

The Peace Age

An Essay and an Address by:

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An ancient proverb states: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." As stated in the program of the World Philosophers Meet, the objective of this important and timely conference is for the delegates to bring to a perplexed and ailing world a message and a method, i. e., a vision ... which can establish: "A new World Culture based on Earth Ethics, Earth Care and Earth Unity."

Furthermore, the conference organizers hope that the outcome of this meet will show the light to the world for ushering into the 21st century a golden epoch for humankind, where peace and harmony will prevail and that this may help to create a holistic society.

In all times and in all ages humanity has ferociously been in search of peace. But exactly like chasing a mirage in the desert, this most coveted condition of all has also been the most elusive one to secure.

This conference constitutes itself as a Parliament of Science, Religion and Philosophy and I am deeply honored to serve as its Honorary Chairman. It gives me a great deal of comfort to be a part of this specific group which has convened in search of lasting solutions to the world's most serious problems.

In our capacity as philosophers, we are "Lovers of Wisdom". By having the courage to allow wisdom, compassion and truth to be the leitmotif of the conference, I am confident that as we jointly probe the depths of our hearts and minds that the objective of the conference organizers shall be achieved.

Our Meet commemorates the 700th anniversary of the Indian Philosopher and Saint, Shri Jnaneshwara. Despite his young age of 22 when passing away, he was a full evolved human being, who with great clarity emphasized the necessity that solid moral, social and

environmental qualities must be employed in the creation of any culture that expects to last long and serve its constituents well.

Most appropriately, our Meet also coincides exactly with the 100th memorial anniversary of Dr. Alfred Nobel. My illustrious relative had a vision for human betterment. A great vision which became reality in the form of the Nobel Prizes. These awards for the excellence in medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and peace, and later in 1969, the Memorial Prize in Economic Science, have been bestowed upon men, women and organizations throughout the world for outstanding excellence in the field of their expertise.

Achievements realized by Nobel Laureates in the technological disciplines are without parallel in history. Alleviation of much human suffering and improvement in living standards are just two of the results. However, careless application of our new knowledge has often created serious problems for the environment.

Due to gross environmental mismanagement, and reckless exploitation of Nature and natural resources, human actions are today in the process of destroying our planet's fragile life support systems. A most alarming report by Dr. Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University, who coined the word bio-diversity, states that the earth is presently losing 250 species per day. This means extinction. And extinction is a serious word... it means gone forever. A planet unfit for plants, birds, animals and other forms of life will likewise one day become unfit for the human race. It might serve us well to be inspired by and follow Dr. Albert Schweitzer's motto "**Reverence for Life**". The future is in our hands. The choice is ours.

A generation ago only a few visionaries concerned themselves with the crises of population growth, pollution, depletion of finite natural resources, and the possible destruction of planet Earth's life saving the ozone shield.

Today, informed individuals world-wide are fully aware of the fact, that our Earth, this blue pearl in space, this fragile, one-of-a-kind planet, which harbors the miracle of life, is in serious trouble due to rapid and massive environment deterioration.

DDT, PCB, Toxic Waste, Green-House-Effect, Global Warming, Acid

Rains, Deforestation, Desertification, Nuclear Waste, Extinction of Species, War, Violence, Terrorism and Oppression have become the frightening buzz words of our common vocabulary.

These words, and the issues they represent, should not be looked upon as merely nebulous phantom concepts. They should not be considered as issues that are too big, too complex and way beyond individual powers, when it comes to taking meaningful action for their quick and total elimination. On the contrary, on the individual level, all of us, must with great resolve refuse to accept any and all issues that jeopardizes the health and the well-being of our life supporting environment. Jobs, secure employment and a steady growth economy is constantly on our minds and has lately become the world's foremost priority. But keep in mind, there can never be a sound economy without a sound ecology.

The issues mentioned are not, the unavoidable handmaidens of industrial and social progress. Instead, look upon these problems as warning signals. Interpret them correctly, because they are nothing less than deadly serious, no-nonsense warning signs posted by Mother Nature herself, saying :"**Humanity, Stop, Halt and Reverse Your Destructive Action**".

Therefore, with all the emphasis I have at my command, I say :"**The human race must cease breaking the laws of Nature... or Nature, will break us**".

The issues mentioned are so grave that they are now adversely affecting not only our physical health, but apparently also, the genetic strength of the human race. Recent scientific research shows today that the male sperm is count down by 50% ... and that an equally alarming reduction is taking place in the natural immune system of new-born infants.

And, a Swedish research group states that dioxin, one of the most toxic Substances on Earth, has been found in mother's milk. In this case, the dioxin emission source was traced to waste burning incinerators.

On the subject of being able to read warning signs, the late Governor

Adlai E. Stevenson cleverly stated : "Man is a strange animal, because he can only read the handwriting on the wall when his back is up against it."

I will illustrate where the solution to many world problems exists by telling a simple story. It is a fable told to me by a white robed Acharya from India. We met during the Earth Summit Conference in Rio 1992. When I asked the holy man what we should do to save the planet, he said in his soft, melodious voice:

"Mr. Nobel, the answer to your question I will give you in the form of a fable from my country." The Acharya said: "When God had finished creating the Earth he was very pleased. He wanted to celebrate his finest and most recent creation in the Universe. Therefore, He decided, to have a magnificent party with the most delicious, heavenly food. Ambrosia and nectar would be served, He invited all the angels and all the devils to a sumptuous feast. When the guests arrived, God toasted them all with a welcome speech. Among other things He said :

You may eat and drink as much as you desire ... and ... you shall all have a very good time. There is only one rule you must strictly obey; if you break the rule ... then you must leave. The rule is :While you are here, enjoying the food and the wine you must never ... bend your elbows. You must eat with straight arms!

The devils cried you : "That's outrageous .. that cannot be done ... we do not want any part f this." The devils left ... and then ... the party began. The angels started eating and drinking and then they were all having a glorious time ... and the Dear Lord was very happy ... He was smiling."

Are you wondering how the angels would eat and drink? ... I see you found the solution to ... and the moral of ... the fable ... **The angels were feeding each other.**

Well, the human race is still very young and we have as yet not got rid off all the devils. But, we are getting better. We are beginning to reach levels of higher consciousness, which will allow us to develop our full human potential. Maybe, the purpose of being born human ... is to become humane? Personally, I agree with the old sage from India, that the solution to most human problems; and the way to save the

Earth, exists in the concept of sharing and caring.

With Governor Stevenson's quote and the Acharyas fable fresh in mind, may I humbly suggest, that the next time we see a warning sign posted by Nature, that we have the courage, the wisdom, the foresight and compassion to engage in personal action. And, that we obey the warning, by immediately making whatever change it takes in order to safeguard the true well-being of both humanity and nature alike.

Without immediate and profound change, the Earth will soon be empty of hope. At this very moment environmental and moral degradation must be stopped. Totally stopped ... before the problems become unmanageable, before they lead to severe economic decline, social disruption and irreversible environmental collapse. This requires fundamental change and world-wide action. A great, global transformation related to the change of human attitudes, priorities and actions have to be launched.

I have been describing some alarming environmental and social trends, but now let me stop lamenting. Instead let's turn our attention to the other side of the coin, the one that says :**Sound Progress for Social and Environmental Sustainability**.

Therefore, let me humbly offer ... **A Vision and a Plan**, which is solidly based upon the ideals of Earth Care, Earth Ethics and Earth Unity. The vision presents two basic suggestions :First, "**Peace on Earth**" is possible. Second, "**The Peace Age**" is coming.

These visionary predictions reflect neither a fickle mind nor an unobtainable utopia Quite the contrary, they herald a much awaited evolutionary step of the human race. They are the concrete results of what is in store for human kind once we focus upon the essential and once we put our priorities right.

This rather optimistic point of view about the shape of events to come is based upon a fundamental law of evolution which states :"**A species must adapt to its environment or it will perish**". In advocating that The Peace Age is coming, I realize that I am deeply at odds with some so called experts, who state that it is too late to save the Earth and that the future of humanity is doomed.

I challenge the doomsday sayers by stating : "The human race, **once well informed and well educated**, has the wit, the wisdom and the willpower to make the responsible life sustaining choices that will ensure its lasting and dignified survival on planet Earth."

In this context, we are well served by recognizing the fact that the basic human instinct for life and living is as strong and vital as our instinct for feeding and procreation. Accordingly, I have no doubt whatsoever that the human race is both able and willing to adapt itself to any and all demands made upon it by both neighbor and nature alike ... even if it involves a fundamental change and great self-sacrifice for the majority of the world's population.

The question has been asked . "Are we humans wise or foolish?" s we all know, our species, humankind, is classified by biologists as Homo sapiens, which name means Wise Man. Recently biologists have classified Modern Man. Our species is now called Homo sapiens. The doubly wise man. That choice of names indicates to me certain degree of hubris.

In observing the state of the world of today one cannot fail to notice how the world suffers not only from environmental pollution, but also from moral and spiritual pollution. Consequently, it seems to me as if by choice we live in a fool's paradise. And perhaps a more appropriate name for our genus would be : "**Homo stupidus**".

Despite all the atrocities that are happening to the Earth and on the Earth, I know that there exist many men and women, and youth, in the world of today, who are blessed with much good will and great amounts of common sense, and that these individuals, the salt if the Earth, have both, the capacity and the fortitude to become the valiant preservers of the Earth.

I believe strongly that : "The survival of the planet depends upon efforts of the individual. And, that individually, we can each make a small difference ... and, together we can all make an enormous difference."

You see, planet Earth, this blue pearl in space is an exceedingly rare planet. It harbors a miracle ... the great miracle of life,

. And life ... is the fragile, common thread that links together all creation on Earth. Our planet is a closed system. That is, on Earth everything is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent.

The 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment well defined the concept of oneness, wholeness and balance in its motto, which was: "Only One Earth". Now, among many people of the world, a new consciousness is dawning, that our Earth ... is indeed a "United Earth".

Today, 1996 A. D., humankind is only a breath away from entering into the third millennium. In so doing, it is as though the entire human race were in the process of being born into a new time. A time which offers great, new possibilities as well as much uncertainty about where our common future will take us.

In the same manner as human birth involves immense feelings of joy, as well as pain and shedding of blood for the mother, and for the baby the sudden traumatic change of living conditions, humanity is now undergoing similar symptoms of agony and elation in its process of being born into a new world. In only four brief years from now, the relentless powers of time will force mankind into new uncharted territories in which new challenges and great opportunities will present themselves to such an extent that only the most creative, imaginative minds can fathom the scope thereof.

The present crises, related to seemingly never ending wars and confrontations, which are taking place in just about every sphere of human activity, have set the stage for the new world leaders and the new world heroes to make their long awaited entrance.

These individuals, the wise and compassionate leaders of tomorrow, and vast hosts of seekers of peace and harmony world-wide, will follow the "inner voice" that ever so softly speaks the eternal truth in most of every human heart. By carefully listening to their "inner voice" and by having the moral courage to follow the message of their conscience, they shall be successful in solving the perplexing problems of the world in a timely and peaceful manner.

In the same manner as the flame of the candle dispels the darkness

of the night so shall the Light of Truth dispel in every human heart :ignorance, selfishness and lust for power. The Truth shall set us free. It is just simply absurd to think that the human race, who by the grace of God has been blessed with such qualities as love, compassion and altruism, shall fail the pursuit of the ultimate goal, which is to know peace and harmony.

Fortunately, in these extreme difficult times, when the very well-being of humanity and our life-supporting environment is in serious jeopardy, a window of opportunity has been given to the human race, and close at hand is the much awaited moment in human evolution, when the peoples of the Earth are prepared to take individual, voluntary, quantum leaps towards the creation of a new, crowing epoch in its history.

Indeed, I not only envision it, but I feel it, in every cell and in every bone of my body, that today humanity stands on the threshold to A New World, A New Humanity and A New Culture.

We humans have the ability and the powers to create a United Earth, a peaceful, well functioning society, where people live in harmony with themselves and in harmony with Nature. This sustainable, synergetic society will constitute **The Peace Age**.

With such a vision in mind, the peoples of the world, as they are represented by their various governments, religions, races, civilizations and commercial enterprises, are about to join hands world-wide in the creating of a global transformation for world betterment. This massive, peaceful movement towards **The Peace Age** is solidly based upon virtues and values.

Furthermore, such a global transformation holds the hope of activating and empowering vast segments of the world population in developing the following three qualities:

- 1 The full human potential for righteousness.
- 2 The "Best Practice" way for finding "Unity in Diversity".
- 3 The glory of the soul to reach its preordained splendor of higher levels of consciousness.

Common sense and common action for our common future are the

life-enhancing concepts that soon shall guide our world, and from this new fertile mind set a perennial, New World Culture will be established on Earth. Character and virtue are the golden tools by which humanity will build its sustainable, synergetic society, and by making new fields of truthful education available to adults and youth alike, the root-cause of all human suffering will be addressed. Thus we can obtain humanity's long awaited hope of exchanging fear, oppression and hopelessness for their opposites of genuine dignity and universal freedom.

Like the proverbial Phoenix bird that recreates itself by rising from the ashes, humanity will from the chaotic world of today create a New World Culture. This means the **Peace Age** is coming.

As we speak about peace, we must bear in mind that in this context peace represents much more than only the absence of war. It represents the totality of peace in four specific areas, namely:

First. The Peaceful existence with ourselves. Here we deal with the inner peace that an individual has within him and herself. It is about the right actions and ethical behavior we have vis-à-vis ourselves. That is, how we humans on an individual basis rightfully treat and manage our bodies, our minds, our emotions, our feelings and our attitudes.

Second. The Peaceful existence with others. Here we address the peace and right. ethical relationship we have towards our family, towards our friends, our neighbors, our associates and other groups. It is about our right behavior and right relationship to other cultures, religions, races, nations and minority groups.

Third. The peaceful existence with Nature. This sphere of peace deals with how we treat, how we respect, and how we interact with the environment. This means our right, ethical relationship with the many forms of life that make up the bio-sphere. That is our sustainable relationship with the plants, the animals, the air, the fresh water, the true purpose of life on Earth, that future human actions become "right actions", actions reflecting the true meaning and spirit of this declaration ... actions based upon Earth ethics.

We request human beings of all nations and of all governments to join us in our efforts to establish: **"World Peace and World Harmony via Earth Ethics"**. This means: Right Thoughts ... Right Words ... Right Actions ... Right Here ... and Right Now. It means **:"Think Globally, Act Locally and Commit Individually"**.

I wish to describe briefly the mission of United Earth, which organization I founded in 1974. United Earth is a not-for-profit, non-governmental, international organization which recognizes and promotes environmental leadership and humanitarian excellence.

United Earth Stands for:
Leadership, Partnership and Stewardship.

The principal activities of United Earth are:
Recognition, Education and Service.

United Earth has so far conducted three Earth Prize Award Ceremonies in USA. One in the General Assembly Hall of United Nations, recognizing among other recipients UNICEF and Mr. Ted Turner of CNN and Turner Broadcasting System. A second Ceremony in the great Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, honoring His Holiness The XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet. And a third one at the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, recognizing United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme and Mr. Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of the 1992 Rio Conference. Also, United Earth has conducted two Earth Service Award Ceremonies, one for a youth program called "Give Water A Hand", and one recognizing Mr. Erik Eweson for developing and environmentally sound co-composting technology for the safe disposal of municipal solid waste and sewage sludge.

I will close my remarks by reading a pertinent message delivered by Mr. Dennis Weaver, the Hollywood celebrity and environment activist, when he played the role of a U. S. Senator from State of Wisconsin, addressing his colleagues.

The Senator said: "The most critical issue that we all face ... whether we are old, young, black, white, rich, poor ... Democrat or Republican ... is ... how we save our common home ... this Earth ... on which we all live.

Because ... if we don't figure out how to do that ... the deficit surely is not going to matter ... neither the budget ... unemployment ... taxes ... interest rates. You see my friends, if we don't save the environment ... the simple truth is ... that we don't have to worry about those issues ... because none of us will be here. Yes, we are the only animal that destroys ... the very thing that allows us to live ... **How stupid can we get? "**

The senator continued his speech by saying: " I'm not here to paint a picture of doom and gloom but to point out the magnitude of our opportunities ... They are tremendous ... **There is nothing ... absolutely nothing that we can't do if we use our time, our energy and our money in a sensible way ... if we get our priorities straight.** There is no time for finger pointing, because we are all guilty ... We have all been part of the problem ... And we better All start to be a part of the solution. And I am talking about: labour, industry, scientists, artists, professionals... and politicians. You see, **we really never have faced a situation like this before. The question is ... Do we survive? ...Do we continue as a species? "**

In conclusion, let me leave you with one final thought provoking quotation, this one by my friend the late British economist Dr. E. F. Schumacher the author of "Small is beautiful".

Dr. Schumacher said: "Can we rely on it, that a **turning around** will be accomplished ... by enough people ... quickly enough ... to save the modern world? This question is often asked, but no matter what we answer ... it will mislead. The answer "Yes" would lead to complacency ... the answer "No" to despair. It is therefore desirable to leave these perplexities behind us and get down to work".