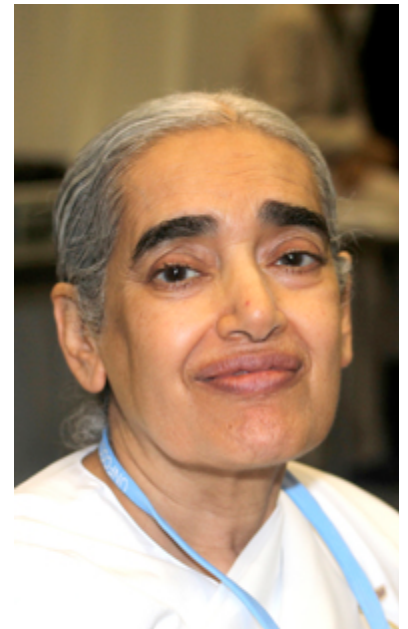


*“Humans have forgotten the sanctity of life and that through consumerism they no longer value their inner being and spirit. The need for awareness, respect and compassion towards the human family, as well as the power of prayer, is paramount.” — Sister Jayanti Kripalani*

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## **ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS INSIGHTS ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Side event organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC)  
for the UN Conference on Climate Change COP18**

**Doha, 7th December 2012**

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION LIE AT THE CORE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS' CONCERNS AND ACTIONS. AT THIS EVENT, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES SHARED ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ECHOING THE SUFFERING OF PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING THREATS TO THEIR LIVELIHOODS.

Could it be that we have forgotten the sanctity of life, overlooking what it is the most important aspect of each human being? That is the inner being, the spiritual being. Within the Brahma Kumaris tradition we understand that yes, the vehicle the body is absolutely vital and important but it's the living being, the soul, the spirit, that is life itself, the life force. In today's world of heightened consumerism and materialism, we have moved away from understanding the life force completely and as a result, lost value for even my own inner being, my own spirit. Equally, there is no respect for other forms of life and also no respect for other human beings. Perhaps this is the basic cause for the problems we face today?

Having understood this root cause, it is fairly easy to rectify it. I say 'easy' because the solution doesn't cost money and doesn't need financial approval from governments. The solution becomes a question of individual personal choice and the decision that "I am going to turn things around by 180 degrees". Simply by the change of consciousness, a change of awareness, and living in the awareness of my own spiritual identity, my relationship to my family, this human family, becomes again one of care and compassion, if we are concerned about not just the citizens of Tuvalu, who are so deeply concerned about preserving their sovereignty, their culture, their language, the beauty of their nation, but also many other societies that are under threat in other parts of the world also.

If there is this awareness of the human family, then surely our compassion and generosity of spirit and heart will allow us to make simple changes within our own lives to be able to help people protect their country and their environment. In this awareness of spirituality and my relationship with nature, there is an awareness of respect; an awareness that I am responsible in this give and take relationship with nature. So far, all we have done is take, but what is it that I can give back to nature now? Firstly, let me reduce what it is that I take, but secondly, if I think about the power of vibrations, perhaps this audience is connected with one church? I use the term 'church' in a loose sense, as an organization that has a foundation of faith. Through this collective faith, our power of prayer works wonders. It works through the power of vibrations. When I pray to God, not only are my thoughts of love, reverence and respect reaching God but also truly, the power of prayer heals people.

***“Nature is eternal and the soul is eternal. The most fundamental aspect of spirituality is the power of our relationship with the Divine. While we are connected to God, the vibrations reach all around us. This is not only true for people but also for nature. This connection gives us the opportunity to reverse the process of damage that we have been responsible for.”***

***“Through prayer, it is possible to heal nature and reverse the process of damage that we have been responsible for”***

There have been many interesting experiments in the USA that have confirmed this. Patients being sent loving healing vibrations through prayer and another controlled group not receiving the same attention. Patients actually responding to the power of prayer and becoming better quicker, healing much faster, and the controlled group complaining “how come we aren’t receiving the same benefit?”. But the point is that although we are connecting with the One above, the vibrations that are being generated are reaching out and helping people even at far distances. Now, is it possible to extend that idea, not just to people but also to places, and to nature itself? I believe it is.

If I am peaceful, then this atmosphere within this room also becomes peaceful. If I am aggressive, not only does it impact on you and other people but also there’s an atmosphere that is held which is filled with negativity and anyone walking into the room even after we’ve left, will be able to sense that. When I send out thoughts of love and peace to nature, it is possible to heal nature and reverse the process of damage that we have been responsible for. And so accepting responsibility for being blessed with intellect, blessed with understanding, now to be able to use all that to start reversing the process and bring back harmony and heal nature again.

**So, I underline the most fundamental aspect of spirituality—the understanding of spirit and also the understanding of the power of the relationship with the Divine.**

To bring in another important universal understanding, whatever term I use, for example, somewhere it may infer, “As you sow, so shall you reap”. In other terms, “whatever you do, you receive the return of that”. This is a simple law of life: the law of cause and effect. And if today we have seen a huge amount of suffering and chaos around us, I can question, “Well, what is the cause?” The cause is me. I can’t even say “all of us” because that would be like stepping away from responsibility by sharing it out. Instead, I take responsibility full on, Again I say, “Yes I know its ME”, “I am part of the cause” or even “I am the cause”. So what am I going to do about it?

In our personal transformation, to be able to come to a state of peace, of truth, of generosity, to be able to give rather than take is the way we can turn things around and shift circumstances so that we are able to live together in a world where instead of taking we are able to give. Give back to the people we have taken from. Maybe they are in a nation far away! I live in England, and perhaps 60–70 per cent (I am not sure of the current statistics), but somewhere in that region, of the food that we eat is imported. Again, an act of taking. At what point of time are we going to say, “OK let’s reduce our needs, simplify our needs, so that we do not need to take so much. At what point can I physically give back? I don’t know. But certainly a deeper understanding of what I am taking and what I am giving is necessary. Even if I can’t give back in kind, maybe there’s some other way, some other mechanism by which I can give. So I believe this principle of ‘give and take’ exists within all traditions as a very foundational understanding of being able to turn things around for the better. I would like to close with one minute of silence, and if I am permitted, I would like to invite you to follow the ideas that I share, so that we can begin the process of healing nature.

***“An individual personal choice is needed, a change of consciousness and awareness of spiritual values. I am responsible in a give and take relationship with nature, so let me reduce what I take.”***

***Meditation for Nature:*** *Sitting comfortably, I focus my thoughts, in the centre of my forehead, and connect with the inner being, the being that I am. Aware of the light within, I connect with the Divine, the supreme light, and through that connection, I myself unfold, with peace, with love, with truth. And the light of the Divine, the light of truth, the light of peace radiates to my human family and reaches nature and all forms of life. The divine light of love begins to heal nature. Peace restores nature to order and harmony and we begin to recreate a better world for all. I hold this awareness, and come back to the things here in the physical dimension, keeping this awareness close to my heart.*

***“The purpose of spirituality and religion is the infinite renewal of hope.”***

*— Sister Jayanti Kirpalani, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Europe & United Kingdom*