

MUSIC DISSOLVES ALL DIVISIONS

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As I looked into my calendar for the year, I found I was visiting so many countries to attend festivals of sacred music. My mind looked back. What began in Tibet House as an idea of spreading the message of peace and harmony through music slowly grew into a string of five festivals to be held in five different continents. In no time the idea assumed proportions larger than that which could be contained in five festivals. It is now a year since the main global event was held in Bangalore and we have celebrated some ten festivals, so far, in different countries. The snowballing effect of the idea goes on unabated and festivals have been planned in Japan, Australia and other parts of the world through this year.

Music in general and sacred music in particular, has the quality of creating an atmosphere of peace and harmony. Even wild animals, it is said, stop hunting when they hear music. It is not only that listening to music can make your mind more tranquil but when we think of music, generally, it is not within a narrow kind of identity, community-related or nationality. At that moment, the mind transcends all boundaries. At that moment, there is no religion: the festival at Bangalore, for example, found Islamic singers from Indonesia, rendering the *Gayatri*.

I found that in all the festivals that I have attended so far, when musicians interacted, neither language nor caste nor community came between them. They looked for synthesis and combinations, with harmony as their overriding concern.

The root of the trouble then is division; division between you and others. And music does not recognize this division. It brings people together. That is why we have music associated with various aspects of life and spiritual progress too. It is said in the *Bodhicharyavatra* of Santideva: “Athaha param pratishttatham pujamegha manoramaha, turya sangeeta meghascha sarva satva prahashnnaha”. That is to say, in addition to all other offerings to the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, may a host of offerings, resounding with lilting, sweet and resounding to the ears of all beings be also offered, for it eases the suffering of sentient beings. As a finale to elaborate ritual worship, Santideva adds the sound of *sangita*, devotional music accompanied with song and dance and the playing of much instruments as *muraja* and *turya*.

The second reason for the success of the idea of a festival of sacred music was the association of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, known all over the world as a symbol of peace and harmony.

Although His Holiness is a leader of the Tibetan people, when he travels around the world he has been speaking mostly about upliftment of basic human values. Therefore we thought that there must be many ways of spreading His Holiness's concerns. Music was a good medium. It also came at a time when people were excited about the coming in of the new millennium, the new century. People were and are, at this point in time, looking for a better future, a better world. How can the future turn brighter or the world turn better? Only by fostering the basic human values. It is this desire within man that has made this festival a popular one.

The festival did not expect to bring peace and harmony to prevail all over the world, the very next week. The intention was to plant seeds of peace and harmony in the minds of the people, especially the younger generation. This is important because the human race is facing the danger of losing some of its basic human qualities of compassion, wisdom and potential for

spiritual growth. All traditional values may not all be relevant today, but some of them are of great importance at all times. One among them is the desire and value placed on mental peace. Mental peace, not in terms of just tranquility but a little more, a deep-rooted understanding and appreciation of the basic human qualities.