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Visionary Leadership for the Transition to a Sustainable Future

Press Statement by Sister Jayanti,

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In 2009 we started our campaign for COP with the theme of “Consciousness and Climate.” At that time, it seemed quite outrageous – what has consciousness got to do with climate? And yet today, the big board on the UNESCO stand reads: “CHANGING MINDS AND NOT THE CLIMATE”. So, it feels as if COP has come a long way in recognizing that it is a question of an *inner* change that will bring about outer change.



The way I am -- the being that I am...the way I think, will determine the way I speak, act, interact with others, and how I treat the world around me and the planet as a whole. So, now it sounds very logical and reasonable. That has been the basis of our work – changing consciousness. What has visionary leadership got to do with all of this? It was fascinating to hear the results of research from the previous speakers, who were essentially saying that very few countries have fulfilled their pledges from Paris even though it's two years on. Further, if you look at the present emissions and whether the countries are fulfilling their commitment to that, not one is anywhere near that target. So, looking at the conditions of the world and the leaders of today, it seems

there is an individualistic approach, in which there is a desire to have further development and comfort for 'my people' in 'my country' rather than a shared concern for the planet.

I think a new type of leadership is required—a leadership which is of **planetary consciousness**, a leadership in which we understand that this spaceship that we occupy – planet Earth - is actually the one home for all of us. It's not possible to say, “India is doing this, and Pakistan isn't doing this” or, “Britain is doing that, and other countries are not doing that.” It really has to be all of us having that vision of our home as 'one planet, one ship' in which we're all sitting at the moment.

I think this change of consciousness of: “I and my” to “we and ours,” is a spiritual consciousness, and it is only through a spiritual change of consciousness -- away from materialism and consumerism and the divisiveness of the individualistic approach -- that humanity will survive. Life in some form or another will survive, but what happens to human beings within all of this? So, visionary leadership is a change of awareness in which we are really concerned not only about the whole human family, but about what we are doing to the planet and to all forms of life. The intricate web of life, which we are a part of, is so incredible -- when you damage one portion, you do not know then what that is doing to the rest of the web, or how the change is going to impact human life and wellbeing. We have had numerous scientific examples of that – we have seen what happens with DDT -- that's one classic example, but things that are being proposed today, such as geo-engineering -- my question to leaders who are suggesting geo-

engineering is: “What impact will it have on other forms of life, on all forms of life---do we know that?” Well certainly, we do not have the research to give us any indication of that.

So, I think that visionary leadership begins with me, in this sense: What is the vision I hold for myself? What is my contribution to making a positive impact on the planet? Can I be a leader of myself by changing ‘desires and wants’ to ‘what do I really need in my life?’ If I address this one statement: “what is the difference between my wants and my needs?” I can make a huge difference in my carbon footprint. I also know that human beings change by seeing change happen; we learn by example; we don’t learn from lectures. Scientists have been giving us research figures and lecturing at us for decades now; but things aren’t shifting. I think we need a leader who makes a difference through their own personal lifestyle and who changes their own attitude to the world around us. That will set the trend and many others will then be able to follow.

I hold a very positive view of the future because I know: Deep down inside there is goodness in human hearts. Maybe the role of spirituality is just to bring that reminder of hope and a vision for the future. Technical details...yes, our organization is very involved with renewable energies-- but my point is that it is the marriage of the two – yes, we do what we can in terms of practical actions and technical action, but more than that, it is our *own* change of consciousness and change of lifestyle that will make a difference to the world.

I close with this statement: When I change, the world around me definitely changes...I am able to have an impact on others...and together we can truly change the world. Thank you.



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