

# Spirituality in Society

7<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 7.00pm

Global Co-operation House, London

## A CONVERSATION BETWEEN SISTER JAYANTI AND CHRISTIANA FIGUERES

### REPORT

This special event was to mark the Mayor of London's first Climate Action Week. Sonja Ohlssen, who had come from Denmark to MC the event, welcomed everyone warmly. Sonja introduced Christiana Figueres and Sister Jayanti as two natural leaders in inner and outer transformation and change. She emphasised how important it was to have such events that have the potential to ignite both our capacity to dream but also our capacity to "get things done". Sister Shivangi then sang a song: **Together We Can Change the World** which provided a very upbeat and inspirational start to the evening.



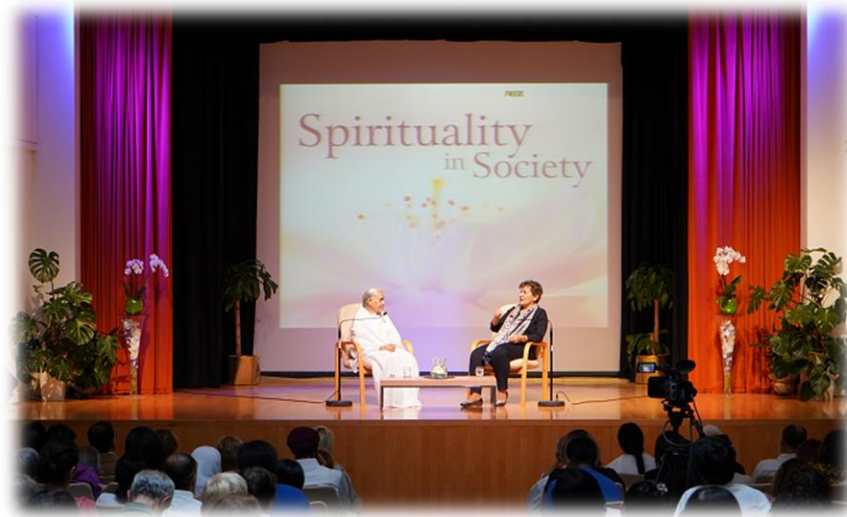
Next Sonja invited Christiana and Sister Jayanti to take the stage and begin their 40 minute dialogue. Friends since 2013 when they met at a Climate change Conference in Bonn, it was very striking to see the very warm and respectful relationship that so obviously existed between the two speakers.

Responding to Sister Jayanti's opening question about how the inner and outer worlds connect and work together, Christiana felt that climate change was "the best crisis we have created" in terms of the potential for inner learning. "And the best way not to waste it is to take on the challenge of going inside and discovering who we truly are". So the learning has to do with regenerating the idea of we are and the way we 'turn-up' in the world. Quoting Einstein, Christiana suggested we cannot solve the crisis if we are stuck in the same mindset that created it in the first place. Sister Jayanti also emphasised the opportunities inherent in the current situation by likening it to when a person develops a physical illness and how it can make them look inside to see if there is a connection between their mental or spiritual state and what is manifesting in the body. Sister Jayanti felt that the "inner battery" of the soul has become discharged and that this was being reflected in the world around us. To remedy this we need not only to co-operate together but also to take the help of the Divine. When we connect with the Divine then regeneration can happen through our own personal transformation which increases our capacity and energy to take positive action in the world.



Christiana then quoted David Attenborough who recently announced that "the Garden of Eden is no more". She therefore stressed our responsibility to create a new vision of the planet and to clarify how we want to be in relation to this new vision. Christiana emphasised that we need to create "a garden of intention". Then we have the responsibility to co-create the next chapter of that garden. Although we need to honour our grief for what we have done to the planet, it is important to move on from that and use it as 'fertiliser' to generate a new attitude or response. Christiana had once been staying on a farm and had gone outside to take a break from some difficult issues only to be faced with a large pile of manure! However she then noticed that at the top of this pile, a beautiful sunflower was growing out of it. This she felt gave a wonderful message: that with intentionality we can coax the sunflower and understand the pile of manure is the means by which the sunflower can grow.

Sister Jayanti also emphasised the importance of being clear about the intention behind any action as this is a key concept in the law of karma. By creating a pure, positive elevated intention she felt that we can recreate the Garden of Eden.



Sister Jayanti stressed the cyclical nature of life and how after the darkness comes the light. So it was important for us to have the intention not just to save the planet but to co-create the Garden through our everyday attitudes and actions towards ourselves, our neighbours and the natural world. Christiana echoed that when we change our attitudes in a deep way, the “impossible becomes possible, likely and even unstoppable!” She defined optimism as the capacity to see beyond what is physically visible to us right now and to be ‘stubborn’ in the face of obstacles. “If the door closes then where is the window?” In this way we can find the next step forward. “If it’s for the common good, then we’d better be stubborn!” Sister Jayanti also felt that in order to see beyond the limited we needed to step into our spiritual identity and then we can hold the vision of a new reality and begin to create it.

Indeed, Christiana felt that part of our job is to help people get out of ‘the box’ of limited vision. She gave a wonderful analogy of when a child is learning to walk, it can get very frustrated because it cannot envision what is beyond the current reality (or the box) of only being able to crawl. But the parent is able to stand outside ‘the box’ and hold the vision of the inevitable transition. So it is important for us to hold our mind open to what is possible. Sister Jayanti agreed that by being in the stage of the observer, I become the script writer of the role I’m playing. Then I can detach, expand my perspective and see the bigger picture. With this expanded vision of reality, I can make the best choices.

Christiana went on to say that feeling like I’m stuck in the box and that someone is to blame for that can also lead to playing a victim role, which can end up as a never ending victim-perpetrator dynamic. The only way to stop this, she said, is to take a step back and take full responsibility to recognise that I do not have to participate in that anymore. Then Christiana shared a very personal story demonstrating how what’s going on in our personal lives inevitably spills into other contexts. The setting was the negotiations for the Paris Agreement in 1992 and the proceedings had reached a stalemate. After a meditation, Christiana had seen clearly how she had been perceiving herself as a victim of the breakdown of her marriage and that she was carrying that dynamic into her work role. Once she was able to extract herself from the victim role then she was able to recognise that she had the power to define her own reality. Interestingly not long after, a solution was found that led to the historic agreement.

After a very lively and engaging discussion, Sister Jayanti suggested a pause for meditation and spoke a commentary reflecting on many of the themes that had emerged. Afterwards, Sonja thanked the speakers for their inspiring conversation and then opened up for questions. The evening closed with a very moving violin solo and another beautiful commentary from Sister Jayanti in which she asked us to create a vision of a world of truth, justice and joy in which all beings are safe, secure and have a life of love and beauty. She left the audience to reflect on what we would need to do inside in order to help create such a world.

