

## Dharma Sammelan

(on the occasion of the Inauguration of the Dharma Sammelan (Organised by Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, ND) on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 at Talkatora Stadium New Delhi)

It is no exaggeration to say that the whole world is in turmoil today. Violence, hatred, bitter animosities, armed conflicts within and between nations mar peace and harmony of the entire globe. Crimes such as robberies, decoities, arson, loot and murders are ever-growing and spreading widely. Poverty and hunger do not show any signs of abating; on the contrary the gap between the rich and poor within countries and between countries is widening. Organised terrorism, where innocent people in market places, public transports and congregations are massacred, is becoming a global menace.

Religious and ethnic conflicts also take a heavy toll of human lives. Instead of preaching peace and harmony, fundamentalists of some religions, fan the fire of hatred and bitterness and lead their followers into the path of senseless violence. In my opinion, the answer to the chaotic conditions in the world should be found in moral and spiritual reformation and not through counter violence. State terrorism is no answer to public terrorism. Let us go back into the past. The primordial man was no better than the beast. He hunted for his food, killing animals including his own species and ate them. He drank and slept like any other animal. While the strongest animal elephant has remained an elephant and the most beautiful bird Peacock has remained the same, Man has advanced in science and technology, in art and culture, in social behaviour and in noble qualities like kindness, compassion, service and sacrifice. This great change has been brought about by religion - whichever it is. Each religion inculcated in Man virtues that would enable a harmonious existence with his fellow beings. Religions also state that if Man violated codes of good conduct and behaviour, he would be committing a sin for which he will be answerable on the day reckoning after death.

Every religion forbids murder, cheating, falsehood, robbery, injury to others and all antisocial activities as sins. They also preach that the sinless go to heaven and the sinners go to hell. There is no religion in the world that approves of misdeeds. Thus, all religions had reformed the lives of primitive man and made him a civilised being. The history of civilisation is nothing but the transformation of a bestial man into a social being, living in harmony with his fellowmen. Laws, more laws and many more laws are powerless to control these inhuman killings. The world community must awake to the situation and find a solution to the growing chaos all-round.

What holds society together is the voluntary observance of moral and physical laws by the vast majority of the people? A government is able to maintain order only because the law-breakers are few and the law-abiders are many. If the situation were reversed, then society would fall apart and disintegrate. What makes the majority observe the moral and secular laws? Is it fear of State action or punishment?

Everyone is aware of the dictum that justice could allow nine criminals to escape but not one innocent person to be punished. What would be the state of society if nine criminals escape every time, for one conviction?

It is not, therefore, the fear of administrative punishment that makes one observe the laws but a subjective check, the reproof from conscience that holds one back from misdeeds. Every human being has experienced that inner voice to a smaller or greater degree. The one who

blunts his conscience by repeated rejection of the reproof soon grows immune to it and ceases to experience it. But the generality of people feel it, heed it and desist from doing wrong.

This conscience or inner voice is developed by faith in divinity and in the Supreme Being. You may call the Supreme Being by whatever name you like, Allah, Brahma or Christ, but accept we must the reality of the ultimate Supreme Being.

The *Bhagavadgita* speaks of the Supreme Lord strengthening the faith of every devotee in whatever form he may worship.

*Yo yo yam yam thanum bhaktah  
Sraddhyarchitam icchati,  
Tasya tasya achalam sraddham  
Tam eva vidadhamy aham.*”

“In whatever form any devotee,  
seeks to worship me with faith,  
I make the faith in him, unwavering”.

All the religions are paths to salvation and are therefore entitled equal respect. If we probe further, we find that every religion preaches morality, righteousness, kindness, love, selflessness and so on. These are, indeed, the requisites of a peaceful, orderly and harmonious society.

The most ancient religion Hinduism describes the qualities that make a devotee dear to the Lord. In the *Bhagavadgita*, the Lord says, “One who hates none, is friendly and compassionate to all beings, free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pain and pleasure, forgiving, contented, steady in meditation, self-controlled, with firm conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on me (God) such a devotee is dear to me.”

Rig Veda says, *Vasudeiva Kutumbakam*. The whole world is one family. Chronologically, the next religion is *Zoroastrianism*. Zoroaster is the founder of Parsee religion. It believes in one God and regards the world as a struggle between *Good* (Ahura Masda) and *Evil* (Ahriman). He preached that all human beings are the off-springs of a single God and that one can be near to God only by good (True) actions. The central point of Zoroastrian philosophy is active goodness.

At the top of the philosophy of *Jainism* stands *Non-violence*. Lord Mahavira himself said: “He should not kill, or cause others to kill and not consent to the killing of any other”. Around this vital principle, four orders rotate:

1. Truth : That is separation from every form of non – truth
2. Non – theft : Not taking anything without owner’s consent
3. Celibacy : Conjugal abstinence
4. Non – attachment : Giving up property and possessions.

Mahavira also stressed the principles of equality of all beings. Jainism and Buddhism gave the pride of place to Ahimsa. *The Buddha* propounded the eight-fold path to salvation:

1. Right Belief,
2. Right Thought,
3. Right Speech,
4. Right Action,
5. Right Means of Livelihood,
6. Right Exertion,
7. Right Remembrance and Self-Discipline &
8. Right Concentration of Thought.

In short, he asked people to follow the path of *Dharma*.

He said,

Hatred ceaseth not by hatred, Hatred ceaseth by love.

Not by wrath should a person conquer wrath . . .

Next in point of time comes Christianity. In the Ten Commandments as well as in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasis has been laid on right conduct and right behaviour.

Jesus said :

Ye have heard that it hath been said,  
an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

But I say, unto you

whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek

turn to him the other also,

If a man take away thy coat

let him have thy cloak also.

Gandhiji once said that it was the *New Testament*, especially the Sermon on the Mount that helped him to fashion his *Satyagraha*.

Jesus also said:

Thou shalt love God.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love your enemies.

Bless them who curse you.

Do good to them who hate you.

*Islam* is full of exhortations

1. to do good to others,
2. to show compassion,
3. to spend money on the orphans, the needy,
4. to conquer anger,
5. to observe humility,
6. to show gratitude and
7. not to covet.

That is why the poet Iqbal sang that religion does not teach bitterness or hatred among Religions. "*Mazhab nahi sikhata aapas mein bair rakhna.*"

Religious tolerance has also been emphasized in the Revelations in Chap. 109 of the Koran :

In the name of Allah, the gracious, the merciful

Say O ye disbelievers !

I worship not that which you worship:

Nor worship you what I worship;

And I am not going to worship that which you worship.

Nor will you worship what I worship.

*For you your religion, and for me my religion.*

It is obvious from the foregoing that all religions preach morality, kindness and compassion and that if each one practices truthfully, faithfully and scrupulously his religion, there would be no disharmony in life. The fact is that no one follows his religion honestly but uses religion for creating discord.

Former President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain, a protagonist of religious harmony said: "If the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, Buddha's philosophy of Compassion, the Hindu concept of Ahimsa and the passion of Islam for obedience to the will of God *can combine* then we would have succeeded in generating the most potent influence for world peace."

It is not beyond the genius of respected religious leaders, gathered here to agree that equal respect should be given to all religions and that there should be no interference in each, following his respective religious tradition. Peaceful co-existence of all faiths will bring about a new millennium of harmony and peace within nations and in the entire globe. Let this Sammelan serve as a guide to humanity.

We should all of us be most thankful to Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya and to its most revered Chief of Brahma Kumaris Rajyogini Dadi Prakashmani for having organised the three day Sammelan and provided one day for religious leaders to freely exchange views and promote harmony amongst religions.

As I said earlier, the problems of ethnic conflict, terrorism and disharmony among the peoples and nations of the world cannot be solved by disarmament conferences, conventions and treaties but only a change of heart. Religions which have tamed the bestial man into a civilised being can alone bring about a psychological and spiritual transformation of Man. The Brahma Kumaris is a worldwide organisation with branches spread over the globe. They have the selfless dedication to effect the change in mental attitudes. Our good wishes go to the organisation for achieving success in their endeavour to bring about peace and harmony in the world.