

Uniting to Establish a Culture of Peace

VISHWANATH D. KARAD

At the outset, I would like to especially congratulate all the students who are graduating today and wish them the very best for their future. May the Almighty Lord guide you in all your future endeavors and show you the pathway to harmony and peace.

Today is also a special day for me personally. I am truly overwhelmed and have no adequate words to describe my joy and satisfaction upon being accorded such a great honor for whatever little I have done in my life and whatever I have been able to achieve, particularly in the field of education and in the service of humanity. I wish to profusely thank the members of the Board of Trustees of BYU and all other concerned authorities who have found me worthy of such an honor.

I am already indebted to Brigham Young University together with other universities for their magnanimous gesture of donating a larger-than-life-size bronze statue of me that has been

installed in front of one of the greatest and largest monumental creations devoted to world peace—the World Peace Dome in Pune, India. The statue’s unveiling took place in the august presence of many of the dignitaries who are also present in this audience.

My dear sisters and brothers, nine years ago, when I was here last, was the first time that I had the good fortune and opportunity to interact with the followers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was a great revelation to me that the principles and values practiced by the Latter-day Saint people are so similar to the principles and values and laws practiced by the Vaishnav-Warkari or Warkari cult of Hinduism, the very tradition in which I was born and reared. I am an ardent follower of the founding fathers of this Vaishnav-Warkari sect, such as philosopher-saint Shri Dnyaneshwara, philosopher-saint Shri Tukarama, and many others who have shown the pathway of love, peace, harmony, devotion,

Vishwanath D. Karad, founder and chief patron of the MIT group of institutions in Pune, India, received an honorary doctorate when this BYU commencement address was given on April 25, 2024.

and dedication to millions of people in India over the last six hundred to seven hundred years. The main principle of this great Warkari tradition is very simple. As said by the great philosopher-saint Shri Tukarama, I quote in the Marathi language:

जे जे भेटे भूत । तयासमिानजि भगवंत ॥

This very simple quotation, loosely translated, means “Every living being is a manifestation of Almighty God and should be treated with love and respect at all times.”

My entire career, friends—whether in the field of education, world peace, service to humanity, or interfaith and interreligious dialogue—has all been made possible because of the blessings I have received and derived from these great saints, sages, and seers, as well as from my elder sister, the late Shrimati Prayagakka Karad, who was more like a mother to me. I must also credit the inspiration that I derived from Swami Vivekananda, the great, noble son of India, and his words of wisdom about how only the union of science and spirituality will help to bring harmony and peace to mankind—words spoken in Chicago at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in this very land of the United States of America on September 11, 1893.

Being an engineer and a man of science, I have been exposed to the scientific and practical approach to life as shown by great philosophers and scientists such as Dr. Albert Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, and Dr. Stephen Hawking. To my great surprise, I have found striking similarities in what philosopher-saint Shri Dnyaneshwara said about the very universe being a conscious and intelligent entity and in the statement by Albert Einstein that the entire universe is a manifestation of pure intelligence and consciousness!

During my lifetime I have been fortunate enough to be instrumental in establishing some landmark monuments that I conceptualized and designed. They are torchbearers for world peace and show the pathway of universal brotherhood and interreligious harmony. I thank the Almighty God for creating such

masterpieces through me, for making me an instrument in His hands. Perhaps the most significant masterpiece is the Philosopher Saint Shri Dnyaneshwara-Saint Shri Tukarama World Peace Prayer Hall, which is also the world’s largest dome. It is a spiritually oriented scientific laboratory dedicated to the establishment of the culture of peace for a holistic, peace-loving global society.

My dear brothers and sisters sitting in this hall, I am so proud that among the fifty-four statues that adorn that wonderful edifice, the World Peace Dome, is a statue of the first prophet of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ: the Prophet Joseph Smith. I personally believe that the Prophet Joseph Smith epitomized everything that is noble in human beings. He faced great odds and torment in his life so that an era of love, compassion, understanding, and brotherhood could be established in a terribly violent society. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to seek from books but to go to God in prayer. This is similar to what Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh community from India, asserted when he said that knowledge can be obtained not just through reading books but by being in the presence of God Himself.

My learned friends, I greatly believe in the commonality of all the world’s religions and believe that they are true and equal. All the world’s religions teach us how to live, how not to live, and how to let others live. Friends, these religious scriptures not only preach religious rituals but are truly life-guiding scriptures.

My dear friends, it is perhaps destined that the MIT World Peace University in Pune, India, and this great Brigham Young University in Utah in the United States of America have come together with a common goal or mission of establishing a culture of peace in the whole world. I strongly believe that this common goal can only be achieved by including a value-based universal education system with an appropriate component of science and spirituality in our education programs all across the world. For this I sincerely look to institutions such as BYU that can appeal to the sister universities of the United States and

the rest of the world to come together to form a managing council for global education that will enforce this value-based universal education system. Such a system could reduce the unbridled chaos, confusion, bloodshed, massacre, terrorism, horrifying violence, and prevailing atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the entire world today.

Friends, when we think of global citizens and the entire human race, I feel that we need to join with other universities and become like a single cell—the body and the brain and the soul of the spirit and the mind. What is the chemistry of the mind? What is the nature of the soul itself? Friends, I don't want to elaborate much about this, but this is what the universities as well as the education systems all over the world must take very seriously. We have a duty to perform.

Accordingly, I want to quote one important passage as an appeal to the president and the board of trustees that we have to certainly think about a universal education system. When I say "universal education," you may say that every nation has its geography, its history, its culture, and its traditions—but the time-tested human values are common. The law of nature is common. It is one and the same; it cannot differ for me or for you. My dear brothers and sisters, I would like to quote from the ancient text of India called the Atharva Veda, one of the religious scriptures. It is called "Fellowship," or coming together. It describes our joining hands together and making the well-being of all mankind our common goal:

Fellowship

*We are the birds of the same nest
We may wear different skins
We may speak different tongues
We may believe in different religions
We may belong to different cultures
Yet we share the same home, the Mother Earth
Born on the same planet
Covered by the same skies
Gazing at the same stars
Breathing the same air
We must learn to progress together
Or miserably perish together
For a person can live individually
But can only survive collectively*

Friends, these are words of wisdom given many years back. They are very important, and universities must adopt the philosophy behind them.

And now, along with engineering, along with management or whatever branch you belong to, we must not forget this very important component of life that is called spirituality. We must transform the university centers of the world, the temples, and the churches into knowledge centers that share divine knowledge and wisdom. Let us join hands for this very common cause.

I again congratulate all the students who are receiving their PhD, master's, and bachelor's degrees. You have a part to play in encouraging your mother, your father, your family, society, the nation, and the whole world so that they can become one family. Thank you!