

New Year Message for 2004

SWAMI BODHANANDA



Yet another new year!

As we become old, birthdays and new years cease to be of any significance to us. They remind us only of our advancing age, physical ailments and other frailties.

As we walk down the busy streets or scan the daily newspapers we see exciting things happening. We see young people, hand in hand, with dreams in their eyes, dancing away -- completely oblivious of the harsh realities of life. That reminds us of our own youth and

dreams and hopes that we entertained once upon a time.

As years pass by I become more and more realistic and pessimistic of life and human possibilities. Long back man reached the moon. But we are yet to reach the hearts of suffering humanity. Some parts of the world have proved that human beings do not have to live in abject poverty and hopelessness. But we still have not brought that message to many other parts of our tiny planet.

When the cold war ended we hoped that huge resources that used to be misspent in armaments would be diverted to peaceful activities in reducing hunger, erradicating diseases and bringing light of knowledge to the dark continents of the world. But that hope also remain dashed in the warfields of Chechnya, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine.

Religions have been our oldest institution preaching the message of peace and happiness and the kingdom of heaven under one God. The same religions are in the forefront calling upon their fanatic followers to draw the sword in defence of their faiths. Countries which have been championing democracy and human rights are in the forefront of nations in supporting dictatorships and in turning a blind eye to the inhuman treatment of hapless people in third world countries.

Thus when we survey the world one sees only darkness. But what is the source of this darkness? Is it fundamental to human nature? Is it the will of God? Or is it just the dark night before a new dawn? I am not sure.

But I still want to believe that this darkness is only temporary. A new dawn will definitely break from behind the distant hills and the morning birds will sing the message of peace and happiness, and our children and grandchildren, irrespective of their race, their

religion and language will be able to eat, play, study, work and celebrate together.

I know that that will not happen this year or even for decades to come.

But something in me says that a day will come when all our dreams will find fulfillment and humanity will reach its final destination.

That is my prayer for the new year. May that be your prayer too.

SWAMI BODHANANDA

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