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Editorial. Peace: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ

Abstract: At the beginning of a new century people wonder what this century has in store for them? Will it be a time of peace? The question is quite legitimate, since the last century was probably the most violent century in human history. It is undeniable that we humans have a deep yearning for peace. And yet, we live in a world which is marked by discord, dissension, hatred, violence and war. Faced with this painful situation, can we really hope for peace? Is humanity capable of ushering in an era of peace on earth? And even if it is capable of doing so what resources are available to it for establishing peace? What contribution can different traditions and different disciplines make towards peace in the world? These are some of the questions which this issue of *Jnanadeepa* seeks to answer.

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Peace
Interdisciplinary Perspectives



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The Editor, *Jnanadeepa*, Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune 411014, India

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Editorial

At the beginning of a new century people wonder what this century has in store for them? Will it be a time of peace? The question is quite legitimate, since the last century was probably the most violent century in human history.

It is undeniable that we humans have a deep yearning for peace. And yet, we live in a world which is marked by discord, dissension, hatred, violence and war. Faced with this painful situation, can we really hope for peace? Is humanity capable of ushering in an era of peace on earth? And even if it is capable of doing so what resources are available to it for establishing peace? What contribution can different traditions and different disciplines make towards peace in the world? These are some of the questions which this issue of *Jnanadeepa* seeks to answer.

There are four articles dealing with the understanding of peace in the major religions of India – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. They also inquire into the contributions these religious traditions can make towards peace in India/the world. There is no doubt that they have rich resources to aid individuals, groups and nations in their efforts to establish peace on earth.

There are three articles which examine the issue of peace from the point of view of the social sciences. The first one deals with peace from the perspective of psychology. It contends that peace is a life-long process that one is engaged in. The second one is by a political scientist. He studies the contribution the UNO has made towards the maintenance of peace in the world and suggests ways in which it can more effectively serve the cause of peace in the world. The third is something of a case-study of the Northeast. From a sociological point of view it examines the causes of the conflictual situation that exists in the Northeast and spells out some concrete steps that need to be taken in order to usher in an era of peace and prosperity in this trouble region of our country.

There are two articles which discuss the question of violence and non-violence. The first one deals with Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of non-violence, its theoretical foundations as well as its practical implications for us today. The other one examines the nature and forms of violence and comes to the conclusion that violence is ambivalent. One cannot absolutise all violence as bad or all non-violence as good.

There is another article on peace which is more practical. It explains the way the Dharma Bharati National Institute of Peace and Value Education spreads a culture of peace in India and abroad. It also clarifies the vision

behind Dharma Bharathi. Those who are looking for a concrete plan of action foster peace in our land will find this article useful.

As usual, there are two special features in this issue. One deals with science and priestly formation. Its contention is that familiarity with and genuine appreciation of the developments in science and technology are necessary for priests and religious destined to be leaders of their communities. The other is a report of an empirical study of rural poverty in India. It also describes how the poor people look at their sad plight.

It is our fond hope that the discussion of peace in this issue will stimulate further discussion among our leaders and lead to some concrete action.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ
Editor

Peace in the Vedantic Age of Hinduism

Sebastian Painadath SJ

Director, Sameeksha, Kalady

Peace is harmony, harmony within oneself, with the world and with the Divine. This holistic harmony is achieved through the integration of oneself with the totality of reality. Integration is possible only through self-restraint. The Sanskrit word for peace, *santi*, comes from the root *sam*, which means to restrain oneself, to pacify, to renounce. Through self-restraint one attunes oneself to the broader horizons and deeper dimensions of reality. One renounces the ego-centred attitudes of life (*ahamkara*) and wakes up to deeper Self-awareness (*atmabodha*). The consciousness sinks to the perception of the Ground of being in which all things are interrelated. Peace comes from this waking of oneself to the truth of the inter-relatedness of everything. Peace is the awareness of the web of reality.

The *Santimantra*

The expansion and deepening of consciousness has a three-fold dimension: one is at peace within oneself, with everything else and with the Divine. This is expressed in the Invocation of Peace, *Santimantra*: *Om, santi, santi, santi!* The invocation is an essential utterance at the beginning, and espe-

cially at the end of any sacred action or the recitation of a sacred text. Before anything is undertaken, one tunes oneself to the totality of reality: hence, the word *santi* is repeated thrice referring to the spiritual (*adhyatmika*), the cosmic (*adhibhautika*) and the divine (*adhidaivika*) aspects (Sankara, on the *Santimantra*, Taittiriya Upanishad 1.1.1). These three are the essential constituents of an integral process of peace. With the *santimantra* one prays for the blessings of all the three realms, invokes blessings on the three realms and asks for the removal of all obstacles coming from these three realms. The opening verse of Iswara Krishna's *Samkhyakarika* speaks of the 'triad of suffering' (*dukhatraya*) caused by the mental, the physical and the metacosmic elements. Peace means the overcoming of these threefold obstacles. Through a life of discipline (*sraddha*) and renunciation (*tyaga*) one experiences peace within the inner spiritual realms of one's being. Further, through compassion (*karuna*) and service (*yajna*) one feels oneself at peace with human persons, other living beings and with the things of nature around oneself. And finally, through worship (*puja*) and meditation

* The author may be contacted at: Sameeksha, Kalady-683574, Kerala, India.

(*dhyana*) one enjoys peace with the divine powers embedded in the universe. Rabindranath Tagore describes the process of peace as follows: “From universe to Infinity – this is the soul’s normal progress” (1958: 199).

We shall examine some texts of the classical Scriptures to explore the meaning of these aspects of peace.

Peace within Oneself

The term *adhyatmika* refers not only to the spiritual dimension of human life, but to the diverse aspects of the life of the individuated self. In the inner process of the realisation of the true self there are three levels of consciousness: the mental, the psychic and the intuitive. At the mental level the mind (*manah*) objectifies everything and reaches out to reality through the senses. In the psyche (*chittah*) the memories of the past are stored. Deeper than these two spheres the intuitive faculty of perception (*buddhi*) dives into a unity in the transcendental consciousness. Mind pursues the logic of things; buddhi enters into the mystique of reality. Mind speculates on the horizontal level; buddhi intuits vertically into reality.

In the mystical consciousness that emerges at the buddhi level one perceives the *Self in the self through the Self* (*atmani atmanam atmana pasyati*) – this is the all-pervading intuition of the Upanishads. When one thus touches the Ground of reality in oneself, all the faculties of perception are brought into an inner harmony. The human individual experiences an inner grounding and this is the peace within oneself. The activities of the senses are controlled

(*vinियाम्या*) by the mind; the mind is focussed (*samyamya*) on the inner Self; thereby the movements of the *chittah* are streamlined (*uparamate*); the *buddhi* is brought to steadiness (*dhruti gruheeta*); and thus the entire inner realm is attuned to the inner Self (Gita 6:14, 20, 24, 25).

When the movements of the *chittah*
are brought to rest

Through the practice of meditation,
then one perceives

The Self in the self through the Self,
and rejoices in the Self;

This the supreme delight in which one
transcends all suffering (Gita
6:20-23).

This is how the deepest spiritual experience is described in terms of the experience of genuine inner peace and harmony. According to the Gita this inner peace is ultimately a gift of the grace of the personal divine Lord (*Bhagavan*):

By my grace you will overcome all
obstacles ... and attain the ultimate
abode of supreme peace (Gita,
18:58,62).

The way to peace is to transfer the centre of one’s being from egoism (*ahamkara*) to Self-awareness (*atmabodha*) (2:71) through total personal surrender to the divine Lord (18:56, 62, 66, 5:12). It is a movement from the possessive attitudes of the mind (*kama*) to a total anchoring of the buddhi in the Lord (12:2,7,8,14). The fruit of this is ‘peace, the ultimate state of being in the Lord’ (6:15; 12:12; 9:31). This is not something that one experiences only after this life, but is an abiding consciousness right in this life, an experience of inner harmony in a busy life in the world.

The Upanishads too describe this basic process towards inner peace and harmony. The quest there is not so much for an objectified knowledge of things, but for an inner awakening to the depth of reality. “Through the knowing of what shall all this become known?” – this is the fundamental question (Mundaka Up. 1.1.3). “Knowing what shall I know the knower of all?” (Brihad. Up. 4.5.15). There is a constant invitation for a meditative entry into the consciousness of the ultimate subject of all the objects of the mind. And finally, the sage makes a breakthrough into that transcendental consciousness in which he exclaims: I am Brahman!, That thou art! (*Aham brahma asmi, tat tvam asi*) (Brih. Up. 1.4.10; Chand Up. 6.8.7). This is the deepest experience and this is the ultimate abode of peace.

The one Eternal amid the transient,
The Conscious amid the conscious,
The One amid the many,
who grants their desires,
to the wise, who perceive It as abiding in the Self,
to them is eternal peace and to no others (Kath Up. 5.13).

One who is thus ‘grounded in the Brahman has overcome all fears’ (Tait.Up. 2:7, Chand. 1.3.1). There is no space for disharmony and grief.

When one understands that in oneself the Self has become all beings,
when one has attained this unity,
what room is there for sorrow;
what room for perplexity? (Isa Up. 7).

The life that evolves out of this experience is oriented to truthfulness

(Mundaka Up. 3.1.6;
Tait Up. 2.1.11).

Hence the *santimantra*:

May my speech be firmly established
in my mind.

May my mind be firmly established
in my speech.

O self-manifested One, be manifest to
me.

Be for me the cornerstone of the Veda.

May what I have heard not depart
from me.

By that learning I maintain days and
nights.

I will speak the right. I will speak the
truth.

May that protect me.

May that protect my teacher. .

Om santi santi santi!

(Aitarya Up. 1.1.).

Peace with the World

The Supreme Self that one experiences as the depth of one’s being is the Ground of the being of all. In as much as one wakes up to the consciousness of oneness with the Self one grows into the awareness of unity with all beings. The consciousness gets a cosmic expansion and consequently a compassionate attitude transforms one’s life. Thus, one grows in peace with all beings, human individuals, living organisms as well as with the things of nature. *Sarvabhutatma bhutatma* – one’s Self has become the Self of all beings. Then one sees the ‘reflections of one’s self in all beings’ (Gita 6:32).

The well-integrated one perceives the
Self in all beings,
and all beings in the Self.

One and the same is seen everywhere.

One then perceives the divine Lord
in all things and
all things in the Lord.

With such a person the Lord is ever
united.
In deep love and unity one worships
the Lord
present in all beings.
Such a person lives and moves ever
in the divine Lord,
whatever be one's mode of life.
In all things one then sees only reflec-
tions of one's self.
Thus one overcomes the duality of
pleasure and pain (Gita 6:29-32).

The inner freedom and equanim-
ity that evolve out of this integral cos-
mic vision make one's life at peace with
all beings in nature. One is then 'pas-
sionately concerned about the well-be-
ing of all things' (*sarvabhutahiteratah*,
Gita 12:4). One commits oneself to the
'integral welfare of the entire world'
(*lokasamgraha*, Gita, 3:25). In this
world-view one realizes the mutual de-
pendence of human endeavour and the
well-being of nature. Concern for the
protection of the environment is a con-
sequence of a spiritual vision of the cos-
mos.

Only by nourishing the powers of
nature (*deva*) can humans attain pros-
perity.

In as much as humans nourish the
powers of nature through their service
(*yajna*), nature blesses them with the
gifts of life.
If on the other hand one exploits na-
ture without maintaining it, one is a
thief.
Those who cook food only for them-
selves are eating sin! (Gita 3:10-13).

Having attained inner peace one
enters the world with the attitudes of
'compassion and friendliness, non-vio-
lence and non-possessiveness, equanim-

ity and even-mindedness' (Gita 12;13-
19). Peace within oneself creates peace
with all beings outside, for the entire
world is experienced as the 'body and
abode' of the divine Lord (9:4; 18:61;
11:9).

In the Upanishadic vision too the
inner experience of the Self blossoms
forth into an integral world-view that
renders peace with all beings. The
Atman that one intuitively within oneself is
the *Atman* that pervades all beings.

Verily this whole world is Brahman.
This Atman within the cave of the
heart is
greater than the earth
greater than the atmosphere, greater
than the sky,
greater than these worlds.
It encompasses this whole world
(Chand. Up. 3.14).

Hence, the *enlightened* person sees
'the Self in all and all in the Self'; the
entire world is seen as 'permeated by
the divine Lord' (Isa Up. 1.1,6). The
effect of such a universal theophany on
the life of the humans is harmony and
peace with all beings. Already in the
Vedic times this cosmic dimension of
peace was upheld in the spiritual evolu-
tion of humans:

Peaceful be earth, peaceful ether,
peaceful heaven,
peaceful waters, peaceful herbs,
peaceful trees.
May all gods bring me peace.
May there be peace through these in-
vocations of peace.
With these invocations of peace which
appease everything
I render peaceful whatever here is ter-
rible,
whatever here is cruel,

whatever here is sinful.
Let it become auspicious,
Let everything be beneficial to us
(Atharva Veda, 19.9).

With this spiritual vision people live with the abiding awareness of living in a sacred sphere. Hence, one cannot covet anything or possess with greed. It has been an ancient insight of the sages that greed (*kama*) is the root-cause of all conflicts and sufferings in the world. What makes life joyful is the inner freedom that comes from renunciation, *tyaga* (Isa Up. 1.1). What makes life peaceful is the compassion that comes from equal-mindedness (*samadarsana*). Mahatma Gandhi was fully convinced of the basic value of peace: “My service to my people is part of the discipline to which I subject myself in order to free my soul from the bonds of flesh. For me the road to salvation lies through love of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives” (Young India, April 4, 1920). When the Creator Lord was asked: what is it that makes life worth living, the answer was: *damyata, datta, daya*, self-restraint, generosity and compassion (Brihad. Up. 5.2.1-3). The final instruction given by the master to the disciple at the end of long years of *gurukulavasa* is:

Speak the Truth, Pursue the Dharma
Continue self-study
Do not desist from your duties to bring
welfare to beings
Give your mother and father, teacher
and guest the respect due to gods
(Tait. Up. 1.11.1-2).

A peaceful social order can result only where individual citizens are re-

spected and the civil duties are performed. Aswapti, a king of the Upanishadic period, was proud of the peaceful situation in his kingdom. “In my kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without a sacrificial fire, no ignorant person, no adulterer, much less an adulteress” (Chand. Up. 5.11.7).

In the Mahabharatha peace is understood as the social outcome of dharma. The basis of dharma is this principle: “Endued with self-restraint, and possessed of righteous behaviour one should look upon all creatures as one’s own self” (Mbh. 12.292). From this spiritual outlook comes the golden rule of a peaceful coexistence:

Brihaspathi tells Yudhistira:

I shall tell you what constitutes the highest good of a human being. He who practises the religion of universal compassion achieves his highest good. He who, from motives of his own happiness, slays other harmless creatures with the rod of chastisement, never attains to happiness in the next world. He who regards all creatures as his own self, laying aside the rod of chastisement and completely subjugating his wrath, succeeds in attaining to happiness. One should never do to another what one regards as injurious to one’s own self. This in brief is the rule of *dharma*. One by acting in a different way, by yielding to desire, becomes guilty of *adharma*. In refusals and gifts, in happiness and misery, in the agreeable and the disagreeable, one should judge their effects by a reference to one’s own self (Mbh. 13.113.6-9).

There are three cardinal values which are essential for a culture of

peace: non-violence (*ahimsa*), forgiveness (*kshama*) and truthfulness (*satyam*).

Non-violence (*ahimsa*) is the 'supreme virtue' (*ahimsa paramo dharma*, Mbh. 12.257.6). It evolves out of a spiritual vision that all beings are ultimately my own self: the one Self enlivens all beings. Hence, any harm done to a sentient being is sin, because it violates its fabric of life. Non-violence is to be practised in thought and word too.

He is said to know what *dharma* is, who is always a friend of all creatures and who is always engaged in the good of all creatures, in thought, word and deed. He casts equal eyes upon all things and all creatures (Mbh. 12.262.10).

Forgiveness (*kshama*) is the attitude of a non-violent mind. When the other is looked upon as the same as one's own self in the divine Self, one becomes compassionate towards the other, especially when the other is in difficulty. Hence, forgiveness is extolled as a divine virtue (Mbh. 3.29). True peace can be realised only through a culture of forgiveness.

A wise man should ever forgive his persecutor even when the latter is in difficulties. The honest and forgiving man is ever victorious. Gentleness conquers cruel behaviour. . . If among you there are no persons equal unto the earth in forgiveness, there would be no peace among you, but constant strife caused by anger. . . Only through forgiveness can mankind survive (Mbh. 3.29)

Truthfulness (*satyam*) is ardent loyalty to what is true. Truth is the constituent element of being (*sat*). Truth is

Brahman, it is the universal Law (Mbh. 3.43.49). "There is nothing higher than truth; truth is everything; in truth lies immortality; so follow the path of truth" (Mbh. 12.251.10). Truthfulness is the integral pursuit of being true to reality, genuine openness to the Divine. Truth is 'eternal duty, the highest refuge in life'. Mahabharata mentions thirteen elements of truth:

Truthfulness, impartiality, self-control, lack of envy, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of jealousy, renunciation, nobility, patience, mercy and absence from injury (Mbh. 12.162).

These moral virtues contribute to a culture of peace in the life of the individual and of the community. Dharma is life in honest pursuit of Truth (Mbh. 12.190.1).

Peace with the Divine

The Divine reality is not primarily conceived as a personal God, who is the Creator and Lord of the universe; rather the Divine is the ultimate spiritual Power (*Atman*) that permeates the entire realm of reality. It is the 'origin, the life and the goal of everything' (Bhag. Gita, 10:20). All realities have their origin *in* the Divine, subsistence *through* the Divine and they finally merge *into* the Divine; the Divine *Atman* is the 'undying seed of the universe', 'the power of life' and 'the ultimate abode' (Bhag. Gita, 10:8, 9:4, 7:6-10, 8:20). In the Upanishads too Brahman is experienced as the life-energy of the universe:

That from which truly all beings are born,
by which, when born, they live,

and into which finally they all return
that is Brahman (Tait. Up. 3.1.1).

‘Brahman is the *Atman* in all things’ (Brihad. Up. 3.5.1). The divine *Atman* pervades the entire universe like ‘oil in sesame seeds, butter in cream, water in riverbeds, fire in friction sticks’, like ‘the sap in the tree’ (Swet. Up. 1.15, Chand. Up. 6.11.1). Through the awareness of this universal divine presence human persons attune themselves to the divine Spirit. With this awareness one perceives the Divine in everything: as light in the sun and moon, as radiance in fire, as the pure taste in water, as the fertilising odour in the earth, as the life-giving *prana* in the air, as the vibrant *OM* in all beings’ (Gita, 7:8-9, 15:12-13, 9:17, Swet. Up. 2:17). The entire universe is perceived as the *temple* of the divine Lord, as the *body* of the divine Spirit. One is then at home wherever one lives and works. It is this harmony with the divine presence that engenders peace in human life.

In order to experience this peace and transmit it to others one enters into a personal relation with the divine Lord present in the universe:

Having experienced me as the source
of all beings,
the wise worship me with devout attentiveness.

They worship me present in all beings
(Bhag. Gita, 10:8, 6:31).

The One who rules all sources of life,
in whom all this dissolves,
the ruler of all, the maker of the manifold forms,
the One who pervades all the worlds,
to Him alone be homage and worship;
in Him alone we take refuge
(Swet. Up. 4.11-14).

The life-giving power and presence of the divine *Atman* shines through all the primordial cosmic powers. Hence, they have been called the translucent media of the divine presence (*deva*). It is in this mystical sense that hymns were addressed to the sun and the sky, the earth and the ocean, the fire and the wind. Beautiful hymns addressed to the cosmic *devas* are found in the Vedic Scriptures. Through the chanting of these hymns and invocation of mantras one sought the blessings of the Divine that shines through these powers of nature. In the course of time these cosmic powers have been given the names of gods and goddesses. Hence, one addresses these powers in the classical invocations of peace (*santimantra*):

At sunrise one invokes the blessings of the divine Sun:

I meditate upon the splendour of the
divine Vivifier-Sun,
May He illumine my intuitive understanding (Gayatri Mantra, Rig Veda, 3.62.10).

The face of Truth is covered with a
golden disc.
Unveil it, O Sun, the sole Seer, so that
I who love the Truth may see it.
(Isa Up. 15)

Further, one invokes the blessings of the cosmic powers:

OM, may Mitra, the sun, be propitious
to us,
may Varuna be propitious to us,
may Aryaman, Indra and Brihaspati
be propitious to us,
may Vishnu of Wide strides be propitious
to us.
Salutations to Brahman.
Salutations to Yaju,
Thou indeed are the visible Brahman

Thee alone I will proclaim.
I will speak the Truth,
I will speak of the right.
May that protect me (Tait. Up. 1.1.1).

The sages of India believed that invoking the Divine through the cosmic powers – *deva* – brings blessings and peace. Such invocations show the firm conviction that true peace is ultimately a gift of the Divine. Only through a righteous and truthful life as well as through rituals and meditation can humans make themselves sensitive to the inflow of this cosmic power of peace. To bring about peace within and around oneself is not an aggressive work, nor a passive role, but a receptive process. Through our creativity, we humans usher in an atmosphere in which the divine *Atman* articulates itself. Peace then flows like a divine stream into the world.

Our union with a Being whose activity is world-wide and who dwells in the heart of humanity cannot be a passive one. In order to be united with Him we have to divest our work of selfishness and become *Viswakarma*, the world-worker: we must work for all. We must cultivate the greatness of the soul which identifies itself with the soul of all (Tagore 1958: 9-10).

The overall effect of this divine-human activity in the world is a culture of harmony. The Vedic hymns constantly uphold this. Peace is a matter of divine grace and of human responsibility. Peace emerges when humans perceive the vibrant power of harmony (*Rik*) in the universe and attune themselves to it through ethical life (*dharma*). When human beings live in harmony with one another and with the powers of nature the blessings of divine peace

abound in the world. In fact all are called to live in peace and harmony:

Of one heart and one mind I make you devoid of hate.
Love one another, as a cow loves the calf she has borne.
Let the son be courteous to his father,
of one mind with his mother.
Let the wife speak words that are gentle
and sweet to her husband.
Never may brother hate brother, or sister hurt sister,
United in heart and in purpose commune sweetly together.
I will utter a prayer for such concord among family members
as binds together the gods among whom is no hatred.
Be courteous, planning and working in harness together.
Approach, conversingly pleasantly, like-minded, united.
Have your eating and drinking in common.
I bind you together.
Assemble for worship of the Lord like spokes around a hub.
Of one mind and one purpose I make you following one leader.
Be like the gods, ever deathless.
Never stop loving (Atharva Veda, 3:30).

The Rig-Veda ends with this exhortation for a life of peace and harmony:

Gather together, converse together!
Your minds be of one accord,
just as in harmony the gods of old took their ritual shares of oblation.
United be your counsel, united your assembly,
united your spirit and thoughts.
A single plan do I lay before you;
a single oblation do I offer.

United your resolve, united your
hearts,
may your spirits be at one,
that you may long together dwell
in unity and concord
(Rig Veda, 10.191.4).

When we thus go to the sources of the Hindu spiritual heritage we discover an integral world-view that promotes a culture of peace. There is no peace within oneself without peace with the world. There is no peace in social life without peace in individuals and harmony with nature. And both the personal and social dimensions of peace are enlivened by the immanent powers of the divine Spirit, the universal *Atman*. Hence, the ultimate source of peace is an ethical life (*dharma*) that evolves from within a deep spiritual experience. "Ethical imperative comes not from around, but from within" (Aurobindo, 1970; 141).

This is the challenge that India is facing today in the promotion of peace. There is a wide-spread crisis in the pursuit of ethical values. Religions which are intended to keep alive the ethical consciousness tend to become fundamentalist, thus oppressing the searching mind rather than liberating it. On

the other hand, people are yearning for a liberative spirituality and they look for it within and beyond the traditional religions. It is the quest for an integrated vision-and-way of life that engenders peace in all realms of life. On the path of this global quest people of different religions and cultures meet as co-pilgrims. In their common pilgrimage towards peace and harmony the great Scriptures of *all* religions and cultures can be sources of light and inspiration to *all* seekers. What is needed is an interreligious hermeneutics of the Scriptures, a cross-cultural re-reading of the Scriptures. It is here that we find the significance of the texts which we have seen above in brining about a culture of peace. Across the boundaries of religions we Indians pray everyday:

Sarvesham swastirbhavatu. . .
May there be well-being for all
May there be peace on all,
May all attain the Fullness,
May all enjoy prosperity
May all be happy
May all be free from illness
May all see what is auspicious,
May there never be a portion of suffering.
Om, santi, santi, santih!

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