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PRESENTATION

For International Dialogue on "Evolving a New Model of Nonviolent
Lifestyle for Universal Peace and Sustainability"

Peace and Sustainability is Only Partial and Local, But Essential, In
the Chaos of the Twenty-first Century

By Bernie Meyer, The American Gandhi
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Namaste, His Holiness, Acharya Mahapragha, Yuvacharya
Mahashraman, Honorable Delegates and all participants.

I am honored by your invitation. This is a most important Conference because we want to discuss subjects affecting all life on earth. And, the times are most urgent. The forces of climate abuse, resource depletion, and wars for resources are upon us. Humans created the abuses and humans must find a way to stop them. We humans took centuries to create these conditions; we do not have centuries to correct them. The 21st Century will tell the tale.

I want to tell you a story about Acharya Tulsi. Vana Jakic told it to me ten days ago. Vana was here at a time that Acharya Tulsi addressed the 4th or 5th ICPNA. Someone asked Acharya Tulsi, "Do you believe in world peace?" Acharya Tulsi answered: "No, I do not believe in world peace." The people were shocked. How could this enlightened teacher not believe in world peace? Vana said that Acharya Tulsi explained his answer: "To have world peace, every sentient being would need to have simultaneous awakening. This can never happen." Acharya went on to explain: "But, if we do not do what we are doing, working for peace, there will be no planet with life, there will be not be future for life on the planet."

Now, Acharya Tulsi's words are even more necessary and relevant. Acharya Tulsi's words can be our guide as we face the chaos of the Twenty-first Century. These words tell us that we must show that enlightened way of living is necessary and can only be fully achieved by communities, villages, or local societies.

I want to remind you of the words of Acharya Mahapragya given in the invitation to this Conference. Acharya Mahapragya says: "If the individual is not good, even the best social system will collapse. If the social system is not good, even a morally elevated person will deviate from the right path. ... It is imperative that there is conciliation between political power, social power, and economic power." This observation is essential. This observation is critical for human survival.

I speak now as the historic Mohandas Karamchaud Gandhi. While I worked for the independence of India from the United Kingdom during the first half of the Twentieth Century, I developed my constructive program. My constructive program was based upon principles similar to Acharya Mahapragya's. I wrote about it in *Hind Swaraj*. Civilization is true only when each person lives with dignity in a social system that is sustainable and just. Civilization is society which is self-directed from within. Civilization is based on "sat," "ahimsa," and "tapasya." Truth or reality, love or nonviolence, and dedication through duty, service, and, at times, suffering to death. "That is the swaraj that I wanted then, it is the swaraj that I want now." In India, the village has been the way of life for millennia. The village is my vision.

Now in 2005, I have been called "The American Gandhi." *I am speaking as The American Gandhi.* When I was a young Catholic priest in the United States, I was told of these principles: To have a just society, the system must be just. To have a just and peaceful society every person must live with dignity and perform his or her duty. I have spent my life working by using these principles. (You can read about this in my book: *THE AMERICAN GANDHI, My Seeking Truth With Humanity at the Crossroads.*)

Now, we have worldwide problems. The resources of the world are being used up. Water, minerals, arable lands, are being consumed at an unsustainable rate. And, liquid fuels of natural gas and oil are near their high point of production. As their production begins to decrease, the world wants to use more and more. China and India now want to use more and more by creating a Western style society. On top of these problems, global climate change is threatening more and more. In this situation the Indian leader of the International Committee for Global Climate Change, Rajendra Pachauri, says "We either swim or sink together."

Now, the world faces wars and terrorism. The United States as a superpower has a military budget of \$ 660,000,000,000 for 2009. And, this does not include the budget for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States military budget is equal to all the budgets of all the other world nations. And, weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, are on hair trigger alert in both United States and Russian systems. They want oil, gas, minerals for market economy and wealth. The United States with five percent of the world population consumes 30-40 % of world resources. The United States consumes 25 % of liquid oils. This cannot be sustained.

Terrorists are fighting back. People want to live with good things for their families. Many times terrorists have fundamentalist religious motives for their fighting. Religion becomes a means to fight for resources and power to control.

Now, we need ahimsa more than ever. Now, we need social systems that are just and nonviolent, we need governments and militaries that respect all peoples with justice and dignity. "I have always said that if love is not the law of human nature, my whole argument falls to pieces." We need more effort to "Become the change we want to see in the world." We need more effort to bring love, ahimsa.

Mohandas Gandhi said, "There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. Now, I have to question, is there enough for everyone's needs?" It appears very clear that the lifestyle of many nations is consuming too much of the world's resources. This lifestyle

not only consumes too many natural resources, this lifestyle also is damaging the environment. Species are disappearing; the atmosphere is polluted with gases causing global climate change.

The solution must be undertaken on the local level. In the industrial nations fossil fuels are intensely used for agriculture and for transportation. When fossil fuels become scarce, transportation and agriculture will need to be local. People will not be able to move goods all over the world in quantities and in speed like now. Agriculture will not have fertilizers and pesticides and equipment to produce food. Food will need to be produced locally and organically. This is the change that is needed to be recovered in the world.

In the United States, this is a major problem. Farms are now dominated by industrial methods. And, food is moved all over the world by trucks, ships, and planes. Organic family farms are struggling. Who will survive in the United States?

I tell you another story. The Amish people live in the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Amish live on farms and do not use industrial methods. They use horses and buggies to transport and to move themselves. So, the Amish have the best possibility to survive oil and gas depletions. The Amish have a better chance to survive the chaos of the Twenty-first Century. My story is also about the nonviolence of the Amish people.

In 2006 a man, who was not Amish but lived nearby, took his children to school and dropped them off at their school. Then, this man drove to an Amish school. He went inside with a gun and shot four children to death and then shot himself. This was a shocking event that the whole nation saw or read about in the newspapers. The man left a note that something happened to him when he was 12 years old that led him to do the killing. Then, another shock happened. The Amish forgave the man and went to the support of the man's wife and children in their grief. The Amish told the wife and children that "We forgive your husband and father." The Amish believe in nonviolence. The Amish live by ahimsa. Since the American culture is based upon the violence of military and individual arms, the

Amish forgiveness was a shock to many American people. Most Americans had difficulty accepting the forgiveness of the Amish people. Many thought "How can people live this way?"

In this Amish story, we have examples of Acharya Mahapragya's and my principles. We see that a system of living that is nonviolent and loving enables individuals in the system to live in an enlightened way. And, we must remember Acharya Tulsi's words about world peace. World Peace is not possible. But, we can create villages and local communities with enlightened citizens.

Last year I visited Rajsamand for the 6th Conference. Rajsamand can be a self-sustaining and nonviolent community. This is the change needed in Rajsamand. This is the change needed everywhere.

I want to share one more concern which threatens ahimsa as a lifestyle. The concern is advertising and the media, such as television and all electronic devices. In the United States, adults and children are wired to these devices. Many, many people are watching television or are wired to these devices for many hours each day. The gadgets are called Wi-fi gadgets. And, people are being damaged in many ways by them. Their brains are being wired to desire things that they do not need. Also, their brains are being wired to use violent means in certain situations.

During the 20th Century in the West, especially in America and Europe, the insights from psychology became used to move people to develop needs that they did not previously think they had. Psychology was used to make the unconscious create desires for all kinds of material possessions, for needs that were not real, but became real in peoples minds. This use of psychology was applied to television and media. These affected all Americans. This also affected the ethical life of Americans. People will fight for these needs. These advertised needs created a lifestyle that Americans depend upon.

More than that. Then, we know that people are deep in debt for these possessions. So, fear of loss drives the lives of people, and leads to much violence and suffering, domestic and national. And,

the debt of American citizens is the similar to the national debt: several trillion dollars.

Now, we have a new development in psychology. Neuro-biology has become a new science for the last twenty years. Neuro-biology is discovering how the brain works. There are many good and important insights and purposes of neuro-biology. Like psychology, neuro-biology can be used to do harm. Subtle insights are expected to cause people to do even more harm to the lives and communities where people live. Neurobiology can be used to control people's choices in purchasing, at work, even in family activities. Neurobiology can be used to change a person's brain.

The Leadership Training, which this conference is promoting, is designed to help develop the mind and emotions for nonviolent living. The training is an excellent anti-dote to advertising and Wi-fi gadgets. This is true only if people do not use these television or Wi-fi gadgets more than an hour a day and true only if people are aware of the subtle effects of advertising and unseen but millisecond messages that these gadgets use. Millisecond messages are too fast for the eye to see, but not too fast for the mind to see.

For myself, I do not have a television set, I do not own a car after driving over 50 years, but, I do have a garden to grow organic food. I seek to live by satyagraha, ahimsa, tapasya. My urgent message to you is to create a local village community wherever you live by using the principles we are discussing.