

Text of speech delivered by Singh Sahib Prof Manjit Singh

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on

THE MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT
OF RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS

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The world human society has entered the twenty-first century. One may well question, what is so new or different in it? Time moves on according to its own pace and rhythm. Yet, while entering the new millennium with a new consciousness, man has to carry with him a lot that is both comfortable, reassuring and painful. Comfortable, because of those great men of God and their teachings, inspiration for the general good of humanity, the pure, mystical teachings they have left in abundance for those whose lives are living examples of following them. Painful and distressing, because of man's mental flaws, immoral tendencies and ignorance, as a result of which man's dream of perennial happiness and joy has reduced his rare life species bestowed on him into one of fear and anxiety. The twentieth century has had a long history of world wars and smaller wars. The weapons and explosives that eliminated millions of men, women and other earthly beings is beyond anyone's comprehension and may well remain so. But those who have survived these, their jealousy, pride, anger and selfishness is endlessly contributing to that destruction and death. This destructive, poisonous atmosphere is affecting not only humans but also birds, animals, earth, air and the overall environment. The human population keeps multiplying dangerously, while other earthly species are fast getting depleted.

Man's evil tendencies have affected life so much that religion which was supposed to liberate man through the general good, sacrifice, pity and humanity, has spread the negative ideology of my religion, your religion, my shrine, your shrine, my God, your God which has led to bloodshed and hatred. We have to accept the bitter truth that our religious places are doing nothing to solve life's complex problems beyond the everyday ritual worship. Many of our religious leaders are victims of this illusion that they shall please their "God" or Guru by bringing into their respective religious fold more and more followers, though they may indulge in any fair or unfair practice to achieve that. Dear friends, if we are able to please any God or prophet in this way, then let us alienate ourselves from him for the general good of mankind. It is in fact not God but the inner evil instincts that makes us

undertake such acts, who feel pleased to have put man on road to such Satanic acts. So what will be right for us is to become role models for the world to achieve two things: one, to make attempts to stop those who spread poverty, the evil habit of intoxicants, illiteracy, wasteful expenditure, to divide the earth politically and ideologically that make men and nations fight, and two, to go beyond mere formal announcements and memorandums. It is correct that intellectuals and religious men's efforts for world harmony and peace are often disregarded by those in state power, yet there are tasks through which we can defeat the selfish political designs of these egoistical leaders who wish to divide and rule.

For example, we have started a program under the slogan 'Pollution free Society' from the birth place of the Khalsa, Sri Anandpur Sahib. Under this program 'Prasad' (blessings) in the form of saplings containing flower, fruit and medicinal qualities have been distributed, and its number has crossed two lakh fifty thousand (250,000). Common people have accepted it as a divine gift and they have been tending these plants in their homes like family members. Only last year the Sikhs across the world have celebrated the Tercentenary of the Birth of the Khalsa. The Indian National Youth Services decided to organize a fourteen day camp at Sri Anandpur Sahib under the leadership of Mr N Subba Rao. Nearly four thousand five hundred young men from all states of India came to participate in it, and they resolved, to plant a sapling each in the name of one of the great men or thinkers from their areas. In this way a common heritage garden shared by the people, and religious faiths of all states has been established at Sri Anandpur Sahib.

In a similar spirit with the grace of God, a 'Center of Meditation' has been started whose aim is to arouse spiritual awareness in people who have fallen victims to the effects of intoxicants and to alleviate their despair and desolate mental conditions. This center has also been started in a rare manner; all religious heads of distinct faiths inaugurated this great symbol of religious unity. It would be right to state that this act has created a new institution for the collective welfare of mankind.

It is our ardent plea that we should make our religious places, centers for helping students and unemployed youth by creating information bureaus, technological training centers and indoor games so that the future generations escape the suicidal diseases like AIDS and are attracted towards religious places and spiritual consciousness. We have started this endeavor at some Sikh religious places whose results have been very encouraging. It has definitely resulted in the youth shunning evil places and their turning to religious places. From my own experience I could say that such endeavors can be very beneficial, especially in the poor nations.

This is the only way to liberate people from getting alienated from mutual hatred in the name of caste, race, religion, territory or political ideologies. Another thing that should be clear is that there are certain problems common to all human societies, while there are some that are peculiar to different societies and territories. The sanctity of human relations has been mercilessly trampled which has given rise to promiscuity, resulting in diseases like AIDS, drug abuse and divorce, and these problems are common to the whole world. So is the rich-poor divide. In almost all the religious concepts, poverty as well as riches are considered as the outcome of our deeds of the previous birth. It is misleading. Lethargy, inferiority complex and a-begging bent of mind are the direct outcome of this wrong concept of life. The need of the hour is to preach the sermon of high dignity of labour and to share one's earnings with others. The message is to come from the towers of the religious places. One thing more, those who are putting for the service of mankind, should themselves work in the economic fields, which uplift our society. They should make it a point to take part in these activities, though for a short time. They should also inspire the rich people as well as head of the institutions, or countries to help the needy from time to time. Despite the common national citizenship, people's rights and respectability is being

cruelly trampled upon in the name of minorities or the dominating community. It is shameful that any Commissions have to be set up to impart justice and to protect human rights of people. Hence these problems have to be solved by separating the above mentioned issues in two parts.

Another thing I wish to point out is that we are trying to solve new problems in old and worn out ways, rather than find solutions in a new idiom and thinking. Those who are serving the religious faiths by propagating their messages will have to keep in step with the present fast paced technological age to assess modern man's dilemma to find peace and balance in the tiring, intoxicant ridden, and morally corrupt life patterns. Only then can they spread the true message about the necessity of religion.

I wish to thank all the organizers of the United Nations and the religious leaders on this auspicious occasion, who have made it possible through their efforts for all of us to assemble here. At the end I recite the pure and pious utterance enshrined as *Ardas* in Guru Granth Sahib and pray for a life of joy and happiness for the whole humanity:

SByj IA smiil Apxl imhr kru]
 Athu pxi mci apie dK dnl du Blh qru]
 Ardais sxl drcwir hel issit Tru]
 I yhu kllT l gwie Apdu sB hru]
 nwnk nmu iDAwie pB kll SPI uGru] 1]
 AGGS, M 5, P 1251

*"Lord, all beings pray cherish; show Thy grace.
 Let grain and water be in plenty; shattering suffering
 and penury, save us.
 The benevolent Lord our prayer listened, and joy-
 cooled was all creation.
 Lord! to your bosom clasp us, banishing all suffering.
 Nanak, on the Name meditate; in the Lord's home none
 unfruitful remains."*

bwxl ibrl aublcwrsI jykogrmik hie]
 ieh bwxl mhwp rK kl inj Gir vnsW hie]

AGGS, M 1, P 935

***"Only rare Guru-oriented will deliberate/contemplate on the Bani .
 This Bani is of the pre-eminent preceptor,
 That is to be imbibed in one's own mind ."***