

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE INAUGURATION OF
BRAHMA KUMARIS' INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
'SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO CRITICAL TIMES'**

1. I am happy to be here today amidst you to inaugurate the International Conference on '**Spiritual Response to Critical Times**'. At the outset, I would like to applaud the efforts of Brahma Kumaris present here today, and all over the globe for their splendid service of humanity.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

2. The Brahma Kumari's community has 4500 centers in 137 countries. This is no mean feat. Neither is the fact that the United Nations has recognized them as a formidable NGO. It fills me with pride that their genesis is from within our nation. This has been the land of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. They re-introduced the light of the spirit in a tormented nation and from them I take my inspiration for today's topic.

3. We live in unprecedented times of change and crisis - in families, countries, politics, workplaces and relationships. As individuals, people are experiencing anxiety, insecurity, uncertainty and depression at levels never seen before. These are truly critical times. It is as if we as humanity are leaping from one crisis to another without stopping to reflect and take account. This of course means that the majority of the people are living in reaction - fear-based and defensive reactions. This outer state of the world is a reflection of the inner state of the world; our moral, ethical and spiritual foundations seem to have become weak. Ego, lust and greed have become deeply rooted in human psyche shaping a culture of personal gratifications and greed and going to any extent to fulfill their desires. People have become callous and indifferent to the plight of the fellow men. Their focus and actions are centered on getting what they want even if that would mean harming or depriving others of their basic dignity and rights. The daily news is filled with horrifying stories of

murder, fraud, rape and torture. Women, children and other vulnerable sections of society have become helpless prey to the viciousness of those who have been totally blinded by ego and lust.

4. Now is the time when we must turn our attention to the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of our life and strengthen these elements which form the foundations of a truly advanced and happy society. The call of the present critical time is that the solutions to all the problems of the world lie in the elevated human consciousness, in the eternal spiritual wisdom and values. Spirituality points us to the realization that when we act with generosity, compassion and respect for all we lay the foundation for a holistic progress of the entire humanity.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

5. Spirituality is important for any individual. At times, it is confused with religion but spirituality carries a deeper meaning in its strong connect in our daily lives. Being spiritual is being devoted. Working harder for the

growth of the nation is an act of devotion in itself. Working harder to become contributing and responsible citizens of this nation is an act of devotion. For children, listening to their teachers and parents, is an act of devotion. To study without any distractions and to put your best efforts towards any activity is an act of devotion. With an august gathering present here, I hope this forum would help in propagating such a message.

6. Spirituality forms the support base of the moral and social principles which has made mankind civilized. We belong to a country and a civilization that has always attached great importance to spiritual thought. It is one of the many gifts India has given to the world. From ancient times to the modern age, India has been a guiding light among nations when it comes to spiritual leadership. Lord Krishna, Lord Ram, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavira, Emperor Ashoka, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi - throughout our history and in our

present - we have been blessed with great spiritual thinkers and teachers. This is a land where ***Dharma Rajya*** has existed. This is also the country that fought its battle for freedom using non-violence. The Indian school of spirituality has never deferred from logic. It has never barred opinion or dissension. It is a school of thought that has always preached unity in difference. I quote from the Maha Upanishads "***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam***". The world with all its differences in one family! This has always been the Indian way of life. This rich heritage is among our greatest strengths.

7. So what is spirituality for us today? I believe it is an India that lives by the values we have always upheld through our history; an India that embraces diversity, that is open and inclusive, where people live with the values of inclusion and tolerance. It is also an India where people strive for achievement, for personal growth, and for balance in life. Our philosophers and

spiritual thinkers have spoken of the need to achieve a higher level of being. Spirituality awakens that inner power in human beings. That power also helps people to face difficulties in their lives. Every religion imparts the lesson that we can surmount our problems and challenges only with truth. This international conference today should re-ignite our minds to maintain our roots in truth while we together pursue this battle against critical times.

8. Ladies and Gentlemen,

Spirituality gives a superior meaning to whatever we do. If we approach life and crisis with the same piousness as we have when we worship God, we will experience a sense of being uplifted; of being connected to a greater power. We need to inspire commitment and positive attitude in our people. Through the Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna guides us by saying and I quote:

"तस्मादसक्तःसततंकार्यंकर्मसमाचर।

असक्तोह्याचरन्कर्मपरमाप्नोतिपुरुषः॥"

"Tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samāchara
Asakto hyācharan karma param āpnoti pūruṣhaḥ",
which means that, ***"Therefore, O Arjuna, always
perform your duty efficiently and without
attachment to the results, because by doing work
without attachment one attains the Supreme Person"***
(unquote).

9. In today's world which is becoming more and more insular, it is imperative that we use spirituality to guide us in our thoughts, deeds and actions. Spirituality shows us how to treat others. All religions profess values for reformation of the human being. The Gita says and I quote: ***"Perform all work carefully, guided by compassion"*** (unquote). Spirituality means embodying kindness, compassion and selflessness. If these values flourish in our citizens, the society would become a happier and more peaceful place to live. This effect will transmit to the wider community, from society to the nation and eventually the world at large.

10. India is a nation with a large young population. The youth is our greatest strength and our beacon of hope for a brighter future. We have to ensure that our rich civilization values are instilled in them. As we strive for higher levels of socio-economic development, we need to ensure that we remain connected to our values. It will guide us to a path of growth that is rich in spirit and wisdom. I hope to see this conference bring us closer to this vision. With these words, I conclude. My best wishes to you all for a bright future!

Thank You.

Jai Hind.