



# A peace movement is needed

Posted at: 09/03/2019

## **India and Pakistan must re-imagine the border as a fold of peace instead of as a threshold of hostilities**

- Our sense of war reads peace passively as a cessation of hostilities.
- Peace is more holistic and comprehensive in a way our current narratives do not capture.
- While war is anchored on the parochialism of concepts like border, security and nation state, peace has to dig deep into the unconscious of theology, philosophy and civilisation to literally create an alternative world view.
- India desperately needs a peace movement.

### **Beyond machismo**

- Our present vision of history and politics has become a handicap here.
- There is an irony to the Gandhian movement in India.
- Satyagraha as an imagination has inspired exemplars abroad, including Václav Havel, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Merton and Desmond Tutu, but it has lost its passion and vigour in India.
- Our ashrams are no longer pilgrimages of the imagination.
- They need to be revived to counter the think tanks of war and a middle class which craves the machismo of militarism.
- What makes the dyingness of Gandhian ideas even more poignant is that violence and war have become technologically and strategically inventive, creating an acceptable normalcy around genocidal deaths.
- The start-ups for peace have to be more imaginative than the usual start-ups of technology.
- Food as a cross-cultural imagination can help create the myths of diversity, generosity and justice that peace thrives on.
- One has to also create a tradition of peace, a genealogy of exemplars and anecdotes, myth and folklore that sustain our everyday sense of life and living.
- Imagine peace groups working on both sides of the India-Pakistan

border in a dialogue of peace.

- This will help us rethink the idea of the border as a threshold of hostilities, a hinge of war rather than a fold of peace.
- Today we see people on the border as vulnerable.
- One needs to give them some sense of agency in creating counter-currents to war.
- Finally, one needs civilisational ideas on war, where a dialogue of religion creates an antidote to war.
- The role of religion in peace is particularly crucial as our conventional spiritual leaders have become handymen of the state.

### **No democracy without peace**

- One has to recognise while there is a poetics to peace, there is also a prose to routine.
- Time and the varieties of time become crucial in understanding peace.
- Waiting for peace is almost the everyday burden of women in war zones as they wait for their loved ones to come back, and dream of the return to normalcy.
- Normalcy is such a rare phenomenon in frontier areas where war and insurgency have become endemic.
- Democracy, in that sense, is an ode to normalcy, to the rhythms of being we call peace.
- The encounter between India and Pakistan must create wider models for thinking about peace.

### **Guns and culture**

- India as a civilisation, a nation state and a democracy has a major resource to fall back on in the wisdom of our cultures and civilisations.
- It is time India goes beyond the grammar of surgical strikes and reaches for its cultures of peace, pilgrimage and understanding.

The Hindu