

## Compassion for Humankind is the Way to Peace

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**T**HANK you very much for inviting me to this function here this morning which has now turned into afternoon. It is a privilege to be a part of it.

Even though he is not physically present here, my first salutation goes to Dr Ikeda. He is the inspiration for whatever we see here, and all that we don't see physically here.

I had the great unique privilege of meeting Dr Ikeda in the company of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1985. Though the meeting was really between Dr Ikeda and Mr Gandhi, but I was present there. It was Mr Gandhi who really met Dr Ikeda but I always say "I met Dr Ikeda in Tokyo City." It was a rare privilege. That meeting between those two great leaders is still with me in my mind. Though I was not taking part in the conversation between the two of them, I was impressed with Dr Ikeda's brilliance of mind and his humility and his compassion.

I have a complaint against the organizers of this event. Why did you ask me to speak after Dr Lokesh Chandra? And what do you expect me to do now? Professor Lokesh Chandra should not be called Professor Lokesh Chandra. I like to call him *Pandit* (great scholar) Lokesh Chandra.

We also have with us the Ambassador of Tunisia, Dr Farukh. As we all know Tunisia has gone through a revolution in the last two weeks, an amazing people's revolution. We must all rejoice with the people of Tunisia. Happily for us in India, we have been and we are and will continue to be a functioning, vibrant democracy. So we are not going to witness that kind of revolution in our country nor the kind of revolution that is now going on in Egypt. This is the advantage of democracy and this is one of the keys to a new humanism for peace also.

As someone said, perhaps Churchill, democracy may not be the most perfect system of governance, but it will remain the best until something better is found. I think so long as we in India have democracy we will have cultures and civilizations of all the world flourishing in our country.

## **Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

I think Dr Ikeda's message to us is really the new way to a new humanism for peace. His book, his dialogue with Dr Rotblat, I would recommend everyone in India and all over the world to read that book. It is a jewel. It is a masterpiece and it contains all the keys that one needs for peace.

Peace in my mind does not merely mean absence of war, or absence of conflict. This is how peace is generally understood. There is peace in India. When one talks about peace, one talks of peace between and among the nations, and not within a nation. In India we have this Hindu tradition, if you want peace, if you want to attain nirvana, salvation, look no further, look within yourself. This is also the message of Dr Ikeda. I think one of the keys to peace in the world is for nation states not to look within themselves but to look outside of themselves. When a country looks all the time within itself as most countries do, maybe all the countries do, then they tend to be self-centered, selfish, exploitative and acquiring means of destroying other countries.

Weapons of mass destruction are the greatest evil that humankind has today. These weapons of mass destruction must be destroyed, must be eliminated. Nuclear weapons about which Dr Ikeda and Dr Rotblat have spoken extensively, they really are a crime against humanity.

India, which was in the forefront of the campaign for the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, we ourselves ended up having nuclear weapons, not so long ago. People in this country, when we carried out nuclear tests in 1998, went out on the streets; they distributed sweets and celebrated the big event. Most people on the streets don't know what a nuclear weapon really means or entails.

Japan, unfortunately for the people of Japan, is the only country which really knows the disastrous impact of nuclear weapons.

I was very sad, very disappointed in 1978, there was a special session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That special session made the usual grandiose declaration calling for universal disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons, which was a good thing of course. Then there was a big controversy in that conference and outside. It was decided that there should be a world disarmament day every year which should be celebrated the world over as humankind's search for a nuclear weapon free world. There was a big demand to make 6th of August as the World Disarmament Day. It would've been the right day.

But the Americans, the United States, since it was that country which

dropped the bomb without any justification—mind you the war was coming to an end in any case—there was no need to drop those two horrible weapons on the unsuspecting people of Japan. But because of that very reason the Americans objected vehemently against declaring that day as the World Disarmament Day and so it did not go through. And I was quite disappointed.

As I was saying, India is now a nuclear weapon power. And it seems to me, to my disappointment, my regret that the fervor with which we in India were leading this campaign for disarmament is not witnessed any more. I think we pay lip service to eliminating nuclear weapons, to a world free of nuclear weapons. I think that campaign, that zeal, that fervor is lacking.

And now Professor Ikeda and Soka Gakkai are in many ways really helping India to rediscover itself. We have lost touch with some of our heritage and it is thanks to the work of the Soka Gakkai that many in India including myself are now learning about our heritage. Nalanda University which will come into existence in the near future will be another big factor in self realization of our selves. In the same way it has now taken foreigners to remind us in India of the need for nuclear disarmament. Dr Kissinger and his three other companions have now started the campaign for nuclear disarmament. In my eyes, their campaign is some what suspect. I believe if Kissinger starts something, a campaign, it cannot be unselfish. But for whatever motives he has started this movement, we welcome it, if it helps in creating awareness, consciousness about the need for nuclear disarmament. I think one of the things which is needed for a new humanism for peace is this imperative need to get rid of the weapons of mass destruction. That is where President Ikeda comes in. He is a humanist of the highest order and he has been propagating along with Dr Rotblat and others. Mr Rajiv Gandhi strongly supported his call for disarmament and I think this is one of the keys to that.

As somebody has said there is enough on this planet to satisfy everyone's need, but there will never be enough to satisfy everyone's greed. It is human nature to be greedy.

So I think the message of Dr Ikeda, and I have marked so many paragraphs and sentences from there which I would've liked to quote. But after *Pandit* Lokesh Chandra's elocution, it is impossible for me to say anything new at all. But I will say this much, Buddha's taming of the horse is probably what made it possible for him to spread his message of nonviolence.

I think his biggest message for me is compassion. The way to attain

nirvana or reach god is not necessarily through mastery over scriptures, the Vedas or the Lotus Sutra or others, but through service of mankind. Even in the *Gita* it says that you will reach me...if you serve the people. Through the *bhakti* (devotion) of this so called ordinary human being you will reach salvation. So the Buddha's message of compassion, to my mind is most important message that he has given us and it is probably the least difficult of ways to achieve self-realization.

Compassion should not be all that difficult. I meditate every morning, for example. Though I think I am meditating, in fact I'm not. I am just sitting there. I have been meditating for 35 years. Even my wife says that now you must have reached a very high standard. So I tell her no, I am exactly on the same level where I was when I started meditation. But nonetheless I think there is merit in meditation. All kinds of thoughts will come to you, but I must say that the best thoughts come to me when I'm sitting in meditation. Let's say if I have to write an article, the most difficult thing for me at least is the first sentence of an article, or if you are writing a book, the first paragraph is the most difficult. Or when I was coming here, I didn't know what I was going to say. So most of the good thoughts, I get some inspiration when I'm meditating. And so whether you call it god, or whatever, meditation has its own value.

But the easiest road to follow for self-realization is compassion for humanity. If I have compassion for all of you, I think all of you will have compassion for everyone else and that is the way to peace. I hope this seminar will give some thought to this proposition that compassion for humankind is the way to peace. It is not a new way. You don't need a new humanism for peace. You need humanity, compassion for all of us, one another. I think that is the easiest and most effective way to peace within ourselves and in society.