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YOU CANNOT SHAKE HANDS WITH A
CLENCHED FIST

The world was shattered, broken and savaged. Suffering from countless casualties, injuries, damaged lives and livelihood, it decided to rebuild itself after World War I. Warring nations decided to create League of Nations as a common platform to bridge its differences.

However, the selfish, inward looking and an ambitious scramble for colonies prevented Europe and USA to come together. The result was another horrifying and even more world shaking World War II.

The above example shows how one cannot cooperate while narrowing focusing only on self interest.

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In this essay, we will examine what is meant by 'shaking hands' and 'clenched fist'. Why 'shaking hands' is impossible with a clenched fist? Where and when do we see its manifestations? How do we open our 'fist'?

'Shaking hands' refers to coming together of two or more different interests to collaborate, cooperate and build consensus. It embodies a spirit of togetherness, acknowledgement of others, and aiming to build the best version of the world.

On the other hand, 'clenched fist' suggests an insular attitude. A nature of neither giving nor receiving but rather an all pervasive attacking personality.

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Why shaking hands is impossible with a clenched fist?

When one focusses only on oneself, ultimately everyone starts doing so. It becomes a case of 'each on his own'. No one is ready to accommodate other's legitimate interests resulting in sidelining of common good over personal ambitions.

It's most acute manifestation is presently ongoing arms race. Global goal of peace has taken a backseat over each nation's ideology of 'realpolitik'. Huge build up of nuclear armaments despite devastating Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings is a case in point.

Further, shaking hands require an equal give and take which is not possible by closing our palms. One needs to support, care and understand

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the other party while simultaneously being ready to accept their best practices.

Its best example is provided by our own Constitution. Borrowing from almost every Constitution of the world, it is deeply embedded with Indian ethos. It serves as an inspiration to newly emerging nations aiming to write their fundamental laws.

Further, another interpretation of 'clenched fists' is aiming to attack which ~~is~~ runs counter to ideology of collaboration. Unlike colonial powers in the garb of 'white men's burden' attacked native economies and fulfilled own selfish agenda. Rather than 'shaking hands', they broke the learning hands of masses.

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Where do we see manifestations of collaboration versus insularity?

Socially, for an entire society to move forward, we have to adjust, accommodate and respect all. Diversity must be considered a strength with equality, liberty, fraternity pervading our social fabric.

In the past and even to some extent in the present, divisive caste system, gender inequality, religious persecution, ethnic faultlines and linguistic barriers prevent us from building a secular, socialist, democratic Republic in a true spirit.

Economically, when one thinks only of oneself, it may result in short term profits. But in the long run, if growth becomes exclusive with islands of prosperity in an ocean of poverty, it only breeds violence.

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distrust, suspicion with massive
pauperisation

Global financial crisis of 2008, rising inequality, Chinese debt trap diplomacy are just few of examples. India is taking a lead in inclusive growth of all via its mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' based on Gandhiji's Talisman and vision of Sarvodaya (inclusive growth of all).

Another global concern is widespread environmental degradation and climate change. Historical emitters as like USA, European Union focused only on developing their own economies at the cost of global carbon budget. Even today, they are not opening their fists by providing sustained climate finance to developing countries.

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On the other hand, when we all shook hands together for Montreal Protocol for safeguarding Ozonelayer, the result was nothing less than pure magic. As per experts, Ozone has largely recovered post commitments of gradual phase out of Chloro Fluoro Carbons Administration, perhaps is the most important sector which requires solving complex problem together. One cannot achieve a sustained impact with an 'ivory tower' bureaucracy.

Mr Armstrong Pame built a 100 km road entirely with crowd funding. His approach of community participation comes out as a shining example.

Politically, there are several kinds of states ranging from democracy to outright totalitarianism. When

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regimes refuse to share power with citizens, don't give ample avenues for their participation and refuse to address their grievances. their destruction becomes almost guaranteed.

From Arab Spring protests to recent 'Janatha Asagalaya' (people's struggle) in Sri Lanka, there are numerous examples to show that the only way a nation can progress is by continuous collaboration and power sharing arrangements.

How then do we open our fists?

Nelson Mandela said, "If you want to change the world, start with children". Value education in schools focus on virtues of integrity, selflessness, compassion can guide one to collaborate keeping selfish interests aside.

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Further, one must realise that togetherness is not only a moral but also the only pragmatic solution for today's interconnected world. We are interdependent on each other for everything ranging from farm to fork, ~~to~~ fibres to fashion and health to happiness.

Remembering the examples of global leaders, saints, philosophers like Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhiji who brought together everyone to liberate us from racism and colonialism, also acts as a guiding light.

Nextly, we must create more avenues for people, communities and nations to come together and build a new world. India is leading platforms like International Solar Alliance which is based on joining hands together for our planet.

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After the harrowing World War II, the world came together again to build United Nations. Genuine togetherness has helped in its sustenance and prevention of World War III.

We must remember only by a positive, open and accomodative nature, we can hope to cooperate. Learning to put narrow self interest behind for 'common good' is a long and difficult journey.

The only way out is to constantly keep striving to build a peaceful and prosperous world based on the dictum of 'Vasudhaev Kutumbakam'

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WEALTH IS WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

Britishers created an elite civil service cadre in India to man its prized possessions in the so called 'jewel of the British Crown'. Getting in the service was extremely difficult due to discriminating policies of colonisers.

Subhash Chandra Bose achieved fourth position in the prestigious Indian Civil Services exam. However, he quit it soon to join the Indian freedom struggle. For him, the real wealth was nation's independence and liberation of millions.

The above example shows how wealth was invisible behind an apparent cloak of power and prestige.

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In this essay, we will examine the traditional notion of wealth, how real wealth is invisible, is there a flip side to this invisible wealth? Why realisation of true wealth is important? How do we protect this wealth?

Conventional idea of wealth revolves around money, capital, property. It is measured in terms of income for an individual and as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for a nation. It also takes into account what one inherits as tangible property.

This idea manifests itself as capitalism as an ideology of production and organisation. It believes in continuous reinvestment to generate profit, in turn adding more wealth.

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However, behind this apparent wealth, lies the real catch! This property that we don't see, means different things to different people.

For someone, this wealth is love, support, nurture and care of family and kinship. In the wake of fast and furious globalisation and industrialisation, family acts as a refuge. In a country like India, where there is a decline in joint family, 'jointness' stays.

It is not easy to realise kin as the real wealth, hence invisible. Bheeshma in Mahabharata, gave up his claim to the throne of Hastinapur by vowing celibacy, only for the happiness of his father — his who was his real wealth.

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For others, spirituality and religion is everything. It grants peace, calmness and solace. An opportunity to connect not only with fellow worshippers and God but also with oneself.

Rising sects and cults, religious revivalism especially in developed countries shows the growing realisation of appreciation of spiritual wealth. ISKCON's popularity in USA is a case in point.

Beyond family, religion, others find their invisible wealth in satisfaction from work. It is not the money that one earns but the sheer excitement and joy associated that constitutes true wealth.

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Countless young men and women are today leaving their well paid jobs to join or start their own 'startups'. The craze of creating something of own trumps the whole wealth of the universe. Falguni Nayar started Nykaa at the age of 50, leaving her well settled banking job. It is not just individuals, but an entire nation can redefine the meaning of wealth. For Bhutan, it is not GDP that gauges wealth of its population but its GNP, Cross National Happiness.

Above all, the most ignored, yet most precious wealth is our planet. Forests, land, rivers are only seen as sources of material and money wealth. Perhaps we

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should learn from the so called 'primitive' societies. For them, nature has intrinsic worth of its own. It is source of sustenance, culture, bonding and togetherness.

However, for some invisible wealth acquires a negative connotation. It engenders continuous lust for power, desire to control and breed on superiority complex. For Hitler, wealth was killing millions of Jews for his quest of supremacy.

Why realisation of true wealth is important?

Today, we exploit our true treasures for short term gains of cash. Incessant inequality, climate change, running behind those profits are just few manifestations.

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Realisation of real wealth has potential to bring us happiness and satisfaction. It controls stress, anxiety, depression which are all results of a restless life.

Everyday we hear of students committing suicides in Kota, the hub of coachings. It's skewed socialisation that makes adolescents equate their life's worth with getting a flush job after IITs than with inherent satisfaction of giving one's best and valuing life and family.

Further, this realisation can take us away from unscrupulous practices that the whole society is engaged in. Corruption, fraud, scams, even murder are all results of flawed understanding of wealth.

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Once we realise our actual wealth, we can adequately and optimally devote our time to our loved ones. Marital breakdowns, rebellion of children, delinquency are results of neglect towards our kin and kith.

How do we protect our wealth?

We must develop a sense of non attachment and a realisation of perishable nature of property, cash. Buddha's four fold path is a guiding light to move from 'Dukkha' (sorrow) to 'Nirvana' (liberation)

Further, it is equally important to make this invisible wealth, visible. Love, care, environment, have all worth of their own and are not mere stepping stones to get capital.

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Today, the world is coming together to raise issues of mental health, capabilities, human capital which give us freedom to make choices in life. Acknowledging rights of women, LGBT, specially abled is helping us to build social capital which is wealth in the true sense.

We must follow Swami Vivekananda's guideline of a healthy mix of Western materialism with Indian spirituality to value what's truly valuable.

Long ago, Bose had the courage to fight for nation and build its wealth. Today, we must constantly strive to protect peace, love,

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happiness, patriotism which though
invisible, is the true treasure.

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