

Friends,

I am deeply disappointed that I could not be present to witness personally, the unfolding of a very important confluence. Unfortunately, I cannot travel astrally, but I have the faith that this coming together will have strong resonances not just for academia, but the worlds of security and public policy. Please do count me in as your co-traveller on this path. Congratulations to Brandeis, to the CI program to the visionaries of the Slifka Foundation, to Mari Fitzduff and Jessica Berns, for the foresight to raise the sails to catch the wind...to help actualize an idea whose time has come.

Today, the concept of *positive coexistence* has moved beyond merely the notion of making the world safe for difference to the idea of the celebration of diversity. It is the prism which enables us to see the rich (often invisible) and complex web of inter-relationships, that binds our common humanity. From the perspective of the less developed parts of the world it provides the foundations for the architecture of an inclusive society with democracy, development, dialogue and diversity as essential pillars.

Coexistence is by nature flowing and malleable, not a static 'end state'. It needs to be seen not as an approach, tool or strategy – but as 'Being'. It requires a growing appreciation of deepening levels of awareness – of both 'self' and the other - as '*dwelling in*' in a Heideggerian sense, or '*Thou Art Me*' in a Vedantic sense. It is also enriched by moving dialogue into realms where *silences may be shared* as envisioned by the 'presence' methodologies adopted by some contemporary reconciliation processes. Silence can often be the space where it is possible to suspend our chattering selves, be without the clamour of the world and hear ourselves think, a place where time itself is stayed and the horizon expands for a serene encounter with reality.

For peacebuilders, coexistence needs to be present and apprehended at an experiential level, even as the building blocks of the 'puzzle' begin to be arranged at the levels of theory and praxis.

At the level of practice an integrated approach to peacebuilding must clearly take cognizance of the 3 gaps in Jean Paul Lederach's now famous articulation – the interdependence gap, the Justice gap and the process-structure gap. The fact that peace is a process and not an event; that acknowledging differences and building on commonalities to search for common ground is integral to that process, is now part of the accepted peacebuilding lexicon and does not bear elaboration here.

Post 9/11, the growing inhospitality of the world, the globalization of violence and the increased 'sophistication' of technologies of destruction with their accessibility to non-state actors has only heightened the inadequacy of conventional approaches to amelioration.

Having worked closely with Confidence Building processes at interstate (India & Pakistan) and intra-state (Kashmir) levels the biggest challenge today that I have encountered is **trust building** and **breaking negative** stereotypes. A new conceptual alphabet, that breaks free of post cold war formulations, that wrests the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' from its ethnocentric and exclusivist biases is an important pre-requisite, globally. The evolving vocabulary on coexistence can open that space.

The **second** imperative for integrated peacebuilding lies in altering the metaphor of development. As North-South disparities grow and as inequalities become exacerbated within the communities of the South, alienation and exclusion sow seeds for generational anger. The lure of material affluence introduces a new kind of helplessness – the inability to break out of the syndrome of wants

generated by an acquisitive mass society and its hegemonic culture which attempts to standardize the texture of lives in subtle and insidious ways.

The way out of the impasse is to affect a metanoia that renews the now frazzled link between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between the particular and the universal, the local and the global, between the individual and her environment. This involves at one level 'breaking the terrain' of the totalizing discourse on the economy.

The concept of **Swadeshi** or self reliance advocated by Gandhi can provide an important link in the development–coexistence continuum. Its concerns lead to a critique of gigantism and a notion of development that underscores inter-connections and a sense of universal responsibility. It upholds democracy and decentralization to empower people in their efforts to transform themselves to coexist with the human and natural environment in non-violent ways. Primarily it subverts received notions of power which are based on hierarchical and patriarchal constructions of social reality. Seeing that change is what inheres in the real, '**engaged**' **coexistence** rejects hypostasizing any particular social arrangement or construct. Consequently, from its perspective continual reflexivity and the shedding of shibboleths falls *within* the intellectual and social responsibility of the peacebuilder. Focusing on our interconnection with other beings, it exhorts us to act in mutuality to experience true development, and see it as the continuity between the inner and the outer world.

Taken a step further it would involve overturning a model of development whose continued power and success depends upon the indifference of the many to the predicament of a large section of the population of the world. The world will not be at peace till governments redefine notions of security in a manner that responds to the 'peace-time wars' and 'everyday violence' that is part of the lives of a large number of ordinary citizens. Also, when societies cease to regard economic growth alone as the Summum Bonum of development.

In the context of gender, *engaged coexistence* requires us to face the challenge of the near ubiquitous violence against women – in homes, in communities, in societies and states. The violence of patriarchy within each of these is known. United Nations Conventions like CEDAW and Security Council Resolutions like 1325 have little meaning for women who wage battles for survival and dignity on multiple fronts simultaneously. In India for instance, if you are poor, a tribal, and a woman, you carry a *triple* burden of disadvantage. For *Engaged Coexistence*, it is not merely more numbers of women at the Peace/Negotiation table that must suffice. But significantly what is brought to the table.

While eschewing reductivist or essentialist notions of the ‘natural’ connection between women and peacebuilding, Coexistence work needs more consciously to foreground the methods (even quotidian) that women use to reweave the web of life during, and after conflict to heal themselves and their embattled worlds. The canvas of coexistence needs continuous restoration.

One way is to highlight the feminine principle in each one of us, to balance the yin and the yang of peacebuilding. Its explosive (often subversive) *avatar* as it confronts and addresses structural causes of injustice and conflict, and its healing work as it restores fractured relationships and rebuilds societies, may often seem to pull in different directions. This is a challenge that peacebuilders continuously grapple with.

The use of extraordinary powers by states to “enforce” law and order is becoming increasingly the paradigm of governance. This *dispositif* (to quote Agamben) quite blatantly tramples upon the human rights of ordinary citizens who are often ignorant of their constitutional rights of recourse and often tremulous to take on the might of the state. This is where an enormous challenge lies for peacebuilding in this century. How to ensure that the protection of the lives and property of some citizens is not at the cost of the dignity for others? This is a

conundrum that seems almost universal today and is not limited to societies that are formally recognized as 'autocratic'.

So the work of integrated peacebuilding must continue apace...in homes, in villages, in schools, in nations and indeed today in the worlds and 'civilizations' that are declared to be in collision.

For me from this part of the globe **Ahimsa** (Non Violence) and **Atmaupamyia** (identifying one's self with others) enters into the spirit of **Engaged Coexistence**. Two symbols capture for me the essence of this engagement. The **Lotus**, indicative of the ability to transcend the limitations of one's environment while being co-existent with it, also unfolding the manifold potential of the human spirit through informed, altruistic awareness. And, the **Charkha** (the Spinning Wheel propagated by Gandhi) a symbol of freedom from (colonial and racial) domination and the harmonizing of the internal and external environment of social beings in the process of non-violent production. Spinning on the Charkha was for Gandhi both a meditative and political act – to stress the dignity of labour and protest the inhuman application of technology for domination over the powerless.

Coexistence work exhorts us to engage with possibilities and transcend limits and break out of the discourse of victimology, like Seamus Heaney in his epic poem *Cure of Troy*

So hope for a great sea change  
On the far side of revenge  
Believe that a farther shore  
Is reachable from here.  
Believe in miracles  
And cures and healing wells

Coexistence work also exhorts us to take the Road Less Travelled.