

[Awaken Moral Force, See Unity in God](#)

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Awaken Moral Force, See Unity in God

Forget the women-are-weak idea, this Hindu nun advises, and stop grasping for materialism

Sri-La-Sri Santoshi Ma Ji

I want to do something for society. Just because I am a woman, I do not think this is an impediment in my path. Twelve years back, during the last Kumbha Mela, Niranjani Akhara appointed me as one of their Maha Mandaleshwars [senior abbots]. Though I was not expecting this, these people pushed me forward and honored me with this title. This decision was made by the head of this monastic order in consultations with other Maha Mandaleshwars.

Whenever I determined to do something with a pure heart and went ahead, I got willing support from all men and women of our society. I have never expected anything in return from society. And whenever I initiated any work, I got excellent cooperation from the people. That's why I do not think that being a woman has ever been a limitation for me. I have no experience to substantiate the idea that I could do better if I were a man. To my other sisters also I will like to suggest that not much importance be given to the idea that if one is a

woman, therefore she is weak. If our soul power and mind power are firm, then everybody cooperates, and everybody looks alike. It is of no significance whether an individual is a man or a woman. All are parts of God. All have the same soul and same prana, life force. The same mind is there, and the same five senses are there.

India today: India's youth are forgetting our moral and cultural values. They are going into modernity. But they must first stop at the point where they are in life. From there, they must look back and identify and understand their ancient heritage and culture. Once this is done, they can move forward again and learn to combine the modern outlook with the ancient way of thinking.

We are all watching the situation in India. Due to the fall in moral standards, there has been a fall in people's characters. To build a society with people of high character we must provide moral education. There is a high level of corruption and exploitation of women in society, also because of India's race for materialism. Man is lost in material comforts and means. But our country has never given importance to bhoga [materialism]. India's innate uniqueness is that even when one's feet are in bad shape, when one has no proper clothes and a poor material standard of living, still the happiness and contentment of the soul are there. Lack of material things was never felt by our people as something significant. Our people were always happy at heart, because they had wealth of character and moral force. We cannot be safe until our people revert back to our ancient heritage and high moral values.

On men and women staying in ashrams: In the state of param siddhi [full realization], it does not matter. But until that stage of God Realization is reached, then for a lady sadhak [spiritual practitioner], the company of a male is banned. For a male sadhak, the company of a female is not permissible. It will be more appropriate if both live separately, because the heart is not trustworthy. Our scriptures say that when a girl is grown up, she should not stay alone, even with her father. Though father is her creator, still even his company, unchaperoned, has not been advised. So, the more the gap, the better it is. Both have to practice restraint of senses.

On abortion: According to our scriptures jiva hatya [killing of the soul] is a maha paap [a great sin]. It has been said that killing of the child in the womb is a bigger sin than Brahm hatya [murder of a priest]. Today's man is deeply influenced by Western thought. So immersed is he in the blind race for materialism that he has no time to study his ancient scriptures, understand them and follow their teachings. One result is that this deplorable crime of abortion is done in such an easy and simple manner. Instead of indulging in this great sin, it is better if the person leads a regulated life in our system. We do not approve.

On the harmony of mankind: At the Kumbha Mela we have a glimpse of complete Bharatiyata [Indianness]. People have come from all four directions--East, West, North and South--people whose languages, eating habits and lifestyles are different. We have a glimpse of unity in diversity in this great festival. From outside we all look different, but in fact we are all one. This spirit of oneness should be imbibed by all of us. This is my message for all those who have gathered here

from all over India and all over the world. Pilgrims should also make an attempt to discover their own selves. They must know who they are. They must not forget their identity. Our eternal identity is one, and that is that we are children of one God. He is the One who has created this entire creation. People must remember Him.

A key principle of Indian culture is vasudhaiva kutumbakam [the whole world is one family]. This thought has not been limited to any caste, community or section of society. It has been for the entire universe. The entire cosmos is just the reflection of God. Nothing is separate from God. So all human beings must recognize this creation of God, this omnipresence of God. They must understand that they are a part of the Almighty and should get liberated from feelings of lack of self confidence and weakness. All must become knowledgeable. All should be blissful. All should be healthy. Anarchy, violence and feelings of ill will towards others should be removed from this earth. Then only will people be truly happy.

Niranjan Peethadhishwar Santan Ratna Anat Sri Vibhushit Paravrajacharya Tapomurti Sri Sri 1008 Maha Mandaleshwar Santoshi Mata Ji was interviewed by Hinduism Today at the 1998 Kumbha Mela. A senior female abbot of the Niranjani Akhara monastic order, she is based at a large ashram in Haridwar where she lives with about twenty sadhvis (nuns) of her order while overseeing the spiritual life of hundreds of other sadhvis and thousands of devotees the world over.