INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF LIBERAL RELIGIOUS WOMEN   (IALRW)

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WOMEN WAGING PEACE:

A CALL TO ENGAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

Introduction

Sisters, today we celebrate our being together. We have traveled thousands of miles, crossing oceans and seas, across mountains and planes, to be together for a common course - to do our bit for world peace. We are grateful to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women (IALRW), in particular the industrious Ms. Johanna Boeke and her equally industrious committee for bringing us together. So today we sit together as one happy family, equal to equal, sister to sister, celebrating our togetherness, rejoicing in our common identity, the identity of the human family. How we wish the whole world can share our celebration, our joy of being together - regardless of race or creed, of culture or language - just joyful to be among, and with, each other.

Yet, you and I know that what we have here - peace, affection, warmth, togetherness - are not reflected in the world out there. You and I know well enough how bad the situation is out there, of how people like us seem to be bent upon annihilating each other, and even of other creatures. It is as if madness has caught the human race in a vicious snare and that we cannot seem to find our way out of it; nay, in fact, we seem to be getting deeper and deeper into it. To be sure, it is a snare of our own making, of our own arrogance - the consequence of our believing that everything in sight belongs to us and that everything else exists because of us and for us, only so as to serve our own reckless and insatiable lust for personal acquisitions and enslavement. We are acting as lord over everything else - and such an unworthy lord at that too.

Yes, we have come a long way from what we are meant to be - created in the image of God, says Christianity, the co-creators of God says Judaism, the vicegerent of God says Islam, the soul (atma) of the Soul (Atman) says Hinduism, Buddha-nature says Buddhism, the microcosm of the Macrocosm says Confucianism, the crown of creations says Sikhism - to list down some of the grandiose titles awarded by the various religions upon us - we, the human race. Yet, in reality, we have become everything except what we are supposed to be - and so we suffer, and the whole world suffers, the human world and the non-human world, alike. Thus, we fail ourselves, we fail humanity, we fail the world, and we fail God too.

Culture of Violence

You and I know that we cannot go on like this; the world cannot go on like this. If we are to list down the bloodshed and violence, the atrocities and inhumanness that are taking place all around us, it will be a never-ending list. Just identifying and listing these will be enough to give us insomnia and transform us into paranoids of sorts. We are not talking about isolated cases of violence - no. Isolated incidences of violence have always been with us throughout human history. In fact the Bible and the Qur'an indicate that violence and killing had taken place from the very beginning of human history when Cain killed his brother Abel over a sister-for-wife issue; and history books too do portray senseless, wasteful wars and bloody battles throughout human history. But these were isolated cases, derided by the average normal people, and affected only particular and localized groups, and were soon repaired, and peace restored and put to order again.

But today, violence is no longer isolated or random cases. Today violence is en-cultured into society, becoming part of our daily routine existence, part of our social landscape, and even seems to be glorified as something awesome and heroic. To be mean and destructive today seems to be chic and cool, to borrow the jargon of our youths. Today we see violence and destructions everywhere, everyday and every hour; they are there on the TV, in the news and in the movies; they are there in the papers and in the novels; and they are there in our towns and cities, in the thundering of bomb blasts, in the roaring of war-planes, in the explosions of missiles and bullets, in the wailing sirens of police patrols, ambulances and fire-engines - sweeping all around us - in the forms of wars and occupations, of racial conflicts and communal rivalries, of crimes and gang fights, of inter-state and intra-state onslaughts, of inter-religious and intra-religious butcheries, of inter-gang and intra-gang showdowns and wipe-outs, of hooligan amok and rampages, of psychopathic rages and berserks - all sorts and for all reasons, genuine as well as imaginary. This is the issue, and this is our nightmare - that violence is becoming a social norm, an acknowledged social phenomenon, instituted as part of our culture, part of the contemporary world order. These are the ghastly facts before us.

If the human family is to go on, if the on-coming generations are to survive, we have indeed to put a stop to this madness right away. We, the parents of today, are the principal educators of our children, the trustees who are entrusted to help bring up and groom up the next generation, who are really our very heirs and successors, to be worthy people of tomorrow. But then, what chances have they got amidst all the violent settings surrounding and engulfing them now, day in and day out?! If we, the parent generation of today, fail to bring back peace into our lives and our children's lives, then our children and the generations after them may well not know what peace is, and what peace is like and all about - for from where can they know if they cannot experience, see, understand or learn it from anybody or from anywhere anymore? Peace and all the noble aspects of peaceful existence will eventually, by and by, become no more then imaginary and illusive for them, no more can they be real and be part of the realities of their lives and their existence; peace will be history, to be only read about in history books - if we go on as we do now.

Look at what are on the offerings for our children, teenagers and youths today. Programs and shows on TV, as well as their readings, portray violence and senseless competitions and intense rivalries at every instance. Meanness, hatred, destruction are painted in the most gruesome expressions even on cartoon characters; toys of destruction flooded the stores; shows of imaginative massive annihilations and exterminations grace the big and small screens; violent characters become exemplary heroes to inspire the kids to aspire into. With all these as backdrops for them to grow up with - what are the chances that they can see a world of peace, of human family-hood, not to mention of compassion, kindness and sharing, chivalry and noble conduct based on higher ideals. Indeed, if this is the direction that we are heading for, and the trend that we are taking, it simply means that we only bring our children into this world in order that they may kill and exterminate each other. These are the ghastly realities before us, like it or not.

Mobilizing for Change

So how do we make a change? How do we bring back peace today, and how can we re-institute peace back into our lives, into our culture and thus into our world order? To begin with, allow me to make a proclamation - harsh and an unprecedented perhaps, but one that has to be said and aired nonetheless - *that the violence and atrocities abound do not so much as reflect the success and triumph of the bad and evil, but rather they reflect the failure of the good and the conscientious to affect goodness in society, in the world.* In other words, they reflect our very own failures to propagate and promote goodness and well-being into society, for the very reason that we are indulging in what I term as "the culture of the mosquito", whimpering weakly and ineffectively, often from the back and in the dark - without dignity.

Yet such passivity is against the teachings of any religion, or any social ethics or social philosophy for that matter, for all religions and ethics promote active participation in building up a good, productive society and peaceful coexistence with fellow beings. Thus this passiveness and inactivity have come from somewhere else - from our very own over-complacency, our over-attachment to our comfort zones. We just do not want to go out of our way, to venture across, not even to look over, our comfort zones. But if we do truly care for our children, for their future, and for the future of humanity and the world, we have no choice but to venture over and beyond these comfort zones - to see the world as what it is and where it is heading to, and what it will soon become - a potential self-exploding time bomb.

That we who are here truly care is obvious enough. The very fact that we are here today, traveling thousands of miles, leaving behind our comfort zones, ready to "wage for peace" is indicator enough that we truly care, and care enough to work to bring a change to our world order, to re-instate our culture of peace and a happy coexistence with one and all. I am sure that every one of us here are exasperated with all the violence before and around us, in whatever form that it takes, from the local to the international, from that of petty crimes to those of widespread terrorism, whatever their champions may proclaim such atrocities to be - state terrorists fighting group terrorists, within or without the laws. Violence is violence, whatever name and garb it takes. All we know and see is that the

innocents are massacred - children, teenagers and women - while the perpetrators of the aggressions and carnages go about unscathed.

Indeed, we have had enough with such explosive culture of hatred and rage, and the vicious cycles of revenges and retaliations, that are rampaging across the globe, in one form or another. It is not that we do not sympathize with those who have been wronged; it is not that we do not empathize with the depth and intensity of their pain and suffering; it is not that we are casting them and their sorrow aside - no, not at all. In fact, we are not even saying, let alone proclaim, that the retaliations and revenges are wrong. Indeed, who are we who have not gone through such ordeals, have not lost loved ones blasted before our very own eyes to their untimely deaths - who are we to pass judgment against those who have. All we are saying is - please, please, let us find other ways to come out of these gruesome nightmares. Surely we can find better alternatives to redress the wrongs, of the injustices and cruelties inflicted upon the unfortunate sufferers. For the sake of our very own children and their future we cannot but must find a better way out of our plight and sad conditions today.

Such is the magnitude and intensity of the problems that simple solutions surely will not suffice to resolve them. At one level, there is urgent need - super urgent need indeed - to end wars and aggressions immediately. Yes, it is always easy to start a war but terribly difficult to end them - Iraq and Afghanistan are blatant proofs of this fact. Still, solutions must be sought. At another level, it is necessary to check counter-reactions against the aggressors, which are often translated into random rampages against even the most innocent and the most uninvolved. Yet, at other levels, there are also needs to heal pains of the victims and the victimized, and to help them repair their disrupted lives, and assist them to regain and restore their sanity and balance, confidence and dignity. Then there are also the needs to help the victimized parties get back on their feet again so that they can earn decent livelihood, help them better themselves and work for the future of their children, to give them assurance and hope of a decent future, which can divert them from looking too often to their painful past.

Admittedly, this is no easy task, but we, the world, owe them this; and all these, as well as other works too, need to be done, and the sooner the better for one and all. Awesome and enormous the tasks may be, but they are not impossible. What human beings have created, other groups of human beings can re-create, so to say; and what the men had done, we women can attempt to un-do. Time has come indeed that we women, concern fellow citizens of Mother Earth, come up front stage now to "wage for peace". We ought now to come out of our comfort zone, shed off our complacency and walk out from our culture of the mosquitoes, and mobilize ourselves, pool our resources together, organize our efforts, and strategize our way through, concerted and structured.

Why not? If we do not take up this task, who will? What have we got to lose? Nothing - we will lose nothing by giving our time and energy, and direct our course and our focus, to "wage for peace". On the contrary, we will put our time and energy to good use; we will make our sojourn in this life, on this Earth, meaningful and productive. We will become better people, struggling and living for higher ideals, noble in minds and deeds;

we will transcend the petty and the trivialities of life, to become worthy beings, the pride and exemplars, the models and inspirations, for our children.

In fact, we can start right away, in this very forum, and so make our moment and occasion here historic. Indeed, we can form a global or world movement of women for peace here and now, before we break off to go so many miles away from each other, going our sundry ways, doing our own different things, and living our own diverse lives. To my mind, this Movement, if it is to materialize, should be inclusive rather than exclusive, in that it ought to comprise of representatives from all the various world religions, orthodox as well as liberal, even those who do not adhere to any religion, so long as they care for world peace and will not personalize the course for their own purposes. In fact, we all are aware that there are already outstanding lady peace activists around the globe. I believe too there are also those ladies with financial strength who are also as distraught with the world situation today and want to chip in to promote goodness and peace into society and the world order. We can unite and pool resources together. Through such a Movement, we, women can really wage for peace.

Structuring for Culture of Peace

Among the most urgent activities that this movement ought to do is to organize serious and concerted efforts to end the on-going wars, including, perhaps, forming pressure groups and peace-lobbyist organizations, carrying out campaigns for world peace, staging up peaceful demonstrations, at various levels, international and national, among others. We should also look into other needs such as to assist in the process of healing, to extend economic assistances, and help in building up hope and the future of the affected parties. This is because, along with the checking and the ending of wars and bloodshed, the process of healing and rebuilding are necessary too, otherwise the anger and hatred will not abate, and so retaliations and revenges will continue to rampage as they do now. Likewise, it is also necessary for us to take up the issues of justice and rights since violence inevitably leads to injustices and the denial and abrogation of rights, which in turn spurs up retaliations and revenges; hence the continuous, vicious cycles of escalating violence - violence leading to more violence.

As much as there is need to stop wars and bloodshed, there is also as serious a need to inculcate a culture of peace. To my mind, peace is not just the absence of direct violence, but is also a prevailing sense of well-being, safe and sound, of easy, comfortable and fulfilling existence, of knowing that tomorrow is good and that the future is bright and promising. In a community or a nation, this means a well coordinated and fair social existence of the individuals with each other and with the state, with the assurance of the possibility of a better tomorrow. For the world, it means a well balanced and coordinated existence of human with human, and with other creatures and creations too, with the environment and with the systems of nature. Thus peace, to my mind, is a state of being, and of assurance, not only of the present situation but of the future also. This is because when persons and people are in a state of peace, their focus is on the present while their vision is on the future; to live comfortably now and to be able to work and plan for the future, for improvements and promotions.

On the contrary, therefore, if there is no peace, and particularly in a state of war or occupation, aggression or exploitation, the victimized parties are in a state of fear, of nervousness and uncertainty, of pain and anger, with no hope and vision for the future. When individuals cannot project their vision to build a future because they see no hope for a future, or see an all bleak and foreboding future, then they will tend to focus on the immediate worries and concerns, and to look back at past events, again and again re-visiting those painful and horrific past events, nurturing strength from these events for retaliations and revenges; to live is to pay-back, as it were. This is as true as regard communities or states, as well as regard the individuals in a society. When persons have no hope for a future, they can go berserk, and we can quote so many cases in recent times even from among the most developed nations of the world.

At the level of the individual, peace is a state of a well coordinated and balanced existence of the person, who is thus comfortable with himself and with others, human and non-human alike. This is possible only if the person is in a balanced and well harmonized state of the body, the mind and the emotion, equally attended to and fully nourished; thus the person feels fulfilled and comfortable with himself and with others too. This means that at the body or the physical level, the person is healthy and fit, has all the necessary materialistic needs for a comfortable, dignified and respectable life, with hope for further improvements and advancement. At the mind or the intellectual level, the person is able to acquire knowledge, both as means for self-improvement as well as status-improvement in society, and both as a necessity and for leisure. At the emotion or spiritual level, the person feels fulfilled, pacified, and serene, which is generally acquired through religious, or spiritual, or ritualistic exercises and performances. Emotional peace can also be acquired through the aesthetics such as music, art and craft. When a person is thus balanced, he will be in a harmonious state of existence, and the chances is that he will be at peace with himself, and with one and all too.

On the contrary, a violent person is he who has lost his coordination and where his emotion, such as anger and wrath has overcome his mind and makes him "lose control of himself" and so lashes out at others, and thus become violent. Not only can he be violent to others, he may also be violent against himself for he may attempt self injury or even suicide. Alcoholism, drug addictions, excessive smoking, obsession with the sensuous, and even gambling, are signs of a person's attempt to quench his craving and need for inner peace and harmony, to pacify his emotion; and the more intensive these are in a person, the greater is the need of the person for inner harmony, for a balanced and well coordinated state of his emotion, mind and body.

As regard society, the more rampant the crimes and the violence there are in the community, the stronger is the indicator that the society is in a state of imbalanced too. In the community and nation, the lost of balance and coordination is reflected in the forms of retaliations and reactions from parties who suffer injustices and unfair treatment from either the state or other fellow citizens, and so express themselves out in the forms of crimes, or lawlessness, or violence, be these directed upon the state or upon innocent fellow citizens. Again, recent history is witness to this fact, of how in highly developed

nations, the marginalized sectors can express their discontent quite violently. Lack of opportunities is also a form of injustice, and injustice has its own way of expressions, often unpleasant.

The same situation works at the global level. When aggressions take global dimension at the political level, such as through hegemony and globalism, coupled with exploitations at the economic level, such as through globalization and multi-national corporations - world harmony is jeopardized. Although these are not direct violence, but are forms of structured violence, and yet violence they still are. Thus we now find a handful of the extremely rich in this world owning more then half of the earth's wealth whereas the rest of us all share the other half. The extensiveness of these economic exploitations and oppressions are reflecting themselves in horrifying social conditions and building up horrific social psychology.

Take the case of India today where multi-national corporations and conglomerates are taking their toils, resulting in gross injustices to the people, underpaid, under-nourished, with horribly poor living conditions. In fact, the situation is getting to be even more gruesome today in the form of rampant abortion or the killing of fetus, almost all of whom are female fetus, identified through ultra-sonic scanning. Out of fear for the future wellbeing of the yet-to-be-born fetus, as well as their own and their other children, the yet-to-be-born are thus terminated at the outset. In fact China too is undergoing the same ghastly phenomenon - aborting off female fetus. Thus killing and violence are expanding now into a new territory - that of the world of the unborn - and this time is justified in the name of economy and social status. The impact of social imbalance of male-female ratio in China is already surfacing, and imagine how much worse the social situation will be in India in twenty years time; a new version of social unrest and violence is bound to take place; and so the up-scaling of the atrocious. So, how much further can humanity go on the expressway of violence?

As there is need for balance, coordination and harmony at the micro level, there is also likewise, the need of the same at the macro level, i.e., in the world of nature and the environment. In the world of nature, the exploitations of natural resources, as well as the abuses on the natural systems, or the laws of nature, are resulting in the loss of the coordination in nature, and in the upsetting and the imbalances of the ecosystems, among others, which now find expressions in the unnatural disorders across the globe, resulting in the escalating of negative consequences to lives on this planet, human as well as non-human. Simply put, it is the simple rule of action and reaction, the law of cause and effect expressing itself in nature.

It is not surprising, therefore, to hear today of such disturbing phenomena as the thinning of the ozone layers and global warming, among others, not to mention the dying species of birds, animals and marine lives, even the flora and fauna - all due to excessive pollutions or exploitations of nature, in one form or another. This is certain to lead into vicious circular reactions, and will bear further negative consequences to life on this planet - human as well as non-human. As exploitations and injustice are inflicted upon nature, so now nature retaliates back, either gradually, as in global warming, or even

violently as in the eruptions of pandemic diseases and unnatural catastrophes. Indeed, injustices beget retaliations in one way or another.

Thus, injustices, economic and political aggressions, nature exploitations, are also forms of violence too, and these too need to be addressed if true peace is to be attained for the world. As stated earlier, violence is not just a state of direct, aggressive, and physical actions but is also a state of the absence of peace, a feeling of insecure and nervousness, of worry, fear and concern, of injustice and foul plays, vis-à-vis, the individual, the community, the nation, or the world. Violence is the opposite of the state of peace. In order to bring back peace, and to promote and propagate peace, it is necessary therefore that violence be stopped and checked - both the direct and structured types of violence, be this at the individual, communal or global levels. To do so, it is necessary to bring back coordination, balanced and harmonious existence to the individual and the community, to nature and the environment.

As there is urgent need to end direct violence, there is also as serious a need to end structured violence. As there is need for concerted and structured efforts to end direct violence, there is also the need for similar organized effort to check structured violence. Perhaps one of the ways to end structured violence is indeed through the demonstrations now often carried out worldwide at almost every international political and economic meet. On other fronts, more exposures on the appalling effects of structured violence should also be disclosed and propagated to the global population. The conscience of the conscientious should be motivated so that we can mobilize ourselves and others to effect goodness back into the world.

Indeed, every one of us can participate in our own way, within our own means and capability, utilizing our own talents and expertise, to help restore back peace to the world, to re-institute a culture of peace on this planet. The young too should understand the situation in order for them to be alerted so that they can save themselves the tragedies of their parents' generations. In the context of the young, it is also necessary for us to review what is currently in the offering for them in our effort to leave behind for them a legacy of peaceful existence. It is indeed heartening to note that UNESCO and other civil organizations are initiating programs and making serious efforts to inculcate a culture of peace for the world through education.

Similarly, we can also work on other platforms and from other fronts, and one such powerful and effective arena is that of consumerism. We can propagate worldwide a consciousness for a culture of peace and so reject, and call others across the globe to likewise reject, violent toys and violent movies, be these in the forms of the regular movies or in the animation. As replacement, we can encourage and promote a taste for themes of compassions, care and concern for fellow beings, human and non-human alike, i.e., themes with higher ideals. Perhaps through the proposed Movement, we can initiate local chapters which can work on campaigns and public education to this effect. If a significant number of the world population makes a preference for toys and movies with themes of peace, then the manufacturers and producers are bound to comply since they are all profit minded.

On Being Human

Other than these practical suggestions, I think it is about time that we also take a look into how we, the human race, have gotten ourselves into such a mess today, to say the least about it. As any doctor or physician will tell us - before a cure can be attempted, the symptoms ought to be identified and understood first, and then only can the proper medication be prescribed. To my mind, the basic or the root cause of the imbalance and lost of coordination, be it within the individual, the society, or the world, is because of the fact that that we no longer know what being human is all about, of what a human being is all about, and therefore do not know how to become, and so do not know how to live and behave like a human being, to each other and with all else. Likewise, and consequently, we also no longer know what life and this world is all about, and thus we do not know how to live in this world.

The lost of this knowledge is because, to my mind, when the modern world, in the name of science and evolution, discarded religion away - whatever religion; and as they threw out religion, they also threw out with it the knowledge on all these items because the explanations of these things are mostly found in religion. In denouncing and discarding the religious definitions and explanations of human being, of the world and life, the modern world came up with a new, the scientific version of the human being, to wit, that he is only another species of the animal species, and so eventually assimilated un-human and inhuman conduct. With that too, all higher ideals, such as love and compassion for all and sundry, of responsibility and accountability over one another, of graciousness and chivalry in relationship, of charity and sacrifice, are likewise marginalized if not thrown out altogether, and are replaced by new ethics and norms such as self-centeredness and self-gratification, of individualistic obsessions and intense competition, of the spirit of lording over the other; in short, the rule of the jungle, of survivors of the fittest.

Thus to bring peace to individuals, to my mind, we first ought to re-learn what being a human being is all about; to promote peace in society, then we should know the nature of society and people; to propagate peace in the world, then we should understand what the world is all about; and to bring peace into our lives, then we ought to appreciate what life is all about. It is only with such understanding that we can look for the cure, and chart our way towards world peace, otherwise we will be caught up in cross visions and muddled missions, and may lose our ways about, and consequently may not reach the desired ends.

Since all these are explained exhaustively in religions - all religions, without exception - it is time indeed that we re-visit such sites again. Even for those who are not inclined to affiliate themselves to any particular institutionalized religion, there is no harm in learning about these items from all the religions. As for those who are already adherents of a particular religion, it is just as rewarding to understand what other religions say about us, human beings, and so enrich ourselves with such knowledge. Thus, to my mind, to re-establish peace back into our lives and the world, we need to re-learn the ABC of being a human-being all over again, to re-evaluate what life is all about, and re-view the status and positions of all other fellow creatures and creations on this planet.

We will find that despite the different definitions and ways of explanations, and over and above the particular theologies, doctrines and dogmas, there are to be found similar threads weaving across all religions - that this life here and now is temporary, and that we are here in this life only for a brief period, that to be alive is to be accountable, that we have a responsibility towards this life and towards each other and all else, and that, as noted by Karen Armstrong, compassion is the essence of all religions (*The Spiral Staircase, A Memoir*). These concepts are as seriously expounded in those religions which uphold the concept of lineal time, i.e., of the Here-before, the Here-now, and the Here-after, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as are also as seriously upheld by those religions that adhere to the concept of cyclical time, i.e., the doctrines of rebirths or metempsychosis, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

We will also find as similar an explanation as regards to co-living with each other, and among other beings, creatures and creations, be the religion monotheistic, polytheistic, pantheistic or even atheistic, whether believing in the concept of a Creator God or otherwise. All religions enunciate that we should relate to one another in sisterly and brotherly fashion, and that we are all fellow beings, and thus we should relate with each other and all else with care and concern. All religions trace the beginning of humanity and all else to one origin, and many endorse the concept of the first pair of parents. At the ethical level, the famous "golden rule" exists in every religion, though may be worded differently - "Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you".

It is also remarkable that all religions condemned and prohibited the deadly sins or crimes of murder, adultery and promiscuity, cheating and lying, and many religions too prohibit alcohol. If we look into these acts, we will see that they are not just destructive to those individuals who indulge in them; they are also social menaces and are disruptive of social life. In fact, they are also addictive in nature in that those who are caught in them will find themselves addicted to them and find it difficult to break free. Thus these sins are both intra-personal in that they affect the individual herself or himself, and at the same time are also inter-personal in that they affect others as well.

That individual acts have bearing upon other people and other beings, are facts also recognized by all religions. Thus, all religions view all beings, human as well as non-human, as inter-connected, inter-linked and inter-dependent upon each other. This inter-dependency of beings is what I often refer to as "the web of subsistence". We are all linked up as if in one gigantic web. If any part of the web breaks off, then the web will break up, with its strands floating about aimlessly, unconnected any more, and this is what happens when individuals become individualistic, communities become selfish, or nations become exploitative and lording over others. When such as these happen, then the inter-connectedness will break up, and so instability, even chaos, will ride in society, or even in the world.

Similarly, all religions level education, or the nurturing process, towards the individual. In educating the individual, all religions give due attention to his physical, mental and spiritual growth, though in different degrees. Some religions stress on all three aspects

equally, while some others may give more attention to the spiritual. Not only will such religious methodologies produce a balanced and harmonious personality, they will also produce a good society; as Confucius wisely observed, "Good individuals make good society". It is interesting to note too that all religions focus on the nurturing of good individuals rather than good citizens. This is because a good person is good for one and all, whereas a good citizen may be good for his nation but may not be good for other people, other nations and other beings.

We see, for instance, in the name of their countries and under the banner of patriotism, how people can massacre and exploit others, not in the least questioning the senselessness and horror of their acts of butcheries and destructions, or the pains and miseries they inflict upon others. Indeed, we find that the better the citizen is for his country, the more patriotic and loyal the person is to his nation, the more obnoxious he or she is to the rest of the world. In truth, over patriotism to whatever and whoever - nation or race, religion or philosophy, community or fraternity - to my mind, is one more form of lunacy for it transforms the persons into robotic beings, without having their own personal judgment or assessment. Indeed, in reality, brute patriotism often leads to violence, and is another form of "terrorism" - to borrow today's popular term - and thus need to be re-addressed and checked too.

Conclusion

To conclude, Sisters, the road to peace is long, winding, and no doubt strewn with all sorts of difficulties, yet I assure you that it is worthwhile an undertaking. Peace is as dear as life itself. Even if we are not to see our struggle to the very end, at least we know we are part of it. In taking this course, we will find that our life will become more meaningful and that our very existence in this life carries a noble meaning, and that our sojourn on this beautiful Mother Earth is indeed worthy and fulfilling. So let us reach out and join hands with each other and with all others who are on similar track across the globe - to wage for peace. For the sake of the future, let us keep on moving - in spite of and despite of whatever there are before us. Good luck to us all.

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For:
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