

RACE, FAITH AND WORLD PEACE

Venue

Hilton London Euston
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Introduction

Good evening and welcome. In my short talk today, I will concentrate on exploring race, faith and how attaining holistic peace can lead to world peace. Universal application of inner and outer peace opens a life of freedom, expression and opportunities for all to fulfil their potential. It brings tranquillity, harmony and reverence for life through a philosophy of nonviolence, in a world beset by violence and wars.

Race, Religion and Racial Discrimination

Evil practices of race and religion have been responsible for killings/violence which manifests in our society in the form of wars, violent crime, homicide, public disorder, weapons crime etc. and deprivation in the form of worst effects of poverty. Some of the deadly conflicts in the past and present have been undertaken in the name of religion and ethnicity based on faith, ideology, race, class, gender and thrived by propaganda of division by politicians, military, corporate, media, thinkers, scholars, academics, priests and historians. Violence, in the name of security, whether it is at home or bullying or war abroad, simply leads to more violence. Power, elite, rulers control, dominate and legitimise violence by creating fear in the masses.

Racial discrimination, ethnic conflicts and widespread violence persist in various parts of the world. In recent years, the world has witnessed campaigns of “ethnic cleansing” in Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, Iraq, Cambodia etc. and earlier mass murder of 6 million Jews in Second World War (The Holocaust). Racial minorities, migrants, asylum seekers and indigenous peoples are persistent targets of intolerance. A case in example is the continuing persecution of Roma community in Europe.

Millions of human beings continue to encounter racial discrimination solely due to the colour of their skin or other factors that, like caste and social status leading to inequality and unrest in the world.

Radical Hindu nationalists are killing Muslims and Christians in India. Radical Jewish groups are murdering Palestinians in the Middle East. Neo-Nazis continue to prey minorities in America and Europe. Criminals pretending to promote workers rights operate in Columbia. Terrorists most threatening to international security are the so-called “global *jihadists*”

One need to understand the role that religion has played in legitimising wars, violence and motivating violent activists and followers. Religious ideologies, goals, and motivations are often interwoven with those that are economic and social leading to injustice and domination. A group’s decision to turn to violence is usually situational and is seldom endemic to the religious tradition to which the group is related. Islam does not cause terrorism, nor does any other religion with terrorists acts have been associated. Political and economic grievances are primary causes or catalysts and religion becomes a mean to legitimise and mobilise violence and wars on a continuous evil cycle. We have victims of gender discrimination, trafficking in persons – especially women and children – asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and injustices suffered by indigenous peoples around the world.

Race and Identity Crisis

Race and identity crisis has been explained by the scholar, writer, philosopher J. Krishnamurti:

“We are programmed and conditioned, like computers – we are Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Hutus and Tutsis and so on. Do we realise, or see actually, not theoretically, or ideologically, that we are programmed? If you are actually programmed do you realise the consequences of being programmed? One of the consequences has been hatred, or war, or separating yourself from others. If one realises that you are being programmed, pressurised, preached at, and if one really sees that, you abandon it, you don't want a formula for it. So what is important is to realise the actuality of being programmed, not intellectually, but with all your being. Then we will be able to break the pattern of confrontation among human beings and free our minds from the conditional mental slavery and it will provide the way for compassion and love for one another.

So can we live on this earth with great understanding of mankind, which is to understand yourself so profoundly, not according to some psychologist, analyst but as simple laymen we can observe our own idiosyncrasies, tendencies. Our brain has been conditioned to war, to hate, to conflict. It is conditioned through this long period of evolution, whether that brain with its cells, which contain all the memories, whether that brain can free itself from its own conditioning. If you have been going north all the days of your life, as humanity has been going in a particular direction, which is conflict, and somebody comes along and says, "That leads nowhere". He is serious, and perhaps you are serious. Then he says, "Go south, go east, any other direction but that". And when you actually move away from that direction there is a mutation in the very brain cells themselves because you have broken the pattern. And that pattern must be broken now, not forty or a hundred years later.

This can be done if we liberate our minds and shed all shackles that rationalise using culture, religion and societal norms to justify our lack of actions. Once we transcend conditioned consciousness then we will have the vitality, the energy, to transform ourselves as civilised human beings, not killing each other. Right now we can change both psychologically and outwardly. First the psychological revolution, not evolution, but revolution, change completely. That is the real action of humankind, not trying to fiddle around on the periphery for putting an end to wars.”

The Role of UN to Bring an End to Racism

UN have organised “World Conferences Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Religious Intolerance” which have not only spread the awareness of the issues regarding racism and religious intolerance but also have explored solutions for these underlined problems.

The General Assembly of UN between 1973 and 2003, designated three decades for action to combat racism and racial discrimination and to ensure support for people struggling for racial equality.

- The programme of action for the first decade was structured around measures concerning the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and pursuit of worldwide education plan.

- The programme of action for the second decade emphasised recourse procedures for victims of racial discrimination.

- For third decade, the programme underlined the pivotal role of human rights education in securing respect for human rights

Creation of UK Equality and Human Rights Commission for Racial Equality and Harmony

The creation of UK's commission for racial inequality which has now merged into the Equality and Human Rights Commission has worked towards elimination of race discrimination and promoted equality of opportunity and good relations among different racial groups. It has the responsibility to monitor the progress that society makes towards becoming one, that is more equal, where every individual has the opportunity to achieve their potential and treat each other with dignity and respect.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission had a triennial review project under the equality act. The review finished in 2012 and recommended 10 areas in which UK government, judicial system, institutions and public authorities can work for better race relations and protection of Human Rights in Britain by improving:

- i) Health and social care
- ii) The Justice System
- iii) Police custody and prisons
- iv) Investigations into the death of people
- v) Providing a system of better legal aid
- vi) Improve legislative and regulatory frame work
- vii) Protect Human Rights of minorities
- viii) Counter terrorism by not undermining civil liberties
- ix) Independent inquiry into torture
- x) Protecting the rights of immigrants

Coexistence of Race and Religion can Lead to World Peace

We can end racism and racial disharmony if we practice coexistence and develop inner peace as without developing inner peace, lasting world peace will be hard to achieve.

To attain inner peace, we need to explore alternative solutions to reduce violence which are described in Eastern and Western traditions. Indian scriptures in various ways in Vedic culture, Buddhism and Hinduism advocate the practice of prayer, meditation, and yoga for attaining inner peace and building a just and violence free society.

How can we attain holistic peace? – In a multi-polar, interconnected and interdependent world, holistic peace is a power within every human being which can be effectively used to change the world to a more peaceful place. One of the ways to do it is via dialogue and living compassionately in unity for constructive co-existence.

Inner peace is a state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, living in harmony with yourself and surroundings. Peace starts within ourselves. When we cultivate inner peace, we

have a calm mind and an open heart, which builds positive qualities such as love, joy and optimism. When we achieve inner peace, world peace becomes inevitable.

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 joy and harmony. Path of peace brings peace. Peace has an inner dimension and an outer one, the latter unattainable without the former.

The concept of Inner Peace is as old as the hills. 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?” His Holiness The Dalai Lama also 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.”

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 what you are passionate about, and lastly do not lose your inner peace for anything.

By training children and adults, practicing and spreading peace not only make them better citizens but also non violent persons building an ethical and non-killing world. Follow your heart to build inner and outer peace. Do not let the noise and opinion of others drown your resolve. The practice of internal and external peace will bring a balance in spiritual and material values benefitting the entire human race.

Conclusion

Race and faith organisations should take the following steps for harmonious relations between communities:

- The promotion of inter-cultural education at all levels of society, providing background into different religious communities
- The facilitation of interfaith interactions with an emphasis on people-to-people relationships
- The establishment of an independent organisation to monitor representations of religious communities on television, news media, textbooks, and other public forums to clear misunderstanding of race and religion
- Political and religious leaders have a duty at all levels to combat extremism, hatred, fanaticism and promote mutual respect among individuals and religious groups.

Former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan said “Racists are not born, they develop, and a primary cause of racism is ignorance. Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda... Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will and must be defeated.”

Mary Robinson, Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also said, “We must combat the evils of racism and xenophobia – manifesting themselves through discrimination and all forms of intolerance – are the wellsprings of many of the world’s conflicts; because they are key element of the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion; and because these forces run directly contrary to the fundamental message of human rights which is that every member of human family has equal and inalienable rights to live with peace and dignity.” – Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Let me conclude by saying, no matter where we live, what religion we practice or what culture we cultivate, at the heart of everything, we are all humans. We all have the same ambitions and aspirations to raise our family and to live life to its fullest. Our cultural, religious and political differences should not provide the backbone to invoke conflicts that can only bring sorrow and destruction to our world.

If we are able to put some of the solutions I have advocated in my talk, then we have a fair chance of developing harmonious race and interfaith relations for achieving world peace.

– Thanks for listening

Notes:

1. Vijay Mehta, *The Economics of Killing*, (Pluto Press, London 2012).
2. J. Krishnanmurti, *World Peace*, a lecture presented at The United Nations, 1984
3. Vijay Mehta, *Nonkilling Spiritual Traditions*, Chapter – We are one family: Developing Holistic Peace for a non-killing World, (Center of Global Nonkilling, Hawaii 2013)
4. “UNESCO Declaration of Culture of Peace”, United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization, http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm
5. Dr. Yoichi Kawada, *From Inner Peace to World Peace: A Buddhist Perspective* (St Martin’s Press, 1999).
6. Crandle R. Kline, *Peace Within Our Grasp: Making the Dream a Reality* (Xlibris Corporation, 2009).
7. Dr. Philip Henry, “Inner Peace - World Peace: The Buddhist Contribution” (paper presented at the Third International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak, Bangkok, Thailand, May 7 – 10, 2006).
8. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (California: Parallax Press, 2005).
9. John Jacob English, *The Collapse of the War System: Developments in the Philosophy of Peace in the Twentieth Century*, (Dublin: Saor-Ollscoil Press in association with Choice Publishing, 2007).
10. Kent Flannery, Joyce Marcus, *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
11. Sheeram Chaulia, “Back to the Future,” *The Asian Age*, July 20, 2013.

12. Aliastair McIntosh and Vijay Mehta, "Spiritual Activism - sustaining the path of non-violence," <http://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/courses/spiritual-activism>.
13. J. S. Mathur, *Ailing World: Gandhian Alternatives* (Mumbai: Bhavan's Book University 1997).
14. Alan Axelrod, *Gandhi, CEO* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2010).
15. Glenn Paige, "The Non-Killing Idea Can Lead" (paper presented at Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, California, October 2010).
16. Pim, Joam E, "Towards a Nonkilling Paradigm Shift" in *Towards a Nonkilling World: Festschrift in Honor of Prof. Glenn D. Paige*, edited by N. Radhakrishnan, Glenda Paige, Balwant Bhaneja Chaiwat Satha-Anand and Joam Evans Pim, 106 – 132, Trivandrum, India: Gandhi Media Center, 2012.
17. International Alert, *Crime, Violence and Conflict*, (Peace Focus, July 2013).
18. Paul Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind* (London: Constable, 2009).
19. Club de Madrid, "Addressing the Causes of Terrorism," (March 2005)
20. Mary Robinson, "World Conference Against Racism," (Durban, 2001)

The materials and excerpts have been taken from the book *The Economics of Killing*.
This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com
Please watch 4D for World Peace film:

“Change the World” – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk>

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

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.

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).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajjak-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). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

He has been appointed a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta’s new 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

“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