

1<sup>st</sup> European Peace Summit 2016

Connecting Minds – Unleashing Potential

# From Inner Peace to Global Peace

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## **Introduction**

It is a privilege to be a part of the 1<sup>st</sup> European Peace Summit a noble initiative which can engage and inspire all to gain peace and justice in the world.

It is good to share a platform with distinguished speakers, and audience of peace, justice and human right activists. Your courageous actions are a driving force for all the changes taking place in our world.

My talk of today is about building a world of genuine peace where the weak are safer and strong are just – a life without fear. A life of freedom of expression and opportunities available for all to fulfil their potential. I will explore how through inner peace and philosophy of nonviolence, we can reach the goal of global peace.

Inner peace is a power within every human being which can be effectively used to change the world to a more peaceful place. Nonviolence is a belief and a value system which safeguards us against war, violence and all forms of injustice. A single person who experiences peace of mind, who lives in a nonviolent manner, is contributing to world peace. I have learnt through various experiences in my life that it takes perseverance to achieve a peaceful life. It cannot come instantly and sometimes much work and effort will have to happen first before one can truly feel inner peace.

Inner peace is a 'Triumph of the Spirit', which promotes the culture of respect and celebrates unity and diversity, moving us towards understanding, cooperation and universal peace.

## **Inner and Global Peace – Obstacles, Challenges and Threats**

### *Obstacles to Inner Peace*

There are five obstacles to inner peace which are aptly described in the Indian scriptures in various ways in Vedic culture, Bhagavad Gita, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. They are Kam (lust), Krodh (rage, anger, fear and hatred), Lobh (greed of wealth, power and fame) – excesses of capitalism and corporate power, Moh (attachment, delusion, ignorance or obsession) and Ahankar (Vanity, pride or ego) destroyer of the tranquillity of the mind. These are five basic causes of violence leading to suffering of human existence. The self-control of all these five evils is the key to inner peace and also the core contribution of all major religions of the world. Inner peace comes from within and it is futile to seek it elsewhere. It radiates from within and our behaviour will be its own manifestation. What you do towards people is a reflection of who you are and what you feel inside.

The Venerable Dhammapitaka in his book Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty-First Century, 1986 remarks "Truly, we have developed all kinds of things in the name of civilization, including science and technology, but we have paid too little attention to the development of ourselves."

Such is the human outpouring of sadness and despair at the conflicts which beset the world, both in terms of war and the nature of exploitation through selfish desire for pleasure and acquisition. Such is the degradation of the human condition and that of the planet that unless fundamental and radical social change takes place, we may already be looking at the accelerated decline of the human race.

Let me share three profound challenges and three broad threats to the attainment of inner peace to Global Peace which I examined last year while addressing an International peace conference in Jaipur, India.

### Challenges to Global Peace

Firstly, will there be an alternative social evolution of our species towards peace without domination that might someday eliminate both war and standing armies from our present military mindset. Violence begets more violence, as it thrives on hatred than on love, it creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. So waging war is not the right answer to counter violence and terrorism. Will we be able to demolish the belief in popular entertainment and culture which takes for granted that violence and war are inevitable and part of human survival. As UNESCO Declaration of Culture of Peace say, "Since wars began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed."

Secondly, is there a way we can have growth without exploitation and mayhem which can clip the wings of the 1% elite who are the cause off most of the problems facing the world today. The most damaging is the actions by which the elite murder, torture and steal to satisfy their unlimited material desires. This greed has created economic disparities among the 99% of people including racial and ethnic groups and between countries on a global scale.

Thirdly, will we be able to combat violence, terrorism/extremism and religious intolerances flaring up many parts of the world based on hatred and irrational attachment to religious ideologies.

We are programmed and conditioned, like computers - we are Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Hutus, Tutsis and so on. One of the consequences of this conditioning has been hatred, or war, or separating yourself from others. We will be able to break this pattern of confrontation among human beings and free our minds from the conditional mental slavery for compassion and love for one another.

### Threats to Global Peace

Now let me examine three broad areas of obstacles to sustainable peace: Culture of Violence, Militarism and Military Spending. These are the outer manifestations of imbalance of inner peace and disturbances of mind.

Human life has an outer material expression and an inner spiritual constellation. Both are sides of the same coin. To understand culture of violence and war as being driven by politics, economics and science is only half the story. They come from projecting

outside of us the conflict that is inside as an individual or collectively as a community or nation. Hence the need for developing non-aggression culture, based on forgiveness which is instrumental in effectively reducing aggressive behaviour/violence and enhancing good relationship, social harmony and peace. As the poet Alexander Pope said, "To err is human, to forgive is divine"

Violence, whether it is at home or bullying or war abroad, leads to more violence. So the answer is to find alternative solutions which reduce violence. This is true of us individuals how we deal with each other and for a country how it relates to the rest of the world. Mere disarmament or reduction of weapons and militarism is not enough. We must end violence in thought, word and action as well.

The culture of militarism is the root cause of wars and a hindrance to peace. How can a society be called civilised if it has an international arms/killing industry which leads to wars, violence, barbarism, to counterproductive military budgets destroying social, economic, political and cultural fabric and values. Today countries are more and more resorting to war instead of dialogue and diplomacy to solve disputes. One is baffled by the fact that here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and we are still killing each other with new and sophisticated weapons. What we need is urgent necessity to adopt nonviolent ways for building peace, restoring human rights and dignity, ethics, rule of law and democracy.

In 2015, world's governments spent over 1,750 billion dollars on the military sector which is about 2.5% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while 2.6 billion people live on \$2 a day and 925 million people go to bed hungry every night. The UN Secretary General Ban ki Moon observed, "The world is over armed and peace is underfunded."

I believe this money must instead be spent on peace – disarmament, conflict prevention, resolution and human security, sustainable development – poverty reduction programme, and implementing UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), Climate Change – mitigation/adaptation, preserving biodiversity and environment and public services – human rights, social justice, gender equality and green job creations. In other words, disarmament for development. Only positive peace provides a framework to understand and address multiple and complex challenges the world faces.

### **Developing Global Peace Via Inner Peace**

So if there is so much violence, turmoil and chaos around the world, how can we attain inner and global peace? The short answer is by love, forgiveness, compassion, tolerance, reconciliation, ongoing dialogue leads to peace.

By practicing five timeless thoughts and actions one can attain inner peace. These are – Simplify (the simplification of life is one of the steps to gain inner peace), Forgive (inner peace can be reached only when we practice forgiveness), Accept (acceptance of others, their looks behaviour, belief brings tranquillity), Do what you enjoy or are passionate about and lastly Do not lose your inner peace for anything.

Each of us has a unique mission to contribute to the philosophy of the inherent value and dignity of all life – respect for self and others above all. So we take actions in our own lives to overcome challenges and support others to do so.

The concept of Inner Peace is as old as the hills. It is part of the rich Asian tradition which can be traced back thousands of years in history, when sages and saints have been meditating to find Inner peace as a way to attain Moksha or salvation and this concept of attaining inner peace can be expanded to bring universal peace.

Inner peace is living in harmony with yourself and surroundings. To address mutual fear Gautama Buddha emphasised on the value of “right mindfulness” for everyone. He also said “Check your mind. Be on your guard.” Mahavira, founder of Jainism also laid out the path and said “Whoever conquers mind and passion, and acts with true austerity, shines like a fire into which the sacrifice/offering has been poured.”

In his book *Being Peace*, the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes: “*Without being peace, we cannot do anything for peace*”. He adds: “*How do you want to create peace, if there is no peace inside yourselves?*” Peace must dwell deep within one’s own being before it overflows to others. The essence of shanti (peace) emphasises the inner source, the absence of peace being due to interior unrest and ignorance which leads to hatred and violence.

Peace starts within ourselves. When we cultivate inner peace, we create a calm mind and an open heart, which creates positive inner qualities such as love, joy and optimism. An open heart is fertile ground for positive social experiences that extend far beyond ourselves.

Inner peace is a vibrant, dynamic state of mind. It fosters in us a vitality and energy i.e. fully present and able to engage life as it is. The more mindful we are at about choosing to be at peace, the more we experience it. The more we experience it, the more we treasure it. The more we treasure our peace of mind, the more expansive it become. When we all create inner peace, world peace becomes inevitable.

Already, it seems we are in a major ideological ‘Shift’. Cities and towns are becoming more diverse and our world is increasingly becoming interconnected and interdependent. There is awareness individually and collectively from which subtle changes are appearing around the world for new structures of handling and organising our affairs, like the concept of nonviolent inner peace cities. We need to channel that energy for future peace building and a better future for all, as inner peace is limitlessly dynamic, expansive and evolutionary in its nature leading to inner tranquillity.

Perhaps the key aspect of “Nonviolent Cities” is that each city will be summoned to address its violence in all its aspects, structures, and systems; to connect the dots between its violence; and to pursue a more holistic, creative, city-wide nonviolence, where everyone together is trying to practice nonviolence, promote nonviolence, teach nonviolence and even institutionalize nonviolence on the local level, to really

build a new nonviolent community for itself and others. We want not just to undermine the local and regional culture of violence, and end all the killings, but to transform it into a culture of nonviolence.

The concept of inner peace can become a reality, if 10% of the population in cities around the world work towards a nonviolent compassionate society, because of the domino effect, it does not require a majority to prevail. The only it can happen is through bottom up, grassroots organisations, reaching out to include everyone in the community and eventually it becomes widely accepted, even by the government, media, police and the military.

Each human being exists within the context of interrelationships that include other human beings, all living beings and the natural world. In other words, each person is sustained by the interdependent web of life. By awakening to this principle we are able to expand instinctive self-love into an altruistic love for others; we are able to nurture the spirit of tolerance and empathy for others.

By our altruistic acts, service and contribution to human society we can transform inner peace to attain universal peace in which all mankind can live in peace and harmony. Gandhi said, "*We must become the change we want to see in the world*" what we need to do is expand our horizon of inner consciousness to attain wider peace in the world. Path of peace brings peace. In our individual life we can be actively engaged as peacemakers in our homes and communities, thus becoming instruments of peace instead of war. The whole world can join in to follow this principle.

We need to incorporate ways to enhance and celebrate diversity and approaches to conflict that are open, honest and compassionate. Total education is the means for preservation for sustainable peace, prevention from violence and war, and cure for victims of injustice. Hence education in all and education for all is a must for good governance, , understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Education in all means education in all the five elements (viz. body, vitality, mind, intellect and spirit) which constitute every man and woman without any discrimination everywhere. Education for all means all men and women, young and old, rich and poor leaving none.

Peace is sometimes seen in negative terms as the absence of war. But, the Sanskrit shanti, Hebrew shalom and the Arabic salaam more positively suggest an integral wholeness resulting from the right relationship with others, nature and the Absolute. Peace has an inner dimension and an outer one, the latter unattainable without the former.

When we look around, most of the world is peaceful. We are at peace with our family, neighbours, and people around us in offices, streets, shops, meetings and conferences as we are here today. However it is the one percent or less, a tiny minority of the people in the world who are violent in nature. For profit, greed and dominance, they engage in endless austerity, violence and warfare. They make it worse for everyone. It is the one bad apple in a box of apples that makes the whole rotten, or a bad fish in a pond which makes the whole water poisonous.

## **Nonviolence – A Path to Achieving Peaceful Miracles**

Non-violence and inner-peace are mutually reinforcing in an increasingly interconnecting world. As real nonviolence begins inwardly uncovering our own deep inner state of peace, love and happiness. Nonviolence (Ahimsa) in its positive form is immense love or the greatest charity in which you do not aim to defeat the opponent, but to convert him/her to your point of view and seek reconciliation rather than conquest. One should develop nonviolence in thought, word and deed and make strong progress towards translating idea, concept and practice of nonviolence. Only then, the goal of inner and global peace can become a reality.

Nonviolence is a positive doctrine of love, friendship and equality among all living beings of the universe. It is an antidote to violence. It embraces both the good of humanity and devotion to the good of all living beings and the environment.

We need to build a vibrant, tolerant and peaceful global society full of loving kindness, caring and sharing environment that encompasses the whole of truth, justice and good governance. Wherever there are disagreements we should find peaceful, nonviolent solutions like dialogue, debates and discussions to lessen tensions among and between the parties concerned.

Nonviolent peaceful means have achieved miracles. There are examples of people and countries working in creative ways to end violence. In 1948, Costa Rica abolished its army and since has been able to invest resources in public interest – education, healthcare, development or quite simply it invested in its people. No one has attacked Costa Rica because they have no army. The campaign against landmines which resulted in the Mine Ban Treaty – signed by 159 countries – began with the collection of data by hospital staff treating the victims of landmines.

Community spirit and mutual trade among countries have ended wars in Europe. Some other examples are Indian Independence Movement, the Civil and Women's Rights Movements. Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland Peace Process, Orange revolution in Ukraine, Velvet revolution in Czech Republic, Rose revolution in Georgia, and the reunification of Germany are a few examples where non violent revolutions have taken place instead of bloodshed.

Many positive changes have already happened, for example: in issues like sexism, racism and religious tolerance.

### **Ideas, Actions and Vision for Building Peace**

- If 10% of humanity practices great moral ideas of inner peace, global peace can become a reality and the world will be a much better place as it does not require a majority to prevail because of the domino effect.
- Follow non-military solutions (dialogue, diplomacy, mediation, meditation) to end violence and wars.

- Develop the spirit. Spirituality is the lynchpin, the centre of gravity which coheres/unifies everything leading to peaceful and enlightened behaviour.
- Practicing nonviolence is a holistic virtue and is not based on cowardice, its basis is love, equality, inclusion, self-restraint and renunciation.
- Pursue urgent need for the establishment of peace cities, peace universities, peace ministries, to develop peace policies and adopt alternatives to violence, militarism and war mongering institutions.
- Nonviolence (Ahimsa) is a lifestyle and way of life and it will not work if it is not put into practice
- We must delegitimise war as a way of solving disputes.
- Build peace by working in the following areas: human rights, poverty, environment, water and resources, conflict resolution, empowering women and children, health, reduction weapons proliferation, inclusion, education and community.
- Nonviolence is, in reality, inner awakening. When a person is able to control his senses, and begins to look within, it is then that nonviolence sprouts. Nonviolence is superb and a gateway to liberation.
- The nonviolent revolutions are started by one single individual who help achieve a change in the destiny of a society and, further, enables a change in the destiny of humankind."
- By becoming more nonviolent, in your behaviour and attitudes, you can contribute to the creation of inner peace societies.
- Through compassion, love and concern about others and because of the interconnectedness of all beings, inner peace remains continuous, and permeates in all our actions and decisions
- Learn and apply forgiveness, a divine attribute of love. Which save the expense of anger, cost of hatred and the waste of spirits.

## **Conclusion**

Our measure of success depends how we translate our aspirations into reality – making 21<sup>st</sup> Century more nonviolent and peaceful and not a repeat of the past two centuries (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>), the bloodiest in our history.

In 1984, the UN General Assembly proclaimed that *"the peoples of our planet have a sacred right to peace"*; and declared that *"the preservation of the right of peoples to peace and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligation of each State."*

Civil society should work continuously on peace, justice, development, disarmament and the respect for human rights which are essential elements to build the culture of peace to challenge our current culture of violence, militarism and fear. Our overarching goal should be to cultivate a shared awareness of our common humanity for resolving the global challenges confronting us today.

We are living in amazing times when it is becoming easier to build new pathways. It is very similar to pioneers and innovators of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. By taking advantage of



technology, the internet and social media we can spread the philosophy of inner peace, the foundation of world peace, in a short span of time.

How will history remember us? It can only be kind if we can make truth, justice and common sense prevail. Today's peace conference is an opportunity to move forward the debate against the military mindset, to start and activate a political discussion to change the system for a safer planet, leading to peace and prosperity.

**"Remember, peace is our birth right and we should claim it"**

**The message is simple: Peace is an investment in our humanity's progress for a better future. The way to peace is to overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth and hatred with love. The bottom line is we should have increasing desire to be of service to others with greater compassion.**

Grassroots activists and change-makers, let me share a dream with you. Let us create nonviolent peaceful cities for building inner peace and global peace. Then the world would be a different place. It will be a bliss to be living on the cusp of a new dawn when mankind would have taken a full turn transforming our world towards a better future.. Only then we can leave a lasting legacy for generations to come ensuring the continuation and progress of our sacred civilisation and humanity leading from inner peace to global peace.

Let me conclude by a quote from the His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama who stressed the importance of inner peace in the world as *"the question of real, lasting world peace concerns human beings, so basic human feelings are also at its roots. Through inner peace, genuine world peace can be achieved. In this the importance of individual responsibility is quite clear; an atmosphere of peace must first be created within ourselves, then gradually expanded to include our families, our communities, and ultimately the whole planet."* Young change makers, together we can transform oppressive systems that perpetuate poverty, militarism, violence and racism – taking us from inner peace to global peace.

If 10% of the humanity practices the great moral ideas of inner peace, then global peace cannot be far away and the world will be a much better place to live in. Let there be peace on earth. Let it begin with all of us. All know the way but few actually walk it, so let's walk the talk, follow our unique passions and create a better world for ourselves and future generations, leading from inner peace to global peace.

**Thank you for listening.**

## **Peace Quotations from major religions and Vijay Mehta's bio follows:**

**Christianity** – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

**Islam** – God will guide men to peace. If they will heed Him, He will lead them from the darkness of war to the light of peace.

**Buddhism** – There is no happiness greater than Peace

**Hinduism** – Without meditation, where is peace? Without peace, where is happiness?

“May there be peace to the heavens, peace to the sky, peace to the atmosphere. May there be peace on the Earth and peace in the waters. May there be peace to the forests and peace to the mountains. May there be peace to the plants, animals and to all creatures. May we all live in Peace”

**Vedas (considered to be the oldest book on earth)**

**Baha'I** – War is death while peace is life

**Confucianism** – Seek to be in harmony with all your neighbours...live in peace with your brethren.

**Jainism** – All men should live in peace with their fellows. This is the Lord's desire.

**Celtic Prayer** – If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character, if there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home, if there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. So let it be!

### **Notes:**

The following publications/websites were consulted and excerpts have been taken from them during the writing of this article:

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4. Santiago declaration to the human rights to peace <http://goo.gl/Twy9o>
5. UNESCO Declaration of Culture of Peace - [http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk\\_sum\\_cp.htm](http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm)
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14. Prasad, Surya Nath, Total Education for Good Governance and Peace, Transcend Media Service
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16. Rev. Dear, John, Building New 'Nonviolent Cities', Common Dreams
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18. Mehta, Vijay, "Is Nonviolent Future Possible?", Towards a Nonviolent Future, 8<sup>th</sup> ICPNA Conference, Jaipur India 2014

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a distinguished author and leading peace activist and a champion for Development and Human Rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace ([www.unitingforpeace.org](http://www.unitingforpeace.org)) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity ([www.fortuneforum.org](http://www.fortuneforum.org)). He is a Director of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is a campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy. In 2016, Uniting for Peace have initiated a new campaign "Europe for Peace – Count Me In" ([www.europeforpeace.org.uk](http://www.europeforpeace.org.uk)) – It is an educational campaign aims to contribute positively to the upcoming UK referendum on EU's membership highlighting the EU's peace endeavours.

The charity Fortune Forum whose founder is Renu Mehta, daughter of Vijay Mehta, held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include The Economics of Killing (2012), The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future (2006), Arms No More (2005) and The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century (2005).

In 2014, Vijay Mehta's bio, "The Audacity of Dreams" appeared in the book Karma Kurry, published by Jaico Publishing House (India). It included 25 other inspiring change-makers' biographies. Nelson Mandela who wrote the foreword to the book, had this to say, "Ordinary people do extra ordinary things. These stories have that power to inspire people to rise and act, to make a difference." To read Vijay Mehta's full bio, please follow this link: <http://goo.gl/JcUGwr>

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aitak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors ([www.icongo.in](http://www.icongo.in)). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice. He has been awarded as Global Peace Ambassador by Global Diversity Peace Centre London in 2015

Vijay Mehta's book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: [www.theeconomicsofkilling.org](http://www.theeconomicsofkilling.org) and was read and commented by figures such as Tony Benn, Mairead Maguire, Alice Walker and Deepak Chopra.

Vijay Mehta's new book "Exporting Europe's Peace" to be published next year makes the case for EU and its preservation of peace in Europe making the war on the continent unthinkable.

"Vijay....a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"  
**The Sunday Times Magazine, London** 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."  
**The Independent, London** 26 September 2006

"Thank you for all you do Vijay - both the Organisation and yourself are inspiration and give us all hope that both yourself and Uniting for Peace can bring a world without war. Indeed it is possible, even in our own time."

**Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate (1976)**

Vijay Mehta is among the 1,300 Notable Peacemakers Throughout History  
[http://peace.maripo.com/p\\_peacemakers.htm](http://peace.maripo.com/p_peacemakers.htm)

He is among the 98 Peace Philanthropists around the world.  
[http://peace.maripo.com/p\\_philanthropy\\_bios.htm](http://peace.maripo.com/p_philanthropy_bios.htm)