



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Statement for the

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Growing concerns associated with climate change and its profound and decisive impact on human well-being.

It has been over 40 years since biologist/writer Rachel Carson wrote the book, *Silent Spring*, hoping to draw attention to climate change and the devastating impacts science was beginning to have on the natural world. In the years that followed its publication, the world’s leaders continued to embrace a philosophy that endorsed the broad use of chemicals for agricultural enhancement, the burning of fossil fuels to power our automobiles and heat our homes, and a “throw away” mentality in regard to domestic and commercial waste.

Perhaps the subtle phenomena Rachel Carson observed were too small, too invisible to alert those making decisions for the world that something was wrong. Or perhaps her credentials didn’t seem substantial enough to warrant significant attention. Regardless of the reason, the world carried on from then until now with the same limited vision and the same ill-founded counsel, while a silent transformation mushroomed in virtually all parts of Earth’s fragile ecosystem.

Change happens from the inside out – from a seed of awareness to a thought to an intention to an action. Impacts also happen from the inside out. They take place on a subtle dimension at first – quiet changes in the temperature of oceans, invisible reconfigurations of molecules in the atmosphere. By the time we have incontrovertible evidence that the world is breaking down, it may be too late: the numbers of songbirds are decimated, vast numbers of honeybee colonies have mysteriously collapsed, and the polar ice caps have begun crashing into the arctic sea.

Solutions, concrete practices to be implemented and shared. Viable habits of everyday practice that ensure a better future.

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) has a spiritual foundation and spiritual expertise, so our reflections and recommendations for solutions will, of course, be spiritual. Where we would like to turn our attention in this paper is to the quality of awareness and action that will serve the world.

On the level of belief and practice we embrace vegetarianism and a simple lifestyle that includes a regimen of daily meditation. The heightened awareness that comes of these principles and practices affects the way we experience and make sense of the world. It also affects the actions we take in the world on our various fields of action.

Because the course of the world is especially influenced by those who make decisions that affect many, in this paper we discuss solutions with special relevance for leaders at all levels. Our reflections on solutions fall into three domains:

1. Cultivation of new methods of discerning the condition of the world.
2. The inclusion of spiritual counsel for those seeking expertise in diagnosing the condition of the world.
3. Development of new levels of awareness among those who are creating policies, laws and plans of action.

1. New Methods of Discernment

Individuals who are going to steer the way forward for the future world must have different methods of discerning the condition of the world.

In the field of medicine conventional wisdom says that illnesses identified in an early stage when they are harder to diagnose, are easier to treat successfully, and those not identified until a later stage are easier to diagnose but harder to treat successfully. In the world of climate change it is the same. Up until very recently there were still scientists (and business leaders and politicians) who were insisting that the evidence for the deterioration of the Earth due to global warming was not yet conclusive. So, action to address the silently growing catastrophe was delayed. Yet, there was evidence, as Rachel Carson and others pointed out as early as the 1960's.

One of the real benefits of meditation and other reflective practices is the heightened awareness of the internal and external states of the world. We become aware of how anger, fear and sadness in our internal world may be affecting the decisions we make, and we find ways to transform those feelings. When we are able to look at the world without the influence of these negative states, and with a sense of equanimity, we are better able to see clearly what is happening around us.

Another aspect of discernment is the influence of self interest over interest in the well-being of the whole. If we are looking at the world from a place of insecurity or greed – or of wanting to advance a particular interest at the expense of the whole, this perspective biases our discernment. We may actually think that we are seeing clearly – that the way we are looking at a situation will eventually benefit the whole – or at least not damage the whole.

A meditative or reflective process cultivates honesty and clarity, allowing us to see through the clouds of self interest to a horizon of truth as to what is good for humanity and the natural world for which we are trustees.

2. The Importance of Spiritual Counsel in Diagnosing the Condition of the World

Those in positions of leadership at this time bear a heavy burden for making the right decisions. They rely on teams of advisors who counsel them on a range of perspectives – financial, scientific, social, and political. How often is the spiritual advisor invited to the table? How often is the spiritual perspective taken into account as one of the areas of understanding necessary for a real 360 degree perspective?

In 2002 the Brahma Kumaris held a dialogue with leaders in Africa. Some were political leaders; others came from the fields of science, education and so on. The co-facilitator of the dialogue was Thomas Odiambo, then chairman of the African Academy of Sciences. He spoke about his own search for truth and the turning point in his life when he discovered that the ultimate truth was not to be found in

material realms – but in subtle spiritual realms. He talked about the curious dilemma of scientists who are encouraged in their search for truth, but told they must confine that search to the physical world. They are, he mused, doomed to look at external indicators of the truth, while the subtle sources of the truth remain behind a veil.

In diagnosing the condition of the world, and in accurate understanding of the causes for this condition, we are handicapped if we insist on quantifiable material evidence and explanations from the physical world.

The BKWSU understands the material world to be intimately linked to the subtle world of awareness, attitude, thoughts and feelings. A feeling of anger, for example, may translate into a fearful or aggressive world view and course of action. Without addressing the subtle inner awareness that informs the outer states, the world's decision makers are doomed to be reacting to ultimatums and stalemates without real hope of lasting change.

3. Development of New Levels of Awareness among Decision-Makers

Those who are creating new policies, laws, and plans of action for the world must also consider the creation of new kinds of thoughts and new levels of awareness, as they are envisioning the way forward. An example of the kinds of awareness that affect the quality of decisions are these:

- **The awareness of brotherhood among the human family**

This notion is so common as to be clichéd, and yet the daily headlines constantly reify the differences that separate the families, clans and nationalities of the world. Every morning we hear about the conflicts from the day before in the language of religions and nation-states. The Brahma Kumaris understand the inner form of all beings to be a form of eternal light and that there is a Supreme Soul, God, who is the father and mother of all souls. We understand that in our spiritual identity we are brothers, though brothers who have lost our sense of connection long ago.

- **Awareness of global citizenship**

Yogis and other certain spiritual people spend much of their lives in reflection, cultivating an elevated vision for the world. There is another group blessed with a rare vision of the world – the hundreds of men and women who have had the extraordinary experience of seeing the Earth from space. Here is what marine scientist Jacques Cousteau said of the experience of these men and women:

They all came back with a revelation of beauty – beauty of the black sky, beauty and variety of our planet, beauty of the earth seen from the Moon, girdled by a scintillating belt of equatorial thunderstorms. They all emphasize that our planet is one, that borderlines are artificial, that humankind is one single community on board spaceship Earth. They all insist that this fragile gem is at our mercy and we must all endeavor to protect it...the future is in the hands of those who dedicate their lives to explore Teilhard de Chardin's three infinities: the infinitely big, the infinitely small, and the infinitely complex. And from all the beauty they discover while crossing perpetually receding frontiers, they develop for nature and humankind an infinite love. (*excerpt from Home Planet, edited by Kevin Kelley ©1988*)

The action plan for sustaining this level of awareness may be to either have the good fortune to be an astronaut or cosmonaut or to develop a pattern of meditation and reflection in our lives to enable us to see with elevated vision.

- **Awareness of innate goodness of the human being**

If we believe that selfishness, greed, and mean-spiritedness are innate in human beings, then our only hope is to arm ourselves against this condition and continue to enlarge our prisons. However, if we understand human beings to be intrinsically good, naturally loving and peaceful, then we must consider the return to this state of goodness and peace to be not only possible, but a natural and desirable goal for humanity. This awareness would inform a policy of hope and plans of action to recover this essential state. The Brahma Kumaris understand this to be the truth about humanity and work towards the recovery of this human condition.

- **Awareness of the philosophy of karma as fundamental to the working of the universe**

The law of karma (and Newton's third law of motion) simply states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, and that this is true in all parts of the universe. If we understand this law to be universal and immutable, then we would never create a plan of action that would involve harming the Earth or its people. We would only legislate for world benefit.

The Brahma Kumaris, and many other spiritual paths in the world, understand the law of karma to be the incognito mechanism that explains the unfolding of events in the world. The actions we take today write the script for the circumstances we face tomorrow. If we understand this to be true, then we might see today's world as the inevitable result of the choices we made in the past, and in that instant of understanding, we might see that the only way forward to a peaceful and loving world would be through our elevated awareness and loving behavior towards our Earth and our human family.

Close

By now there is virtually universal acceptance that climate change is being accelerated by human actions. The call of this conference is a call to action. But a call to action without a call to greater discernment and higher levels of awareness will only continue the harmful and self interested patterns of the past. The call of this conference and the call of our time are for a new level of awareness so that the resulting actions will bring a whole new climate of understanding and world benefit.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF.
The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide.
It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

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