

Distinguished Fellow Participants, Esteemed Audience, Namaskar, I wish you all a very peaceful morning!

Thanks for your kind introduction. I am Secretary General of BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. It is a 27 years old regional organization, with its focus on Bay of Bengal, and it brings together 5 countries from South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and 2 from South East Asia: Myanmar and Thailand.

It is my privilege to share my thoughts with you on the occasion of the United Consciousness International Week of Peace, a week that calls us to reflect deeply on interconnectedness of peace, sustainable Development and our shared responsibility as global citizens. Today's discourse is a testament to our shared commitment to fostering, globally, the culture of peace through uniting our consciousness, anchored on the well-being of our planet and people.

I want to commend our Chief Guest, Dr. Vinay Shasrabuddhe, with whom I share a long and close friendship, on his enlightening discourse. I am grateful to Dr. Vikrant Singh Tomar, the Global convenor of United Consciousness, and a valued and close friend, for inviting me to participate. In his opening remarks he has set the backdrop for today's discourse, underlining the importance of individual action.

As we explore together the pathways for realizing peace and sustainable development through united consciousness, I would like to focus on the relevance of the concept of identity in realizing the goal of peace through united consciousness. Identity studies have shown that our self sense of identity is not merely a self realization of who we are; it is deeply rooted in our affiliations, our nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other social constructs. Our sense of belonging to a specific group or groups also significantly influences how we interact with others, both within and outside our groups.

In a world where individuals and groups have to navigate an increasingly interconnected global landscape for coexistence, our multiple and often conflicting identities present us with the challenge as well as opportunity to underline our shared identity i.e. our shared human identity. This will be our first step towards uniting our consciousness, aimed at creating the culture of non-violence, harmony and peace.

In today's polarized and divided world, we need to emphasize, more than ever, our shared human identity, in order to promote sustainable peace and development. An inclusive approach to identity, one that embraces identification with all fellow human beings, rather all living beings, is essential. When we see ourselves as a part of the larger human family, in line with the age-old paradigm of "Vasudeva Kutumbakum," India's civilizational message, we are likely to act in the ways that promote the welfare of the entire humanity, coexisting and thriving together.

Similarly, we should recognize and accept the diversity of identities within our societies and nations, which would allow us to move beyond our biases and prejudices, fostering a culture of not only mutual tolerance but also mutual understanding, respect and acceptance of those with whom we do not share our identities; this, in turn, will foster the culture of non-violence, peace and harmony. This will be another important step towards uniting our consciousness for peace and harmony.

For BIMSTEC, this means nurturing a regional identity that celebrates the diversity of our member States, while uniting us in our pursuit of sustainable development, peace and security.

As a regional organization, BIMSTEC is focused on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advancing security and sustainable development across Bay of Bengal region. Through collaborative efforts in promoting energy transition, disaster management, environmental protection and climate action, BIMSTEC is committed to enhancing the resilience and capabilities of its member States to deal with the challenges of sustainable development.

As we commemorate the United Consciousness International Week of Peace, let us reaffirm our commitment to building a world where peace and sustainability are not just aspirations but tangible realities. By embracing a broader, more inclusive sense of identity, we can transcend the divisions that have led to conflicts and work together to create a just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable world. BIMSTEC's commitment to promoting security and sustainable development is a testament to what we can accomplish together as a community of nations, united by a common vision for the future.

In conclusion, I would like to urge you all to continue to build on our endeavours towards promoting peace and sustainable development, guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for the people and the planet. Together, as nations, communities and citizens, we have the power to build a sustainable, peaceful, inclusive, equitable and prosperous future. Let us reiterate our faith in Vasudeva Kutumbakum and our commitment to the well-being of the entire humanity.

Let me conclude by a Vedic mantra which contains this message:

“Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah
Sarve Santu Niraamayaah
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu
Maa Kashchit Dukha Bhaag Bhavet
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih”