

## The World is Over-Armed, and Peace is Under-Funded

By Sonali Gupta

When Gandhi was asked "How do you know if the next act that you are about to do is the right one or the wrong one?", he responded saying "Consider the face of the poorest most vulnerable human being that you ever chanced upon, and ask yourself if the act that you contemplate will be of benefit to that person. And if it will be, it's the right thing to do, and if not, rethink it." To me, the poorest, most vulnerable human being is not a person, but it is the community, the culture, and the world itself.

Since about one-fourth of the world's population lives under the poverty line, I would frame the similar question to the proud leaders of superpowers about their next act in the pursuit of maintaining or winning the hopeless crown of regional superpower. What are they trying to achieve - destruction of their brethren or the creation of peaceful, happy, and thriving human beings around them? Is their next act an investment of billions of dollars in stockpiling arms or a research to create more lethal weapons or donating a small fraction of that amount towards world peace? Definitely, the answer would be all of the above. I wonder why these investments can't be reversed.

The war clouds looming over the world will not contribute to the happiness of the people; they will only make the arms' producers richer. The investment of resources on the instruments of destruction can be diverted to protect mothers, save infants, educate the youth, and bring happiness to the globe instead of destruction and misery.

Humankind is facing deadly diseases such as AIDS, Ebola, cancer and a host of new diseases that may not have a name yet. They require years of research and billions of dollars to control. This enormous effort will require a huge proportion of world resources, much of which is being spent on military and the invention of new weapons.

Why are puppet governments in poor countries given arms to suppress oppression? What can't we arrange for basic necessities so that the whole country comes above the poverty level? Why is the solution of every conflict war? Fighting fire with fire is never the solution to anything.

The Cold War has been over for more than two decades, yet even the most developed countries are on an insane path to increase military budgets year after year, as if we are living in an era of an unending conflict. I am baffled that we are in the 21st century and we are still talking about war. Why can't investments be made so that the world, that is separated by only six degrees of separation, can live

happily?

Even in a developed country like ours where innocent children and teachers have been massacred in deadly tragedies in schools, the government has not been able to implement gun control.

One day, I hope to see a race to fund peace and the well being of humanity.