

IN THE BOSOM OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

(Keynote address delivered at the Symposium "Pathways to Peace" at the Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, Sunday 28th September 2003
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Dear friends – lovers of peace!

Why do we seek peace? Why is peace so essential to us?

Because it is already here inside us and we do not know it! Our inmost being is always flooded with limitless, unending peace and only when we realize that – when we fully experience that unconditional, fathomless peace – we can truly become persons of peace in this world. And that is exactly what this world now so badly needs.

How do we find this inner peace?

There is nothing to find because it is already there! Every night when we sleep we are really absorbed in that peace. At night we all experience a certain period which is called "deep dreamless sleep" and this every day profound state of mind is the very cause of our idea of peace. But alas! – we are not conscious of this experience – when we wake up in the morning it is only a vague reminiscence lurking in the depth our subconscious mind. And that is why we haven't got any clear idea of peace. And that is why we will have to make peace conscious in our lives.

What is really peace then?

Peace is not so many things – peace is simply *harmony*. It is the harmony between the dualities of life. When a person is at peace with him- or herself that person is natural and peaceful and the community gains from having members like him or her. When husband and wife have a peaceful relationship their children become harmonious and the whole society will benefit from it.

Peace is certainly not only a pact or a treaty between warring combatants or only the absence of violence, as is usually the present international understanding of the word. If peace is only the absence of something, what then will this void be filled with? Isn't peace also the presence of something? And if peace is only a pact like a business contract, then we should abolish the word "peace" from our vocabulary altogether.

What then is the true word for the harmonious condition?

There is a most wonderful and scientific word for peace or harmony which has existed for thousands of years in *Sanskrit* which is the mother language of all the languages in our Indo-European group of languages and that is the word *shanti*. Shanti is the correct soundexpression for the human nature's harmony and balance with emphasis on mental calm, serenity and contentment. Without the right conception and a phonetically correct sound it is impossible to conceive the right ideas and to develop the right understanding. In India Shanti, with a capital S, is the goddess of "Universal Peace".

How can shanti be experienced?

Shanti is always with you – it is the natural state of your inner being. As universal nature is always in harmony with herself, so we will have to learn from nature. Part of this nature

within our own individual sphere is our own body and mind, and so we shall have to learn the language of our body and read our mind to know ourselves. The ultimate question in life "Who am I?" will be answered not by the study of literature or by lectures or information given to us from outside ourselves, and certainly not by scientific gene manipulation or other biological alteration of nature, but by learning to know and harmonizing what we already have got by nature at birth. That is to tune in to nature and universal harmony. And that is the art of life and art of living.

By knowing and harmonizing ourselves, shanti will be the natural outcome. We may say that peace is a positive side effect of the art of life and art of living. And how else will peace really come to this world – how else will the goddess Shanti descend on this war-ridden planet Earth and live amongst humankind?

Dear friends!

What about nature – the very basis of our existence? Is there really any peace in nature? Aren't there always violence and war?

Yes, there are! In nature there is a constant "struggle for survival" and "survival of the fittest". The death of one becomes the food of another – that is the very law of nature. In fact, by the sumptuous lavishness of nature all life batters on life. In nature there is always duality – it both gives and takes life. Life and death are always together and the one cannot be without the other. And as all life wants to live and not die the different forms of life, also within the same species, always tries to dominate and to conquer each other in the survival race. Still, nature is always in harmony with herself on the overall universal level because all the life-forms are interdependent on each other and because she always keeps the balance of the three main principles of life, namely *creation*, *sustenance* and *destruction*. It is very necessary to understand these things in order to understand how conflicts and war come about.

Man is at the top of the evolutionary pyramid of life-forms. His body and mind are the very result of all these forms of lives' millions and millions of lifecycles through the struggle of evolution. So we just have to realize that our distinct tendency to dominate and to conquer other life-forms and each other is innate and inherent through our genes. It is a fact of nature and we shouldn't get surprised to learn about it. Perhaps it is unpleasant for most of us to consider it, but if we think a little we shall clearly see how this violence in different forms and with different levels of intensity permeates our daily life and society. Just think of the violence most of our foodstuffs have undergone before we buy it deliciously looking and well presented in sterile plastic in the grocery. Vegetables and fruits are treated with poisonous chemicals from beginning to end and the unspeakable cruelty with which our domestic animals are treated in their concentration camps for effective production of meat, milk, eggs, etc., makes us realize that violence is not only inborn in us through our genes, but is also richly supplied on a daily basis through our food and lifestyle. So there should be no wonder why half of all of our so-called "best brains" are directly engaged in the war industry and that a large majority of all education, scientific research, commerce and resources are used to feed the machinery of war and in different ways to dominate and to conquer each other.

Dear friends!

We cannot run from the fact that there is a tendency of life to conquer each other and that

this inherent tendency causes dominations, suppressions and enmity, and also superpowers, imperialism, conflicts and wars. This tendency is a part of us. Still, we feel that it is not acceptable. Why is this? Why is it that people from many parts of the world have gathered here in Brisbane this weekend to exchange thoughts and feelings about peace? It is because we as humans also have *conscience*. You may say that conscience is a divine faculty because it is not a product of evolution. It was always there even before creation and this purely human faculty is our guide in this wild world and a great harmonizer.

Because we as humans are still only children – because we use only between 5 to 10% of our brain capacity – and because we are not very conscious of ourselves as human beings, we still follow the course of evolution in the survival race and that is why we consciously or subconsciously are driven to conquer each other. We do that – ok – and we probably *have* to do that as our body and mind are results of evolution, but the thing is that we don't know *how* to conquer! And that is what we have to learn. We shall learn to conquer each other by conscience, wisdom, love, compassion and humanity. This is the art of life and art of living, so let us be Artists of Life!

Dear friends!

The essential human being is really not a product of evolution. Our body and mind are only instruments to know ourselves and to express ourselves. Then, who are we? We are "That" (there is no word really, we only have to call it "That") – the unutterable, incomprehensible "That" which is far beyond the reach of reason, thoughts and mind – which never was born and which will never die – which is eternal and everexisting. **My dear friends!** – we are not many, we are only One *appearing* as many. In reality there is no difference of you and me and "That" – there is only one Unity in the whole seeming diversity.

Does that mean that the individual doesn't count?

No, not at all! Each and every human being is really a unique manifestation – the only one expression of its kind of the infinite stream of life's unfoldment and display. It is a microcosm in the macrocosm which means that there is nothing out there in the whole infinite universe which is also not in here – inside ourselves. Every individual is like a ray from the Sun of Life or like a wave on the Ocean of the Absolute. We are One in essence and belong to one another.

So why shouldn't we feel peace? When we realize our true identity who we really are, beyond name and form, title and any imagined identity, there is only a fathomless ocean of peace and harmony without beginning and end, no matter what happens on the outside of this world. And when this enormous potential of peace is released in the world through many active individuals all over the globe, we can hope for the establishment of universal peace.

Dear friends!

Yes, this is all very good, you may say, but only on the individual level. What about the collective level – what about the world and the world situation?

On the international political level in the not so far future, after the discharge of the present conflict, I believe there will arise a World Government based on the United Nations and the Human Rights Declaration, headed by truly good and spiritual people who have the ability to

think and care for others and who are determined to work for the whole of humankind. This World Government will have to forbid four things, namely *superpowers*, *tyrants*, *terror* and *revenge*.

But before that and *as soon as possible* the world now really needs a great unifying institution which will focus on the human being, human life and humanity for peace and harmony in the world. An inspiring centre for human rights, human dignity and, most of all, human possibilities – a spiritual sanctuary where all can meet as humans and communicate as human to human. A human spiritual lighthouse which can inspire not only individuals but also the United Nations and other organizations, institutions and schools all over the world.

Such an institution is the great University of Peace. The idea of the University of Peace was brought to Norway and the West from the Himalayas by the Indian sannyasin, poet and philosopher Swami Sri Ananda Acharya early in the 20th century, who wrote about it in two of his books and in 1920 declared that it would come "in a hundred years' time". Swami Anandacharya stayed on Mt. Tron in Alvdal, Norway, from 1917 to 1945. His grave is near the top of Mt. Tron and on a big plateau on this mountain, called the "Peace Plateau", he found the perfect site for the future University of Peace. On this plateau today there has been erected a monument which is both a memorial to Swami Anandacharya and the foundation stone of the first University of Peace.

Later, in 1989-90, another Indian sannyasin, Swami Paramananda, visited Mt. Tron and inspired greatly the revival of the old idea, giving many new impulses and further details to it. Swami Paramananda, who is my personal teacherfriend, was a most remarkable and wonderful personality who has yet to be known to the world at large. He visited Mt. Tron again in 1993, 1995 and in 1998, and he left his body in India in 1999, only 45 years of age.

For the last ten years, since 1993, some of us, on Mt. Tron in Norway on the other side of the globe, have been working with a concrete project for the establishment of world peace through the great University of Peace which is actually a "humaniversity for universal harmony".

The Mt. Tron University of Peace will be an international centre for Humanity – free from dogmas, "isms" and prejudices, and independent of organisations, religions, ideologies, and political or spiritual trends. It will be open for all irrespective of age, sex, race, mental makeups or affiliations. Its attitude will be that "the same heart is beating in all of us" and that the core of humanity is a unity with a spiritual dimension common for all. It will function as a transnational forum for peace and human dignity where unifying conferences with these themes will be held. It may also host meetings for peace negotiations at political and diplomatic summit level. This university will not be a university in the ordinary sense of the word with exams, diplomas and degrees and where learning is based on the acquisition of information. The student will only unfold what he or she already has inside because real education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

Life is a journey to reach Perfection and this Perfection is already within ourselves. It will manifest through spirituality or "Art of Life and Art of Living" by "Learning the Language of Body", "Reading the Mind" and "Knowing Thyself", which will constitute the main course and activity in the University of Peace. As humans we have got everything we need from Nature at birth and through the bare instruments of our body and mind we will learn to know ourselves. Peace will be the natural outcome of this and only by experiencing and living peace on the individual level can peace be brought about on the collective level. Peace is harmony individually as well as universally.

The Mt.Tron University of Peace will work systematically to establish similar universities of peace in the mountains in other countries and continents worldwide. And the idea is that the individual student will not only learn to know himself or herself, but also other fellow humans from different nations and races, by living together in each university and ambulating between the different universities around the Globe. In this way they will also learn the culture, customs, geography and conditions of other people and places all over the world until eventually they have become friends with all tribes, countries and cultures. After the conclusion of their studies at the University of Peace, the students will then become teachers in the art of life and art of living, and in the wisdom of peace, in the ordinary school system and elsewhere. Thus, in the course of time, it will grow ever more impossible for the coming generations to wage war against each other.

This is actually a concrete and practical plan for world peace and if we will give our hearts and minds for it the plan will become a reality. There is probably no other way if we shall ever realize the idea of world peace. Consciousness-raising on a large and harmonious scale is necessary through education, and by many similar Universities of Peace all over the world with finalized students in key positions in education and administration in every country, there should be a justified hope for established peace in the world.

In our ongoing project for the Mt.Tron University of Peace in Norway we have now done and finished as much planning and presentation work as can only be done at this stage in the process. We will now be searching actively worldwide for possible supporters and benefactors to the project both financially and morally.

Dear friends!

Our attention is always going *outward*. In fact, the perception of reality of the whole Western World and culture is based on the impressions received from our five physical senses. Science, which is now our established guide and highest authority in all matters concerning human life, is completely based on these fragile and everchanging senseimpressions. And even before the establishment of modern science we had philosophies and religions which could never produce meaningful words or notions about the fundamental ideas and questions in life. That is why in all our cultural tradition and literature from the ancient Greeks to the present day the three different concepts of "soul", "mind" and "spirit" are used arbitrarily to describe the same thing. And that is why in any of the Western languages of the Indo-european group of languages we cannot find equivalents to the most central concepts in the *Sanskrit* language (the "Latin of the East") like *brahman*, *atman*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*, *samsara*, *karman* and *shanti*, which proves that the Western part of the world never even thought about these most essential and important things in our life. The essence of the Western mind is to search for Truth through the visible and physically tangible world. And that is why we invented the word "religion" which means to "resume the bond" (with God) as if it was lost or forgotten. As yet we did not even discover the mind – confusing it for the physical brain. Only quite recently the exploration of the mental sphere of man has started.

But man is so much more than body and mind and for the survival of mankind it is completely necessary to accept it and to realize it. Therefore more and more *inward* attention is needed on the individual level without forgetting our obligations to our fellow human beings and other beings in nature on the collective level.

Every day our mind passes through three very different stages or states: the *waking state* which we all experience just now (hopefully!), the *dream state* in which most of our sleep is passed, and the *deep dreamless state* which usually lasts for a couple of hours during sleep. The waking state we like to think about as *conscious*, and the dream state is no doubt *subconscious* as we can only remember very little of it on waking up, but the deep dreamless state of mind is almost entirely *unconscious*. Then there is a fourth state which in Sanskrit is called *Turiya*, the "transcendental state" which is *without* mind and which is described as "superconscious".

My dear friends!

If you want to solve the riddle of life and if you want to know the truth about you, you will have to pass through the dark chambers of the dream and the deep dreamless states of mind with the torchlight of your conscious waking state of mind. Then only, if God permits, you may touch the Ultimate Truth of life. And remember! – that is always with you and always accompanied with Shanti, with Universal Peace – in fact, that *is* you! My dear friends! You are That!

Shanti – Shanti – Shanti!

Thank you very much for your attention!