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ISLAM
INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS
YOUTH

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A week ago, I addressed a meeting in protest against the compartmentalisation and rationalisation of culture; and today I speak to you, who have vindicated my arguments of that day. Culture must be a medium of communication and the vehicle for the promotion of the message of understanding, tolerance and guidance. No man or group can survive indefinitely in a vacuum or reach perfection, without having ~~tested~~^{experienced} the conflicts of decision, conscience of guilt, or the turmoil of adaptation. It is easy to swim in the forceful current of conformity and compliance, but it is more fulfilling to have questioned and reached peace with oneself, accord with society and harmony with the environment. Many of us mistakenly believe that culture is strict and unchangeable - any adjustment, addition or deletion is sacrilegious. This is not so. Whilst it is valid that for culture to be progressive and achieve its intended results, it would be disastrous to change the basic moral values of behaviour and conduct, because this gives strength to the stability and security ~~of~~^{to} society. It is ^{also} an established fact that culture is additive and progressive - when people of different customs, traditions and standards live or meet in close association, they are able to influence each other and over a period of time a distinctive pattern of existence is evolved. History has shown the influence of such dominant cultural periods - e.g. Roman, Greek, AND many others. However, it must not be construed that the cultural norms of domination are necessarily the superior values, because this superiority only manifests itself through some aspect of ^{dominant} its influence - military might, scientific superiority etc. Thus even the ~~subjugated~~ or suppressed groups have virtues that are superior than the dominant group. This is one reason that despite its great material, scientific and technological advance, western culture has not adequately satisfied the needs of its society. The seeds of destruction lie in its pre-occupation with the material worth of human existence. Today we find western youth turning to the east; seeking for escape from ~~from~~ its own soulless involvement. Whilst in the east we find a struggle where it is finding it equally difficult to reach a balance with the tremendous progress of material advancement of the west. This constant search for balance create points of misunderstanding, suspicion and often conflicts. We must bear in mind that cultural development can only be beneficial if we accept that it is not restrictive and demands improvement for its fullest potential. It is only ~~unchangeable~~^{uncompromising} in these aspects of life that govern harmony between man and man, man and his environment; and man and himself. These are necessary principles that determine the orderly growth of society and regulates this advancement for the total good of society - this is self-evident in the teachings of most of the great religions and philosophies of life. When society fails in this direction then we have wars, revolutions,

five, to build bridges of contact, encourage sharing of ideas and arrange meetings between people - such as this gathering to-night. Needless to stress that good understanding and healthy relationship must flow from such get-togethers and exchange of ideas. This assembly epitomises the human need for dialogue; especially between people of different cultural backgrounds; and so make our positive contribution, towards the ideal social order, designed by God. As people we may differ in our approaches and attitudes but as people we have to seek the path that will translate into reality, what religion have preached, since the dawn of time. Many are afraid to communicate, for fear of conversion, but society will be that richer for having conversed. Man must be able to set out from the past, those values that encourage security and stability; and discard that which is harmful and stultifies improvements. Because what we consider necessary to-day will not necessarily be adequate, a hundred years hence. So a continual process of assessment is necessary. When Indians came to South Africa they brought certain cultural characteristics which over the years has undergone tremendous transformation. Much of this change has been forced onto us through different environmental conditions: political inhibitions, industrial development and contact with different racial groups. Thus our Indian culture is being replaced by a South-African culture. No amount of opposition or resistance to adaptation can alter this fact. Provided we maintain the basic moral values of ethics and code of conduct, this evolutionary process is definitely needed, if we are to live in peace and interdependence with all the South-African groups; and also for the proper and fruitful utilisation of the advantages for humanity at large. Balance is of prime requisite for success; and it is to this end we must work. Communion leads to the power to understand and the ability to appreciate differences in philosophy; and from this type of consultation and mutation of ideas can arise a first order, far better than the existing climate of uncertainty, and rumblings of discontent that clouds the world. There can be unity in diversity, just as there is harmony in diversity in nature. Reason and indulgence can only result from knowledge and participation; ignorance and prejudice will be accentuated through isolation and separation. This is a lesson which multiracial South-Africa must take to heart, if it is to avoid the pain and agony of conflicts and racial polarisation. Finally, a few words on poetry - poetry has the quality to excite, to elevate, to confuse, to understand, to love, to hate - all the emotions and characteristics that form part of the living force of man. It can be naive and simple; or philosophical and difficult. But in every aspect, it touches the higher sense of all of us. It expresses the spiritual values

Gripped as we are, under a system that encourages survival through separation and fear. We have cultural moral values and spiritual responsibilities that cries out against the injustices that man perpetrates against his fellow men. If, in the poetry that you present to-day and the pearls of wisdom that you speak, can but re-emphasise the virtues which materialism has destroyed in our soul; then you will have served a most useful service to us. In these dark days of uncertainty and indifference there is need for the voice of justice to proclaim its right over the selfish motives of men. Thus we hope to learn much, value even more and practice charity, ^{humility} ~~humility~~ and service, which ^{of these} ~~of these~~ no doubt you will stir in the hearts that are present here.

Thank You,

R.A.M.SALAJEE.