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One of the greatest challenges confronting the world from time immemorial, which appears insuperable, is how to ensure peaceful co-existence of its heterogeneous and multi-ethnic, racial, national, socio-cultural and religious peoples. These human diversities, that are untrammelled by the cognition of our 'divine ancestry' (origin from God) and brotherhood, have persistently conspired to elude the peoples of the world of peace.

Hence, it has become imperative to take a second look at (and ultimately jettisoning) the 'traditional' means of settling disputes – through confrontation. Experiences over the years have proved the futility of this option and consequently necessitates the adoption of a better, potent and noble approach – dialogue among civilizations with emphasis on the youth – as the determinants of tomorrow.

Dialogue, literally implies verbal interchange of thought between two or more person. In politics or international relations, it means discussion or diplomatic contact between the representatives of two nations, groups or the like. I subscribe to the view of Herbert Aptheker, a one-time leading American Communist, who once described dialogue as a "deliberate search for civilized discourse with each other, in which no one seeks to score points or win over an opponent, but to discover likeness as well as difference, the better to help create a less destructive human order".

### **Darkness Pervades the Land**

Before proceeding further in this write up, I consider it germane to take you on a 'short ride' into the darkness of our past and present, with the intent of portraying the ugly climate in the land, sequel to the hitherto confrontational posture of many civilizations of the world.

The foundation of international relations was sorely polluted in the 'cold-war' days between U.S.A. and the then U.S.S.R., with the attendant polarization of international politics along the two super powers, and the military alignments along NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The atmosphere then reeked with conflict, suspicion and bloodletting confrontations.

Even with the end of the 'cold-war', internecine altercations remain unabated, with a rise in wars within states. The common political denominator in most parts of the world is conflict with attendant explosion of the numbers of refugees/internally displaced persons, and therefore of humanitarian emergencies.

## **The Dawn of a New Era**

In view of the foregoing, it has become expedient to institute a global 're-birth' and re-orientation through the instrumentality of dialogue among civilizations, with particular emphasis on the youth – as a veritable vanguard for social change and leaders of tomorrow. Transition into a new millennium should herald the dawn of a new era of peaceful co-existence of all peoples, détente and strengthening of the bond of international relations through the 'gospel' of dialogue among civilizations.

This concept could be actualized and promoted educationally, socially, religiously and politically.

Educationally:

1. Schools: Beginning in the kindergarten and the primary schools, the child and then the young person should be provided with as much positive information about the different peoples of his or her country and the world in general, in such a way which imbues him/her with respect and tolerance for all nationalities and an understanding of the importance of peaceful co-existence between them. At the high school and university levels, dialogue among civilizations should be incorporated into the Social Studies and General Studies curricula and made compulsory for every student.
2. Family: The family, as the first contact between the child and the larger society, must inculcate in the child, early enough, love and respect for other people and need to eschew violence and pursue peace with all peoples.
3. Mass Media: They have an important role to play in this respect, such as not broadcasting programs which propagate violence and aggression. There is need to design and broadcast popular TV and radio programs for the youth about dialogue among civilizations.

Socially, there is need for the following:

1. Establishment of many international friendships clubs at schools and universities. These clubs should organize pen friends abroad and collect information about life in foreign countries, so as to understand them better.
2. Promotion of tourism among the youth of the world, which enables them makes trips abroad and see the world from other perspectives.
3. Organisation of international summer students' school. This makes for cross-fertilization of ideas that will help develop the growth of healthy minds that are better equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Religiously, the various religious groups (Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, etc.) should sensitize and reinforce in their followers, using their moral authority, the sacred teachings of their founders – as they all had love for ones neighbor, tolerance and peace as the hallmarks of their lives and teachings.

Politically, there is need to ensure good governance in all countries through the enthronement of democracy. Democracy makes for social and economic development of nations, with delivery of public goods that further create enabling environment for self-actualisation. It is trite that most of the recruits into ethnic militias and the various rag-tag armies are youth who cannot find a hang on the economy. Many of the agents of conflicts are persons who have been marginalised and left with no option but to resort to violence.

### **Glorious Tomorrow**

In light of the fore going, one can confidently say that darkness would soon give way to a bright and glorious tomorrow, as the 'sunlight of dialogue' radiates into all civilizations, as it would contribute the followings:

1. Gradual phasing-out of belligerent tendencies and enthronement of durable peace among all civilizations.
2. An end of global arms race, making nuclear war impossible – that may mean the end of the history of human civilized life.
3. In every soul and in every body politic, there will be vision for harmony and fulfillment in community with others.
4. There will be global socio-economic development and stable cum healthy international relations.
5. Emergence of youth that think, feel and work in the spirit of dialogue, peace, détente, international co-operation, respect for all nations, love of their own motherland, and international solidarity with those struggling for peace and social progress.
6. In all nations, there will be increased prosperity, improved working and living conditions, progress in public health, education and culture.

### **Footprints in the Land**

This essay will be incomplete if mention is not made of "General of Dialogue and Peace" – who through pursuit of dialogue have made indelible footprints in the landscape of internal and international relations. Few examples will suffice:

1. Pandit Nehru, the architect of peace between India and Pakistan.
2. Late Presidents Sadat of Egypt and Menachem Begin of Israel with former President Jimmy Carter of US – achieved the Camp David Accord in the late 1970's.
3. Former President Fredrick De Klerk and Nelson Mandela of South Africa – brought an end to apartheid in their country.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the preceding sections of this write-up, I believe that nobody is left in doubt of the inestimable damage that conflict and confrontations have done to humanity, and the expediency of enthroning a new world order through the propagation of a novel concept

in international relations – the dialogue among civilizations with emphasis on the youth. Finally, I humbly submit that there is no dispute that cannot be resolved through dialogue and consequently, dialogue among civilizations is the anvil on which a new and healthy domestic and foreign relation must be forged. Thanks and God bless.

**Footnote:**

1. International Institute for Peace, Vienna: **Peace and the Sciences** (1 and 2/83).
2. International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project: **Crisis, Conflict and Instability**.