

## **THE ARTISTIC QUEST FOR PEACE**

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Peace is the inner most and inherent inspiration of human beings. A peaceful surrounding is required even for animals to live in. We have seen that if we create disturbances in the habitats of wild creatures, they start deserting it soon.

In Buddhism, one of the four cardinal doctrines is "Peace is virtue, and Nirvana is the virtue". Nirvana is not just a final resting sphere where nothing happens; but it is a state of complete cessation of problems created by our mind and our actions. In Nirvana, there is a spirit of pure activities devoid of defiled thoughts and acts. It is not a realistic approach to expect everyone to embark on the path to Nirvana. The point here is to see whether the peace within the world is something achievable. I see two extreme tendencies in the search for peace. The first is to talk about the "world peace", a world without any destructive weapons and not even enmity and a world where every nation celebrates peace treaties, lot of festivities, smiling faces... The other extreme is to think and say that peace can be achieved only through looking inwards, see the nature of your mind and so on. But my contention is that peace cannot be achieved in isolation of human spirit, human dignity, and justice.

Peace is something in-between that has lot to do with both of them, but more with the mind and spirit. I feel we have to talk about working towards creating inspiration and atmosphere of peace through human actions. Obstacles of peace are mainly created by human thoughts and actions. Therefore, peace also has to be achieved through collective and individual human actions. The acts which help to reduce hatred, tension and jealousy need to be directed towards benefit for individuals, communities and nations, blocks of nations. That is what I call peace work.

Art has the potentials of making peace. There is something in art that transcends and unite. If some people turn this potential into trouble making tool, that is the problem of the particular trouble makers. But artists are expected to be honest, secular in approach and unbiased. Art symbolizes the yearning for harmony, harmony with oneself and with others; with nature, and with the spiritual and the sacred within us and around us.

The effort should be to find a path to reach out to artists, more particularly contemporary artists who seek a durable peace within and around us, so that the art has a role to play in search of peace.

My experience in organizing a worldwide festival of sacred music in the year 2000 gave me an inspiring impact. It was held in different countries across the world. Some 600 artists drawn from various cultural and religious background took part in this festival in Bengaluru. People still remember this event fondly and say that it was a unique occasion. Some close associates of mine encouraged me to do some work on this line and organize events of contemporary art in conjunction with peace.

The experience also brought home to me the fact that each and every one of us is an artist. Some of us find expression for the art within us through painting, dancing or singing. Many others give expression to the art in them by identifying with the artist. The latter experience too, as we have seen in our lives, can be edifying. That is why it is said to live life well is an art by itself. If we could use all the principles that we employ in art, principles of harmony, of objectivity and of a superior whole that connects man and nature, we will be able to have peace within us and around us.