

Pursuit of happiness: Buddhist group urges focus on dialogue, Compassion

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Panelists Discuss Need To Put Values Into Action

All people have the right to live in happiness." This sentiment formed the cornerstone of many of the speeches at the Symposium on Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda's 2016 Peace Proposal: "Universal Respect for Human Dignity: The Great Path to Peace". SGI, which is a global network committed to putting Buddhist values into action, has a network of 12 million people across 192 countries. The symposium was organized by SGI's Indian affiliate, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). Held on Saturday at the YB Chavan Auditorium, the symposium focused on Ikeda's peace proposal, which emphasizes "humanism", the "power of dialogue" and "people-to-people contact." The panellists included Ajit Ranade, chief economist to the Aditya Birla Group, who stressed on the need to eradicate inequality before lasting peace could be achieved. "We need to think of inequality like air pollution," he told the audience. "It needs to be regulated because it affects both rich and poor." Another panelist Shaheen Mistri, founder of Teach for India (TFI), related anecdotes emphasizing compassion. In one, a 14-year-old girl from a broken home handed over her beloved teddy bear to an inmate of an old-age home. And when she was applauded for her kind action, the teen replied, "If I really understood compassion, I would not have hesitated." The other speakers were Prakash Shah, India's Former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, who talked about the need to reduce the world's stockpile of small arms and nuclear weapons, and TISS professor K.M. Parivelan spoke about the refugee crisis created by natural disasters and human conflict and the importance of "last mile connectivity" or trying to evacuate every last person during an emergency . Each year, President Ikeda formulates a peace proposal that offers pragmatic solutions. His areas of focus in the 2016 proposal are humanitarian aid and human rights protection, ecological integrity and disaster risk reduction, which he believes require prompt action by both governments and civil society . Vishesh Gupta, chairperson BSG, says the proposal "compels us to think of four main aspects: whether we are able to touch the life of one person and empower it, the importance of one-on-one dialogue to build a world where no one is left behind, acknowledging the inherent dignity and potential of all people and finally , believing in the power and passion of youth."



PEACE TALK: (Left to right) Ajit Ranade, chief economist Aditya Birla Group, Vishesh Gupta, chairperson BSG, Prakash Shah, former UN representative, Shaheen Mistri, founder TFI, Rashi Ahuja, BSG director, TISS professor KM Parivelan and moderator Nandan Maluste

Symposium illumines Buddhist values, explores path of peace

Monday, August 29, 2016

By A Staff Reporter. Photograph By Azad Shrivastav

On Saturday, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG), the Indian wing of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an organisation which puts Buddhist values in action to help create a peaceful world, conducted a Peace Symposium at Y.B. Chavan Auditorium at Churchgate. BSG held the symposium in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). The symposium entitled, 'Universal Respect for Human Dignity: The Great Path to Peace' was based on the 2016 peace proposal of Daisaku Ikeda, President of SGI.

The programme began with a short film to notify the audience about the key ideas of the proposal i.e. "Dialogue is absolutely essential if we are to build a world in which no one is left behind". The eminent speakers present at the event included, Mr. Prakash Shah, India's Former Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Former Ambassador to Japan, Dr. Ajit Ranade, Chief Economist to the Aditya Birla Group, Ms. Shaheen Mistri, Founder and CEO, 'Teach for India' and Professor K.M. Parivelan, Chairperson and Associate Professor at the Nodal Centre for Human Rights Education, School for Legal Rights and Constitutional Governance, Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

The opening speech was made by Vishesh Gupta, Chairperson BSG, throwing light on the three important aspects of 2016 Peace Proposal. According to Gupta, key aspects of Ikeda's peace proposal will include humanitarian aid and human rights protection, ecological integrity and disaster risk reduction. Each year, President Ikeda formulates a peace proposal that goes beyond diagnosing obstacles to peace and provides solutions that encompass attitudinal change and other concrete suggestions.

The opening speech was followed by speeches from other speakers. "Peace actually comes from justice and justice comes from the idea of fairness, we all need to be treated fairly. Peace is not a matter of debate and there is no compromise. In India, we are politically equal but social and economic inequality exists. We need to remove this contradiction between political equality and social and economic inequality," said Dr Ranade, in his speech. All the other speakers shared anecdotes linking them with the excerpts of the peace proposal. Later, a short panel was conducted among the speakers. The event ended with speakers handing over mementoes and a vote of thanks.

Bharat Soka Gakkai

'Soka Gakkai' means society for the creation of value. 'Bharat Soka Gakkai' (BSG) is the Indian branch of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Through a wide range of activities, the SGI seeks to foster awareness of the social and environmental responsibilities that we all share for the future of planet. BSG was established in January 1986, with its headquarters in New Delhi. It has membership spread over 300 towns and cities across India. The membership is voluntary, mostly members are introduced by their friends creating a chain. BSG has sought to create an environment of peace through cultural, educational and community-related activities. BSG has five culture centres in India.

For details on Bharat Soka Gakkai log on to

www.bharatsokagakkai.org



Removing inequality, check on weapon use need for world peace

Press Trust of India | Mumbai Aug 28, 2016 03:13 PM IST

Business Standard

World peace can be achieved by working in four areas - right to happiness, removing social and economic inequality, need to focus on 'dialogue and compassion' and reducing stock of arms and nuclear weapons worldwide, experts said.

They were speaking at a symposium was organised by renowned Buddhist body Soka Gakkai International's (SGI) Indian affiliate, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG), in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) yesterday.

The focus of the symposium was on a recent 2016 peace proposal sent by Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda to the United Nations, which highlighted several areas that require prompt and coordinated action by governments and civil society.

Focusing on the peace proposal, chairperson Bharat Soka Gakkai Vishesh Gupta, said, "It compels us to think of four main aspects: whether we are able to touch the life of one person and empower it, the importance of one-on-one dialogue, acknowledging the inherent dignity and potential of all people and finally, believing in the power and passion of youth." Founder of Teach for India, Shaheen Mistri, addressing the gathering said, "The peace proposal has several points that I could connect with. For instance, everyone has the right to be happy. I think it is important to touch the life of each person." Chief economist to Aditya Birla Group, Ajit Ranade, stressed the need to remove inequality in search of peace. He said, "Peace comes from justice and justice comes from the idea of fairness, we all need to be treated fairly. In India we are politically equal but social and economic inequality exists and we need to remove this contradiction."

On the occasion, Prakash Shah, India's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations talked about the need to reduce the stock of arms and nuclear weapons the world over to bring peace and happiness among people while TISS professor KM Parivelan said, "The principle that we need to reach out to everyone and not leave anyone behind is very important. We need to truly respect and believe in the inherent dignity of all life."

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All problems can't be solved but it's a process: Ex-diplomat

Aug 28, 2016 | Age Correspondent | Mumbai



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Soka Gakkai International's (SGI) Indian affiliate, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences organised a symposium on Saturday. At the symposium, Prakash Shah, India's former permanent representative to the United Nations, said "While we may not be able to solve the serious problems we face now, the reduction of those problems itself is a process by which we can fashion a better society."

Entitled 'Universal Respect for Human Dignity: The Great Path to Peace', the symposium was based on SGI president Daisaku Ikeda's 2016 peace proposal.

"We don't believe we can completely solve the serious problems we face now. However, I do hope that there will be solutions," said Mr Shah. "As president Ikeda says, that while we cannot eliminate the problems the reduction itself is a process by which we can move towards elimination whether it is poverty, suffering of children, HIV or the Ebola virus, the reduction is a step towards elimination," he added.

Apart from Mr Shah, other speakers who took part in the symposium were Dr Ajit Ranade, chief economist to the Aditya Birla Group, Shaheen Mistri, founder and CEO, 'Teach for India' and professor K.M. Parivelan, chairperson and associate professor at the Nodal Centre for Human Rights Education, School for Legal Rights and Constitutional Governance, Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

"It is important to touch the life of each person. We need to ask ourselves what is it that I can do in this single minute, day or night to help others. If we want to change our society and to stop violence around us then we should follow this concept," said Ms Mistri.

Mr Ikeda is the president of SGI, a Buddhist association of more than 12 million members in 192 countries and territories. Mr Ikeda is a staunch proponent of dialogue as the foundation of peace.

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PTI

August 28, 2016 | UPDATED 15:15 IST

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