

New Year Message for 2006

SWAMI BODHANANDA



The year 2005, that just left us, rained unimaginable miseries on the hapless humankind - to name a few, the Tsunami, the Katrina, the Rina, the floods in India and the earthquake in Pakistan, apart from other natural disasters.

On top of that, manmade miseries like the war and violence in Iraq, Sudan, and terrorist outrages in Kashmir, England and Bali added to the brimming cup of human miseries. These tragedies brought up both the good and bad sides of human nature. But overall it was a pleasing sight of peoples and governments coming to the help of each other. The partial success of WTO deliberations in Hong Kong toward the end of the year also was a silver lining in international cooperation.

The G-8 nations under the leadership of British Prime Minister Tony Blair had earlier agreed to help the poorest nations of Africa to the tune of 50 Billion dollars. What I see from these gestures is the willingness on the part of the rich nations to help the poor to redeem them from abject poverty. It is time for us to examine whether the millennium promises and pledges that we have collectively made in the areas of poverty eradication, environmental protection and world peace on the eve of the 21st century are being fulfilled or whether determined strides are being made towards those lofty goals. The sharp divide of interest and approaches that we see between the rich and poor nations in the United Nations and WTO concerning global issues is not a healthy sign. This tiny planet that we call our common home is very fragile and will not tolerate resource exploitation and environmental pollution beyond a certain limit. Beyond the limit the loss and damage will be irreparable. And then humanity as a whole whether they live in South Africa, North America or East Asia, whether rich or poor, Christian, Moslem or Hindu will suffer irretrievably.

There are certain issues like pollution, poverty, diseases and inequality that the world has to face united and solve within a given time frame. The UN, the WTO and the ubiquitous think-tanks, the NGOs and religious organisations have to work together to create a global consciousness and passion and commitment among peoples and governments to take decisive steps towards the solutions of those problems. At this point it is the USA and the rich nations of Europe who set the agenda for the world, and, they are generally interested in pursuing their national, corporate and sectarian interests. The world economy depends upon the health of the US economy that in turn is highly indebted to the world for maintaining its standard of living. This intolerable imbalance and

inequity in resource utilisation and consumption cannot go on forever.

It is time for us to reinvent John Maynard Keynes and devise policies and institutions and action plans to create more jobs across the world and ensure that resources are distributed more equitably and that consumption doesn't confine to few classes and countries. The very logic of market capitalism which is driven by global demands, optimal utilisation of scarce resources, complementing core competencies of nations, and increasing common wealth through global trade will necessitate such egalitarian interventions from a neutral world body. In an increasingly flattening world, eradication of world poverty, equitable distribution of income and free mobility of labour across nations will become acceptable rational economic policies of nations.

I see that in a networked world, nations will be busy exploiting their core competencies for mutual advantages where America, India, Europe and ASEAN engage in a collaborative dance of wealth creation. Soon African and South American nations will also be sucked into this global process. A new global awareness is emerging where self-interest of nations will force them to collaborate and eradicate world poverty and make the world one single market of rational choice makers.

I see the meaning of what CK Prahlad says that there is profit in the bottom of the pyramid.

The creation of this global awareness where corporations are conscious of environment, make vision statement based on social commitment and poverty eradication, governments cooperate in the creation of wealth than waging war, and people have access to education and decent jobs - is the millennium that I dream of.

I think the world is making slow but steady strides towards that Elysium. Human intelligence is flowering into that dream. I see all auspicious signs for 2006. I wish you all a happy new year.

SWAMI BODHANANDA

*10.00 a.m., 20 December 2005,
Tiruvananthapuram, Kerala*

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