



TOWARDS PEACE AND HARMONY

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## **Editorial:**

# **To be in PEACE, Not PIECES**

Peace is something that no one wants to lose. By all means human beings want to possess it. They are ready to go to any length, even violating the basic ethical principle that the end does not justify the means. Peace is sought after in oneself, in families, in one's society and the world at large. However, peace is often understood differently by different people. It is not uncommon to see peace being colored by self-centredness and short sightedness. That is why, as there are efforts to establish peace, there are also other forces, equally strong if not more, to destroy the peace of others for one's own selfish motives and vested interests. Over the centuries, as humanity gets complex and complicated, those efforts of destabilizing peace also get dangerously complex and complicated. Therefore, the need to critically and constructively look at peace - its nature and implications, means and methods to establish it – is also steadily increasing.

The efforts for peace must be made in a holistic manner. Peace touches upon every aspect of our existence. Therefore, the efforts for such peace must also be holistic. All the piece-meal approaches towards establishing peace don't bear fruit precisely because they fail to treat peace in a holistic manner. Even in science, we are forced to learn that piece-meal approaches do not work in understanding reality. In getting a fair picture of reality inter-disciplinary approaches are required, whereby various domains and streams of science come

together to investigate nature, which is multifaceted and multidimensional. Similarly, peace also needs to be approached in a holistic manner, not in a piecemeal manner; for instance, we cannot speak of peace without serious and committed efforts for justice, because the minimum requirement of genuine peace is justice. Without justice no real or lasting peace can be established. The peace that is sought after on the basis of violence or oppression, unjust actions or exploitation, can never be genuine and it may last only as long as those oppressive forces prevail.

Today India and the world at large experience lots of violence, explicit or implicit, misoriented actions to establish peace and harmony. For instance, in the process of creating peace and harmony, progress and prosperity, the ruling class and the vested interests fail to recognize and encourage multiple viewpoints. They abhor dissent and every effort is made to evolve a sort of ‘consent’, to unify all thinking to forcefully go along with the thinking of the ruling class. Different opinions and dissenting voices are silenced by various means like absorption, domestication and homogenization. The uniqueness and the otherness of the others are ignored so that one ideology and one set of practices can be imposed upon. Unity is a value, but not uniformity; if these voices are stifled, a system may continue to be in its own ignorance and arrogance; in fact, most often arrogance results from ignorance.

In protesting against the attempts by the Central Government to polarize the people in terms of cultural practices and religious ideologies, several intellectuals of the Nation returned their Sahitya Akademi awards. For they fear the Government is ruining the multicultural and multi-religious fabric of India. The inhuman assassination of M. Kalgurgi, Narendare Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, and Mohamed Akhlaq in the past years is vehemently deplored by the intellectuals and the ordinary people alike. These killings are the heinous expres-

sions of the brutal attempts to mute the critics and to manipulate the public opinion. India has a great tradition of tolerance towards difference of opinion. The recent suppression of dissent is in fact an insult to this long cherished tradition of India. As Amartya Sen points out the great emperors of India, like Ashoka and Akbar, not only exhibited mere tolerance but also respected and encouraged the heterodox voices. India has always been and still wants, as Jonardon Ganeri explains, to be “an open assimilative, and spacious one, sustaining a plurality of voices, orthodox and dissenting, of many ages, regions, and affiliations” and he invites the modern India to study the valuable ancient traditions, to deliberate and to learn from them to decide “who to be, how to behave, and on what to agree. That is a fundamental freedom, one which ought not to be surrendered in binding.” Without heeding different voices and opinions no real or genuine peace can be established. Again it is a threat to the peaceful fabrics of our nation, where the freedom of speech and constructive criticism are strangled.

We are thus forced to reflect upon the nature and the means of establishing genuine peace, based on justice. One such serious effort was undertaken by the Association of the Moral Theologians of India (AMTI) last year; it is our pleasure to bring out the proceedings of the seminar on “The Challenge of Peace and Harmony: An Indian Moral Theological Response,” held on October 23-25, 2015, at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune. *Jnanadeepa* Journal is delighted to disseminate the critical and creative ideas of the scholars to other theologians and the public in general.

The papers approach the theme of “The Challenge of Peace and Harmony” from various perspectives. Dr. Selva Rethinam, SJ, explores the notion of peace in the Bible to show that peace is wholeness, referring to both the secular and religious realms: secular in its individual and communal spheres and religious which is the result of righteousness, covenant, blessing

and salvation. He proceeds to present peace in the NT as the gift of Christ. Finally he establishes, by elaborating on peace as reconciliation and peace as Kingdom of God, that peace is a gift and a task as well. In the NT we do find some tough texts to assimilate and interpret. Fr. L. Joseph chooses one such theme of understanding peace in the context of sword; he chooses two texts from the Gospel according to Luke: “Do you think I have come to bring peace upon earth? No I tell you, but rather division” (Lk 12:51) and “The one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one” (Lk 22:36). Very often these texts, unfortunately, become very handy to justify violent approaches to solve issues, not only for self defense but also to make our missionary and evangelical activities more effective and fruitful. But the author raises a very pertinent question: “How to understand these texts of Luke’s Gospel, which is otherwise seen as the Gospel of Peace? To find some satisfying explanations the paper seeks to analyze the nuances of the usage of these two terms in the over-all context of Luke’s Gospel.

Peace seems to be a rare commodity for the tribals in India due to various factors. The conference has two papers to discuss this important perspective. Prof. S. M. Michael, SVD, in his paper, “The Challenge of Peace from Tribal Perspectives” explores the social, cultural and political identity of the tribals and shows how systematically and deliberately their identities are obliterated by violently taking away their lands, displacing them in terms of developments and confusing their identities with the caste groups. Tribal liberation movements focus on the exploitation and discrimination of the tribals and the callous, even criminal, attitude of the governments that don’t bother about the welfare of the millions of tribals. The author reiterates that in order to build peace and harmony within India from a tribal perspective, we need an inclusive development of tribals. Dr. Amrit Tirkey, SJ also follows similar lines of argument to show the tribals in India are exploited by all



quarters, starting from the governments, the corporates and industrialists. The paper critically discusses the burning issues of land acquisition, displacement and migration in the context of the State of Jharkhand and it ends with a clear and decisive call to all the people of good will and every citizen of India to support and collaborate with the Adidvasis in their legitimate struggles to regain their rights and dignity.

No doubt that every nation looks for development. But development for whom and at what cost? – is a serious question to be considered, so argues Prof. John Chathanatt, SJ, in his paper on “Integral and Sustainable Development: A Challenge for Peaceful Co-existence.” He is convinced that no integral and sustainable development can be ensured unless the social order is rooted in truth, built according to justice and graced by love. The author proceeds to show how exploitative and unjust structures are unacceptable to a serious follower of Christ. In order to have lasting peace in our society, he suggests that the models of Ambedkar and Gandhi need to be brought together, where the former is the symbol of equality, freedom and emancipation. He brings in Pope Francis who, according to him, adds a new dimension to the whole process of establishing peace, namely, ‘we cannot have peace without merciful love’.

While speaking about the ways and means of establishing lasting peace no one can ignore serious threats that emerge from another important source, namely, Religious Fundamentalism. Dr. Jose Thayil, S.J., presents an elaborate analysis of this notion to show how it poses serious threats to peace in India and elsewhere. He points out that no religion is free from the upsurge of the fundamentalistic attitudes; it happens due to various reasons and one of them is the advent of the modern secular world. The author suggests some possible and legitimate reactions to the issue of fundamentalism. Some might suggest that religion can be an effective tool in overcoming

violence and establishing peace. Dr. Morris Antonysamy takes this claim up for a serious scrutiny from the mimetic perspectives of René Girard. He argues that the nexus between religion and violence is centuries-old and it is not easy to separate them and make religion work for real peace. Adopting anthropological approaches he deals with the basic task of defining religion and proposes certain ways of overcoming mimetic conflicts and violence. Finally, a short report of the conference, prepared by Dr. Charles Davis and Dr. Morris Antonysamy, is also attached herewith.

*Jnanadeepa* Journal expresses deep sentiments of gratitude to the Association of the Moral Theologians of India (AMTI) for giving us the opportunity to bring out the proceedings of their Conference. The articles published here are the select papers presented in the said Conference held at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 23-25 October, 2015. We wish its members and the contributors all the very best in their future endeavours. It is also our earnest wish and sincere prayer that all our efforts, academic and otherwise, may land our land, and the whole world, in lasting and genuine PEACE, not PIECES.

United in the efforts towards lasting peace and harmony,

**Prof. S. Stephen Jayard**

Director, JDV Centre for Applied Ethics  
Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune  
(Guest Editor)

*The Editor thanks Prof Stephen Jayard, for editing this issue of the Jnanadeepa, on behalf of JDV Centre for Applied Ethics. He is also grateful to Prof George Karuvelil, the former editor, for making it possible. - K. Pandikattu*