

Toward a True Dialogue of Cultures

by Chandrajit Yadav

Mr. Yadav is a former Union Minister of the government of India under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He is currently chairman of the Centre for Social Justice of India. He gave this speech to the Schiller Institute's conference near Wiesbaden, Germany on Sept. 25. For other conference speeches, see EIR, Oct. 8, 15, and 22.

Mr. President, dear Lyn, my dear Helga, our brothers and sisters and young friends of the LaRouche movement! I am extremely grateful to the Schiller Institute and its president, Madame Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who is a crusader for an international composite culture and religious and cultural harmony. I am also grateful to the source of inspiration behind the institute, world renowned statesman, economist, and philosopher, Lyndon H. LaRouche, for inviting me to address this important international conference, "The Turning Point in History."

The topic is most relevant in the present world context. It has stimulated my mind, because the prevailing world situation is throwing challenges to the very existence of human beings and their future destiny. The entire world, whether developed or developing, whether East or West, North or South, is facing serious economic, social, cultural, and political crises. Science, technology, and knowledge have brought dramatic changes in the world, in a sense the world is becoming a global village.

Three thousand years ago, the Indian's had a vision of *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*: The whole world is a family. Now that can be realized: computers, Internet, jet planes, mobile communications, nuclear energy have immensely facilitated human life. But on the other hand, the most destructive nuclear weapons are being stockpiled, with the capability to destroy the world a thousand times. These are missiles to hit a target accurately 1,000 miles away: This has made the world more vulnerable than ever before in human history.

So history today provides both possibilities. If man is compassionate, kind, considerate, loving, and peaceful, he can make the Mother Earth planet heaven. But if he is selfish, egoistic, tyrannical, exploitist, and imperial, he will bring total annihilation, the end of existence. The prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there will be only deluge.

The Global Financial-Economic Crisis

The world is facing a financial economic crisis. As Lyn said, perhaps it is at the great point of collapse. . . . The seri-

ousness of this crisis has taken over the entire Western world. Earlier, it was thought that the developing countries, the newly liberated countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, were poor, exploited, subjected, and therefore perhaps the crisis was there. Now we see a much bigger and deeper crisis in the Western world.

In Germany, where we are meeting now, we were told that there are 8 million people unemployed. The government, instead of helping people, instead of providing more jobs, is taking steps to cut social benefits. Therefore, there is anger, there is fear about the future of the young people. It is not only Germany, not only Europe but also the United States of America. The U.S.A. today is facing one of the most serious economic crises in history.

And then there is India. One great statesman long ago said that there are two Indias: the India of the rich, the 20% of Indians who can be compared with the richest people in the world. They live as luxurious a life as anywhere on the planet. But 80% of Indian people are poor, they are living on a very low income. At least one-third of our population live below what we call the poverty line. But our poverty line is, in reality, an inhuman condition. As far as per-capita income is concerned—though India in certain respects has become a developed country—India stands 127th in the world.

The Message of Asian Culture

But my subject today is to deal with the cultural dialogue. I was very much impressed yesterday, before we started, when our young people here, the LaRouche Youth Movement, sang collectively, that "thoughts should be free" ["Die Gedanken Sind Frei"], about the freedom of thought. I want to read a poem from a poet who is internationally known. He is Rabindranath Tagore, India's only Nobel laureate in literature. This poem is from his famous book *Gitanjali*, a collection of devotional poems:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free, where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, where words come out from the depth of truth, where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection, where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habits, where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action, into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake."

Had he been alive today, I am sure he might have said: "My father, let humanity awake."

These are the ideas to which Indian culture has given thought. A friend said yesterday that science and technological inventions have mostly been made in Western countries. That is a correct statement. He also said, that in the last five years in China, despite the level of Chinese development, the Chinese have not been able to make any important inventions. This can be said not only about China, but also about India



Chandrajit Yadav of India greets young people at the Schiller Institute conference in Germany. His wife is on the right. "Our youth movement has to make the question of culture part of their movement," he said. "Not only the bread-and-butter issues."

and many other Eastern countries.

But I must say, let us peacefully and calmly think over, that those minds who are inventing very important things which have facilitated our lives today, the same minds were also capable of making atom bombs—the first serious threat to all humanity. Now, the same excellent and brilliant minds are responsible for making nuclear weapons and, as they are not satisfied, they go on making searches, inventions, spending billions and trillions of rupees, reaching to the point of launching a "Star War." Is the mind for this? To make inventions for the destruction of humanity, to wage war and destroy our children, to wage war to destroy the freedom and liberty of weaker countries? Is this the brilliance of mind?

Here I will quote Mahatma Gandhi, from a speech made long ago, at the first Pan-Asian conference which was held in Delhi in 1947. There, he said certain things which are still very relevant today. The conference was held on April 1, 1947, just before India got its independence on Aug. 15, 1947. . . .

When Gandhi was requested to address the conference, he said he would speak later, but responded to a question on whether he believed in the theory of "One World" and whether it would succeed: "I would not like to live in this world, if it is not to be one. Certainly, I should like to see this dream realized in my lifetime. I hope that all the representatives who have come here from different Asian countries will strive their level best to have only one world. They will have to think out ways and means for achieving this goal. If you

work with fixed determination, there is no doubt that in our own generation we will certainly realise this dream."

Then, when Gandhi really addressed the conference, on the last day, he said the following: "I have learned from books, written by English historians. We read books written in English by English historians, but we do not write in our own mother tongue or national language, Hindustani. We study our history with English books rather than the originals. That is the cultural conquest that India has undergone. It was not only the political conquest but also the cultural conquest that was imposed on India."

However, Gandhi asserted, wisdom had come to the West from the East. "The first of these wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha, who belonged to the East, to India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses, who belonged to Palestine, though he was born in

Egypt. After Jesus came Mahommed. I omit my reference to Krishna and Rama and other lights. I do not call them lesser lights, but they are less known to the literary world. All the same, I do not know a single person in the world to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West.

"What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through Western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart."

Gandhi said this because, he knew that the mind is also the home of evil. If you want to work only with the mind, it that can produce excellent things, as well as atom bombs and nuclear weapons and missiles, but the heart, as Lyn says and Helga says, produces nothing but love, love, and love.

Gandhi went on in his speech: "In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can re-deliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West, not through vengeance, because you have been exploited, but with real understanding. I am sanguine, if all of you put your hearts together—not merely the heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we have really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself." . . .

A Civilizational Crisis Today

So, friends, I am saying that this is the situation the world is facing today. I would say, that the turning point in history is not only the Presidential election of the United States of America. I do not know what the result will be, but I can tell you one thing: if the 1 billion people of India were able to vote in the American Presidential election, 90% of Indians would vote for the Democratic candidate supported by Lyn and his friends, Kerry, and would like to defeat Bush, because they know, that today Bush is the evil of history. This is how the people today feel. But I do not think that this is the only turning point in history. Of course, dangers are there; the world will be facing many destructive situations if Bush, unfortunately, should win.

But there are other things also, side by side. I would like this conference to seriously think on these problems. It is not only the economic crisis; it is an equally serious civilizational crisis, and an equally serious cultural crisis. Lyn yesterday told us that America has no culture. Is that not a serious thing? That a country, who produced a man like Washington or Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln or Roosevelt, and also Martin Luther King, Jr., has no culture? The question today is that this country with no culture, is trying to destroy the cultures of other countries. It is trying to create a situation of cultural conflict, of cultural crisis, using religion as a weapon; using developed science, technology and their knowledge, to degenerate culture. And they are exporting the ideas of degeneration to other countries.

We, in India, had faced a situation where religion was used by British imperial power. They used religion to divide and rule. India is a country where, out of more than 1 billion people, 80% are Hindu. But India is also a country where 17% of the population is Muslim: the third biggest Muslim population in the world lives in India. But [at the time of Independence in 1947], India was divided on the basis of religion. Muslims at that time were told that they had no future in free India, that they would be second- or third-class citizens in free India. This weapon was used and our country was divided. Although history proved this claim was wrong, Pakistan was built on the basis of religion, to have a 98% Muslim population. But then Pakistan itself was divided—it became Pakistan and Bangladesh. The British and some self-interested politicians exploited the situation, and made religion a weapon to divide our country.

Today the same kind of thing is going on: mischievous minds are trying to do this. Terrorism is growing, and it is said that perhaps all terrorists are Muslims. It is said, that there are only Islamic terrorists and that Islam is producing terrorism. Therefore, the danger is not terrorism, the danger is Islam. This kind of dangerous ideas are being propagated. From where? From the soil of the United States of America—I am sorry to make this statement, that those brilliant minds have the most mischievous minds and are trying to use this.

The Role of the Youth

Therefore, the subject of cultural dialogue becomes very pertinent today. A culture grows and moves with the people. Culture is a wide thing; culture is much bigger than simple civilization. Civilization is a part of culture. Culture is music, drama, poetry, lifestyle, history, philosophy, ideas. Therefore, it is important that particularly our younger generation must understand—I am sorry to say that our schools and colleges sometimes become the place of such dangerous ideas; they are in bad condition. They may teach mathematics, science, modern technologies, but pay no attention to the teaching of human values and civilizations. Our young people are misled today. One religion is used to hate another. Religions are not meant to hate each other. If you study religions, whether Christianity or Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism, Persian, or any religion—you see the basic tenets of religion, which also form part of culture, which is spirituality.

What does religion, culture, spirituality say? They teach how to be a good human being. Be compassionate, be kind, be loving, be caring, and believe in brotherhood. Be a peaceful man, or woman. Don't be violent, be non-violent. These are the basic things. I think it is high time that our young people should launch a movement, that our education today should not only teach science and technology, but along with that, they should also be taught human science, human values, and the main tenets of religion and culture.

How do cultures unite? We are living in a world, where culture has to be universal. It can't be divided by creating walls. If the walls are there, they have to be removed. The emphasis should be on universal culture and spirituality. Today it is important that cultural movements should be universal movements. Unless and until people have culture and are compassionate, are non-violent, the danger is hovering over our heads, that any mad person can create a situation where nuclear war can break out. We have heard that at least one medical person has found Mr. Bush to be, in reality, insane. He is President of the country which has today the maximum nuclear capability.

Our youth movement has to make the question of culture part of their movement. Not only the bread-and-butter issues, not only employment, greater salaries or a more luxurious life, but also a life based on human values, a loving life, which teaches how to be a good human being, good sisters and brothers, and to care for our future.

India's Ancient Culture

How are cultures created? I will take the example of India. India is a very ancient civilization. Buddha was born 500 years before Jesus, and Buddha became the symbol, the prophet of compassion, love, non-violence, and kindness. This was born on the soil of India. In ancient times, there were several other great civilizations, like the Roman, the Greek, Persian, or Chinese civilization, but at that time, they were confined to their own countries only. Today, all cultures are exchanging.

Knowledge as knowledge is spreading, and so does culture, cultural exchanges today have become important.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote: "We have come to understand in modern times that any special truth, or special culture, which is wholly disassociated from the universal, is not true at all. It will not do to keep our culture so reverently shackled with chains of gold. The age has come when all artificial fences are breaking down. Only that will survive which is basically consistent with the universal.

"All great countries have their vital centres for their intellectual life, where high centre of learning is maintained, where the minds of the people are naturally attracted to find their genial atmosphere to prove their work, to contribute their share to their country's culture and thus to kindle on some common altar of the land a great sacrificial fire of intellect which may radiate the sacred light in all directions. Athens was such a centre in Greece, Rome in Italy, and Paris is such today in France. Benares has been and still continues to be of our Sanskrit culture.

"Let me state clearly that I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On the contrary, I believe that the shock of such forces is necessary for the vitality of our intellectual nature."

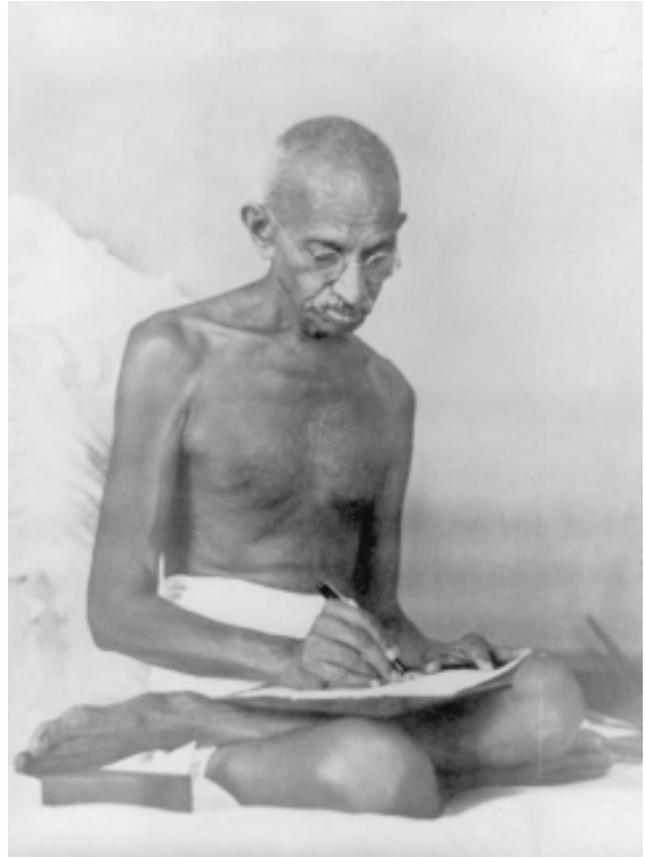
Tagore compares culture and great rivers. He said that the river belonging to a country is not fed by its own waters alone. The river Rhine in Germany is not fed by German waters alone; waters from Switzerland and the Netherlands are also feeding the river Rhine. Tagore wrote that the Tibetan Brahmaputra is a tributary to the Indian Ganges. Such "rivers" of contributions have similarly found their way into India's original culture. "The Mohamadan, for example, has repeatedly come to India from outside, laden with its stores of knowledge, and his wonderful religious democracy contributes to our music, our architecture, our pictorial art, our literature. They have made their permanent and precious contributions.

"Then descended upon us the later flood of Western culture. European culture has come to us not only with its knowledge and modern ideas, but with its velocity."

If you see the history of the whole world, every culture in every country has received contributions from many other cultures. So the cultures do not divide, they do not create clashes; culture unites. When cultures become more composite, they become more shining, more human, richer. Therefore, today the dialogue of cultures is a must. It has to be a movement and it has to be universal. And I hope that the younger people will pay greater attention to all this.

What Is Real Democracy?

I only say a few words about the present situation. In my opinion, today is the era of social justice. The common man is awakening and he is asserting his rightful place and his dignity in society. He wants his due share in the governments of the countries. Therefore, democracy will not be democracy, unless the common people have a voice. Manipulated democracy or winning elections by manipulation, by using money



Mahatma Gandhi told his countrymen that if they live by the great message of the spiritual leaders of Eastern civilization, "the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself."

and power, is no true democracy.

This is also an era of knowledge, where science and technology play an important role. We are living today in the era of globalization. It is a reality, which has both advantages and disadvantages. Developed countries, through liberalization and the WTO [World Trade Organization], are trying to take advantage, to serve their own interests. They are trying to make the WTO a tool of new exploitation. If the rest of the world unites, and succeeds in establishing a new international social and economic order, then globalization can be meaningful.

This is also an era of materialism, which is causing a serious civilizational crisis. Money is becoming the goal of life. The value system is being broken. It is bringing degradation, corruption, criminalization in society. . . . Uncontrolled materialism is responsible for cultural decadence, individual depression, and degradation leading to large scale suicides. One million people commit suicide in the world every year. One million people, and 20-30 million attempt suicide. This kills more people every year than war and diseases. Why are there so many suicides? Because people are the victims of depression. People are running after desires, and unlimited

desires lead to a disastrous life. . . .

Therefore, I am saying, the contribution from the West for development of science and technology is tremendous. But the West is also responsible for dehumanizing society and vulgarizing culture; its lust for power and wealth, its desire to dominate the world is becoming the source of evil. The United States of America has to play its role, and I hope the people of the U.S.A. will be reminded of the noble ideas imbibed from their Constitution. I have heard Lyn say several times and he, with a great sense of pride, perhaps with great American pride, says that the U.S. Constitution imbibes the best idea. But in a country that has such a noble Constitution, why is it that degeneration is coming from there? That is a matter of serious thought for the younger generation. If your administrators are going to destroy your noble ideas, if they are violating them, you have to say, "No. We are the defenders of our Constitution. We will defend freedom and liberty, and our future, and we will defend the future of the people." And that time has come. I see what is going on in Germany. Young people are coming on the street. . . .

Formidable Problems Facing India

This noble fight for rights will spread. My country, India, in spite of serious problems, has to play a role.

India is an immensely complex, but vibrant, country. India's population is more than 1 billion, and it has one of the fastest growing economies of the world. . . . During the 1990s, the Indian economy did reasonably well, in terms of economic growth and related macroeconomic indicators. When the world economy was relatively slow, at that time, the Indian economy was doing comparably better. Last year, India's growth was 8%. The service sectors have grown much faster, and India has made remarkable progress in information technology and electronic services.

But there are major problems, with which the country is confronted. After 57 years of independence, India is 127th in the world in per-capita income. It is only 21,670 rupees, or about \$480, and in the villages, where 70% of the population lives, the per-capita income is just 7,900 rupees, or \$175. Some 300 million people in India are living below the poverty line in inhuman conditions, denied even drinkable water, or a sound roof over their heads. By 2020, India's population at present growth rates will be 1.34 billion: 137 millions of these will be of school-going age, between 5 and 14 years; 846 millions will be in the working age between 15 to 59; and 132 millions will be over 60. Every third person will be a dependent, and 6 out of 10 Indians would need jobs. These are enormous problems, and the political leadership, administrators, economists, intellectuals, along with peasants, artisans, and the working class have to tackle it, with vision, determination, and a proper strategy.

These obvious disparities are creating an unbalanced society. It is now being reflected in politics. Dissatisfaction of the common people has been exploited by communal and reactionary forces. Imbalanced development is also responsi-

ble for political fragmentation. You may know that India has, for the last seven years, been in a coalition era. No single party has got the absolute majority. Before today's government, India was ruled for six years by a 24-party coalition. But they did succeed at least in completing a five-year term. Today we have a government, where seven political parties are part of the government and six political parties are supporting it from the outside.

Among these disparities, we have the fight between the 85% and the 15%. Earlier, I had thought that only my country was facing this problem of 85% poor, versus 15% rich; but Lyndon has said, that even in the United States, there is a disparity of 80% in the lower salary grid, while 20% of the people monopolize the national wealth of the U.S.A. This is becoming a universal question, not one of a particular country.

These are the challenges which have to be very seriously considered. Not only that we frighten the people, but right-thinking people must put their minds together and get a concrete alternative part of development. Now is the time, and I am of those who feel that every crisis provides an opportunity also. Therefore, this world crisis today provides the opportunity for thinking minds to come together and . . . save humanity from annihilation. . . .

Today the world faces not only a financial systemic crisis, but a civilizational and cultural crisis. Human values are at a discount. The overwhelming world population is individually depressed, socially isolated, spiritually void. Man has become a prisoner of uncontrolled, unlimited desires. It is leading to the growth of corruption, the animalization of society, intolerance, impatience combined with growing violence, are matters of serious concern. . . . *As long as the individual is in conflict with himself*, he must inevitably create conflict without, and he can only bring about peace within himself, if he does so in the world. . . .

I would like to finish my statement with another quote from Tagore: "According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world merely as the sum total of things that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realises all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy, not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union."

In the view of this world which India has taken, we said, *he alone sees, who sees all beings as himself*. That was the goal and the ideal. Therefore, my dear friends, closing my statement, I would like to say that I believe in the possibility of love. I am convinced that there will be mutual understanding among human beings, achieved in spite of all sufferings and blood and broken glasses. Because the voices are saying: "We are the people." So, dear delegates, let us be creative and creators, not only spectators. And also I will say, when there is darkness around, be a lamp onto yourself. Thank you.