

Pujya Swamiji's 2009 New Year's Message

Values are universal whether Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. Values are īśvarā.

Happy New Year. We now have Obama in the White House, and we hope this financial meltdown will crystallize into something that will give us some hope. It is very clear that we need to be prayerful. One of the most unpredictable, uncontrolled subject matters is the global economy and this country's economy. If we look at the monetary system or at the flea-market capitalism or at Marxism, we find that neither really works. Marxism would never work because there is no reason for it to work, and the flea market has to conform to certain norms that should come from the people, which can never be enforced.

Look at the flea market. This country's economy is destroyed by imports. I am not a market man. I do not read, nor do I understand, the vertical lines in the New York Times business page. I am just looking at the situation objectively. The market always has its eye on the bottom line. Therefore, they don't mind outsourcing. The employers are medium and small industries who are providers of employment. A labor union does not exist in China; therefore, no country is able to compete with them. No country. All our textile industries are destroyed because of unions and also because of no unions. Communists control both. Nobody is looking at this. There is no fair play in global markets, and in global markets there should be fair play. The monetary system must have a certain paradigm between currencies and currencies, but there is no paradigm. Therefore, the world is not ready for a global-free market. There needs to be similar infrastructures or somebody is going to be exploiting somebody else. That is what happened to this country, plus there was extraordinary greed.

The greed of hedging doesn't produce anything. Billions of dollars of major economic activity in this country is just hedging. Hedging means whether the economy goes up or it goes down there is no problem, the investor will make money. I am not talking about right or wrong here. I am simply saying that hedging doesn't produce anything. The production there is nothing. Nothing is produced in agriculture. Hedging only produces green paper, and hedging is ruthless. One makes money out of money. Money brings money. It is supposed to bring money, but money also takes money away. Somebody loses and somebody gains. The whole world loses and the hedging people gain. What I am saying is there is no emphasis on production. The large and small industries are to be encouraged. They need to be protected. Other countries also need to follow the same norms and the same conditions as there are here. If there are some minimum wages here in this country, an equivalent needs to be there in other countries. There needs to be the same minimum wages and the same freedom to have labor unions. The people need to voice their demands, and they need to get their demands met. They need to have their freedom. In China the people cannot open their mouths. For dental work they have to come to Delhi.

Therefore, it is not wise to throw open the market. If it is going to be a real flea market, then every country must have a similar infrastructure in terms of power, in terms of

transport, and in terms of communication. If every country has the same infrastructure, they can compete with each other. There can be equality, et cetera. That would be beautiful. But in India there is no infrastructure; there is no power. If the power comes on, we do *namaste*. If the power doesn't come on, it is natural. I don't see any will to bring about a change. Here in this country the unions are very big. In India the communists have no unions, and the unions cannot start. The argument is: It is the people's government. Here this is what? Devata's government? Bluff! These folks are a danger to the world. Danger comes from these people. They are destroying our government, our national culture, and the global economy all because of greed for power. Deluded as they are, they say they are working for the people, but the people are suffering. Anything that is lasting they destroy. The value structure they destroy. They are hobnobbing with the political parties in India. People don't understand.

There is so much disparity. In the monetary system there is disparity. The buying power of a dollar must be the buying power of a rupee. You can have forty or forty-five rupees to a dollar, but that kind of money one should be able to earn. What does it take for an unskilled person to earn one dollar here in America? What time does it take? Within that time that person in India should be able to earn that forty or forty-five rupees, then that is called parity, but one cannot earn that in India. The minimum wage here is now about seven dollars. Let's say that a person in America earns one dollar for every eight minutes. A person in India would have to earn forty or forty-five rupees every eight minutes, but sometimes it takes the whole day for him or her to earn that. He earns eighty rupees for four hours, earning two dollars for the whole day. See the difference. There is no parity; there is no justice. A global market means this is what will happen.

Assuming that there is parity, still a global market won't work. A free market is required. Freedom is required. The human being has to be free for *artha kāma*, and the human being, he or she, has to follow *dharma*. It has to come from within. No matter who rules, which party comes to power, nobody has any clue what will work. People don't know. If a person knew, he or she could control the system, but it always goes haywire. A natural course must be allowed. When one tries to block this and tries to block that, something else happens afterwards, and there is another problem. This is a system, a defective system.

That greed must be kept under control. What is that greed? Suppose somebody has a corner shop. There are no corner shops anymore, you know, but suppose there is a corner shop and this person wants to have another one so that he can sit in one and his wife can sit in the other. So he opens another shop. Is it greed? I don't think it is greed. It is his desire, which is legitimate. He wants to have one more shop. And after two shops, suppose he wants to sell and buy a small supermarket where people walk in and pick up whatever they need. It is not like a corner shop, but he wants to buy it. It is a desire. Afterwards, he wants to buy a bigger place. He is an enterprising person. He doesn't get stuck. He keeps growing. That is a trick of survival. You have to keep growing. That is how you can survive in the market. So that is what he does. It is all natural.

Suppose somebody owns a corporation and wants to own another corporation, is it greed? No, it is desire. It is not even ambition. One corporation is not enough. In fact, the corporation owners really do not know where the corporation is. A person buys a new corporation and sells it piecemeal and makes some money. This is what they have been doing in America. Just like this, piecemeal, a person sells and makes money. All the big people are making money that way. They buy a corporation and then sell it piecemeal. And the people who buy it also sell it afterwards. Both the buyer and the seller make money. This goes on. Nothing new is produced. When one starts a company, one has an idea to sell it. It is called a startup company. One starts a company with an idea to sell. It is an entirely different approach. One builds up to a level (there are all the shares, options, and money) and then one sells, and one makes money. A lot of Indians earn money this way. I am not saying they shouldn't. I am saying they should, they should make use of the system. They should go by the system whatever they can do. But what I say is the commitment is elsewhere. The joy of building up something and seeing it through its growth doesn't seem to be the motivating force. Therefore, what is greed? One corporation? The one who is the CEO of this corporation wants to buy another corporation. That is not greed; it is desire. Whether one wants to have one more corner shop or one more corporation, it is the same. There is no difference between the two. If one is legitimate, the other is equally legitimate. But what is greed? If one transgresses the norms of *dharma* and of fairness in order to get that corporation that is called greed. Any system cannot work on its own.

Human beings have knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. It is God given knowledge. There is *īśvarāin* this. The whole humanity has to recognize that values are universal. It is not that believers have one set of values and nonbelievers have another set of values. If that were so that would mean you could cheat; you need not be objective; you need not be transparent. So in order to accomplish your ambitions, in order to promote your religion, your God, you can promote or pretend yourself to be an altruistic person interested in the welfare of others. But the motive is to bring them to the flock. You can go to the internet and see what is under the Vatican research. There is kind of a message or advice to the Indian bishops. They say that the *ṛṣis* of the Upaniṣads, of the *Vedas*, are very sincere people and they pray to God asking God to bless them and to lead them from untruth to truth. *Asato mā sad gamaya . MāĀ* means *mām*. From untruth (unreal) please help us reach the truth (the real), lead us to truth from darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge). *Tamaso mā joytirgamaya . Mrtyormā amrtam gamaya*. From the hands of death (any sense of limitation), lead us to freedom from time, freedom from death. This is a mantra in the *Brhadāraṇyaka* upaniṣad. The advice to the bishops quotes this mantra. It says that the *Vedic ṛṣis* did not know what was truth, what was right, and what was freedom from death, immortality, they didn't know; therefore, they are afraid. As an answer to the prayer came Jesus. Look at that. Deception! The person who quotes that knows very well that we have a definition of *satyam*, which they cannot stand. They cannot argue against it for one minute. "That which is not subject to negation is *satyam*." How are you going to negate it? "That which is not subject to negation in all the three periods of time (*abādhitam satyam trikale*), and that *satyam* you are (*tat tvam asi*)." And they say we don't know. Not only do we know but we teach. We are not mystic people. Like

math, we teach. It is an equation. We teach that you are that *satyam*. We have a live teaching tradition which is why we have survived; whereas, other cultures have been wiped out. We have survived because of our teaching tradition. They can abuse and use means like this because, according to them, the end is good. That is because of double standards.

Values are universal. Recently the Vatican and others have signed a document accepting universal values and mutual respect. How much they have committed themselves in order to sign that document I do not know, but they have signed it. We are all witnesses. I have signed it also. Mutual respect means you respect me as I am, and I respect you as you are. I don't try to change you overtly, covertly. I don't want to change you; I enjoy you as you are. You enjoy me as I am. It is a loss to lose a colorful person like me. So you have mutual respect and universal values.

We celebrate different types of New Years. Tamilnadu has its own New Year. In the Zodiac, when the Sun enters into Aries on the fourteenth of April that is the New Year. It is very definite. Here we have January first, which we also celebrate. We don't have any problem with all of this. We want them to celebrate our *Deepāvali* also. They should celebrate so that we can all live in harmony. But for that they need to know that God is bigger than our mind.

Did I tell you about the missionary who went to India to do some missionary work? On the way he wanted to take pictures so that he could produce a book on old cathedrals with all their stained glass windows and their chandeliers. It would be a wonderful book. There are lots of cathedrals in Southeast Asia. So he went to Peking and other places. In the Peking cathedral, he was taking pictures when he saw in the corner one huge golden telephone. He asked the priest, "Is it a real telephone?" The priest said, "Yes, it is a real telephone to God, a hot line. You can talk to God." "Really!? Can I talk to him now?" "You can talk to him for ten thousand dollars." He couldn't afford ten thousand dollars. He left and went to Indonesia where there again in one of the cathedrals he saw this golden telephone costing ten thousand dollars. Every church he went a golden telephone was there, and to place a call to God it was always ten thousand dollars. He couldn't talk to God for want of money. Then he came to India, Chennai. He told the taxi driver, "Take me around before you take me to St. Thomas church." He took him to Mylapore temple. He saw the temple and said, "What is this?" "It is a Hindu temple." "It's a Hindu temple!?" "Yes, it's a Hindu temple." This missionary was there to save the souls of Hindus because he thought these Hindus were godless people, but they have such huge temples. They must have some concept of God. Then he went inside with his camera to take pictures. There also he saw this telephone. That was a shock. Hindus can also talk to God!? He thought that Hindus couldn't talk to God. He asked the person standing there, "Is this a telephone?" "Yes, sir, you can talk to God." "What will be the cost?" "One rupee, sir." "One rupee? Those people said ten thousand dollars." "Sir, that is a long distance call; this is a local call."

People have to learn that God is not small. He is free. It is our mind that is small. According to us, all that is here is God. Even your false perceptions are because of

the order that is here, the order of knowledge; and if you don't fulfill the criteria to gain knowledge, then in its place there will be wrong thinking. That is all within the order of *īśvarā*. There is no wrong perception without *īśvarā*, and that you can correct those perceptions is a blessing that you have. That you can commit an error is a possibility, and that you can correct that error is also a possibility, a blessing; and we invoke that blessing on this day when we again begin. Perhaps we can understand that the values are universal and that they are common for all and that they are another manifestation of *īśvarā*. Therefore, there are no double standards.

We invoke the grace of *īśvarā* on this day in order for people to see that for God's sake one cannot go against God because *dharma* itself is another manifestation, a critical manifestation, of God for human beings. So you cannot say I am doing this for God's sake. The end is God; *Dharma* is God. If you want to make somebody's life holy, make that person recognize that *dharma* is holy because it is a manifestation of *īśvarā*. So you not only make your life holy but you make another person's life holy if you can make that person see that the values are a manifestation of *īśvarā*. We don't create values. They are there. We pick them up in terms of knowledge. It is centered on the urge to live. *ahimsā* is our own urge to survive. As a human being, I recognize that attempt to survive on the part of every living being, including a mushroom. Every one of them wants to survive, and as a human being I know that. Animals do not know that, but they want to survive. If a cow finds that it is in danger, it will attack; and if somebody that it was afraid of dies, it is not going to have any guilt or regret. It just goes away. Nor can you take it to court, even in this country; but the owner of the cow, of course, will be taken to court, and there will be a jury trial. This is the truth about a human being. You know that you want to survive, and you know that everybody else wants to survive. With that knowledge is born a universal value. A universal value is inborn.

There are many ways of harming or of hurting another person. That is *himsā*. If you deceive a person, that is harming that person. How can you deceive? When you want to start a school, you should simply say, "I am starting a school," and there should be nothing more than educating the children, period. If you are doing it for a profit, please say that. If you are doing it to bring people to your religion, then please say that. Then the Hindu parents have the privilege of choosing you. Tell that; otherwise, don't start a school. Why should you start a school? This is a very important thing on this day. We recognize that values are universal and that values are the same whether a Muslim, a Hindu, or a Christian. Even if one doesn't follow any religion, values are the same; and values are *īśvarā*, one critical manifestation of *īśvarā*. This is the message that should go to everybody. This is also the message that should rule our lives, and we should help others understand this. Then it is easy. Any system will work, even autocracy will work. If that autocrat is automatically *dharmic*, then there will be no problem. It will work. *Dharma* should rule us, and we should help others recognize that. If everyone makes one or two other people recognize that, then it will be a great contribution for the well being of humanity.

I wish you all a happy New Year.