From Inner Peace to Global Peace

VIJAY MEHTA: vijay@vmpeace.org

Location:

SOAS Room V111 | SOAS, Vernon Square| Penton Rise
London WC1X 9EW | United Kingdom

Date & Time:

Saturday | 8 December 2012
16:00 Start

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Obstacles to Peace
3. What are the Alternatives for Sustainable Peace
4. Building an Ethical World to End Violence, Militarism and Wars
5. How the World Benefits
6. What can Civil Society Do
7. Conclusion

The Conference is hosted by Tibetan Community in Britain and Tibet Foundation to celebrate the awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1989

Introduction

Thanks Tsering, Jon Aldridge and Tibet Foundation for inviting me to speak at the Commemoration of the Nobel Peace Day. It is an honour to join to celebrate the awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness The Dalai Lama on 10th December 1989. It is a privilege to be speaking to the Tibetan Community who are engaged in an inspiring and historic struggle to gain justice and independence from China.

The current Tibetan practice of self-immolation for the cause of gaining independence are gaining world attention. The situation in Tibet is dire as human rights of Tibetans are suppressed as they seek freedom and democracy which are fundamental rights of all people around the world.

It is good to share a platform with distinguished speakers, 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.

It is unrealistic to talk of permanent peace while fighting continues in Syria for last 18 months, Iran under threat of an imminent attack by US, Middle East is volatile as extreme tensions between Israel and Palestine remain. Let us also consider what does sustainable peace means to 2 billion people living on $1 - $2 a day whose basic human rights for food, shelter, education and healthcare are denied on a daily basis. It is a shameful scenario for all of humanity when one billion go to bed hungry while commodity giants like Glencore reported 2.2 billion pre-tax profits out of the misery of poor people without any slightest shade of moral conscience. It seems in times like this, human empathy has become a casualty of culture of war.

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 obstacles to the attainment of inner peace to Global Peace which I examined last year while addressing an International peace conference in Jaipur, India.

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. 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 which can clip the wings of the 1% elite whose crimes seem beyond redemption and are the cause off most of the problems facing world today. The most damaging is the actions by which they murder, torture and steal to satisfy their unlimited material desires. This greed has created economic disparities among racial and ethnic groups and between countries on a global scale.

Thirdly, will we be able to combat violent extremism and religious intolerances flaring up as in India, Egypt, Libya and other parts of the world, based on hatred and irrational attachment to religious ideologies.

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

Obstacles to Peace

Culture of Violence

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 basic causes of violence leading to suffering of human existence. The control all of these five evils is the key to inner peace and also the core contribution of all major religions of the world. Let me flag up anger or fear which is relevant to our talk today.

Anger is about confronting the underlying factor of fear. In a Anger or rage one take actions one will not dream of doing when you are in a calm state. Anger and fear are head and tail of the same coin. Wars seem to be about anger but they are actually about fear. This is a hard fact for combatants to face. In the name of toughness, warring countries never admit how afraid they are of each other. The sponsorship of terrorist groups who perpetrate random attacks, theory of pre-emptive strike like wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, violent regime change as in Libya or policy of first use of nuclear weapons is based on the same principle that you

attack your opponent first before they attack showing unmistakably the fear in both the conflicting parties. Power, elite, rulers use violence to control, dominate and legitimise violence by creating fear in the masses.

Violence and aggression domestic or outside including gun crimes is happening on a regular basis in our civilised society. 780 million guns are in circulation worldwide and 5 to 6 million are manufactured on a yearly basis. Shootings in US occur every 4 to six weeks, the recent one being in Sikh Temple in Wisconsin. In UK Dunblane school massacre killed 18 school children of 5 years old. And the recent murder of 77 people in Norway is another example of manifestations of inner restlessness and mental imbalance. Individuals like Breivik (murderer of Norway Massacre) seem to be ideologically driven, yet in the depths of their mind they are a victim of distortion of the personality. On a wider scale this imbalance of personality and mind has the potential of creating havoc. It leads to militarisation and leaders engaging in futile wars as in Afghanistan and Iraq. The flames of fear, hatred and greed destroy individuals, engulfs families, ethnic groups, nations, and eventually the whole of humanity.

Militarism and Military Industrial Complex

The culture of militarism is the root cause of violence and an obstacle to inner peace. The reverence for military is prevalent in all societies throughout history from the Greek state of Sparta, to the Roman Empire to British Empire to the Soviet Union. Hollywood glamorises military. Judiciary and political leaders find it dangerous to oppose militarism. Media rarely questions when it comes to warfare, and only takes a narrow view of wars as justified or unjustified, legal or illegal, popular or unpopular. With little of government or military criticism, practical alternatives to war are ignored.

In my book The Economics of Killing, I have advocated the urgent necessity to try to stop our world becoming dangerously militarised. 1% of the senior-politicians, military, weapon manufacturers, arm dealers, corporations and media support militarism. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) data for 2011, the military spending has risen to $1.74 trillion while 925 million people go to bed hungry every night. 4% of the military spending is enough to wipe out extreme poverty, financial crisis and climate change. The cold war has been over for more than two decades, yet the world continues on an insane path to increase its military spending year after year as if we are living in a time of unending conflict.

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 21st Century and we still killing each other with new and sophisticated weapons. What we need is urgent necessity to adopt nonviolent ways for building peace, restoring human dignity, ethics and civilisation, which are reflected in a new initiative 4D for World Peace inspired by my book. It is about taking actions on disarming and demilitarising, and

the savings thus achieved to be deployed for peace-building, development and promoting democracy. A film, Change the World (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk) has also been produced as a part of promoting the 4D for World peace Campaign.

The US obsession with wars and military spending has created a monster – the military-industrial complex – which acts against the interests of people everywhere, including US citizens themselves. The US military spends $1.9 million per minute. My book, The Economics of Killing shows how this monster is not only the cause of extreme poverty in the developing world, but of 911 and the market crash of 2008. How the world can move away from war economy to a sustainable peace economy based on soft power and co-operation, so we can tackle the biggest threats facing humanity: extreme poverty, climate change and warmongering

Some examples of damage done by Military Industrial Complex(MIC) are:

1. Rise in militarism, endless wars and conflicts leading to millions of deaths and untold suffering

2. Oppression of developing countries & forced transfer of resources from poor to rich

3. Terrorism and War on Terror.

4. 2008 financial collapse and current economic crisis

5. Marginalisation of United Nations and Weakening of World Institutions

6. Start of a new cold war in Europe and Asia with frightening prospects

7. Negative effects of MIC on environment, global and human security including refugees, migrants etc.

8. Control of information, secrecy, Manipulation of media, biased reporting and false propaganda

9. Use of Science, latest technology and research to develop satanic weapons
10. MIC Giving powers to military alliances like NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to police the world and fight its wars

What are the Alternatives for Sustainable Peace?

So if there is so much violence, turmoil and chaos around the world, how can we attain inner and global 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 oblation has been poured."

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. When we all create inner peace, world peace becomes inevitable.

Already, It seems we are in a major ideological individual and collective 'Shift' in awareness from which subtle changes are appearing around the world for new structures of handling and organising our affairs. 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.

The answer to these challenges is yes if we all join and cooperate to explore and implement 4D for World Peace Model, which advocates development for peace and disarmament for security. 4D stands for working on Disarmament, Demilitarisation, and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for Development and Democracy. The initiative is inspired by my recently published book The Economics Of Killing, endorsed by luminaries and organisations around the world.

The book explains that 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.

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, and are culprits. For

their profit, greed and dominance, they engage in endless 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.

Building an Ethical World to End Violence, Militarism and Wars

The alternatives for a peaceful world, as explored in the 4D for World Peace Model, are military reduction, cutback on global arms trade, reforms of the monetary system to a wisdom based economy, addressing root causes of violence, wars, terrorism and creating incentives for inner peace leading to global peace.

The aim of individuals and society is to harness money and power for promotion of peace education which is fundamental for building an equitable and safer world—in short living in a atmosphere of peace and harmony. To work for peace, It is important to understand and act on culture of peace. It begins with an individual who by his/her actions can bring inner peace which equals world peace. It calls for an education that empowers learners to resolve differences peacefully without recourse to violence, learning to live in peace with their neighbours.

Peace is often called absence of war. But it is much more than that. It is the ability of society to function on ethical and moral core values of life where everyone is provided an opportunity to find decent work, earn a living, contribute to their communities and societies and fulfil their full potential, It is about shared values which comprise some of the most basic aspirations of human kind – freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, shared responsibility and multiculturalism At a wider level, it is preparing and nurturing citizens to grow and become vehicles for change to find solutions to the issues we are facing today.

"Peace is upholding universal and eternal truths of life-- love, kindness and harmony. It is nurturing qualities of self control, sacrifice, non-violence and understanding for resolution of conflict. It is spreading culture of peace and to challenge the futility of violence and wars. Peace is recognition of our interconnectivity at all times and in all places.

All countries need urgently to restructure their economies away from its dependence on military sector. How can it be done? These are some of the ways we can change the system.

- By following the UN programme of action on Culture of Peace and Santiago declaration to the human rights to peace creating conditions of equity, gender and racial equality and social justice inculcating values of nonviolence, tolerance and democracy in every woman, man, children and adult alike.

- Shift workers from war industry into 'green collar' jobs – renewable, waste management, pollution control, carbon capture for peace economy.

- Share green technology innovation by exporting it to developing countries so they escape smoke-stack stage of development.

- Reform the arms, financial and drug industries, who work on giving bribes to win contracts, leading to economic instability. Close down corruption loopholes and fraud which has cost the UK economy $73 billion in 2011 – the $43 billion BAE Al-Yamama arms deal to Saudi Arabia

- Creating a wisdom based enlightened economy where looking after majority of people (99%) should be the first priority, and not the 1% elite lining their own pockets.

- To stop stealing and extorting materials from developing countries under the guise of free trade and globalisation. Adopt Chinese model (lifted 600 million people out of poverty, despite corruption). They have done this by a policy of protecting growth of state champions which should be followed by other developing countries

- Reform UN to play better leadership role in new global economy, international peace and security.

How the World Benefits?

For the world to benefit bring fundamental shift in our ethics and values to eradicate wars, violence and establish peace to reduce debt and financial crisis in which US and most of European countries are engulfed. According to Global Peace Index 2011, if the countries cut back their violence at the rate of 25% for example, it could save global economy $2.25 trillion. Eradicating violence altogether, can create a stimulus of $9 trillion, enough to tackle financial, climate change crisis and wipe out extreme poverty including covering cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Military spending is anti development. The developing world does not need hand-outs from industrialised nations. All it needs is a level playing field and leaders who place their country's interest over personal wealth. A Chinese proverb states "Give a man a fish and you feed him for one meal, teach him to fish and he is set for life"

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.

Nonviolent peaceful means have achieved miracles. Mutual trade have ended wars in Europe. Some examples are Indian Independence Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland Peace Process, the recent Orange revolution in Ukraine, Velvet revolution in Czech Republic, Rose revolution in Georgia in Europe, and the reunification of Germany are a few examples where non violent revolutions have taken place instead of bloodshed.

We firmly need to demolish the belief in popular entertainment and culture which takes for granted that violence and war are inevitable and part of human survival.

Let me say selling arms and expecting peace is unrealistic. What we do require is to change war economy to peace economy and if we want peace, as Martin Luther King Jr. said: *"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom."*

Any demilitarisation plan should begin with US by slashing its cold war level of military spending being the biggest player in arms race.

What can Civil Society Do?

The ideological shift of ideas and actions is necessary to set our minds free and to reach a critical mass and to spread in society. Our hope for abolition of war and demilitarisation lies with us – Citizen Power, the moral conscience of the world. With hardly any backing of money or peace keepers, all we have is our core belief and indomitable spirit to stand up for peace and justice. Through inner peace we can mobilise strong nonviolent grassroots movements, to change public opinion with the help of internet and social media. It is easier to make connections between people, teams and ideas to make a difference and change the world. When enough people are convinced that war is not necessary then elected leaders will be forced to change policies from war mongering to peaceful resolution of conflicts.

My book demonstrates that in 4D for World Peace, there is an alternative model to the deadly cycle of military and economic disaster. It is the vital necessity for disarmament and establishing security on a world scale and a strict regulation of arms trading to create a peace dividend within an international legal framework. It will pave the way by which the military industrial model could be replaced by adopting equitable policies for disarmament, demilitarisation and working for sustainable development thus ending the cycle of violence and poverty.

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 our 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.

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 emphasises the inner source, the absence of peace being due to interior unrest and ignorance which leads to hatred and violence.

Conclusion

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, threats 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 19th Century. Through inner peace citizen activism can harness the advantage of technology, internet and social media to go global with the message 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 a public outcry and demand for abolition of war and military spending for eradicating violence and building a peaceful world. When 25 million soldiers worldwide are replaced with 25 million peace-workers, the world will 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 14th 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.*" taking us 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.

Notes:

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

1. Prof. N. Radhakhrishnan, Satyagraha: Its relevance in Dialogue, Reconciliation and Justice.
2. Vijay Mehta, The Economics of Killing, Pluto Press, 2012 London
3. Santiago declaration to the human rights to peace http://goo.gl/Twy9o
4. UNESCO Declaration of Culture of Peace - http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm
5. Vijay Mehta – The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future, 2005, London UK.
6. Dr. Yoichi Kawada – From Inner Peace to World Peace – A Buddhist Perspective, St. Martin's Press, 1999
7. Crandle R. Kline – Peace Within Our Grasp
8. Inner Peace – World Peace: The Buddhist Contribution – Philip Henry
9. Dhammapitaka - Buddhist solution for the 21st Century, 1986
10. Thich Nah Hanh, Being Peace, Parallax Press, 2005, USA
11. Marcus Braybrook, Beacons of Light, O Books, 2009, Winchester, UK

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 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.

Fortune Forum was founded by his daughter Renu Mehta. Fortune Forum 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, Ajtak-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.

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