Spirituality Alone Can Save Our Planet
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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

# Spirituality Alone Can Save Our Planet

The message of Sringeri Math to the UN Summit of World Religious and Spiritual Leaders

Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Bharati Tirtha

In many parts of the world we witness terrible wars, terrorist activity and many other atrocities. It causes great anguish to see many people resorting to violence and causing injury to life. It is a great sin to hurt others in any way. It does not matter if we cannot do good to others. But we should never do bad to others. The greatest service one can do to humanity is to not hurt anyone by thought, word or action. This is ahimsa, non-hurtfulness. Greed is at the bottom of all the problems of the world. Greed for wealth, greed for power and, worst of all, greed for name and fame. It is natural for us to want to lead a happy, comfortable life. However, we should set a limit to our wants. Because of the greed of a few individuals, millions of innocent people have been massacred. Contentment is most essential for men. Without it, one cannot be happy even if one gets everything that is in the world. All of us should be content with what God has given. Only then can we live in peace and let others live in peace.

The task before us religious leaders is daunting. We have to educate the people of the need for spirituality and restore their faith in the scriptures and God. We have to teach them what is good and what is bad. Humanity has moved away from God and spirituality, hence so many violent and criminal activities are taking place. Spirituality is the need of the hour. By our concentrated efforts we must restore spirituality to its rightful place.

In many parts of the globe we find terrible conflicts taking place due to religious intolerance. All religions worship the same God. All religions have the same goal, and that is God Realization. Just as you can reach the ocean by travelling on any river, you can reach God by following any religion. In God's creation nothing happens without a divine purpose. If only one religion were enough for all, God would not have created so many diverse religions.

No two persons are alike. Each one of us is at a different stage of evolution. As for different people, different religions are appropriate. This is why God has created so many different religions, so that each one of us can follow that religion which is most suitable for us. Each religion is good only for some and not for others. If a doctor prescribed the same medicine for all patients, he would cause terrible suffering. Similarly, if we preach a single religion to all and try to convert everyone to our religion, we will do incalculable spiritual damage to billions of people. We should therefore respect all religions of the world equally.

We have no right to call ourselves religious leaders if we

cannot eradicate fanaticism and hatred from the minds of our followers. Let us work together to infuse love and tolerance in the hearts of all and remove religious intolerance and hatred.

Poverty is another reason why theft, robbery, arson, murder and other crimes occur. Poverty is a man-made problem. God has created plenty for everyone. Look at the animals. Do you see any poor animals? Do you see any animals dying without food? Hardly ever. But we see billions of people living in inhuman conditions on streets and dirty slums. Why? Because a few million people have cornered the wealth that belongs to all. So the others suffer.

If each affluent person simply helps one poor person to stand on his feet, then we will be able to completely eradicate poverty very quickly. Little drops make the ocean. If all rich people help a bit, then poverty can be eliminated soon. It is meaningless to live only for ourselves. If we live only for our own happiness, we would be worse than animals. A tree does not eat its delicious fruit. It gives it to others. A cow does not drink its milk. It gives it to others. True happiness lies in helping and serving others.

The value of social service is recognized by all religions. All of us here are doing excellent work by running schools, hospitals, orphanages and old-age homes for the poor and the needy. But much more remains to be done. Billions are materially poor and are crying for our help. Billions are spiritually poor and are in dire need of our assistance. We must remove both types of poverty. Only then can Mother Earth turn into a heaven of peace and happiness. The violence, tension and

unrest that we behold in the world around us is actually not the real problem that plagues us. The real problem lies within us. Our minds have become heavily polluted. Worldly desires and attachments damage our minds day and night. Due to ignorance, we have lost the ability to distinguish between good and evil. We have lost touch with the God who dwells inside us. This inner turmoil is the root cause of all the evils of this world.

Only through inner transformation of each and every human being can we transform Earth into a veritable heaven on a permanent basis. All other measures can only give short-term results. Spirituality alone can save our beautiful planet. There is absolutely no alternate to spirituality. The darkness of worldliness has enveloped Mother Earth. It is most appropriate that at this critical juncture, the U.N.O. is hosting this historic Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. Religion and spirituality alone can bring solace to this world. Very soon the dark night of senseless materialism shall go away. The golden radiant sun of spirituality is about to rise and shower the rays of knowledge, love, peace and happiness on our beloved Earth.

Shankaracharya Sri Bharati Tirtha, 50, head of the Sringeri Math in Karnataka, is the 36th descendent in an unbroken line of spiritual preceptors beginning with the great Adi Sankaracharya. This message was read in UN General Assembly Chambers by Sri Gowrishankar, administrator of Sringeri Math, on August 29, 2000.