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Published by Anonymous on Apr. 01, 1996

My Turn

My Vision of the New World

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The United Nations has placed before itself lofty goals. For fifty years the United Nations has worked tirelessly--though not always successfully--to settle disputes among the nations and to maintain peace in troubled areas of the world. The U.N. has brought together so many nations on a common platform of debate and intellectual discussion. But has there been present in their hearts even a ray of recollection of the Supreme Lord of the universe, the Master Builder of the destinies of East and West?

Three things, as it seems to me, are essential to create conditions for an enduring world peace. First: a new sense of brotherhood needs to be awakened among the nations. The second thing needed is a spirit of service. The great statesmen must rejoice in opportunities of service to poor and lowly, the unwanted and unloved, the hopeless and homeless. The third thing needed is a new vision of life as a movement onward.

My vision of the 21st century is very simple. It is the vision of a world without war and a world without want--a world in which every human being, irrespective of his country, color, creed, gets the necessities of life, a world in which every human being is able to hold his head high, a world in which peace prevails among the nations and harmony among the peoples of the earth, a world in which the right to live is granted to every creature that breathes the breath of life. My vision of the 21st century is that of a world in which war passes into the museum of history.

May I tell you, wars will not cease until all killing is stopped! Stop all killing! No sentient creature must be killed. The reason is very simple. If a man kills an animal for food, he will not hesitate in killing a fellow man whom he regards as an enemy. All life must be regarded as sacred. For there is but One Life in all. This One Life sleeps in the minerals and the stones; this One Life stirs in the vegetables and the plants; this One Life dreams in the animals and wakes up in man.

The time has come when we must decide, once and for all, that all type of human exploitation must cease. The time has come when we must recognize the inviolability of the individual--both human and sub-human. Just as women do not exist as resources for men, just as the Black people do not exist as resources for the white people, even so animals do not exist as resources for man. What a wonderful thing it would be if on this auspicious occasion of its 50th anniversary, the UN formulated a charter of animal rights and a charter of man's duties toward the animals! Animals have certain fundamental rights. And the very first right of every animal is the right to live. We must not take away that which we cannot give. And

since we cannot give life to a dead creature, we have no right to take away the life of a living one. The 21st century, I verily believe, will give rights to animals.

The New World will be built not in parliaments but in the home and the school. It is here that character is made and unmade. The world will not be new until we have men and women with a world vision and with hearts of love. What can parchments of parliament and laws of assemblies do? They who behold the One in all and all in One--they will rise above the barriers of creed and color, country and race. Unto them will be granted the power to build a new order and a new civilization.

My hope is in education more than in politics. Politics can, at best, touch the circumference. Life needs to be touched at its depth. But education must be directed and inspired by men and women of light and illumination. Knowledge, true knowledge is not taught: it is caught through fellowship with teachers of the true type.

We must begin with the child. I am afraid we have neglected our children for a long time. How true it is that the richest treasure of a family, a community, a society, a nation--the richest treasure of humanity--is children. Give them time. Give them attention. Above all give them the love of your pure, unselfish hearts. Without love no child can grow in the right way. Go and hug your children to your hearts and kiss your little one in the cradle. Take care of your children. They are builders of a brave, new world.

Dada J. P. Vaswani is the spiritual head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission who works tirelessly for the world peace. The above are excerpts from his speech delivered at a Interfaith Conference in New York City 1995