



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Statement for the

United Nations 66th DPI/NGO Conference

***“Education for Global Citizenship:
Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Together.”***

Realizing our Interconnectedness Through a Shift in Awareness

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The United Nations call for a civil-society-led ‘Coalition for Global Citizenship’ requires both formal and informal education, drawing on the resources of organisations such as the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. The Brahma Kumaris has been affiliated with the United Nations as an international NGO since 1983 and has spent many years researching and promoting universal values in all fields and professions. The Brahma Kumaris offers a form of education that requires a shift in awareness at an individual level where the responsibility for the well being of all is embraced, making the achievement of the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development more attainable.

At the root of this informal holistic education lies spirituality, which leads to the realisation that we are all intricately inter-connected. Reflective practices such as meditation, journaling and connecting with nature have proven to facilitate the emergence of an inter-connected orientation - the need to care for the self, for others and the world. Spirituality aligns us with meaning and purpose and has been documented to bring success in all areas of life; leading to a strong trend towards spirituality amongst leading edge researches and scientists in all fields – business, management, health, science, etc.

This shift in awareness makes it possible to move from a position of merely surviving sustainably, to the creation of a long-term vision in which all of life can flourish in a healthy or vigorous way. For this to happen, individuals within organizations would benefit from the broad perspective seen through a spiritual lens making them better able to deal with the realities of our complex and volatile world.

Established in 1937 and dedicated to re-empowering individuals to find their vision, purpose and inner strength, the Brahma Kumaris has a network of centers in over 120 countries. Free meditation and health camps are organized in villages, towns and cities all over the world drawing on the spirit of volunteerism. One example of the huge commitments volunteers and others are inspired to make is a 1MW thermal solar power station, in Rajasthan, called India One, which is now nearing completion. With the help of these engineers, project managers, solar power experts, and other partners, this project will provide all the energy needs for 25,000 people who attend the Brahma Kumaris residential programs in meditation, health care, stress management, etc. It will also provide power to the not for profit hospitals in Abu

Road and Mount Abu which are also staffed by volunteers from the medical profession. Such flourishing communities of volunteers springing up all over the globe are already building a 'Coalition of Global Citizens'.

In 'Flourishing Enterprises the New Spirit of Business,' research done by Chris Laszlo, Judy Sorum Brown and their co-authors, revealed that an increase in spiritual awareness is fuelling a passion for contributing to the wider good. *"The emerging beliefs we see today include a sense that complete well-being is more important than material success alone; to care for others is an essential quality of what it means to be human; cooperation is a powerful basis for business success; happiness is a more desirable societal goal and measure than gross national product and the acknowledgement that the earth is a fragile, exhaustible, living system entrusted to our care."*

Little can be achieved without the support of the business sector and spirituality is now being seen as the vital link towards a flourishing world and has become the new wave in management theory. In 'Megatrends 2010: The Rise of Conscious Capitalism,' Patricia Aburdene goes so far as to say that the focus on spirituality in business is becoming *"today's greatest megatrend."* Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton, MIT Sloan Management Review, believe that *"spirituality is becoming the ultimate competitive advantage."*

However, these ideas are not new. The Australian aboriginal people are custodians of one of the oldest cultures in the world. Aboriginal elder, Bob Randall, explains spirituality in the documentary by Melanie Hogan. *"Kanyini means inter-connectedness; love with responsibility, to care for, to support, nurture and protect. The principles of Kanyini have held us strong and will allow us to rebuild our culture now that our culture is being recognised as having meaning, wisdom and durability. Within kanyini is the 'Dreamtime' - belief system, inter-connectness; Spirituality - developed by adhering to teachings that particularly resonate and empower the individual in their most difficult times; Family - expanding outwards from one's human family to all living things; Land – our 'songline' of the Earth, which is our powerbase, our security. We belong to all that there is, and all that there is belongs to us."*

"Cultures that do not recognize that human life and the natural world as having a sacred dimension, an intrinsic value beyond a monetary value, ruthlessly exploit the natural world and the members of their society. In the name of progress they allow whole systems to collapse, blind to their own self-destruction." Chris Laszlo.

The Brahma Kumaris promote spiritual consciousness in action, which basically translates as applying values. In the last decade researchers in all fields have turned their attention to the study of consciousness. Spiritual intelligence is the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion while maintaining equilibrium regardless of the circumstances. Spirituality provides conditions for community, meaning at work, inner life, personal responsibility, positive connections with others, and behaviors associated with expressing inner life.

To achieve this deepening awareness, we need to invest time and attention in reflective practices that help us to regain this consciousness of connectedness, keeping in mind that it is only when we have a such a sense of connectedness—to our life's purpose, to other people, and to all life—that we reacquire and strengthen our capacity to think and act in ways that support flourishing. These reflective practices allow each of us to step back, absorb important insights, and see connections that would otherwise be invisible to us. It strengthens the individual's awareness their thoughts and feelings and creates a genuine steadiness and

centeredness in the face of life's challenges. Neuro-physiological evidence already exists for the effects of reflective practices on the brain and nervous system.

The Brahma Kumaris, as well as many other traditions, practice Remembrance, which varies from focusing on an awareness or image of God, or a phrase or word that is in some way sacred to the person speaking it and that connects to the person's deepest source of creativity, inspiration, and wisdom. By connecting with the Source, we are able to re-emerge our own essence aligned to the Source. We re-emerge and remember our original nature of peace, power and bliss. We know who we are and whom we belong to. *"The awareness of your spiritual identity is developed by training the mind ... It is a state of inner silence, a state of great peace and nourishment to which the mind needs to return again and again,"* explains Dadi Janki, Chief, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University and a Keeper of Wisdom at two UN world conferences.¹

So often when we become passionate about a cause or issue, there is an accompanying sadness, anger, despair and frustration. In his book, 'The Conscious Activist', James O'Dea shares *"As we recognize the root of our own being through reflective practices, we remember the common source of all being. To be effective in conflict we need to move beyond polarized thinking of us and them, privileged and underprivileged, victims and perpetrators and good and evil. We must go beyond the projection of social problems onto other people rather than onto what needs to be changed. It is the heart that guides us to this higher vision. If we seek to change the world, we must learn the power of cooperation, of sharing ideas and to stay open."*

Time and again we witness the essence of humanness and compassion that endures hardship, imprisonment and torture. It is the experience of Brahma Kumaris volunteers working with Sri Lankans and Japanese after the devastating tsunamis there and on the streets of Brazil and Africa, people all over the world facing trauma and environmental crisis, need to be aided not only with material necessities but also by spiritual counseling, helping them to emerge their own spirituality that they can build resilience in facing life's challenges. Resilience is to return to the original state, when we are stretched by trauma or stress; we need to know that original state in order to come back to that.

"Although most of us can visualize a state of well being, it may seem more of an ideal than a reality. A pleasant 'spring-like' state of mind, harmonious relationships, good health and a life of abundance at all levels may be what we try to achieve, but the aim to live securely and comfortably has undoubtedly become a challenge in the present age. Do we realize that we can definitely strengthen our own well being, irrespective of the situations we encounter in life? Commitment to change comes from the realisation of the need to change." Dadi Janki.

It is the realisation and commitment on an individual level, and the fine-tuning of our personal practice of strengthening our well being, that will take us on the course of global citizenship and toward the transformational and universal agenda we all want to achieve.

¹ In 1992 Dadi was one of the 'Keepers of Wisdom', an eminent group of spiritual and religious leaders, convened at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio, and again in 1995 at the Habitat II, United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Istanbul, Turkey.

Bibliography: -

Books:

‘Wings of Soul’, Dadi Janki, Chief, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University
‘The Heart of Well-being’, Dadi Janki, President, The Janki Foundation of Global Health Care
‘Flourishing Enterprises: the New Spirit of Business’, by Chris Laszlo, Sorum Brown with Distinguished Fellows from the Fowler Centre for Sustainable Value: John R Ehrenfeld, Mary Gorham, Ilma Barros Pose, Linda Robson, Dave Sherman and Paul Werder.
‘The Conscious Activist’, James O’Dea

Documentary Film:

“Kanyini” Documentary Film by Melanie Hogan

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), with its spiritual headquarters in Mt. Abu, India, comprises a worldwide network of centers in 110 countries and is an international non-governmental organization of the United Nations accredited with General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); Associate Status with the Department of Public Information (DPI); Consultative Status with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Observer Status to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Observer Organization to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Flagship Member of Education for Rural People (ERP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

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