

[A Mystic's Message Of Peace to Mankind](#)

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A Mystic's Message Of Peace to Mankind By Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Shivarathnapuri Bhagawath Padachariya Thiruchimahaswamiji In this rare epigrammatic discourse Thiruchi Swami speaks of the perennial human plight and the path to liberation. 1 India has all along its history held that peace is the most valuable treasure for mankind. All the schools of thought, all the saints and seers, all the visionaries and poets have advocated the cause of peace. Indeed, all the religions of the world and all prophets have sung the praises of peace; and whatever may be the doctrinal or other differences between religions and sects, there is perfect unanimity in their appeal for peace as the most prized possession of man. 2 Naturally, one may wonder why, in spite of such unanimous advocacy of peace, mankind has been witnessing wars and conflicts without a break all through history. There is not a single country in the world which has not suffered by the breach of peace to a smaller or to a greater extent. Great saints and prophets have come and gone. They have all preached peace eloquently and honestly, but their influence has not been considerable in preventing dissensions and conflicts. 3 One of the schools of Indian thought, the Mimamsakas, have held that the world remains essentially the same all through the years. The doctrine that na hi kada-chid anidrasam jagat, "the world was never any different from what it is now," implies that the affairs of the world do not alter with the passage of time and that human nature remains identical whatever the affairs of the world. History, in a sense, truly repeats itself. Wars have always been fought, and violence, deceit, ambition, envy, hatred, fear, suspicion, anger, pride, revenge, passion and prejudice have dogged man all through his career on the globe. The course of mankind has not changed despite prophets and messiahs, sages and seers. 4 But this is no justification for pessimism or cynicism. It is the nature of all phenomena that when things go wrong, corrections are promptly applied and the original state is sought to be restored. Wars are fought and peace is sought thereafter. Periods of agitation and turmoil are always followed by spells of calm and comfort. Depravity soon gives place to good sense. But it is a significant detail to note that such corrections do not occur spontaneously or mechanically. There are always individuals who are divinely inspired and operate as if they are emissaries of Destiny. Whenever evil prevails and the good suffers, God will manifest Himself to put down the evil and support the cause of the good. 5 The Vedic seer visualized a state of composure and contentment in which not only all the living beings but also the natural forces settle down amicably for mutual benefit and betterment. He did not distinguish between human beings and animals and plants or yet between animate beings and inanimate things. They were all alike

eligible for peace and happiness. The Veda treats all aspects of existence equally as sources of a comfort or distress for man depending on how he approaches them. 6 Shanti, meaning "peace and well being," is a powerful Indian word, frequently found on the lips of Indian populace since very ancient times till our own day. Shanti is a state where one is free from both happiness, sukha, and sorrow, dukha. It is a state of perfect bliss. 7 As is well known, shanti as an invocation for peace is uttered in India thrice: Om Shanthih, Shanthih, Shanthihi. The initial Om represents the Vedic lore in its essence and stands for Godhead, pure and absolute. The three shantis are peace in the individual, adhyatmika, peace in the surroundings, adhi-bhautika, and peace in the spiritual context, adhi-daivika. The individual peace relates to body and mind; peace in the surrounding comprehends the physical environment and the social situations; and the third peace refers to the forces beyond our normal control. The three shantis answer to the three-fold ills that man is heir to: tapatraya--physical and mental ailments (adhyatmika), troubles from wild and cruel animals and from unfriendly fellow humans (adhi bhautika), and distresses caused by unforeseen calamities and natural upheavals (adhi-daivika). There is, thus, need for man to safeguard his existence from disease, social stresses and ecological disasters. Remaining in a state of peace, shanthi, is the only solution to all these predicaments. 8 Indian thought further analysis the human predicament as mainly due to errors of judgment (prajnaparadha). Diseases are caused by not knowing or not attending to what and how and when we should eat, how we should exercise and order our lives, etc. Social stresses are occasioned by our ignorance of how to interact with others around us and by our own inability to keep our emotions under check. Ecological disasters are caused by our ambition, greed and insensibility. We undermine our health, vitiate the relations with others around us, and exploit natural resources in order to maximize our happiness, and the entire process becomes counterproductive. 9 There is a popular saying that man wants to be happy but does not bother about the method for securing it; and he wants to avoid sorrow but does not give up the things that necessarily produce sorrow. This is man's predicament. He knows what is right but lacks the will to pursue it. He is aware of what is bad but is unable to forsake it. He wants what he does not get and gets what he does not want. The result is that he is not happy either with what he wants or with what he gets. His unhappiness makes him sour, angry and violent in his speech, thought and actions. A large number of such people will make conflict, discord and hatred unavoidable. 10 Passions that are not controlled are like fire that not only burns where it arises but spreads all round and causes misery to others. Indian culture attaches importance to the individual more than to the society. Its message is that man must be in his own life restrained and noble, and that it is only then that the society can flourish. For, after all, society is a collection of individuals. How can society be all right when the individuals composing it are not all right? Social stresses are caused by individuals who are under stress in their own lives. A man who is really happy cannot think of making others unhappy; he can only make them happy. 11 Therefore, our saints have warned that six enemies are lurking within each individual (arishadvarga), and we are to be constantly vigilant, lest they overpower us. They are ambitions and desires (kama), hatred and anger (krodha), greed and hankering (lobha), ignorance and indolence (moha),

arrogance and conceit (mada), and envy and jealousy (matsarya). Research by yogis has revealed that lack of awareness of reality (avidya) and repulsions towards objects (dwesha) and desire for life (abhinivesha) are the causes of all miseries in life. These afflictions (kleshas) have to be reduced to the vanishing point. The first and foremost task of every religion should, therefore, be the building up of the inner man, chastening of his emotions and refining of these attitudes and aspirations. 12 A real hero is a master of himself. He does not lord over others; nor does he allow anything or anyone to rule over himself. What does it profit to conquer the whole world and lose oneself in the bargain? Plenty and power are not the solution for man's predicament on earth. Restraint and rest are the answer. 13 Peace, in other words, rests finally in each one of us. It is a matter for each individual to strive for and become. It cannot be a community program. Purity of purpose, sincerity of heart and strength of will are personal factors, and they alone contribute to the success of any undertaking. Our saints insist on purification of one's own mind and heart (antaranga-shuddhi) before one sets out to correct the ills of the society or the world. 14 Indeed, one can never make the world a perfect place for all of us to live in. The miseries of poverty, aggression, exploitation, corruption and violence can never be totally eradicated from the world. But a wise person can make himself immune to all the stresses by developing spiritual resistance. Is it possible to spread carpets over all the roads so that you can walk safely and with comfort? But you can still achieve that end when you cover your feet with sandals. When the soles of your feet are covered, the entire stretch of earth is as good as being covered with carpet. More important and more practical than correcting the world is therefore correcting oneself. As the preamble to UNESCO rightly puts it, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." 15 This is possible only when we learn to turn our attention inward. We read in the Kathopanishad that ordinarily man is engaged with the world outside because his sense organs and mind are by construction outwardly oriented. But a wise man will shut his sense organs and open the inward eye. When we are involved with the outside, stress results; but when the gaze is inward, peace will alight on us, because the very nature of Self is peace (Santoyam atma as another Upanishad says). Peace is, thus, a quality of life and each one has to discover it within himself. 16 Although most miseries are psychophysical, the mind being the more suitable and primary, is the ultimate host of all miseries, verily. The mind can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. How to transform hell into heaven and help retain heaven is the quest that the seeker of peace is after. 17 It is our considered opinion that enduring and effective peace can result only from more and more people taking to the path of religious devotions (upasana). Religious devotion does not consist of dogmas, creeds, sectarian affiliations or regional differences. It is a way of life in which the thoughts and feelings are continually chastened while they are directed towards the supreme reality which is within. Temples, worship, rituals, religious observances and a life of restraint are all directed towards this end. The body of a truly religious person is itself the temple, and his spirit verily is the Godhead. The fundamental need of the world--far deeper than any social, political or economic readjustment--is, therefore, a spiritual awakening, a recovery of faith. 18 Everyone should, therefore, know what life is, why life is and how life is. Without

knowing these things, life can never be lived properly. Right life comprises the three disciplines: physical, moral and spiritual. The error of man is to prefer the veiled to the revealed and the twilight of illusion to the light of reality. Life should, therefore, be lived with some definite aim or goal. It should be planned and discriminative, with duties absolutely necessary and helpful for achieving the aim in the shortest possible time. 19 May the Devi, our chosen form of the Godhead, our Universal Mother Gnanakshi Sri Rajarajeswari, who presides over the destiny of all the worlds, instill in our hearts good sense, right discrimination and firm resolve so that our individual lives may become abodes of peace. May the little lamps thus lit, millions of them, illumine the world and make it a place fit for enduring and meaningful peace.

Sidebar: Early Life and Initiation by Sivapuri Baba

Palaniswami, as Thiruchi Swami was called as a boy, associated early in his life with various holy men and women, both Hindu and Muslim. At 19 he became famous literally overnight when he calmed a raging elephant during a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka. After his return to South India, he became close with the Nattu Kottai Nagarathara community of bankers. To this day, most of the members of that chettiar community are his disciples. It was during this time Palaniswami had a vision of the Goddess Rajarajeswari in which She told him, "Preach the glory of God unto all men and uplift them. Lead those who aspire to achieve My grace towards Me. Go North and see your Guru." He was not yet 20. As he was staying in Thiruchirapalli at this time, he acquired the name Thiruchi Swami. Swami now embarked on a pilgrimage across India to find his guru, whom he had been told in another vision would be in Nepal. Thiruchi Swami's guru, Sivapuri Baba, was born in Kerala. He left home at an early age and spent 20 years in meditation along the Narmada River. Baba visited an ashram at Sivaratnapuri in Kashmir, and was appointed as the successor pontiff of the place. He did not stay there, however, and today the place is in ruins, though the lineage carries on. Instead, Sivapuri Baba lived in Kathmandu, Nepal, and this is where Thiruchi Swami found him. He was initiated in Manasika Sannyasa, sannyas without the external symbols such as the saffron robes, shaven head and staff. He was asked to continue wearing white clothes and given the name "Shivarathnapuri." After just a few days Baba told him, "You should not spend your time here. You have much work to do in the South." Before Thiruchi Swami left the North, he pilgrimaged to Mount Kailas. There, not only he, but those with him, had a vision of Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, who told Swami, "Proceed South. Go to Karnataka and establish an ashram there." Upon his return to Bangalore in 1960, he saw three eagles circling in the sky over a nearly vacant area of jungle land. He took this as the sign to found his ashram there. It is the present site of Kailas Ashram. Baba's teachings are summarized in this advice he once gave to a disciple, "See God first; every mystery is solved. Before that, whatever answer we give you, it will not solve your problems. By seeing God everything is known. Dismiss every thought from your mind. You will see God." Sivapuri Baba advised devotees to not blindly follow the preachings of Adi Sankara. "He lived more than a thousand years ago, but now the situation is changed. Nothing remains the same in this world, and there can be no permanent rules. Study the conditions of life and choose your duties accordingly."