



May Your Hearts Blossom

(Address at the Parliament of World's Religions,
Chicago 1993)*

Salutations to all of you who have come here today, you who are the embodiments of Supreme Love. Words cannot express the gratitude that Amma feels towards the sincere organizers who have taken the time and energy to bring this highly beneficial conference into being. Though living in the midst of today's highly materialistic world, they have dedicated themselves to the organization of this conference which is based on the uplifting and sustaining values of religion. Through their hard work and prodigious efforts, they have set an example of selfless service by which the world can potentially profit. Before such big heartedness Mother has nothing else to say, and humbly bows down.

It is not Amma's way to deliver speeches. Still, Amma will say a few words about things that She has experienced in Her own life. Amma asks your forgiveness, if there should happen to be any mistakes in what She says.

Religion is the faith which eventually culminates in the knowledge and experience that we ourselves are the all-powerful God.

To lead man to the Realization of his own true state of Godhood, to transform man into God, that is the goal and purpose of Sanatana Dharma. India's "Eternal Religion", popularly known as Hinduism. The great scriptural dictum, "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman, Absolute Consciousness), indicates the subjective experience of the non-dual self.

"I am a Hindu", "I am a Christian", "I am a Muslim", "I am an engineer", "I am a doctor", this is how everyone speaks. That nameless, formless, all-pervasive principle common in all as the "I" is the Atman (the Self), the Brahman (the Absolute), or Ishwara.

(God). To deny the existence of God is to deny one's own existence. It is like saying with one's tongue, "I have no tongue". God is present in each one of us, in all being, in everything. God is like space. Space is everywhere. The entire creation exists in space. Suppose we build a house. Space exists before the house is built. And after its completion, the house exists in that same space. Even after the house is demolished,

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the same space remains. God too is like this. He exists, unchanging, in the past, present and future. You may wonder, "If God is all pervasive, then why am I not seeing Him?". Electricity cannot be seen, but put your finger in a live socket and you will experience it. In a like manner, God must be experienced to be known. Even though God is everywhere, our limited vision prevents us from seeing Him. The attitude of "I" and "mine" has blocked our vision and bound our minds.

Sanatana Dharma does not ask us to believe in a God seated on a golden throne, high above the clouds. God is not a limited being. God is all-pervasive, omnipotent and omniscient. God is the Principle of Life and the Light of Consciousness within us. God, who is pure Bliss, is verily our own self. Mind alone is the cause of man's bondage and freedom. Religion is that principle which releases the mind from diverse thoughts and emotions, and from its dependence on external objects. It helps the mind to reach the state of eternal freedom or independence. It is the attitude of "I" and "mine" that makes us dependent. Practicing the principles of true religion is the path that will lead to the elimination of the ego.

What is it that human being crave? They crave peace and happiness, don't they? People run here and there, seeking peace of mind. But peace and tranquility have disappeared from the face of the earth. We are very enthusiastic in embracing the outside world and all its physical comforts. Meanwhile, the internal realm has become a living hell. There are more than enough comforts in the modern world. There is no scarcity of air-conditioned cars or air-conditioned room. These comforts

are available everywhere on earth. But what a pity it is that the people who live in them still have no peace of mind. Many of them cannot sleep without the aid of pills. The restlessness and tensions of the mind have become so uncontrollable, so unbearable, that a number of people commit suicide even while living in the so-called lap of luxury, in these air-conditioned rooms. Those who show such a great interest in air-conditioning their cars and houses, should make some effort to air-condition their own minds. This is what is needed in order to attain real happiness.

Contentment and happiness depend solely on the mind, not on external objects or circumstances. Happiness really depends on self-control. Both heaven and hell are created by the mind. Even the highest heaven turns into hell if the mind is agitated; whereas, even the lowest hell will become a blissful abode for a man endowed with a peaceful and relaxed mind. Religion is the science which teaches us how to live a happy and blissful life while still living in this diverse world.

Faith and Alertness Are Needed in Today's World

This is a scientific age. Intellect and reason have reached great heights. But surprisingly, most people are deeply attached to these things and to the small comforts they offer. If they are damaged or destroyed, we hastily engage ourselves in repairing them. Yet we do not realize that it is actually we who are most urgently in need of repair. For we have lost faith in ourselves. We have lost faith in the heart and its tender feelings. A man who shows great patience in repairing his computer and TV, shows no patience

in returning the notes that are off-key in his own life. The mind can be compared to a pendulum. Like the incessant movement of a clock's pendulum, the pendulum of the mind swings intermittently from happiness to sorrow and back again. When the pendulum of the clock moves to one extreme, it is only gaining enough momentum to swing back to the other end. Likewise, when the pendulum of the mind moves towards happiness, it is only gaining the momentum to reach the other pole of sorrow. Real peace and happiness can be experienced only when the pendulum of the mind stops swinging altogether. From that stillness ensues real peace and bliss. This state of perfect stillness is verily the essence of life. He can smilingly welcome both the negative and positive experiences of life with equal vision. But for those who do not have this awareness, life becomes an unbearable burden, filled with sorrow. True religious principles give us the strength and the courage to confront the difficult situations of life with a calm and balanced mind. Religion paves the way towards embracing this life with even greater joy, zest and confidence. For one who has truly imbibed the principles of religion, life is like the joyful play of an innocent child.

Today's world tries to evaluate religious principles by observing the actions of certain individuals, performed in the name of religion. They then judge the whole of religion based on the misdeeds of a few. This is like discarding the baby with the bath water. It is like condemning all medicines and doctors for the wrong prescription given by a single doctor. Individuals are sometimes good and sometime bad. They have weaknesses and may lack discrimination. It is wrong to impose

the faults and weaknesses that you see in them on the principles of religion. It is the practice of religious principles that fills human life with vitality and energy. Without religion and faith, life on earth would be empty. It is only because people have imbibed at least a little bit of religion and spirituality that there is still some beauty, vitality and harmony in our lives.

The Declining State of Religion Today

Religion contains the essential principles of life by which egotism and narrow mindedness are eliminated. But sometimes, due to lack of proper understanding, the same religion becomes a breeding ground for these negative qualities. As a result of egotism, narrow mindedness and competition, quarrels arise. They arise because people have failed to imbibe the essence of religion. There are thousands who are ready to die for their religion, but none who are willing to live by its principles. People do not realize that religion is something to be lived. They forget that it has to be applied and practice in our day to day lives. "My religion is the best! My religion is the greatest" says one. "No, it is my religion that's the best and the greatest!" says another. Thus, the clamor continues. Because of this narrow vision and all the envy that exists, the essence and message of religion is lost to the people. This is the pitiful state of religion in the modern age. Owing to this unyielding and arrogantly competitive attitude, people have neither patience nor forbearance, and have lost their capacity to love. When we truly imbibe the spirit of religion, the sorrow and suffering of others becomes our own. Compassion arises and we are able to sympathize with pain and suffering of others. Only through the

experience of oneness with the Self can we feel real compassion and concern.

If we accidentally happen to poke our eye with our own finger, do we punish the finger? No. we simply try to soothe the pain. Why do we not punish the finger? Because both (finger and eye) are part of us, both are ours. We see ourselves in both the eye and the finger. In the same way, we should be able to see ourselves, our own Self, in all beings. If we can do this, we can easily forgive the mistakes of others. To be able to love and forgive others, seeing ourselves in them, seeing their faults as our own faults, that is the true spirit of religion. Religion is the secret of life. It teaches us to love, to serve, to forgive, to endure, and to interact with our brothers and sisters with empathy and compassion. Advaita (non-duality) is a purely subjective experience. But in daily life it may be expressed as love and compassion. This is the great lesson taught by the great saints and sages of India, the exponents of Sanatana Dharma.

The Role of Love and Compassion in Religion

True religion is a language forgotten by modern man. We have forgotten the love, compassion and mutual understanding taught by religion. The basic cause underlying all the problems that exist in the present day world is the lack of love and compassion. All the chaos and confusion that prevail in an individual's life, at the national level and in the world as a whole, exist only because we have failed to practice true religious principles in our day to day lives. Religion should become part and parcel of life. Religion needs to be revived, it needs new life and vitality. Then

only will love and compassion dawn within us. Love and compassion, alone, will wipe out the darkness, bringing light and purity to the world.

When love becomes Divine Love, the heart is filled with compassion. Love is an inner feeling and compassion is its expression. Compassion is expressing your heartfelt concern for someone, for a suffering human being. This is the age of intellect and reason, the age of science. We have forgotten the feelings of the heart. Intellect alone is not sufficient. In order to attain Perfection, in order to reach the fullness of life, one needs to have a heart filled with Love and compassion. To know this is the sole aim of religion and of religious practice.

There is love and Love. You love your family, but you do not love your neighbor. You love your son or daughter, but you do not love all children. You love your religion, but you do not love all religions. You may even dislike those of other faiths. Hence, this is not true Love; it is only limited love. The transformation of this limited love into Divine Love is the goal of spirituality. In the fullness of Love blossoms the beautiful, fragrant flower of compassion. When the obstructions of ego, fear and the feeling of otherness disappear, you cannot help but love. You do not expect any return for your love. You don't care about receiving anything; you just flow. That is the goal of religion. A person who is full of Love and compassion has realized the true principles of religion. To see and feel life in everything, that is Love. When Love fills the heart, one can see life pulsating in and through the entire creation. "Life is Love" – This is the lesson taught by religion.

Restoring the Balance of Nature

True religion tells us that all of creation is a manifestation of God. If this is so, we must have love and concern for nature as well as for our fellow men. The scriptures say, "Isavasyamidam Sarvam": that everything is permeated with God consciousness. The earth, trees, plants and animals are all manifestations of God. We should love them as we love our own Self. Actually, we should love them even more than ourselves, because only with nature's support can human beings exist. Animals, plants, and trees all contribute to the harmony of nature. It is man's duty to protect and preserve them, for they are helpless to defend themselves. If we continue to destroy them, it will do the World great harm.

How much pollution has been caused by the smoke from factories? Mother is not suggesting that we close the factories; She is only saying that part of the profits should be used for devising methods to reduce pollution and to revive and protect the environments. In olden days, rain and sunshine came at the right time and supported the cycle of growth and harvest. There was no need for irrigation because everything was taken care of by nature. Nowadays, we have strayed from the path of dharma (right action). We are not at all concerned about nature, and therefore, nature is reacting. The same cool breeze which once caressed mankind has now turned into a tornado.

We may doubt whether we have the power to restore and lost balance in nature. We may ask, "Are we human beings not too limited?" No, we are not! We have infinite power within us, but we are fast asleep and unaware of our

strength. This power rises up when we awaken within. Religion is life's greatest secret which enables us to awaken this unlimited, but dormant inner power. The Sanatana Dharma proclaims, "O man, you are not a tiny candle, you need not depend on someone else for your light. You are the self-luminous sun". As long as you think you are the body, you are like a small battery whose power is easily drained. But when you know yourself to be the 'Atman', you are connected to the cosmic power supply, which provides you with continuous and inexhaustible strength. When connected to God, the Self, the Source of all power, your energy never diminishes. You are able to tap into your infinite potential. Be aware of your own immense power and strength. You are the cosmic energy, the all-powerful God.

Children Should be Taught Through Example

Amma has heard that many young children in the West carry guns when they go to school. She has been told that they may even shoot someone without any reason at all. Have you ever thought about why it is that young children are tempted to act in such cruel ways? It is because they have never been taught proper conduct. They have never been exposed to true love and compassion. Many boys and girls have come to Amma and said: "Our mother has not given us any love. Our parents have not taught us to behave properly. We have seen our mom and dad fighting with each other, right in front of us. As we witness such quarrels and selfishness, we begin to feel hatred towards the whole world. We become disobedient and selfish". Their parents, from whom they are supposed to learn the first lessons of love and patience, fail to set a proper

example. It is Amma's request that parents should shower love and affection on their children in the early years. The infants should not be left uncared for in their cradles. Their mothers should hold them close and breast-feed them with love and tenderness. Children should be taught religious and moral principles during their formative years. Parents should not fight or express anger and hatred in front of their children. If they do, how is the child to learn patience and love. Children need loving care, but at the same time we should not forget to discipline them. Faith in God should be instilled in them, as well as love for the entire creation. This is possible only through proper religious education.

Our foremost duty and obligation in this world is to help our fellow human beings. God doesn't need anything from us. He is ever full. To think that God needs anything from us is like holding a lighted candle before the sun in order to light its way. God is the one who protects us; He is not the one who needs to be protected by us. A river has no need for water from a stagnant pond. Rather it is the stagnant pond that needs the river's water, in order to become clean and pure. Today, our minds have become filled with impurities, like the stagnant pond. We need the Grace of God to purify and uplift us, so that we can selflessly love and serve the world. To show compassion towards suffering humanity is our obligation to God. Our spiritual quest should begin with selfless service to the world.

Concluding Remarks

When the flower has not yet blossomed, when it is still a bud, its beauty and fragrance are not yet manifest. No one is able to appreciate

or enjoy them. But when the flower blossoms, when it unfolds in bewitching colour and form, when its fragrance wafts through the air, it arouses joy and happiness all around. In the same way, the flowers of our hearts have not yet blossomed. They are still tiny buds. However, if nurtured by faith in God, by love and compassion, and by adherence to the principles of religion, the buds of our hearts are bound to unfold. Revealing their beauty and spreading their fragrance, they become blessings to the world.

Religion is not limited to the words of the scriptures. It is a way of life. Its beauty and charm are expressed in the love and compassion of those who live in accordance with its precepts. Whatever Amma has said until now, is like the script on the label of a medicine bottle. Simply reading the label will not effect a cure. The medicine has to be taken. You cannot taste the sweetness of honey by licking a piece of paper on which the word 'honey' has been written. Likewise, the principles described in the religious texts must be contemplated, meditated upon, and finally realized. Let us all take refuge at the feet of the Supreme Lord and pray that we may attain that state of Perfection.

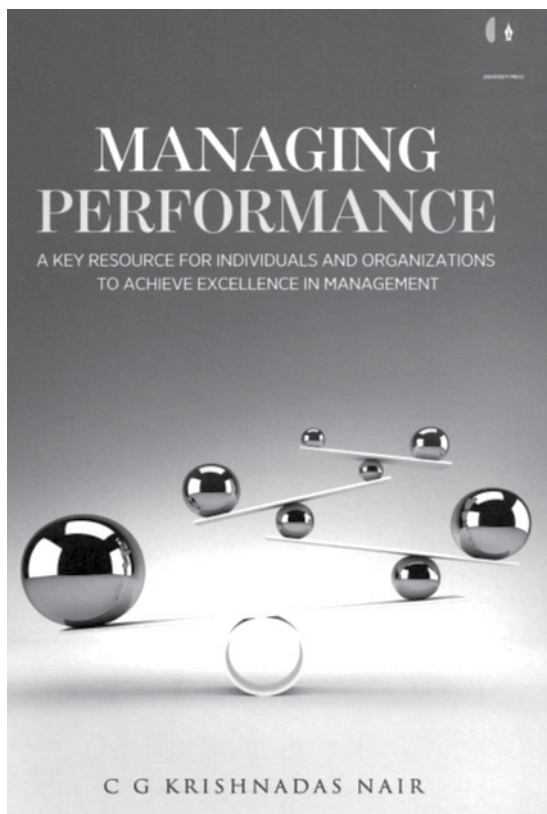
References:

1. Parliament of World Religions, Chicago – Sep 1993
2. 'May Your hearts blossom'- Mata Amritananda Mayi, translated by Swamy Amrita Swarupananda, Amritanandamay Mission Trust Publication.



BOOK REVIEW

QUEST FOR SUCCESS



This book covers actionable techniques and addresses fundamental 'how to dos' that every manager and organisation grapples with. A consummate professional with vast experience in leadership roles in the industry, the author expertly melds his own experiences with case studies and research to design innovative solutions for dilemmas that can hinder growth and performance of people and organisations. The readers would find *Managing Performance* an invaluable handbook and a priceless ally to aid them in their quest for success.

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Reference: "Corporate Governance and Quality Management"- Management Topics, by Dr. C. G. Krishnadas Nair. Harisree Publications (2005) ISBN No. : 81-901862-3-X

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