations released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that private consumption has again been the main driver of overall GDP growth for the first quarter of 2015 with a contribution of 0.3 per cent. Government consumption, investment and stock building each contributed a further 0.1 per cent. On the other hand, net exports reduced GDP growth by 0.3 per cent.¹²⁷

According to the European Economic Forecast 2015, ‘Private consumption has been the main engine of growth in the current recovery both in terms of its absolute contribution to GDP growth in the European Union (EU) and the Euro area and in terms of the dynamics, by being the only large GDP component that has permanently expanded since the beginning of the recovery.... Over the last few months, additional support has come from the decline in oil prices, which pulled down energy prices, helped households to reduce their energy bills and thereby increased the amount

of disposable income available for other spending decisions. Lower energy prices are expected to remain a key factor driving the expansion of private consumption growth in 2015. The impact of higher real disposable incomes on private consumption depends on households' propensity to spend, which can be expected to be emboldened by rising consumer confidence.¹²⁸ The West which was looking at the option of environment safeguard because of higher oil prices, seems relieved as the lower oil prices are encouraging consumption.

Again, the OECD framework for statistics on the Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth emphasises 'the importance of looking at consumption' and says, 'It is the consumption of goods and services along with other inputs such as time that ultimately satisfies a household's needs and wants. Because of this, consumption is a more important determinant of economic well-being than income alone. Indeed, Mike Brewer and Cromac O'Dea of University of Essex, Institute for Fiscal Studies, who published *Measuring Living Standards With Income and Consumption: Evidence From the UK* (March 2012) with the Institute of Social and Economic Research and others (see Noll, 2007 for a review) argue that it is preferable to consider the distribution of consumption rather than income on both theoretical and pragmatic grounds. On a theoretical ground, households can smoothen consumption by, for example, adjusting savings or drawing on wealth and borrowing. Incomes may also be more volatile, a finding that led to Friedman's "permanent income hypothesis", which suggests that decisions made by consumers are based on long-term income expectations rather than their current income. Therefore, because consumption expenditures fluctuate less than incomes, they can be considered a better proxy of living standards. This view is supported in a number of studies, eg Cutler and Katz (1992) and Jorgenson and Slesnick (1987), which find stronger relationships between consumption and subjective well-being than between income and subjective well-being.¹²⁹

YET, ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL POWER DRIVE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

Events in world affairs show that economic forces powerfully drive political decisions including that of high politics of war and diplomacy.¹³⁰ As shown by

the financial crises of Asia in late 1990s, the international mobility of money brought about by globalisation had created economic forces more powerful than states.¹³¹ The neo-liberals, who push for more and more globalisation, have no answer to the challenges that energy-environment poses, except clinging to the cornucopian view—a large horn-shaped container overflowing with produce, flowers or nuts, symbolising plenty—that things will somehow work out in the end.¹³² As the process of economic globalisation rolls on, the energy-environment conundrum is aggravated. Neither the neo-liberal approach nor the antiglobalisation movement has any reply to the challenges that it poses to mankind.¹³³ One of the important challenges is that ‘ecological considerations will give in to economic ones, as the economic difficulties mount.’¹³⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE DESPITE REGULATORY PROTECTION TO ENVIRONMENT—REGULATIONS ARE FAILING

With the West—copied by the elites in developing nations—leading in consumption which it is unwilling to reduce, the rest of the world, climbing on to the escalator of competitive consumption-based lifestyle and the West paying lip service for sustainable consumption, the faith is that regulatory mechanisms would deliver environmental safety to the future generations. Here are three glaring failures of the regulatory regime mentioned in the review of *The Art and Craft Of International Environmental Law*, Harvard University Press (2010) by Daniel Bodansky:

- Despite the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, an estimated 50 to 150 species continue to be lost every day. Almost one in four mammals and one in eight birds face a high risk of extinction in the near future.
- Almost two decades after the emergence of global warming as a significant political issue, global emissions of greenhouse gases continue to grow at a rate of roughly 1.9 per cent per year. The entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in February 2005 has done little to slow this trend.
- An estimated 12 million hectares are lost to deserts each year, despite the adoption in 1994 of a treaty to combat desertification.¹³⁵

Even after rules were put in place, without detection and enforcement, the protection is only theoretical.

In another cautionary example, Bodansky notes that even as seemingly concrete an achievement in international law as the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) very specific rules against unrestricted whaling, which seemed such a concrete, adequate set of rules when adopted, failed for many years because they did not detect systematic cheating by the Soviet Union as it killed over 100,000 whales between 1948 and 1987. Success in establishing a hard rule was defeated for four decades by a failure to detect and punish.¹³⁶

These instances are purely illustrative, not exhaustive of inadequacy or failure of environmental regulations.

SCIENTIFIC ESTABLISHMENT NOT TOO HOPEFUL OF SAVING THE PLANET?

With mounting pressure on scientific and economic establishments from the galloping conflict between man and nature, science and nature and development and nature, the world leadership began embracing the ecological and environmental paradigm which has raised more questions than provide any worthwhile answers. On the issue of 'conflict between man and nature' in 1992, some 1,700 of the world's leading scientists, including the majority of Nobel Laureates in the sciences, issued 'The World Scientists' Warning to Humanity' which was written and spearheaded by the late Henry Kendall, former chair of the Union of Concerned Scientists' (UCS's) board of directors.¹³⁷ Science, which always promises to solve every problem, seems to be losing hope of saving the world from ecological degradation. From the warning in 1992 it seems to have become despair in 2014. *The Guardian*, UK on 8 April 2014 reported scientist James Lovelock, who first detected Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) in the atmosphere and proposed the Gaia hypotheses as saying, 'We should give up trying to save the world from climate change' and claiming, 'We should stop trying to save the planet from global warming and instead retreat to climate controlled cities and give up on large expanses of land which will become uninhabitable.'¹³⁸

NEEDED—NATIONAL CULTURE-BASED ALTERNATIVE TO MODERN WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODERNITY AND THE ECONOMIC MODEL BASED ON IT

The modern Western anthropological model and the economic model based upon it have failed, and the West itself has admitted to the failure of the economic structure based on the modern Western anthropology. The world, including the West and certainly the non-Western nations, needs an alternative to it. But the backlog of the discourse based on the superiority of the Western culture still continues. This is because of the lead that the West had had in the last few centuries. Even neutral institutions like the UN issued an ‘amazingly ethnocentric and arrogant, at best naive’¹³⁹ prescription that the ancient philosophies of the non-Western people have to be scrapped, their old social institutions have to disintegrate, their bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst and if they cannot make these painful adjustments they cannot develop (unstated like the West) and have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. The prescription was, to put it plainly and shortly, that the non-Western peoples, particularly the underdeveloped, will have to give up their culture and adopt the Western culture touted as the universal model. Now that very UN is pleading for the restoration of the primacy of peoples’ culture without which, it says, no sustainable development is possible.¹⁴⁰ Obviously, the world is in desperate need for an alternative paradigm.

But the national and local cultures of non-Western peoples have been weakened because of the wholesale defection of the world establishment opinion in favour of the modern Western anthropology of development model. The UN statement of 1951 exemplified ‘the will to transform drastically two-thirds of the world in the pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress and by the early 1950s, such a will had become hegemonic at the level of the circles of power’—meaning it had entered the corridors of power—in all underdeveloped nations. This was the ruling thought for the last half a century and more. It continues to be one. Because of the influence of the establishment including the state, media and academia and intellectuals ‘faced with the development model and structures of the modern West, developing nations with apparently flourishing cultures and spiritual heritages have been unable to maintain their cultural attitudes’.¹⁴¹ The real test is how to reverse the trend that has been set for over six decades.

THE BEST SAFEGUARDS FOR ENVIRONMENT ARE THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES, THEIR CULTURE AND CONSCIOUSNESS BASED ON THAT, WHICH WESTERN MODERNITY SEEKS TO DESTROY

Now the best safeguard for environment seems to be the very institutions which modern Western anthropology of modernity and its economic manifestation have been targeting and even destroying—namely the ancient philosophies and the traditional communities—their religion, culture, traditional knowledge and belief systems. The West derided and declared non-Western traditions and cultures for the last six decades as a sign of underdevelopment and an impediment to development. Ironically, ancient religions, which secular modernity abhors, seem to be emerging as the hope to save the environment. What environmental scientific knowledge and ecological rules of modern states could not do—namely discipline and motivate people to safeguard nature—religions, particularly the traditional belief systems, seem to have the potential to do. Holmes Rolston III, professor of philosophy, University-distinguished professor emeritus at Colorado State University says, ‘Religious faith can make a unique contribution to environmental policy. Typically, legislators might expect to formulate a science-based environmental policy. But scientific reasoning is able to offer only partial and value-free guidance. Science, by its very nature, cannot offer enough guidance for the challenges of contemporary environmental policy. Religious faith and religious communities can and already have begun to, offer precisely what science lacks—a value-laden, unified understanding of creation, humankind and our obligations as stewards of the earth.’¹⁴² Professor Rolston was awarded the Templeton Prize in Religion in 2003 for his work in religion and conservation and in science and religion. The editor’s note on Rolston’s article says, ‘The following article offers a synthesis, for the first time directed at a legal audience, of Professor Rolston’s views on the interrelation of religion and environmental policy, one element of his decades-long project to illuminate the interconnections between the worlds of science and religion.’¹⁴³

What Professor Rolston says seems to be even more true of ancient and non-Abrahamic religions than of the Abrahamic group of religions. Studies and empirical evidence point to the fact that religious beliefs of native communities have preserved the environment, which secular modernity that

perceives nature as a secular asset and the modern development economics based on that have been threatening to destroy. One such study, by the Center for International Development and Environment, World Resources Institute (WRI), Washington DC, USA on *Religious Beliefs and Environmental Protection: The Malshegu Sacred Grove In Northern Ghana* concluded, ‘The principal driving forces behind Malshegu’s effective protection of its sacred grove include a strong religious belief in the grove as the sanctuary of the local god—in good measure a result of the effectiveness of the religious leader, the rules and practices established centuries ago to guide people in their use of the forest and its resources and the growing regional importance of the sanctuary as other local sacred groves become degraded or lost.’¹⁴⁴ The study added, ‘Villages seeking to protect sacred sites threatened by non-believers need the support and backing of the government for the legal authority to implement and enforce traditional resource management strategies and practices. The government of Ghana’s recognition of the importance of traditional religious beliefs in local level natural resource management and its recent policy, legislative and programming actions to further empower communities to take greater control of their resources have the potential to lead to improved local initiatives in environmental protection and management. Other governments and international development assistance agencies concerned with natural resource management may learn from Ghana’s example.’¹⁴⁵

Traditional belief systems and culture of the local people all over the world have established a mutually dependent relation between nature and communities in which communities revere nature as sacred. The environmental protection propensity and potential of the local faiths and communities have been and are being continuously eroded by secular modernity which attaches no higher value to nature and is founded on an anthropocentric world view.

**RELIGIOUS CONVERSION DESTROYS REVERENCE FOR NATURE; BAN ON
CONVERSION IN DEVELOPING NATIONS IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT
ENVIRONMENT AND AVOID CONFLICT**

The Ghana experience studied by the Center for International Development and the Environment, WRI, Washington DC, USA brings out the conflict between non-Abrahamic and ancient religions, which revere nature as divine

and sacred and Abrahamic religions, which regard nature as devoid of divinity. It also brings out the conflict between Abrahamic faiths and the environment and emphasises upon the environment-compatible and environment-friendly ancient and indigenous faiths. In the present context where environment is under stress, there is a clear case for preventing the religious conversion from ancient and indigenous faiths to Abrahamic faiths. The Ghana experience indicates how religious conversion risks and endangers traditional environment safeguards. The view, that ‘conversion harms environment’, was expounded by Lynn White and the UN as mentioned earlier. There is also a body of thought which argues that religious conversion also harms religious and social harmony and promotes conflicts. A latest work on conflict avoidance, the first theme of the Hindu-Buddhist conference, also points to religious ‘conversion as the stumbling block’ for peace and harmony in Asia.¹⁴⁶ Even in the West, the attitude of man to nature and animals shifted to the anthropocentric view of perceiving them as just resource for wise consumption. That shift was because of the advent of Judaeo-Christianity—namely conversion from paganism.¹⁴⁷ There appears to be a case for banning religious conversion from environment-friendly indigenous faiths to environment-unfriendly Abrahamic faiths, unless the Abrahamic faiths too accept nature as sacred.

EASTERN PHILOSOPHIES OF HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, JAINISM, SIKHISM, TAOISM AND SHINTOISM ARE ENVIRONMENT-COMPATIBLE, ECO-FRIENDLY AND BUILD ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Environmental consciousness is not an intellectual idea. It is rooted in abiding reverence for nature. It is a spiritual virtue, neither purely religious at any rate nor a conflicting, religious concept. It is the core value of Eastern philosophies even though all the ancient cultures throughout the world have similar orientation. In Eastern philosophies, consisting of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Tao and Shinto traditions, humans and environment are considered interrelated. They all see divinity immanent in every tiny atom of the universe and humans. They perceive the five elements of nature—earth, water, air, fire and space—as emanating from the same source as humans. *Isavasya Upanishad*—Hindu, *Kalachakra Tantra*—Buddhist, *Acharya Sutra*—Jain, *Guru Granth Sahib*—Sikh, *Taishang Huadao Dushi Xianjing*—Taoist

and *Kojiki*—Shinto—all believe that nature and humans both originate in divinity and consider nature and humans as interrelated and not independent of one another. Here are some illustrations of how the ancient civilisations revered nature:

- *Isavasya Upanishad*, one of the most sacred ancient Hindu scriptures states, *Ishaavaasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat tena tyaktena bhunjithaah maa gridhab kasyasvid dhanam*. As translated by Mahatma Gandhi, it means, ‘In the creation, the Divine is immanent in earth, water, air, fire and space and in every tiniest atom of this universe.’ (Sri Aurobindo has also translated)
- *Kalachakra Tantra*, the sacred Buddhist scripture, says, ‘Earth, water, air, fire and human beings, all emerged only out of the vacuum of space.’
- *Acharya Sutra*, the Jain sacred text, says, ‘The four elements, earth, water, air and fire, are animated by souls; particles of earth are the bodies of elementary souls called earth-lives.’
- *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture, declares that, ‘The five elements of earth, water, air, fire and space and all living beings are, “O God, only thee”.’
- *Taishang Huadao Dushi Xianjing*, the Taoist scripture, states that, ‘Tao is the mother of heaven and earth, of yin and yang and the origin of the five agents and of the myriad beings. Man and all other beings are born from the same primordial breath—qi—so that all beings emanate from Tao and obtain their essence from Tao.’
- *Kojiki*, the Shinto scripture, regards the land, its nature and all creatures including the human as children of Kami (the Divine), therefore there exists Kami of rain, Kami of wind, Kami of mountain, Kami of ocean, Kami of river and Kami of thunder.

The entire spectrum of Eastern philosophies converges on the view that creation is manifestation of the Divine or divine force. They clearly distinguish themselves from the Abrahamic religions, which set apart humanity from nature conceptually and theologically. Consequently, the Eastern religious philosophies are ecocentric where humans and nature are interrelated, share

common origin and common biological space, while the Abrahamic religious philosophies are anthropocentric, which considers humans as the crowning glory of biological hierarchy.

Reverend Father Shaji George Kochuthara says, 'Hinduism attributes sacredness not only to the human being, but every minutest particle in nature.'

In a profound cross-philosophical study entitled *Re-Discovering Christian Eco-Theological Ethics*, Reverend Father Kochuthara deals with comparative philosophical position in the West and in India and how the West has to learn from India the concept of reverence for nature to save the environment. Here are some extracts from Reverend Father Kochuthara's paper which exhaustively deals with how the ancient Hindu literature reveres nature.

One of the fundamental cosmological insights of the Indian tradition regarding this world is that it is indwelt by the Lord of the universe and hence it is sacred, '*Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat*—this revolving world together with every minute particle in it is indwelt by the Lord'.

The Hindu vision affirms the sacredness not only of the human being, but everything in nature.

According to the Hindu concept, the material causes of the created world are the *Pancha bhutas*—five great elements—namely earth, air, space, water and fire. These cosmic elements create, nurture and sustain all forms of life, after death they decay and absorb what was created earlier. Thus, in the preservation and sustenance of the environment, these elements play a vital role. These are deified in the sacred scriptures.

In the Hindu tradition there is an underlying unity of all life, the world and all that exists. The interconnectedness of all life and all creatures is affirmed by the scriptures.

The Divine permeates everything and radically connects all life, whether human or not. That is, God and nature, the individual and others are all one, are all ultimately unified. Following the same pattern, the Bhagavad Gita affirms that atman is ultimately identical with Brahman. Hinduism is a religion in which the human is conceived as part and parcel of nature. The natural phenomena are from a divine source. Behind the wide spectrum of gods and the rituals and sacrifices, there is this insight into the sacredness

and divine origin of nature. Thus, every natural force and phenomenon—for example, sky, sun, moon, rain, wind, thunder, rivers, mountains, forest, etc—is considered to be a god and there are hymns praising and venerating them. ‘Human being is not on the earth to conquer, dominate and exploit but to be an integral part of the organic whole. The gods, men and nature formed one organic whole.’

Animals, in the Vedic vision, are not inferior creatures but manifestations of gods on the lower scale of evolution compared to man. Animals like monkey, elephant, tiger, cow, bull, etc. occupy important places in the spectrum of gods. ‘Spiritually, there is no distinction between human beings and other forms of life. All forms, including plants and animals, are manifestations of God as limited beings—*jivas*. Even microorganisms are *jivas*, having souls of their own.’ The protection and worship of the cow symbolises human responsibility to the subhuman world. This also stresses the reverence for all forms of life.¹⁴⁸

Reverend Father Kochuthara concludes, ‘Hinduism can help Christianity to discover further on their eco-theology.’

In the abstract of his study, Reverend Father Kochuthara summarises his position in the paper and says that Christian theology tends to regard any attempt to consider nature as sacred as pantheism and idolatry and by this it has denied the immanence of God in His creation. He says that Christianity, with the theology of ‘dominating earth’, is often accused of having been responsible for the present crisis. He admits that certain emphasis in the Christian tradition did not facilitate a reverential attitude to nature and says that uncompromising commitment to a transcendental God and the prohibition of worship of any other being, implies a denial of the immanence of God in His creation. Any attempt to consider nature as sacred would be labelled as pantheism and idolatry and the Christian emphasis on the spiritual nature of human beings against the physical nature of the other creatures are some of the main reasons for the lack of reverence for nature in Christian tradition, even though he contends that it is unjust to attribute to Christianity the sole responsibility for environmental destruction. The most important part of his paper is that Hinduism can help us, Christians, to discover further our own eco-theology. He further says that we, Christians, develop a reverential attitude to nature.¹⁴⁹

After exhaustively considering the sources of ancient Hindu literature that see humans as part of nature and profess and proclaim reverence to nature, Reverend Father Kochuthara talks about how, besides Hinduism helping Christianity to rediscover its eco-theology, it also shows the possibility of working together with Christianity to face the ecological crisis and to fill the spiritual inadequacy to face the crisis. He says:

This attitude of reverence and gratitude to the earth and the whole cosmos in Hinduism shows us the possibility of working together to face the ecological crisis and to respond together to the spiritual inadequacy that many feel in the face of this crisis. There are differences in the basic faith vision and convictions, but a more critical re-evaluation of interpreting Hindu approach to nature as pantheistic and naturalistic will help us to understand better the richness of these traditions and to find common grounds to work together. Many have said the same regarding African religions which have a reverential approach to nature. Besides convincing us of the possibility of working together, this will also help us to rediscover our own eco-theology and eco-ethics, to reconsider the interpretations in the past and to correct the imbalances.¹⁵⁰

Owing to their experience gained over thousands of years, ancient thinkers in most older civilisations were aware that humans needed forests and nature for their survival and well-being, forests needed wildlife for their protection and wildlife needed forests for their protection. Therefore, there was complete and comprehensive understanding about the interdependence of humans and all living beings including wildlife.

ANCIENT INDIA'S WISDOM: HUMANS NEED FORESTS, FORESTS NEED WILD ANIMALS AND WILD ANIMALS NEED FORESTS—ALL MUTUALLY DEPENDENT

According to the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, 'Don't destroy forest with tigers and don't make forest devoid of tigers. Forests can't be saved without tigers and tigers can't live without forests because forests protect tigers and tigers protect forests.'¹⁵¹ Is the Mahabharata true in relating to the survival of forests in context to wildlife and vice versa? What is the relation between tigers and forests? Empirical evidence indicates that forests and wildlife are related. When the tiger population was high, India had more forest

cover and when the tiger population dwindled, India's forest cover crashed. A comparison of the forest cover of India in 1900 and now and the tiger population then and now seems to establish the possible link between the two. The total area under forests in India in 1900 was 50 per cent and now it is 14 per cent.¹⁵² The tiger population in 1900 was 40,000 and is now about 2,000.¹⁵³ Thus, when the tiger population came down, forests disappeared and vice versa. This shows that conservation of forests depends on protection of wild animals and wild animals depend on conservation of forests for their survival and neither can exist or survive without the other. Ancient Indians seem to be right in relating tigers—wild animals—and forests. The Mahabharata verse quoted above also establishes one cardinal principle—forests need to be protected. And for that, it commends that tigers be protected. But the fundamental idea is conservation of forest for the good of the world and humans. Is that why many ancient civilisations commended the reverence for trees as symbolic of protection of forests; and similarly, reverence for wild animals like snakes and elephants recognising their protection as a necessary corollary for conservation of forests?

DEEP ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS EXPOUNDED BY CONTEMPORARY ECOLOGISTS IS IMPLICIT IN ALL ANCIENT FAITHS

What Reverend Father Kochuthara sees in ancient Hindu philosophy is environmental consciousness. The deeper inner and spiritual consciousness is that which makes humans realise that humans and nature are an indivisible part of the Divine. It is not just environmental awareness, which is limited to the domain of reason. It is deeper than higher consciousness, which is the consciousness of a higher self that is higher than the material self. It is the consciousness that humans are not independent of nature but dependent on it as much as nature is dependent on humans. And certainly not that humans are masters or that nature is their servant.

In the early 1970s, some ecologists in the West began thinking out of the box on the fundamental aspects of environment. The person who led this alternative thought was Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess. He saw that the ongoing ecological debate was just shallow and argued that what the world needed was 'deep ecological' consciousness. The term

‘deep ecological’ consciousness was first used by Arne Naess in 1972 in his paper *The Shallow and The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement*.¹⁵⁴

Both historically and in the contemporary environment movement, Naess saw two different forms of environmentalism, not necessarily incompatible with each other. One, he called the ‘long-range deep ecology movement’ and the other, the ‘shallow ecology movement’. The word ‘deep’ in part referred to the level of questioning of our purposes and values when arguing on environmental conflicts. The ‘deep’ movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamental root causes.¹⁵⁵ The long-range deep approach involves redesigning our systems based on values and methods that truly preserve the ecological and cultural diversity of natural systems. The distinguishing and original characteristics of the deep ecology movement were its recognition of the inherent value of all living beings and the use of this view in shaping environmental policies. Those who work for social changes based on this recognition are motivated by love of nature as well as for humans. They recognise that we cannot go on with industrialism’s ‘business as usual’. Without changes in basic values and practices, we will destroy the diversity and beauty of the world, and its ability to support diverse human cultures.¹⁵⁶

In the essay *Hinduism and Deep Ecology*, Christopher Key Chapple says that Hinduism, broadly defined, espouses a philosophy akin to the core sensibilities of deep ecology. He discusses and explains in his essay, the importance of the five elements in the Hindu worldview—earth (*prithvi*), water (*aapah*), fire (*agni*), air (*vayu*) and space (*akasha*)—and the relation between meditative practices and the natural world. He asserts that ritual worship provides the context for understanding the functioning of ‘embedded ecology’ in Hindu life. ‘The meditative and ritual deep structures of Indian life and culture can help support an indigenous form of Hindu deep ecology.’¹⁵⁷

The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature* says, ‘It is common perception within the deep ecology movement that the religions of indigenous cultures, the world’s remnant and newly revitalised or invented pagan religions and religions originating in Asia (especially Daoism, Buddhism and Hinduism) provide superior grounds for ecological ethics than do occidental religions.’¹⁵⁸ Anthropocentrism, the concept which keeps humans at the helm and at the

centre of the architecture of creation is viewed as grounded in Western religion and philosophy, which many deep ecologists believe must be rejected—or a deep ecological transformation of consciousness within them must occur—if humans are to learn to live sustainably on the earth.¹⁵⁹ And Frank Edwin Egler, in his study *The Way of Science: A Philosophy of Ecology for the Layman* proposed a new world view called the ‘human ecosystem science’, wherein he propounded, ‘I look into Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism as the womb from which a humanitarian oriented “human ecosystem science” may yet arise.’¹⁶⁰ A study of Vaishnavism, an integrated philosophic branch of Hinduism, says seeds of a theology that could rouse the nearly 1 billion Hindus in the world to a deeper ecological consciousness are dormant in Sri Vaishnava tradition, but shows that the soil is fertile.¹⁶¹ How fertile the soil is, is testified to by the cultural history and also the current practices of Hindus.

KHEJRALI MASSACRE IN 1730 CE, RAJASTHAN, INDIA DEMONSTRATES THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND CONVICTION THAT HUMAN BEINGS AND NATURE—TREES IN KHEJRALI—ARE ONE SOUL IN TWO BODIES

Deep environmental consciousness internalised by religious belief and spiritual experience can motivate hundreds of people to lay down their lives to prevent trees from being cut. A most powerful example of how deep environmental consciousness can make humans defend trees as if the trees are their own near and dear happened as recently as in the eighteenth century, 1730 CE, in Rajasthan, a state of India. This event is part of the history of the Bishnoi community, which has sworn to be non-violent and vegetarian. The Bishnois are a small community in Rajasthan, who practised environmental conservation as a part of their daily religious duty. Their faith is an offshoot of Hinduism and was founded by Guru Maharaj Jambeshwar in the fifteenth century. He believed that if trees were protected, animal life would be sustained and his community would survive. Therefore, he formulated twenty-nine injunctions. Principal among them was a ban on the cutting of any green tree and killing of any animal or bird. In 1730, a Bishnoi woman Amrita Devi, was at home with her three daughters when she came to know that a party of woodcutters sent by the Maharaja of Jodhpur were on their way to fell a green Khejri tree for the construction of the Maharaja’s

new palace. She prevented the woodcutters from felling the tree and was killed by them for her resistance, as were her three little daughters. The news spread like wildfire among the Bishnoi community and hundreds of them assembled on the spot, prepared to give their lives for the cause. Finally, 363 of them got buried while resisting those who were chopping off the trees. This incident is popularly known as the Khejrli massacre. Eventually, the Maharaja apologised for the conduct of his officials but this moving event, unprecedented in the environmental history of the world, has ever since been an inspiration to the environmental protectionists of not just India, but all across the globe. The Bishnois' defence of the natural environment needs to be more widely known as one of the world's classic instances of martyrdom in defending the environment. The incident laid the foundation of the famous resistance initiated by tree-hugging movement, known as Chipko.¹⁶² Valmik Thapar, the renowned naturalist and conservationist, described the Bishnoi incident in his 1997 book *Land of The Tiger: A Natural History of The Indian Subcontinent* as 'the primary reason that deserted wildlife still exists on the subcontinent'.¹⁶³ The combination of religious belief and a community life, which preserved and practised that belief made nature part of the life of the Bishnoi community. Individual belief would not have made the bond between the people and nature that intense and powerful.

SOME INDIAN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR BELIEFS AND CULTURE FOR PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

In India, there are several instances of communities and traditional faiths and cultures, as living phenomena, towards protecting environment. One is the Demazong, the Buddhist eco-cultural landscape in Sikkim Himalayas, and another is the Apatani, the eco-cultural landscape in Arunachal Pradesh, which illustrate the value of traditional culture and ecological knowledge in sustaining natural resource management.¹⁶⁴ The natural resource conservation at the village of Mendha in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra is an example of another such community dedicated to the same cause. In 1987, the villagers renewed their efforts at biodiversity conservation. They decided that there would be no commercial exploitation of forests, except for non-timber forest produce. The villagers would themselves regulate the amount

of resources they could extract from the forests and undertake measures to tackle soil erosion; forests would not be set on fire and encroachment would not be allowed.¹⁶⁵ In the northeastern region of India, tribal communities meet a substantial proportion of their resource requirements from a relatively small catchment area in which they have been living for a long time. They live in complete harmony with nature.¹⁶⁶ Another pertinent example is that of the Meitei communities in the states of Manipur and Assam. Sacred groves, or *Umang Lais*, as they are called in the Meitei language, form an integral part of the Manipuri tradition of nature worship. Several species of plants are protected in these groves, which also offer protection to birds and animals. These include teak, several fruit trees like lemon and plants of medicinal value such as ginger, eucalyptus and bamboo. Fishes, waterfowl and other aquatic animals like snails and insects are very common items in the diet of the Meitei. However, many of these animals are not eaten during certain periods, probably with the motive of sustainable harvesting and conservation.¹⁶⁷ These are just illustrations of how living religious beliefs and practices help in the conservation of nature and its biodiversity.

CREATING ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND INFLUENCING BEHAVIOUR THROUGH SYMBOLS

In the evolution of human consciousness, both at the individual and collective cultural levels, beyond an overidentification with its rational mode, reason is transcended but not left behind, it is taken up and integrated into the higher levels of consciousness that is 'psychic' and the 'advaitic', affirming the necessity of using reason to process the experience of levels of consciousness beyond the rational.¹⁶⁸ Consciousness is not anti-reason or irrational. It is integral to a higher reason than self. But consciousness evolves through the psychic process, which needs training of the mind through symbols. Symbols have the potential to transform one's consciousness. These symbols mediate transcendence, and by so doing, they transform the mind. This transformation is multifaceted. It transforms consciousness. Symbols also open up levels of awareness in human consciousness that would remain hidden were they not awakened by them.¹⁶⁹ Symbols can communicate effectively and quickly what thousands of pages or hundreds of hours of lectures cannot.

In a thesis on *The Symbols' Role in the Creation of a European Identity* for a master's degree in European studies, Ioana-Sabina Prisacariu says, 'Complex ideas, abstract values, subtle emotional associations when communicated in a non-symbolic common language, which require very long, complicated and difficult verbalisation, would be incomprehensible for at least most of the people to whom the message is addressed. Symbols, on the contrary, communicate them in a synthetic, short way, appealing directly to the emotional semi-conscious associations and avoid intellectual elaboration. Symbols are therefore a very quick and efficient means of communication. They are ceremonial, attractive and appeal to the sense of beauty. A message transmitted in such a festive and aesthetically pleasant way is readily received and accepted, because not only is it sent in an attractive form, but also, its ceremonial character gives the impression that its content is of a special importance and value. They are not merely symbolic, in the sense of being the opposite of real life. They are real life and they may become vital aspects of social process. What is of primary importance here is the role of symbols as vehicles that convey values. Cultural values, although a fundamental component of the cultural system, do not exist in any material form outside symbolic texts. Symbolic forms like rituals, ceremonies, myths, festivities, art, literature are the way in which a group, a community, a state, or, in our case, a reunion of states organises the intellectual and emotional framework of its members' lives, confirming its value system, social norms, and goals legitimising social order. In such a way, group identity is created, maintained and transformed together with the identity of other groups with which one's own group has relations.'¹⁷⁰ Symbolism is therefore effective in communicating and implanting impressions and values, as much in modern times as it has been in ancient times. Symbolism has great value in environmental psychology.

Hindu religion and culture effectively use symbols and symbolism to create and sustain ecological and environmental consciousness and sustain them through rituals. Hindus regard rituals as *samskaras* or continuous practice to imbibe values so as to influence the conduct of the performer. Puja or the ritual of worship is a *samskara* to train the mind to internalise deeper consciousness. For example, a tree is revered and worshipped during *Vruksha puja*, as symbolising the entire forest to internalise the deeper environmental

consciousness that makes trees and forests an integral part of one's own life. A snake is worshipped during *Naaga* puja, symbolising the wildlife and internalising the consciousness that protection of wildlife is inseparable from protection of forests as forests cannot be protected without wildlife and wildlife will cease to exist without forests. The river Ganga is represented as the entire water kingdom, which is revered and worshipped during Ganga puja to internalise deep ecological consciousness. Similarly, the earth is revered and worshipped during *Bhumi* puja to imbibe deeper consciousness that earth is a living reality. Similarly, the cow is revered and worshipped while performing the *Gau* puja and elephant is revered and worshipped at the *Gaja* puja to create and internalise the deep consciousness that the entire animal kingdom too is integral to human life. The Tulsi plant is worshipped during Tulsi puja to imbibe the deep consciousness that all the plant varieties are integral to human life. Here, the symbols become the deities—the direct consequence being deep consciousness, which conserves forests, protects wildlife, sustains the environment and preserves the ecology. The worship or puja is the *samskara* or the practice that is founded on symbolism. It is through symbolism and symbols that the ancient Indians implanted and kept alive environmental consciousness which is in a living form today with potential to be revived in a big way for environmental protection. Because of the continuous practice of reverence and worship or *samskara*, the higher consciousness of those who practice it regularly is awakened. By the regular practice of the *samskaras*, the subconscious of the practitioners is influenced and their entire behaviour changes. *Samskaras* build deeper and higher consciousness in humans. This is not theory. This had worked in practice, despite the advent of Western modernity, which regards such practices, which are founded on the basic consciousness that nature is sacred and not a secular asset, as animistic and persuades people to discard these practices as irrational and superstitious.

HOW ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAVE IGNORED THE ROLE OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGES IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

As explained earlier, the West has withdrawn its prescriptions that the non-Western people must give up their philosophies and lifestyles for achieving

development, but that is yet to reflect in the national discourse of developing nations. The cultural and spiritual heritages of the developing nations have to be saved, revived and preserved in their interest and in the interest of protecting the environment for posterity. A strong theme in the environmental philosophy holds that a society's behaviour towards the environment depends on the relation between humanity and nature as propounded by cultural and religious tradition.¹⁷¹ The role of cultural and spiritual heritages in economic development has been substantially ignored even by environmentalists, despite embedment within different cultures of alternatives to modernity and ways of knowing and interacting with social and natural environment.¹⁷² This challenge of integrating the environmental movements of India with the traditional and ritualistic ethic is needed in the larger interest of India and of the entire world. This will call for intense public education to negate the notion that traditional ritualistic practices run counter to secular society or state.

THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF DEVELOPING NATIONS NEEDS TO BE SAVED AND LEGITIMISED

The issue in the age of economic development is, therefore, whether, as TN Jenkins asked in his work *Economics and the Environment: A Case of Ethical Neglect*,¹⁷³ 'Is it adequate to seek to solve environmental and social problems of development simply by administrative interventions (such as regulation, price incentives, delineation of property rights) or whether there is a role for cultural and spiritual heritages in solving these problems and in environmental ethic for today's overwhelmingly secular age.' Jenkins answers the question thus: 'In considering such questions it is necessary to examine whether particular traditions are conducive to environmentally sensitive behaviour; whether environment and social problems of development are the inevitable consequences of modern economic, social and political organisation; the extent to which there is congruity between traditional and cultural prescriptions and actual current behaviour; and the reasons why particularly in developing countries faced with 'development', apparently flourishing cultural and spiritual heritages have not been able to maintain attitudes, which may have mitigated the environmental and social problems in the past.'¹⁷⁴ This is the

real issue. Cultural and spiritual consciousness are being destroyed by a mindless educational system that commends precisely what the fit-all model of the West mandated for the development of the developing nations that called for the destruction of the national philosophies and lifestyles of the people.

CONCLUSION

The emerging fact is that the global environmental regulations do not measure up to the challenge of environmental degradation. The paradigm of regulations seems to be proving to be 'shallow environmentalism' as Arnie Naess would have said. An effective alternative seems to be to revive and celebrate the traditional and cultural environmental consciousness which has safeguarded environment and ecology for millennia. This calls for a paradigm shift from environmental regulations to environmental consciousness, that is, from the state-driven model to peoples and communities or a cultural and religious participatory model. Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Taoism, Shintoism and all ancient and earth religions which have ecocentric philosophies are the resources for this new paradigm of environmental consciousness.

THEME THREE

IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE TO PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE

Ideology and philosophy look identical but there is a world of difference between the two. The difference between the two is an area that remains not fully explored in public discourse so far. Briefly put, the difference between ideology and philosophy is this: ideology is exclusive, whilst philosophy is inclusive. Philosophy is pluralistic, ideology is not. Therefore philosophy allows dialogue but ideology does not. Ideology is akin to religious dogma. It presumes itself to be inerrant and inviolable. Therefore, it tends to undermine, if not shut out, dialogue with others who hold a different view. And even though philosophy too is generally inclined one way or the other, it

is open to evidence and dialogue. The divide between ideology and philosophy extends to all areas of human endeavour and interaction including science, which too has developed rigidities like ideologies have. Neither the efforts for advancing conflict avoidance nor the endeavour to promote environmental consciousness will work unless the world, which has been and is even now largely functioning in an ideological mode which has a 'Them vs Us' divide, shifts from the exclusive paradigm of ideology to the inclusive paradigm of philosophy. Even though the term ideology made its advent quite late, as late as the eighteenth century, rigid thought systems including religions which refused to allow any debate on their fundamentals, were themselves ideologies or ideological religions, have been around for millennia.

Dialogue is the very foundation of philosophy. A world which has been running on ideologies—secular and religious—for the last several centuries needs to turn to philosophies. The word philosophy has its origin in Greek. 'Philo' means love and 'Sophia(e)' means reason. Philosophy means love of reasoning. Philosophy, in the West, is concerned and stops with pure reason. But the Hindu and Buddhist philosophic systems go beyond and transcend reason on to contemplation. Accordingly, the terminology for philosophy is different in both. The Hindu concept of '*darsana*', the Buddhist equivalent of which is '*dassana*', means 'to see and to contemplate.' The Hindu concept of philosophy is known as '*Darsana Shastra*'¹⁷⁵—the equivalent of which in the Buddhist is '*Dassana Shastra*'. Through millennia, the *darsanas* emerged and refined their views in debate and dialogue with one another.¹⁷⁶ The celebrated Hindu text, Upanishads, which contain the essence of Hindu philosophy of Vedanta, are themselves dialogues between the guru (preceptor) and the *shishya* (student) about the religious and spiritual concepts relating to man, nature and creation. Likewise, dialogue has played a central role in Buddhism.¹⁷⁷

INTRA-RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND INTERRELIGIOUS DISHARMONY

Both Hinduism and Buddhism promoted as part of their evolution intra-religious dialogues and debate. This promoted intra-religious tolerance in both. Only because of their tolerance within, they became tolerant outside. When intra-religious intolerance is dominant in a religion, it becomes disqualified for interreligious harmony. Intra-religious hate leads to interreligious conflicts

and violence. While theological rationales for the fomentation of intra-religious hatred vary, there is commonality in the psychosocial roots of such enmity across religious boundaries. Intra-religious hatred consists of the negative attitudes formed by in-group members about out-groups—those outside their own religion. Interreligious violence will be defined as aggressive behaviour between in-groups and out-groups.¹⁷⁸ The intra-religious hate between in-groups weakens the moderate in-group against the extremist in-group, in what should be the attitude of their religion as a whole to the out-group. Religious hate seeded development of ideologies in the West. Ideologies have played havoc in the West with human lives. Millions and millions have perished in ideological wars and conflicts, whether the ideology was religious or secular. Ideologies, which were believed to have faded out and died in the early 1990s seem to have returned with a vengeance. It therefore calls for a brief reference to its past and present, even though it is not the appropriate context for detailed discussions on the origin and development of ideologies in the West.

FROM AGE OF IDEOLOGY TO END OF IDEOLOGY TO THE END OF END OF IDEOLOGY

On the return of ideologies, John T Jost, professor of psychology and politics, co-director of the Center for Social and Political Behavior at New York University says that: ‘The twentieth century was regarded by many scholars as the Age of Ideology and yet twice at least in the century, the demise of ideologies, which directly and indirectly drove the world history for almost two millennia, was pronounced. First, when World War II had ended and next, when the Cold War ended. The “end of ideology” was declared by social scientists in the aftermath of World War II. The end-of-the-ideology protagonists were so influential that researchers ignored the topic of ideology for many years. However, current political realities provide strong grounds for returning to the study of ideology.’¹⁷⁹

On the other hand, Francis Fukuyama wrote in his famous book *End of History and the Last Man*, that ‘Fascism was destroyed as a living ideology by World War II. That was a defeat, of course, on a very material level, but it amounted to a defeat of the idea as well. What destroyed fascism as an idea

was not the universal moral revulsion against it, since plenty of people were willing to endorse the idea as long as it seemed the wave of the future, but its lack of success. The passing of Marxism-Leninism, first from China, and then from the Soviet Union would mean its death as a living ideology of world historical significance. And the death of this ideology means the growing “Common Marketisation” of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states.¹⁸⁰ But contrary to the perception of Francis Fukuyama, ideologies and conflicts did not end. They revived more virulently in 1990s and later in 2000s.

John T Jost appropriately titled his book containing the collection of articles first published in 1960s, as *The End of the End of Ideology*.¹⁸¹ The history of ideology simply did not end. But it came back with a vengeance as religious ideology, which the 9/11 attacks, the wars that followed, the Islamic terror all over the globe and the ongoing religious revolutions and religious wars in the Middle East demonstrate. It is time that the concept of ideology and its types and their origins and history are recalled particularly from the Hindu-Buddhist civilisational perspective as the history and origin of ideologies show that they have a West-centric evolution and growth. This is important because the Hindu-Buddhist civilisational history brings to the table a different paradigm operated by conflict-free philosophy instead of conflict-prone ideological paradigm and demonstrates the dominance of a higher thought that avoided and undermined ‘Them versus Us’ approach—which is the source of all ideologies—throughout its history.

SOME ATTEMPTS TO ADD INCLUSIVITY TO EXCLUSIVE RELIGIONS

Ideologies, like exclusive religions, are basically exclusive. But in recent times, there has been some attempt at transforming ideologies into inclusive ones, even though conceptually inclusive ideologies are an oxymoron. The attempts to introduce inclusiveness in exclusive ideologies, including inclusiveness in exclusive religions, is a later evolution—like the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church, even while holding Christianity as the only true faith, advocated dialogue with other religions, which it had earlier consistently dismissed as false faiths. Attempts to move from exclusiveness to inclusiveness in Christian theology began only in the twentieth century.

There were individual efforts at inclusiveness. In her essay *The Catholic Church's Theological Approach to other Religions: From Conversion to Conversation*,¹⁸² Alice Priest attempts to map the nuanced journey of the Catholic Church's theological approach to other religions since its birth in Judaism to the present day. Priest is a graduate of the Inaugural Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship, 2006, an initiative of the Council for Australian Catholic Women in conjunction with Australian Catholic University, Canberra. Priest demonstrates the slow historical progression from exclusivism to inclusivity, which finally emerged in the twentieth century, and concludes with the Church stepping hesitantly, but inevitably, upon the threshold of pluralism. Alice Priest argues that the history is a story of transformation, from only to also, from conversion to conversation.¹⁸³ Even now, all Western notions of religion or ideology continue to be, by belief and practice, exclusive. Such religious exclusivism was at the root of all ideologies that dated prior to the twentieth century. If in any ideological discourse this point were missed, then the history of what ideologies meant and were will be unclear and even misleading.

**IDEOLOGY IS DOGMA; EVIDENCE OR DIALOGUE IS IRRELEVANT
BUT PHILOSOPHY IS OPEN TO EVIDENCE AND DIALOGUE**

For an objective comparison of ideology and inclusive religions and thought systems, it is also necessary to understand the qualitative difference between ideology and philosophy. Ideology is powered by a certain dogma akin to religious dogma. But philosophy is sans dogma. Surprisingly, this apparent distinction is not in the discourse on either or both. It was not a philosopher, but a political leader, the former US President Bill Clinton, who spoke of the distinction between philosophy and ideology—although in the context of politics. Citing too much dogma and too little philosophy as the reason it is so hard to achieve political consensus, Clinton said, 'If you have a philosophy, it generally pushes you in a certain direction or another, but, like all philosophers you want to engage in discussion and argument. You are open to evidence, to new learning, and you are certainly open to debate the practical applications of your philosophy. Therefore, you might wind up making a principled agreement with someone with a different philosophy.

The problem with ideology is, if you have got an ideology, you have already got your mind made up—you know all the answers. And, that makes evidence irrelevant and argument a waste of time. So, you use assertion and attack. If you have a philosophy, it means you're generally inclined one way or the other but you're open to evidence. If you have an ideology, it means everything is determined by dogma and you're impervious to evidence. Evidence is irrelevant.¹⁸⁴ It is surprising that the mainline discourse on either philosophy or ideology does not bring out this vital difference between the two paradigms of thought. This may be because the global discourse today is dominated by ideological groups and anti-ideological groups, sans philosophy. Anti-ideology is not philosophy, but it is itself another ideology. The exclusiveness of different ideologies, religious, social, economic or political, ensured that there is no space for philosophy as each one of the ideologies claimed to be the only truth. The global discourse has become a prisoner of 'either this or that' approach, thanks to the dominance of ideological attitudes in all aspects of life.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

What is philosophy, what is ideology and what are the fundamental differences between the two have been well brought out in www.differencesbetween.net, which because of its profoundness is quoted in full here:

There are very fundamental differences between philosophy and ideology. Ideology refers to a set of beliefs or doctrines that back a certain social institution or a particular organisation. Philosophy refers to looking at life in a pragmatic manner and attempting to understand why life is as it is and the principles governing behind it.

Ideology expresses dissatisfaction with the current state and aspires to be some future state whereas philosophy tries to understand the world in its current state. In other words, ideology is aimed at changing the world whereas philosophy is aimed at seeking the truth.

Ideology is rigid and once fixed on certain beliefs, refuses to change its stance irrespective of any change in the surrounding environment. Challenging an ideologue can be the most difficult task. A philosopher, on the other hand, may arrive on some construct for the basis of life and other things but

will be willing to discuss and ponder other philosophies. A philosopher is open-minded and willing to listen to criticism, whereas an ideologue will refute anything challenging his or her ideology outright. This also suggests that while philosophy encourages people to think, ideology discourages any thinking that goes against the basic doctrines that govern the ideology.

These definitions and differences clearly indicate that philosophy and ideology, if measured on a scale, would occupy two extreme ends. The purpose of any philosopher is to seek knowledge for the sake of wisdom and truth whereas an ideologue's sole aim is to advocate and enforce his or her ideology wherever he or she can.

Philosophy is objective whereas an ideologue will always impose his or her ideology's vision and discard anything against it. Philosophy requires structured thinking whereas ideology has lot of personal emotions in play.

Philosophy is neither harmful nor helpful as there is no advocacy behind it. On the other hand, an ideology can bring both harm and good to the society. This is because the set of doctrines that govern the ideology may not always serve universal interests, and ideology demands advocacy and conversion of other beliefs and thoughts to that particular ideology in order to reign supreme. However, every ideology is born out of some philosophy.

In conclusion, here is a summary of differences between philosophy and ideology:

1. Philosophy refers to a pragmatic approach of looking at and analysing life. Ideology refers to a set of beliefs and rules belonging to a particular group or set of people
2. Philosophy aims at understanding the world as it exists, whereas ideology is born out of a vision for the future and aims at changing the current state to that particular vision
3. Philosophy is objective whereas ideology is dogmatic and refuses to participate in any discussion that does not agree with that ideology
4. Philosophy does not have as much impact as an ideology would have on the world, for ideology aims at spreading beliefs and imposing them on the rest of society irrespective of its relevance
5. All ideologies have some underlying philosophy but it is not true vice versa.¹⁸⁵

Even though the difference between the two concepts—which are like two poles—is striking, surprisingly, there is very little scholarly work on the difference.

IDEOLOGIES HAVE CAUSED OVER A BILLION KILLINGS THE WORLD OVER, BUT INDIA HAD REMAINED AN OASIS OF PEACE AND HARMONY BECAUSE OF HIGH PHILOSOPHIES

Ideologies have caused deaths and destruction of human lives in not tens but hundreds of millions. What ideology and ideologically defined power and state have done to the world till the nineteenth century and in twentieth century is best captured by Professor RJ Rummel at the Center for National Security Law, School of Law, University of Virginia, 1997 and Rutgers University, in his monumental research on ‘Democide’. Regarding the ‘Democide’ in the twentieth century he says, ‘Collecting data on “Democide” was a horrendous task. I was soon overwhelmed by the unbelievable repetitiveness of regime after regime, ruler after ruler, murdering people under their control or rule by shooting, burying alive, burning, hanging, knifing, starvation, flaying, beating, torture and so on. Year after year, not hundreds, not thousands, not tens of thousands of these people, but millions and millions—almost 170,000,000 of them, and this is only what appears a reasonable middle estimate. The awful toll may even reach above 300,000,000, the equivalent to those dead in a nuclear war stretched out over decades.’¹⁸⁶

Professor Rummel estimates pre-twentieth century killings—massacres, infanticide, executions, genocides, sacrifices, burnings, deaths by mistreatment, and the like—to be from 89 million to slightly over 260 million men, women and children. By another estimate he says that since thirtieth century BC till twentieth century CE, almost a fantastic 626,000,000 people would have been killed—even possibly over 1,138 millions—that is over a billion people. As contrasted with the rest of the world, India has been an oasis of peace and harmony with Professor Rummel reporting no mass killing in India till the thirteenth century and an estimated death of 4.51 million between the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries during the Islamic invasion of India.¹⁸⁷ However, on the site www.necrometrics.com, as quoted by Professor Rummel

in his site, three instances of violent killings in India are reported in the pre-1700 CE period—the Kalinga war in which 100,000 were estimated killed¹⁸⁸, in Sati¹⁸⁹ and Thuggee¹⁹⁰ assaults, the deaths were estimated in tens of thousands rather than in hundreds of thousands.¹⁹¹ Both Rummel's site and the Necrometrics site confirm that there was no mass killing in India before the advent of Islamic conquest. Evidently when the whole world was witnessing mass killings, India had remained an island of peace and harmony.

HINDUISM BELIEVED NOT IN THE WORLD AS ONE FAMILY BUT THE CREATION ITSELF AS ONE INDIVISIBLE PHENOMENON

How could India remain an oasis of non-violence and peace? That is essentially because of the philosophic underpinning of Hinduism. One of the oldest values of the Hindu civilisation is '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*', which translates as, 'The entire creation, not just the world, is a family.'¹⁹² That means there is mutuality and interdependence within the creation, like in a family. Another ancient motto of the Hindus has been '*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah*' meaning, 'Let everyone be happy, and everyone be free from all ills.'¹⁹³ The oldest known sacred literature, the Rig Veda says, '*Ano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah*,' which means 'Let noble thoughts come from everywhere.'¹⁹⁴ Thousands of years earlier, the Hindu sacred text Vedas proclaimed, '*Om taccham yoravrini mabe, ghatun yajnaya, ghatun yajnapataye, daivi svastirastu naha, svastir manushebhya, urdhvam jigatu bheshajam, sham no astu dvipade, sham chatushpade, om shantih shantih shantibi*', which means, 'We worship and pray to the Supreme Lord for the welfare of all beings. May all miseries and shortcomings leave us forever so that we may always sing for the Lord during the holy fire ceremonies. May all medicinal herbs grow in potency so that all diseases may be cured. May the gods rain peace on us. May all the two-legged creatures be happy, and may all the four-legged creatures also be happy. May there be peace in the hearts of all beings in all realms.'¹⁹⁵ The Hindu concept of well-being was not limited to seeking happiness for the adherents of the Hindu pantheon of faiths. It is not even limited to human beings but extends to the entire creation, including the vegetation, the two-legged and the four-legged living beings. Hinduism integrated and assimilated the entire creation as part of an indivisible whole.

BECAUSE OF ITS INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY HINDUISM PROTECTED THE PERSECUTED JEWS AND THE PARSIS, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TOLD THE WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS IN 1893

Emphasising these high values, Swami Vivekananda declared before the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 11 September 1893—and coincidentally, exactly 108 years later to the date, Islamic terror hit the US in the year 2001—‘I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites who came to southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.’¹⁹⁶

It was not that the Hindu civilisation merely professed these high values. It also practised these values at a time when wars and conflicts over ‘which god was the true god’ were resulting in the massacre of millions and millions of people in the West and in the Middle East. Vivekananda pointed to the world’s religious leaders assembled in Chicago as to how the Hindu civilisation protected and preserved for posterity the Zoroastrian faith and culture, which was extinguished in the place of its origin, Persia (now Iran) and also the Parsi race itself, and how it protected the Jews who were hounded by Christian churches and kings all over Christendom. This is because even the Hindu statecraft or *rajadharma*, was founded on the Hindu philosophy or world view without the ‘Them versus Us’ approach.

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL ACCOUNT AS TO HOW THEY WERE PROTECTED BY HINDU PHILOSOPHY

Seven decades after the Hindu monk spoke to the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, in a booklet titled *Indian Jews in Israel*, brought out by the Consulate of Israel in India in the late 1960s, the editor of the booklet, while describing how the formation of Israel came about, stated, ‘While most

of the others came to Israel driven by persecution, discrimination, murder and other attempts at total genocide, the Jews of India came because of their desire to participate in the building of the Third Jewish Commonwealth because of their unshakeable belief in the Redemption of Israel.' He added, 'Throughout their long sojourn in India, nowhere and at no time were they subjected to intolerance, discrimination and persecution.'¹⁹⁷

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HOW PARSIS WERE PROTECTED BY INCLUSIVE HINDU PHILOSOPHY

The story of the Parsi community which came from Iran in the eighth century, or thereabouts, is also similar to the arrival of the Jewish community in India. 'In the seventh century, Arab armies invaded Persia. Some Zoroastrians were converted to Islam and some preferred to migrate to India, which they did from the early eighth century. They too came to western India where they already had trading contacts and established large settlements to the north of Mumbai, such as the one at Sanjan. Their descendants founded a community later known as Parsi, reflecting the land of their origin and their language. Some settled in rural areas but close to centres of trade, others were more active in the trading circuits of the time.'¹⁹⁸ The Parsi legend about their entry into India goes something like this, 'A little over a thousand years ago, a bedraggled and tired group of persecuted people from Iran landed at Sanjan. Sanjan, a tiny principality—about 100 km north of present day Mumbai—was ruled by one Jadi Rana. The beleaguered king, not too keen on allowing foreign refugees to settle in his tiny kingdom, sent a bowl full of milk to the foreigners, signifying that the land was full and could support no more. Understanding Jadi Rana's ploy, the leader of the refugees added a pinch of sugar to the bowl, which did not overflow. Jadi Rana understood this astute gesture of sweetening the milk and the message behind it and graciously allowed the Parsis to stay. Since then, legend has it, that they have added sweetness to local life without being a burden.'¹⁹⁹ What Swami Vivekananda proclaimed in Chicago was no theory on universal brotherhood or acceptance of other faiths recited in the Hindu texts but the high principles of their texts observed by the Hindus in practice.

PHILOSOPHY OF WARS VERSUS IDEOLOGY OF WARS

While ideology provokes conflicts and leads to bloody wars and has resulted in killings of millions, philosophy not only avoids wars but guides an inevitable conflict into humane wars by such elaborate rules that turn wars into high rule-based sports. The differences between philosophy and ideology also manifest in wars.

WARS—PHILOSOPHIC AND IDEOLOGICAL

The noble principles of war had evolved from time immemorial in India and they were practised till very recently—as recently as in the sixteenth century CE. The concept of war and victory in ancient Hindu civilisation was in total contrast to what the Western civilisation bears testimony to. The ancient Hindu position on wars was based on an entirely different philosophy and outlook. Ancient Hindu texts had classified conquests into three types, *Dharma vijaya*—ethical victory, *Lobha vijaya*—lustful victory and *Asura vijaya*—barbaric victory. *Dharma vijaya*, that is victory obtained by ethical rules, was the ideal, which the Hindu kings were expected to follow and they usually did.²⁰⁰ The basis of *Dharma vijaya*, ethical victory, is *Dharma yuddha*, that is, ethical warfare. Unless warfare is ethical, victory cannot be ethical. The essence of *Dharma yuddha*, which leads to *Dharma vijaya* is that, ‘in the convention of *Dharma yuddha*, the adversary is never taken unaware.’²⁰¹ In contrast, even in modern times, a surprise attack on the enemy is an accepted war rule. The contours of what constitutes *Dharma yuddha* are illustratively:

- If the adversary had no shield, he was never attacked
- The fight took place between two persons who had the same weapons
- If one was a horseman, he would never think of attacking a charioteer
- When an adversary was injured, he ceased to be an enemy and he was attended to as an injured
- It was considered to be a disgrace for a warrior to stoop down or abandon the morals of his profession
- For a warrior, death is considered to be preferable to ignominious victory
- The belief was that victory, which is built upon fraud, treachery,

betrayal or cheating would entail, at sometime, total destruction of the family and the dynasty

- The captives—men, women and girls—would be unmolested
- After one year, these prisoners were permitted to their homes
- Even slaves in the war and plunder of wealth were expected to be returned to the rightful owners after a lapse of one year
- Victorious kings were never permitted to plunder the wealth of the defeated people, destroy their properties and occupy their territories.²⁰²

These illustrative norms of war capture the noble character of warfare in ancient India. In the Mahabharata—*Bhishma parva*—it is said that, ‘Conquerors do not secure victory so much by their army and prowess as by truthfulness, freedom from cruelty and observance of dharma and energetic actions.’ Again, in the Mahabharata, *Shanti parva* states that it is ‘better to die rather than obtain victory by wicked actions’. The great epic lists certain rules of war agreed between the combating sides, such as one should fight only with someone similarly equipped, one should not kill a soldier who is already in combat with another or who has turned his back from fight or is without armour. Similar position is commended by authorities like the lawgivers of ancient India, namely Apastamba, Gautama, Yajnavalkya, Manu, Sankha, Baudhayana, Parasara, Sukra and also in epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata—in *Shanti parva*, *Drona parva* and *Karna parva*—and others. Some of these will bear comparison with the conventions of Geneva and The Hague conferences on war laws in 1899 and 1907.²⁰³ The forbidden actions in war, as laid down by the lawgiver Gautama Rishi, were—killing anyone who has lost his horse, charioteer, or weapons, turns away from battle, sits down; killing with barbed or poisoned weapons or weapons with points of blazing fire; fight one who runs away and climbs a tree, or folds his hands, or is sleeping, or is naked or disarmed, or is seriously wounded, or whose weapons are broken, or is merely an onlooker or is not taking part in the battle, or is in fear or has turned to flee; kill or fight one who is taking water or meals, or taking off his shoes; kill a woman or female elephant, or a charioteer. Nor should one who is not a king kill a king. Mahabharata—*Shanti parva*—again stipulates that the wounded soldier

should be treated with medicine and should be allowed to go when he is healed. These rules, though ideal and not probably followed in every case, are more humane as compared to modern warfare.²⁰⁴

The rule in *Gada yuddha*—mace fight—was that no blow was to be struck below the naval, a rule which Bhima violated when he struck Duryodhana with his mace in his thigh. At the end of the great war of Mahabharata, Duryodhana recounts all bad deeds of Krishna and the Pandavas to which, Krishna responds with the numerous breaches of war morality by the Kauravas such as the slaying of Abhimanyu by many engaging at the same time. But, these are admitted breaches of war ethics, the ethics being acknowledged to be legitimate. In ancient India, non-combatants were never molested, a rule which was universally recognised in global warfare in the West only in 1897. The Greek traveller Megasthenes bears testimony. He says, ‘Tillers of soil even when the battle is raging in the neighbourhood are undisturbed by any sense of danger, for the combatants allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested.’

WARS LED BY AND FOUGHT ON IDEOLOGIES TILL 1897 WHEN THE WESTERN WORLD BEGAN FRAMING HUMANE RULES OF WAR

In contrast, in the West, where ideological wars were fought, ‘in ancient times captured cities or towns would be pillaged and their inhabitants massacred, whole lands would be turned into regions of ruins and skeletons. Even the Hebrews, according to the Bible, put to the sword those they conquered. It was the Assyrians, however, whose reputation for such savagery would be transmitted down the ages. They would reward their soldiers for every severed head they brought in from the field, whether enemy fighters or not. They would decapitate or club to death captured soldiers, slice off the ears, noses, hands and feet of nobles, throw them from high towers, flay them and their children to death or roast them over a slow fire.’ Consider what one historian writes about the capture of Damascus by King Sargon of Assyria. ‘Sargon had the defeated king burned alive before his eyes. The wives and daughters of the captured kings were destined for the Assyrians’ harems and those who were not of noble blood were condemned to slavery. Meanwhile, the soldiery had been massacring the population and brought the heads

of their victims into the king's presence where they were counted up by the scribes.²⁰⁵ Adding that such barbarity was not limited to classical times, Professor Rummel cites gory instances like the alleged 40,000 to possibly even over 70,000 men, women, and children, who were butchered after the Christian crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099 CE. The pre-twentieth century, killings—massacres, infanticide, executions, genocides, sacrifices, burnings, deaths by mistreatment, and the like—add up to a grand total of from near 89,000,000 to slightly over 260,000,000 million men, women, and children dead.²⁰⁶

During the first eighty-eight years of the twentieth century, almost 170,000,000 men, women, and children had been shot, beaten, tortured, knifed, burned, starved, frozen, crushed, or worked to death or buried alive, drowned, hung, bombed, or killed in any other of the myriad ways governments have inflicted death on unarmed, helpless citizens or foreigners. The dead could even conceivably be near 360,000,000 people.²⁰⁷ This kind of barbarism never occurred in ancient or later India till the Islamic invasion.

KAUTILYAN PHILOSOPHY OF ACQUISITIVE WAR DECLARED AS UNETHICAL

In the *History of Dharmasastras*, Dr PV Kane says, 'In Bana's *Kadambari*—first half of the seventh century—we have a striking reference to Kautilya's work as cruel work because it almost contains advice that is "very wicked". This is perhaps the reason why Kautilya's work had already become unpopular and virtually disappeared in North India—before the first half of the seventh century—on account of its vigorous advocacy that end justified the means.²⁰⁸ But, in retrospect, it would appear that empire-building in India—which would have brought political unity on the lines of what the West believes today to be the nation state, consistent with the cultural entity of India—would have been in Kautilya's prescriptions.'

CONCLUSION

In normal times of peace, philosophy integrates humanness, logic, morality and dialogue, while ideology shuts out the other view and that is the reason behind wars and most often barbaric wars, which has been brought out tellingly by Professor Rummel. Ideology, whose end was seen after the Cold War ended, seems to have revived in a more virulent form—as

religious ideologies. The only alternative to the conflict is to make the ideologies including religions acquire philosophic underpinning—which is to look at the world view of others also even as one is convinced of one's own world view. This is possible only if an ideology allows investigation of its foundations, as Hans Küng has suggested. Unless a religion or ideology allows its fundamentals to be investigated, it is not possible to avoid conflicts and violence.

A FINAL WORD

Open dialogue is at the root of all three themes, whether it is about avoiding conflicts, creating environmental consciousness or transforming ideologies into philosophies. The rule for transparent and open dialogue is the ancient Hindu-Buddhist model of *Purva paksha*, almost endorsed by Hans Küng and Luc Reyhler, who called for a new global ethic to be mediated by all religions for world peace. The rule of *Purva paksha* will legitimately explore the fundamentals of all religions and ideologies and their attitudes towards one another. This is particularly important when a religion lays down rules for the followers of other religions by classifying and naming them as *kafirs* or heathens and prescribes how they should be viewed or treated. This is a most wholesome way to avoid conflicts, or to dissolve the conflicts—to adopt the innovative terminology used by Prof Dr SN Balagangadhara, in his paper on conflict avoidance, presented at the conference—whether the conflicts are religious, political, civilisational or environmental. In sum, conflict avoidance, environmental consciousness and philosophic attitude are not independent but interrelated—by the idea of truthful and open dialogue—which is the very motto of the conference that is Samvad. Hopefully and increasingly the world will see them as an integrated and inseparable whole.

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Not for Sale

In his quest for a value-oriented century, to enrich humanity with beauty and happiness of the horizons of the mind and the marvels of scientific development, our Prime Minister mirrors the message of Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha spent the last rainy season at the Venuvana monastery, on the outskirts of Vaishali. While resting under a tree, he remarked, ‘The world is beautiful. It is a joy to live in it.’

The Rig Veda says, when the sun goes home, it enters the womb of fire to find a new existence. We too seek this ultra living fire that lives in our hearts, in the sky, in the warmth of love, in the joy of creation and in the intensity of our deeds. One of the most impressive international sharing of culture and civilisation is the interface of India and Japan. A Japanese child begins his education with a syllabary of fifty sounds or *gojuon*, commencing with *aa*, *ee*, *oo*, *ae*, *o*, *ka*, *kee*, *ku*, *kae*, *ko* and so on. This syllabary was a revolutionary step in Japanese history. What was hitherto the prerogative of the predestined few became the potential privilege for all. Classical and contemporary are living symbols of vitality in Japan—skyscrapers besides shops selling samurai swords, electronics of today ravishing the eyes and the pulsating levels of culture fascinating the mind. The echoes of cultural consciousness flow into the stream of life. The roundish *daruma* doll is a must for success in life.

Its eyes are blank when one buys it. One paints a pupil when embarking on a project and if all ends well, the second pupil is added, so that *daruma* is rewarded by full sight. What is further interesting is that this *daruma* doll is actually the Indian acharya, Bodhidharma—the founder of Zen Buddhism. He spent nine years in uninterrupted meditation and at the end of it, when he tried to stand up he found his legs had atrophied. Thus, the ancient frontiers of the collective mind dawned.

In Japan, the inner life moves in peace and serenity. The outer manifestation is just an action. The bodhisattvas take on two aspects—one that is calm, serene and benevolent and the other that is dynamic, passionate and terrifying. The intangible perfume and the indefinable hue of the Japanese spirit create a modernisation that resists Westernisation. Japan is more modernised than Westernised, while the Philippines is more Westernised than modernised. A Westerner does not feel his eyes assuming the shape of an almond or his thoughts becoming Zen, simply because he drinks tea. Likewise, the adoption, diffusion and development of invention have become the unequivocal veer of Japan. There is no veering of the Japanese mind to the West except towards the movement of a creative territory.

The European perceptions of Eurocentrism and their theory of civilisation are both structures of minds that have seen phenomenal advances during the last millennium. The Western mind is seeking room to move in a pluralistic universe, while it is rooted in the meaning and being of its own exclusive thinking and understanding. It does not seek either a reevaluation or a transvaluation of the multiple structures of alterity. A higher religion generates monocentrism, antagonisms and conflicts. A unidimensional norm is against the deep reality of existence. We have to discover freedom to acknowledge variousness. All the centuries, climates, lands and languages cannot be articulated according to a single symbolic system. The new sign is bringing in indeterminism and illogical systems—quarks without substance, irrational numbers and so on. They compel us to be a polycentric world, to a new sensibility of a polytheistic consciousness.

Civilisation had swept Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 with the slogan 'Civilisation and Enlightenment'. In the post-war years, civilisation was replaced by culture and the phrase 'culture nation'—*bunka kukka*—emerged

as a national slogan. The Huntington shock led to the realisation that cultures wield power—like the Hindu-Buddhist culture’s aesthetic contemplation and appreciation of beauty and charm, nobility and fervour. The concept of culture as power has made the Japanese reflect on self-awareness and to nurture the search for our roots. The fall of communism was a victory for human rights and the demise of globalism will be a victory of values. Globalisation provides confrontation and thereby new opportunities to assess our traditions. In the words of Emmanuel Todd Harris, ‘Traditions are the heart of a culture. Family systems stubbornly resist globalisation and thus help cultures preserve their individuality.’ Professor Yamazaki Masakazu of the University of East Asia’s Graduate School has pointed out that, ‘Values common to all humanity are an illusion.’

Silence gives voices to new historic symbols. The Japanese noted the importance of linguistic sovereignty. Dr Takashima Shuji, director-general of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo writes, ‘Preserving it is absolutely essential, not only to safeguard the Japanese language, but also to contribute to the world with the Japanese language and Japanese culture.’ The famed novelist, Natsume Soseki taught his students that the correct Japanese translation for ‘I love you’ is ‘*Tsuki ga tottemo aoi naa*’ which means ‘The moon is so blue tonight’. All varied cultures cannot be measured by a single yardstick. Heavyweight cultures have to acknowledge the existence of lightweight cultures—that possess a mysterious charm, refinement and unique flavour of belonging. It is the difference between a house and a home, an expression of inner identity alive within the cultural flowering of a dwelling. The West seeks to submerge our identities into an industrial civilisation that exaggerates the value of human rationality and repudiates the transcendental, which alone can give meaning to life.

Professor Kawakatsu speaks of ‘an encounter between the Japan of beauty and the West of strength. Beauty is not something that builds before might.’ To him the way of the samurai meant the polishing of spirit and virtue so as to avoid war. The Meiji government let this spirit and virtue fall by the wayside in its headlong dash to build a wealthy state and strong army, albeit with disastrous results. In his policy speech on 7 August 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi spoke of *Fukokuyutoku*—a country of wealth and virtue.

The two Sino-Japanese characters of '*fu ji*' mean rich and civilised. Professor Heita Kawakatsu says that 'By turning itself into a country of both wealth and virtue, Japan can make itself as splendid as its Mount Fuji.' Professor Terumasa Nakanishi elaborates on the Japanese sense of values, accomplishing economic vitality and three national goals:

- Freedom and vitality
- Revival of history
- Independence

Takashi Imamichi warns, 'Those who think that they are victimised by post-Cold War economic trends, they regard economic globalisation as a campaign to impose Western values under which a country's development strategy and reform efforts are judged by how close they approach the Anglo-American model.' He is positive in pointing out the core Asian values—restraint of individual desires and ambition, harmony with nature and concert between the group and individual.

Humanity will have to move away from glorifying consumerism, sex and violence to the omnipresent and omnipotent electronic media. The West cannot stain the mind of humanity. The sky looks blue but does not leave its stains on the wings of a bird. The two avoid tensions and appraisals, clashes and crashing. This inherited earth will have to be respected and owned. The roots of humanity as a whole and the West in particular must go deep down into the universal and infinite. The series of opposition creation like negative and positive, asserts that the world is a reconciliation of opposing forces. They return in rhythm and harmony. Technosphere has to be an auxiliary to the biosphere. It must not intrude into the functions of the biosphere, with all its *dukha* and *sukha*, misery and happiness. There has to be a non-being for a being to emerge; life is an interplay of being and non-being. Likewise, technology, robots and high-tech will have to be harmonised with the needs of life. Life includes human life, animal life and stationary life of plants. Flora, fauna and humanity have to coexist. The soft power of our values has to condition the future. If hard power replaces soft power, it will distract life. Our century has to realise the essence of life and the ethics of responsibility. Spiritualisation of the image of the future is creativity, which

through pure science and applied technology provides a new structure for the continuing process of human development. In a world where science has become cannibalistic and humanity has become edible, technology will devour the significance of human existence.

The real fulfilment of human spirit is in the values of the inner life to mitigate the acid rain of unbridled pursuit of material wealth. Continued industrial exploitation will invite massive retaliation from nature. Man has to give up the illusion of being the supreme creation, whose mission is actually a struggle against the forces of nature. He has to be a gentle disciple of life, for stiff and unbending is the disciple of death. He has to celebrate the green plants that are tender and full of sap. As Lao Tzu wisely puts it, 'A man is born gentle and meek. At his death, he is hard and stiff.' A Sanskrit text says, 'The whole life of these trees is to serve, with their leaves, flowers, fruits and branches, roots and shade and fragments, sap, bark, wood and finally even their ashes and coal. They exist for the purpose of others. Trees and animals, forests and rivers are divine symbols of life and we humans are part of that interdependent whole. A forest is as deep a culture as spiritualism. We may define three categories of forests—the forest that provides prosperity, *srivana*, the forests where sages contemplate and seek truth, *tapovana* and the great natural forest, *mahavana* where all lives find shelter.'

After millennia of separate histories, the cultures of mankind now suddenly find themselves in a common situation. Natural resources are dwindling, the water table is going down every year, pollution is reaching critical levels, social relationships are being dominated by egotism and national frontiers in meaningless array, all threatening human life itself. The technosphere is on a collision course with the biosphere. It has to be symbiosis of the multiple, a polycentric consciousness—theodiversity. Biodiversity is the supreme law of nature. There are over 800,000 species of flora and fauna in India alone. There are more than a lakh of different forms of plant and animal life in our country. Likewise the spiritual life must divine the several meanings and fuzzy wisdom of nature, the light of the many to imagine the sacrament that enshrines the multiple, the changing, the silent. Theodiversity is an inescapable corollary to the astounding discoveries in science and universal applications in technology. Realisation or *sadhana* is to visualise the harmony

between man's spirit and the divine spirit of the universe. In the living growth of nature is a sublime quest for the infinite, the rising towards higher and nobler freedom of perfection. In realisation, man ascends into a luminous vision of perfection, while in revelation he has to accede to the dogmas. There are no pagans or infidels in sadhana or realisation. In revelation, man is in the image of God while in realisation, gods are in the image of men. We will have to switch our consciousness. Humanity and nature are interdependent. Nature can no longer remain the backdrop or raw material for exploitation. Polluting nature is to our own peril. Nature commands our reverence. Lord Buddha gained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

Instead of frontiers, this century needs open horizons where people are sculptors of themselves to invoke the light and lyricism that resides in our life. The great poetess of Kashmir, Lal Ded says, 'From the outward enter into the most inward part of thy being. The beyond and the within has to be a flow.' To replace the natural order by an artificial euphoria will be a global mirage. *The Daily Telegraph* of 21 August 1991 published a public survey in Britain in which 42 per cent of the people said that they would be prepared to give up all the benefits of technology in order to lead a natural way of life in a world free of pollution. The value of a simple life has to be placed by the cult of the consumer. We have to find points of contact with our natural origins. We have arrived at a point where we must give back to nature. We can no longer take goodness and return poison. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Europeans will have to remodel their outlook if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves.'

Respect for the cultures, civilisations and religions of each other and no interference or conversion by a certain psychological propaganda should be the value of humankind in our century. True universality would be rich diversity with no single meaning. The various lives, the many realities would be lived with one deep feeling. Religions would be global in the sense that they will be rooted in human consciousness as the vision and faith of fellow beings, whatsoever their demographic number. Universality of civilisation rather than a universal civilisation will seek the affirmation of diversity. Such a civilisation and culture will be multiple and the centre will be everywhere.

ARAYAWONGSO

Namo tat sat bhagavatoratosammasam Buddhasa.

Namo tat sat bhagavatoratosammasam Buddhasa.

Namo tat sat bhagavatosammasam Buddhasa.

Priyehometulaghuta Dhammasanga.

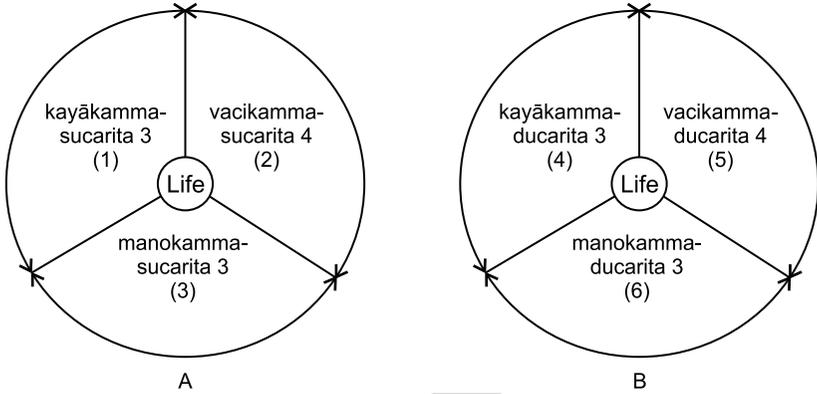
What is the meaning of peace in religious terms? What is the relation between peace and religion? And how does peace according to religion, or dhamma, happen? We have come together in the hope that religion can help us avoid conflict and to bring peace to the global community. My talk is focused on Buddhism. Our religion is all about peace.

I will discuss the *Ovādapātimokkha*—the charter of all Buddhist teachings. It has three paths: one, ideology, two, principle and three, rules of practice. In worldly terms, they are: strategy, tactic and operation—the military processes or the governing policies. We need all three of them in managing the current global society.

Let me focus at the heart of Buddhism, a universal religion with these three principles: one, abstain from all evil, two, cultivate wholesomeness and three, purify one's mind. The first two are peace in worldly terms, relying on dhamma, so we call them *santi dhamma* or 'dhamma peace', which leads to happiness and peace. We have three words: dhamma peace, happiness

and peace. Dhamma peace consists of *sila* (moral precepts) and dhamma. *Sila* is the instructions and dhamma is the teachings. Together, they create people who will be good for society. The aim is to build up virtuous human beings and return them to the world.

How does a person with virtue conduct his life?



You can see these two cycles of life, showing: ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kamma-patha*) and ten unwholesome courses of action (*akusala-kamma-patha*). Both cycles rely on the first and second principles of *sila* and dhamma, for life's development, or to cultivate noble human beings. We call them the cycles of life, leading to either good or evil. There are ten each, opposite to each other.

An interesting principle we should study is that of the mental action (*manokamma*), because it can lead to all kinds of results, merit or evil, joy or sorrow, success or catastrophe, depending on actions of the mind.

How do we keep human greed in limit? Not by sinking to such a degree that you need to invent by only destroying other things. We must keep ourselves from becoming so greedy that we covet other people's possessions. Here is the crucial part: Whether or not we can have peace in this world depends on this matter of greed (*lobha*). Yes, people should be allowed to have some degree of greed but it must remain within a moral framework. Next, we have to instill the right view or *samma ditthi* in their mental actions. This right view brings us to *ariyamagga*, which in Buddhism refers to the creation of mindfulness and wisdom in humanity. Buddhist teachings emphasise the development of individuals for a sound relationship with society.

How do we make mindfulness and wisdom arise among people and lead them to have the right view? The Buddhist process of learning gathers all knowledge of the Four Noble Truths—suffering, origin, cessation and path, with the right view being one component of the Four Noble Truths. Only in Buddhism do we find the following eight dhamma—right view or *samma ditthi*, right thought or *samma sankappa*, right speech or *samma vacca*, right action or *samma kammanta*, right livelihood or *samma ajiva*, right effort or *samma vyayama*, right mindfulness or *samma sati* and right concentration or *samma samadhi*. This noble path and technique is known as the Middle Path—*majjhimapatipada*. This will bring liberation from all sufferings. True peace in religious term is the complete extinction of suffering from the minds of humanity. The cleansing of greed, anger and delusion from human mind is true peace in the meaning of dhamma.

Peace, in the worldly sense, means restraining people within the moral boundary. We must teach them to have mindfulness and wisdom to understand the truth, to know what is proper and correct according to dhamma. Once taught, people will bring peace to the world. We must ensure that our humanitarianism will reach the same heights as morality for a peaceful world. Only when human beings are moral can we reach a society that is peaceful and where human beings are well treated. The attainment of such a society must be done through Buddhist or Hindu religious teachings or dhamma principles. We can call it the House of Peace, an office in the building of Buddhist religious principles. This House is made of the four dhamma principles of morality or *sila*, truth or *sacca*, gratitude or *katannu* and unity or *samaggi*. We need to have unity between body and spirit and also between body, spirit and mind to set forth on the ten wholesome courses of action. These are the most common practices of Buddhist followers leading to being a good person.

A good person needs unity of body, spirit and mind. He also has unity between his thoughts, actions and words. One needs all these to practice dhamma and reach out to other people of society. When everyone in a society observes the same morality and shares the same view, *samaggi dhamma* will arise in that society and such a community will be a joy to look at. When people are together with the help of *samaggi dhamma*, such a society will be

greatly empowered. One single piece of rope can be easily torn, but when we combine many into one thick rope, even an elephant cannot pull it apart. In building a house for our life, the whole aim is to live with others in a society. We must all be aware of and work for this unity, which will prove to be an inevitable boon for human society. People who observe unity should be constantly alert, as in the following story of bamboo trees. Once, in a grove of bamboo trees, a group of bamboos learned about the impending danger of humans coming to uproot them. After much discussion, they agreed that there was no danger more serious than human beings destroying bamboos. To destroy bamboos, however, human beings need a weapon. And one of the most harmful is a hooked knife with a bamboo handle. So the bamboos had an idea that: What they must guard against is not human beings, but bamboos that are willing to become a handle for the knife. Without that, the knife is harmless.

It is better to explore human behaviour with Buddhism or Hinduism than with another religion. I have thought about this even at the basic level. We rely on moral dhamma as it can be used in the life of society to thoroughly attain happiness and peace. Every dhamma teacher, whatever religion he is preaching, must fulfil his task earnestly, aiming at the benefits of convincing humanity to realise their humanitarian mission. Most importantly, there must be an interreligious cooperation to cooperatively lead to happiness and peace with the dhamma power of this religion. In Theravada Buddhism and other religions, there is a difference but there is a common core of bringing humanity towards peace and happiness.

King Ashoka the Great professed himself a Buddhist, with faith and confidence in Buddhism. Dhamma teachings were integrated into his policy of governance which relies on the principle of ruling with dhamma. He ensured there was a way for common people to adopt the thirty-eight highest blessings from the *Mangala Sutta*—that was well-expounded by the Lord Buddha—to be used in the administration and management of life-development towards sustainable happiness and peace.

How can we be so certain that dhamma can help create true peace and happiness for the world? We can look back and study the historical teachings of King Ashoka who shared his governing policy from *Sangha vijaya* to

Dhamma vijaya. He had dhamma as his governing principle, known as the policy of governance by righteousness. Countries today should also adopt the principle of governing by dhamma. There was an expansion of this policy throughout Asia during the second and third Buddhist century.

People can enjoy affinity, liberty and fertility and one can understand dhamma from Buddhist teachings to be used for the benefit of all mankind. The relationship between Buddhism and other religions is unique as it offers a changed view of peace for mankind all over the world.

Not for sale

The world is being increasingly plagued with political unrest, terrorism and conflicts. There is insecurity, uncertainty and insurgency in many parts of the world. Politics in the modern time has been perceived by the general public as a game, which some politicians play with dexterity for their personal gains or to the advantage of their groups on one hand while on the other, religions have been misinterpreted and have been hijacked by some extremists to suit their personal ambitions and fanatic ideologies.

As much as people would certainly like to perceive politics as a respectable profession where politicians are more sensitive to the needs and sufferings of the people at large, they also expect religious people to honestly follow the true teachings of respective religions, and in turn guide them towards meaningful and prosperous lives. Therefore, it is high time that we try our best to look into this matter, with the noble objective to find ways and means out of these social ills.

There are, broadly speaking, two categories of conflicts:

- Physical conflict: use of weapons, family violence, rape
- Mental conflict: irritation, short temperament, infliction of mental torture or trauma

For forty-five years, the Buddha devoted his life to the cause of welfare

of humanity and world peace, leading by example as well as by preaching the message of peace called dharma. There are numerous events described in the Buddhist scriptures wherein the Buddha personally participated in conflict avoidance. When the Sakya and Koliya clans were on the verge of waging war against each other over the use of water of the river Rohini, the Buddha intervened so that the immanent war was dispersed once and for all.

Following the example of the Buddha, Buddhist monks and nuns throughout centuries have contributed immensely to the preservation of world peace. Since Buddha's time, wherever the monks went, they would bring along with them the teaching of peace and non-violence. Even today, Buddhist missionary monks have taken the message of the Buddha to many parts of the world and have been able to help preserve stability and peace in those regions. Buddhist monks and nuns in predominantly Buddhist countries have played a very active role in safeguarding peace and harmony, promoting economic development and ethical living.

As a religion of peace, Buddhism teaches non-violence, tolerance, loving-kindness and forgiveness. In the whole history of its propagation, it has never resorted to or supported the use of violence or war at any time. In fact, in the discourse on loving-kindness in *Metta Sutta* and *Sutta Nipata*, the Buddha advises his followers to spread loving-kindness to all living beings without discrimination, 'as a mother protects her only child to the risk of her own life, even so should you spread loving-kindness to all sentient beings—long or large, middling or short, minute or massive.' Such is the Buddhist tolerance.

Moreover, the Buddha teaches us to live the four sublime virtues (*brahmavihara*), namely, loving-kindness (*metta*)—loving all beings without discrimination, compassion (*karuna*)—showing sincere pity for and giving a helping hand to those who are in difficulties and in need, sympathetic joy (*mudita*)—rejoicing and not being jealous with those who have obtained happiness and prosperity and equanimity (*upekkha*)—having a balanced mind, untouched by the external happenings and having no prejudice.

In order to maintain security, stability, peace and order in society, Buddhism instructs people to observe these five precepts:

- To abstain from killing living beings
- To abstain from stealing

- To abstain from committing sexual misconduct
- To abstain from telling lies
- To abstain from taking intoxicating drinks

These also form the fundamentals of human rights and social justice.

If we all abide by this advice, conflict, dispute or war between religion and religion, society and society or between nation and nation, will never take place. On the contrary, we will experience only peace, happiness, development and prosperity.

In contrast, the world today is experiencing various conflicts. Their root causes, according to the Buddhist teaching, are the evil thoughts such as selfishness and hatred. When people harbour hatred against each other, they always think of others as the enemy. In most cases, they have never had any dispute or even seen each other. Therefore, in order to prevent such malice, it is very important that they strive to eliminate hatred and hostile feelings from their hearts and souls and instead cultivate love and compassion. Thus, mind is the forerunner of all things—peace and war are also created by the mind. Therefore, politicians, as persons involved in managing the affairs of the nation, should develop peace within themselves, only then will they be able to radiate this inner peace to their families, societies, nations and to the whole world.

The current social upheavals are also created by men's insatiable thirst for material pleasure. Their desires have become so grave that they have lost humanism such as love and caring towards others. They long for wealth and pleasures for themselves to such an extent that they forget the suffering of others. Consequently, this leads to tension, disunity, disharmony, hatred and anger, not to solidarity and brotherhood. So people should try to lessen their endless desires and learn to lead contented lives, and at the same time try to help those who are less fortunate than them.

Real peace has to be built on mutual trust, care and love. It has to be acquired by a sincere and devoted struggle for truthfulness, honesty and dedication. Therefore, we all have to strive with even stronger determination for the sake of peace, development and prosperity in our region and in the world.

I conclude by quoting words spoken by Buddha, 'Hatred never ceases through hatred in this world; through love alone it ceases. This is an eternal law.'

May all beings be happy and free from hatred!

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5
Kripasur Sherpa

Contemporary society is facing unprecedented challenges to peace caused by numerous conflicts of different nature in different parts of the world. The basic notions of humanity and fraternity among humankind seem to have been undermined. Never before has human life been exposed to challenges and problems caused by conflicts at such levels. Likewise, we are confronted with excessive levels of impact of environmental degradation throughout the globe. No region of the world is unaffected by the adverse impact of global climate change—whether it is the upland region of high mountains or plain areas of the lowlands or whether it is the interiors or the coasts—all areas of this earth and the lives prevailing therein have come under direct threat of the negative impact of climate change.

We all know Hinduism and Buddhism are the most ancient traditions of the world. They carry long time-tested traditions and influence the way of life of billions of people in Asia. In fact, the meaning of both Hinduism and Buddhism is not limited to the restricted notion of religion. They are in the real sense, the philosophies of human life. Hence, they are a way of life.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism are directly concerned with the central thought of communities. It is also in this context that the title of the programme, Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and

Environment Consciousness, is truly of meaningful relevance. It has been understood that the philosophy of Buddha is entirely associated with the philosophy of non-violence, with truth and compassion towards all animals which could be classified as the core elements of humanity. Likewise, Hinduism derives its philosophy from nature and humanity and in Hinduism, nature is regarded as God. The sun, moon, sky, river and earth and every part of nature is considered as one or another part of God. Nature is revered. It is also therefore essential that these two traditions of philosophy may prove crucial in avoiding conflict and preserving nature. We highly value the importance of peace, tolerance and understanding for avoiding conflict. We believe in non-violence and the Buddha. We believe that this approach is a principle, a philosophy as well as a way of life. It has been the most desirable and elected means of social and political change as well. Great leaders of the world have pursued the principle of non-violence in their movements for social and political change. The nature and magnitude of such accomplishments handed to us by Lord Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King have been inspiring people across the world.

We are equally concerned about climate change and its negative impact on the planet. No region or life is immune from this. The negative impact of climate change is even deeper in our region of South Asia, especially in mountainous and coastal regions which stand to be adversely affected by increasing temperatures. The melting of ice in the Himalayas, the reduction in agro-production, the negative impact on biological diversity and its adverse effect on public health, the increase in natural disasters and the problem of food security are some of the challenges with which we are confronted.

To conclude, the objective of avoidance of conflict and consciousness of environment can be achieved only if we understand and accept the existence of others. If we are able to subvert our ego, we can end the conflict. If we love our Mother Nature and want to protect it for future generations, then true understanding of deep philosophy of humanism, Hinduism and Buddhism and their implementation in real life situations is what we need today.

The Hindu civilisation is one of the oldest and living civilisations in the world. And despite being one of the oldest civilisations, it is considered compatible with science, capable to deal with challenges of contemporary times and is gifted and competent to contribute its share for the good of humanity.

Here, it is necessary that the meanings with which certain terms are used in this address and also certain notions about war in ancient India are clarified.

The term 'conflict avoidance' does not mean putting off or avoiding a conflict whether at personal, social or civilisational level. Generally that is how its meaning is taken, and even Wikipedia quotes many authors: 'Conflict avoidance is a method of dealing with conflict, which attempts to avoid directly confronting the issue at hand. Methods of doing this can include changing the subject, putting off a discussion until later or simply not bringing up the subject of contention.'¹

Conflict avoidance can be used as a temporary measure to buy time or as permanent means of disposing of a matter.²

The term 'conflict avoidance' is sometimes used to describe conflict prevention.³ The Thomas and Kilmann grid views avoidance as a 'lose-lose proposition' since it does not address the issue at hand.⁴

But other sources view ‘avoidance as a useful means of disposing of very minor, non-recurring conflicts whose resolution would expend excessive amounts of time or resources.’ (*Timor-Australia Friendship Manual*)⁵

‘Poor-performing executives can survive because the president doesn’t investigate or act on employee complaints, conflict can become malignant between departments because there is no tiebreaker to force resolution, and ineffective managers are passed from one department to the next because the senior executive would rather play “pass the turkey” than “cook the goose”.’ (*Confronting a Leader’s Conflict Avoidance*, Joan Lloyd)⁶

Conflict avoidance does not mean to avoid and ignore the conflict and to allow the problem to grow to a threatening proportion. Conflict avoidance is to work for such an atmosphere where no conflict arises and if it arises then it should be faced but the efforts should always be to see to it that the destruction and devastation is contained and that conflict itself does not become the cause for another conflict as the First World War had become the cause for the Second World War.

Instead of promoting conflicts and then going for resolution, it is much better to work to the effect that the conflicts do not arise and even if they arise they should be localised, contained and their destructive impact should be minimised. It is something like working towards a society where no child has to go through the trauma of being orphan than letting the society get disturbed and disintegrated and then start orphanages and state homes to take care of orphans. Thus, promoting conflicts through conflict-prone philosophies, practices, etc. and then working for conflict resolution is a far inferior method than promoting philosophies which promote tolerance and acceptance of each other and also minimise the devastating impact of conflicts.

As Hindu civilisation never attacked other civilisations there is a tendency to not consider or ignore the wars within the Hindu civilisation as mere ethnic clashes. Unless the Hindu civilisational concept of state is comprehended holistically, wars within the Hindu civilisation would be regarded and even dismissed as merely inter-Hindu community clashes. The idea of a super state federating or affiliating under it a large number of smaller states was known to Hindu civilisation—of course, it was qualitatively different from the

present concept of nation state that evolved in the last two to three centuries in Europe.

In ancient India, the idea of suzerainty extending over many kingdoms was known since the times of the Rig Veda⁷ and had been fully developed before the composition of the ancient texts of *Aitareya Brahmana* and *Satapatha Brahmana*. The first one mentions the names of twelve emperors of ancient India and the latter, thirteen. Another ancient text, *Amarakosha* states that a king before whom all feudatories humble themselves is called a *Chakravartin* (emperor). *Chakravartin* is the one who wields lordship over a circle of kings or who makes the circle—kingdom—abide by his orders. The word *Chakravartin*, though not as old as *Sarvabhauma*, is as old as the Upanishads.

Sukranitisara (1.183-87), another ancient Indian text, grades kingdoms starting at the lowest level from *Samanta* which has an income of 1-3 lakhs of *karsas* collected without oppressing the people, to *Rajan*, to *Maharaja*, to *Swarat*, to *Virat* and to *Sarvabhauma*, who wields suzerainty over the whole of the earth, meaning *Bharatvarsh*, that is the ancient geography of India and has income of 11-50 crores qualitatively good revenue not collected by oppression.⁸

So the general view prevalent among West-centric historians, that the Hindu civilisation never organised itself into an empire, is not a correct presentation of the Hindu civilisational or political history. Thus, there is every reason why the Indian models of war ethics should be regarded as worthy of being cited or benchmarked and compared to the war ethics of others, in the Western world.

A galaxy of historical emperors Chandragupta, Ashoka, Pushyamitra, Bhavanaga, Pravarasena Vakataka, Samudragupta, Harshavardhana, Rajendra Chola, emulated such mythical heroes and emperors as Mandhata, Bharata, Nahusha, Yudhishtira, and practically realised this ideal. Thus, wars were unavoidable in ancient times.

Sovereignty or *Sarvabhauma* in ancient India had a different meaning and that could be the basis of the Western historians' misreading of ancient India. Sovereignty in ancient Hindu tradition did not invariably or necessarily result in acquiring control over vassal kings in all their affairs. Generally, the

supreme ruler did not hanker after territory as much as having his superior prowess acknowledged. In this sense the ancient Indian state at the pan-Indian level—what was then known as *Bharatavarsha*—was a loose, but clearly acknowledged cultural and political identity, rather than a nation state in the modern sense of the term.

So the *Chakravartin* in ancient India was not a central authority, but an acknowledged superior king, an emperor. The descriptions of *Digvijaya* in the Mahabharata show that there was no aggrandisement by acquiring fresh territory but all that was desired was to make several kings submit and pay tribute or offer presents. Arjuna states in the *Sabha parva* that he would bring tributes from all kings, and the conquered kings were generally represented as submitting and making presents to the conqueror. The Allahabad Pillar inscriptions describe almost identically what Arjuna said in the Mahabharata, that the kings and the tribal chieftains fully gratified Samudragupta's commands by paying tributes and obeying commands.⁹

Hindu civilisation (India) as we know of before the seventeenth century, stretching from present Afghanistan to Myanmar and from Tibet to Sri Lanka with all the kingdoms and also the concept and practice of becoming *Savabhauma* king or *Chakravartin* king was a very large action field for wars and development of war ethics. Perhaps, this India was bigger than Europe.

But these wars were not with barbaric warfare like in some other parts of the world. They were based on principles broadly recognised as dharma in the Indian civilisation.

Dharma is not to be translated and taken literally as religion and thus the *Dharma yuddha* or the war fought with dharma is not to be equated with crusades and jihads, which are against the followers of the other religion. *Dharma yuddha* was called so because it was fought with lots of rules and restraint.

OUTLINE FOR STUDY OF PRACTICE OF CONFLICT AVOIDANCE FOR ANY CIVILISATION

Before going to the war ethics to study conflict avoidance, one needs to look into the philosophical foundations of a civilisation to know whether the

philosophy promotes violence or promotes accommodation and acceptance or whether historically it has been a conflicting civilisation or a non-conflicting one.

But in spite of philosophical foundations, which promote oneness in a non-conflicting civilisation, the possibility of war within the civilisation always exists due to ambitions, greed and shortcomings of man. Therefore a non-conflicting civilisation also has war ethics to promote conflict avoidance.

In a warlike situation what is the general practice or norm? Is war resorted to as the only option or is there a practice in the civilisation to avoid war by resorting to other options?

What is the war being fought for? Is it for self-protection, protection of honour or for greed and ambition or is it motivated theologically—to destroy all those who are not like ‘us’? Which types of wars are encouraged or looked down upon in a civilisation needs to be looked into, to understand its practice of conflict avoidance.

Once the war becomes inevitable, then what are the practices and rules about fighting it? Is it all-out destruction or is it limited only to combatants? How the spread of war and also the destruction that it causes is contained in that civilisation needs to be studied. Is the civilisation concerned about the safety of the non-combatants? Are there injunctions as well as practices regarding containing the ill effects of war on countryside, society and non-combatants in the war?

After the war, how should the behaviour of the conqueror be with the conquered? What care is taken in the civilisation to see that the after-effects of war do not become the cause for a next war?

All these points need to be seen to understand the practice of conflict avoidance in any civilisation.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HINDU CIVILISATION WHICH COUNTERACT CONFLICT AND POSITIVELY PROMOTE ACCEPTANCE AND ONENESS

What is inherent in the practice of conflict avoidance is to have such vision and values of life, which positively promote oneness, fellow feeling and acceptance of others and thus counteract the propensity for conflict. Some core values of Hindu civilisation are:

Vision of Oneness

Beyond the diversity of various philosophies (*darshana*) everything is viewed in India as imbued with or pervaded with *Ishvara* or consciousness. Thus, the whole existence is viewed as interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Respect to family, society, nation and whole creation is intrinsic to Hindu civilisation. Today, this basic oneness is being increasingly acknowledged in ecology, science and relationships and new age spiritual literature.

Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall write: ‘Quantum field theory describes all existing things as being states or patterns of dynamic oscillating energy. You and I, the chairs on which we sit, the food we eat are all patterns of this energy. And what does this energy oscillate on? The ground state of all beings is a still ocean of background state of unexcited energy called the quantum vacuum. All things that exist are excitations of the quantum vacuum, and the vacuum therefore exists as the centre within all things. Vacuum energy both underlies and permeates us. We are “waves” on the ocean of the vacuum. Quantum vacuum is the ultimate centre and source of the self. When the self is truly centred, it is centred in the ground of all beings.’¹⁰

Fritjof Capra explains: ‘Subatomic particles, then, are not “things” but are interconnections between “things” and these “things” in turn, are interconnections between other “things” and so on. In quantum theory you never end with “things”, you always deal with interconnections.... This is how modern physics reveals the basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated basic blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole.’¹¹

Henry Stapp, University of California, writes: ‘An elementary particle is not an independently existing unanalysable entity. It is, in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward to other things.’¹²

Respect for Diversity

It is this propensity for viewing everything as sacred and as an expression of Divine, that the diversity of forms and names of God and even various ways of worship of same form of God are respected. This has made Hindu

civilisation as the one, which not only tolerated others, but accepted others. About this, Swami Vivekananda proclaimed in the Parliament of Religions as, 'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth.'¹³

Law of Karma

Man is not considered as a sinner; each soul is potentially divine. By our actions we should manifest the divinity within. What is done today decides future births. Thus, resorting to proper karma (action) with proper attitude to manifest the inherent divinity, to realise one's divine nature or to attain nirvana is essential. If one disturbs, hurts or kills others then the fruit of that action has to come to that person either in this birth or in the other births. The Karma Theory is now being gradually accepted by people the world over.

Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall explain that, 'As one is the part of the whole, the harm caused to others would distort the person's inner being. We cannot draw a boundary between the waves and the pond, nor can we draw any hard and fast boundary between ourselves and other "waves". I am inside you and inside every creature and inside every speck of stardust. And each of these is inside me.... A person high in SQ (Sentience Quotient) knows that when he harms others he harms himself. When I pollute the atmosphere with my garbage or my anger, I pollute my own lungs or psyche. When I selfishly or unnecessarily cause suffering to others, that suffering comes back as a pain in my own being, as something that distorts me, makes me 'ugly'.... The high SQ requires me to use my deep spontaneity to respond to all others and to all existence, and to take responsibility for my role in caring for these things. When I cause unnecessary harm I abdicate this responsibility, which is the deepest purpose and meaning of my life.'¹⁴

Practice of Dharma

As the whole existence is viewed as interconnected, interrelated and interdependent, an individual being part of the family, society, civilisation

and whole creation has to align himself with the *ritam*, the cosmic order which maintains these collectives, by his actions and duties depending at the given time, place and situation.

Rama Jois says about dharma, 'The rules of dharma were meant to regulate individual conduct in such a way as to restrict the rights, liberty, interest and desires of an individual as regards all matters to the extent necessary in the interest of other individuals, i.e. society and at the same time making obligatory on the part of society to safeguard and protect the individual in all respects through its social and political institutions. Shortly put, dharma regulates the mutual obligations of individual and society. Therefore, it was stressed that the protection of dharma was in the interest of both the individual and the society.'¹⁵

We are not discussing this philosophical foundation in all its details. The discussion here is however limited to the impact of this foundation on conflicts or rules of dharma in wars. The Hindu civilisation views the whole existence as expression of One and therefore, has seen the interconnectedness, interrelatedness and interdependence in existence. For one to be happy one has to pray for the happiness of all. Thus, at a philosophical, psychological, social and political level, the efforts are to create such an atmosphere where conflicts will not arise in the first place. Whenever it arises it should be minimised, contained and it should be seen that it is less destructive.

Whenever there is a need to fight, then just as in the physical body if an unwanted or unhealthy part is removed, similarly a war is entertained, undertaken to restore the health of the society. But as a surgery involves several norms, discipline, restraint, skill and quickness to perform in minimum possible time, similarly a war has many rules and regulations and would be restrained to as less number of people as possible. As we try all systems of medicine like Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Naturopathy, etc. to avoid surgery, similarly the rulers were advised to adopt all other methods and if nothing worked only then one was to resort to war. And even the war was to be fought with restraint.

Just having a philosophy is inadequate if there are no practices which help the civilisation to inculcate those principles. Fortunately, the Hindu civilisation has a very rich culture in which such inculcation of values

takes place. There are systems which avoid conflicts or temper the destructive impact of wars, just like the following tribal community practice. Joram Begi writes:

Manyiang or *Menyi* was a term used for the intercommunity friendly relation between the Apatani and the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh. A Nyishi used to address a friend from the plains of Assam as *Mitur* and the *Aka* or the *Miji* friend as *Lekwng*. Likewise, an Apatani friend was addressed as *Manyiang*. An Apatani also used the same term for addressing a Nyishi friend. Therefore, the institution of *Manyiang* was sacred and socially binding. It was obligatory for a Nyishi *Manyiang* to protect his Apatani *Manyiang* in a Nyishi village and vice versa. It was due to this interdependent relationship that the two communities could coexist for centuries without any serious communal tension between them.¹⁶

Likewise, many such practices prevail in various communities.

THE PURPOSE OF WAR

The human mind is so complex that in spite of the philosophies and culturing, it succumbs to ego, greed, ambitions, etc. and thus, a flare up at personal or collective level takes place. As per the purpose with which a conflict or war is resorted to, wars can be broadly categorised into three types based on three gunas:

Satvik: For Honour or Self-defence

Honour also meant acquiring the title of *Sarvabhauma* or *Chakravartin* emperor. But the meaning of emperor was quite different as mentioned earlier as honour can also mean setting right a wrong that has been done. Like in the Ramayana, Sita is abducted by Ravana and to get her back was honourable for the Raghu race. Or instead, war could also be for self-defence.

Rajasik: Greed and Ambitions at Others' Cost

To annex others' territories and take over enemies' wealth, etc. is the purpose of war.

Tamasik: Intolerance or Just Enjoying Killing Others

Not tolerating others, rejecting rights of others to live because they are different either in colour, religion or creed, or just to get devilish joy in killing others,

could also be causes of war. Monotheistic religions like Abrahamic faiths have propensity for conflicts due to such intolerance and fundamentalism.

'The Chicago University had constituted a project to study religious fundamentalism and had brought out five volumes on different aspects of religious fundamentalism. In the first volume titled *Fundamentalism Observed*, the editors of the five-part study, Martin E Marty and R Scott Appleby, capture and compare the essence of the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths with the core of the non-Abrahamic ones in the East in the context of 'understanding fundamentalism' as a phenomenon in their conclusion. The editors say, "Some of the traits of fundamentalism examined here are more accurately attributed to the 'People of the Book', the Jews, Christians and Muslims, than to their first or distant cousins in the fundamentalist family, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Confucians. Sacred texts do not play the same constitutive role in South Asian and Far Eastern traditions as they do in the Abrahamic faiths nor is history conceived as of a structured drama proceeding inexorably to a climactic final act." What is the effect of this difference between the two sets of faiths, the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths and Hindu-Buddhist faiths? This is what the editors say: "Such dramatic and dualistic readings of sacred texts and renderings of meta-history provide the fundamentalists with a cosmic enemy, imbue fundamentalist boundary-setting and purity-preserving activities with an apocalyptic urgency and foster a crisis mentality that serves both to intensify the missionary efforts and to justify extremism."¹⁷

In India, such *Tamasik* wars are described in the Puranas and also in the Ramayana where the rakshasas or asuras could not tolerate or did not allow what the rishis were doing and would always come to disturb and also to kill the rishis. For example, when Rama went to the forest, the rishis showed him the heaps as tall as hills, comprising of the bones of the rishis killed by rakshasas.¹⁸ When the influence of Hindu civilisation swept the whole land, wars due to the third cause were very rarely seen till the invasion from Islam.

TYPES OF WAR

Not just the purpose of war but also the way the war was fought decided the types of war. Generally most scriptures categorise wars into only two types:

Dharma yuddha and *Kuta yuddha*. But Chanakya further categorised the *Kuta yuddha* as *Lobha yuddha* and *Asura yuddha*. AL Basham says, ‘According to *Arthashastra*, there are three types of conquests: righteous conquest, conquest for greed and demonic conquest or in Sanskrit: *Dharma vijaya*, *Lobha vijaya* and *Asura vijaya*. The first was a conquest in which the defeated king was forced to render homage and tribute, after which he or a member of his family was reinstated as a vassal. The second was a victory in which an enormous booty was demanded and a large portion of enemy territory was annexed. The third involved political annihilation of the kingdom and its incorporation into that of the victor. The two latter types are generally disapproved by all sources except the *Arthashastra*.’ The Mahabharata declares: ‘A king should not attempt to gain unrighteously, for who reveres the king who wins unrighteous victory? Unrighteous conquest is impermanent and does not lead to heaven.’¹⁹

Chanakya was a great scholar and also a nation builder. When he saw that in front of the imperial army of Alexander the smaller kingdoms could not stand for long, he realised the need for empire not as that of *Chakravartin* as explained before but an empire wherein the whole empire is directly under the rule of an emperor. So he propagated *Kuta yuddha*. As Chanakya resorted to *Kuta yuddha* his name itself got changed to Kautilya—the one who follows the diplomacy of *Kuta yuddha*.

Though Chanakya justifies the *Kuta yuddha* or *Lobha vijaya*, he keeps humanitarian principles at the core. As Basham writes, ‘Though in one passage, not in keeping with the main tenor of the work, it suggests allowing the conquered king to remain as a vassal, it ends on a note of humanitarian imperialism. The victor must do everything in his power to conciliate the conquered people, if their economy has suffered badly from the war, taxes must be remitted, ministers of the defeated king must be won round and law and order restored as quickly as possible, when in the conquered country the king should wear the local dress and follow the local customs. Evidently, from the point of view of *Arthashastra*, the main motive of war is gain and build-up of a great empire.’²⁰

Gurumurthy writes, ‘Basham’s proposition that *Arthashastra* advocated conquest, which was the *Lobha vijaya* or conquest for greed is correct as that is what sanctions conquest and annexation. But, the most significant point

to note is that *Arthashastra* never accepted barbaric warfare or *Asura vijaya* which was the accepted war model of all other civilisations. But even the rules of *Arthashastra* which sought a compromise between *Dharma vijaya* and *Asura vijaya*, were rejected within a couple of centuries of the emergence of Kautilya's treatise with the mainline Hindu scholars charging that the *Arthashastra* prescriptions were "wicked". The more orthodox texts, according to Basham, take a different view, different from *Arthashastra*. According to them, "the major motive of war is glory, not gain"; further "homage and not annexation was the rightful fruit of victory."²¹

Basham says, 'The concept of righteous war was ignored by the kings of Magadha, from Bimbisara onwards, and (they) annexed territory without compunction, but the doctrine that war should be waged for glory and homage rather than sordid aims such as wealth and power grew in importance with the fall of the Mauryas and was accepted by the quasi-feudal medieval order. "Demonic conquest" still took place from time to time, notably under the Guptas, but "righteous conquest" was the ideal, which the Hindu kings were expected to follow, and it is evident that they usually did.'²²

Unfortunately, Basham classifies the victory of Mauryas or Guptas as *Asura vijaya* and not as *Lobha vijaya* though it was *Lobha vijaya* and not *Asura vijaya*, that is, wantonly killing enemy or barbarity after the war. *Lobha vijaya* was also the need of the hour. Gurumurthy writes, 'But, in retrospect, it would appear that empire building in India which would have brought political unity on the lines of what the West believes today to be nation state, consistent with the cultural entity of *Bharatvarsha*, would have been possible in India if only India had not rejected Kautilya's prescriptions of war for greed and annexation. Other civilisations not only followed the lower (second) and the lowest (third) grades of war, namely conquest for greed and barbaric conquests for annexation of the enemy kingdom but they also emerged and were celebrated as empire builders and nation builders, while the Hindus, who followed ethical warfare and therefore did not build empires like the Europeans did, are faulted for not building empires.'²³ It was not only Kautilya's lessons but centuries ago even Sri Krishna had given the same lesson that if the enemy is not ethical in war then the defeat of the enemy alone should be the objective though such wars also should be fought without any rancour in mind.

THE NORMS OF *DHARMA YUDDHA*

Dharma yuddha is not to be equated with jihad or crusade because the purpose of *Dharma yuddha* is not in the interest of one's own religion or to annihilate others whose religion is different. The way the war is fought and the means adopted for war decide whether it is *Dharma yuddha* or not. *Dharma yuddha* is righteous war, which means war according to the 'shastra'. Such a war could be started only for just reasons. Moreover, such a war must be waged in accordance with certain rules and regulations. It involves a battle or a combat at a place and time previously decided by the combatants. In Sanskrit literature this is also known as *Prakasa yuddha*. Such a war involves minimal damage, and the combatants are forced to obey certain constraints on their conduct as given below.

The rules of Hindu warfare observed in the battlefield, summarised from the different texts mentioned in *War in Ancient India* by VR Ramachandra Dhikshitar²⁴ and also extensively mentioned in *Shanti parva* and *Bhishma parva* (1.26-33) of the Mahabharata, are:

A king should fight with the other king after alerting him and if the other king wears armour, then he should also wear one and if the enemy king brings his army with him then he should also take his army with him. (*Shanti parva* 95-7-9) If the king is defeated then his army also accepts the defeat. Jarasandha in Mahabharata was killed like that. This was so ingrained in the Indian mind that later we see whenever the king died while fighting, his army just deserted the battlefield, acceding to the enemy.

Not understanding the purpose and how the *Dharma yuddha* was fought in India, the Western scholars assert that ancient Indian warfare was comprised of 'Flower Wars'.²⁵ For instance, TA Heathcote writes that, 'Battle was considered to be merely a series of individual combats, with the courage and morale of the mass depending upon the visible performance of their leaders. If a leader fell...the rest made their escape as best as they could.'²⁶

The general rule is that warriors should fight with only their equals. Thus, a cavalry soldier should not be attacked by a chariot warrior but a chariot warrior could attack a chariot warrior. Similarly a horse warrior could resist another horse warrior but not a foot soldier.

In case of insufficient supply of numbers in a particular division or

divisions in the army, substitutes may be used. An elephant may be opposed by five horses or fifteen men and four horses, one horseman may be opposed by three footmen. (*Agni Purana* 242.38)

Poisoned or barbed arrows should not be used.

A weak or wounded man should not be killed.

He whose weapon is broken or whose bowstring is cut or who has lost his chariot or horse or elephant should not be hit.

A warrior who requests to be excused saying, 'I am thine,' joins his hands in supplication or throws off his weapon, must not be killed. But he can be captured as a prisoner of war.

A king should fight with only another king and should not fight with warriors of inferior status.

If a Brahmin enters the field to bring about peace between contesting parties, both should stop fighting. And no injury should be inflicted upon such a Brahmin.

Aged men, women, children, the retreating or one who holds a straw in his lips as a sign of conditional surrender should not be killed.

The panic-stricken and scattered foe should not be pursued hotly. (*Baudhayana Dharma Sutra* 1.10.8) In the Mahabharata war when the soldiers in the Kaurava army were running away to Hastinapur after Duryodhana hid himself in the pond, Yuyutsu goes with the consent of Yudhishtira and Sri Krishna to protect these defeated soldiers.

No one should kill the sleepy or the thirsty, the fatigued, one whose armour has slipped, a peaceful citizen walking along the road, one engaged in eating or drinking, the mad and the insane, one who went out of the camp to buy provisions, a camp follower, menials and the guards at the gates. (*Manu Smriti* 7.92)

He who is a eunuch or a war musician should not be killed. (*Manu Smriti* 7.90.93) *Silappatikaram*, a Tamil classic, refers to warriors escaping from the battlefield in disguise. Most of them were allowed to run away, though some of them were captured and sent to far-off lands. (*Silappatikaram* 26)

It is further prohibited to fight those who do not offer to fight, who hide themselves in fear or who go to the battlefield as spectators. (*Ramayana Yuddha kanda* 80.39) The Mahabharata affords ample proof that spectators

were admitted into the battlefield during the scene of action and they were not injured or harmed. In *Sukraniti* (4.1176), amongst those who should not be killed during the war is the mention of a eunuch, one who is engaged in other work, is without weapons, is eating or drinking something, is fighting with others, who is running away as a deserter, and interestingly the spectator.²⁷ War was like a game where spectators would come and see the bravery of warriors.

Fruits, flower gardens, temples and places of worship were not to be destroyed during the war. (*Agni Purana* 236.22)

As early as the fourth century BC, Megasthenes noticed a peculiar trait of Indian warfare. ‘Whereas among other nations it is usual, in the contests of war to ravage the soil and thus to reduce it to an uncultivated waste, among the Indians, on the contrary, by whom husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred and inviolable, the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging in their neighbourhood, are undisturbed by any sense of danger, for the combatants on either side in waging the conflict make carnage of each other, but allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested. Besides, they never ravage an enemy’s land with fire, nor cut down its trees. (Source: *A Brief History of India* by Alain Danielou (p 106)) The modern “scorched earth” policy was then unknown.’²⁸

‘Nor would an enemy coming upon a farmer at work on land do him any harm, for men of this class being regarded as public benefactors are protected from all injury.’ (*Arthashastra* 14.4)

Prisoners of war were generally accorded generous treatment. Sometimes the captive agreed to become the slave of the captor for a period of one year after which he became a free man. (Mahabharata, *Shanti parva* 96.4-5) After the victory in the war, the war prisoners were not to be ill-treated. The children of the enemy who had been orphaned were supposed to be treated as children of the king. ‘The Bawih system’ in the Mizo community was an example of this injunction,²⁹ though the anthropological scholars misunderstood and mistranslated it as a slave system of Mizos. The point to be noted is, these war ethics were not limited to a few communities (as some may like to label them as Brahmanical war ethics) but were followed by all.

If maidens were among the prisoners of war they were to be courteously treated and were induced to marry persons of the captors' choice. If they declined the offer, they were sent back to their homes under proper escort. (*Shanti parva* 96.5) If war is because of the kidnapping of a woman then the conqueror after one year should ask the desire of that girl and marry her off to whomsoever she wanted to marry. If she did not want to marry any one there then she should be allowed to go wherever she wanted.³⁰

Usually the defeated king was reinstated on the throne. But if the enemy king had met with his death in the battle, his son or nearest relative was installed on the throne on terms of subordinate alliance. (*Arthashastra* 7 ch 16; *Manu Smriti* 7.202)

Subjects of the vanquished monarch were allowed to retain their own laws and customs. The practice was that the progeny of the king would become the successor of the deceased and the defeated king. Snatching of others' territory was never a practice. Thus the bitterness in the conquered people was minimised. The conqueror was supposed to go and visit the important places, temples and also respect the *Deshachara*—the practices of those kingdoms and not impose his practices. Such treatment not only minimised the animosity but also nipped in the bud the future possibility of fights powered by revenge and humiliation.

The conqueror in most cases was to be satisfied with the acknowledgement of his overlordship and was to not trouble himself as long as his sovereignty was not challenged. (*Vishnu Purana* 3.30-31; *Jayaswal: A History of India AD 150 to AD 350*) Wars are fought for various reasons. According to thinkers of ancient India, victory in war was never for conquering the land. It was only to make the conquered kings accept the conqueror's sovereignty and to give him some taxes. Very clearly it was told never to dethrone the conquered kings and to coronate him again. If the king died in war then his son, brother or grandchild was made to ascend the throne. If the successor was a baby or still in the womb then the conqueror was to console the subjects and take care of administration till the successor was able to rule. If no male issue was surviving, then even a female child had the claim to the throne but never the a conqueror. Such kings looked upon the conqueror as their guru. (*Mahabharata, Sabha parva* 38.7; *Shanti parva* 33. 43 to 45)

A wounded opponent was to be either sent to his own home or if taken into victor's quarters, he was to have his wounds attended to by skilled surgeons. After he got cured, he was to be set at liberty. (*Shanti parva* 95.17-18) Women were appointed to nurse the wounded. In the war camp the surgeons with surgical instruments, machines, remedial oils and bandage cloth were an essential part. After defeating the enemy, the victor was to show mercy to the enemy soldiers and sympathise with them by comforting them, taking hold of their hands affectionately and even shed tears so as to secure their devotion. (*Shanti parva* 102.34-39)

It was a custom to make war during the day and cease fighting during the night. This was also the practice in the Mahabharata war and a practice in all righteous wars. When the army retired for rest, all feelings of animosity were to be suspended and both the contending parties were to behave like allies.

A conqueror had to please the conquered king by all means and had to treat him like his own son, thus the animosity that generally results after a war was avoided. When the conquered kings honoured the *Chakravartin* by offering gifts and taxes, the *Chakravartin* king was to also give gifts in return. In the Mahabharata, Yudhishtira gave such gifts in return.

'If we see the whole war ethics of olden days, it is clear that the ancient Indian thinkers knew that conflicts cannot be completely avoided but to minimise the destruction and devastation of war they had prepared war ethics and more or less they were followed. They were also aware that some may resort to deceit. In such cases, they sanctioned that one should follow *Dharma yuddha* with one who follows dharma and with those who are deceitful not only they can, but they should resort to deceit. If the various wars are studied it is seen that the war ethics were not always followed fully at times. But it is natural if we take into consideration the situation and the excitement that prevails during wartime.'³¹

And yet, over all it can be said that these rules of *Dharma yuddha* were not just in texts but were followed all through the ages. Whenever these norms were not followed, successive generations have continued to discuss how it was wrong not to have followed them. Even divine personalities like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna are not spared and great empire builders like Chanakya or emperors like Ashoka are discussed, analysed and censured even today.

Even the rules of *Arthashastra*, which sought a compromise between *Dharma vijaya* and *Lobha vijaya*, were rejected within a couple of centuries of the emergence of Kautilya's treatise by the mainline Hindu scholars charging that the *Arthashastra* prescriptions were 'wicked'. The more orthodox texts, according to Basham, take a different view from *Arthashastra*. According to them, 'The major motive of war is glory, not gain; and homage and not annexation was the rightful fruit of victory.'³²

Gurumurthy writes, 'The authority says that in the *Kadambari Bana* (first half of the seventh century) we have a striking reference to Kautilya's work as cruel work because it contains advice that is 'very wicked'. This shows how Kautilya's work had already become unpopular in North India (before the first half of the seventh century) on account of its vigorous advocacy that end justified the means. This explains to some extent the paucity of manuscripts of the *Arthashastra* in the whole of India, particularly in North India, from where only a fragment of the manuscript of the work has been recovered. There is probably a reference to Kautilya by the author of the *Matsya Purana* on the issue of wrong war models. If this be accepted, *Arthashastra* would have to be pushed back at least some centuries before 250-300 AD, the probable date of *Matsya Purana*.'³³

EVEN DHARMA YUDDHA WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE LAST RESORT

If a situation for war arose, a king was advised not to go for war without trying other options like *sama*—compromise and conciliation, *dana*—by bribing or employing money and *bheda*—by dividing the enemy and thus weakening the enemy and ultimately avoiding war and at least reducing the extent of war. If these three options failed only then was the king to resort to war. (Mahabharata *Bhishma parva* 3.81; *Udyog parva* 82-13) Chapter 103 in *Shanti parva* explains what all ways to adopt to understand and to weaken the enemy before actually resorting to war.

The civilisation where war was not considered as first option and was thus in low priority, a need was also for a philosophy that when one fights war he should fight with all his might. Thus, a balancing was also required that the war should be fought with all the spirit and yet, there should be minimum destruction and devastation. This balancing was done with two core concepts:

- It was considered the sacred duty of a Kshatriya to fight in war. He was not expected to turn his face from this at any cost. If he died on the battlefield while fighting it was considered as the greatest merit, which would fetch him heaven. (Mahabharata *Shanti parva* 97-30, 31, 32)
- A person was supposed to fight without any rancour in the mind. We can see the pinnacle of humane consideration for the enemy in this advice—*Yudhyaswa Vigatajwara*. Therefore the war should be fought ethically—it should be *Dharma yuddha*.

The necessary education, drill, and discipline to cultivate militarism were confined to the members of one community, the Kshatriyas. This prevented the militant attitude from spreading to other communities and kept the whole social structure unaffected by actual wars and war institutions. Says the Atharva Veda: ‘May we revel, living a hundred winters, rich in heroes.’³⁴

Again, the balancing of permission for *Kuta yuddha* or *Adharma yuddha* and containing its misuse is also seen. A person was expected to fight *Dharma yuddha* and could resort to *Kuta yuddha* only for self-defence if the enemy was too powerful and deceitful. But it was also told that the victory by unfair means—by *Adharma yuddha* is temporary and will not take one to heaven. Such war is destructive to both king and the earth. (Mahabharata, *Shanti parva* 96-2)

Though unfair wars or *Kuta yuddha* or *Adharma yuddha* are permitted by scriptures but it is to be remembered these were to be resorted to only as *Apad dharma*.³⁵

Shukracharya, who unabashedly promoted *Adharma yuddha*, also tells the soldiers that if they die while fighting then they would be welcomed by apsaras in heaven. The interesting coincidence is Shukracharya was the guru of asuras.

INSISTENCE ON *DHARMA YUDDHA* AND ITS PRACTICE IN HISTORIC TIMES

The practice of *Dharma yuddha* was not only carried out in ancient times but it continued even later. Because of that sometimes the kings were at a disadvantage when they fought with alien rulers. This disadvantage was also misinterpreted by other historians as lack of war strategy in Indian kings.

Gurumurthy says, ‘So any alien appraisal of the Indian statecraft and wars cannot understand the normative standards by which people in this country were governed. Those who came to conquer India had no war model based on ethics. That was why a Muhammad Ghorī, who was defeated several times, was not killed by the victor, Prithviraj Chauhan. The host civilisation applied its normative standards in war even to the aliens who had no normative standards even in religion. For them victory was the target, how it was achieved never mattered. It is not just in the matter of war. Again, as late as Western colonial conquest of India, these war principles were found to be in practice and the Portuguese historians have noted that these noble principles of war were adhered to by the Hindu kings in Kerala and elsewhere.’³⁶

In the book *History of Kerala* by Padmanabha Menon, on the war models adopted in the distant Malabar in southern peninsular India, the author writes: ‘And when they are in battle and one army is distant from the other two ranges of crossbow, the king says to the Brahmin, “Go to the camp of the enemy, and tell the king to let 100 of his *naeri* (soldier) come and I will go with a 100 of mine” and thus both go to the middle of the space and begin to fight in this manner. Although they fight for three days, they always give two direct blows at the head and one at the legs. And when four or six on either side are killed, the Brahmins immediately go to the armies on both sides and say, “*Nur mauezar hanno.*” The king answers “*Matile*”—“Do you wish for anything more?” The Brahmin says, “No” and the adverse party does the same. And in this manner they fight one hundred against one hundred. Castenheda observes, “When these kings are at war with each other, they often personally go into the field and even join personally in the fight upon occasion.” Sheik Zeen-ud-deen observes, “In their wars, they have seldom had recourse to treachery, but fixing upon a certain day with their enemies to decide their quarrel by arms, they regard any treacherous departure from this engagement both as base and unworthy.”’³⁷

Menon continues, ‘Whiteway in his work in *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India* gives us the following account of the weapons of the *nayars* (soldiers) and their methods of warfare: “In arms and methods of warfare the Hindu of the extreme South, where Mohammedans had not yet penetrated, is behind his contemporary in Europe. Chiefly, perhaps, because they had

then met no serious enemy, and had only fought with their own caste fellows and coreligionists, war had become a game governed by a series of elaborate rules, and to break one of these rules involved dishonour, which was worse than death.”³⁸

‘Whiteway adds: “There was neither night fighting nor ambushes. All fighting was in the daytime when the sun had well risen; the opposing camps were either pitched near each other, and both sides slept securely. At sunrise, the soldiers of both armies mingled at the tank, put on their armour, ate their rice, chewed their betel, gossiped and chatted together. At the beat of the drum, either side drew apart and formed its ranks. It was creditable to be the first to beat the drum and no attack was allowed until the other side had beaten theirs.”³⁹

‘Whiteway goes on to say: “The fighting was always in the open plain and they advance—all stooping—very slow, now gaining ground, now losing, so that sometimes a whole day is spent in advance and retreats. At the drum beat, both sides rose to their feet and fought no more for the day. The drum could only be beaten when both sides were halted, and it was a point of honour not to beat it unless some advantage could be claimed. All strategy was directed to capturing and defending the camp and scribes were in attendance to write down the different turns of the battle. At times when the ranks on one side broke, the slaughter was very great, but after the drum sounded, both sides mingled together, and there was no bad blood even when a man killed his own brother. In certain cases, when a relative died or a vassal rebelled, the leader of the side that desired a suspension of hostilities, after the ranks were formed, advanced, stuck his javelin in the ground, leant his sword and shield against it and stood apart: the leader on the other side imitated him and truce ensued.”⁴⁰

Gurumurthy says, ‘Rudradaman I (150 AD) was known as the establisher of kings who had lost their territories. Samudragupta was famed for having re-established several royal families that had lost their kingdoms. Likewise, the historic treatment of war widows and women of the hostile kingdom was generally in conformity with the traditions captured in the ancient literature. Chhatrapati Shivaji who had to fight unconventional, guerilla warfare against the Islamic rule, which was annihilating Hinduism, maintained highest

standards in the treatment of women of the defeated kingdoms and also in respecting the religious sentiments of the people. Likewise, Prithviraj Chauhan treated Muhammad Ghori in the same way the Hindu traditions commanded him to treat defeated kings. So the war ethics of the Hindu civilisation demonstrated the highest human values, which are not attained in the modern world even today. In a world where winning war by any means particularly for a God or religion was considered not only justifiable but also mandatory, the Hindu civilisation maintained highest standards in wars and generally never deviated from its war ethics. Even modern global war conventions fall short of the standards which the Hindu civilisation had set for itself and practised, even when it faced Islamic and later colonial forces.⁴¹

In the introduction to his work *The Wonder that was India*, AL Basham says: 'After severely indicting India, which was admittedly "a cultural unit", for the "internecine wars", "cunning and unscrupulous" statecraft of its rulers, "flood, famine, and plague" that killed "millions of people", "inequality of birth" with "religious sanction" where the lot of the humble was generally hard, yet, our overall impression is that in no other part of the world were the relations of man and man and of man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilisation were slaves so few in number and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well protected as in the *Arthashastra*. No other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu. In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but, in comparison with conditions in other ancient cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilisation is its humanity.'⁴²

Professor HH Wilson says: "The Hindu laws of war are very chivalrous and humane and prohibit the slaying of the unarmed, of women, of the old and of the conquered." At the very time when a battle was going on, he says, "The neighbouring cultivators might be seen quietly pursuing their work—perhaps ploughing, gathering for crops, pruning the trees or reaping the harvest." Chinese pilgrim to Nalanda University, Hiuen Tsang affirms

that although there were enough of rivalries and wars in the seventh century AD, the country at large was little injured by them.⁷⁴³

One may feel that such war ethics were impractical. Will a civilisation survive if it resorts to such war ethics? But that is what civilisation means—that the beastly instinct in man is gradually diminished and the person is ennobled through culture. Such war ethics with lot of restraint could flourish only in such a civilisation where conquering of the self is more important than destroying others. These war ethics are ultimately based on the truth of oneness of existence. If a civilisation has not harmed or has not tried to destroy others then it is destined that the civilisation will endure all misfortunes and survive to regain its glory.

At the end of the nineteenth century when Swami Vivekananda had gone to America, one of his lectures was very interestingly quoted by the newspapers: ‘The speaker had asked through the length and breadth of the land what the definition of civilisation was, and he had asked the question in many countries. Sometimes the reply had been given: What are we?—civilisation. He begged to differ in the definition of the word. A nation may control the elements, develop utilitarian problems of life seemingly to the limit and yet not realise that in the individual, the highest type of civilisation is found in him who has learnt to conquer self. This condition is found in India more than in any country on earth, for there the material conditions are subservient to the spiritual and the individual looks for the soul manifestations in everything that has life, studying nature to this end. Hence, that gentle disposition to endure with indomitable patience the flings of what appears unkind fortune, while there is a full consciousness of a spiritual strength and knowledge greater than those possessed by any other people; hence the existence of a country and people from which flows an unending stream that attracts the attention of thinkers far and near to approach and throw from their shoulders an oppressive earthly burden. The early king, who in 260 BC commanded that there should be no more bloodshed, no more wars and who sent forth instead of soldiers an army of instructors, acted wisely, although in material things the land has suffered. But though in bondage to brutal nations who conquer by force, the Indian’s spirituality endures forever and nothing can take it away from him.’⁷⁴⁴

CONTRIBUTION OF HINDU-BUDDHIST CIVILISATIONS FOR CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

The question is: In the march of humanity what contribution do the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations make in conflict avoidance? Can these civilisations, which share the deeper understanding of a common approach to life, emerge as effective voices in development of human consciousness? If Hindu-Buddhist civilisations have to contribute in conflict avoidance for overall well-being of humanity then we will have to work towards that end.

We have to bring about a paradigm shift in thinking about man and his purpose in life. Fortunately, the increasing demand for Yoga, Zen, new age spirituality which focuses on oneness of existence, on multiple approaches to the Divine, rebirth, law of karma, etc. provide an action field for these civilisations to play a role they deserve to play and are destined to play in the interest of humanity. Yoga, Zen and spiritual practices are not just practices in themselves; they spring from certain visions and values of life and their proper practice would lead to those values. The power of Yoga, Zen, law of karma, rebirth, etc. is to be used to take the non-conflicting philosophical foundations to the world.

Intracivilisational and intercivilisational dialogues are required where the ideological positions are explored and the exclusive approach, which is the cause of conflict, is moderated and respect to diversity is nurtured. It is seen that conflicts are not just intercivilisational but are more intracivilisational especially in case of an exclusive civilisation or amongst the civilisations which follow monotheism.

And it is to be noted that a congenial atmosphere for such dialogues on conflict avoidance as well as environmental consciousness is being increasingly observed even in countries prone to conflicting ideas. The futility and inefficacy of conflicts that come from insistence on one's way as the universally right way for all, is being increasingly realised. Samuel Huntington says, 'Western civilisation is valuable not because it is universal but because it is unique. The principal responsibility of Western leaders, consequently, is not to attempt to reshape other civilisations in the image of the West, which is beyond their declining power, but to preserve, protect and renew the unique qualities of Western civilisation.' He advises that, 'Instead of promoting the supposedly universal features of our civilisations, the requisites for cultural

coexistence demand a search for what is common to most civilisations. In a multi-civilisational world, the constructive course is to renounce universalism, accept diversity and seek commonalities.⁷⁴⁵

In playing a more proactive role in international bodies for more humane war ethics and also the efforts required at a global level to contain and minimise the flare of conflicts, the combined voice of Hindu-Buddhist civilisations would be compelling and difficult to ignore.

The ground realities also should not be wished away. Unfortunately, there cannot be civilisational harmony so long as civilisations which have conflict potential acquire and hold power. Differences between a conflicting and a non-conflicting civilisation are finally resolved only by a clash—just as it happened between the non-conflicting Pandavas with the conflicting Kauravas. It is the extent of ambition and the thrust of the civilisation with aggressive ideology and its power that determines the inevitability of the clash and not the existence of a non-conflicting civilisation which is not proactive. Thus, the need of non-conflicting civilisations to be proactive for conflict avoidance is essential in the interest of humanity. Realising that the people bent upon conflict cannot be ignored, the non-conflicting civilisations would have to hone their skills to employ the *sama*, *dana* and *bheda* before war is resorted to so that minimum destruction of human life takes place on both sides. The application of *sama*, *dana* and *bheda* would have to be with at least fifty years of planning in advance in order to get the visible fruits.

If the bleak future of humanity is to be avoided; if the development of technology is to be balanced with conquering of the self, then the Hindu-Buddhist civilisations will have to play their destined role. Hindu civilisation has survived all the vicissitudes because it has to fulfil its destined role. To conclude in Will Durant's words:

One cannot conclude the history of India as one can conclude the history of Egypt, Babylonia or Assyria, for history is still being made, that civilisation is still creating. It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier, India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future.

As invention, industry and trade bind the continents together or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilisation more closely and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit and a unifying, a pacifying love for all living things.⁴⁶

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As a former Buddhist monk I was able to study to some extent the great ancient scholars' works especially from the Nalanda tradition, such as that of Nagarajuna. The Middle Path taught me a lot and gave me insightful ideas, without falling into extremes, and helped in finding perfect balance. My childhood was in the 1970s, when Mongolia was a communist country in Central Asia, there was no freedom of religion there and we had a very limited practice of Buddhism. However, if you look at the history of the introduction of Buddhism to Mongolia, about 2,000 years ago through Central Asia, Buddhism was introduced to nomadic Mongols and that is the time when the nomadic people of Mongolia saw the culture, philosophy and teachings of Lord Buddha. Thanks to the incredible changes that took place in the early 1990s, the people of Mongolia were able to regain and revive their faith, which now is Buddhism.

For the last twenty-five years, Mongolia and India and the peoples of both nations were able to establish a very unique politico-cultural relation, the basis of which was the values and philosophy of Buddhism. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, paid an official state visit to Mongolia in 2015 where he mentioned the two common aspects of this unique bilateral relation: one was Buddhism and the other was democracy. There are not many countries

that enjoy this type of special relation. Mongolia is a nation of only 3 million people whereas India is a nation of 1.3 billion people, so diverse and so huge as compared to Mongolia that they could have disregarded us. However, both countries and both people have been enjoying a very unique relationship based on the common religious heritage and democratic principles. Therefore, this relationship has been continuing as strongly as we can see it today. The representatives of Mongolia are not only enjoying this conference, but at the same time are learning a lot on avoiding conflict and raising environment consciousness. These two issues are indeed beyond borders.

Even though we all live in very different and diverse societies, in order to avoid conflict and raise environmental consciousness we have to find the right way to create good education for peace, which should be based on philosophy. In the early stages of human development you cannot teach children very complicated philosophical concepts. Education has different stages of reaching out to different levels of people in different societies. Therefore, at this conference I am enjoying the different views and different perspectives that the venerable monks and the scholars are sharing. All that they have said goes back to the core of education. We can't just think of ourselves without thinking of our future generations. This process needs to carry an important message to the youth who have to carry it forward and learn from an early age how to avoid any kind of conflict—at the individual, organisational, national and perhaps even at the global level.

Going back to the second theme of the conference, environment consciousness, this is very important as it concerns everybody. This definitely reminds me of one of the core teachings of Lord Buddha—interdependent origin and interdependent existence. The whole world and its phenomena is so strongly dependent on one another that we cannot ignore it. We have to try to avoid conflict while simultaneously protecting the environment. I think it is all about the mind and the heart. Therefore, again, education comes first. We can take the example of the nomadic Mongols. The nomadic way of life forces one to understand nature and its unique aspects of living in harmony. The Mongols were able to learn from the early stages, how to live in harmony with nature, without trying to take over nature or its related phenomena.

Lord Buddha has taught us a very special concept, which is building inner peace. Without inner peace, we cannot positively fathom the person sitting next to us and cannot freely communicate with others what we think. I think peace starts from within oneself without which every attempt we make will be just an act. We need to seriously find a better and more effective way of holding dialogues, perhaps at the family, organisational, national and global levels. What we definitely lack is having effective dialogue at all levels.

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CAUSES FOR CONFLICTS

In whatever context conflicts may arise, be it due to social injustice, poverty, religious, ethnical or other discrimination, geostrategic power struggles or striving for economical dominance, the circumstances for such conflicts are not just a natural given but the manifestations of actions committed by people who have their reasonings and motivations. In order to gain a more general perspective it might prove helpful to try to identify some underlying mindsets that constitute the fundamental causes for such conflicts.

Probably the most common and obvious assumption about a mindset that causes conflictual behaviour points to some form of egocentrism. For present purposes, I would like to distinguish between two aspects:

1. On an individual and mainly emotional level, an egocentric or self-centred attitude, that gives rise to a strong fear for the self and further causes to limit the perception of and relation to other people or things in what is considered as good or bad from the perspective of that self. The actions carried out accordingly can be described in Kantian terms as to treat others as means for selfish purposes rather than ends in themselves.
2. On a conceptual level, such a selfish/self-centred attitude can manifest

in some legitimising narrative. Such a narrative would have the structure of regarding one's own epistemic and normative standards, about the universe or society, eg to be absolute and either too sacred or otherwise immune to any internal or external scrutiny. The more immediate the identification of a set of doctrines with the truth becomes, the easier it gets to authorise aggressive actions against whomever is regarded as different.

Accordingly, the preconditions to overcome conflicts can be traced back to mindsets which had a less fear-driven attitude and were less concerned about the self, but instead, more capable to open up to the outside—be it other people, living beings or inanimate objects. A further aspect could be an ability to accept diversity by gaining a less self-elevating and absolutist look at accustomed points of view.

In what follows, I will outline how I see these causes for conflict taking shape within the setting of modernity, take a look at the Indian situation in regard to dealing with diversity and conclude by highlighting some promising features concerning conflict avoidance which I consider to be unique in Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY

The history of the modern world comes with an upside and a downside that can both be related to the aforementioned mindsets of causing or avoiding conflicts—although the depiction here can only be very sketchy and anecdotal.

On the upside we find an immense increase of our knowledge about the laws of nature, previously unfathomable technical innovations though in globally uneven allocation, also rising levels of literacy and education, expansion of life expectancy due to medical advances, decrease in poverty, the implementation of inalienable human rights, various liberation movements and the establishment of democratic societies, etc.

It seems safe to assume that these developments are generally seen as achievements inasmuch as they enable the improvement of everybody's living conditions, social justice and personal freedom. In relation to the aforementioned underlying mindsets such achievements would be made

possible due to a less selfish attitude and a more open and moderate understanding of what one holds to be true—refraining from utilising beliefs and convictions as a basis for some form of exploitation, that dismisses to ascribe any rights to the people or living beings we relate to.

Such achievements required some degree of scepticism in terms of open-mindedness, being able to put aside traditional beliefs and relying on the human capacity to reason in regard to explaining natural phenomena or answering questions of ethics. Starting in the Renaissance Humanism of the fourteenth century that referred to antique philosophy, cognitive and normative authority gradually shifted from a metaphysical or divine point of reference to the performances of human rationality, thereby allowing more and more, even hitherto untouchable beliefs to be dragged into a stream of scrutiny—eventually leaving no space for absolute certainty. This in principle also included the new findings of science, giving them a provisional status until new evidence might prove them wrong.

Paradoxically the increase of knowledge in modernity did not in turn contribute to an equally growing feeling of certitude. The Christian worldview, for example, presents the comforting notion that the universe is created by a benevolent supreme being, therefore structured by divine principles and containing an inherent purpose for humankind. The modern scientific insight into the laws of physics and the biological origins of species in contrast sees humanity subjected to random events in the midst of a vast and indifferent universe, lacking any inherent meaning, guidance or solace. The scientific concept of knowledge simply doesn't provide answers in the way traditional beliefs do, concerning questions of meaning and purpose—it can only state connections between natural causes and effects.

Ultimately even the very foundation of the modern paradigm—rationality—itself became uncertain. As Romanticism had already pointed to the importance of emotions and psychoanalysis uncovered the hidden force of the subconscious, rationality appeared like a small island encircled by a vast ocean of the irrational. The intensified questioning of epistemological conditions in modern philosophy—starting with, for example, René Descartes, the Empiricists, Immanuel Kant and culminating in the so-called 'linguistic turn' from the early twentieth century onward—further

undermined the concept of any absolute foundation of knowledge whatsoever. The Enlightenment idea of one single universal reason disintegrated into a plurality of semantic systems, limited to various socio-pragmatic contexts and organised according to their unique forms of rationality. Against this backdrop, claims of universal validity for specific standards of rationality lost their credibility and were interpreted as expressions of unjustified self-elevating hegemonial aspirations, also denoted as ‘Ethnocentrism’ or as further respective ‘centrism’.

Pointing out that modernity is accompanied by an element of confusion and deprivation because it causes the crumbling of any presumed foundation that promised the comfort of self-assurance, might help to understand developments that make up a severe downside of modern times. I like to interpret these developments as attempts to compensate for the modern deprivation of certitude, which in doing so introduce new forms of ‘absolutism’ which encourage self-serving and aggressive behaviour.

Examples would be movements directly opposing the ideas of freedom and democracy in the form of totalitarian political ideologies, which lead to suppressive dictatorships like the fascist and communist regimes. The same goes for movements that are directed specifically against the secular aspects of modernity in various forms of religious fundamentalism and extremism. They often have a strong political dimension as well and in some cases constitute theocratic dictatorships. Such political and religious ideologies in the modern context share the rejection of societal diversity and individual autonomy—instead they try to superimpose homogeneity by means of suppressing minorities or any opposition, legitimised by their assumed ‘higher cause’.

A further downside—not opposing but from within modern democratic states, who in principle affirm ideas like personal freedom, human rights, plurality, etc—can be seen in extreme developments of economy, where striving for profit presides over all other aspects of society encouraging the exploitation of natural resources and human labour. The supposed need for permanent growth demands for expansion, and this became a driving force behind imperialism and colonialism including current forms of economical

domination with their subsequent conflicts. Here we see individual and corporate greed taking over, justified by myths like the one which declares that deregulation of markets would cause prosperity for everyone.

Considering all this, we might name the following requirements for a mindset enabling conflict avoidance in our current situation, which we could label as ‘Late Modernity’. It would be necessary to achieve a perspective that acknowledges a general state of incertitude—that is, a situation in which nothing is capable to provide absolute assurance or ‘ready-made’ guidance. It would include being aware of our limits as well as opening our convictions to permanent scrutiny and debate. Finally it should contribute to inducing an altruistic motivation.

Before we take a brief look at some features for conflict avoidance to be found in Buddhism and Hinduism, we should consider some aspects about the role of religions in democratic societies.

REQUIREMENTS ON RELIGIONS IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

Contrary to secular or religious dictatorships that try to impose a single doctrine and way of life on everyone, democracies operate on a metalevel. The democratic structure values plurality and consists of a procedure to ensure equal participation of all diverse points of view, as long as they in turn accept the basic principles of democracy itself.

The American philosopher John Rawls offers a helpful further description concerning the required connection between the plurality of what he calls ‘comprehensive doctrines’ on one side, and the foundations of democracy on the other. He speaks of the necessity of an ‘overlapping consensus’ about the values that enable social stability providing fairness and freedom, in which agreement on these values is possible on the basis of different secular or religious contexts on respectively varying grounds.¹ The issue here is to consolidate the basic conditions for harmonious diversity from within the polyphony of differing models of justification themselves, rather than imposing them from the outside.

Since modern states were established often in conflict with traditional views, religious groups form a somewhat special case. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, for instance, characterised today’s democratic societies

as 'post-secular' in the sense that, although situated in a religiously neutral public sphere, religions with their 'important resources of meaning'²² still constitute a relevant factor. A necessary precondition for these traditions to be an integral part of society is to identify and promote those elements from within their own articles of faith that can contribute to a peaceful and constructive cooperation.

Religions have never been homogeneous structures, but instead, within certain doctrinal limits, gave rise to discourse and different interpretations of their core tenets. Thus, a spectrum between interpretations with greater potential for conflict on the one hand and those that are more moderate and open to dialogue on the other is to be found everywhere. Within this spectrum, the task at hand is to make use of those potentials specific to the individual traditions that are conducive for the democratic society as a whole. In affirming the preconditions for everyone to live freely within a harmonious plurality they in turn reinforce what enables their own freedom.

Reflections by HH the Dalai Lama³ may provide some more specific inspiration on how to approach this. His initial premise is that, apart from partially insurmountable differences in doctrine, all religions contain their own unique access to universal human values. Despite opposing tendencies, intersections exist in terms of the pursuit of happiness and the desire for community based on respect, solidarity and compassion. If we manage to set aside doctrinal antagonisms and allow contact with each other on the level of our shared bare humanity, many conflicts could be avoided. This again requires gaining some freedom from being completely determined by a certain set of views or prescriptions, and not treating them as absolutes, at least if they become the source of problems. Religious ethics can contribute to achieving this kind of a more neutral perspective, but they contain too much which cannot be accepted by members of other religions or non-religious people. According to HH the Dalai Lama, exploring that common human basis, therefore, calls for a 'secular ethics', not in terms of ethics opposed to religion, but being able to go beyond its doctrinal confines, if they demand aggressive actions against others just because they believe differently.

THE INDIAN MODEL

As far back as we are able to look, India has always been a place of diversity. The modern generic term ‘Hinduism’ contains in fact very different traditions with their own terminologies and partially antithetical teachings, whose systems of thought cover a spectrum from what could be labelled as theistic to atheistic and dualistic to monistic. But besides those differences all these traditions remained in a fruitful exchange of ideas and practices, attaining new forms of unity and constituting a dynamic network to the present day. That is not to say there haven’t been conflicts, forms of discrimination or issues like mistreatment of animals. Within the Vedic/Brahmanical tradition especially the situation of women and Dalits has to be mentioned, as well as animal sacrifices. But the ‘Dharmic’ traditions usually didn’t induce aggressive behaviour against other traditions on the basis of their different belief systems.

As a part of this Dharmic network, Buddhism also originated and developed in a context of many different religious communities, made up mostly by a large Vedic/Brahmanical tradition and a multitude of smaller or larger groups within the *Śramaha* movement that Buddhism itself was a part of, next to Jainism and others.

Thus, Indian religions never regarded plurality as a threat and something that has to be suppressed—this also applies to the politics concerning religion, as far as it was rooted in the dharma. Many rulers and dynasties are known to have supported all traditions in equal measure, most prominently the Mauryan emperor Ashoka.

This is quite contrary to the European situation, where Christianity since its introduction became a force for religious unification and aggressive exclusion of everything different. When the confessional schism in the sixteenth century established a lasting inner-Christian divide in Europe, it resulted in confessional wars and severe persecutions. From a historical perspective it is very recently—within the last decades—that mainly central European and generally Western societies have been confronted with diversity within themselves, due to large immigration movements. Since they have very little experience with this topic, the Indian model has a lot to offer. To illustrate my point, I will conclude by pointing very briefly to some aspects in Buddhist

and Hindu traditions, that correspond to the mindsets required for avoiding conflict as stated in the beginning.

POTENTIALS FOR CONFLICT AVOIDANCE WITHIN BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

One of the most unique and intriguing features of Buddhism I like to focus on is the sceptical stance in regard to views, doctrines, beliefs, etc. including its own. As far as we can tell from the early scriptures, it appears that the Buddha did not just attempt to introduce a new set of doctrines next to the ones already existing, giving new answers to old questions, but rather attempted to ask new questions by addressing problems that occur just by adhering to doctrines, regardless which ones.

To do so requires a meta-perspective, that is not primarily concerned with the relationship between concepts and what they refer to in the world, but with their function and consequences, thereby looking at all views, including one's own. The driving motivation then is not to find out something about the extra-mental or extralinguistic world, but learning how to relate to our concepts and systems of convictions in order to avoid certain problems—the main problem in the Buddhist perspective being suffering (*dukkha* in Pali, *dukha* in Sanskrit).

To hold on to something as true and to strongly believe in it can become a problem, if it is met with intense attachment which in turn has its basis in a self-centred attitude that wants the world to be in accord with one's needs. Since everyday experience is to a significant degree characterised by vicissitude and uncontrollability, suffering occurs in terms of an existential anxiety, because these needs are not reliably met. To avoid this form of suffering it is necessary to let go of the presumption that we could ever attain complete understanding and thereby control over our situation.

A Buddhist term frequently used to describe such a presumption charged with attachment is *ditthi* in Pali and *drishti* in Sanskrit, meaning 'view'. The *Paramatthaka Sutta*, for example, says the following about the attitude a monk should achieve in regard to such views:

Abandoning [beliefs] he had previously embraced (*attam pabhāya*), without attachment to other [beliefs], he does not seek support even in knowledge; he does not take sides amongst those who quarrel; he does not fall for any view (*ditthi*) whatsoever. (*Sutta Nipāta* 4, 5 – *Paramatthaka Sutta* 800)

As another example expressing the same idea, one quote from Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakāvātāra* says:

Being attached to one's own view (*drishṭi*) and to dismiss the view of someone else are equally limited attitudes. When desire and aversion are eradicated, analysis will quickly bring liberation. (*Madhyamakāvātāra* 6. 119)

Not to 'fall for' or 'seek support' in views, 'not taking sides' and analysing our own and other views 'without desire and aversion', as stated above, call for picturing us engaged in the same struggle as everyone, trying to make sense of the world around us but eventually failing to achieve absolute certainty. Looking at the frequent discussions we find in Buddhist literature this can't mean to abstain from dispute altogether or not having any opinions, but to be aware of our cognitive limits and not to allow difference in opinion to preside over the basic human connection and becoming the main cause for how we relate to another person—possibly in a dismissive or aggressive way.

Being told that it's all about letting go of views raises the question of what remains for seeking guidance in regard to making decisions and to determine the right conduct in a given situation. If everything is uncertain, why bother? But even if absolute truth and certainty are unattainable, at least in the state of samsara, experience presents to us the consequences of our ways to think and act. On that basis it is possible to gain a still limited but for practical purposes sufficient degree of certainty about doing the right thing, if we establish a mindset aiming at everybody's benefit. It is quite apparent that we find here a stance bearing the potential for a strong antidote against a self-serving and self-elevating absolutism, against a stance likely to induce conflict, since it puts itself above everything else.

I finally turn to one of the most revered works of the Sanskrit Hindu literature, the Bhagavad Gita. The main content of the Gita, the instructions given by Krishna, are embedded in a framework that ingeniously presents the problem of having to make decisions in a situation of inescapable incertitude. In the context of the larger narrative of the Mahabharata, the Gita describes the meeting of two armies about to engage in battle. On the 'field of the Kurus' (Kurukshetra) the Pandavas and the Kauravas, descendants of two royal brothers, face each other struggling for the succession of kingship, that

has unrightfully been seized by the Kauravas and is about to be regained by the Pandavas. Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, stands between the armies together with his charioteer, the god Krishna, and reflects on the carnage to come. Seeing his relatives, beloved friends, and revered teachers on the other side he hesitates to call for battle. Drawing from various Indian schools of thought Krishna presents arguments to Arjuna to convince him to fight and finally succeeds.

One interesting aspect of this setting is how it manages to create a veritable dilemma. On the one hand, killing relatives and Brahmanic teachers is one of the most reprehensible things to do in the Vedic tradition, resulting in severe bad karma—on the other hand, being a Kshatriya, a warrior, Arjuna has to succumb to his ‘caste duty’ (*svadharma*). Furthermore, not doing so and not helping to restore the rightful line of kingship would lead to a state of *adharma*, of societal and even cosmic disorder. So both options would be met with an undesirable outcome and on top of all, not making a decision is also not an option—it is either this or that.

In this situation, with the circumstances not providing any hint for a positive conclusion, Krishna utilises various traditional concepts to make his point for battle. In the second chapter, for instance, he reminds Arjuna, that his hesitance to kill is unwarranted, because the ‘embodied self’ (*dehin*) or ‘true self’ (*ātman*) is indestructible. But the main line of argument is not directed at the nature of something objective, but turns attention on Arjuna himself and his state of mind. He is supposed to stay ‘equal-minded in pain and pleasure’ (*samadukhasukham*), to become someone, ‘whose desire for pleasures is gone’ (*vigatasprahā*) and ‘passion, fear, and anger have departed’ (*vītarāgabhayakrodham*)—someone, having attained *prasāda* (‘peace of mind’/ ‘tranquility’) or *brahmanirvāna* (‘salvation in Brahman’). However, since the setting demands for actions, the required state of mind has to be defined in more active terms. A famous concept within the Gita therefore speaks about *naiṣkarmyakarma* (‘to act without desire’), meaning without being attached to the ‘fruit of actions’ (*karmaphala*). If Arjuna acts accordingly, so Krishna tells him, he will not generate bad karma.

Again, the solution to the problem of incertitude lies in a mindset that consists in overcoming self-centredness; if there is no way to determine

the right cause of action in regard to the given information about the circumstances, a calm mind not driven by egoism is the last resort and an indispensable foundation for ethics in general. This holds true especially if all other candidates for serving as a foundation, like a metaphysical point of reference or rationality, have become dubious, as it is the case in the situation of Late Modernity. Any metaphysical concept or God became at least questionable due to natural science; reason and rationality in turn also lost credibility since it became apparent that we are not just rational beings, but driven by desires and fears, etc.

In that way, it seems to me, Hindu and Buddhist ideas have become more relevant in light of the negative developments today, especially those which point at the deepest level of the human personality, at the underlying mindsets that determine our behaviour.

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Not for Sale

I'd like to talk about how Japan has assimilated Buddhism, democracy and respect of human rights, which did not originate in Japan. When Japan imported Buddhism, it had an indigenous religion, which is now called Shintoism. When it imported an idea of democracy and human rights, it had indigenous political thought and philosophy, which was based on Confucianism. A learned lesson is that imports do not conflict with indigenous thought to a large extent, if we accept them very wisely. I believe the Japanese experience is overlapping with the Indian one. The experience could be a good foundation for how we should be creative in the future to promote two major difficult tasks in the world—namely conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness.

I am a political scientist, born in Japan and educated in the United States. Talking about Japan's political thought or philosophy is sometimes very difficult. We need to explain how Western-born democracy functions in a non-Western society which still upholds non-Western indigenous norms. The same logic may apply to Indian or any other non-European society as well. The bottom line is—like all non-Western societies, Japanese governance and politics have been shaped through interaction between imported political thoughts and indigenous ideas. Talking of international or intercultural

conflicts, we should smartly combine conflicting ideas in a harmonious manner. The Japanese, and perhaps Indians, have taken some imported ideas if they liked them. They did not take it if it did not fit in their society. It seems to me that this has worked. We have to be very smart teachers for other non-Western societies.

The Japanese probably have one of the oldest important tools as a guideline for their daily life—that is Buddhism. It was imported in the sixth century, all the way from India through China and the Korean peninsula. But nowadays, no Japanese feels that Buddhism is an imported foreign religion, although they acknowledge that it originally came from India. Current statistics show that 84.7 million Japanese consider themselves as Buddhists, out of a total of 127 million people and I am one of them. Now Japan has 75,000 Buddhist temples and more than 300,000 Buddha statues. According to historical records, in the sixth century there clearly was conflict between Buddhism and the Japanese indigenous religion, now called Shintoism. Conflict has always taken place when the Japanese imported foreign ideas, but we somehow accepted a foreign idea such as Buddhism as long as it was probably useful. To accept Buddhism, the ancient Japanese loosened their commandments. Characteristics of Japanese Buddhism are marked with relatively weak or loose commandments, which is the reason that Japan could accept a foreign-born religion or idea with few conflicts. The Japanese seriously tried to harmonise an existing idea with an imported one.

The same thing applies to Western notions like human rights or democracy. Democracy or human rights were not completely alien to the Japanese at that time. Japan had similar ideas then. However, there is a little bit of a difference. The idea of human rights comes from European and Judaeo-Christian societies. Individual human rights there were regarded as ‘divine’ rights. ‘Divine’ means ‘given by God’. This idea is very foreign to Japan. The Japanese didn’t believe in an only God. Rather they believed in many gods in their indigenous religion. So, the idea of ‘divine’ rights was a very foreign one. Then a wise Japanese philosopher thought, ‘Let’s change the idea of God to the old Japanese notion of heaven’. Heaven is not God. The notion of human rights was induced to the Japanese people as ‘human rights given by heaven’ (*tempu jinken*). Somehow human rights were accepted among people

because they were useful, as Japan already held a traditional idea that good governance is good for the people. Some ruling elites had ethics—they really respected human dignity, though they did not refer to it as human rights. The ruling elites knew that good governance gives good results.

The Japanese merchant class also developed its own ethics such as at the time of the Singaku movement by Baigan Ishida during the Edo period, in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their working ethics is sometimes compared with European Calvinism, which Max Weber, the well-known social scientist, pointed out as a bedrock of capitalism. Max Weber propounded the idea that Protestantism is the bedrock of capitalism. I agree with Weber's analysis in his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. But in another book, he criticised Hinduism and Buddhism as impediments to the development of capitalism. I think he was wrong—even such a genius could not imagine that Japan and India could develop their economies with indigenous tradition in the future. It is safe to say that the nature of Indian and Japanese economic development is a little different from Western development. I would like to stress that we, as non-Western people, have some track to get over the current impasse of capitalism with limited natural resources and some track on how to avoid conflict too. That's not a possibility for known Western ideas or traditions. However, this does not mean that we are anti-West or denying Western culture. We share the same ailment, but our experiences are different. Different experiences yield different results and some opportunity for the future. For example, the limitation of self-ego is promoted by Japanese tradition, which may sound opposite to Western ideals, but it is not. Sometimes self-restraint is considering the needs of other people. That is, respecting other individuals too, or considering total happiness of people. I am not talking about denying Western ideas of individualism but emphasising upon the fact that the approaches to protect the individual are different.

I agree with some notions I have heard in the talks before mine such as the restraint of greed, acquiring too much money or the exploitation of resources, since all resources are limited and human beings are living on limited land and time. Our environmental situation is dire. That is one thing we could think of. The experience in Japan or India or other non-Western countries

is an opportunity to develop a new approach. Buddhism is a good tool for the Japanese to address difficult issues internationally. It is less ideological and more embedded in daily life. Japanese people are now so familiar with Buddhist traditions that they do not even consider Buddhism to be a religion. They believe it to be a part of daily life, which is a good thing.

I'd like to talk about Japan and Swami Vivekananda, the great Indian thought leader who visited us and commented on his impression of Japan at the time of modern nation state building in 1897. He praised Japan by saying that 'Japan digests Western knowledge very well, at the same time maintaining its indigenous spirit.' I'm not sure current Japanese society is still what he described. But the Japanese experience I shared with you confirms that we exhibited a smart digestion of Western ideas while keeping our indigenous ideas alive, which probably overlaps with the Indian experience. Not only Japan and India, but other Asian countries must have experienced this too. I have observed and respect the Indian approach to shape international troubles such as environmental issues and conflicts with Indian philosophy and experience. Conflict avoidance and a non-Western approach to environmental issues are the things we need right now. But how these can be brought about needs to be thought over. I hope that is going to be the foundation to think further upon. I think Japan could work with India and other nations, sharing a heritage of goodwill which has been shaped in our history, in order to influence the world for the better in the future.

If you look at Europe, you find (historically speaking, of course) that the spread of Christianity in the West was possible because of an organisation—the Roman Catholic Church, enormous trade and military conquests. In short, it was a mammoth attempt, over more than 1,000 years, for Christianity to spread throughout Europe. But if you look at Asia you notice something extraordinary—one Chandrakirti, one Nagarjuna (I don't know if he even went abroad), one or two bhikkus travelling abroad, some Indians going abroad. India was huge, there was trade, but these things didn't spread through trade. There was no church, there was no conquest. Hinduism went right up to the doors of Japan, Buddhism went beyond that. Why? Is it possible that they resonated in these cultural societies because there really is something fundamental that unites us as Asians? You could resonate to the Buddha, I could resonate to Shankara. Cambodia in fact, is one of the places where we find tremendously beautiful documents on French trade routes, extraordinary documents on law and so on and so forth. So what made you or your ancestors resonate? I think there is something even deeper than Christianity, which unites the Western culture, unites us and I want to build on that.

Three things I'll tell you; first, this is the result of forty years of my

research in Europe and my research is to describe Western culture against the background of Indian culture—that is how I started; it has become Asian by now. How does the Western culture appear to us? We know how it appears to us; you have your Pelican and Penguin books about Reformation, Enlightenment, the Renaissance, where there was a glorious Newton and an inglorious Karl Marx. This is the propaganda department of the Western culture which has told this story and unfortunately, all of us repeat it and mimic it mindlessly.

I discovered we don't know Europe at all and then discovered something that strangers do when they research, that I didn't know India either. What we do in India (please know that the subtext is Asia), is that we reproduce European stories. There is nothing wrong with this since we also reproduce their physics, chemistry, mathematics, technology and so on. That is currently true. I have nothing against Europeans—I mean my wife is European, my children are European, my students are European—I have nothing against them. The thing is this, the secular theories today (the so-called scientific theories), be they in political science, sociology or law—they are secularisations of Christianity. Let me tell you something very true—all of you are Christians! Did you know that? But which means one good thing, eh? Your souls are saved...truly, truly! I mean I'm not one, I mean come on, I have a very, very special, hot seat reserved in hell for me. Fine, I have no problems with that. But you all are Christians, you ask why?

We talk about the needy creatures that human beings are, right? We all have basic needs, don't we? Well, I think it is true. I'm going to take a bet on it. In all Asian languages as well, but in Indian languages, we don't have a word for 'need'; we don't know what it means. We use the word that translates to 'desire'. So if I say 'desire', it is also interesting. We talk about having multiple desires, hundreds, thousands, millions and infinite desires. Indian traditions say the following—we don't have multiple desires, what we have is one single desire. What does it do? It latches on, clings to what? Everything. And I think this is what the Buddha was talking about when he spoke of grasping. He didn't say who grasps—you can't ask that question of Buddha or even in the Indian tradition. In fact, grasping, he said, is a desire deep

inside, attaching itself now to Galaxy S6 Edge, tomorrow morning to Miso telephones or even OnePlus 2 (for which you have to be invited if you want to buy the phone). One good thing about the Chinese, is that they all are ingenious. Has anybody seen a black market in Europe?

That's the good thing about all Asians. I don't know how the Japanese are. I think they are also corrupt like Indians are. It's good, you see—probably that is why you resonated with the Buddha. That is why we reproduce the Buddha. Even in case of the notion of human desire, only the Bible—Old and New Testaments—says that human beings have desire because of which there are conflicts between them. Indian traditions say, there is only one desire, there is no conflict in a human being, therefore conflict between human beings is not possible. If there is, it is because you are ignorant about the nature of desire, about who you are. Like this, we develop a thought which is the complete opposite of what are called scientific theories today in social sciences. For thirty-five years I have been arguing the following—social sciences are not sciences at all, they are ideologies. We have to build a social science and I truly believe after forty years of research that it is going to come from Asia. It will come from here, from hundreds of Asians. Excellencies, venerable *bhikkus*, revered masters, I just want to say one thing. If you want to carry what you are trying to do today forward, you need three fundamental things. One, you must know Western culture well—if you don't, you keep quiet. Second, don't reproduce Buddha or Shankara or the *Brahma Sutra* bhasha over here. Nobody will understand it. Your children don't give a damn whether you have an *atma* or there is an *anahata*. '*Pratichyasamuppa Buddha maatesharir*'—who cares! So talk to them in this language, to the youth of today, lucidly. If you genuinely believe that these traditions have something to say to us today in the twenty-first century, which I believe they do, say it in the language of today. If there are important questions giving us good solutions, it must be possible to speak them in our language, the twenty-first century language, whatever it is.

This is my belief, that we Asians are the only ones who developed social sciences, 2,000 years ago. Third, love is all well and good, tries to show the other cheek, and Buddha's compassion too. Show it, but don't forget

one thing. If people are waiting to be punished—a loving father punishes a child if it's not learning—well, that is a relationship we should have towards Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions and the Western culture. If you don't have the three things, then my earnest, very humble request to you is this—shut down the conference.

Not for sale

JEAN-PIERRE LEHMANN

I had written a paper in 2006 titled ‘The Dangers of Monotheism in the Age of Globalization’ and the byline was ‘Can India’s polytheism provide a moral and spiritual example to the world, that the West and Islam cannot?’ So I have written this article and on that basis I was invited to share some thoughts here. The point I made in this was that the planet needs, quite desperately, a sense of moral order, spirituality and an ethical compass. The Indian religious and philosophical traditions can provide a great deal of all three. I still believe this quite strongly, although I will come back to this point shortly. I found out that some of these perspectives that I had were actually shared by other Westerners at earlier times. I have a number of quotations. It was while I wrote my article that I came across a passage from Aldous Huxley who was the philosopher and author of *Brave New World*. He wrote, ‘Religions whose theology is least preoccupied with events in time and most concerned with eternity have been consistently less violent and more humane in political practice. Unlike early Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedism—all obsessed with time—Hinduism and Buddhism have never been persecuting faiths, have preached almost no holy wars and have refrained from proselytising religious imperialism or conversions—which had gone hand in hand with political and economic oppression of coloured people.’

I also came across a quotation from the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer who said that, 'In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people.' The twenty-first century can gain enormously from the leadership of India, spiritual and philosophical leadership drawing from the traditions. In fact, I make the point that if we look at the environment right now, it is pretty certain that the next global power (in the sense of hard power, economic and military) will be China. I think that seems pretty irrevocable. What role China plays is going to be considerable in many respects but I think the Chinese tradition, even including Confucianism, has difficulty in explaining the meaning of life. I think at this point comments have been made about identity and so on, that is from the traditions of Indian religions. I also have two more quotations I want to share with you just to show that there is reasonable company that I am keeping. Arnold Toynbee, who again I presume you know, is a famous historian who said, 'It is already becoming clear that the chapter which had a Western beginning, will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation is the ancient Hindu way. Here we have the attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family.' There is also a last quotation by Mark Twain, who again I am sure everybody knows, who says, 'India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most constructive materials in the history of man are treasured in India only.'

So I think this represents in my mind the sort of challenges we are facing. Comments have been made that conflict is in our DNA. We've always been in conflict. Now we realise that we only went 250 years without it. The process of globalisation as we call it now has been a succession of great powers emerging and imposing their power. Before the fifteenth century it was mainly the Muslims and the Arab world which extended from Andalusia to Indonesia. After the fifteenth century we had the rise of the Portuguese Tibon Empire. There is an extremely good documentary done by the Chinese

television channel, CCTV—some of you may be familiar with it, if you're not I strongly recommend it—it is called *Rise of the Great Powers* and it came out in 2006. It was a time when the Chinese were saying—hey, wait a second, we're becoming a great power. By great power I'd rather attach more value to it. I like to think of great power in terms of might. This is what this series is about, in that they described what had been the experience of other great powers. The series begins with Portugal, chapter 2 is Spain, chapter 3 is the Netherlands (that is the historical chronology), chapter 4 is the UK, chapter 5 is France (my country), chapter 6 is Germany, chapter 7 is Japan, chapter 8 is Russia and chapter 9 is the United States. Chapter 10, will presumably be China. The Chinese are talking about their peaceful rise.

We have to accept, I think, that this conflict is within the DNA. One thing that is interesting is that all of these great powers with one exception are basically of Christian origin. Japan is the exception, though I must say that when you talk about Buddhism and Shintoism, there is a difference. Buddhism is universal while Shintoism is nativist, it is very much unique. If you take a look at Japan's rise as a power, Buddhism was there but not the driving force. Shinto was the state religion; the Yasukuni shrine is Shinto and not Buddhist and so I would insist much more on the Buddhism which is universal. There is this potential for India to be a leader in a non-conventional sense. This point I try to get across to my students (I teach in India); they ask me when I think India is going to overtake China. I say why do you want to do that? What's the point? I think there is an obsession partly with hard power, partly also with materialism. Many Chinese friends of mine are beginning to wonder, whether it was really worth it, to maintain this sort of GDP at the expense of reality. We need to have a new paradigm, a new thinking.

If you are in a monotheistic faith, you say there is one God and it is my God and if you don't agree, I will kill you or you convert. That has been the driving force of ideology and dogmatism in religion. Now there is this new perspective possible of India as a global civilisational power, not as a global military or economic power. I think that Vivekananda, as far as I know, can be a tremendous inspiration for this. I chose two quotations from Vivekananda which I use as the basis of my argument. The first quotation from

Swami Vivekananda is, 'All differences in this world are of degree not of kind because oneness is the secret of everything.' It is a secret that is very elusive and I think that the point has been made that what we are seeing is much more confrontation and division everywhere. I take the point right now that to a considerable extent Islam is in the hot seat so far as ethnic cleansing and so on is concerned. Right here one has to see the plight of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Somehow or the other we have to get to this oneness, on the basis of unity. The other quotation of Vivekananda which I use frequently is, 'It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.' I think it is also true that men are given more to violence. This is not to say women are immune from violence, but it is one of the points I make very strongly because we could at one level be practical. The point I make here, using Vivekananda's words is—let us have a movement to abolish rape. Conflict is usually between men, but it is women that suffer the most.

I am from Myanmar and the foundation I work with is a humanitarian as well as a community development organisation which works with around 100,000 farmers. I would like to share my humble thoughts and observations based on Myanmar's experience.

Talking about climate justice and ethical economy, in 2015, Myanmar faced the biggest flood in living memory. Twelve provinces out of fourteen were hit, 1.6 million people got affected and 1 million acres of agricultural land got inundated and destroyed. This had a significant impact, destroying the food of the people and destruction of the crop that was to be harvested in the following season. In 2010, about 29,000 families were estimated to be severely affected by the floods. Then in 2008, Cyclone Nargis had hit Myanmar and killed over 150,000 people. That was the biggest scale of destruction that Myanmar had ever faced. So, in 2008, in 2010 and 2015 Myanmar was under duress. The question that arises is that why do these climatic disasters come so often? A lot of us are talking about anthropocentric climate change and how politicians, economists and the people address this issue. Here, we need to look at what are the ideologies and philosophy behind the current economic model that the world is practising as well as what impact it has brought on us.

We know that the current economic model is very much based on profit. It has very little consideration about people or the planet. In 2014, Indian investment and trade with Myanmar was US\$ 2 billion and for Japan this number stood at US\$ 15.52 billion. This shows that both India and Japan have a lot of investment in Myanmar, which is far-reaching for its economy and has a huge impact on the life of people. I would like to emphasise that our economy has to be ethical. Myanmar is a transitioning country and we are grappling with a lot of issues like land-grabbing and labour exploitation. Whilst the economic investment is uplifting well-being and livelihoods of the people, the social situation in Myanmar is also important and ethical investment in Myanmar is important as well.

Our country transitioned from dictatorship to a democracy in 2010. We are still struggling and it is still a work in progress. When the country opened up, a lot of investments came in, which was a positive sign, but we are worried because a large part of investment has to do with extractive industries such as mining and logging which create money very quickly. Myanmar is a country rich in natural resources, but we still need to find ways to use those wisely. Notwithstanding the need to mention why social and environmental safeguards are crucial in conducting economic activity in Myanmar.

When Myanmar got independence from British rule, the British government was quite concerned that after they left the country, Myanmar would be in trouble, as perhaps the people would not know how to conduct their business properly. Thus, the British government sent a senior economic advisor to Myanmar, EF Schumacher. When he arrived in Myanmar around the year 1940, he realised that he didn't need to teach Myanmar but in fact, he could learn a thing or two from her. What he found was that there was an economic system based on the teachings of Buddhism. A system, where the idea of right livelihood flourished, and where not only the trader but also other people benefitted. So he wrote an essay about this Buddhist economy, based on the idea of right livelihood. In today's time of economic turmoil, this is the idea that should be revisited. What his essay gave me is a question—'Can we shift our economy from a profit-oriented one to one where we can show more compassion and kindness to the people as well as other sentient beings in the environment?'

Talking about a dialogue on religious nationalism, when Myanmar opened up, our neighbouring countries, well-wishers and friends were happy and had great expectations about her transitioning into a democratic country. With the transition, many spaces have opened up, like freedom of expression. In contemporary Myanmar, the media can write quite openly, criticise the government as well as talk about corruption in industries. Social media is also a driving force. A lot of young people are using social media. In the meantime, what we witness is the rise of religious extremism. If you follow the news about Myanmar you might know about the communal violence, conflict and the so-called Buddhist extremism. Many articles are questioning, how Buddhism, which is seen as a very peaceful religion, is capable of committing such violence? For me, growing up in Myanmar, being governed by the military government which was also Buddhist, it is not really surprising. Many people notice that in Myanmar there is a group of Buddhists led by a Buddhist monk called the Ma Bat Da Association for Protection of Religion and Nationality, which is on the rise. Naturally, this is the ideology which brought all Myanmarese people together to fight against the British colonialists.

However, what is going on now is very sad. I would like to highlight a case as an example:

A few weeks ago, four bills were passed by the Parliament and are being enacted. These are the interfaith marriage bill, monogamy bill, birth control bill and religious conversion bill. The interfaith marriage bill puts in place a procedure if a Buddhist woman wants to marry a non-Buddhist man. The procedure makes such a thing very difficult. The birth control bill is again a very nasty law and the religious conversion one is also similar. A lot of human rights groups are pointing out that these four bills are unacceptable on the grounds of breaching the very constitution of Myanmar, universal human rights as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Then how is it that these laws are even being passed and enacted? According to some of the literature, it might even be called 'structural violence'. It's a policy of discriminating against women and non-Buddhist people who are part of Myanmar. If we look at how this movement arises and how this bill comes into being, we notice that it is very much based on the insecurity that is prevalent in the country.

When the country opened up, it faced a lot of new challenges. The Buddhist community faced a lot of new challenges and I think this is in response to those. The very ideology of protection of race and religion had brought our people together to fight against the British. The question is, if that ideology is still relevant in this age, will it bring any good to Myanmar? If we look at this issue through the situation in Myanmar, it has to do with the identity and inclusiveness of the social, economic and political spheres of minority, religious and ethnic groups. One might say that it has also to do with the rule of law, good governance and vested political interests. Yes, it also clearly shows the need for moral leadership and courage that we need to draw from the great traditions that taught us compassion and loving-kindness. Education is very important, particularly the stories that we tell our children—stories that are taught at school or at home. What kind of stories are we teaching our children? Are those only stories glorifying war heroes? Or are those stories which emphasise on leadership, which bring compassion and peace to our society? We really have to look at our curriculum and the way we tell stories to our children. Talking about this type of violence and the civil conflict in Myanmar, it is clear that the role of women is very important. Be it man-made disasters like war, or natural disasters, women are the ones who are the most affected. Women are the ones who nurture the family and our civilisation. If we don't give women important roles in peacemaking as well as in decision making, we would not go very far when we talk about conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness.

We are living in a world with situations of conflict. Here we are making our minds go such a way that all conflicts should be avoided. I thank the organisers for the fact that they asked us to pile out the philosophical grounds for conflict avoidance. That is what is more important, and then again they have brought Hinduism and Buddhism together for this purpose, to give a clarion call for all humanity. These two religions, if they join hands and call humanity, I don't think that our future shall be darker. It shall be brighter than bright. Hinduism and Buddhism, both are just two facets of one reality, of one thought box. There are so many similarities. I am not here to give the list of similarities, since there are only a few diversions or differences. Both religions have defined dharma only as human moral values. They are not dogmatic, and especially with Buddha you know there is no dogma.

Aapo deepo bhava, that is what Buddha taught. In the same way, in Hinduism, religion is described just through human moral values. When we come to Buddha and Manu—*Dhrati kshama damah asteyam shoucham indriyanigrhabh, Dhi vidya satyam akrodho dashakam dharma lakshanam*—these are ten human values. Again if we come to Bhagavad Gita, twenty-six values and not any dogma. In Shrimad Bhagvat reading, the description of

Sanatan Dharma, they have given thirty values. Everywhere there is stress on *sadachar* or human moral values that is called dharma according to Vedas or Hinduism. Both of these religions believe that the basic cause of misery is ignorance. Both of these religions have given the way out, which is the life of moderation, the life of the golden mean. In both these religions we find yoga or meditation as the base. Meditation and compassion were taught by Buddha. Even in Gita we find *bhargo devasya dheemahi*, or meditation is the highest form of worship. Ahimsa is the best way of life in both. We find the mantras, mudras and so many other things that are so similar.

So similar is the thought process of both the religions that the highest personality in Hinduism, Bhagavan Shankaracharya was called Prachanda Buddha, a Buddha in disguise by the people. Regarding the Shunya, given by Buddhism, Nagarjuna has said, just because it is beyond all attributes it is called Shunya, but when we are speaking, it is not the name of knowledge, just a thing not existent. Therefore, there are so many similarities and thus, these two religions are brother religions. If they come together, they can teach the whole world and the world has experienced that light has always come from Asia, that too from Bharat. We can prove it, and for that, what needs to be done? Really speaking the mindset of humanity has changed. The mindset of humanity before renaissance was different from the mindset today. Before renaissance, people were permanently prostrating before some authority but post renaissance all authorities are discarded. Science has made such a big revolution that all the means of hedonism have come at hand. Therefore young people, especially the new generation is breaking all moral laws and going beyond everything. This mindset is to be changed and it must be started with education only.

Education is the basic thing because if we can catch the young boys and girls and educate them, not for injustice or violence but for peace, brotherly ways and meditation—this can be done only by the Hindus and Buddhists. This is because they have learned it since childhood. A new type of education and training is required and that training shall make people sober so that coming generations can be philanthropic. The next step that we should take is to celebrate our festivals together. We should come together to celebrate our festivals.

Mahabharata is the highest treaty on avoiding conflict. In the beginning of the Mahabharata the question has been asked as to why the Kauravas and Pandavas who were individually accomplished and of good personalities, saw differences amongst themselves? Why did these differences increase and were they not bridged, and ultimately how they lead to such a great war? Could it not have been avoided? Then the Mahabharata is narrated within which Ved Vyas has given all the sutras of how to avoid conflict. Mahabharata is not a treaty for *yuddha* or war, but is in fact about how to avoid war in the coming future. All those aphorisms and sutras have been given in it. He said that people of different faiths, different clans should come together. Let them come together for all these different festivals; when they come together and celebrate, their minds can be bridged. Then they need not get converted but let them celebrate their differences and diversity and come together for festivals and celebration. Such as when we come together and arrange a dialogue. Dialogues are the only solution; we must keep coming together and interacting. For only then can we find the way out and therefore we must have together, some symbiotic project of serving humanity. This project should have people of different faiths, keeping all respect for those faiths and abiding by the rules, coming together. Last but not the least, we must have a firm belief that we are going to win. We are a minority today, maybe, but we are a firmly determined creative minority. If we can keep coming together and going ahead with confidence, we shall change the world. Let us take the first step.

Not for sale

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THICH NHAT TU

In terms of concept, conflict avoidance is not something to be accomplished or started because conflicts arise in the human world and we have to have the courage to face them, overcome them and to solve them effectively for the benefit and happiness of humans.

There are two dimensions that conflict may relate to. The first is reinvention. In this regard we should see the differences in terms of management of conflict. We choose very simply to change the subject, to put off the clash of wits that creates suffering between us. So we have to engage in the second dimension of conflict avoidance, that is, resolution.

Most of the speakers agree with the following statements; first—promote the vision of oneness; we acknowledge the interdependence of all things in the world. At the same time we also acknowledge the oneness of humanity, the oneness of heaven and earth and the oneness of a peaceful world. For doing this we have to live in harmony for our benefit. Second, most of us agreed to appreciate diversity and plurality of politics, religions, cultures and individuals. It is said that we have to enhance universal acceptance as well as universal tolerance. A point was also made that we should not call it tolerance, because tolerance means that we are putting up with someone we consider lower than us. We have to develop acceptance, so that it reinforces

the principle of coexistence in this world. We have to develop the concept of inter-being and interrelation for the benefit of humanity. Avoiding rituals as well as political extremism is a must, if we want to build happiness and peace. In order to do that the practice of dharma and receiving good education for peace, especially inner peace, is important. According to Hindu and Buddhist traditions, inner peace leads to world peace.

Third, most speakers suggested a compromise of mutual interest as well as benefit; if we can agree with it then it will be easy to realise the interest and well-being of the parties concerned who have or are facing conflicts. In this regard, the solution for conflict avoidance would be a win-win situation, so that every party is benefited and by doing so, we can earn happiness. Transformation of familiarity into friendship is important for everyone, especially for political and religious leaders. So we have to transform it into friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood. We have to accept competition in the good sense, in accordance with the law, international as well as regional and national. Fourth, collaboratively looking at the future is the advice given by some speakers; we have to make use of it to close the past sufferings or conflicts. There is only one way to look at that in the future. The future opens the gates for all of us. Please do not try to worm out past sufferings due to conflicts and war. We have to find a common platform and network so that every person can go together for the happiness and peace of mankind.

Fifth, this dialogue on conflict avoidance is a historical, wonderful landmark event. For this we have to thank the organisers, who put together tremendous effort so that Hindu and Buddhist leaders as well as intellectuals can sit together and find ways to end human suffering and conflicts. We have to play an active role at the international level in order to stop all kinds of conflict completely. We have to commit ourselves to transform all we have accomplished into a collaboration. Practice of dharma is a must; dharma in this sense might mean variety, compassion and truthfulness and by committing to this we can eliminate conflict totally.



Param Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giri



Dr Bataa Mishig-Ish



Dr Karsten Schmidt



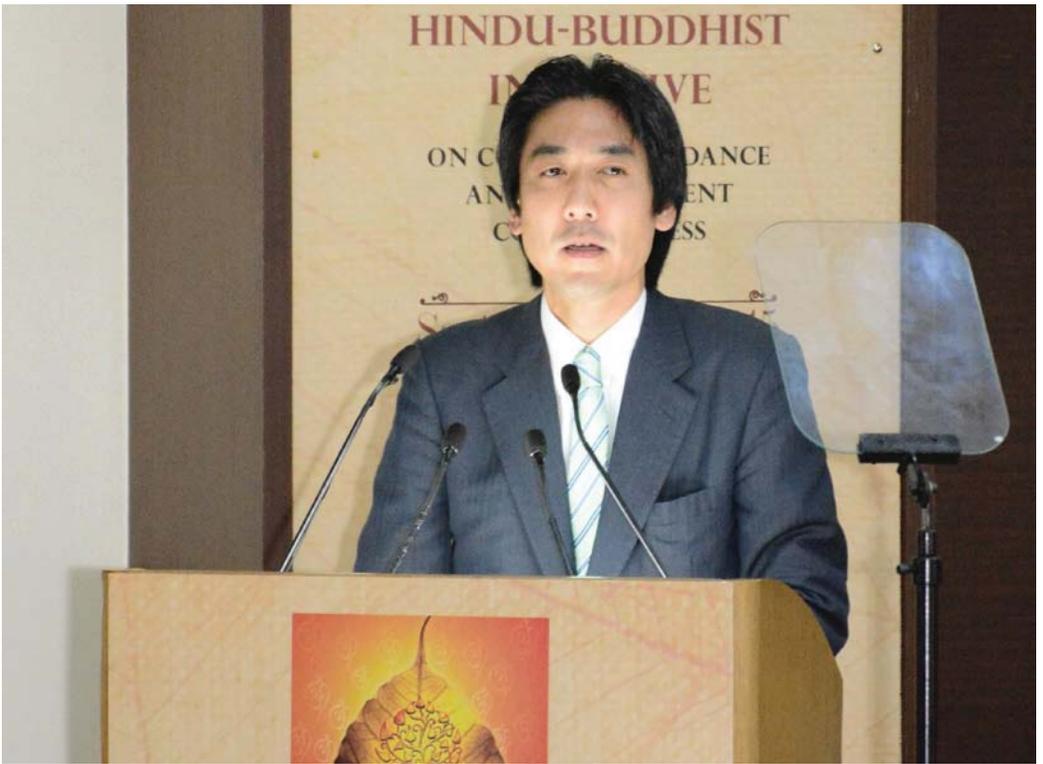
Dr Lokesh Chandra



Dr Ashin Nyanissara



Ven Dr Thich Nhat Tu



HE Minoru Kiuchi



HE Chandrika Bhandaranaik Kumaratunga



Prof Swaminathan Gurumurthy



HE Shri Kripasur Sherpa



Most Ven Arayawongso



Kumari Nivedita R Bhide



Mr Sai Sam Kham



Mr Jean-Pierre Lehmann



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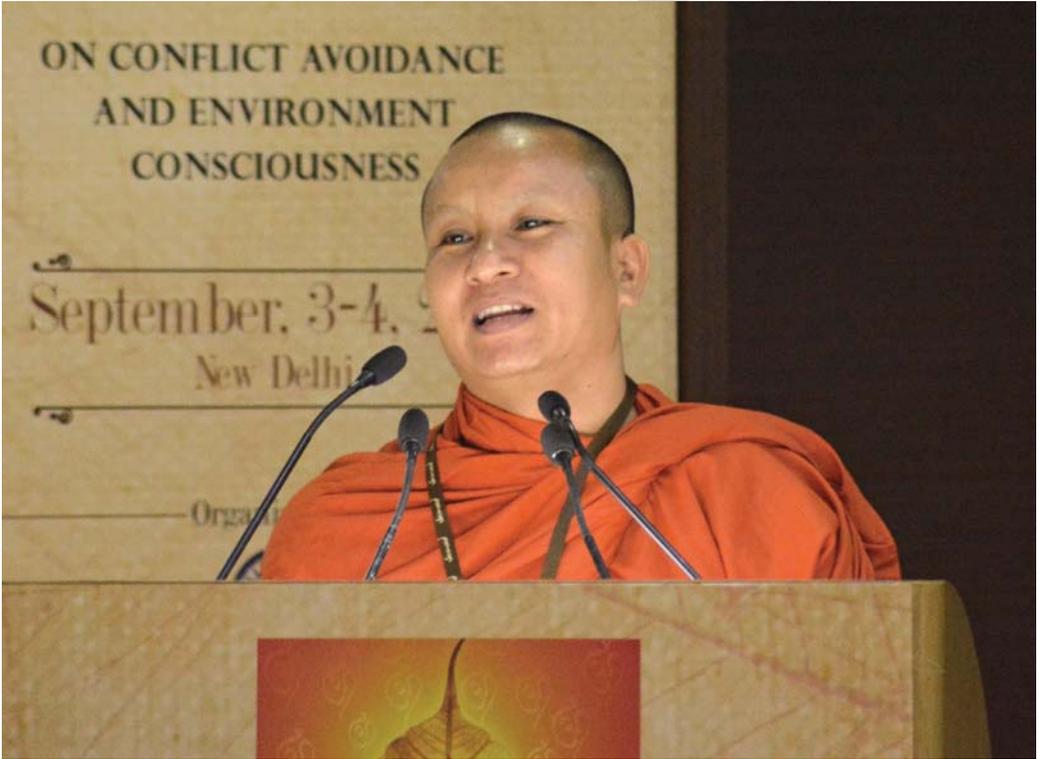
Mr Masahiro Akiyama



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Prof SN Balagandhara



Ven Prof Preah Tepsattha Khy Sovanratana

ENVIRONMENT
CONSCIOUSNESS

Not for Sale

JANGCHUP CHOEDEN

*With folded hands I beseech
The Buddhas of all directions
To shine the lamp of dharma
For all bewildered in misery's gloom.*

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'Taking care of the planet is nothing special, nothing sacred or holy. It's just like taking care of our own house. We have no other planet, no other house, except this one. Even if there are a lot of disturbances and problems, it is our only alternative. We cannot go to any other planet. If the moon is seen from a distance, it appears quite beautiful. But if we go there to stay, I think, it would be horrible. So, our blue planet is much better, much happier. Therefore, we have to take care of our own place. This is not something special or holy. This is just a practical fact!'

We are alive because of the environment and we would not be alive without it. Therefore, I am grateful that the environment surrounds me. We are born dependent on it and we will die dependent on it. Without a good and healthy environment—this includes a friendly neighbourhood and a peaceful society—nothing can be sustained. Like all great masters and gurus, Buddha had great appreciation and respect for the environment.

BUDDHA AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In fact, Buddha was very close to nature. A study of his life shows how close nature was to key moments in his life. He was born in a garden near Kapilavastu. He renounced his palace and moved to live in a forest. He chose a Bodhi tree for the place to achieve enlightenment. He delivered his first historic sermon in a forest near the historic city of Varanasi. He passed away lying in between two sal trees in Kushinagar.

In his teachings, he put great emphasis on caring for the environment. In the *Vinaya*—the books of the monastic code of conduct—a large portion of the list of offences is related to ignoring, harming or destroying the environment.

Buddha said in the *Pratimoksha Sutra*,

*These are the teachings of Buddha
Never do any evil thing
Do plenty of good deeds
And tame your own mind.*

*Those great men who on mere instructions
Refrain from crossing the limits
Are noble men, comparable to tamed precious horses
They will be victorious in war against afflictions.*

*Those to whom this bridle is missing
And who never wish to have it
Will get disturbed by the war of afflictions
And wander away in disconcerted states.*

PHILOSOPHY OF *PRATIITYA SAMUTPADA* AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Arahata Ashwajit once said to Shariputra, ‘The Tathagata taught those causes from which everything arises. The great Shramana also taught the methods to cease those causes.’

Buddha independently and exclusively expounded the philosophy of *Pratitya samutpada*—Dependent Origination or Dependent Arising—a uniform philosophy common to all the Buddhist schools. The practice of non-violence also became a universal Buddhist code of conduct. Both these

practices are relevant to the way a Buddhist views the environment. These two core teachings are still commonly shared by all Buddhist schools, which exist today and have survived more than 2,500 years since the passing of Buddha.

The teaching on the core practice of non-violence is built up on the firm foundation of the philosophy of Dependent Origination, *Pratitya samutpada*. Therefore, the philosophy of Dependent Origination forms the most important exposition out of all the teachings originating from the Buddha Sakyamuni.

Of course, the philosophy of Dependent Origination is very profound but in a simplified form, I would like to say it is an erudite, scholarly, thorough and profound presentation of the law of causality and mutual dependence, both of which are universal characteristics. Since the law of causality and mutual dependence encapsulates everything around us, we should be constantly conscious and caring of the environment surrounding us. Therefore, the practice of non-violent conduct is indispensable to those who adhere to the philosophy of Dependent Origination. Because things exist and are sustained by depending on each other, self-discipline, contentment, frugality, compassion, kindness and care for others, as well as devotion, perseverance, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are the core concepts Buddha taught to his followers.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'Therefore, I always used to tell people that whether they are believers or non-believers that's up to them. From a certain point of view, religion is a little bit of a luxury. If you have religion, that's very good. But even without religion, you can survive, you can manage to live and even sometimes succeed. But not without human affection—without love, we cannot survive. Therefore, affection, love and compassion, they are the deepest aspects of human nature.'

A greater expansion of environmental consciousness will culminate in an increased sense of universal responsibility. According to the common teachings of the Buddha, there are the practices of the four *Aparmanas* and four *Brahmaviharas*, which form the common practice of universal responsibility.

In the path and training of Bodhisattvas, there is a great emphasis on the practice of *Mahakaruna*, *Mahamaitri* and *Boddhichitta*, which are all further enhancements of the practices of the *Aparmanas*. Therefore, in the Bodhisattva teachings, in general, there is great emphasis on the practice of moderation—Middle Path—with avoidance of extreme frugality and over consumption, although, when it comes to taking care of and serving others, one should strive to offer the best service and materials possible.

Moderation in consumption and simplicity in lifestyle are values we need to promote in this era and I think environmental consciousness could be an indispensable tool to help us achieve that.

MODERN MATERIALISM VERSUS ANCIENT SPIRITUALISM

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, ‘I am very fond of honey so I am always exploiting the bees’ hard work. Therefore, I have a special interest in the lives of bees. I learned many things about them and developed a special relationship with them. They amaze me. They have no religion, no constitution, and no police force, but their natural law of existence requires harmony, and they have a natural sense of responsibility. They follow nature’s system. So what is wrong with us, we human beings? We have such a great intelligence, our human intelligence, our human wisdom. But I think we often use our human intelligence in the wrong way, we turn it in the wrong direction. As a result, in a way we are doing certain actions which are essentially contrary to our basic human nature.’

The issues related to the environment have become one of the most popular concerns over the last four decades. The environment is being degraded all over the world owing to poorly-planned industrialisation, urbanisation, population pressure and human greed. This in turn leads to indiscriminate and environmentally incompatible development, over-utilisation of resources and the use of inappropriate technology, unmindful of the harm being done to environment.

These factors cause environmental, social and health problems. Some of the problems faced by humankind, directly or indirectly, are ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, global warming, air and water pollution, and fossil fuel combustion. The chemical materials and processes are the most

important among these. The excessive use of fossil fuels—coal, oil and natural gas—causes several environmental problems. In addition, religious fanaticism, terrorism and polarisation between social and religious groups add to the problem by fuelling greed and the desire for domination and further expansion.

Pollution of any kind is a result of the injudicious use of resources and it is a problem of obvious importance that affects human, plant and animal health. Pollution from a wide variety of emissions, especially from automobiles and industrial activities, has reached critical levels, causing respiratory, ocular and other health problems.

On this, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has opined, ‘Essentially, nature’s elements have secret ways of adapting. When something is damaged, another element helps out and improves the situation through some kind of evolution. This is nature’s way of adjustment. But then, human intervention creates certain changes, which do not give nature and its elements time to cope. So the main troublemaker, the major cause of imbalance, is we human beings ourselves. Therefore, the responsibility should be borne by us. We must find some way to restrain our destructive habits. We cause these problems mainly with our modern economy. With different kinds of factories and chemicals, we have a strong negative impact on the balance of nature.’

Nowadays, the whole world appears akin to a colossal war zone of consumerists. We should come out of the prevalent mentality of consumerism. Those who consume more are not necessarily happier, more powerful, more successful or more admirable. If this was the case, then the richest people would also be the happiest, which is clearly not true. Several individuals and institutions are promoting this dangerous mentality of consumerism. They do this by constantly telling people that if you don’t earn this much you will not be happy. If you don’t own a TV, or a second car as well as a house then you will never be happy. These people promote greed and greed is the root of all the problems and the mistakes. The publicity that promotes greed is baseless and illogical according to our spiritual teachings. It is possible for a man to enjoy the highest level of happiness throughout his life even without owning a single penny. Therefore, happiness mustn’t be measured by what people own, and what they consume, instead it should be measured by how content the person is and what level of satisfaction is in their life.

HAPPINESS AND GDP: ARE THEY RELATED?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'I believe that every individual living being, whether animal or human, has an innate sense of self. Stemming from that innate sense of self, there is an innate desire to enjoy happiness and overcome suffering. And this is something, which is innate to all beings. I believe it is a natural phenomenon. But if we tried to examine why such innate faculties are there within living beings, I do not think we could ever find a convincing answer. I would rather stop there and say that it is a natural fact. Various different philosophies have tried to examine that nature of living beings. And still, after centuries, this is not yet finally solved. So I think it is better to accept this as something natural, as a reality.'

By nature, from childhood we wish to be happy, not necessarily wealthy, but in the course of time, our parents, peers, society and even our teachers teach us that to be happy we need plenty of wealth. Ironically, many people will say that their happiest period was their childhood, when ironically they owned the least. This is further proof that money does not buy happiness.

Here I would like to put forward a very positive approach the Government of Bhutan has initiated, which is a unique system to measure Gross National Happiness (GNH) instead of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). I think that is a very progressive approach to address the common goal of humankind.

The GNH concept evolved through the contributions of an international body of scholars and researchers working together to create a socio-economic development framework. The GNH policy now serves as a unifying vision for Bhutan's five-year planning process and all the derived planning documents that guide the economic and development plans of the country. All proposed policies in Bhutan must pass a GNH review based on a GNH impact statement that is similar in nature to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required for development in the US.

Since 1971, the country has rejected GDP as the only way to measure progress. In its place, it has championed a new approach to development, which measures prosperity through formal principles of GNH and the spiritual, physical, social and environmental health of its citizens and natural environment.

For the past three decades, this belief that well-being should take preference over material growth has remained a global oddity. Now, in a world beset by collapsing financial systems, gross inequity and widescale environmental destruction, this tiny Buddhist state's approach is attracting a lot of interest.

At the same time, placing the natural world at the heart of public policy has led to environmental protection being enshrined in the constitution. The country has pledged to remain carbon-neutral and to ensure that at least 60 per cent of its land mass will remain under forest cover in perpetuity. It has banned export logging and has even instigated a monthly pedestrian day that bans all private vehicles from its roads.

Why shouldn't we have something similar in India? Why do we need to just stick to the GDP yardstick? Even if it is necessary to use the GDP yardstick, why shouldn't we create our own yardstick to measure the level of happiness of our citizens rather than the amount of money and wealth at their disposal? If citizens of a nation are happy and satisfied with their income and life, why should that nation strive for economic growth at the expense of the precious environment, social harmony and a peaceful life?

FINDING THE SOLUTION

Acharya Shantideva said,

*'If I give this, what shall I use'—
Such selfish thinking is way of evil;
'If I use this, what shall I give'—
Such altruistic thinking is the way of the Divine.*

*All the joys of this world
Arise from wishing happiness to others,
And all the sufferings of this world
Arise from egocentric wish to happiness.*

*There is no need to say much more,
Take note of the differences between these two!
Foolish work just to benefit themselves,
And the Buddhas work to benefit others.*

In this country, we have a well-established tradition dating back to several millennia of renunciate yogis, sadhus, saints, *bhikshus* and fakirs. I strongly believe that the majority of the practitioners of these traditions enjoy a deep sense of satisfaction in their lives. Satisfaction is a very stable, unflickering variety of happiness, therefore, we cannot say there is no happiness in frugal and simple living. Thus, as a community, a society and a nation we must have an appropriate yardstick to measure happiness based on our ancient wisdom and thinking, rather than just following the materialist Western system. We don't need to follow the West at every step. Instead, we should retain our own great values and wisdom while importing only extremely important and necessary things from the West.

HOW TO PROMULGATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Acharya Shantideva said, 'Everything will get tied only by tying this mind. Everything will get subdued only by taming this mind.'

Too much greed and the adoption of extreme individualism, materialism, industrialism and expansionism from other civilisations is damaging our society. The modern materialistic trend is attractive to the young, immature and untamed mind, but at the same time, it is very destructive to our culture, our values, our lifestyle and humanity as a whole. Becoming aware of the bad effects of environmental degradation on human life, environmentalists are trying to find solutions to reverse this trend. Environmentalists are supposed to play a great role in urgent environmental issues such as ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, global warming, air pollution and the like. But an ultimate danger to the environment is lurking in the disharmony and conflicts arising due to religious fanaticism; these and some other dangers have not yet been fully addressed.

In any case, teaching about environmental issues and the preservation of the world's environment has become increasingly important across the globe. It shows the importance of human awareness and consciousness about these problems and in taking precautions to vaccinate against them. The importance of creating a peaceful and safe world for the next generations should be recognised by all countries.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'I firmly believe that the most

important factor is our attitude and human motivation. Genuine human love, human kindness and human affection—this is the key thing. That will help us to develop human determination also. Genuine love or compassion is not a feeling of lofty pity, sympathy tinged with contempt towards the other, a looking down on them; it is not like that. True love or compassion is actually a special sense of responsibility. A strong sense of care and concern for the happiness of the other is genuine love. Such true love automatically becomes a sense of responsibility.’

Therefore, we need to revisit our ancient wisdom of environmental consciousness based on core human values in order to maintain peaceful coexistence, brotherhood and harmony in our society, nation and world. It is crucial to constantly keep thinking about the environment surrounding us. Hence, environmental consciousness and universal responsibility must be inculcated from early childhood by parents, elders and teachers. This should be done through practical teachings instead of dry lectures.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, ‘I feel it’s very important to introduce ecology into the school curriculum, pointing out the environmental problems that the world currently faces. Even at a very early age, children should be exposed to the understanding and knowledge of the planetary environmental crisis. The various media—newspapers, television, etc—should be responsible for communicating the reality of this threatening situation.’

During the last few decades, the trend for environment protection has expanded in various areas including education. An environmentalist stated that:

- If people are aware of the need for and the ways of protecting the environment they will act to preserve it
- Schools should assume responsibility for educating about environmental protection
- Environmental education can be effective as a part of a school curriculum

Increased concern about the environment has resulted in the development of environmental education in the world. Community awareness is the key to community participation. Well-informed and well-aware people must be

more involved in promoting environment awareness, care and management. An alert community will take a more active part in any environmental project and can provide inputs in terms of local knowledge and resources. This will enhance self-reliance and confidence in them. People's participation is important for the success of any project.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'In some cases, we might be able to overcome ignorance, understand reality, and reach the situation where everyone knows what is going on. But still, we do not act to prevent disaster. Such a lack of will to act—in spite of having the knowledge and understanding—stems, I think, either from negligence—becoming totally oblivious to the crisis or from discouragement—the feeling that "I have no ability, I simply cannot do anything".'

'Each of us is an individual, naturally a part of humanity. So human effort must begin with our individual initiatives. Each of us should have a strong sense of the responsibility to create our own small part of a positive atmosphere.'

People, however, have a tendency to support or participate in any activity only when they are convinced that the programme will benefit them. It is therefore important that the public at large be informed about the relationship between ecology, economics, peaceful coexistence, brotherhood, mutual respect and sustainable development. Environmental education has been recognised as possessing the capabilities to meet the challenges by promoting awareness and knowledge on various social and environmental issues, changing the attitude of people, generating critical thinking and actions and attaining the goal of sustainable development. Each individual needs to be motivated to voluntarily participate in interreligious and environmental improvement activities. Therefore, it becomes important to first find out the awareness level of people and then formulate appropriate strategies for the implementation of an environmental awareness plan.

Identifying the type of media that gives the most effective information about environmental awareness is equally important. For young people, social media may be the best medium. For older people, newspapers or television may be better suited.

To bring about a change in the behaviour of the community, people

working in the area of environmental education, in government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and in the voluntary sector at different levels, all need to join hands to develop an appropriate communication strategy. This needs to take into account the use of interpersonal and interreligious communication and traditional media in addition to electronic and print media. The aim of this communication strategy is to awaken and sensitise people to social harmony and environmental issues.

However, it is also pertinent here to draw a distinction between environmental awareness and consciousness as people take both the terms as being the same thing. Environmental awareness can better be considered as merely the level of knowledge regarding environmental issues possessed by an individual, but one can be called environmentally conscious only if they can derive relevant inferences from the knowledge they possess and thus modify their daily life activities in view of the knowledge attained.

Just acquiring the knowledge of environmental issues will not solve the problem. We need to go beyond this. For this reason, environmental education should envisage activity-oriented concepts. This was precisely what was suggested by Yomi Noibi, an environmental educationist of African origin. He stated, 'Learning to be environmentally literate comes through doing something for the environment and not just through learning about the environment.'

The most important things like common human values, secular ethics and interdependent nature of things must be understood well.

There has been a steady development in the promulgation of national and international declarations relevant to environmental issues. The first attempt in this regard was the Stockholm Declaration that recognised the interdependence between humanity and the environment. The most important point which emerged from this declaration was the provision of a fundamental right to freedom, equality and the right to a clean environment both for present and future generations. In addition, this declaration confirmed the need for environmental education from school to adulthood.

After this first attempt, a number of similar pieces of law were passed acknowledging environmental issues on a local and global scale.

TABLE 1- CHRONOLOGY OF SOME INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Year	Location	Declaration
1972	Stockholm, Sweden	The Stockholm Declaration
1977	Tbilisi, Russia	Tbilisi Declaration
1990	Talloires, France	The Talloires Declaration
1991	Halifax, Canada	The Halifax Declaration
1992	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	UN Conference on Environment Development
1993	Kyoto, Japan	The Kyoto Declaration
1993	Swansea, Wales	Swansea Declaration
1994	Geneva, Switzerland	CRE-Copernicus Charter
1997	Thessaloniki, Greece	Declaration of Thessaloniki

The Tbilisi Declaration was one of the most important moments in the evolution of international declarations related to environmental education. The declaration constitutes the framework, principles and guidelines for environmental education at all levels—local, national, regional and international—and for all age groups both inside and outside the formal school system.

In the Talloires Declaration, the primary importance of higher education was highlighted. The declaration concluded that universities must work together towards environmental sustainability.

The Halifax Declaration's main goal was to consider the role of universities in improving the capacity of countries to address environment and development issues. The most important points of this declaration were:

- Recognising the key role of universities in a world at serious risk of irreparable environmental damage
- Reconstructing environmental policies and practices to contribute to sustainable environmental development at national and international levels.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, named Agenda 21, was related to environmental sustainability. It addresses issues related to sustainability in education.

The three main points were:

- Reorienting education towards sustainable development
- Increasing public awareness of environmental issues
- Promoting environmental training among educators

The Kyoto Declaration stressed the ethical obligation of universities to environment and sustainable development principles. A final feature of the declaration was its challenge to universities not only to promote sustainability through environmental education, but also through the physical operations of a university.

The Swansea Declaration included the need for universities to review their physical operations, the desire for environmentally literate students and faculty, and an emphasis on the ethical obligations universities have to current and future generations.

The CRE-Copernicus Charter was developed by the Conference of European Rectors (CRE). The Charter stressed the need for a new frame of mind and a new set of environmental values within the higher education community.

The Thessaloniki Declaration argued that the concept of environmental sustainability must be linked with poverty, population, human rights and health. With regard to formal education, this declaration affirmed that all subject disciplines must address issues related to environment and sustainable development and that university curricula must be reoriented towards a holistic approach to education.

The three main points that emerged from these meetings related to the environment were:

- To outline negative factors that affect the environment
- To make citizens conscious of environmental issues
- To put environmental concepts into curricula

Although environmental consciousness will best arise from learning human values and the interdependent nature of all things, formal environmental education is also an important factor needed to increase environmental consciousness.

As defined in a project report, 'Environmental education is a process that

aims to develop an environmentally literate citizenry that can compete in our global economy, has the skills, knowledge and inclinations to make well-informed choices and exercises the rights and responsibilities of members of a community.’

CONCLUSION

I conclude with this quote by Shantideva, ‘By the merits I accumulated, may all living beings abandon all forms of wrongdoing and perpetually engage in virtue. As long as space endures, as long as beings remain, may I too remain and dispel the miseries of beings.’

This conference is of special significance for humanity as we are facing increasing challenges to human society in maintaining environmental integrity—the critical balance between man and nature. As I have been asked to discuss environmental consciousness in the context of the Royal Government of Bhutan and the calls of action of my country, I am extremely happy to share the views of Bhutan on the policies, laws and initiatives pertaining to environmental consciousness that have enabled Bhutan to preserve its pristine natural environment.

Bhutan has been able to protect its natural heritage and all its purity, but this has not happened by chance. It is the result of enlightened leaders, who have formulated policies, strategies and action to be undertaken by the government and people. Therefore, I will share a brief insight into the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which has been aiding in achieving our development goals on the basis of our development values. It was here in India that the fourth King of Bhutan, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, first shared his vision of Gross National Happiness with the rest of the world. It was in 1979, a little over thirty-six years back, when an Indian journalist had asked His Majesty in Mumbai, ‘What is the Gross National Product (GNP) of Bhutan?’ To this, His Majesty had replied, ‘For

Bhutan, Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.’

The message was loud and clear, that the goal should be for higher human development than for material well-being. Therefore, today Bhutan is home to a unique civil society—one that promotes national focus to maximise GNH over GNP. To enhance GNH, Bhutan focuses on what are called the four pillars of GNH—economy, culture, environment and good governance.

Lord Buddha taught us that one cannot separate suffering from the causes of it. From this, we have drawn the wisdom that one cannot separate happiness from the cause of happiness. Happiness of the people is our development goal and therefore, it is the mandate of the government to create causes and conditions for our citizens to pursue happiness. We have thus identified four fundamental policies as GNH pillars that will translate into the development priorities of our country.

Out of the four pillars named above, I would like to refer to the one that is based upon conservation of environment. The pillar stands for the age-old Buddhist value of interdependence. While interdependence of human communities is a common factor, especially in most traditional and rural societies, with people existing in harmony with each other, the interdependence on GNH perspective includes all forms of life in such societies. We acknowledge that we must live in harmony with the natural environment, that we are more dependent on nature than nature is on us. Unlimited consumption upsets the ecological balance and results in fatal disasters, and because of this intuitive value, the Bhutanese do not consider nature as a source of resources to be exploited for material gains. We protect our fields and forests, valleys and mountains and lakes and rivers. We protect all wildlife, to the extent that the human–wildlife conflict has been the most sensitive issue in our rural areas, where all people are subsistence farmers depending largely on agricultural produce. We believe that all forms of life are sacred and must be treated with reverence.

This is why Bhutan does not allow mountaineering although we have some of the highest unconquered peaks on earth. Tourism is strongly controlled and regulated to prevent unique pressure on the environment. The constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan requests the country to maintain no less than

60 per cent of its land under forest cover at all times. Today, Bhutan takes pride in having maintained 72 per cent forest cover and more than 51 per cent of our country is protected as parks and wildlife sanctuaries. All national and socio-economic policies go through GNH policy screening, where the impact of the policy on the priorities of GNH is assessed and evaluated. The overarching objective of the seventh five-year plan, that is from 2013-18, is self-reliance and inclusive, green, socio-economic development. We are currently carbon-negative and fully committed to remaining carbon-neutral. Presently, the Royal Government is fully committed not only to preserve but to also grow our heritage. We are painfully aware that the pressure of socio-economic development has resulted in global warming, climate change and environmental degradation. Human greed has resulted in consumption of natural resources with frightening speed. Despite all our efforts, we in Bhutan too have suffered adverse effects of nature in the form of earthquakes, landslides, cloudbursts and other extreme environmental conditions.

Our world can be saved from total destruction only if we change our attitude towards the natural environment. All countries, small or big, rich or poor, should respect the environment because we are interconnected and interdependent. We are all affected by each other's actions. This is the law of mutual causality that Buddhism teaches us. The people of Bhutan are fortunate to have inherited an extraordinary legacy of an unspoiled natural environment. This places on us a responsibility to preserve our legacy for future generations. This is the coronation pledge of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk and a deep commitment upheld by the Royal Government of Bhutan at all times. Therefore, let us take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to make this world a better place to live for our future generations through environmental consciousness in our daily lives. Together we must and together we can save our Mother Nature. Let us pledge to act today, for tomorrow may be too late.

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We Mongolians have been acquainted with India as early as the teachings of Lord Buddha, prevalent throughout the steppes of Mongolia.

A thirteenth-century, famous manuscript, *The Sacred History of Mongols*, referred to India as *Hindoo* or Hindustan and the river of Indus as *Sindhi* or 'new river'. Mongolians and Indians have great similarities, with historically long and uniquely close cultural and spiritual ties. We Mongolians have a traditionally strong view that India is a peace-loving nation and Indians are peace-loving people because India is the motherland of both Lord Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi—both great souls. Both taught us to strive for peace and non-violence. During his official visit to Mongolia in June 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the banyan tree and we Mongolians also refer to the Bodhi tree particularly significant for the Buddhist community in Mongolia. This was a vivid indication of our common spiritual traditions for preserving our valuable heritage, national interests and promoting peace and stability. The truth that Siddhartha Gautama taught cannot be quickly described in brief remarks. Perhaps it requires a lifetime to comprehend it. Lord Buddha described it in the parable that man should seek the Middle Path between self-indulgence and self-mortification. He has made known to us the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of right view, right thought, right

speech, right action, right mode of living, right conduct, right mindfulness and right consciousness. These teachings of Buddha not only help form our thoughts but also turn into philosophy that has huge impact on the state policy.

Based on the unseen bonds of historical and cultural relations, our two nations have had diplomatic relations since 1955. We Mongolians respect India as the sacred land of Lord Buddha and a source of wisdom and knowledge. Travellers of ancient times knew that Mongolian monks were studying in the Nalanda University once upon a time. These spiritual ties also formed the basis of another multifaceted cooperation. I am pleased to say the Government of India has expressed its readiness to accept Mongolian students to this ancient university upon its revival.

2015 also marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first, free and fair election in Mongolia resulting in political democracy and market economy. The unique and remarkable feature of this political, economic and social transformation was the democratic revolution that took place following the great Indian tradition of ahimsa, in a peaceful and non-violent way with no broken windows and no bloodshed at all. As Narendra Modi had stated in his speech at the Mongolian parliament, more than just trade and investment, our developing partnership is a reflection of our shared ideals and vision. I am very delighted to see that our partnership is growing beyond the traditional areas of cooperation. It is now expanding effectively into fields of security, defence and promoting peace and stability regionally and globally. Despite the geographical distance between the two countries, we are democracies and remain committed to bringing our countries closer in pursuit of common good and interests, and strengthening democratic values and principles.

In addition to our shared spiritual traditions, the two nations have great respect for our mutual friendship. The friendship is very significant and unique as the future strengthens the special bonds between our peoples. Such a special bond between two nations could successfully set a good example for other countries in promoting peace and dialogue. I am very definite that this conference on Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness will result in good outcomes in finding

effective means based on philosophical and religious dialogues to avoid conflict, promote democratic values, universal responsibilities and elevate environment consciousness at individual, organisational, national and global levels respectively.

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NIRMALANANDANATHA SWAMIJI

*Hari Om tat sat. Brahmanand Amparama sukhadam, kevalamdnya namurtim,
dvandatitam gagana sadrusham, tat tvamasyadilak shyam. Ek amnityam
vimalachalam, sarvadisakshibhutam. Bhavatitam trigunarahitam,
sadgurum tam namami.*

The universe in which we have been living is approximately 13.7 billion years old. The planet on which we have been living is 4.5 billion years old. Many million years later, creation came into existence. Human beings are the latest addition to this creation. So far we have witnessed two great World Wars in the modern, civilised world, both of which have taken place because of human beings, who are rightly called the fruit of evolution.

It is quite clear that no animal, no other being and no other creation in this universe has waged war except human beings. Albert Einstein rightly said, 'Man can denature plutonium because of his innovations. Certainly it cannot change the wickedness of the human heart.' One who is not aware of the pure consciousness which is hidden inside is the one who is going to crave destruction in this universe, particularly on planet earth. In order to prevent that, we should make people understand reality. It is known that Lord Buddha had taken birth in the forest and he moved away from the palace to the forest to gain enlightenment. Being in the forest under the Bodhi tree he

attained enlightenment and again near Kushinagar, between the sal trees, he attained nirvana. We have all ultimately come from nature and we have to go back to it.

Only if we are in line with nature can we lead a happy, comfortable, peaceful and tranquil life. If we are going to harm nature, certainly after bearing a lot, nature is going to get back. Several centuries ago, a sage called Punarvasu was walking through a deep jungle along with his disciple Agnivesa. He was so glad and overwhelmed by this walk through the forest that he immediately stood still and began shedding tears. At this his *shishya* Agnivesa asked him for the cause of his tears. Maharishi Punarvasu said, 'Ahead of time I am looking at the fate and future of mankind in nature and the future of the world because of which I am crying.' His disciple said that Punarvasu had created such great solutions for all kinds of ailments in this universe and he could surely find a solution to this problem also. Maharishi Punarvasu said, 'Whatever the findings and research have been conducted by me, they are solutions to all worldly ailments. If the problem lies in human consciousness and personality, then there is no solution to it.'

'*Pradnya patra dho mulam sarva roga naa*'—'when we identify ourselves with the physical body, mind and intellect then we can find some solution.' If consciousness is affected badly, there is no solution for that. That is the reason I quoted in Sanskrit that if consciousness is going to be disturbed, it is quite hard to find a solution for it. Today, the Vivekananda International Foundation and other foundations have come together to send a message in all seriousness to the entire globe that if you do not take care of nature, ultimately we are going to be at stake.

'*Om isavasyam idam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunñjitha ma grdhah kasyasvid dhanam*'—this is a verse from *Isavasya Upanishad*. One must understand that whatever things we have been eating and rejoicing in, are not ours. They are kindly and compassionately bestowed by the Almighty. Ultimately, if you do not have gratitude, you are going to suffer a lot. That is where suffering begins.

Human beings are the so-called fruit of evolution. Do you know what we have been doing? We are the people who cut trees, make paper, on which we in turn write 'save the tree, protect the environment'. Which other being can

do this? The lion and tiger cannot do this, only human beings can. '*Manushya rupena mrugaas charanti*', only because we have human form we cannot be entitled humane. Humane is a word of which the root meaning is kindness. The one who can really understand the meaning of this word is the one who has been living accordingly and thus, can be called a human being. Mahatma Gandhi had mentioned that 'there are sufficient resources to satisfy the need of the people, not the greed of the people'. So we should understand the path we have to adopt today.

At the same time we have to be grateful to nature as human beings have taken everything for granted. We have been thinking that everything exists for our well-being, forgetting that we have to give back to society and nature. In our Hindu system, everyday in the morning before stepping on the earth we used to say, '*Samudravasane devi parvat sthanmandale, vishnupatni nama stubhyam padsparsham kshamaswa me.*' This is the verse spoken everyday in the morning before stepping on the earth, which translates as, 'O consecrated *Bhudevi*, Mother Earth, pardon me because I am going to be stepping on you throughout the day, the one whose garments are the oceans and whose chest are the mountains over which the rivers flow.' This is the gratitude which we used to have in those ancient days; we have forgotten this and become ungrateful people. We used to worship the trees—'*Moolatho brahma roopaya, madhyatho vishnu roopine, agratha shiva roopaya vruksha rajaya they nama.*' Early in the morning we used to worship trees saying, 'Brahma is the root, Shiva is the trunk and Vishnu is there at the top.'

In our tradition, even before cutting trees, if it was indeed inevitable, we used to plant a hundred plants. In the name of progress and development, we have been cutting trees which were planted decades ago. If it is inevitable for development, then certainly we have to cut trees but not at the cost of nature. So today, we are suffering. It is not because of a lack of anything; science has bestowed everything. It is at the cost of our own self that we have been suffering. We have to nurture nature, take care of Mother Earth and our rivers. The human body is made up of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. If these things are not taken care of, a human being cannot live comfortably. Buddha has taught that the human body is precious—it is an instrument, a vehicle for our enlightenment. Buddhism tells us to take

care of our physical body. ‘*Shariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam*’—this is a verse from our Hindu scriptures, which means, ‘This physical body is given to get enlightenment.’ The Buddha says the same thing and our Hindu verses say the same as well. If we have to achieve the ultimate, we have to take care of this physical body. If this physical body is to be maintained in a good condition, nature must be taken care of. There is no difference between nature and our inner nature.

Lord Krishna says, ‘I am manifested in this universe through this physical earth.’ I have mentioned the *Pancha mahabhutas*—five elements. If these *Pancha mahabhutas* are going to be disrupted, ultimately it will call destruction down on us. If you would like to see the right thing in this universe, if you would like to live comfortably in this universe, we have to take care of Mother Earth and nature. Buddha has said that the solution is not hidden elsewhere but in the hearts of the people. If everyone is going to walk the righteous path, certainly nature is going to be conserved and ultimately we can achieve salvation. As far as an action plan is concerned, what has been done? When Mother Earth has been nurturing us, why have we been torturing her? We should not do it. Let us pray to Mother Earth and nature because of whom our physical form is supported here. The disruption between individual and universal consciousness leads to disease. If there is right connectivity between individual and universal consciousness, right health would be maintained. Ultimately we are going to get universal consciousness, the point where Lord Buddha reached. If this is to happen, we have to take care of nature then nature will take care of us—‘*Vruksho rakshita tira kshitaba*’

BELLANWILA WIMALARATANA THERO

Different religions sometimes create differences between humans but today, all human beings are suffering from a common crisis. For common problems, we, as religious people, the devotees and followers of religions, should get together and raise our voice regarding these problems to bring them to the attention of important people. That is our duty as religious people, bodies and dignitaries.

We know about the *Pancha mahabhutas*, the five primary elements from which everything in the world is constituted. These five are earth—*prithvi*, water—*jala*, fire—*agni*, ether—*akash* and air—*vayu*. If the natural balance of these five is disturbed, problems rise. At least some of the major sicknesses are due to this imbalance. Indigenous medical systems of India are based upon this theory. Besides, the teachings and the practices of Buddha encouraged nurturing environment, its protection as well as its conservation.

There is an incident recorded about some monks who went into the forest and cut down trees at random in order to obtain wood to build an ashram. When the Buddha was informed about the careless manner in which the trees were being cut, he used an allegorical expression and said, ‘Cut the forest, but not the trees?’—‘*Vanam chindatha maaruk kham.*’ Buddha also spoke about destruction of the three root causes of immorality: *raga*—lust,

dosa—hatred and *moha*—delusion, and that there are hindrances that obstruct one's spiritual progress.

Speaking about protection of the environment, Buddha openly advocated the protection and preservation of environment. In the *Vanaropa Sutta* of the *Samyutta nikaya*, he cited acts of protecting environment as a means of attaining heavenly birth. Thus, according to Buddhism, protection of the environment is a meritorious deed. So planting of trees, reforestation and so on, are all meritorious deeds as these acts help to make life safe, comfortable and pleasant.

In the same spirit, Buddha strongly denounces the cutting down of trees, even the cutting of a branch of a tree if it is done without any valid reason. In one instance he stated that one who cuts a branch of a tree under the shade of which one has rested, is indeed a betrayer of friendship.

We have been discussing about the environment and the need to nurture, protect and sustain it. Even the Prime Minister of India highlighted this, encouraging all to give thought to engagement in activities that help to make life better, safer and happier. He stresses on the importance of preventing and properly managing violence, for violence is another grave problem that looms large over all of us. When environmental problems raise their ugly, monstrous head, life becomes a great misery, a nightmare. World leaders, economists and scientists are all talking about these issues. They write volumes and volumes on these issues. Everyone seems to be aware of the issues, but perhaps, no one seems to be conscious of the gravity, seriousness and imminence of the disastrous outcomes that will befall us.

The focus seems to be more on development, including material development or development at any cost. Hence, developmental projects are undertaken in a rather haphazard manner, often even disregarding the adverse consequence of such ill-planned and short-sighted development. It should be well-remembered that the concept of development should be applied as 'sustainable development'. Though this appears and sounds to be a mere phrase, it is impregnated with meaning and speaks volumes for the future sustenance and happiness of all—the present as well as the future generation not just of mankind, but also of flora and fauna, which contributes in myriad ways to make humans kind, happy, prosperous and safe.

We have been living very close to nature. From time immemorial, we have been living so close to nature, that our beliefs and traditions have intermingled with the practice of tree cults but, unlike other religious teachers, Buddha did not advocate tree-worship. What the Buddha advocated was to show respect and gratitude to trees which are helpful in numerous day-to-day activities. The Buddhist teachers also show this display of appreciation and gratitude to the Bodhi tree, which provided shade and shelter to the Buddha when striving for enlightenment. The incident of planting the *Anandabodhi* at Jathawana is further evidence of this.

Modern societies are looking at these things only from a scientific perspective. However, it is good to remember that there are certain areas in life that cannot be seen, understood or explained purely on the basis of science. We cannot cast aside everything that does not come within the logic and reasoning of science. Without trying to engage with scholars for veracity, it is definitely more practical and beneficial if certain age-old beliefs and practices, which are not harmful or obstructive, are followed. Those will certainly prove to be helpful in dispelling the feeling of insecurity and helping one to lead life without any undue apprehension of violence. Buddha denounced all kinds of violence. Though he did not go to the very extreme in the practice of non-violence or ahimsa—as some religious teachers did—yet he encouraged the practice of pervasion of the sublime ethical qualities such as *metta*—friendliness, *karuna*—compassion and *mudita*—sympathetic appreciation towards all, disregarding all barriers. Such a sublime mode of living, which he very aptly called *Brahmavihara*, will certainly enable anyone who observes these to enjoy it. Such a person or the Buddhist is considered as one who has attained the companionship of Buddha, the highest epitome of restrained, noble living that is beneficial to oneself and to all alike.

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BARBARA MAAS

The earth is our life support system. During the demands of everyday life, we can easily forget that we are part of nature, not man and nature or humanity and nature. We depend on nature for every breath we take, for the water we drink and for every bite of food we eat. That is science and it fits in very well with Buddhism and interconnectedness. Our link with plants, animals and the minerals of the world goes way beyond just our immediate need for survival. Our relationship with the environment goes much deeper. There are studies now that have shown that people who have access and live closer to natural environments are happier than people in inner cities and those who have no access to natural spaces.

The world today is no longer enough. 13 August 2015 marked the Earth Overshoot Day. Earth Overshoot Day estimates the level of resources and ecosystems that are required to support human activities today to the point where the earth and nature can regenerate and compensate for what we take out. We were bankrupt in 2015 in this regard as it took 1.6 earths to meet our demands and that does not even include what any other species needs. There are roughly another 8.7 million species who we share our world with. For example, China consumes in one year 2.7 times as much as its environment can regenerate. If we look at some other countries, we see that

the consumption ranges from 1.4 to 5.5 times the ability of the country's natural environment to sustain the demands that it makes on it. If we take all this together we see that we spend resources worth 1.6 earths, rendering us ecologically bankrupt and on a course to destruction.

Over the last forty years, Earth Overshoot Day has moved forward by about 3.5 months. So, we are getting there quicker and quicker every year. How many earths does it take to support humanity? If we carry on with business as usual, then by 2030, roughly in June, we will require two earths. That's a problem! If we reduce our carbon emissions by roughly 30 per cent we will come down towards the path of sustainability. There are suggestions that current agricultural yield is stagnant. Despite all the fertilisers we throw at it, we can no longer raise agricultural production. On top of that, what is required to produce fertiliser—fossil fuels, gas, oil, even phosphorus—although they are not about to immediately run out—are becoming harder and harder to access. That means procuring them will be more and more expensive, which means food will get more and more expensive as the population rises. You don't need to be an ecologist to see where this is going.

Currently we are at roughly 7.38 billion people. If we carry on like this and it looks as if we are, it is projected that next year 83 million people will be added to the human population. It is expected that we will reach 8-9 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion by 2050 and by 2100 we would be 11.2 billion. Bear in mind that these figures include a reduction in fertility that is factored in, because as human population grows so does disease and a drop in fertility will take place. So you can see the curve is rising more slowly but it is still rising. This is not good. As a result of this, we are faced with massive overcrowding that serves no one, not even us who are responsible for this. Although it is very unpopular to talk about overpopulation because of the implications and fears it invokes about state control and the limit of reproductive freedom, we must face the human in the room. Overpopulation is the root cause of all sustainability issues.

First of all we are sharing a finite world. We have nowhere else to go. There will be increased competition as we are destroying our own life support system. We have managed to alter our climate and the chemistry of our oceans. If this continues, we can foresee problems that lead to conflicts

between individuals, neighbours and neighbouring countries. We will see them intensifying as shortages of resources such as food, water and housing are increased. Emissions and waste will increase the toxic load on the health and welfare of people. Both psychological and physical well-being will be affected. Biodiversity and environmental health will decrease as a consequence. We will see a rise in wars and conflict.

In the past, there have been five mass extinctions caused by climate change, intense ice ages, volcanic eruptions and a meteorite hit roughly 65 million years ago that wiped out the dinosaurs. A graph that looks at the long history of life on earth shows that we are heading for a sixth mass extinction that will be caused by us, primarily as a result of what we take out of and what we put back into the environment. Current extinction levels are roughly a hundred times higher than background levels and there has been a sharp increase in the rate of these extinctions in the past few decades. Until we abandon the idea of conserving nature for the sake of mankind and adapt a unified way of tackling the environment and seeing us as part of it, we are doomed to failure. There is brand new data published a few months ago, which reveals how animal groups, mammals, other vertebrates, birds, amphibians and reptiles are affected. Once a species is gone, it is gone and they are not decorations in our environment, they are building blocks of our life support system. So we pull one out—it's like that game, Jenga—and eventually the whole thing falls down.

At the current rate of species loss, people will lose many biodiversity benefits on which we depend for our own survival, within three generations. Sustainability is driven by how much we consume, how efficiently products are made, how many of us are there and how much nature can produce and compensate. There are a couple of things that we can do on a large scale. We can reduce our consumption, we can recycle. In terms of energy, we can increase energy efficiency and we can move towards renewable energies. In terms of emissions and waste, we need to bring them down to a level that can be absorbed by nature. This is where Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and other religions come in, that care about other species rather than just mankind. The principle of harm and respect for life is integral to all of us who sit here and does not apply only to human beings. It is inspired by the

premise that all living beings have a spark of the divine spiritual energy and by hurting another, we are hurting ourselves. Any violence we perpetrate in this sense has karmic consequences.

Non-violence in Buddhism is the first of the five precepts of dharma, which says that we must abstain from the destruction of life. We are not doing well on this. This includes not just our deeds but our words and thoughts as well. It is a simple message but it has massive implications. Siddhartha Gautama said, 'All beings tremble before violence. All fear death. All love life. See yourself in others. Then whom can we hurt? What harm can we do?' There are also some people in the West who have early on recognised this and have praised religions that have originated in India as well as philosophical constructs that have an origin in India. Albert Schweitzer who received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on the reverence for life in 1952 said, 'Laying down on the commandment not to kill and not to harm is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of mankind.'

As one of the voices of Buddhism, one of my favourite quotes is by the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Han, 'I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill and not to condone any act of killing, in the world, in my thinking or in my way of life.' I would ask you and I am quoting Albert Schweitzer, 'to think occasionally of the suffering of which we spare ourselves the sight.' The great biologist, ecologist and conservationist, Jane Goodall said, 'That thousands of people in the world who say they love animals sit down once or twice a day to enjoy the flesh of creatures that have been utterly deprived of everything that could make their lives worth living. And who endured the awful suffering and terror of the abattoirs.' We are talking about not eating meat in good company—Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism already have links to vegetarian lifestyles and Albert Einstein had said, 'Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances of survival of life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.'

Currently there are 70 billion animals raised for slaughter around the world. That is ten times as many as there are humans. If we look at what they consume, what it takes to feed and water human beings, you see that human beings consume roughly 5.2 billion gallons of water a year and 21 billion pounds of food. The 1.5 billion cows around the world raised as livestock

consume almost ten times as much water—45 million gallons—and many times as much food. So you can see how this cannot carry on. Now you may say—who is this woman to say this? The United Nations in 2010—although this has received very little coverage—has stated in a report that agriculture, particularly meat and dairy products, accounts for 70 per cent of the global freshwater consumption, 38 per cent of the total land use and almost 20 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. Then the United Nations, hardly an animal rights advocacy group, said, ‘A global shift towards a vegan diet is vital to save the world from hunger, fuel poverty and the worst impacts of climate change.’ A vegetarian diet is important on compassionate, environmental and health grounds.

My calculations are that without the increase in any gas or oil or fuel consumption ever again from this day forward, we would still exceed our maximum carbon-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions—another 565 gigatonnes by the year 2030, without the electricity sector or energy sector even factoring in the equation, all simply by raising livestock. If you reduce the amount of methane emissions, the temperature of the atmosphere goes down very quickly, within decades, as opposed to carbon dioxide, in which case if you reduce the emissions to the atmosphere you won’t really see a signal for a hundred years or so. Livestock is the single largest contributor to every known environmental ill known to humankind—deforestation, land use, water scarcity, destabilisation of communities, world hunger, the list doesn’t stop. It’s an environmental disaster that’s being ignored by the very people who should be genuine. All living animals 10,000 years ago, made up 99 per cent of the biomass of the planet. Human beings made up 1 per cent of it. Today only 10,000 years later which is really just a fraction of time, we human beings and the animals we own as property make up 98 per cent of the biomass. Wild and free living animals make up only 2 per cent. We have basically completely stolen the world, the earth from free living animals, to use for ourselves and our cows and pigs and chickens and fish. The oceans have been even more devastated. Concerned researchers working on the loss of species agree that the primary cause of this loss that we’re witnessing is due to overgrazing and habitat loss from livestock production on land and by overfishing in our oceans. We’re in the middle of the largest mass extinction of species in

65 million years. Rainforests are being cut down at the rate of an acre per second. The driving force behind all of this is animal agriculture. We are cutting down the forests to graze animals and to grow soy beans which are used to feed the cows, pigs and chickens as well as factory-farmed fish. 91 per cent of the loss of the rainforests in the Amazon area thus far, to date is due to raising livestock.

We need to move from compassion and wisdom to action. This is a great opportunity to show the world that wisdom and compassion are not mere words. If we don't change, there will be chaos, famine and misery on a scale never witnessed in this world before. The World Wars we have experienced and the conflicts we are seeing as a result of terrorism are nothing compared to what is in store for us. Of course, this drives a lot of the conflicts. As a species we need a mental reboot. Evolution has programmed our brain, where our mind resides, to concentrate and see the purpose of life in eating, surviving and reproducing. To do that we need to grab and own and have, which is where greed comes from. This is an evolutionary behavioural strategy that no longer serves us today.

Your role here as spiritual leaders is crucial in the revolutionary transformation that will lift us, if we're lucky, beyond our biological programming. It is in my view the biggest challenge our species has ever faced but you can be the catalyst for change. We need to re-establish balance by involving not just spiritual leaders but also politicians, educators, consumers, business corporations and the media. Strong leadership is required and we need to walk the talk, or no one will follow us. It is not going to be easy, because it will require willpower and resilience.

If we fail and we might, there will be social unrest leading to collapse of civilisations. In several hundred years, wars over resources such as oil, water and arable land will be commonplace. Even as a mother protects her child with her life, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings, radiating kindness over the entire world. May all beings be at ease!

Public consciousness about the need for sustainable environment is the most important factor if we are to solve the problem we now face. Years ago environmental disasters were often due to the lack of knowledge of the environment. People believed that dumping raw industrial and human waste in the rivers would not seriously affect the riparian ecosystem. Later on, even after knowing the environmental effects, industrialists and others with selfish ideas ignored the common good and continued business as usual that caused the degradation of the environment. I feel great sadness at the state of the holy rivers in my home—the Bishnumati and Bagmati rivers of the Kathmandu valley—and about all the other tributaries of the Ganga in North India.

I wonder about the power of religion versus the power of human denial and greed that brought us to this state. Somehow, we must change the formula of how we live. What matters most to the future of humans is the quality of air and water. How we reshape our consciousness with regard to the environment is central. People by tradition or by choice are attached to certain religious rituals and belief systems. They follow instructions of their religious masters—even those who are educated in modern fields of study such as science. I believe that it is time to connect religious beliefs with the scientific understanding relating to the environment. It is logical and important for

religion to relate to the challenges of our world. It has to be understood that the origin of religion and its development was affected by historical context. We can see that each religion attempted to understand nature and in the same context considered the environment as divine creation. All religions have beliefs about nature. Some have deified it and some have assigned divinity to it and have developed a culture of worshipping it.

What is clear in today's world is that leaders in all religious traditions must see the urgent need to define the environmental crisis as a religious issue. Buddha, after leaving behind his home and family, chose to seek enlightenment in the forest, under the open sky, close to the great trees and flowing rivers of the Gangetic plain. The environment sustained and educated him in his quest and afterwards he wandered across townships and cities to spread his teachings. His earliest followers also depended on the forest for dwelling and as a suitable place for meditation. Buddha was very friendly towards nature throughout his life. He also frequently analysed the nature of mind and matter, the environment and the relationship between mind and matter very minutely. The connection between mind and matter was the key to realisation and enlightenment.

The formula of '*Pratyuta samruddha paada*' expresses the condition wherein twelve factors form a circle showing how untamed desire and ignorance about our existence cause humans to suffer rebirth again and again. Interpreted in another way, '*Pratyuta samruddha paada*' also demonstrates that the life of any being is conditioned by and dependent on other factors. No entity exists alone as all life forms are part of the matrix of life, in which self and the world cannot exist without interconnection or support. Since we are fond of quickly moving to other things and don't mindfully pay attention to this interconnectedness, let us together, for just one minute, do the simplest Buddhist meditation. With a straight back, let us silently breathe in the air and then let it go, with no talk and just experience. Note how we depend on this constant replenishment of oxygen and energy without which our lives would not continue for very long. In Buddha's understanding, this world is made of matter in the form of earth, fire, water, air and space. Life or living beings combine the aggregates of mind and matter. The world is a macrocosm

while our life is a microcosm and both are marvellously interwoven with the same life force. Thus the world and individual life are not dual.

Non-duality is the ultimate truth of the world and life. This is Buddhism's contribution to addressing the environmental crisis with its own understanding of human consciousness. Its non-duality theory reveals the inseparable connection between human life and environment. Having examined mind and matter very closely and extensively, the Buddha is said to have spoken a *gaatha* comprising of a special set of words that reveal the interrelationship between all entities—‘*Anyony anugata sarvo dharma, paraspar anugata sarvo dharma, atyant anugata sarvo dharma*’, which translates as, ‘All entities whether living beings or not, whether mobile or immobile are interrelated, interconnected and interdependent.’ The *gaatha* states that the relation and the connection of all the entities are inseparable, indivisible and it follows that all entities are equally essential, noteworthy, vital, etc. All entities are respectable, admirable and praiseworthy. The change in one's entity not only affects that entity but has a chain effect on all entities.

While chanting this *gaatha*, a Buddhist master in my tradition also displays hand gestures or mudras—first they put the hand together and they chant the *gaatha*, ‘*Anyony anugata sarvo dharma, paraspar anugata sarvo dharma*’, then ‘*Atyant anugata sarvo dharma*’. Together, these gestures demonstrate the diversity, relation, connection and networking of the five fingers of a hand. Apparently, the five fingers differ from each other—they are separate from each other and all are of different sizes and shapes. Each finger has its own separate name as well as purpose and characteristics. However, if one finger is absent or ignored the whole hand would be incomplete. There would be difficulties and loss of strength. It is therefore seen that all fingers have equal existence, identity, purpose and value in constituting the hand. A wise human being who understands and realises this truth will understand that the five fingers are not really separate. We respect all the fingers equally and discount none. Similarly, the wise will realise and cherish the inner connection between oneself and another person, one society and another society, one country and another, and one religion and another. The Buddhist consciousness of reality will realise the inner connection between oneself and the surrounding environment.

This inseparability is the ultimate reality. Understanding this interconnection is a must to create the consciousness of humanity's universal coexistence and then explain the logical necessity of universal love and compassion expressed in environmental activism. Leaders must be asked in the name of religion to govern for the greatest common good without sacrificing the environment and the people who depend on it. Buddhism can create the consciousness of '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' or universal family and motivate expressions of '*Sarva prakaram jagatu hitaya*' or working for the welfare of all entities by every means. Every religion needs to contribute immediately to address the global environmental crisis. Buddhist thought and moral teachings have much to offer in facing these challenges—'*Stesarva sattva sukino bhavantu*'

I have a special connection with Buddhism because my brother is married to a Buddhist from Japan. So we do discuss a lot about Buddhism and Hinduism at home, which has made this kind of a topic very dear to my heart.

I want to share a small sloka, which says what God wants in life, the kind of flowers he wants in life, which may not be jasmine, rose, etc. but '*Ahimsa prathamam pushpam, pushpam indriya nigrham, sarva bhutadaya pushpam, kshama pushpam visheshtaha*', as described in the *Padma Purana*. It goes on to describe what the eight *pushpas* or the eight flowers, which we require are. You don't have to go to the garden and pluck them; if you own the qualities mentioned in the sloka, it is as good as offering flowers to God. That is how our ancestors told us that your good qualities are your flowers and you don't pluck them without a reason. The very first time I had learnt about caring for plants was through this sloka.

Then again in any Hindu marriage, we also need a *saakshi* or the witness in a marriage. No important person is required to be the witness for this, but in fact the river is the witness because it is not just a river, but a source of energy. The concerned sloka says, '*Ganga Sindhu Saraswati cha Yamuna Godavari Narmada, Krishna Bheemarathi cha Phalgusarayu Sri Ghandaki*

Gomathi, Kaveri Kapila prayaga vinatha nethravathi dhyadayo', which means the rivers of India witness this marriage. That means in our scriptures, Vedas and Upanishads, it has been told that it is nature which is more important in life than rituals. We have forgotten this and do it the other way. The scriptures say that you have five mothers in life. We have always known of only one mother, the mother who has given birth to us. The first mother is of course, your mother, '*matru devo bhava*', or the biological mother, who gave birth to you. The second mother is the *vruksha* or the forest or *taru*, which according to the scriptures is the most important mother. Then Mother Earth is your third mother. The fourth mother is the language you speak and the fifth may not be a mother as such but the most important one—*vayu*, water, etc. which become the most essential things in life.

I can continue giving you many examples where our ancestors have taught the importance of nature in our life and the fact that they were aware of this then. When you read Chanakya's *Arthashastra*, which is one of the greatest treatises of India, he talks about the protection and killing of animals. How and how much you should do and what you should not have been defined by him explaining what kind of animals we can kill. He said you should not pollute water, and some of the stanzas concerned are very beautiful. If you want to take a bath in the river, you should have a bath first and then you can take a dip in the river because you should not pollute water. There is a famous Ashoka pillar in Delhi and if you go and see the inscription on that, the fifth inscription on the Ashoka edict says that looking after nature or animals is essential and that Ashoka allowed only rationed killing of animals in his own kingdom.

I want to narrate a small story, which is a true story. In 1995, UNESCO declared Easter Island as a UNESCO heritage site. If anyone of you has seen Easter Island, off the coast of Chile, it is barren, but has huge statues, almost 20-25 feet tall. There are very few humans on that island, yet these huge statues stand. Following many years of research there has emerged an interesting hypothesis as to why these were built and why the island is barren. Thousands of years ago, it was a very fertile island where people lived. A specific kind of tree grew there, which they used to cut whenever it was required to make boats for fishing. Over a period of time, the island became very prosperous

and the chief of the island decided that they should have beautiful statues in his honour. Considering it was an island at one end of which was a quarry from where they could get huge stones, they had to figure out a way to bring these stones over to the capital. The chief ordered the cutting of all trees for building a road and to build carts to load the stones and bring them to the capital, where the sculptors would sculpt statues from them. In the process, they cut down all the trees, made huge statues and at the end of it realised that there were no trees left.

Now what would they do for fishing? There would be no new boats. They survived on their store of fish for a couple of years. However, hunger led the tribe into conflict with one another and even cannibalism, which meant that over a period of time they perished. This is the best example to show that owing to ego and a lack of foresight, humanity can be wiped off the island.

The Vedas say that one must earn money for *artha*. It is very important in life. However, one must only spend on what one requires. There is no end to greed—if I have a crore of rupees, I would like to have 5 crores. If I have a hundred saris, I would like to buy another thousand. If I have ten pairs of earrings, I would like another hundred. If I have a hundred gold bangles, I would like a thousand more. If I have a standard car then I would like to have a Mercedes Benz, if I have the Mercedes I would like something better than that. There is no end to desire. Therefore our Vedas say that money must be spent on what is essential and not for one's ego. *Artha* left over after satisfying necessities must be used for *daana*, out of compassion. You should give it to those that are below the poverty line. You should love everyone—humans, animals, birds, trees and everything.

There is a sloka in the Mahabharata where God comes to Raja Ranti Deva in the form of a dog, a bird and many other forms to test him. Each time, Raja Ranti Deva gives away what he has. Then Lord Shiva comes and says, 'O Ranti Deva, you are a very kind-hearted and compassionate person. I would like to ask you to ask of me whatever you want in life.' Raja Ranti Deva says in a very beautiful verse, which is very famous, '*Na tvaham kamaye rajyam, na swargam na punarbhavam, kaamaye dukha taptanam, praninamarti nashanam*', which means, 'Don't give me another life, don't give me another kingdom,

don't make me an emperor; I do not want to attain to heaven, I desire nothing, if you desire to give me something, give me strong hands and a soft heart that I may wipe the tears of every living being in this world.' That was our dharma. Dharma is not ritual; dharma is to uplift the *patita*—the fallen—enlighten him and set him on the right path. This is what Buddha did and our ancestors did, which was taught to us by our great grandparents who never even went to school but who knew what dharma was.

Dharma is '*daanam priya vak sahitam*'—whenever you want to give, give with a kind word—and '*shraddhaya deyam*'—believe in that which you give—I scratch your back, you scratch mine is not *daana*. '*Ashraddhaya adeyam*' means that if you don't have belief, don't do *daana*. Help someone who is *patita*, someone who really needs it. This doesn't require a lot of money; a kind word or a compassionate gesture is enough. If you are compassionate to people, either money or word or deed that is appropriate is equivalent to *daana*—'*daanam priya vak sahitam*'. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* there are thirty-three stanzas on how you should live and we don't even look at them; whereas we see thirty-three other things in Western civilisation which are great but self-centred and not adaptable to our country.

When you have resources and you don't do *daana*, then what happens? Nachiketa asks Lord Yama, 'Tell me that if everybody fights for money, everybody wants it and even lies at times to get it, is it that important in life?' Yes, *artha* is important but it is not an end in itself. It is only a necessary condition in life. When you amass wealth more than what you require because you have money and greed, you can amass as much as possible, but what happens as a result? You are never satisfied in life. While eating salt, you require more water. If you don't do *daana* then the wealth you have amassed will be destroyed before your eyes by your children. Please remember that money or any material more than what you need is always dangerous. That is the reason our ancestors have said that you should care for others and give away what you don't need. Do only that which is essential. You should be compassionate to everyone. This is not taught in universities.

Taking care of all these things at Infosys Foundation, where I am the chairperson, we decided we should also take care of the environment. We did whatever little bit we could do for our own company. Instead of talking, we

needed to do first. In Kannada we say, '*Ada dema duna rudioda gothamanu*', that means you have to display what you do, you should not go on talking. Talking is easy anyway. We decided that we will use everything which is discarded in our company. For example, all the toilet water is processed and used in the gardens. Material waste is converted in a machine to gobar gas, which is then used for cooking. We also make a kind of charcoal which we use in the soil as it can absorb moisture in the rainy season so that we can use less water for plants during winter and summer. Whatever little we can do, we have done. We wanted to try everything in our company, to ensure that nothing was wasted. Every leaf and every drop of water is used. God has given us too much on our plate; whatever little we can do for nature we have tried to do.

Somebody once asked me, 'Tell me about this middle path of having everything and still living like a sanyasi; who taught you this?' I said, 'There was a great saint who guided me in my most difficult period of life and I have his statue in my office. The man was born as a prince, a rich prince who never saw any difficulties. He was so socially sensitive, when he saw a dead body and a diseased person, he became a monk. In those days of princehood he was called Siddhartha, today we call him Buddha.'

Not for Sale

TENZIN PALMO

Our planet is called Mother Earth. She is our mother. Even in the West she is Gaia and we usually think of our planet as a female giving birth to nature. It has been said over and over again that our planet needs our compassion, our empathy, loving-kindness and nurturing. All of these qualities are embodied in the feminine. Women are naturally—emotionally as well as physically—intended for the role of motherhood. A mother naturally demonstrates sympathy, care and nurturing. The Buddha himself said, ‘Just as a mother loves her child, her only child, so we must extend this feeling to all beings’ and to the whole cosmos which we inhabit.

Women inherently have these nurturing qualities and we are not so afraid of our emotions. To be loving, caring and devotional is natural for us. Traditionally women are in charge of the rearing of their young so they don’t go to war. They nurture their family and society and that is one of their roles. Since the beginning the male task has been to protect the tribe, to go out and fight and extend territory. We see it in little boys. They usually love guns and loud noises. Even during celebrations, the boys will mostly light the noisy fireworks. The girls usually prefer the pretty ones making coloured patterns in the sky and they play with their dolls and teddy bears. This is because nature has designed females on the whole to be nurturing and to take care of

the young ones, not just in humans, but also amongst animal species such as tigers, elephants, birds and so on.

Since the male role is more aggressive in order to protect his family from harm, men have to learn to be more compassionate—often they really have to work at cultivating the heart with *maitri* or loving-kindness. For women it just comes more naturally.

So the question I am asking is: Why are so many of the environmental and religious organisations and foundations, not just in India but throughout the world, being run by men? Why is there not a greater female representation in these organisations? Look here at this conference. By far the majority of the speakers have been male. Where are the females? We have heard a few very strong female speakers but in general, it is heavily weighted on the side of testosterone. At an interfaith conference I attended in Asia, out of the 200 delegates, I was the only woman speaker and the rest were all male.

Forgive me but at the inaugural meeting of the International Buddhist Congress (IBC), which is nicknamed The International Boys' Club, sixty personages chosen to represent global Buddhism were all Asian males. Is that global Buddhism? So for the future, please remember there are many wonderful women out there who also have a voice and need to be heard. They also have an important message. One of the main problems of being a female is that nobody listens to us, which makes us want to shout loud. We have to shout because otherwise nobody hears us. But that is not in our nature.

So I hope that in the future at an important conference like this where many good things have been said, there will be better balance on the basis of gender and more women will be allowed to finally make their valuable contributions.

This *samvad* is a very welcome initiative focused upon conflict avoidance and environment consciousness. The irony is that both these issues of conflict and environment are mostly a human contribution. For these human creations, we are neither proud, nor willing to take credit, but in due humility, we cannot shirk our responsibility.

Simultaneously, we humans have been aware of the consequences of the conflict situations and environmental disasters. In all earnestness, we have also been making efforts to address the situation, for which, various resources and processes are available to us ranging from scientific, technical, political, economic, etc. They were and still are being tried to restore peace and ecology but not to much success. *Dard badhata gaya, jyon jyon dava ki...* We need to reflect, what is lacking in our approach and efforts. The twentieth century saw human affairs, including political and economic ones, being governed by material sciences and technology. This was revolutionary, but could not bring about the desired results for a simple fact was overlooked.

The human reality, including its body, is not just a bundle of physical elements mechanically functioning by themselves. It needs no intricate metaphysical or ontological exercise to comprehend that our material body comes to life when joined by a spirit and it stops living as soon as it gets

disconnected from this spirit. A living human being is a bundle of body and soul, *sharir* and *atma*. Therefore, the methods of the so-called civil society need to be strengthened by spiritual sciences. Least do we realise that culture, including religion, arts and literature, is the most potent means of human experience and expression. When the reality of human beings is a composite whole, then material sciences and processes, un-synched with spiritual wisdom, will not deliver much. There needs to be a dialogue between the two: '*Jnaanam paramagubhyam me yadvijnaana samanvitham*'. (*Bhagavata Purana*, 2.9.30)

The problem does not stop there. In this multicultural milieu, with whom shall civil society talk? Due to different cultural and other kinds of backgrounds, religions seem to speak differently. For enabling such a discourse to be fruitful, we have consensus about the importance and urgency of dialogue between religions. Not only in the Indian context, but globally it is significant that the first cousins—Hindus and Buddhists—should talk to each other.

Today, as part of the emerging discourse rightly emphasised by Mr Gurusurthy in his speech, I speak to you from a Hindu perspective, which is inspired by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533), a Vaisnava Hindu leader, believed to be an incarnation of Krishna and his shakti Radha. I introduce Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also as a *prachanna buddha* because in his whole philosophical discourse, he prefers the spiritual concept of *Advaya* of Nagarjuna while rejecting the metaphysical *Advaita* of Shankara. This was quite a path-breaking event in the whole domain of Vedantic tradition. His main religious practice, *sankirtana*, would not be there if the Buddhist chants were not there or if the *doha kosha* of Sarahapad was not there. The *padabali kirtan*, which is an epic contribution of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, would not have emerged. If the *kaalchakra* was not there, then all the *saanjihi* rituals of the Chaitanyaite temples would be colourless and ritualless. Among his various important deeds, one was the rediscovery of Vraja Vrindavan, the holy playgrounds of Sri Krishna, in ca 1515. I share with you a story of Vrindavan:

What is Vraja Vrindavan? In the Vedic sources, Vraja is identified as 'a rich pastor land populated by cows with long horns.' (Rig Veda) *Bhagavata Purana* (10.11.28) says: 'Vrindavan is an enchanting forest, rich in flora and fauna. There is a holy mountain along the green pastures. It is a place where cowherds, their women and cows can dwell with comfort.' Moreover, the great

poet Kalidas was also enamoured by its beauty. He reports that: ‘Vrindavan in its beauty belittles the Chaitraratha, garden of Kubera. Here the grounds are covered by tender grass covered with flower petals....’ (*Raghuvamsa* 6.50) On all counts, Vraja Vrindavan had an enchanting environment. It could lure even Krishna, the supreme Godhead for an enjoyable visit.

It is documented that some 5,000 years back when Sri Krishna incarnated in the Vraja Mandala, he was shocked to find that nothing in its environment matched the glorious descriptions. God resolved never again to trust the promotional literature. In Vrindavan, nature was polluted, the earth defiled, water poisonous, tornadoes abounded and forests were on fire. The social environment was even worse. Uncle Kansa was eager to kill him at his birth itself. The nurses were feeding poison to infants. Economy and politics and even religion were controlled by exploitative powers. If we were in that situation, would we even spend a minute in that terrible mess?

But Krishna is Krishna. He said that it was his decision to come to Vraja Vrindavan and he did not get what he wanted. He resolved to get what he did not find. Krishna soon realised that nature or prakriti, needs to be cared for and served, not exploited. He started with purifying the polluted earth, with his ingenious technique of tasting the mud, *Mrida Bhakshan Lila*. The parents soon realised that if they could not stop their kids from tasting the dirty grounds, it was better to clean it. The tornadoes were strangled to death by heavy plantations. *Trinavarta Vadha Lila* leads to restoration of pure air. He could not wait and unlike us, he did not have the luxury of dialling the emergency number to call fire services. Repeatedly, he drank the fires—*Davanala Pana Lila*. It is stated that the water of river Yamuna was so polluted that any bird overflying the river would instantly drop dead. Krishna jumped in the waters. His vigorous dance segregated the poisonous effluents, which he put in containers and dispatched to the deep oceans—*Kaliya Daman Lila*. Krishna is a ruthless destroyer of evil, whatever form it takes—human, bird or animal. Here, he merely ‘contains’ the pollutant serpent Kaliya. Krishna’s message is loud and clear: do not pollute as pollution cannot be killed even by God himself. Last but not the least is the menace of sound polluting the space, *akasha*. As a flute player, he filled the space, *akasha*, with melodies of love and joy and nature danced happily to Krishna’s flute.

But soon, he realised that the natural ecology cannot be sustained if the economic ecology is not healthy. The urban market economy of the tyrant ruler Kansa was thriving at the cost of the producers—especially the farmers. Krishna enforced a Gandhian principal, wherein a producer should have the first right to use or consume the products. Only the surplus would go to the markets. This ban encouraged smuggled goods to the luring markets. Krishna enforced a hefty duty on all exports rigorously and made them unviable. The illegal consignments were confiscated or destroyed—*Mataki* and *Dana Lila*. Now, it was the farmer or producer who controlled the market. With that economic strength, Krishna took the political power head on, replacing a tyrant Kansa with a popular and pious ruler Ugrasen.

How did he do all this? Krishna believed that in any ecological concern, the crucial thing is a relationship with the environment, whether it is nature or society. That relation can be sustained only through service (*bhakti*), which will not bear fruit if it is done under compulsion or for mere show-off. Service has to be with love and care, *prema bhakti*. If we relate out of love, then the interest and well-being of the loved one is our priority. Else, the relationship is reduced to exploitation, which is the root cause of any kind of ecological disturbance.

That exploitation has many forms and its worst manifestation is in the name of religion and spirituality. The revolutionary environmentalist Krishna is at his best when on the issue of getting water, he replaces Indra, the intangible high god of Vedic ritualism, with the worship of Mount Govardhana, the tangible 'green' god. It was a unique installation of a devotee as the highest object of worship. *Bhagavata Purana* (10.21.18) calls Govardhana Hill as a *Haridas varya*—the supreme devotee of Krishna. Intriguingly, Krishna installs Vrinda (tulsi or basil), a small plant, to be the presiding deity of Vrindavan, hence Vrindadevi. In the realm of love, the most weak and vulnerable is the most powerful. Yamuna, the river, is Krishna's choicest consort throughout his life, in Vraja, Mathura and Dvaraka. All these acts of Krishna are amazing. Why did he do so?

First of all, it was a conscious decision on Krishna's part to not flee the chaotic polluted environment. He had an inkling of the bad situation. While contemplating descent on earth, the Parama Purusha Krishna resolved to

please his darling or *priya*, the prakriti. ‘*Vasudeva grihe sakshad bhagavan purushah parah, janishyate tat priya artham...*’ (*Bhagavata Purana*, 10.1.23) The *priya* or his beloved prakriti is twofold—nature and woman.

Generally, womanhood is acknowledged only to the degree it is beneficial to society. The relationship between man and woman is based on vested social interests, as a help, a daughter, a mother, a sister, a wife. Krishna moved further by celebrating woman only as a woman in her own right, beyond any kind of social give and take. His relationship with Radha is beyond (*parakiya*) any social give and take.

His respect for the dignity of womanhood is fully manifest when he frees thousands of women from captivity by slaying their captor and violator Bhaumasura. In their moment of freedom, women realise that they will not be welcomed back by their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. Losing their social dignity and modesty reduces them to social waste. Krishna did not agree. When his crown is a recycled wasted peacock feather, how can Krishna imagine a woman violated against her wish to be a social waste. He accords all these ladies the highest honour and stature of the land by duly marrying them all as queens of Dvaraka, which was an unparalleled feminist celebration in human history.

Returning to Vraja Vrindavan, soon after Krishna’s return to heaven, this area was environmentally devastated. Krishna’s great-grandson Vajranabha restored the ecology and Vraja was again flourishing amidst its former glory (reference *Bhagavata Mahatmya* chapter one, from *Skanda Purana*, *Vaisnava Khanda*). However, nearly two-and-a-half millennia later, when Gautama Buddha visited Vraja and its centre Mathura, he was not very happy with the place or its people. He found several defects: ‘The roads are uneven, filled with stones and pebbles; the landscape is too dusty, full of thorny bushes; the dogs are ferocious; the *Yakshas* are ignorant and indomitable; people are obsessed with caste distinctions; they eat late at night hence alms are difficult for bhikshus to get, the area is infested by mother goddesses.’

If we accept this account of the *Anguttara Nikaya* (*Akkosakavagga*, *Mathura Sutta* 5.22.10, 1960, pp 494-95) and *Gilgit Manuscript* (Vol III, Part I, pp 14-15) then Vraja or Mathura Mandala desired much intervention on the natural and socioecological front. Hindu tradition believes that Krishna

himself reincarnated as Buddha, whereby he restored the natural, social, religious ecology by protecting humans from hypocrisy and callousness—‘*Buddha stupa khanda ganat pramadat*’. (*Bhagavata Purana* 6.8.19) Buddha did not tolerate violence in any form or guise, even if it was justified in the name of religion. ‘*Ninda siyajna vidherahaha sruti jatam, sadaya hrdaya darsita pasugbatam kesava dhrtta buddha sarira...*’ (*Gita Govinda, Sarga 1*) Owing to Buddha’s repeated visits and the continued efforts of the sangha, the Vraja environment was again happy, but not for long.

Five hundred years back, in 1515, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had travelled to Vraja, to enjoy the sacred geography of *Krishna Lilas*. To his shock, he found that many holy sites were missing from the geographical memory, although they were alive in the Puranas, legends and literary sources. Historical records tell us that even Vrindavan was bereft of any groves and *kunjias*, gardens and ponds. The area was populated by wild boars, hunted by passing armies and there were no Rasa Mandalas. Like Krishna, Chaitanya also did not give up. He stayed in the area for many months and reclaimed many sites from encroachments. For resurrection and recreation of Vrindavan and its environs, Chaitanya had a big plan.

He understood that the ‘other power’ had come to stay and rule in India. Instead of engaging diabolically with the other, Chaitanya preferred dialogue. This dialogue was multidimensional: between Hinduism and Islam, between religious and political leadership, economy and spirituality. An able team of Chaitanya’s followers, called the Gosvamis, the Rajput rulers and the imperial court of Akbar, were the three main players in this dialogue *lila*.

This dialogical process brought peace and prosperity, unprecedented for those times, to Vraja and India at large. There was an explosion of creativity all round—art and architecture, philosophy and literature, music and cuisine, pilgrimage and trade. Akbar not only granted freedom to the Gosvamis and their people for openly practising one’s own faith and constructing their grand temples, but in 1598, through a royal decree, he also created Vrindavan as an independent revenue entity and gifted it to the Gosvamis, tax-free. Chaitanya not only avoided conflict, he transformed that into an occasion and process for peace and harmony.

Today, Vraja Mandala, with Vrindavan at its heart, is one of the most popular centres of Hindu pilgrimage.

Summing up, we need to reflect upon the fact that the environment is not just the natural physical world. *Paryavarana* or environment is our all round protective cover. Natural, physical, political, economic and cultural environment, they are all linked to each other. Environment in itself bears no meaning unless it is related to living beings—especially human beings to begin with. That holistic ecological consciousness is what is available to us from Sri Krishna to Bhagavan Buddha, from Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Mahatma Gandhi. Chaitanya's way summarises that consciousness, which takes us first into a relationship of joy and celebration—not exploitation of the environment—and then protection of that relationship with the loving service, *prema bhakti*. He declares that 'without service our world will not exist.' *Bhakti bina jaga tera nahi avasthana (Caitanya Caritamrta, Antya Lila)*.

To translate this environment consciousness into action we require a system of logic. Like biodiversity and theodiversity, what we require today most is logic diversity. We have to graduate from 'the either-or logic of binary opposites', which is the mother of all conflicts and environmental disasters. We need a paradigm shift in the way we think.

Chaitanya says that we cannot and should not negate the other, rather we should engage with it dialogically into a dalliance, which transcends the duality without negating it. In the dance of love, the seemingly different entities like man and woman, humanity and nature, economy and ecology make one whole. I agree that history alone is not enough to strengthen our desired discourse. However, this story of Vrindavan, hopefully is helpful in our discourse and the wisdom drawn from it will help us to act. As we say, resolve, talk and then act.

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Namo Buddhaya, namo Dharmaya, namo Sanghaya

There was a climate summit in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio 2012 where United Nations (UN) delegates from more than eighty countries and seventy international organisations attended, was a pertinent step towards sustainable development. For five to nine days annually, there is participation in various forms with different responses to mobilise the ways of the planet we live on. We know that environment pollution is a consequence of the lack of responsibility towards the environment and will lead to destruction of human life in the near future. Humans are now faced with a new environmental crisis which may bring mankind to extinction even faster than the scourge of war.

Japan, in the recent past, faced problems like an earthquake and a tsunami. The largest earthquake in Japan's history—8.9 magnitude on the Richter—caused a 10-metre high tsunami, which swept away many houses, severely damaged infrastructure in northeastern Japan and left thousands dead. A consequence of this event was the destruction of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant which was a colossal disaster. The Japanese government declared a 'state of nuclear emergency' in order to evacuate thousands of people living

near the Fukushima plant. Until early in 2016, the nuclear emergency in the Fukushima Daiichi plant was level seven—the highest on the scale of international nuclear incidents. As conservationists and biologists say, in fifty years, wars that will occur will be to protect the environment of this earth. The countdown for humanity has to be destroyed. The inhabitants of this planet will be destroyed.

What can we save? Besides the agreement of the UN and some of the international organisations concerned, to protect the environment, we must overcome the worst effects caused by the environmental crisis because this is essential for the security of the human community. The origin of the second Buddhist concept of protecting the environment depends on the fundamental theory to explain existence and the causal relationship of all phenomena in the world. This theory makes sense for the protection of the ecological environment. Based on the Dependent Origination stance, the world is a unified body. There is no limit on earning wealth and wealth is the cause of relationships between people and the ecological environment which shows the underlying interdependence.

In modern times, the speed and extent of globalisation is rather strong. Information science, biotechnology, material science, science and technology in energy, transportation, aerospace and the weapons of war and nuclear weapons, which have been widely used by humans for their own benefit, have a profound impact on the environment. As a result of the use of new technologies and the exploitation of natural resources in a smarter way, human life has improved. Development of human society is important but on the other hand, the ecological environment must bear the pressure of this and is harmed by the use of technology. The issue is that people have to have a respectful attitude towards nature and live in harmony to protect the environment. The Buddhist perspective on environmental destruction is that pollution is the result of selfish thought and enjoyment of human pleasures, irrespective and regardless of their holistic impact on the ecology. The main causes of the great crisis of ecology are thus as simple and basic as ignorance and craving.

If the natural environment is polluted, the physicality of human life is destroyed. When people understand this critical sutra of dependence, all nations will protect the environment from pollution. It is also a means to protect the

source of life and human happiness. The practice of the *Brahmavihara* for the sake of environmental protection follows four immeasurable principles—loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. Metta is an effective remedy for aversion, anger and hatred which arise within us. We know that negative spirit can produce toxins that destroy the body's health and spirit. Among these various toxins, hatred stands at the centre of the circle and creates chaos of psychology which is the reason for neurological disorders as well as depression. Also, interested compassion helps us to not only respect humans but also other animals and species within nature.

Buddha advised his disciples not to pour dirt on the grass, not to trample vegetation, not to defoliate or break tree branches. Especially after enlightenment, the Buddha was looking at the Bodhi trees and during meditation, he took the protection of the trees under which he found enlightenment. The Vietnamese have a tradition of environmental consciousness, according to Buddha's teachings. This includes love and peace, preventing conflicts, avoidance of killing, spreading kindness to all beings, loving nature and wisdom and practising the Eightfold Path with '*silasamadhi-panna*'. The Buddha's Middle Path taught that those who follow his path, should practise loving-kindness. His soul was in the universe as also in nature and that the lives of humans and animals were mutually developing.

Currently, Vietnamese Buddhism is put in a new gaze, which is the direction to young people. It is to provide direction to them on how to accept life's many riches with basic means, to ensure environment protection and to instill sensitivity among them to better appreciate the physical needs of other people. However, Vietnamese Buddhist youth increasingly desire families with no moralities, with no heed to *santusthi*, basic ignorance to the need of the day to protect the environment and reduce open exploitation of nature. The Vietnam Buddhist Association has promised to continue developing positive characteristics in the masses to reduce the destructive power of conflict. The removal of prejudiced ideologies, striving to protect the environment and helping to reduce the effect of climate change are relentless.

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I would like to highlight environmental consciousness through my observations and my interventions on the current activities of the Royal Government of Cambodia which promulgates laws and regulations for environment protection.

For centuries, the Khmers, since the beginning of early Common Era (CE), have established cities with the construction of what we call *barai* or water reservoir and planted trees along the embankment of such water reservoirs. This spirit has been continued till recent days.

During the ninth century, the kings and their subjects built a huge water reservoir that is now named as the 'Western *barai*'. It is in the Symbia province and the complex has been declared a world heritage site. Measuring 3.7 kilometres in length and a kilometre in width, along this embankment the king ordered his people to plant trees that not only adorn environmental scenery but also provide harmonisation of the environment for people living nearby. At the beginning of the ninth century, a king named Yashovarman I, ordered the building of three ashrams for the benefit of Buddhists, Vaishnavites and Shaivites. His subjects increased their livelihoods by growing rice, tree plantations and through biosphere protection.

Nowadays, in the environment of people living near the complex of Angkor, they created a policy of building a green bank for supporting the

people living in the *Siem Reap* complex of Angkor. The goal was the transfer of the natural environmental aspect into love for nature and its protection. King Yashovarman VII, the great Buddhist king, adhered totally with the Buddhist teachings of compassion at the end of the twelfth century. They have an inscription, which says, the king suffered more from the disease of his subjects than his own. Therefore, he built a hospital and a dharmasala for sheltering travellers along the roads of his empire, in order to serve his people. Mental healing is important for conflict avoidance as well as the care and preservation of nature.

During King Sieno's time, regulations and laws have been promulgated for environmental protection. For example, recently the Royal Government of Cambodia encouraged its people to protect the biosphere. Now, on the great lake Tonle Sap, there are a lot of biospheres, which are protected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This is a condition sine qua non, that is, with no environment there is no development of the people. Now, the government integrates Buddhist ethics and Khmer ideals. In Phnom Penh nowadays there are pagodas where one has his own right for diffusion of his morality to the people, not only morality, but ways of protecting the environment and consciousness because of this very important forum for them. You know Cambodia has the Great Lake and the Mekong River that are full of fish and food for the Khmer people and also for exportation.

The creation of mystery of the environment is very important too, because people are unaware about how to protect forests. They cut down trees for their own benefit. The Ministry of Environment has been involved in very systematic protection of the forests, emanating from the first creation of systematic governance of the people at the beginning of the ninth century. There was also the building of lots of Shiva lingas and sculptures of Vishnu reclining as well as the Devi. The main role of the king is to create environmental people that live nearby and also for the Mahendraparvata, which is known as the cradle of the Khmer civilisation from the ninth century till now. This mystery that engages is to ensure land concession for the benefit of people. People must engage in this programme of replanting forests that have been cut down in order to recover barren lands.

The issues of conflict and environmental crisis are universal in nature as they affect everyone on the planet. These are global problems and we must have participation of the global human community to find a sustainable solution. When there is a conflict, it affects everyone in the conflict zone and when it takes the form of a war, catastrophic destruction is inevitable. Environmental issues such as climate change, global warming, acid rain, etc. pose existential threats to all living beings on earth. It is a universal problem and not a problem of a particular religion, region or nation.

The Buddha taught us dhamma—the eternal universal law, to eradicate causes of *dukkha*—suffering and problems—and overcome them completely. The *dukkha* is not only for the Buddhists or Hindus; it is a universal phenomenon—every living being has to pass through *dukkha* of different magnitude.

The present *dukkha* or problems of internecine conflicts and environmental crisis are not for a particular religious group or community; it is a global crisis or global problem, so our approach to find a solution has to be universal in nature. Not just global Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or Christian communities but the global human community has to pledge before it is too late, to adopt a non-sectarian universal approach with universal identity and for the

universal common interest of the global human community in order to avoid internecine conflicts and to sustain environmental health.

When there is suffering or *dukkha* created as a result of conflicts, environmental crisis, man-made disasters or natural calamities, the suffering is experienced by all and that suffering cannot be labelled as Buddhist *dukkha*, Hindu *dukkha*, Muslim *dukkha* or Christian *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is *dukkha*, it has universal characteristics, it is human *dukkha*, and there is no partiality on any grounds. That is the truth of the universal identity and universal dhamma.

When there is a pandemic disease, it affects all human beings whosoever is weak and exposed to it. There is no special natural law created by the creator of a particular faith to prevent a particular group or community for their religious or national identity, or in that matter for any other reason. The deadly disease or virus will attack us as human beings and not as Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims or Americans, Africans, Europeans and Asians.

This is the dhamma—the universal truth that we all need to realise and identify ourselves with—a universal identity to live a life in harmony with the universal truth, the universal law—dhamma and not with any sectarian belief system.

If there is any medicine or cure produced or developed by anybody, it will cure the sick person if it is effective—not because he or she is a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Christian or a Muslim but because he is a human being having the same human characteristics. The name or label of the medicine is not important, but effectiveness of the medicine is. We share common biological as well as psychological characteristics, therefore we have a common problem and a universal interest.

Human beings have forgotten our common root and common universal identity. Being human is our common root and humanity is our universal identity, which are common to each and every individual known as human being. Apparently, we may be different, but essentially, we share the same human characteristics. We are not created by different gods as many of us presume or believe. There is no separate world, sun, moon or special natural laws created by a specific god for his followers. If what we presume is true,

there would have been as many worlds, suns, moons as there are gods created by humans on the earth.

Let's revisit the time in reverse order and try to understand human history with respect to different belief systems or what we know as religions. Which religion was there in the world 10,000 years ago? The answer will be surely very interesting. I am sure you all will agree with me that most of the religions we know today did not even exist back then.

Was there any religion 15,000 years, 20,000 years or 50,000 years ago? You may answer that you have no idea or no modern day religion might have existed. We know the advent and proponents of all the religions, which are very recent compared to human history. However, it is logically inevitable that the sun, the moon and the same universal natural laws existed even when none of the modern religions was on the scene.

From this, it is clear that human beings can survive and can continue to exist without the religions known to us today. But can human beings survive or exist without love, compassion, mutual respect and humanitarian service? There are two principles that exist in the world—the principle of love and gratitude that brings people together in harmony and peace, and the principle of hatred and delusion—which pulls people apart in discord and violence. The first is the principle of positive energy and the second one is the principle of negative energy.

The principles of energy are universal and they are eternal. Irrespective of time, place and persons, the principles of energy will have same universal characteristics. The principle of love and gratitude will harmonise people and the principle of hatred and delusion will divide people and create conflicts.

WHAT IS OUR UNIVERSAL COMMON INTEREST?

By whatever name we call ourselves or wherever we live, we share something in common as far as our interest is concerned. Nobody wants pain, suffering and misery. Everybody desires prosperity, good health and happy life.

We human beings are said to be different from all other animals. That is quite true so far as human intellect and rationality is concerned. It is also true that we share certain characteristics or qualities with other animals and these animalistic qualities in humans, if not harnessed and kept under check,

give rise to conflicts, fights, wars and even lead to disastrous consequences which human history has already proved. Many of us will agree that human beings are superior to other animals. But if we live only for pleasures and possessions and fight for them, does it justify calling ourselves superior to animals? Animals also eat, sleep, enjoy sex and fight for other things in life. Many of us do these things or live a life not different from what the other animals do.

It is understandable that animals act at the call of their instincts. They do not have highly developed intellect or rationality like human beings. They cannot differentiate between right and wrong or good and bad. But human beings, considering ourselves rational, superior and intelligent, think and act like animals causing harm and destruction to fellow humans and to the environment where we all live in, which nobody desires for—can we still call ourselves human?

The common interest of all human beings is to have a meaningful life—a life of perfect health and prosperity, a life full of joy and happiness. Every human being aspires for these life's ideals. Then why do human beings not use their superior human qualities to achieve the life's ideals collectively for everyone as they are our common ideals?

DIFFERENT BELIEF SYSTEMS

Life is full of uncertainties and the world is full of unpredictable occurrences. Many of us are disillusioned and there are endless questions in our mind about the meaning and purpose of life. Questions such as—is this the only life? What will happen after my death? Why is my life in the world after all? How did I come to exist? Is it a sheer accident or is there any purpose or meaning?—continue to bother us.

When people are confused and puzzled about the mysteries of life and the world, they look for answers and solutions. The result is the appearance of different belief systems or philosophies. Every belief system tries to provide logic or justifications to validate or prove one's own point of view and it leads to conflicting institutionalised belief systems.

The present-day conflicts and environmental issues are either a direct or an indirect result of these belief systems. At the back of our thought and

action, there is a belief system. The belief system might be either individual or institutionalised. Either consciously or unconsciously we pick up many belief systems from the family, teachers, peer groups, society, religious institutions and so on. These belief systems get ingrained into our mind and remain dormant at the subconscious or unconscious level. After assimilating various belief systems from different sources we reflect on them and form our own. These belief systems are pivotal and influence our decision-making, thought, speech and action in day-to-day life to a great extent.

Any belief system, which does not promote common human interest and ideals and rather undermines them and ignites negative energy causing harm and destruction to the individual or to the society, should be avoided. The question here is whether we all agree to this proposal and commit ourselves to act accordingly. If we are to avoid conflicts, we must agree and act appropriately or at least the majority of us should agree, otherwise the negative forces will overpower and the world will be struck by perpetuating man-made calamities and disasters including environmental ones.

CONFLICTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Whether it is conflicts or environmental problems, it will have two dimensions—the internal and the external. There have been enough discussions, researches and studies on conflicts and environmental issues. The whole world is trying to understand the nature of conflicts, environmental problems and their causes. These are the most burning issues for the global community today. Our life is at stake and peace—which is our universally acclaimed ideal—is evading us.

Any problem whether it is conflicts or environmental issues—as it is related to human beings—has a start first in the human mind, either in the individual mind or in the collective mind. The human mind is the source of all problems and whatever is seen as a problem in the external world is nothing but the outward expression of problems existing in the human mind. Take for example the issue of conflicts. Conflict cannot take place without the conflicting agencies or partakers and in every situation of conflict, we find human beings are the partakers.

Either the conflict is within the individual or between individuals, groups

or organised institutions or nations. There are always certain underlying factors that aggravate the situations from within the human mind. The defiled human minds are the definite sources of all the problems in the world today. If we are to search for any solution to the global menace in question, we must find it in the human mind only. Thus, instead of discussing about the problems in the outside world, we must shift our search and focus on human minds.

When we look at the types of conflicts, these could be:

- Conflict of interest
- Conflict of ideology or belief system
- Conflict of acquisition or possession
- Conflict of personality traits or character
- Conflict of ego

All the conflicts mentioned above arise first in the mind and are then expressed in the world outside which at times becomes catastrophic. Therefore if we are to avoid conflicts in the outside world what we need to do is to refine or purify the human mind or at least maintain a balance in our thought, speech and actions.

Let's talk about environmental issues now. An environmental issue is like a gigantic hot iron ball hovering upon us in the sky which may hit any part of the globe at any time and consume everything part by part. That is the reason why there is so much discussion about environmental problems.

We are the makers of our future. The environmental havoc we have created due to over-exploitation of natural resources and indomitable greed for material prosperity in the name of economic development will definitely leave negative bearing on the overall well-being of the planet. Whatever is the present state of affairs on environmental issues, we can surely make a difference positively if we all collectively decide on and agree to certain conditions for which we have to sacrifice a part of our interests, acquisitions and possessions. 'Are we ready?' It is a million-dollar question!

The whole world is deeply concerned about environmental issues which directly or indirectly affect our health and pose a serious threat to our well-being. We are caught at the crossroads of conflict of interests. On the one hand we want economic development, technological development,

modernisation, etc. and on the other we don't want the negative repercussions or impacts of these developments. We want avoidance of conflict and environmental crisis which are the direct or indirect impact of technological development, economic development, urbanisation, modernisation, etc. We also want sustainable environmental health and conservation of natural resources. Now we are confronted with a series of questions:

- Can we have sustainable economic development without exploitation of natural resources and industrialisation etc?
- Who will set the limit and what will be the limit of economic development and to what extent should the exploitation of natural resources for industrialisation be done?
- Who will control the insatiable greed of human beings?
- What is more important to us—healthy living or pleasurable living?
- How to avoid the conflict between economic development and environmental issues?

These are a few questions; we have to find an answer not by a group of people with certain sectarian identity but by a global human community with universal identity. The general tendency of human mind is rooted in *lobha*—greed, *dosa*—hatred, *moha*—delusion, *mana*—egoistical pride and *ditthi*—false belief systems. Majority of people in the world are controlled and directed by these tendencies unchecked. They are those with negative energies and destructive potentialities. When the society or world is moved and run by people with destructive energies and false belief systems the world will definitely plunge into conflicts and crises and nature will react, and serious natural calamities and disasters will be inevitable.

As per the Buddha's paradigm of Four Noble Truths, if there is any *dukkha*, crisis or problem, we are required to follow the four standard steps:

- Diagnose the real nature of *dukkha*, crisis or problem
- Ascertain the actual causes corresponding to that *dukkha* or problem
- Optimistic approach regarding solution to the *dukkha* or problem
- Pragmatic or realistic ways to put the *dukkha* or crisis to an end

Let's pose a question, 'What are the possible causes of environmental crisis?'

From the point of view of the dhamma paradigm of universal identity there are multiple causes having universal characteristics. These causes can be of two types—internal causes and external causes.

As has been already mentioned, generally, the human mind is rooted in *lobha*—greed, *dosa*—hatred, *moha*—delusion, *mana*—egoistical pride and *ditthi*—false belief systems. These are the internal causes of all human problems, whether environmental issues or human conflicts. The internal causes are basically the internal environment of human beings which needs to be kept under check and maintenance of balance. If the internal environment is not in balance there is every possibility that it will cause turbulent situations outside and thereby affect the external environment.

The cause of crisis in the external environment can be anything which is created by human actions with their roots in negative human tendencies or dispositions. The environmental issues which are actually the result of internal human-environmental imbalance may be termed as external causes of the environmental crisis.

According to the Buddhist theory of interdependence, *Paccayata dhamma*, causes and conditions are multiple and they are interdependent. Whatever occurs in the outside world occurs in that particular way owing to the causes and conditions present at that point of time and these causes and conditions are not only external; in fact, internal causes are the implicit determinants of the event or occurrences. *Lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*, *mana* and *ditthi* contribute as internal causes for all conflicts and crises that one undergoes.

According to Buddhism, there is interconnectedness between our actions and subsequent occurrences as a natural sequence of *Kamma-vipaka*—cause and effect or action and reaction. There is no agency or almighty God controlling or monitoring the sequence of events. We are responsible for the results or consequences of our own action—positive or negative. As problems are caused by human beings, accordingly solutions have to be worked out by human beings and that also from a global and universal perspective.

WHAT CAN A BUDDHIST SUGGEST AS A SOLUTION TO THE HUMAN PROBLEMS OF CONFLICTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS?

The Buddhist way is the dhamma way—the Middle Path—according to the Buddhist doctrine of *Majjhima patipada*. In the Middle Path, one is required

to avoid extremism of any kind in order to maintain balance in different spheres of existence. Extremism of any kind implicitly contains the risk of unwanted and negative consequences. Therefore, the suggestions from a Buddhist point of view to avoid crises or problems is to avoid extremism and follow the dhamma way and lead a life of dhamma firmly established in *sila*—universal moral values, *samadhi*—tranquil, unwavering and balanced state of mind and *pannya*—wisdom or experiential knowledge about facts and real nature of life and existence. When a person follows the dhamma way of life and gets established progressively in *sila*, *samadhi* and *pannya*, the internal negative causal conditions such as *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*, *mana* and *ditthi* become weak. Positive internal conditions will override the negative conditions and produce a positive effect which will get expressed in the external world as everything positive and pleasant.

Thus it is evident that in order to avoid conflicts and achieve sustainable environmental health for healthy and peaceful living we have to educate every human being on earth and create awareness about the negative and positive internal and external causal conditions as well as the importance of the Middle Path, the dhamma way.

The billion-dollar questions before us are:

- Who will undertake this project of educating the global human population and create awareness and work for conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness?
- How, when and where to start?
- Is there any comprehensive and sustainable plan?

Let's make a movement on the same theme—conflict avoidance and environment consciousness.

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I think that this conference has given us a great opportunity to do something. For me, it was very, very inspiring when the Prime Minister of India came and gave his speech. He is very unusual. I have heard many lectures from political leaders before but he is exceptional. In Asia, many countries try to put their efforts into promoting economic development, but what I heard here is that we must promote energy and spirituality by following ancient Asian traditions. This is something very special. We must listen to this voice and follow this advice to find a proper direction for humankind. We should not get lost. This was the first impression that I got, when I heard the speech from the Indian Prime Minister. The second thing was that we must go beyond theology and come back to philosophy or philosophical discussion, so that we can find the truths and follow them.

If you follow ideology, then there is a lot of conflict. Think about the things you talk about. This is also something that is very, very inspiring to me, especially when we talk about the conference's theme. When we talk to each other, what we always tend to insist is that our own ideology is correct—how can we have a successful dialogue? In different systems of ideology, the original teachings have become a dogma. This creates a gap between the original teachings and the dogma that develops after. This is something meaningful

as it compels us to return to philosophy. We come back to ancient wisdoms. It is very important to highlight these. Another thing he mentioned, which I have never heard before, is that we are not only here to talk about climate change—we must think about climate justice. That is also something which is very special.

We talk about climate change where we only think about how to reduce carbon dioxide, but we never think beyond that about climate justice. We must speak from our hearts as the Indian Prime Minister did, not out of his brain but out of his mind. When we have the dialogue here, we must talk mind to mind. That is how our ancestors like the Buddha and many other great masters always spoke to the people—mind to mind, not by brain. The brain sometimes creates gaps. Therefore, I want to share a few points.

The first point which the Prime Minister mentioned is that of the Asian century. We can see that during the last fifty years, the very core of the world has transferred from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. It is so clear that you may call it the Pacific and the Indian Ocean period or the Asian century. I am from a Chinese cultural background and we found a lot of common ground between Buddhism, Hinduism and Chinese cultures. Chinese culture has its own long history, but in almost more than 2,000 years since Buddhism came to China it has had a huge influence on Chinese culture. The historical fact is that Chinese people have spent 700 years in translating the Buddhist Sutras into Chinese. Another important fact is that so many great masters came from India to China and the only reason for them to do so was because they wanted to share Indian wisdom with the Chinese. They climbed the Himalayas and went through the Great Silk Route from *Tukuangzhou* to many cities.

As a Chinese, I am very moved that so many great masters came to China. Also from the Chinese front, we have put in a lot of effort to preserve the Buddhist traditions. Not only the sangha tradition, but also the *bhikkuni* tradition was preserved in China and in Chinese Buddhism. That is something that we must never forget. When we talk about the Asian century today, it is a great opportunity for us and how we can go to the deep roots between India and China. When we say China, it is not only China but the Chinese cultural field that we are talking about. When we talk about India, it is not just India

but this huge view that the people are learning from each other. One time an Indian guru had come to Taiwan; I was teaching at Shuji University and I had invited him to give a lecture. He said that in ancient times, 5,000 years ago, we had many gurus who went to China to learn and had many Chinese masters coming to India to learn. This is something that we must continue. Today, this forum, this conference, has provided a new platform to improve this kind of activity in our period.

I also want to talk about climate justice. I want to add a little bit to this. The first is that we can see rich industries producing a lot of carbon dioxide which the masses breathe in. That is so unfair. Therefore, we must create a system to maintain equality. The common masses have no means to protect themselves. When we talk about climate justice in terms of the problems created by capitalism, I think we have to think about true democracy. Another issue within climate justice is how to go beyond materialism. This is very important. Every one of us must commit with a strong vow to create a strong, spiritual Asian culture from now on.

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The Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative was conceived more than 2,200 years ago by the Chakravarti Maurya dynasty emperor Ashoka and it is beginning again now. We have heard all aspects of conflict avoidance and environment consciousness as well as the importance of dialogue.

The environmental crisis we are talking about is indeed a modern crisis. 200-300 years ago when India, China and East Asia used to have 70 per cent of the world's economy between themselves, there was no environmental crisis. They were not consuming twice the earth's capacity. It is not something inherent in human genetics that we consume for creating economy. It is the product of a particular world view, which was reaffirmed during European enlightenment in the emergence of modern science and technology; it is this world view, which has been thrust upon and partially adopted by the whole world, including the Hindu-Buddhist world. That is why, we have an environmental crisis and to come out of it, we have to look at the other world view that used to exist and which is largely preserved in our religion and society but somehow seems to be missing in our science and politics. We have to bring back that world view.

The Indians and Chinese had a great amount of scientific knowledge. Our venerable texts think of the purpose of science. The *Taittiriya Upanishad*

says that '*Vigyanam yagyam tanute*' or science is to manifest *yagya*. *Yagya* according to classical Indian texts is the discipline of producing basic goods in plenty and sharing them with all aspects of creation. The goal of science was not to think of conflict, domination or control of a non-human universe. It was to share with all aspects of creation. The philosophical principles behind *yagya* were those propagated by the first mantra of the *Isavasya Upanishad* that the entire universe is sacred. Fifty years ago, Lynn White created a controversy when he said the modern environment crisis is actually due to the Judaeo-Christian viewpoint where there is almost an insistence that man should dominate nature in the scriptures. Of course, Christian theologians interpreted that this dominion over nature in the Old Testament should be understood as stewardship and good husbandry of nature.

However, it is not the Bible alone that Western civilisation has been brought up on. It is ancient Greek thought as well, which put man as the rational being above the rest of creation, including women as proposed by stoic philosophers like Aristotle and then, a long tradition of this follows in the thoughts of Aquinas, Kant and others. They all think that there is a reason why man should dominate nature or that nature is something we can deal with in whatever ways we want to. That is because we have been imbued with the great Logos or rational spirit.

What did the Indians or Chinese think? They never put man or human beings above in the natural order; instead they placed special responsibility on them. They said that what differentiates animals or other living beings from humans is that they are governed by dharma. Other beings naturally follow dharma while humans have to learn dharma and follow it. Dharma is to understand the natural order and the harmony in it and to learn to perform or add to your life in accordance with it.

We had this system of having several water reservoirs in India, especially in South India. They are built on a principle that you follow the natural topography of the land, the natural scheme of rainfall and each point holds as much water as that place can hold, then let it out and reach the next reservoir. These reservoirs are artificially built over a landmass of more than 30-40,000 square kilometres. The principle was that you optimise these, for

if you try to make even one more reservoir, this system would not work. That is the kind of care with which you try and understand nature, follow it and obtain its bounty. Modern science was born with the understanding that we have somehow lost the spirit of dominion that was granted to us with the birth of Christianity and we should reclaim it. This is what Bacon said and what Descartes said. Bacon said something more, he said that you should put nature on the rack and make her bear witness to her truth.

That adversarial relationship with nature was a compelling feature of scientific investigation. This horrendous thinking persists in an enormous way in the name of science today. There are 70 billion animals, which we consume as food today. This is nothing as compared to 30–40 million animals, which are being tortured alive, to discover what we believe are the true laws of nature or great medicines for the benefit of humanity. This is something which all of the modern world is party to. Of course, in America we know this number may be 5 or 10 million, but it is 2 million in Japan, 2 million in China and about a million animals in India. So, we need to reacquire the Hindu-Buddhist means of understanding and viewing nature as sacred. We should reacquire the spirit of limiting our claims over nature and be more restrained and humble in our attitude towards nature. For us to proclaim this world view, which was inherent in the way we treated technology and science, we must first come out of our collaboration with the modern world in the tremendous atrocities it practices in the name of science.

You kill animals and eat them—in fact, you are rapaciously consuming them. The royal society proclaims that we have a right to do so for the good of humanity. It is this attitude that the Hindu-Buddhist world has to negate. No good for humanity can come out of doing experiments on—the Greeks even experimented on living human beings—animals. Mahatma Gandhi, about a hundred years ago, when he wrote *Hind Swaraj*, had rejected modern medicine owing to this mindless experimentation. Of course, one reason was that it indulges you to violate the discipline of life in the sense that we will give you medicine and you consume whatever you want. In that sense, the science of medicine has a certain immoral aspect as he saw it. It breaches your self-control. He said that European doctors or scientists think very highly of torturing other beings for the cause of advancing medicine.

I wouldn't have minded if William Harvey had not discovered blood flow, if he had to discover it by torturing a living animal. Later on he said that this vivisection is the blackest of all blackest crimes. It is something akin to, the very practice of untouchability on 15-20 per cent of other people, the practice of racism in the Western world. That vivisection was worse than these practices, he thought. He also thought that by doing so we are violating the limits that God has imposed on us. There is hubris in the modern world which we have to puncture and that is the main task of the Hindu-Buddhist initiative. That is the message which we have to give to the world and also learn to live by ourselves.

On 22 April 1990, tens of millions of people worldwide participated in activities to commemorate the twentieth Earth Day. On June 1992, the Rio de Janeiro Congress on Environment and Development of the United Nations opened in Brazil. Delegates from more than 180 countries and seventy international organisations attended the conference, as they do annually, to set and maintain environmental strategy of the planet we live in, mobilising participation in various forms in response to different frequencies simultaneously.

In that spirit, the Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environmental Consciousness of 2015 has created a powerful, winning issue.

Lack of responsibility towards the environment sometimes is the leading cause of destruction of human life in the future.

In recent years, the efforts of mankind have been towards living together peacefully and never to let a nuclear war happen and destroy humanity. However, humans have faced a new environmental crisis, which may bring us to extinction even faster than a war ever could.

Japan recently faced a highly destructive earthquake and tsunami. This was the largest earthquake in Japan's history—with an 8.9 magnitude and a 10-metre

high tsunami sweeping away many houses, severely damaging infrastructure in northeastern Japan and leaving thousands dead. Furthermore, this was followed by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. Eventually, the Japanese government declared a state of nuclear emergency due to loss of coolant and had to evacuate thousands of people living near the Fukushima plant.

As a conservationist biologist would say, if in fifty years the world does not stand up in unison to protect the environment on this earth, the home of humanity could be destroyed, their habitats could be destroyed.

The Buddhist traditions, teachings and methods of practice are derived from the doctrine of Dependent Origination and follow the Four Noble Truths.

Dependent Origination is the fundamental theory to explain the existence and the relationship of all the phenomena in the world. This theory makes sense in all activities of life, particularly for the protection of the ecological environment. According to this theory, everything that exists in the world is the combination of many causes and conditions.

Conditions cannot exist in isolation but always rely on each other to form a mutual relationship with each other. Buddhists usually teach, 'Because this one is there, the other one can be; because this one is not, the other should not. For this birth, so that arises; for this one should kill, the other one killed.'—'*Imasmim sati idam hoti. Imasuppada idam upajjati. Imasmim asati idam na hoti. Imassa nirodha idam nirujjhati.*'

Based on the Dependent Origination stance, the world is a unified body and has no limit to access the ecological environment and all organisms should adhere to principles of mutual interdependence.

In modern times, the speed of globalisation is going strong—information science, biotechnology, material science, science and technology in energy, transportation, aerospace and the weapons of war and nuclear weapons are being widely used by humans globally for their own benefits without a thought of their impact on the environment.

Owing to the use of new technology and the exploitation of natural resources in a smarter way, human life has improved on one hand but on the other hand, the ecological environment must bear a pressure overload and harm caused by overuse of technology.

People must learn to live in harmony with and to protect the environment. According to the Buddhist perspective, the ecological crisis is because of ignorance and craving. Doctrine of Dependent Origination, which is the foundation of Buddhist education, indicates that people are gathered from five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formation and consciousness.

In particular, the identity of human aggregates consists of the physical body and encompasses the entire physical world. Thus, if the natural environment is seriously polluted, the physical body of man or of human life will be destroyed.

Four immeasurable *Brahmavihara* principles of the mind include loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. A negative spirit can produce toxins that destroy the body's health and spirit. Hatred creates chaos of psychology and leads to neurological disorders and depression. Interestingly, compassion helps us not only to respect the human life, but also the charming animals and other species.

Buddha advised his disciples to not pour dirt on grass, not trample vegetation or even break any tree branch. Especially after Buddha's enlightenment, he sat looking at the Bodhi tree for a week to thank the trees that protected him during his meditation and until he found enlightenment.

Buddhism spread to Vietnam in the second century BC and the early years of AD, advocated by Emperor Ashoka, 273-232 BC. The Buddhist centre in Luy Lau—now in Thuan Thanh district, Bac Ninh province, Vietnam—is one of the largest centres of Buddhism in the East started in that time. Buddhism has been viewed as a state religion through the ages—Dinh, Le, Ly, Tran (968-1400 AD)—and profoundly influences even thousands of years later. From Buddhism philosophy and faith, the Vietnamese attained the tradition of environmental consciousness—love, peace, prevention of conflicts, avoiding killing, spreading kindness amongst all beings, love for nature, love for wisdom, building life with the Eightfold Path and so on.

Over 2,500 years ago, Buddha taught his disciples about kindness, personal responsibility and the path to happiness, which hold the key to a new way of relating to each other and to our environment. The Buddha manifested complete compassion. He taught that those who wished to follow his path, should practice loving-kindness. He saw all beings in the universe

as equal in nature, and in this phenomenal world, lives of all humans and animals were interrelated, mutually developing.

From a young age, Buddhists are taught love for people and animals, and to not kill living beings, whether small, unseen, in water, in the toilet or hidden in the grass. Being conscious of animal protection and simple living led to the Buddhist precepts—not to kill, not to steal, not to be unchaste, not to drink intoxicants and not to lie—‘the Buddha established a monastic order, with the five basic precepts.’ The monastic discipline soon involved many more rules that applied to the laity as well as to the monks and nuns.

The Buddha’s first sermon consisted of the Four Noble Truths with causal relationship: *dukkha*—the truth of suffering, *samudaya*—the truth of the cause, *avijja*—suffering caused by desire and by ignorance is the truth of cessation of suffering and *magga*—the truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering which is the Middle Path, between the extremes of asceticism and indulgence, or the Eightfold Path, which is—right knowledge or views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct or action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation or concentration.

Practice and enlightenment then lead one to *nibbana* which means extinction. In achieving enlightenment, the Buddha acquired supernatural powers. These powers were:

- Psychokinesis, the power to move objects with the mind
- Clairaudience, the power to hear sounds at extraordinary distances
- Telepathy, the power to read the minds of others
- Retrocognition, the power to know one’s own previous existences

Clairvoyance is the power to see and know things at a distance and knowledge of the destruction of defiling impulses, such as those which would hinder enlightenment and nirvana.

On right livelihood, for example, Buddhist teaching requires every person to consider the manner in which the performance of his duties as an employee would impact society and the future. Employment, for example, in the armaments industry, which imperils human future, would be a violation of the path of right livelihood.

Any employment, which causes damage to the environment such as manufacturing of toxic substances, working in the nuclear industry, felling

of forests and the adverse exploitation of marine resources would also be a violation of right livelihood.

Everyone can become a Buddha, all beings have Buddha nature. Buddhism also mentions reincarnation and accordingly humans can be reborn as humans, as gods or animal ghosts, thus supporting the thought that all things are equal and Buddhism supports the democratic spirit of the country and equality among nations of the world.

Buddha was also interested in an orderly family and society in order to avoid conflicts between parents and children, national leaders and between nations.

Buddhism prescribed five duties towards parents: nurturing parents when parents are older, performing duties as a child, preserving family traditions, protecting legacy assets and organising a funeral when parents die—'*Kinh Thien Sanh*.'

The Buddhist theory of filial in karmic transmigration through countless lifetimes is that these beings are probably parents. Also in the birth of compassion, Buddha stated five obligations of parents towards their children—preventing children from doing evil, encouraging them to do good, teaching them for a prosperous career, finding them a worthy spouse and handing over their inheritance at proper time.

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Let's take a moment and observe and look at the name Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative. Have we achieved the initiation of a dialogue?

Just like a speaker mentioned, it is a dialogue that has been taking place over centuries, which I agree with, but to a certain extent we lack communication, dialogue, network and conferences like this one. The second point is, it says conflict avoidance. Here I'd like to be a little bit critical, with respect and not in a disrespectful or negative sense. The reason I want to be critical is that I like to be realistic, optimistic, pragmatic and a person who likes to take action, not just speak but deliver in action. In the Buddha's concepts we speak about the body, speech and mind and about dedicating your body, speech and mind to your guru, dedicating your humanitarian activities through body, speech and mind or even delivering your teachings through body, speech and mind and so on.

In the two days of this conference, I was grateful and a little bit embarrassed as well because we have done a very good job on conflict avoidance dialogue, but beyond that we have done a tremendous job in avoiding each other. I have about a handful of visiting cards in my pocket and in my bag. I don't have one visiting card from any of the Swamis or any of the spiritual leaders of the Hindus, and we are gathered here today to talk about conflict avoidance.

We have achieved that, in fact, we have not only achieved that but we have also avoided each other. So if that is the conference or the whole concept of gathering here today—which I truly believe is not the case—to avoid each other but instead to have a dialogue where we can work together. To figure out how we can make a united effort, unite our experience in collaborations over thousands of years and how we can move forward in protecting Mother Nature.

Today, we have over 7 billion human beings on this planet and I want to make 7 billion points within seven seconds—education for every single human being on this planet. In these two days, we had many speakers, especially from the spiritual community. Buddhists and Hindus spoke eloquently and beautifully about the Vedas and Suttas as well as the Sutras, reciting verses perfectly and explaining them in a very short period of time. It is very touching because every new word that I hear or every word that I hear from a Veda or a Sutra is an educational experience for me. Then again, we come here and say that the Buddha said this, some acharya said this and more. How do we implement what has been said by them and their teachings? How do we act on and bring results to those teachings? That is the question not to ask us or spiritual figures, but a question for you to decide and analyse.

We are here to provide information; that is why we are separated into observers and speakers. Speakers are the ones who are supposed to be giving out information. Then again, have we achieved our goal in sharing this information? I don't think so, because I find a huge gap. We have the very basic information—the Vedas, Suttas, Sutras and so on. Then we have the well-advanced scientists, who have done tremendous research on various topics. We are consuming thousands and thousands of animals, the River Ganga is being polluted, trees are being cut down, and there is a threat to the Asian continent and so on. How do we prevent that? The only way to prevent that is through education.

India is a country which has all major religious traditions in very high numbers; all major religious traditions that exist on this planet, exist in India—therefore India has a moral responsibility to be not only the centre of Asia, but the centre of today's civilisation. I say this from my heart because

I was born in the United States—which always claims it is promoting democracy, liberty and freedom, but then again look at the wars taking place since the new millennium. The twentieth century was deemed a century of bloodshed with the World Wars happening then. Everybody had high hopes for the new millennium. But frankly speaking, the beginning of the twenty-first century did not begin as well as we had been anticipating, expecting, wishing or praying for.

Since the new millennium, how many wars have been started and how many are continuing to this day? We see a threat of this increasing in the near future, in the next five years in fact. So what are we doing? What is India doing? At one point, certain continents or certain countries, certain scientists or technologies seemed to be too advanced. They had all this information regarding what exists in the world, what we're breathing in through the air, how it affects us, what types of cancers are coming up and so on. I don't see a middle way or middle person that brings down the overly advanced information we have to the ones that have fallen behind in terms of technology, science and education. We need a strategy, and proper implementation of it. That is what we need to work on. The environment is of course a hot topic, but how long has that been going on now? It has been going on for as long as I can remember—the last twenty something years almost.

However, over the last twenty something years we have gathered so much research and data but we have not achieved as much as we should have, based on that information. We're falling behind in terms of that. Yet we continue to complain that the world is in danger. These are things we already know. Thanks to Google, Yahoo, Bing and other search engines, information is now at the tips of our fingers. We don't need to spend crores or millions to fly to and from faraway destinations to obtain this information though it is nice to interact face-to-face. Everything is at our fingertips now. The action that we have to take now is the implementation of strategy, based on information, in order to prevent these issues from cropping up. There is a great Buddhist scholar who said that, 'Whatever happened in the past has disappeared into space and the most important thing now is the future.' The future depends on the present and the present is in your hands. Whether I want to have dinner

tonight or not, that's up to me. Whether I'm going to be happy tomorrow or not, or whether I'm going to be an angry person or not, that's up to me. That is the situation that I can truly control.

I've been living in Russia for the last twenty-three years now. Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, I've been involved in assisting with the revival of Buddhism in a place where it once existed, but was destroyed during the communist period. I have been involved in assisting communities rebuild, re-establish and redevelop. In 2012, the Russian government passed a new law which introduced into schools' curricula world religious traditions (*mirovyye religioznyye traditsii*). This means that it is compulsory for every student to choose a religion which they want to study. Right now it is only in the initial stages as this began in 2012. The reason for this is that Russia is facing a social as well as an economic problem. The social problem is that the unemployment rate is rising, alcoholism and drug addiction is on the rise, family problems are rising, the divorce rate is rising and as a result the number of single parents is rising. The law says that the Church and the state are separated which is a common feature in every government. However, we have to coexist as a community.

If a Buddhist monk kills somebody in Russia, what's going to happen to him? He's going to get arrested and when the police will come and get him, he cannot say 'Oh, the Church and the state are separated, so you're not allowed to arrest me.' He is going to be arrested based on the laws of that country. What is the point of saying the Church and the state are separated when you live in one country, one community and you follow one rule. You cannot separate that. You cannot separate individuals. You cannot separate us as human beings therefore we must come together and work together. Russia has taken a very small step by introducing these programmes. His Holiness the Dalai Lama considers himself a son of India because he has lived in exile, for close to sixty years in India. He has been speaking all over the world as well as within India especially within the last ten years. I follow him on Twitter, Facebook and his website. He has been travelling to many universities and many educational institutions within India and trying to encourage India to take the lead on secular ethics. Secular ethics which are

not based on any religious traditions, but are based on humanist values such as love, compassion, forgiveness and so on. India has to take the lead.

India has the resources and the philosophers or religious leaders, to be a leader in promoting secular ethics. If you don't understand what secular ethics means, forget that. India has the potential to be a leader in peace, science and technology. I have a base in the United States and I have several friends working in IT, technology and so on. You would be surprised to know how many smart Indians are working in these tech companies. We have been exporting all our knowledge, expertise and experience abroad. We need to embrace all those Indians who are abroad and bring them back to India. I certainly agree with Prime Minister Modi's campaign of make in India. When he says Make in India he doesn't just mean cars, cellphones and so on but everything. Make peace and let us Make it in India. Make literature, poetry, technology, science, spiritual leaders, swamis, Buddhist monks and so on and make it all in India.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS: SWAMI PARAMATMANANDA

*Om namo Brahmadibhyo, Brahmadevidya sampradaya kartribhyo,
vansharishibhyo mahadbhyo namo gurubhyaha. Sarvo paplavarahita
pragyanaghana pratyagartho Brahmaivahamasmi Brahmaivahamasmi.*

Om shanti, shanti, shantibi.

*Ishvaro gururatmayti murtibheda vibhagine, vyom vadvyapt dehaya
dakshinamurtaye namaha. Om.*

To address a given problem or to find a solution, we need to understand it thoroughly. A new definition of growth got institutionalised in the last century—abundance for everybody. Science with the help of technology or vice versa created abundance for society. Not only did societies adopt this definition, but nations adopted this definition of growth. Look at the shift, especially from the Indian point of view, where up to twenty-thirty years ago many of us didn't know what the Bombay Stock Exchange Index was. We never knew what the Tokyo Stock Exchange was, in fact when I was young, a person who was a share broker was considered to be a gambler. That is how they were looked at.

The performance of a government today, all over the world, is measured on the basis of stock exchange indices. The media protects this point of view. Nobody talks about the health, education or law and order indices of

the country. This concept got institutionalised, that growth entails only economic growth. This abundance of economic growth also created a side effect where a new thought became entrenched in society that ‘we have to consume more’. It has a basis in theology—that man is basically created as a reflection. And thus it is interpreted that creation is for man’s consumption. The problem basically lies in the fact that we have created a consumerist society. You’ll be surprised if you read the paper submitted by Shri Gurumurthy, where you learn that the slowdown of the European Union was reversed because individual consumption rose. The best economy, or the most developed economy is the US because there is maximum consumption there. We are not talking about abundance, but abundance with consumption, which has created a society of waste.

We have shifted to a ‘use and throw’ society. The unnecessary use and wastage of resources has caused the problem of environmental imbalance and this mentality has to change. New power centres have come up, where the state is the centre of political power. But economic power centres are different. Economic power centres now govern or push government policies. They decide diplomacy and the outcomes of wars. This is the world that we have come to live in. The capitalist and consumerist model has today threatened the world. It was very aptly mentioned by Shri Gurumurthy in his speech, that the tiger protects the earth and the earth protects the tiger. I would add to that sentence. The earth is not in danger; we are in danger, therefore we want to protect the earth. This is why we have become sensitive to this issue.

There is one more thing we must acknowledge. I am not against technology or economic growth. It is because of this growth that we are sitting here, we have air-conditioning and we can travel by air. Then, as it is mentioned in economic terms, the standard of living has risen. That is the bottom line. The standard of living has risen but the standard of life has deteriorated. As Dr Srinivas mentioned, India, China and East Asian countries contributed almost 70 per cent to the world GDP 200-300 years ago. The beauty and heritage we had is no more. It is not that India was rich only in terms of resources and wealth; the British have also written—besides the Chinese travellers—that prosperity was there but growth was also holistic and the standard of life was

very high. Even the person who changed our whole educational system is believed to have mentioned that the whole world should learn to live the way Indian society did, in terms of common ethical values, social and national values. That means that growth has taken place only partially. For holistic growth we have to grow individually, the culture has to be human-centric, not econo-centric, in order to help the earth.

First the individual has to grow; as one of the speakers said, it has to be inside-out growth. Only then will the benefits of so-called growth be available to humanity, and in absence of this (pardon me for saying this) we have created a society of looters and grabbers. Americans are very smart in giving names such as ‘takeover’ or ‘merger’. The real act is neither of these but merely looting. It is an aggrandisement—what I have, I should have maximum. New values have come into play—every now and then we read in the newspaper, ‘the richest man of India’, ‘the richest person the world’, ‘the Fortune 500 list’ and more. However nobody talks of the highest giver in the world. Nobody talks about who contributed the most to humanity. The good work somehow is not mentioned and this cultural shift or paradigm shift can be brought about globally through religion only. In our religion, the Vedas never say that man is entitled to exploit nature for its consumption. They never talk about exploiting animals, vegetation or the earth. The Vedas only consider that man is an integral part of the universe and say that the best creation and the one at the top, has maximum responsibility. He has to have maximum restraint. Power always goes with restraint and that is what restraint has taught us. That restraint in our definition of dharma or that of *manava* is one with *maryada*. This is what Indian religion has taught us and that is how we have these prayers. The whole thing is so interwoven in culture—‘*sarve bhavantu sukhinaha*’. There are a few more things that Swami Nirmalatmananda ji mentioned—even for ants you will find people in villages putting out crumbs in the garden.

You go to the south of India and every house will have rangoli or, as it is called, *kolam*. They make sure it is rice paste because insects get food out of it. That ‘*sarve bhavantu sukhinaha*’ sensitivity towards all of nature is imparted to humanity and it is interwoven in the culture because we all only have religious culture. Whether you go to Cambodia, Vietnam or Sri Lanka, in all

Buddhist countries and in India, there is no secular culture. It is all religious; every last custom is religious. That being the case, the solution to the problem is, we have to change our mindset. Every individual has to change. People have been talking of development under new names. As a speaker today mentioned, they still talk of development. For the last twenty years they have been talking about the problems but they do not want to address the original issue. Now they have coined a new term—‘sustainable development’. They want to continue, in the name of sustainability. Unless we give every citizen the awareness that divinity towers over nature, an attitudinal change in individuals alone will help in holistic and sustainable development.

Both these religions—and I can say all the religions that originated in India, whether Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism, all of them talk of human growth first. They also talk of economic growth, but economic growth without dharma or any kind of restraint will be destructive. As my teacher always used to say, we have to transform humanity from consumers to contributors. To be a contributor requires a certain inner strength. Only those strong from within can give and share, not weaklings and the insecure. There is also a definition of ahimsa mentioned in our shastras which relates to overconsumption and a society of waste—merely not hurting another is not ahimsa, wasting is also *himsa*. You have a right to take from nature what you require but you have no right to waste. That is the ultimate doctrine. Therefore in Indian religious traditions, in the ultimate stage of *sanyas* or *bhikkutam*, a sadhu lives a life of bare minimum. A sadhu lives a life of the least consumption. Look at our culture; we never respected a person with power. We did not respect a person who had a lot of wealth. These cultures based on religion—Hindu, Buddhist or Jain—have the highest respect for the one who gives up everything (or undergoes *tyaga*) and who lives a life for the benefit of human society and humanity. Therefore, kings and rich men used to respect the sadhu in any tradition.

This value has to be inculcated today and this is an excellent initiative for that. Very rightly it is asked, who will listen to us? True, they are not listening to us. Go to hell, I don't care about you. I managed to get an invitation to the G8 summit on behalf of the Acharya Sabha which our previous government

didn't support. Before the G8 was the Interfaith Summit which decides G8 policies. Only Christians and Jews were invited so far, and a few Muslims. Sheikhs came from the Middle East. They didn't bother about what was said; they were in their own world. This time I made up my mind, so we two acharyas from the Acharya Sabha barged in and raised the issue of human rights. I raised the issue that you have the right to have freedom of religion, but you have no right to convert others. I mentioned this very sophisticatedly; the next time they didn't invite us. There is one *satya* (truth) that we should know. There is a beautiful sloka in Sanskrit. '*Simho naivo, gajo naiva, vyaghro naivacha, naivacha ajaputram balim dadyat, daivo durbala ghataka*'. When a sacrifice is to be made, they do not catch a lion, elephant or tiger for the purpose but a goat. Therefore if you are weak, you will be sacrificed.

When we talk of inside-out, we have to gain strength. As my swami ji would say, for the so-called predator religions which actively go to convert and evangelise people, we are the last victims left today. In the whole world, all aboriginal cultures and religions are nearly gone; we are the ones left out and so we have to join hands and develop the strength to tell them on the face, that we have to have dialogue or *samvad* (as this conference has been aptly named) and question their theological principles. If we can create that awareness, we will be able to create ecological awareness too. Otherwise this thinking that everything is good, of '*ishwar, allah tero naam, sabko sanmati de bhagwan*' will lead nowhere. We already have *sanmati*, they need *sanmati*. I said how can you have a right to kill? The whole problem is that there is not just an ecological or environmental problem at hand, but religious and social environment issues as well. Forget about Mother Earth; these issues are important and they cause these ecological problems. All these theologies have double standards in their values.

Many speakers here talked about human life, human growth, *maitri*, *vinaya*, compassion and ahimsa. All these values are universal. Nobody likes to get hurt irrespective of religion, caste or age. I don't want you to hurt me and I should not hurt you. The mutual behavioural expectation is the basis for universal values. All these religions have double standards in their values. If you kill our followers then it is wrong but if you kill someone

non-faithful, Allah will be happy. This is a double standard. We have to question this and challenge them head on and therefore we need to unite together. It is very necessary. True, we may take up a project or so but we have to position ourselves globally. This may be my personal view but I am happy that India is in a position to do so with the Prime Minister supporting and understanding this, without which economic growth will not happen. He wants a holistic growth and therefore we have begun a good dialogue.

Lastly, to summarise, sustainable growth is only possible, as all other speakers mentioned, when a sense of divinity is developed for the earth and every living being on it. That attitude of divinity and ahimsa leads to compassion. You cannot be compassionate without ahimsa and without seeing the divinity inherent in nature. As our shastras say the *atma* is nothing but an embodiment of compassion. The inner development which has been emphasised in our shastras needs to be taken to the world. The word that has been used—*samvad*—technically in Sanskrit it means a dialogue between a teacher and student or *guru-shishya samvad*. At the end of every chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, we chant ‘*Shri Krishnarjuna samvade*’—*vaadaha* means dialogue. There are four ways of communication mentioned in our shastras—*jalpa*, *vitanda*, *vaad* and *samvad*.

I see *jalpa* and *vithanda* in all such religious interactions—‘I am always right’ where no one wants to listen to the other and the latter one being ‘you are always wrong’. However we need to have *vaad* or dialogue with them. I hope that with dialogue they will come back to learn from us what holistic growth constitutes. Therefore the name *Samvad* has been given. We have to position ourselves strategically. As you expressed the hope, India should take the leadership of this initiative. As Chanakya mentioned, without the support of *rajyasatta* you cannot have much speed. We have the support of *rajyasatta* and of thinking people and institutions like Vivekananda Kendra and others who are working on it. I request on behalf of Hindu leaders to our Buddhist counterparts, I know our traditions involve a lot of *tapas* and *jaapa* as well as being introverted and taking certain vows. However when you adhere to such a cause, you have to make certain adjustments, spare some time and act a little faster. I request all monks to find such time for such cause. It involves leaving

your religious practice and *matts* and institutional work, but I think by what we call '*naimityika dharma*', the demand of the time requires that we keep certain things aside—spare some time and involve ourselves in terms of our wisdom and our time as well as resources. I am sure and hopeful that we will be able to draw up a path and teach the world the right way of growth.



Acharya Dr Shrivatsa Goswami



Param Pujya Swami Paramatmananda



Ven Telo Tulku Rinpoche



Most Ven Geshe Jangchup Choeden



Dr Barbara Maas



Dr MD Srinivas



HE Lyonpo Namgay Dorji



HE Chuch Phoeurn



Dr Sudha Murty



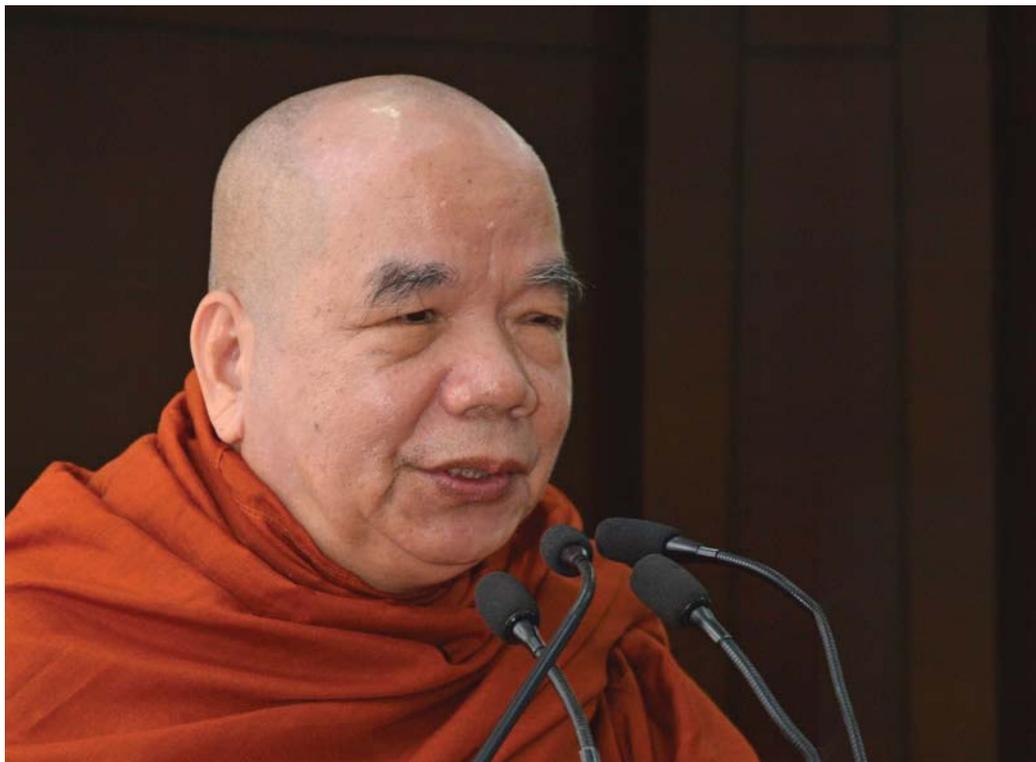
Most Ven Bellanwila Wimalaratna Thero



Mr Sukhbaataryn Batbold



Prof Hsiang-Chou Yo



Ven Thich Thien Tam



Prof Naresh Man Bajracharya



Ven Dr U Dhammapiya



Ven Jetsunma Tenzing Palmo



Sri Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha

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WELCOME ADDRESS AND RECALL: NC VIJ

I was telling somebody once that I am a General and for almost forty-seven years of my life I have been practising the art of warfare. It is for the first time that I have had the privilege of hosting a conference where over 200 extraordinarily intelligent minds have been discussing and debating how to create a more peaceful world. This has been an enjoyable experience. Allow me also to say, of course, that in reality no soldier has ever wanted war. It is with immense satisfaction that I stand here to share with you the happenings of the Samvad conference.

For us at VIF and our associates, the Tokyo Foundation and the International Buddhist Confederation, these two days were immensely fulfilling. The conference not only met the objectives that we set out to achieve but has also gone much beyond that. The rich and scholarly discourse, research and innovations and frank opinions expressed by all the speakers and delegates will certainly help us to take this initiative further. The fact that we got talking, in itself is a clear indicator that intelligentsia and religious and spiritual gurus are aligned with this thought process in letter and spirit. As a matter of fact, the resounding speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the ball rolling. He underlined the emerging dangers both to world peace and also to the environment.

Discussions were frank and honest, hearts were opened and ideas exchanged. During the discussions and presentations that followed there was a consensus, that the world needs a fresh approach to deal with the twin threats of violence and rising environmental degradation. This conference has given us the lead to pursue that path. I will now like to recall some of the major aspects that emerged. Let's take a look at day one which was about conflict avoidance. It came out loud and clear that the teachings of Swami Vivekananda which advocated establishment of peace and prosperity through interreligious relations, spiritual revival and religious harmony are most relevant today. Speakers after speakers agreed with Most Venerable Sayadaw Dr Ashin Nyanissara, that this conclave offered great opportunity to analyse the threats and challenges to the maintenance of world peace and tranquility. Her Excellency Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga, speaking from her own vast experience of going through a period of live conflict, stressed on the need to infuse spiritualism and morality at a time when materialism is at its extreme. She stressed the need for adopting non-conflicting ideologies.

Shri Gurumurthy and a number of other speakers stressed the principle of everybody having freedom of practising their own religion without any interference from others. As a matter of fact it is only when certain radicalised elements try to force their own ideologies on others that it becomes a major reason for strife. The world needs to break the shackles of ideologies and strive for philosophical debate as a means to develop universal understanding. There was total consensus on the aforesaid approach.

I come to day two, with regard to environmental consciousness. This day witnessed a spirited and composite dialogue on environmental consciousness being the prime paradigm of sociocultural cooperation and collective global action. The philosophical underpinning of Buddhist dhamma was touched upon in reference to the protection of natural heritage and the pursuit of sustainable growth. Environmental protection would be possible only with self-awareness based on our ancient religious beliefs with respect to Mother Earth.

All efforts to enforce discipline through regulatory mechanisms are proving to be fractious. As a matter of fact, the root cause of this problem has been the over-exploitation of natural resources.

This conclave marked the beginning of the process which will ultimately lead to world peace, improved environment and better living standards. This is our earnest hope. We welcome the announcement by the president of the Tokyo Foundation that the next conference would be held in Tokyo in January 2016. Three cheers for The Tokyo Foundation. I would also like to thank each and every attendant for their active and thoughtful participation. The success of any conference is always dependent on the intelligent and intellectual inputs of the participants as was the case in this particular conclave.

We would also like to convey our deepest appreciation and convey our gratitude to the team of scholars led by Shri Gurumurthy ji, who conceived and constructed the entire concept of this conclave and laid down the intellectual road map for this conference. A word of thanks for our sponsors, Larsen and Toubro, TVS and Dalmia Group, and finally without the unstinting support and hard work by my colleagues in VIF we could not have managed to hold this conclave. The list is too long to mention their names, but allow me to mention two, Anuttama Ganguly and Amitabh Mathur, who really have worked their guts out. I also do hope that nobody was put to any inconvenience and if there have been any slip-ups they were not for want of efforts. It has been a pleasure to host this event.

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I firmly believe that this Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative for Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness will be a tangible contribution to world peace and the welfare of mankind. Historically, Buddhism was introduced to Mongolia three times since its first introduction 2,000 years ago. But since the sixteenth century—we count it as the third introduction—we have been following the education system of the Nalanda University of India. Some concepts of this Buddhist knowledge on environment have been associated with our old rituals and formed a significant tradition for nature conservation in Mongolia. Mongolian Buddhism and environmental consciousness have developed as inseparable in our history. Therefore, we have developed certain sensitivities as mentioned below:

SACRED PLACES

In Mongolian Buddhism, many mountains, rivers and lakes and other natural sites are revered as sacred either because they are the residing places of Buddhist deities, protectors and *ngagas* or because they are viewed as Buddhist deities and protectors in themselves. These natural sites have been historically treated with utmost respect and protected by taboos. For example, trees and plants must not be cut within their vicinity nor should wild animals be hunted.

SACRED ANIMALS

Some mountains are found to be named after certain animals. The ecological significance is that there is a specific taboo on hunting or trapping of these animals on the site. While snakes and fishes are considered animals of the *ngagas* or nature spirits, the hunting, harming, trapping and eating of any of these animals—deer, mountain sheep, wild goats, migratory birds and other rare species—is considered sinful. There are also ancient beliefs that casting one's shadow on or touching the nest of eggs of any bird is a taboo. The mother bird discards her own baby because of this reason as it is said that this act would cause the anger of the *ngagas*. This is the basic consciousness which every Buddhist has in Mongolia. As a result of these beliefs, some internationally endangered birds live comparatively unharmed in Mongolia.

OVOO (MOUNTAIN) WORSHIPPING CEREMONY

Most of the *ovoos* are believed to be residing places of Buddhist deities, protectors and subdued *ngagas* in Mongolia. Even if you are not a Mongolian, you can recognise a sacred Mongolian mountain or another site. They are generally impressive, with high features on the landscape, often with unusual shapes and supporting an abundance of wildlife and freshwater sources. Many monasteries view the *ovoo* worshipping ceremony to be one of their important responsibilities—from both a religious and an environmental perspective. Every year, monks perform these worshipping ceremonies at sacred sites with the support of the state government or the local administrations and Buddhist devotees. The President of Mongolia attends the worshipping ceremonies of the most important sacred mountains of Mongolia. The significance is that the Mongolian government protects nature through this traditional approach.

SACRED TEXTS

The role of sacred texts or manuscripts in protecting the environment is a very special part of Mongolian Buddhism. After Buddhism became Mongolia's state religion in the thirteenth century, Mongolian scholars codified and incorporated core components of ancient pre-Buddhist traditions into the new faith, embracing among other things the worship of natural sacred sites. So, of the 600 or more venerated mountains and sacred sites of Mongolia,

at least 300 have their own associated manuscripts honouring the local environment. More might once have had such references but the texts were most likely lost in the purge. These manuscripts helped preserve ancient ecological practices over the ages: some through describing rituals that would protect Mongolia from ecological dangers, some through offering prayers to the *ngagas* to bring blessings and purify past misdeeds that disrupt nature, others through inviting Buddhas and deities to clear obstacles such as natural disasters or incursions of evil, some asking for the increase of sacred animals and finally some—critically for today’s ecological initiatives—describing taboos and outlining punishment. The *ovoo* worship is one of the most popular methods of traditional nature conservation among Mongolians. Mountain-sacred texts or manuscripts are not only religious books for ritual ceremonies, but also invaluable repositories of wisdom derived from Mongolian Buddhist culture.

Even though this ancient Buddhist tradition of protecting nature was severely forbidden during the communist regime, Mongolian Buddhists are today playing the most important role in bringing back this sacred Buddhist tradition for protecting nature into the daily life of Mongolians. This is how we Mongolian Buddhists protect nature through our belief. Moreover, Mongolian Buddhists are involved in various projects with UNESCO, UNDP, NEMO, JAICA, ARC, the Tributary Fund, GTZ, USAID in the field of nature conservation.

CONCLUSION

The greed for external development without spiritual satisfaction is equivalent to the crime of stealing wealth from our own children. As we both believe in the law of karma and rebirth, we Buddhists and Hindus should take greater steps in bringing the awareness of nature conservation to the world through our teachings and provide a better environment for our future generations to inherit. I believe we have the potential to do so.

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS: SUSHMA SWARAJ

I strongly believe that conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness are not independent of each other. They are inseparable parts of human existence.

From time immemorial, this idea is very much embedded in our world view and in our universe. We thrive with nature and we lose our consciousness whenever we hurt or damage nature. That is the reason why culturally specific assumptions have been linked with the age of our ecological sensitivity since ancient times. Conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness are deeply embedded in the Indian and Buddhist philosophy. Our scriptures have underlined the vital importance of these two essential concepts for the survival and progress of mankind. Our experience has clearly shown that without respect for human beings and Mother Nature, peace and tranquility of mind and space cannot be achieved. History has also taught us in no uncertain terms, the perennial need for avoiding conflicts, physical or psychological, for personal, regional and global peace and for sustainable economic advancement of societies through protection of the environment.

The global cry for avoidance of conflicts and consciousness about climate change is well founded. Future generations would not forgive us, if corrective measures are not undertaken to save the world from these growing challenges.

Consciously or unconsciously, a kind of disconnect has emerged across our developmental theory where nature is seen more as a factor of production rather than a valued asset. The idea of utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill had maximising happiness as its focus with man at its centre. This utilitarian approach, combined with several such theories from the monetary school of thought, eventually became the basis of a framework that gave rise to what we know as the Washington Consensus.

At different points, these theories and frameworks have been dismissive of nature as having only an instrumental purpose. As a result, at different fora, there are heated debates whether the loss of nature is crucial enough to cause climate change, and if not, then business as usual goes on. The consequences are extremely clear and up for all to see. If one scans literature since the 1950s, scholars like Professor CP Snow and others have ascribed this to differences in cultures emanating from those following science and those following non-science approaches. Our scriptures have always shown respect and reverence for Mother Nature. Hence, since time immemorial we have been praying, 'May there be peace in space, may there be peace in the sky, may there be peace on the earth, may there be peace in the water, may there be peace in the plants and may there be peace in the trees.' We also pray, 'May the winds bring us happiness, may the rivers bring us happiness, may the herbs give us happiness, may night and day yield us happiness, may the dust of Mother Earth bring us happiness, may the trees give us happiness and may the sun pour down happiness.'

These universal prayers reflect our environmental consciousness, our deep commitment and sense of gratitude towards nature and its protection. Unfortunately, today we are facing an alarming situation and desperately need to protect our environment. As a woman, I also strongly believe that women generally end up absorbing most of the consequences of these developmental challenges. With the gradual loss of biodiversity, it is their livelihood and their security that becomes the first casualty. In urbanising India, the story is not very different. Several studies in urban India show that the levels of pesticide in mother's milk are much higher than those in cow's milk.

Challenges in the developed countries are also very similar. In 2014, according to a study in the United States, rising levels of glyphosate herbicide

were traced in mother's milk. These were ten times higher than the acceptable limits. I am reminded of 1958, when a housewife from Illinois, wrote to a scientist of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). She wrote, and I quote, 'Here in our village the elm trees have been sprayed for several years. When we moved in here six years ago there was a wealth of bird life. After several years of DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) spray the town is almost devoid of birds. It is hard to explain to children that the birds have been killed off.'

The first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, Wangari Mathai in her acceptance speech said, 'Industry and global institutions must appreciate that ensuring economic justice and ecological integrity are of greater value than profits at any cost. The extreme global inequities and prevailing consumption patterns continue at the expense of the environment and peaceful coexistence. The choice is ours.' I strongly believe that one major factor that has contributed to this is our growing disconnect with culture. I become very nostalgic when I think, how my mother would insist every morning that before going to school I must lay out the millet in the bird feeder and I must pour fresh water in the birdbath. At lunchtime, it was mandatory that two rotis would be made extra. One would be given to the cow and the other was for the street dogs. This was not just in our house, but a practice followed by most families.

Therefore, caring for the environment is and has always been an intrinsic part of our cultural values. Soon, the global community will be endorsing the post-2015 development agenda with the new goals being called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This testifies to our collective commitment for bringing back culture to our development landscape. Goal sixteen of the seventeen SDGs is very important as it recognises that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible. We cannot achieve poverty eradication and sustainable development without tackling conflict and insecurity. Along with other goals, it acknowledges that there can be no peace without equitable development and there can be no development without sustainable management of natural resources. SDG sixteen emphasises on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Similarly goal ten which talks about the inequalities across countries

is also likely to help restore global balance. Inequalities of income have widened across the developing economies and pose a major challenge to their social fabric. Unless things are managed by states in developing economies, globalisation can produce such outcomes that will severely disorient societies and states themselves.

Regarding conflict avoidance, our scriptures exhort us to nurture and cultivate virtues such as non-violence, that is, non-infliction of suffering on anyone through mind, speech and body. They teach us purity, peace, contentment, endurance, spirit of service, sacrifice, charity, humility, compassion, forgiveness, patience, as well as abstinence from malice and pride. Bhagwan Buddha had also taught us, 'Goodwill toward all beings is true religion. Cherish in your heart boundless goodwill to all that lives.'

He underlined that all beings long for happiness, therefore extend your compassion to all. Similarly he firmly emphasised that hatred never ceases with hatred, it can cease by love alone—this is an ancient law. His universal message to humanity was, 'Cleanse your heart of malice and harbour no hatred, not even against your enemies, but embrace all living beings with kindness.' While delivering his powerful message for world peace, Swami Vivekananda said, 'If there were no fanaticism in the world it would make more progress than it does now. It is a mistake to think that fanaticism can make for the progress of mankind. On the contrary, it is a retarding element creating hatred and anger and causing people to fight each other and making them unsympathetic.'

Swami ji firmly believed that, '...no civilisation can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed and brutality stop. No civilisation can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another. The first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably on the religious convictions of others, nay, more to understand that not only should we be charitable but positively helpful to each other, however different our religious ideas and convictions may be.' Thus, the concise, clear and complete message of Swami Vivekananda is, 'If anyone dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and destruction of the others I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written

in spite of resistance, “help and not fight”, “assimilation and not destruction”, “harmony and peace and not dissension”.’

In this backdrop it is highly desirable that we realise what international commitments and national legislations cannot achieve, may well be achieved by our faith and belief in the oneness and love of all existence. Through this same path we can effectively deal with both issues of conflict avoidance and environmental degradation. It is obvious and incumbent upon all cultural and religious leaders to play an important role in moulding our mindsets towards conflict avoidance and developing a greater environmental consciousness. Here I urge upon all humankind to work towards evolving enlightened citizenship. This alone will provide hope, support and inner strength to the masses, transcending physical boundaries. We need a fresh wave of movement for spiritualising humankind, to rejuvenate its commitments to the fundamentals of compassion, consideration and the idea of peaceful coexistence.

We have no choice but to live with the core values of simplicity, restraint, empathy, generosity and kindness while recognising the interdependence between society and nature. Already some inspired souls are actively engaged on this pathway in different parts of the world. Many of them are sitting here today in this hall. I bow before you and I bow before them. Their hard work has given us hope in this arduous and uphill task. I repeat their message, which says, ‘Be united, speak in harmony, let your minds apprehend alike, common be your prayer, common be the end of your assembly, common be your resolution, common be your deliberations, alike be your feelings, unified be your hearts, common be your intentions, perfect be your unity.’

In conclusion I would like to pray for you all by saying, *Sarve bhavantu sukhinaha, sarve santu niramayaha, sarve bhadrani pashyant, makashchid dukh bhagbhavet*. Let all be happy, let all be healthy, let all see good things, let none be miserable.

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VOTE OF THANKS: LAMA LOBZANG

Most respected mahasangha, respected Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs, Smt Sushma Swaraj ji, His Eminence Khamba Lama, Supreme Head of all Mongolian Buddhists, respected Venerables, leading lights of the Hindu and Buddhist world, dear friends and lovers of peace on our planet, I thank you all for making this conference such a grand success. I would specially like to thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, for spending some of his precious time with us and encouraging us with his inspiring words. I am also very grateful to the Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs, Smt Sushma Swaraj ji for kindly taking time out of her busy schedule to be with us at the concluding ceremony.

Special thanks are also due to Hon'ble Minister of State for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Mr Mahesh Sharma and Hon'ble Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr Kiren Rijju for further motivating us with their presence. The presence of many members of Union ministries and senior officials is proof of how serious the Indian government is about the two great challenges that humankind faces today—conflict and environmental degradation. Dear friends, you will agree that the last two days have been extremely fruitful especially because they have given us hope. Hope that we can still join forces and save ourselves from destroying ourselves and this beautiful planet that we all share and call home.

For this we owe gratitude to Pujya Swami Ravi Shankar, Most Venerable Sayadaw Dr Ashin Nyanissara, His Eminence Khamba Lama Demberel and all other esteemed Hindu and Buddhist religious leaders, scholars, opinion makers and philosophers from all over the world who have gathered here to share their precious thoughts with us. I am also very grateful to their Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners and other senior members of the diplomatic community for representing their respective countries and for the encouragement they have given to us with their presence.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank our wonderful family of organisers that has worked together over several months to make this conference a success. So I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation of the Vivekananda International Foundation and The Tokyo Foundation as well as my colleagues and coworkers at the International Buddhist Confederation for the wonderful job that they have done. Last but not the least, I would like to express my (I cannot thank General sahib, but I can express) heartiest congratulations to General Vij, the director of Vivekananda International Foundation. This is his initiative and it is under his leadership that this has been organised so well. He worked tirelessly, so on behalf of all participants who are here I congratulate you, General sahib; thank you very much. Even to you, Tokyo Foundation's president, Mr Masahiro Akiyama, and to Khamba Lama ji. I would once again like to thank all of you who have participated here in this conference.

*Bhavatu sabba mangalam, rakkhantu sabba devataha,
sabba dhamma anubhavana, sada sotti bhavantute.*

CHETIYA CARIKA
PILGRIMAGE TO
BODHGAYA

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NARENDRA MODI

After Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, I have had the opportunity to visit this sacred place—Bodh Gaya. I feel blessed and happy to be amidst all venerable members, visiting ministers and diplomats from foreign countries.

In the symposium we have been talking about one of the most impactful teachers in world history—Gautama Buddha, whose teachings have inspired millions of people over centuries. Today we are also celebrating Janmasthmi, the day Lord Krishna was born. The world has also so much to learn from Lord Krishna. When we talk about Lord Krishna, we say ‘*Shri Krishnam vande jagadgurum*’. We say Sri Krishna is the teacher of all teachers and the guru of all gurus. Both Gautama Buddha and Lord Krishna have taught the world so much. The themes of this conference in a way are inspired by the values and ideals given by these two greats. Sri Krishna gave his message before the start of the ‘great war’ in the Mahabharata and Lord Buddha repeatedly emphasised on rising above warfare. The message from both of them was about establishing dharma. Both of them gave great prominence to principles and processes.

Gautama Buddha gave the Eightfold Path and the *Panchsheel* while Sri Krishna gave valuable lessons of life in the form of Karma Yoga.

These two divine souls had the strength to bring people together by rising above differences. Their teachings are most practical, eternal and are more relevant in this day and age than ever before. The place where we are meeting makes it even more special. We are meeting in Bodh Gaya, a land that has a distinctive place in the history of humankind. This is the land of enlightenment. Years ago, what Bodh Gaya got was Siddhartha but what Bodh Gaya gave to the world was Lord Buddha—the epitome of knowledge, peace and compassion. This is therefore the ideal venue for a dialogue.

It was my great privilege to have participated in the inaugural function of the first Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness hosted by the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) and The Tokyo Foundation with the support of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) at Delhi. The conference was conceptualised on shifting the paradigm from conflict resolution to conflict avoidance and from environmental regulation to environmental consciousness. I had shared my sum of thoughts on the two critical themes which are threatening humanity as no other challenge before. I recall, how in the context of both issues and for changing the global paradigm of thinking, the world is looking to the Buddha today as conflict resolution mechanisms and environmental regulations—both dependent on the instrumentality of nation states—are increasingly failing to measure up to challenges.

Spiritual and religious leaders and also intellectuals, largely from Buddhist societies participated in the two-day conference and deliberated on the two issues. At the end of the two-day conference, and after a churning in which spiritual, religious and intellectual leaders participated, The Tokyo Foundation has announced that they have decided to hold a similar conference. Other Buddhist nations have also offered to hold similar conferences in their countries. This is an extraordinary development, which coincides with the rise of Asia as an economic and civilisational phenomenon. The themes of the conference informed and shaped by the Hindu-Buddhist civilisational and cultural perspective, promise to deepen the notion of conflict avoidance philosophy and environmental consciousness in Asia and beyond.

The two-day conference seems to have arrived at a broad consensus on both issues. On the issue of conflict, most of which is being driven by

religious intolerance, the participants in the conference seem to have agreed that there is no problem with the freedom to practice one's religion. It is when radical elements try to enforce their ideologies on others that the potential for conflict arises. On the issue of environment, the conference seems to have agreed that the philosophic understanding underpinning dharma, which stresses the protection of natural heritage, is critical for sustainable development. I am glad that the United Nations (UN) too has arrived at the view that sustainable development is achievable only through alignment of development with the local culture of the people. This in my view is a positive turn in the development modelling of the world of diversity. I am glad that the turn in thinking at the global level has created an ecosystem for the Hindu-Buddhist societies to carry forward their consensual ideas to the global fora.

I personally consider the Hindu-Buddhist Conference on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness as an important development in a world that seems to be short of durable ideas on both issues. Hindu philosophy was one of the greatest beneficiaries of the advent and teachings of Lord Buddha. Many scholars have analysed the impact of Buddha on Hinduism. In fact, Adi Shankara was even critiqued for the way he was influenced by the Buddha and was called 'Prachanda Buddha' meaning that Shankara was Buddha in a disguised form. That was the extent of the influence of the Buddha on Adi Shankara, regarded by many as the tallest Hindu philosopher. At the mass level, Buddha was so venerated that Jayadeva in his *Gita Govinda* even praised him as *Mahavishnu* or God himself who descended to preach ahimsa.

So Hinduism, after the Buddha's advent, became Buddhist-Hinduism or Hindu-Buddhism. They are today an inseparable amalgam. This is how Swami Vivekananda praised Buddha: 'At the time Buddha was born, India was in need of a great spiritual leader, a prophet. Buddha never bowed down to anything, neither Veda, nor caste, nor priest, nor customs. He fearlessly reasoned so far as reason could take him. Such a fearless search for truth and such love for every living thing, the world has never seen. Buddha was braver and more sincere than any teacher. Buddha was the first human being to give to this world a complete system of morality. He was good for good's sake. He loved for love's sake. Buddha was the great preacher of equality. Every man and woman has the same right to attain spirituality—that was his teaching.

I would personally call India—Buddhist India, as it has imbibed all the values and virtues of the teachings of Buddha by religious scholars incorporating them in their religious literature.’

When this highest tribute is paid by a Hindu philosopher, would it be wrong to call today’s Hinduism in quality and substance as a Buddhist-Hinduism? Buddha is the crown jewel of the Indian nation, which accepts all ways of worship of all religions. This quality of Hinduism in India was a product of many great spiritual masters. Chief among them was Buddha. This is what sustains the secular character of India. The enlightenment, which Buddha attained in Bodh Gaya, also leads the light of enlightenment in Hinduism. As the first servant (*pradban sevak*) of this ancient nation, I revere Buddha as a reformer of not only Hinduism but also the world. He has given all of us a new world view and vision, which is critical for the survival of all of us and this world. I recognise how Buddhists all over the world revere Bodh Gaya as a place of pilgrimage.

We in India would like to develop Bodh Gaya so that it can become the spiritual capital and civilisational bond between India and the Buddhist world. The Government of India would like to provide all possible support that its Buddhist cousin nations need for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs from this holiest of holy places. I am happy to read the Declaration of Buddhist Religions and Spiritual Leaders. This Declaration is the result of hard work and extensive dialogue, which is why it is a pioneering document that will show us the way ahead. I also echo Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, who highlighted the importance of tolerance, appreciation of diversity and the spirit of compassion and fraternity. His message to this august gathering and his continuous support for furthering this initiative is a matter of great strength for us.

I extend my congratulations and best wishes to you all. This conference has raised a hope and urge to go beyond clash and create a dialogue framework for civilisational harmony and world peace. I wish you well in your constant and determined efforts to ensure that our wisdom reaches the future generations and that too in a manner in which they can practically relate to. This is essential not for us or them, but for the progress of the entire human race and the beautiful surroundings which we have got from Mother Nature.

BODH GAYA DECLARATION OF BUDDHIST LEADERS

This Bodh Gaya Declaration of Buddhist spiritual and temporal leaders, scholars, philosophers and thinkers is made in Bodh Gaya at the conclusion of day-long devotional and spiritual accomplishments.

It is hereby declared that:

- Bodh Gaya, where Siddhartha became Buddha, is the seat of enlightenment for the world of Buddhism and Buddhist civilisation that have inspired all religions of the world.
- In this age of increasing conflicts where in the last fifteen years, religious conflicts have trebled and killings in the name of religion have gone up by two-thirds, the spiritual gift of Buddha is the only hope for the world to overcome the intra-religious and interreligious strife and massacre.
- The Hindu-Buddhist civilisations have a special responsibility to work for conflict avoidance and environment consciousness by expounding the philosophical principles common to Hinduism and Buddhism to save the world from fratricidal conflicts.
- The Hindu-Buddhist civilisations that celebrate diversity and are non-conflicting with other religions will have to work together for a paradigm shift from the present conflict resolution model powered by geopolitics to conflict avoidance model inspired by civilisation.

- This will call for in-depth spiritual orientation to present an alternative world view as a new paradigm for understanding, appreciating and celebrating diversity based on the ancient idea of dhamma in Pali and dharma in Sanskrit.
- There is no place more appropriate and elevating than Bodh Gaya for inspiring and institutionalising such noble work.
- Bodh Gaya has the credentials to emerge and must emerge as the global symbol and vehicle for enlightenment, peace and hope for civilisational, spiritual and cultural harmony.
- A Buddhist spiritual and civilisational institution that will bring together and make the entire Buddhist world participate in this momentous task will be built in Bodh Gaya in the coming three years.
- Hindu civilisational and spiritual institutions will be invited to work with this new Buddhist institution to share the responsibility for global peace and harmony.
- Buddhist spiritual leaders will approach governments of all Buddhist nations to support this monumental and noble task of developing Bodh Gaya as an International Centre of Buddhism for the enlightenment of all humankind.
- We call for support from the Government of India for the development of infrastructure and other public utilities in the area.
- A team of experts will be constituted to begin the noble work and the responsibility for this purpose shall be given to a committee.

SAMVAD SPEAKERS

On 26 May 2014, **Narendra Modi** took oath as the Prime Minister of India, becoming the first ever prime minister to be born after India attained independence. Dynamic, dedicated and determined, Narendra Modi reflects the aspiration and hope of over a billion Indians. Ever since he assumed office, PM Modi has embarked on a journey of all-round and inclusive development where every Indian can realise their hopes and aspirations. He remains deeply inspired by the principle of 'Antyodaya', of serving the last person in the queue. Through innovative ideas and initiatives, the government has ensured that the wheels of progress move at rapid pace and the fruits of development reach every citizen. Governance has become open, easier and transparent. In a first, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana marked a paradigm shift in ensuring that every citizen is integrated with the financial system of the nation. His clarion call for 'Make in India' complemented by a focus on making business easy has stimulated unprecedented vigour and enterprise among investors and entrepreneurs. Labour reforms and dignity of labour under the 'Shrameva Jayate' initiative has empowered several workers of small and medium industries, also providing a boost to our skilled youth. In a first, the Government of India launched three social security schemes for the people of India and also focused on giving pension to the elderly and insurance cover to the poor. On 2 October 2014, Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, the Prime Minister launched 'Swachh Bharat Mission', a mass movement for cleanliness across the nation. The scale and impact of the movement is historic. Narendra Modi's foreign policy initiatives have realised the true potential and role of world's

largest democracy, India on the world stage. He began his term in office in presence of all Heads of State of SAARC nations. His address to the General Assembly of United Nations was appreciated across the world. Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to embark on a bilateral visit to Nepal after a long period of seventeen years, to Australia after twenty-eight years, to Fiji after thirty-one years and Seychelles after thirty-four years. Since taking over, Narendra Modi attended UN, BRICS, SAARC and G-20 Summits, where India's interventions and views on a variety of global economic and political issues were widely appreciated. His visit to Japan marked a momentous chapter in unfolding a new era of India–Japan relations. He became the first Prime Minister of India to visit Mongolia and his visits to China and South Korea have been successful in drawing investments to India. His continued engaging with Europe was seen during his visit to France and Germany. Several world leaders including Prime Minister of Australia Tony Abbott, President Xi Jinping of People's Republic of China, President Maithripala Sirisena of Sri Lanka and President Vladimir Putin of Russia have visited India and these visits have achieved breakthroughs in improving cooperation between India and these nations. The 2015 Republic Day saw President Barack Obama visit India as the Chief Guest, a first in the history of India–USA relations. Narendra Modi's clarion call for marking one day as 'International Day of Yoga' received an overwhelming response at the UN. In a first, a total of 177 nations across the world came together and passed the resolution to declare 21 June as the 'International Day of Yoga at the UN'.

Born on 17 September 1950 in a small town in Gujarat, he grew up in a poor but loving family 'without a spare rupee'. The initial hardships of life not only taught the value of hard work but also exposed him to the avoidable sufferings of the common people. This inspired him from a very young age to immerse himself in service of people and the nation. In initial years, he worked with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) a nationalist organisation devoted to nation building and later devoted himself in politics working with the Bharatiya Janta Party organisation at national and state level. Narendra Modi completed his MA in political science from Gujarat University. In the year 2001, he became the Chief Minister of his home state Gujarat and went on to serve a record four terms as Chief Minister. He transformed Gujarat, which was reeling from the after-effects of a devastating earthquake, into a growth engine that makes a strong contribution to India's development. Narendra Modi is a 'People's Leader', dedicated to solving their problems and improving their well-being. Nothing is more satisfying to him than being amongst the people, sharing their joys and alleviating their sorrows. His powerful 'personal connect' with the people on ground is complemented by a strong online presence. He is known as

India's most techno-savvy leader, using the web to reach people and bring about change in their lives. He is very active on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Sound Cloud, LinkedIn, Weibo and other forums. Beyond politics, Narendra Modi enjoys writing. He has authored several books, including poetry. He begins his day with yoga, which centres his body and mind and instills the power of calmness in an otherwise fast-paced routine. This is the man, an embodiment of courage, compassion and conviction, on whom the nation has bestowed its mandate, trusting that he will rejuvenate India and make it a bright beacon to the world.

Gen NC Vij, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, who was commissioned in Dec 1962 in the Dogra Regiment, was the twenty-first Chief of the Indian Army from Dec 2002 to 31 Jan 2005. As the DGMO during Kargil Operations, he coordinated withdrawal of the Pakistani troops with his counterpart. As DGMO, he conceptualised and thereafter oversaw the execution of the operations (OP KHUKRI), in Sierra Leone, wherein over 455 Indian soldiers, serving as part of UN Peacekeeping contingent who had been taken hostage, were rescued in a daredevil operation, which got worldwide acclaim. His tenure as the Army Chief was widely acclaimed for a bold and imaginative strategy of erecting a 670-km long fence all along the line of control in J&K, in a record time of nine months, thus reducing the infiltration to a trickle. He was also responsible for conceptualising the raising of South-Western Command and 9 Corps HQ for providing a strategically balanced posture. Other notable achievements of his tenure included the start of the 'ex-servicemen's contributory health scheme' (ECHS) and promotion of a large number of officers through Ajay Vikram Singh Committee Report. On superannuation, he was appointed as founder Vice Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority on 28 Sep 2005, with the status of a Union Cabinet Minister for a tenure of five years. He is presently Director of Vivekananda International Foundation, an internationally renowned think tank located in Delhi. The VIF has relationship with over thirty think tanks internationally.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is a spiritual and humanitarian leader. He is the founder of the Art of Living and the International Association for Human Values. His vision of a stress-free, violence-free society has united millions in 152 countries through service projects and the courses of The Art of Living programmes.

Numerous honours have been bestowed upon Sri Sri, including the highest civilian awards of Colombia, Mongolia and Paraguay. He is the recipient of fifteen honorary doctorates from around the world.

Sri Sri is the Chairman of the Quality Control of India Yoga Certification Committee and a member of the Amarnath Shrine Board (appointed by Government of Jammu and Kashmir, India). He is also Chancellor of Sri Sri University.

His Eminence Dr Ashin Nyanissara is the Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, Chairman of Theravada Dhamma Society of America (TDSA), Chairman of the International Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (IATBU) and Honorary Professor of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University. He has been teaching the fundamentals of Buddhist scriptures, advanced Pitaka scriptures and other Dhamma lessons at several study centres and is extremely well-versed in the Pitaka commentaries and the subject of missionary duties. He has founded the Sitagu International Buddhist Academies in Sagaing, Yangon and Mandalay where over 1,000 monks and nuns are taught yearly. He is also serving as Honorary Professor at the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He has previously received numerous important titles such as Maha Dhamma-ka-hti-kaBahu-janaHitadhara, Agga Maha Saddhama Jotikadhaza and Agga Maha Pandita. He has also formed the ‘Theravada Buddhist Association’ for Myanmar in Tokyo, Japan, and has also formed a separate Thera Buddhist Association for the Japanese in an effort to propagate Theravada Buddhism abroad.

Shinzo Abe is the current Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He is the third-longest serving Prime Minister of the post-War Japan.

Minoru Kiuchi is currently serving as the State Minister for Foreign Affairs in Japan. Previously he has been elected for many important posts such as Director of the Foreign Affairs Division of the LDP, Director of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and Director of the Special Committee on National Security of the House of Representatives. Mr Kiuchi has also been elected as a member of the House of Representatives (LDP) three times in his entire career; alongside he has also served as a Visiting Professor at the Takushoku University. With his utmost concern regarding saving the environment, he has also done commendable work as a Member of Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Member of Committee on Environment of the House of Representatives. He has also participated in election observations in Bosnia as a member of the International Peace Cooperation Corps,

Prime Minister's Office. Subsequently he worked at the Foreign Policy Bureau, Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau and European Affairs Bureau.

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (CBK), born 29 June 1945, was the fourth Executive President of Sri Lanka from November 1994 to November 2005; Prime Minister for a brief while in 1994; and Chief Minister of Western Province in 1993. She is from Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

Both her parents, father Solomon Bandaranaike and mother Sirimavo Bandarnaike, were Prime Ministers.

President Kumaratunga has lived in the shadow of constant violence. Her father was assassinated in 1959; her husband (actor and politician Vijaya Kumaratunga) in 1988 and she survived an assassination attempt in 1999.

After relinquishing the presidency in November 2005, CBK lived abroad using London as base, returning to Colombo often.

CBK returned to active politics last year and played an important role in the victory of President Maithripala Sirisena, who has been a loyalist of Bandaranaike family throughout his political career.

CBK is the Chairperson of the South Asia Policy and Research Institute (SAPRI) and member of Club de Madrid, through which she has been working on issues such as education of the girl child in South Asia, eradication of poverty, the role of women in peace-building and post-conflict reconciliation.

A moderate, she has been favourably disposed towards India but also had looked at China for development assistance and initiated the Hambantota Port Project. Both Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and Muslim parties view CBK as more sympathetic to minority issues than Ranil Wickremesinghe.

CBK has a daughter and a son, both of whom reside in the UK.

Mr Masahiro Akiyama, President, The Tokyo Foundation, Japan graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Tokyo in 1964 and later entered the Ministry of Finance. His professional career in government includes budget examining in MOF's Budget Bureau, along with being the head of the Banking Investigation Division in MOF's Banking Bureau. He was also the chief of the Nara Prefectural Police Headquarters, and Councillor in MOF's Secretariat. Later, in 1991, he moved to the defence agency serving as Director-General of the Defense Policy Bureau along with the Finance Bureau, later he became the administrative Vice-Minister of Defense before resigning from the agency in 1998. Mr Akiyama has also been a visiting

scholar at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University in 1999, and was Chairman of the Ocean Policy Research Foundation from 2001 to 2012. Mr Akiyama has also served as a Professor at Rikkyo University and Visiting Professor at CISS, Peking University.

Swaminathan Gurumurthy is a professional writer, academic and activist. A Visiting Faculty of the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, he is also the Distinguished Professor of Legal Anthropology at The Palkhiwala Centre for Legal Anthropology, Sastra University Thanjavur. One of the Trustees of the Vivekananda International Foundation, he is also a member of its Advisory Council. Starting as a chartered accountant and corporate adviser by profession, he became the adviser to the Indian Express newspaper, then turned into investigative journalist of high repute in 1980s exposing the corrupt nexus between corporates and government. In an effort to silence him, the then government arrested him on a forged document. As the plot got exposed, media demanded apology from the government. Hamish McDonald, an Australian journalist, says Gurumurthy had 'a high sense of probity' and 'his investigative writing must rank among the most powerful examples of investigative journalism anywhere in the world'. The *Business Baron* magazine rated his knowledge of economics, finance and accounts as 'outstanding'. As an adviser he has resolved many irresolvable disputes among corporate families and groups. The media repeatedly rated him among the 50 most powerful persons in India—*Gentleman* magazine in 1990; *Business Baron* magazine in 2004; *India Today* magazine in 2005 and again in 2014. Yet, he declined all positions offered to him by governments and corporates. He regularly contributes columns in leading newspapers like the *Hindu Business Line*, the *New Indian Express* and others on issues of critical importance to the society and the country.

Dr Lokesh Chandra is among the foremost contemporary scholars of the Vedic period, and of Tibetan, Mongolian and Sino-Japanese Buddhism. He has previously served as the Vice President for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Chairman of the Indian Council for Historical Research and Director of the International Academy of Indian Culture. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1974 to 1980 and again from 1980 to 1986. He is a scholar of Sanskrit, Pali, Classical Greek, Latin, Chinese, Japanese, Avesta, Old Persian, Old Javanese, Tibetan, Mongolian and other languages of cultural importance, and has also studied Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, English, German, French and Russian. He has to his

credit over 360 works and text editions, among them classics like the *Dictionary of Tibetan Art, Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature, Buddhist Iconography of Tibet* and the *Tibetan–Sanskrit Dictionary* in nineteen volumes. He has also edited several volumes of Tibetan historical texts, including a history of Samye, the first monastery of Tibet. He is a recipient of numerous prestigious awards the world over. In 2006, he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan by the President of India. He is presently the President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Most Ven Arayawangso is an esteemed master of Vipasaana and at present is not only the Abbot of Buddhapoj Hariphunchai Forest Monastery in Lamphun, Thailand but also holds other important posts such as Chair of Sangha of the four monasteries under supervision including Arayawangsa Bangsai Forest Monastery in Ayudhya, Yannasampanno Arayarama Forest Monastery in Chiangrai, Suan Dhamma Khaokhunnam Ramnakorn, a meditation site in Nakhon, Si Thammarat Tesrangsi Meditation House, Arayawangso Buddha Dhamma Park in Phuket. He is also serving as the Chief Patron, Buddhist Revival Charitable Trust (BRCT) registered in Mumbai, India and Honorary Advisor to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI), Pune, India. Ven Arayawangso has also been the recipient of ‘Dharma Pratipatti Vyaptidhara Nayaka Thero of Siyam Upaliwangsa, Sri Lanka’ and also awarded the title of ‘Phrakhrupalad Viriyawat’. Previously he has been invited as the guest speaker in many renowned institutions and written more than 500 articles and published fifty Dhamma books. Ven Arayawangso is also working towards the promotion and understanding of Buddhism and Hinduism along with strengthening relationship with Mahayana in China.

Ven Prof Khy Sovanratana has previously worked as Lecturer in Buddhist Philosophy at Preah Sihanoukraj Buddhist University, Phnom Penh. In the year 2003, due to his extraordinary work, the King of Cambodia conferred upon him several ecclesiastical titles in the Supreme Sangha Council of Cambodia, the last one being ‘Preah Dhammaghosacharya’, Royal Title Second Class in 2012, the second highest in the Cambodian Sangha hierarchy. He is currently a Personal Advisor to His Holiness Samdech Tep Vong, the Great Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia, the Abbot of Mongkulvan monastery, the First Vice President, Secretariat of the Supreme Sangha Council of Cambodia, a Personal Advisor to the Buddhist Supreme Patriarch (Sangharaja) of Cambodia, a Vice Rector of Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University, and a faculty in psychology at Pannasatra University of Cambodia.

Venerable Prof Khy Sovanratana has made extensive overseas travels for visits, conferences and symposiums. He is presently the Vice Rector, Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University, Cambodia.

Kripasur Sherpa is a member of second Nepalese Constituent Assembly and Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Nivedita R Bhide is a Jeevanvratī (Life Worker) and Vice President of Vivekananda Kendra. She is also a Trustee of the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. She has previously worked as a member for the National Council for Teacher Education and is also the founder member of International Forum for Indian Heritage. She is also the coordinator for the Institute of Culture at Guwahati and is a regular faculty in All India Yoga camps and spiritual retreats. Previously she has conducted seminars for various communities in north-east India on topics like 'Traditional Systems: Change and Continuity', written books, given talks in some of the most prestigious universities worldwide and represented India in the Meeting of Educational Experts at Darwin, Australia convened by UNESCO for the Asia-Pacific region. Recently she was a speaker at the seminar on Swami Vivekananda conducted in Australia by ICCR.

Dr Bataa Mishig-Ish is an acclaimed academic and Adviser on Religious Affairs to the President of Mongolia. He is also Chief Adviser to the Grand Maitreya Project in Mongolia and serves as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Grand Maitreya Foundation.

He undertook monastic education in Ulaanbaatar and continued his academic education in Hawaii and Japan.

He is an authority on the subject of religion in the modern world and had examined challenging issues that have appeared in the social relations of Buddhist institutions in Mongolia, after democracy and freedom was restored in 1990. He continues to examine how the public, culture and educational relations of restored and reinvigorated Buddhist institutions are being worked out in a modern society.

Born in Hamburg (Germany) in 1967, **Dr Karsten Schmidt** lived in Africa (Ivory Coast/Madagascar) till the age of seven. After finishing school in Germany, he studied at London University College in 1991. From 1993 onwards he continued to study Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Sociology and Tibetology in Frankfurt and Marburg (Germany). After his PhD in 2006 on the topic of 'Buddhism as Religion

and Philosophy’, Dr Schmidt worked as Assistant Lecturer and in various postdoctoral positions at Goethe University Frankfurt in the areas of Comparative Religion and Philosophy of Religion. Currently he is involved in a cooperation project between Goethe University Frankfurt, University Potsdam and the University of Religions and Denominations (Dānešgāh-e adyān va mazāheb) in the city of Qom (Iran) concerning, ‘Developing Comparative Methods in Religious Studies—Scientific Investigations, Exchanges and Dialogue’ including yearly conferences as well as giving lectures/seminars in the fields of Buddhist Studies. In 2014 he was responsible for a dialogue event with HH the Dalai Lama, Bishop Ackermann and the Philosopher Rainer Forst in Frankfurt.

Tsuneo ‘Nabe’ Watanabe joined the Tokyo Foundation in 2009 after serving as a Senior Fellow at the Mitsui Global Strategic Studies Institute in Tokyo since April 2005. In 1995, he joined the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC. Previously he has served as a Visiting Research Scholar, Research Associate, Fellow and Senior Fellow. Currently, he is an Adjunct Fellow of CSIS and Senior Fellow of the Okinawa Peace Assistance Center. His publications include *How Were Three Principles on Arms Reviewed?* (Co-authored with Satoshi Morimoto et.al. in Japanese) (Kairyusha, 2014), *New Understanding of the Contemporary America* (in Japanese)(Mikasa Shobo, 2012), *US–China Trading Places: History Tells the Truth of the Bilateral Relation* (in Japanese) (PHP Research Institute, 2011). Watanabe received his DDS from Tohoku University in 1988 and his MA in Political Science from the New School for Social Research in New York in 1995. He is Senior Fellow and Director of Foreign & Security Policy Research at The Tokyo Foundation, Japan.

Prof Balagangadhara (known as ‘Balu’) is a naturalised Belgian of Indian origin, who has been living and teaching in Belgium for nearly forty years. His research began as an attempt to describe and understand European culture against the background of Indian culture, but very soon developed into a ‘comparative science of cultures’. This science tries to reconceptualise the study of cultures as a scientific discipline and is best seen in contrast to Cultural or Social Anthropology. Prof Balu is the author of many books and articles on this subject. His writings show that the extant descriptions of India (whether informal, journalistic or academic) are expressions of European experiences of India and tell us more about European culture than they do about Indian culture. He is not to be located either in the postcolonial or in the postmodern traditions, both of which are seen by him as pernicious intellectual fads. He is a Professor at Ghent University, Belgium.

Jean-Pierre Lehmann is Emeritus Professor at IMD, Lausanne, Switzerland, where he was appointed to the Chair of International Political Economy in 1997. He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service (BSFS) from Georgetown University (1966) and his DPhil (doctorate) at Oxford University. Dr Lehmann founded the Evian Group in 1995, an international coalition of corporate, government and opinion leaders, united by a common vision of enhancing global prosperity for the benefit of all by fostering an open, inclusive, sustainable and equitable global market economy in a rules-based multilateral framework. He has had a particularly close involvement with Asia. His doctoral thesis was on Japanese Economic History during the period of transformation in the mid/late nineteenth century, drawing on lessons for development, governance and growth. The overall theme he is primarily working on now is 'Asia in the New Global Disorder', assessing the Asian diverse regions' transformative forces and trends while emphasising on holistic and multidisciplinary perspectives. He acts in various capacities in a number of global public policy forums, as an adviser to governments and corporations, on the editorial board of several journals and as a frequent commentator in the international media.

Sai Sam Kham is a thirty-eight-year-old Executive Director of Metta Development Foundation, Yangon. Metta is the Pali word for *maitri* or friends. Born in the northern Shan State, Myanmar, he studied at Yadanarbon University and University of Computer Science, Mandalay, Myanmar for undergrads and at Schumacher College, Plymouth University, UK for postgraduate degree. In 2000, he started community development work as a volunteer at Shan State Kachin Baptist Association, Development Department, visiting conflict-ridden remote villages, working with opium farmers on issues like food security, drug addiction, forest and resource conservation. In 2003, he started volunteering with Metta Development Foundation and became full-time staff in 2007. In September 2011, he was appointed as Executive Director of Metta. Myanmar's ethnic, religious, social and political diversity expanded his interest into multiculturalism, social justice and peace. He actively participated in the 2013 Conference on Interfaith Dialogue on Climate Change in Sri Lanka, organised by International Network of Engaged Buddhism and Seva Lanka.

Param Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giri has, since the days before renunciation, successfully floated various need-driven projects in the service of Indian culture without any governmental assistance, with public support and participation. He has given over 1500 lectures worldwide; Swamiji has established Maharshi Ved Vyasa

Pratishthan; twenty Vedic schools in nine states of India and also provides support to five other Vedic schools. He also founded Sant Shri Dnyaneshwar Gurukul with the main goal of serving the cause of saints of India, this trust has busied itself over the past decade with organisation of Geeta Sadhana Shibirs (spiritual retreats), support to spiritual seekers, free eateries for the traditional students at Alandi and Vrindavan, 'Sant Dnyaneshwar Award' to eminent scholars of saint literature, publication of spiritual literature through Dharmashree Prakashan, hostel for rural students at Beed (Maharashtra), and Govinda Day Care Centre at Pune for toddlers from economically challenged families. Sant Shri Dnyaneshwar Ashram in Toronto, Canada caters to the spiritual needs of the local Indian population.

Ven Thich Nhat Tu is a Vietnamese Buddhist reformer, an author, a poet and an active social activist. He is committed to propagate Buddha's teachings through education, cultural activities and charitable programmes in order to benefit the individuals and the society at large.

In his early teens, **Ven Khen Rinpoche Jangchup Choeden** joined Gaden Shartse Norling College in Mundgod, Karnataka, and embarked on an extensive course of traditional Buddhist education, at one of the most prestigious Monastic universities of Tibet. He learned Buddhist logic (Pramāna Vidya), Epistemology, Ontology and Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā), Madhyamika philosophy, Buddhist psychology and Phenomenology (Abhidharma), and Buddhist Ethics (Vinaya). He was the topper of most prestigious and tough Lharam Exam of year 1997. Consequently, he was awarded the title Geshe Lharampa. Subsequently, he joined Gyuto Tantric University to learn Tantric studies and earned degree of Geshe Ngagrampa. In the year 2009, His Holiness the Dalai Lama specially appointed him the Abbot of prestigious and historic Gaden Shartse Monastery, Mundgod. Since then he is leading the monastery. He is playing active role to bridge various spiritual traditions the of world. He was a key participant in the historic international dialogue on Vinaya in March 2015 in Delhi between The Nalanda Tradition of Tibet and Theravada Tradition of Sri Lanka.

Lyonpo Namgay Dorji is Bhutan's second democratically elected Minister of Finance, who formally took charge of the Ministry on 27 July 2013. Mr Dorji contested as candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) from Draagteng-Langthil constituency in Trongsa. Prior to joining politics in 2008, he served as a Deputy General Manager (Legal) in the then Bhutan Development Finance Corporation.

Born on 23 February 1968, Mr Doji is from Ngada, Langthil, Trongsa. He is married with three daughters.

Mr Dorji holds LLB from University of Bombay, Government Law College, Bombay, India; and Bachelors in Commerce from Sherubtse College, Kanglung, University of New Delhi, India.

Bayartsogt Sangajav is the current Chief of the Cabinet Secretariat of Government of Mongolia, Minister and Member of Parliament of Mongolia.

Sri Kshetra Adichunchanagiri is an ancient centre of worship with an unbroken tradition of religious observances like prayers and yajnas that have imbued the ambience with peace and serenity. Sri Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Math through educational activities, Sri Adichunchanagiri Shikshana Trust (R) established 475 institutions where 1,30,000 students take education. Also, established rural and urban hospitals to provide quality health to needy society. Launching the project of plantation, Sri Math accomplished planting of 50 million saplings successfully in the state of Karnataka. **Sri Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji** is the seventy-second Pontiff of the Sri Math. A devoted disciple of His Holiness Jagadguru Padmabhushan Bhairavaikya Sri Sri Sri Dr Balagangadharanatha Mahaswamiji (Sri Guruji), the seventy-first Pontiff of Sri Math, Sri Mahaswamiji was initiated into the ascetic fold (sanyas) in the year 1998. At that time, he had with him a Master's degree in Structural Engineering but in keeping with the requirements of his new life, he acquired a postgraduate degree in Sanskrit 'Adwaita Vidwat'. Under the guidance of his Guruji, Sri Mahaswamiji established and served institutions ranging from pre-nursery to research centres in Chickballapur and Kolar Districts of Karnataka, at New Delhi and New Jersey. These institutions alone provide education to more than 25,000 students. Today Sri Mahaswamiji is relentlessly continuing the work begun by his Guruji of spreading the message of amity and knowledge to all sections of society, particularly the underprivileged. Sri Math believes in holistic development and serves society as a social, cultural, educational and spiritual mentor. In this context, Sri Mahaswamiji has visited several countries such as USA, UK, Cambodia, Israel, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Prof Ven Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thero is the Chancellor, University of Sri Jayawardhanapura. Prior to be appointed to the post of Chancellor, Ven Thero has held the position of Professor, Associate Professor, Lecturer and Visiting Lecturer respectively at the Sri Jayawardhanapura University. The contribution made by him

in the field of inter-religion harmony in Sri Lanka is highly commendable, especially with regard to easing out ethnic tension in Sri Lanka. Ven Bellanwila also holds prestigious posts such as Co-President and Founder Member, Congress of Religion; President, Religion for Peace and Sri Lanka Council of Religions for Peace; Chairman, Sri Lanka Community Development Foundation, Bellanwila; Secretary General, Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sanga Saba of Syamopali Mahanikaya. Ven Thero has published many Dhamma publications, articles and research papers locally and internationally such as: 'Buddhism Society and Environment 1989', 'Facts of Buddhism, 2006' and 'Concept of Mahapurusha' and many other Dharma books in Sinhala language.

Dr Barbara Maas has worked in international wildlife conservation for over two decades and in every continent with a deep sense of kinship, and love for the natural world has guided her throughout her life. Dr Maas studied Zoology at Cambridge University before taking up a postdoctoral position at the University of Oxford. She left academia in 1995 to work as an advisor and chief executive for conservation and animal welfare groups around the world as well as for the New Zealand civil service. In collaboration with HH the Dalai Lama, she initiated the Tibetan Conservation Awareness Campaign, which stopped the use of tiger and other animal skins by Himalayan communities. Dr Maas took up the position as Head of International Species Conservation for NABU International, the international branch of NABU, Germany's oldest and largest conservation organisation in 2009. She is responsible for project selection and management, education and advocacy, as well as support for the organisation's marketing, fundraising and PR activities. Her current conservation initiatives include snow leopards in Kyrgyzstan, tigers in India, elephant and rhino anti-poaching work in Kenya, lions in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park and Hector's & Maui's dolphin protection in New Zealand. She has been appointed as the Secretary for Environment and Conservation at the International Buddhist Confederation's (IBC) in 2013, where she is applying Buddhist principles to identify and implement practical solutions to pressing environmental and conservation challenges.

Rev Prof Naresh Man Bajracharya is a distinguished and the first Professor of Buddhist Studies at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. He was the founding Chair of the Central Department of Buddhist Studies in the same university. He is also the lineage holder and the leading Priest of Newar Buddhism. He has been awarded Fulbright Scholar in Residence (SIR) for 2009-10 by US. He is the author of many articles and books on Newar Buddhism. He had played a pioneering role in introducing Buddhist

Studies discipline in Nepal and in revitalising Newar Buddhism. Currently he is devoting his life in construction of a Bajrayana Monastery in Lumbini Master Plan area and serving the Lumbini Buddhist University in Lumbini as the Vice-Chancellor.

Born on August 19, 1950 at Shiggaon in the Haveri District of North Karnataka, **Dr Sudha Murty** is a well-known social worker and a prolific writer. After topping her state in the SSLC board examinations from the Girls' English School, Hubli in 1966, Sudha Murty joined the BVB College of Engineering and Technology, Hubli. Studying engineering at a time when there were hardly any women students in the stream or women engineers in the industry was a challenge in itself. Not only did she take up the challenge, but she also secured the first rank among all the universities of engineering in Karnataka in 1972, and received many awards, including a gold medal from the Institute of Engineers and a silver medal from the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, Devaraj Urs. Even though she started her professional life as an engineer, she later took up teaching as a career, while devoting a significant chunk of her time to social work. She has been the Head of the Department of Computer Science at the Bangalore University College, and a Visiting Professor at the postgraduate centre of a reputed college of Bangalore University. Her passion for social causes translated into the creation of the Infosys Foundation in 1996. Ever since its inception, Sudha Murty has headed the Infosys Foundation with her characteristic commitment and zeal. The wide range of her social work covers the sectors of healthcare, education, empowerment of women, public hygiene, art and culture, and poverty alleviation at the grassroots level. Over the years, she has designed and anchored several programmes for the construction of school buildings, public toilets, healthcare facilities and homes for orphan and destitute children. Under her guidance, the foundation has disbursed scholarships to needy meritorious students; donated books to educational institutions and public libraries; trained teachers; conducted disaster relief operations; imparted technical education to the youth; set up self-employment centres for women; helped war widows and artistes fallen in hard times; and revived some of our most traditional yet endangered arts and crafts. Sudha Murty is also a bestselling author, who writes in English and Kannada. Sudha Murty's philanthropy and literary achievements have won her recognition at the state, national and international levels. She has been honoured with the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2006.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo was raised in London. In 1964, aged twenty, she travelled to India to pursue her spiritual path and met her guru, His Eminence the Eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist Lama. She became one of the first Westerners

to ordain as a Tibetan Buddhist nun. The inspiring story of her life, including twelve years of secluded retreat in a Himalayan cave, is the subject of the biography, *Cave in the Snow*. A popular Buddhist teacher, she presents the Dharma in an accessible manner to audiences across the world. Jetsunma is Founder and Abbess of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery in HP where some 100 young women, from the Himalayan region, receive monastic training. In 2008, she was given the title of 'Jetsunma', which means 'Venerable Master', by His Holiness the Twelfth Gyalwang Drukpa, Head of her lineage. At present she is the President of 'Sakyadhita International Women's Organization' and a member of the Supreme Dhamma Council of the International Buddhist Congregation.

Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami hails from a family of eminent scholars and spiritual leaders at Sri Radharamana Mandir of Vrindavan and is a leading figure in the Vaishnava tradition. Sri Goswami has been a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard, Heidelberg and other important universities all over the world and his recent book *Celebrating Krishna* was received with much acclaim. He is the Director of Vraja Prakalpa, a multi-year multidisciplinary research project on the Vraj. Recently, he has also conceived and directed grand academic-cultural events such as Braj Mahotsava (Delhi, 2009) and Ananda Mahotsava (Govind Dev Mandir, Jaipur, 2011). Among other commitments, he is devoted to interfaith relations worldwide and is presently working in the field of making alliance of religions and conservation, and is connected with several important international peace and environmental movements. Sri Goswami was invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the World Bank to represent Hinduism at a historic meeting of world religions at Lambeth Palace, London. In 2000, he delivered the J Estlin Carpenter Centenary Lecture organised by the Hibbert Trust, Oxford University. In 2007, he was a resource person for religion to a meeting of over forty Heads of State in Vienna. In November 2009, he was invited as a Plenary Speaker at the centenary celebrations of the American Academy of Religions. He also represented Hinduism at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Day of Prayer at Assisi in October 2011 on the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI. In 2012, he was invited to be one of the main speakers at the Interreligious Harmony Week during the special function of the UN General Assembly. Last year, the President of India gave the lifetime award of the Sangeet Natak Akademi for his contribution to scholarship in the performing arts.

Vice President of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, **Ven Thich Thien Tam** is one of the senior most venerated Dhamma masters in Theravada tradition of Vietnam. He has

authored several books on philosophy and commentaries on Buddhist treatises. He is also member of the Supreme Dhamma Council of International Buddhist Confederation.

Chuch Phoeurn is the Secretary of State, Ministry Of Culture And Fine Art, Cambodia.

Ven Dr Dhammapiya is the founder of 'Dhamma Dipa Foundation'. He is also the Secretary General for the North East India Buddhist Sangha Council and the founder Chairman for Bahujan Hitya Education Trust, Manu Bankul, Tripura. Apart from holding these prestigious posts, he is also the Associate Professor and Principal, MMD College, Tripura. He is also running a charitable residential school named 'Dhamma Dipa Senior Secondary School' along with a monastic educational institution named 'Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist Academy', where over 150 Buddhist monks and novices are given monastic education and are being trained in meditation and Dhamma courses. Ven Dr Dhammapiya has also actively participated in several national and international seminars, conferences and workshops, symposiums in India and abroad since 1994.

Prof Hsiang-Chou Yo is the Member of the Executive Council of the World Buddhist Organisation, the World Fellowship of Buddhists and Lay Buddhist association, Taiwan, ROC. He has also served as a consultant to the Chinese Traditional Medical Centre of Red Cross, Beijing, China and has also been serving as a spiritual teacher in the Buddhist Association of Massachusetts, USA since 1992. In the past he has worked as a Lecturer, Associate Professor and Visiting Professor in some of the most prestigious universities including some Buddhist universities worldwide. Dr Yo had been awarded with the Nationwide Contribution of Social Education Award in the year 1978 and has academic background majorly focusing on research work in philosophy. He has been conducting retreats and organising lectures for the public at different Dharma centres and has also been invited as a guest speaker for many prestigious events worldwide.

Dr MD Srinivas has his area of expertise in Theoretical Physics (Conceptual and Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics), History and Philosophy of Science (Scientific and Technological Tradition of India, Methodology of Indian Sciences, especially Mathematics and Astronomy) and Indian Society, Economy

and Polity. He is the Founder Chairman for the Centre for Policy Studies (Chennai), Member of the Advisory Board on History of Science, Indian National Science Academy and the Indian National Commission for History of Science and Central Sanskrit Board. He was also the Chairman for MOP Vaishnav College (Chennai). In the year 1996, he was a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Policy Studies, (Chennai). Professor Srinivas has written and co-authored many important books and published several significant papers on topics related to Theoretical Physics, Indian tradition of Science and Technology, Indian Society and Polity in the Pre-British Period and on the Current Indian Economy and Polity.

Born in the United States, **Most Ven Telo Tulku Rinpoche** at a very young age had a wish to become a monk and later spent thirteen years in Drepung Gomang, India studying Buddhist philosophy under the guidance of illustrious Tibetan masters. In late 1980s, while studying in the monastery, he was recognised as a new reincarnation of great Indian saint Tilopa. In 1992, Telo Tulku Rinpoche paid his first visit to Kalmykia with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Shortly afterwards, in 1992, he was elected as 'Shadjin Lama' (Head Lama) of Kalmykia by the Kalmyk people and was entrusted to lead the process of spiritual restoration of one of the three Buddhist regions in Russia, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then, he has supervised and managed to rebuild over twenty-seven Buddhist temples that had been destroyed during Communist era, as well as the main temple in the capital city, *The Golden Abode of Buddha Shakyamuni*, which is the biggest Buddhist temple in Russia and Europe.

Swami Sri Paramatmananda ji is the Secretary General and Coordinator of 'Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha' and a senior disciple of Param Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati under whose guidance he has had a comprehensive learning in Vedanta, Sanskrit and Yoga. Swamiji has previously represented Hindu Dharma at many international conferences such as Hindu–Jewish Dialogues, G-8 Summit, Hindu–Buddhist Dialogue, World Religions Conference etc. Swamiji not only possesses a unique ability to communicate wisdom across the wider section of society ranging from school and college students, parents and teachers to corporate executives but has also been a prominent change-maker who has been teaching and spreading knowledge for the past three decades.

Gabju Demberel Choijamts is the Supreme Head of Mongolian Buddhists.

Sushma Swaraj is Minister for External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs in Government of India. She is a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha (House of People in India). She has served six terms as a Member of Parliament and the current term is her seventh term. She was elected three times as Member of Legislative Assembly. She represents the Bharatiya Janata Party. She was born on 14 February 1952. She obtained her BA and LLB degree from the Faculty of Law, Panjab University, Chandigarh in 1973 and started her practice as an Advocate before Supreme Court of India. Sushma Swaraj was elected as Member of the Haryana State Legislative Assembly and became a Cabinet Minister in 1977 when she was just twenty-five years of age. She was elected to the State Assembly again in 1987 and served as Education Minister, Haryana. She was elected to Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Indian Parliament in 1990. She was elected to Lok Sabha in 1996 from the South Delhi Parliamentary Constituency. She was re-elected from South Delhi constituency in the mid-term elections held in 1998. She became Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the Union Cabinet in 1996 and again in 1998. She held an additional charge of Minister for Telecommunications also. She resigned as Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Telecommunications, to take over as the Chief Minister of Delhi in 1998. She became the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi. She was again elected to the Rajya Sabha in April 2000 and joined the Union Cabinet as Minister for Information and Broadcasting. She was Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India during 2003-2004. Bharatiya Janata Party came in opposition in 2004 and she became Deputy Leader of Bhartiya Janata Party in the Upper House. She was honoured with the 'Outstanding Parliamentarian Award' in 2004. She is India's first woman MP honoured with this award. She was elected to Lok Sabha in 2009 from Vidisha Parliamentary constituency of Madhya Pradesh and served as Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Indian Parliament) from December 2009 to May 2014. She was re-elected from Vidisha in 2014 and was sworn in as Minister of External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs of India on 26 May 2014. Sushma Swaraj was the first woman General Secretary, first woman Spokesperson, first woman Chief Minister and the first woman Union Cabinet Minister of Bharatiya Janata Party. She is married to Swaraj Kaushal, a Senior Advocate before Supreme Court of India. He was Governor of Mizoram (1990-93) and a Member of Parliament. They have a daughter Bansuri Swaraj who is an alumnus of the Oxford University and is a Barrister from the Honourable Inn of Inner Temple. Sushma Swaraj has the distinction of being the youngest ever Cabinet Minister. Her husband Swaraj Kaushal was the youngest ever Governor of a State

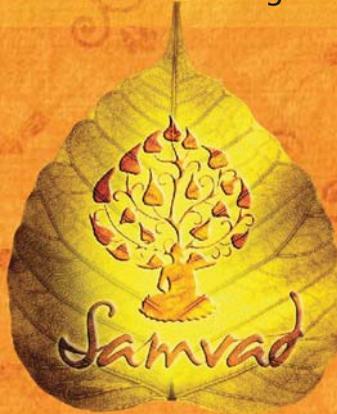
in the country. Sushma Swaraj is known for her exceptional memory and brilliant oratorical skills. Her alma mater Panjab University has honoured her with the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris causa).

Ven Lama Lobzang is the Secretary General for the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), President for the Asoka Mission, Mehrauli, New Delhi, Founding General Secretary, Ladakh Bauddha Vihara and Vice President for the World Buddhist Supreme Tathagata Followers. He has previously participated in and organised many national and international conferences. He has been serving the poor and suffering people of Ladakh and the entire Himalayan region for the last many years by organising medical camps at Leh once a year and sometimes twice a year with the assistance of renowned specialists belonging to different medical disciplines. He has also worked to mobilise the people of Ladakh for cultural and emotional integration with India in view of the geopolitical strategic importance of Ladakh and most importantly, for the social and economic uplift of SC, ST and other weaker sections.

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