



‘Rekindle love and compassion to end stress and violence’

Excerpt of H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar’s address at “*The Civilization of Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue*” on November 16, 2008 in Cyprus

“The closer we move towards God, the more we pray, the more devoted we are to God, we cannot but experience love and peace within ourselves and in others around us.”

Your Excellencies, Dignitaries, Ladies & Gentlemen, greetings from India, one of the oldest civilizations of the world, and particularly from the Hindu community, which is one of the oldest religions. I am very happy to be here with you all and thank the community of Sant’Egidio for inviting me here.

We often say, “Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.” Saying Shanti, which means peace, is significant. We ask for peace within one’s self, peace in the society and peace with the universe. For the whole world is one family. This ancient concept is called *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – the whole world is one family.

I feel that those who do not exuberate with peace and do not feel love for humanity are not religious at all. They have moved away from religion. People of any religion – whether Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Protestantism, Catholicism or Islam – one who follows religion, one who has faith in God, cannot take to violence. This is my contention based on our inherent nature. The closer we move towards God, the more we pray, the more devoted we are to God, we cannot but experience love and peace within ourselves and in others around us.

As earlier speakers have mentioned, the Spirit loves diversity, God loves diversity. That is why He created so many different types of flowers, fruits and people. And honouring diversity, I feel, is the only way we can be at peace. We will have to take this dialogue to every part and path, nook and corner of the planet. This has become so imperative today. A conflict arises in the mind, in individual life, within the family. Then it spreads inside the community and finally comes between nations. The reason is stress and a lack of faith in that one God, that He is with us and He cares for us. So, love and compassion have to be rekindled in society to put an end to stress and violence and to bring the community together.

All great minds have gathered here, due to the Church of Cyprus, which has hosted this event. I am sure we will be able to carry this message of love and peace and dialogue to more and more people of the planet, of this earth.

It is unfortunate that extremism has entered even the most peaceful of religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is so unfortunate. The extremists are just using religion to further their own ends. Many times I feel, a culprit who is violently acting in a situation is mentally sick, is a victim himself. We need to heal that victim inside the culprit. So, we have to work in prisons, as many of you are already working. When we work in the prisons, we see that these criminals who are engaging in violent activities are either brainwashed or they don’t have a proper understanding of life or religion. So, a need is there today to re-educate our children, our youth, in peace. The recent incidences in the world are so unfortunate: the one in Orissa, and in other parts of India, and the world such as Myanmar. It pains any individual to see such an assa-



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Creating a Stress-Free Mind and a Violence-Free World

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ult in the name of religion – from one religion on another. It has to be stopped. We can't proceed with this same violent culture to the next century, or even this century. We all have to stand up against all types of violence.

So once again, I congratulate you all for coming together and thinking on this line of dialogue between civilizations, cultures and faiths. It is most needed today. As one of the oldest sayings goes – the wise celebrates the diversity, the fools create conflicts out of diversity. So let us bring wisdom. We have globalised potato chips, we have globalised Coca Cola, we have globalised everything else – we have not globalised wisdom today. And, this is needed. Every child should know a little bit about all the different cultures, civilizations, faiths in the world. Then they will live in harmony and let others live together as one family. The world as one family – we are all part of that one family.

Thank you once again for having me here. Let us have 30 seconds of silence for all those who have been victims of violence, religious violence, in recent years in different parts of India and the world. Let us be in silence, pray in our hearts, and honour those victims.

(About the conference: His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was asked to share his vision for world peace, in light of the growing inter-religious disharmony. The 22nd International Meeting “Men and Religion,” promoted by the Community of Sant'Egidio together with the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, on the theme “The Civilization of Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue,” began on November 16, on the Mediterranean island. Taking part in the event were 200 religious and political figures from over 60 different countries.)