

Peace Paradox

'If there is to be peace between neighbours, there must be peace in the home'. And the last one, 'if there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart'.

But if you look at your own heart. There are series of messages on these placards ~ on various nook and corners and written upon them are these little signs.

And it's very apropos of our write ups today. The first sign says, if there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. And the next one says, 'if there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities' and the next one, 'if there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbours'. 'if there is to be peace between neighbours, there must be peace in the home'. And the last one, 'if there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace amongst people living in that home. 'if there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in your own heart'.

Peace paradox, the paradox of peace and its lack. And perhaps you guessed that my mind certainly has been somewhat disturbed by the world events. We have a big invasion of Ukraine and there's terrible suffering inflicted on millions of people. There are people being killed, wounded, displaced, so much trauma. And it's all coming on our televisions or our computer screens or our little device screens and it seems so utterly senseless. So utterly senseless. So many lives wasted, so many innocent people terrorized, so much wealth obliterated. So much for what? It's such a folly. It's so heartbreaking. And so I wanted to think about how do we process this? What do we do about it? How do we understand it?

In 1899, there was a war between the British and the Boers, the descendants of the Dutch settlers in South Africa and it was a brutal war. Swami Vivekananda of course knew about it, it was in the news of those days and he wrote to sister Christine. The poor English are getting it hot from the Boers. In the beginning the Boers took control and they killed a lot of young English soldiers. Mourning in every home in England and still the war goes on. Such is human folly. How long will it take for man to become civilized? Will wars ever cease? Mother knows. That's the question. Will wars ever cease? And it seems even Swami Vivekananda was unable to answer that question. Mother knows 'when wars will cease'.

If we look back over the history of humankind, over the history of us, our history going back in time, we find that our history is saturated with blood. How many wars? How much conflict? How much violence? Where is the safety? Where is the peace? And yet this is the paradox. Are the sages and saints of our tradition and every tradition and even those of no tradition, tell us, affirm, that at the very root of our being lies infinite peace.

Our true nature, as per Vedanta, is infinite peace and joy. We are divine. Our soul is one with the absolute. One with infinite consciousness and bliss. And if this is so, then how can we do such folly as having wars with each other? How is it possible? We are unable to manifest that peace which lies at the very root of our being. We are unable to show others to live on that level. We're on a much different level and that's the tragedy.

Swami Vivekananda's idea was to preach unto humankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. So that's our ideal. To manifest our divinity, to manifest that peace, and yet look where is the peace?

So the heart breaking news continues to flash across our screens. And well to put it in a little perspective or to put it even in a darker perspective, actually we're all taken up with perhaps many of us may be taken up with this war in Ukraine, but according to the editors of Wikipedia there are right now at least 43 wars on earth. In which at least a hundred people died last year. That was the cut-off. If 100 people died in the conflict last year then they put it in this particular list - 43 of them. Many of them are unknown to us. Some of the worst as far as the cumulative number of deaths – Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, south Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria, and the surrounding countries, the boko haram, Darfur, Colombia, Myanmar, Tigre, Congo, the Mexico - the drug war, Ukraine which has been going on since 2014 etc etc etc. It's heart breaking. The total deaths from wars estimated in 2021, that's last year - 150 000. That's just deaths. Not wounded, not lives destroyed, displaced, terrorized, traumatized, loss of family members, all of that. Since 1978, two million people have died in the conflict in Afghanistan. Since 1991, 500,000 people in Somalia. Since 2011, at least half a million in Syria and 400,000 in south Sudan. Since 2009, 358 000 in Nigeria and the surroundings. Since 2003, 300, 000 in Darfur. So on one hand, Ukraine right now is in our mind. But actually the whole world is burning. It's another tragedy. The countless broken hearts, broken dreams, broken nations, unimaginable suffering. No wonder Swami Vivekananda said, “the world is burning with misery. Can you sleep?” The world is burning with misery can you sleep. How can we sleep knowing that there's this much misery in the world?

It seems like we ought to be able to live together. We ought to be able to live in peace. Yet it's burning. Rodney King asked after three days of writing, we remember he was ruthlessly beaten to within inches of his life by Los Angeles police officers who were later acquitted of the crime, and then riots broke out in Los Angeles and many people were killed. And he said, “people I just want to say can we can we all get along? Can we get along?” And the last the answer still seems to be no. So this is the paradox we're facing. On one hand we have faith, and perhaps also a little glimpse of that infinite mind of peace which lies deep within our hearts, deep within ourselves. And it seems like we have enough. We have enough wealth, we have enough food, we have enough land, we have enough resources to go around, so that everybody on earth, everybody here can live in relative comfort and relative peace. We have the knowledge, the technical know-how to arrange things pretty well so that we could all live in peace with enough to eat with a roof over our heads, and yet

we are unable to do so. War, conflict, stress, anxiety seem to rule the day. Will we ever learn to live without violence? Swamiji's attitude, we already got to get a glimpse of his attitude.

He was interviewed in San Francisco in march of 1900. When the interviewer asked him what do you think of the Boers war that was still in the news a lot? Oh have you seen the morning paper? He answered, "but I do not wish to discuss politics. English and Boers are both in the wrong. It is terrible, terrible, the bloodshed. English will conquer, but at what fearful cost? She seems the nation of fate." This war lasted three years, twenty two thousand British soldiers dead, six thousand poor soldiers dead. Civilians - forty six thousand dead. Twenty-six thousand Boer women and children died in concentration camps. And twenty thousand Africans in concentration camps. So he would tell sister Nivedita, "the details of this war are terrible to me. Strange how the fate of a nation overshadows a man's karma".

This is a fascinating remark to me that we have our karma and oftentimes we say well if we have if we experience misery and suffering in our life that's due to our karma. Here he's suggesting there may there's something else at play when we have this kind of vast mass scale of mass suffering, it looks like the fate of a nation is, whatever that may be, overshadows or takes precedence over our individual karma. This is difficult to understand. So how are we to process all of this? I'm sorry to start out our talk with this rather dark picture of the state of affairs, because of course it's not that there are wars everywhere, there are wars in selected places, and there are other places like the Ramakrishna monastery in Tabuk canyon which seem to be very peaceful, and harmonious and joyful, and we can walk outside and see, almost feel the Divine Mother peeping at us through all the blooming flowers and the chirping birds, singing to us through the chirping birds.

Well, how can we understand this? That feeling of helplessness that we get. What to do about this? The despair, the heartbreak? We have several approaches. I always start with Sri Krishna's message to Arjuna. So let's remember. Arjuna and the Pandeva's have been basically tortured by the dritarashtra's sons for a decade, more than a decade, and have been pushed and almost assassinated a number of times and finally, all they asked for was one village each. Five little villages they'll be satisfied. And the answer came, no. You have no place in this world. So it came to a war. And Arjuna is there on the battlefield and suddenly he sees all the people that he has to kill and he's overcome with grief, with terror, with weakness. He's completely innervated. And what does Sri Krishna tell him?

He reminds him, "you will not die. You cannot die. Who you are does not die. It is only bodies who die". Let me read some of these thrilling verses from the first the message of Sri Krishna on the battlefield to Arjuna.

"You have been mourning Arjuna, for those who should not be mourned for. Though you speak words of apparent wisdom, neither for the living nor for the dead do the wise grieve."

“never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor these kings of men arrayed on the battlefield. Never will there be a time hereafter when any of us shall cease to be.”

“even as a person casts off worn out clothes and puts on others that are new, so the embodied self casts off worn out bodies and enters into others that are new”

“weapons cut it not, fire burns it not, water wets it not, the wind does not wither it, this self cannot be cut nor burnt nor wetted nor withered. Eternal, all-pervading, unchanging, immovable, the self is the same forever”.

So this is the strong infusion of Vedanta that Sri Krishna gives us. There is no death for the soul. We simply leave our bodies behind at death. And we reap what we sow. So this is where I first turned when I am faced with the kind of massive death and destruction that we are learning about in our news feeds. Who we are does not die. All the millions and millions of people who have been killed, it's just their bodies that have been killed. They have put on new garments after that, and we, whether we are killed in a violent conflict or we live or die in an automobile accident or die from some horrible disease or live to a ripe old age and just breathe our last comfortably one night in bed, we too shall give up this body; and put on another body - a spirit body. And who knows, perhaps another body in this world or maybe not if we're striving to avoid that. So that's the first infusion of Vedanta that helps me at least, and maybe I hope it will help some of you to remember - we do not die. Still the heart rebels, the heart rebels. It seems so utterly tragic and wasteful to see war. It could be another way couldn't it? It doesn't have to be like this, does it?

Swami Vivekananda wrote one letter to his faithful disciple Josiah J Goodwin who was his the recorder of most of his teachings, who came on the scene in 1895 in new York, and took down all his classes and lectures in shorthand, followed him all over the world, and so there's only one letter to him I guess because mostly they were together. But Swami Vivekananda had gone to Switzerland, it was august of 1896, and Swamiji had just learned of one of his disciple's sort of craziness and treachery. He turned against Vivekananda and at the same time there was in the alps of Switzerland. He was reminded of the Himalayas. The amazing phenomenon of spirit manifesting in mountains in northern India and his mind was soaring. Soaring in the mood of the absolute, in the peace of the absolute. So this is a letter that bears deep study, I'm just taking a few quotes from it.

“First, it is unswerving love and perfect unselfishness that conquer everything. We Vedantists, in every difficulty ought to ask the subjective question, “why do I see that? Why can I not conquer this with love?”

It's a tall order. Unswerving love and perfect unselfishness can conquer everything. But can we have unswerving love? Can we have perfect

unselfishness? How difficult it is. He tells us to ask ourselves, whenever we see a problem, whenever we see a conflict, to ask ourselves, why do I see that? Why can I not conquer this with love? Because love conquers all says Swami Vivekananda. Why can I not conquer this with love? What a bold question? Reminds us of buddha's teaching, 'hatred can never be overcome by hatred, only by love'. This is the illusion that that most people in the world have. That when you see hatred, you have to conquer, you have to meet force with force. If there's a force of hatred coming you have to meet with equal an opposing force, and then you get destruction. Compassion, love, these are what the great world teachers call us to live up to. The letter goes on,

"I am much refreshed now. I look out of the window and see the huge glaciers just before me and feel that I am in the Himalayas". He had worked so hard traveling all over the America lecturing, then he came to Europe for a little break. "little vexations like those you write of do not touch me at all. How shall I be disturbed by this child's play? The whole world is a near child's play. Preaching, teaching, and all included."

Okay we're starting to see how these illumined souls when they're in that state of ecstasy as it were, when they're constantly aware of their true nature, this world is like a play. Like a child's play. It cannot touch them.

"know him to be the Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires, and what is there to be desired in this little mud puddle of a world with its ever-recurring misery, disease, and death?"

Sometimes we place all our hopes and all our desires in this world and feel like we just will work to make this world better. But Vivekananda says there's something higher. This world is just a mud puddle of misery. There's something higher. That which you are is much higher.

"he who has given up all desires, he alone is happy"

He often emphasized that what we see in this world is what we call in Vedanta, the pairs of opposites. We constantly see these opposites. Heat and cold. Pleasure and pain. Happiness and misery. Health and disease. That's the very nature of life in this world. Opposites. We get some happiness and gradually it fades and we get some misery. And that also fades and again we get some happiness. It's temporal. It's all temporary and yet it's in constant flux and these opposites come and they go. This rest he says,

"this eternal peaceful rest I am catching a glimpse of, now in this beautiful spot. Having once known that the atman, the self alone and nothing else exists, desiring what or for whose desire shall you suffer misery about the body?" This is quoting from the Upanishads. His letters and his talks are littered as it were or scattered through and through with quotes from Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita and bible and other holy books.

Yes if we can know who we truly are, there's nothing else to desire. Then we attain that peace that we're so in need of. And what then does it matter what happens to the body? I know it's just a garment. So he's in this mood of strong renunciation and detachment. Now this next paragraph in this letter is a good challenge for us. So listen to this.

He says, “a good world, a happy world, and social progress are all terms equally intelligible with hot ice or dark light”

A good world, we think that we can have a good world. Somehow it must be possible eventually we'll have a good world, a happy world or social progress. At least there should be progress. Aren't we making progress? And yet he says, “these terms are equally intelligible with hot ice or dark light. In other words, it doesn't make sense. If it were good, it would not be the world. The soul foolishly thinks of manifesting the infinite matter. Intelligence through gross particles, but at last it finds out its error and tries to escape. This going back is the beginning of religion. And its method, destruction of self (lowercase as the small self), that is love. Not love for wife or child or anybody else, but love for everything else except this little self.”

I'm always amazed by how Swami Vivekananda brings love in again and again. He's talking very high Vedanta philosophy. The philosophy that only the self exists. Why? Because if something is temporary it cannot ultimately said to be existing. If something will come to an end, it doesn't have any permanent existence. Only the self has that permanent existence, and yet then he brings it to love. We foolishly try to manifest, we try to manifest that infinite in this in this finite world, and yet that's what we are called to do. And yet, at the same time find the impossibility of it. And then when we finally realize that, turn back, turn back, and that is the beginning of religion, and what's the method? The method is love. The method is love. Not love for any particular individual, not love for me or anything else. In particular, love for the universal. Love flowing equally to all beings. And then he goes on –

“never be deluded by the tall talk of which you will hear so much in America. About human progress and law and such stuff. There is no progress without corresponding regression. In one society there is one set of evils. In another, another.”

The western conception of history is linear. Right there was a point of time at which the world was created and then it's going for a certain time and progressing and progressing and progressing and then there's a point of time when it comes to an end. At least from the Judaeo-Christian or the Christian viewpoint of the second coming etc etc, and it's a linear conception. Whereas the eastern conception is a circular conception. It's a series of cycles that follow one after another. Waves that come one after another. We tend to hold on to this linear idea. We're going to have human progress, yes, we're having progress. And we do see, in some sense that it seems like we're progressing. Civilization has grown incredibly complex. Technology has become so

complex, health care has become incredibly effective in some ways, and yet where's the peace? Is there evolution?

Vivekananda comes down on both sides of the question. Sometimes we feel that yes we are growing more spiritual, humanity is. And why do the great teachers come unless there is a chance for us to grow, to become spiritual? To realize our divinity? And yet, he says, never be deluded by the tall talk of which you will hear so much in America. About human progress and such stuff. We cannot make this world perfect it is by its nature imperfect the very nature of this world is impermanent and imperfection, and this is buddha's first noble truth. The truth of dukkha, which is often translated as suffering. Yes, sometimes we can say suffering, look, we were just talking about that at the beginning of the talk, how much suffering there is in so many parts of the world? And even in our own lives. He's pointing out the dissatisfaction, the deep sense of unfulfillment that is in our lives. As long as we are immersed in the world, in our careers, and our families, it's never enough. It's never quite enough. There's always a fly in the ointment to spoil stuff, to spoil everything. Just when it seemed like the cold war is over and everything seems to be going nicely, and then boom, there's another war in Europe. This is dukkha. But there is a way out. Swamiji says, in towards the conclusion of this letter,

“ the only knowledge that is of any value is to know that all this is humbug. But very few will know this. Know the Atman alone and give up all other vain words. This is the only knowledge we gain from all this knocking about the universe. This is the only work to call upon humankind to arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached”.

This is to me one of the special beauties of Swami Vivekananda's message. That he's always calling upon us to awake. Awaken from us your sleep. We're sleeping. We think that we're bodies and we're caught in this world and we have to fight with each other, wake up. You're not bodies, you are infinite spirit. Let that spirit shine through in every action, let your love flow to every being, wake up. And that's the work. That's the work says Swamiji. To call upon humankind to awake, arise, and go on, go on till we reach the goal.

So I think uh in some sense our hearts do need to break our hearts do need to seeing the heartbreak of this world all the suffering and misery and all the difficulties, our hearts do need to break, to break open and bleed, bleed for the suffering billions of people here, and to be moved, then, to call all, to wake up to our true nature.

Incredibly powerful letter Swami Vivekananda wrote to sister Nivedita, his Irish disciple on 7th June 1896 she was still Margaret Noble, just starting to, she had just committed herself as a disciple of Vivekananda. And he writes, “this world is in the chain of superstition. I pity the oppressed and I pity more, the oppressors.” I wonder why? He pities the oppressed, yes it is easy to pity the oppressed and he pities more the oppressors. Why? Perhaps because their ignorance is deeper. Their darkness is greater. The oppression they are inflicting on others will ripen in time to bring terrible misery to them also.

With their heavy karma. “one idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by ignorance and nothing else.”

Misery, what we have what we've been talking about, what is it caused by? Ignorance. Ignorance. And then he (Vivekananda) asks, “who will give the world light? Who will give the world light? Why not you and me? Why not all of us?. Sacrifice in the past has been the law. It will be a last for ages to come.”

“The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.” So this gives us a ray of hope doesn't it? Yes with hundreds of buddhas, humanity will come to know who we are.

We will wake up, we will give up war, we will turn to truth, we will turn to the eternal. Why not? But what is required? What is required Swamiji says, is people who will give the world light. People who will sacrifice everything to call humanity to wake up, to come to the truth of our own blessedness, our own divinity.

Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity. With eternal love and compassion. He then points out that the religions, the traditional religions, they're no longer able to come up to the task. He says, “religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless, that love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.”

So that's how we give the world light, through character. Building that character, from the birth to the end of school, through educations at home as parent ,and at school. So the work before us, to build, to develop our character. To build our character according to these principles and shed the light, shed the love.

“Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones. The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping Gods awake. Till the God within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I always say, awake, awake”.

So this is Swami Vivekananda calling all of us to awake, and even calling us to carry forth that call of awakening. Yes, what a powerful line.

The other day on my morning walk in Hollywood, I passed by somebody has made a Hollywood sculpture garden. And in the garden around this house, there are all kinds of sculptures and there's a little path you can walk through it as you like. It's an art lover and perhaps an artist it looks like. And on the street outside, there's a just a post, an ordinary signpost, just like you put the no parking signs on, and there's a bunch of different signs, which look like no parking signs, it's got the little arrows and the red text on a white background.

But if you look at it, there's a series of messages on these placards, on these little signs. And it's very apropos of our discussion. The first sign says, if there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. And the next one says, 'if there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities' and the next one, 'if there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbours'. 'if there is to be peace between neighbours, there must be peace in the home'. And the last one, 'if there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart'.

It's juxtaposed with this very ordinary look of no parking signs and I came across this. I took a photograph of it. It's beautiful. It's points at a profound truth. Peace cannot be forced from outside. It must start within and radiate outwards. Yes we want peace in the world, and we should work for that. But if we don't have peace in our hearts, it will never come about. Do we have peace in our hearts? Then we can have peace in our homes. When we have peace in our homes we'll have peace among our neighbors. How many of us have feuds with our neighbors. If you are on the website next door then you know that neighborly feuds are extremely common, and often very humorous from our standpoint if we're not actually caught in the feud. But if you're in the feud, it's life and death. When we get have peace between neighbors we'll have peace in the cities. When there are peace in the cities we'll have peace in the nations. And when there's peace in the nations we'll have peace in the world.

Touching that peace deep within, that's what really the Upanishads again and again affirm. That's where this peace is to be found. Touching our true nature, the Self, the Atman. Swami Vivekananda loved to quote this verse from the Katho Upanisahd –

“Thus sages who realize him as the soul of their souls, unto them belongs eternal peace. Unto none else, unto none else. He or she who in this world of evanescence finds him who never changes. He who in this universe of death finds that one life, he who in this manifold finds that oneness, and all those who realize him as the soul of their souls, to them belongs eternal peace. Unto none else, unto none else.”

So thus are the true peacemakers. To be true peacemakers we need to touch that infinite peace, which is our destiny. Let us touch it now. Let us work on it now. This life. So, perhaps you're familiar with the, some of you may be familiar with the American saint named Peace Pilgrim. Anybody heard of ? Just a few of you. She was a remarkable human being who walked all over this country, during the nuclear time and was walking coast to coast for peace, for global peace and disarmament. And she was one who was not in any spiritual tradition, any religious tradition. And yet she was profoundly spiritual, she was an illuminated person. And her whole message was peace. And she said, I work on the complete peace picture. Peace between nations, peace in the cities, peace among people, and very very important inner peace. Because if there's no inner peace, how can there be peace without? I was

really struck by her book, her book which is a collected letters and conversations of by her friends. She didn't write any book but it's worth looking at her message. And this idea of attaining peace, one question we can ask ourselves is, "do we really want it?"

Because, I think when I first started reading some spiritual books and started getting interested in spirituality, I read about inner peace. I was a student in college and thought wow, inner peace? That sounds really neat. That sounds great. And I asked one of my friends so have you attained inner peace? It's a very kind of innocent and naive question really. And what did he say? He said, "oh I wouldn't want that that that would be boring". Now I understand that he is confusing what we call sometimes the two end of the spectrum look alike. Like the infrared light you can't see and the x-rays you also can't see. But they are different ends of the light spectrum. So on one end of the of the spectrum is what we call *tamas* or darkness. Which is like death, and it may look. The other end is supreme peace. Now someone who is in a state of supreme peace can sit quietly and doesn't have to do anything and yet is radiating peace. And someone who's in the state of darkness, can be sit quietly and not doing anything, and is just like a clod of earth.

But my thought is, do we want peace? We say we want peace. And yet we're always preparing for war. We want to legislate peace. We want that we have the united nations and we put past motions enough for peace and peace. We want to force it through military action and sanctions et cetera et cetera, we want to force peace. We say we want peace and yet we still hold on to the idea that physical force, violence, killing are acceptable acceptable means of solving problems. So the question then arises. Do we really want peace? How much do we want peace? Are we willing to sacrifice for it. And what sacrifice do we need to make to attain peace? The cost is a little costly. It's a little costly. We have to sacrifice. We have to give up our false notion of who we are and what we are. If we really want peace, we have to sacrifice our lower nature. We have to sacrifice our anger, we have to sacrifice our greed, our lust for power. Why is global peace making so difficult? Because we don't have peace in our hearts and our homes and our own neighborhoods. We have still greed and lust for power. We want to rule it over others. The roots of conflict go very deep. Fear this, the lust for power and wealth. Historical memory, inability to forgive, and let go. Inability to see another point of view, we have such a strong identification with our bodies, our families, our countries, the color of our skin. Ultimately, we are ignorant of who we are. We have to let that go. That's the cost of peace. To sacrifice everything that we think we are. Our own identity as it were as a limited individual separate from every other person with my own rights and I have every right to amass as much as I want and to have as much as I want and enjoy as much as I want. Yes we have to sacrifice all of that. But the gain is tremendous. The gain is worth. It's worth it. If only we knew, if only everybody knew the gain, what we gain from that is infinite peace, infinite joy. We touch our true self, we touch the feet of God, and we attain the peace that passes understanding.

Finally, there's the idea when faced with all of this and yes maybe we're not quite ready to sacrifice everything, well then take refuge in God. Take refuge in God and the holy name as we chanted at the beginning of our prayer. When the recorder of the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna was describing to Srama Krishna how Genghis Khan the Mongolian conqueror of half the world, it is said that 30 million perished under his conquests. 30 million. So there was an incident recorded about him when they had attacked a country and they had about 100,000 prisoners. And his lieutenants came to him and said, "sir we have all these prisoners who will feed them? Yet it is equally dangerous to let them go. What shall we do?" And the emperor said true what can be done? Have them killed. And so they were all slaughtered. So how to understand that? And M was suggesting that you can lose your faith in God seeing such a horrible thing. And Sri Ramakrishna replied, "is it possible to understand God's action and motive? He creates, he preserves, and he destroys. Can we ever understand why he destroys? I say to the Divine Mother, O mother, I do not need to understand. Please give me love for thy lotus feet. The aim of human life is to attain Bhakti, love for God. As for other things, the mother knows best". So there's also this attitude that we can take. Take refuge in Divine Mother. Take refuge in the lord, the abode of safety. The one safe refuge as my favorite morning chant before a talk, which I always chant, that we take refuge in that that one raft to safety across the ocean of this miserable world.

At the end of the bhagavad-gita after giving him all the teachings he says, Sri Krishna gives Arjuna the same message. "Take refuge in him with all your heart o Arjuna. By his grace, you shall attain supreme peace and the eternal abode."

Take refuge in that infinite mind of divine grace and peace and we shall attain peace. So I hope I've been able to give a few hints about peace and how to understand the terrible things that we're seeing in the news and in this world and what we can do about it. Yes we can serve. Perhaps we are called to serve, perhaps we are called to serve the suffering and set aside our little individualities. Perhaps we are called to find our unity with others, perhaps we can dive deep in meditation and touch the peace within, and then share that with others through service and sacrifice and taking refuge in the divine. Let us therefore bring peace to our own lives through right action, and touch the source of infinite peace within and become real peacemakers. Let us hear Swami Vivekananda's call to be a real peacemaker and bring peace to our families and our neighborhoods and our cities and our nations and the world.

I'd like to close with uh reading a little passage from a remarkable letter of Swami Vivekananda to Mary Hale his American Sister.

"I am being lifted up above the pestilential miasma of this world's joys and sorrows. They are losing their meaning. It is a land of dreams. It does not matter whether one enjoys or weeps. They are but dreams. And as such, must break, sooner or later. Go on, life is but a dream. Are you not glad it is so? My, they want an eternal heaven. Thank God nothing is eternal except himself. He alone can bear it I am sure. Eternity of nonsense. Things are not

humming for you just now. I am so sorry, that is, I am trying to be. For I cannot be sorry for anything anymore. I am attaining peace that passeth understanding. Which is neither joy nor sorrow, but something above them both. Now I am nearing that peace, the eternal silence, now I mean to see things as they are, everything in that peace, perfect in its way. This is the great lesson that we are here to learn through myriads of births and heavens and hells, that there is nothing to be asked for, desired for, beyond one's self alone through eternity because I was free and free and will remain free forever. This is vedantism. I preached the theory so long, but oh joy, Mary, my dear sister, I am realizing it now every day. Yes I am, I am free. Alone, alone, I am the one without a second. If the universe tumbles round my ears what is that to me? I am peace that passeth understanding. I am beyond, I am peace.

Ever yours, in the sath chit anand, the existence consciousness bliss,
Vivekananda