

Nobel Lecture

Nobel Lecture by Kailash Satyarthi, Oslo, 10 December 2014.

Let Us Globalise Compassion, and Set Our Children Free

दुनिया भर के मेरे प्यारे बच्चों,

(My dear children of the world...)

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, distinguished members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, dear brother Tom Harkin, brothers and sisters, and my dear daughter Malala.

मैं आज शान्ति और नैतिकता के इस पवित्र मंच से वेद के मंत्र को उच्चारित करते हुए बहुत गौरान्वित हूँ।

इस मंत्र में एक ऐसी प्रार्थना, कामना और संकल्प निहित है जो सम्पूर्ण विश्व को मनुष्य निर्मित त्रासदियों से मुक्ति दिलाने का सामर्थ्य रखती है।

From this podium of peace and humanity, I am deeply honoured to recite a mantra from the ancient texts of wisdom, Vedas.

This mantra carries a prayer, an aspiration and a resolve that has the potential to liberate humanity from all man-made crises.

ॐ उ हं बबीकीं उ अंककीं उ अव उदंदेप श्रंदंजं उ

श्वमं ईं हं लंजीं चववतअमं उ रंदंदं नचेंजमं

हम सभी साथ-साथ चलें। वैश्विक विकास और तरक्की के रास्ते पर धरती के दक्षिणी छोर से उत्तर तक और पूर्व से पश्चिम तक कोई भी पिछड़ न जाए, हममें से कोई भी बिछुड़ न जाए।

Let's walk together. In the pursuit of global progress, not a single person should be left out or left behind in any corner of the world, from East to West, from South to North.

हम सब साथ-साथ बोलें और साथ मिलकर चिंतन करें। अपने पूर्वजों से सीखते हुए साथ में मिल बैठ कर ऐसे ज्ञान का सृजन करें जो सभी के लिए कल्याणकारी हो।

Let's speak together, let our minds come together! Learning from the experiences of our ancestors, let us together create knowledge for all that benefits all.

आज मैं सबसे पहले अपने स्वर्गवासी माता-पिता को, स्वर्ग से भी महान् मेरी जन्मभूमि भारत माता को और धरती माता को नमन करता हूँ।

I bow to my late parents, to my motherland India, and to the mother earth.

मैं उन हजारों बच्चों का स्मरण करता हूँ जिन्हें आज़ाद कराने में मैं स्वयं मुक्त होता रहा हूँ। मुक्ति की पहली मुस्कान से भरे उनके सुंदर चेहरों पर मैंने बार-बार, हर बार ईश्वर को मुस्कराते हुए देखा है।

With a warm heart I recall how thousands of times, I have been liberated, each time I have freed a child from slavery. In the first smile of freedom on their beautiful faces, I see the Gods

smiling.

मैं इस सम्मान का सबसे बड़ा श्रेय अपने आन्दोलन में भारत के कालू कुमार, धूमदास और आदर्श किशोर तथा पाकिस्तान के बालक इकबाल मसीह को देना चाहूंगा, जिन्होंने बच्चों की आजादी और गरिमा की रक्षा के लिए अपना सर्वोच्च बलिदान दे दिया। मैं यह पुरस्कार उन सभी शहीदों की ओर से, विश्व भर में बचपन को बचाने में जुटे कार्यकर्ताओं की ओर से, और मेरे समस्त देशवासी भाई बहनों की ओर से विनम्रतापूर्वक स्वीकार कर रहा हूँ।

I give the biggest credit of this honour to my movement's Kaalu Kumar, Dhoom Das and Adarsh Kishore from India and Iqbal Masih from Pakistan who made the supreme sacrifice for protecting the freedom and dignity of children. I humbly accept this award on behalf of all such martyrs, my fellow activists across the world and my countrymen.

भगवान बुद्ध, गुरुनानक और महात्मा गांधी की धरती भारत से नोर्वे तक की मेरी यह यात्रा धरती पर शान्ति और विश्व बन्धुत्व की प्राचीनतम और वर्तमान धुरियों को जोड़ने वाली यात्रा है।

My journey from the great land of Lord Buddha, Guru Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi; India to Norway is a connect between the two centres of global peace and brotherhood, ancient and modern.

Friends, the Nobel Committee generously invited me to deliver a "lecture." Respectfully, I am unable to do that.

I represent here the sound of silence. The cry of innocence. And, the face of invisibility. I have come here to share the voices and dreams of our children, our children, because they are all our children.

I have looked into their frightened and exhausted eyes. And I have heard their urgent questions:

Twenty years ago, in the foothills of the Himalayas, I met a small, skinny boy. He asked me: "Is the world so poor that it cannot give me a toy and a book, instead of forcing me to take a tool or gun?"

I met with a Sudanese child-soldier who was kidnapped by an extremist militia. As his first training, he was forced to kill his friends and family. He asked me: "What is my fault?"

Twelve years ago, a child-mother from the streets of Colombia – trafficked, raped, enslaved – asked me this: "I have never had a dream. Can my child have one?"

There is no greater violence than to deny the dreams of our children.

The single aim of my life is that every child is:

free to be a child,

free to grow and develop,

free to eat, sleep, see daylight,

free to laugh and cry,

free to play,

free to learn, free to go to school, and above all,

free to dream.

All the great religions tell us to care for children. Jesus said: "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to them." The Holy Quran says: "Kill not your children because of poverty."

I refuse to accept that all the temples and mosques and churches and prayer houses have no place for the dreams of our children.

I refuse to accept that the world is so poor, when just one week of global spending on armies is enough to bring all of our children into classrooms.

I refuse to accept that all the laws and constitutions, and the judges and the police are not able to protect our children.

I refuse to accept that the shackles of slavery can ever be stronger than the quest for freedom.

I REFUSE TO ACCEPT.

I am privileged to work with many courageous souls who also refuse to accept. We have never given up against any threat and attack, and we will never. Undoubtedly, progress has been made in the last couple of decades. The number of out of school children has been halved. Child mortality and malnutrition has been reduced, and millions of child deaths have been prevented. The number of child labourers in the world has been reduced by a third. Make no mistake, great challenges still remain.

Friends, the biggest crisis knocking on the doors of humanity today is intolerance.

We have utterly failed in imparting an education to our children. An education that gives the meaning and objective of life and a secure future. An education that builds a sense of global citizenship among the young people. I am afraid that the day is not far when the cumulative result of this failure will culminate in unprecedented violence that will be suicidal for humankind.

Yet, young people like Malala, are rising up everywhere and choosing peace over violence, tolerance over extremism, and courage over fear.

Solutions are not found only in the deliberations in conferences and prescriptions from a distance. They lie in small groups and local organisations and individuals, who confront the problem every day, even if they remain unrecognised and unknown to the world

Eighteen years ago, millions of my brothers and sisters in 103 countries marched across 80,000 kilometres. And, a new international law against child labour was born. We have done this.

You may ask: what can one person do? Let me tell you a story I remember from my childhood: A terrible fire had broken out in the forest. All the animals were running away, including the lion, king of the forest. Suddenly, the lion saw a tiny bird rushing towards the fire. He asked the bird, "what are you doing?" To the lion's surprise, the bird replied "I am on my way to extinguish the fire." He laughed and said, "how can you kill the fire with just one drop of water, in your beak?" The bird was adamant, and said, "But I am doing my bit."

You and I live in the age of rapid globalisation. We are connected through high-speed Internet. We exchange goods and services in a single global market. Each day, thousands of flights connect us to every corner of the globe.

But there is one serious disconnect. It is the lack of compassion. Let us inculcate and transform the individuals' compassion into a global movement. Let us globalise compassion. Not passive compassion, but transformative compassion that leads to justice, equality, and freedom.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "If we are to teach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with the children." I humbly add, let us unite the world through the compassion for our children.

Whose children are they who stitch footballs, yet have never played with one? They are our children. Whose children are they who mine stones and minerals? They are our children. Whose children are they who harvest cocoa, yet do not know the taste of a chocolate? They are all our children.

Devli was born into intergenerational debt and bonded labour in India. Sitting in my car immediately after her rescue the eight-year-old girl asked: Why did you not come earlier? Her angry question still shakes me – and has the power to shake the world. Her question is for all of us. Why did we not come earlier? What are we waiting for? How many more Devlis will we allow to go without rescue? How many more girls will be abducted, confined and abused? Children, like Devli across the world are questioning our inaction and watching our actions.

We need collective actions with a sense of urgency. Every single minute matters, every single child matters, every single childhood matters.

I challenge the passivity and pessimism surrounding our children. I challenge this culture of silence, this culture of neutrality.

I, therefore, call upon all the governments, intergovernmental agencies, businesses, faith leaders, the civil society, and each one of us, to put an end to all forms of violence against children. Slavery, trafficking, child marriages, child labour, sexual abuse, and illiteracy have no place in any civilised society.

Friends, we can do this.

Governments must make child friendly policies, and invest in education and young people.

Businesses must be more responsible and open to innovative partnerships.

Intergovernmental agencies must work together to accelerate action.

Global civil society must rise above business-as-usual and scattered agendas.

Faith leaders and institutions, and all of us must stand with our children.

We must be bold, we must be ambitious, and we must have the will. We must keep our promises.

Over fifty years ago, on the first day of my school I met a cobbler boy my age sitting at the school gate, polishing shoes. I asked my teachers these questions: "Why is he working

outside? Why is he not coming to school with me?" My teachers had no answer. One day, I gathered the courage to ask the boys' father. He said: "Sir, I have never thought about it. We are just born to work." This made me angry. It still makes me angry. I challenged it then, and I am challenging it today.

As a child, I had a vision of tomorrow. That cobbler boy was studying with me in my classroom. Now, that tomorrow has become TODAY. I am TODAY, and you are TODAY. TODAY it is time for every child to have the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to health, the right to education, the right to safety, the right to dignity, the right to equality, and the right to peace.

TODAY, beyond the darkness, I see the smiling faces of our children in the blinking stars. TODAY, in every wave of every ocean, I see our children playing and dancing. TODAY, in every plant, tree, and mountain, I see that little cobbler boy sitting with me in the classroom.

I want you to see and feel this TODAY inside you. My dear sisters and brothers, may I ask you to close your eyes and put your hand close to your heart for a moment? Can you feel the child inside you? Now, listen to this child. I am sure you can!

Today, I see thousands of Mahatma Gandhis, [Martin Luther Kings](#), and [Nelson Mandelas](#) marching forward and calling on us. The boys and girls have joined. I have joined in. We ask you to join too.

Let us democratise knowledge.

Let us universalise justice.

Together, let us globalise compassion, for our children!

I call upon you in this room, and all across the world.

I call for a march from exploitation to education, from poverty to shared prosperity, a march from slavery to liberty, and a march from violence to peace.

जव उाँक हंतलए जतेंव उाँ रलवजपत हंतलए उाँ जलवत उाँ उाँजम हंतलए .

Let us march from darkness to light. Let us march from mortality to divinity.

Let us march!