

Ela Gandhi

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Dear Amb. Mussie Hailu,

My message for world Golden Rule Day.

I greet you in the name of Mahatma Gandhi who has been my mentor. He lived his life putting into practice the Golden Rule. While I recognise that all our religions contain references to the Golden Rule, we have to acknowledge that the exception to the rule are at present more prominent in the world.

Yet it is heartening to note that the important place given to the Golden Rule by the world community on 5 April is indicative of the goodwill that exists among so many around the world. While I extend my hand of friendship of compassion and love to my fellow concerned brothers and sisters across the world, I am deeply mindful that we live in an unequal world where millions are left to suffer untold miseries either because of sheer poverty to which many of our fellow travellers are exposed or because of the violence and its accompanying hardships imposed on millions of people in all parts of the world.

So today may I firstly quote some prayers chosen from various scriptures, “O Lord, our Father and Mother, we pray that we Thy children on earth may all unite in one family.” - Sufi Prayer

“From you comes peace, To you returns peace. Revive us with a salutation of peace, And lead us to your abode of peace.” - Prophet Muhammad

“May it be your will, Eternal One, our God, God of our ancestors, that wars and bloodshed be abolished from the world, and bring into the world a great and wonderful and lasting peace. And let no nation lift a sword against a nation—let them learn no more the ways of war!” Jewish prayer.

“Let us respect other religions even as we respect our own. Mere tolerance thereof is not enough.”
Mahatma Gandhi

Ubuntu is the popular African terminology which is a term present in almost every African language on the continent and its meaning spans as wide as the golden rule. It embraces all in the universe and refers to the interdependence as well as the love compassion and caring service, that binds us together.

Many more prayers from all the different faiths refer to the same sentiments expressed in these prayers.

Yet the converse is the reality we face. Our world and our people need a reminder that the basic belief in all our faiths is love Gandhiji said, “I verily believe that man’s habit of killing man on the slightest

pretext has darkened his reason and he gives himself liberties with other life which he would shudder to take if he really believed that God was a God of Love and Mercy.” Mahatma Gandhi

This love is not merely a love that binds human beings but is extended to our earth and natural resources such as air and water which are God given vital contents of the universe and which we are plundering, depleting and destroying at a rapid rate.

“There is no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the non-violent method with all its glorious implications” said Mahatma Gandhi

A return to that love and acceptance that we are born with is vital for our world to survive. Nelson Mandela said, “For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” The emphasis is on others, even as the Golden rule places emphasis on the other and includes the universe.

Martin Luther King sums it up beautifully when he says, “When I speak of love I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Budhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the First Epistle of Saint John: Let us love one another: for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love... If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

Finally Martin Luther King goes on to say, “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

This then challenges us to do more than articulate our religious beliefs. We need to influence world leaders to begin to see their role as leaders to bring about structural changes so that the lives of all can be changed and so that the earth can be better protected and so that humankind can see a future for the generations to come. May this Day reverberate through out the world and cause real ripples of change a change which must start with us.

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