

Amma: A Fountain of Love and Compassion

On the occasion of the 61st birthday of Her Holiness Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, or Amma, as she is popularly referred to, I have great pleasure in sharing some of my own thoughts and feelings.

I have had the privilege of receiving Amma's darshan on several occasions. A unique feature of being in Amma's presence is the spontaneous realisation that she exudes Love that is genuine and flows from within. She generates a sense of peace and sublime joy when she hugs anyone who is in her presence with her arms around the person and as she whispers blessings softly in the person's ears.

The sensation that radiates from her is that this is a fountain of super-human love. I think in this world today, pure love is one commodity that is missing, a divine gift, which we have to discover, a treasure that fortunately is within ourselves. If we have love for each other, if we have love for Mother Earth, if we have love for all living beings, then there would be no basis for conflict at all on this earth. If that were to be then I think all of us would be basking in the glorious blessing that Amma's simple life is. She is truly such an unlimited source of boundless energy, divine love and compassion. I think if all of us were to get even a fraction of what she holds within her, and absorbed it within our own beings, there would be unending joy in the whole world.

I am deeply indebted to Amma because she has always given me courage when I have had to confront daunting challenges and some forces of evil. It would be impossible and totally inadequate to thank her, but a more fitting acknowledgement of what she has given me would be to apply her wisdom and enlightenment to the limited extent I am capable of in my own life. Her inspiration would always be with me as a force for good, which I am sure, will always help me do the little I can in this world.

From what I have known for many years now, Amma has on numerous occasions, taken the opportunity to share her vision of the way humanity can traverse the difficult road ahead - navigating the murky waters of prejudice, discord and dogma between religions towards universal harmony; from terrorism and fear to peace and tranquility; from in-



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equality between sexes, classes and communities to mutual trust and cooperation; from war between nations and strife between neighbours to a collective war on poverty, and from environmental chaos to ecological balance and sustainability of the earth's ecosystems. Amma's beliefs and values invite each one of us to reflect deeply and to get involved in the process of rebuilding a concerned and caring society. Taken together, Amma constantly provides a wealth of prescriptions for humanity in crisis, addressing all the most pressing issues of our time with clear, practical guidance for positive change. Amma is also calling upon all citizens of India and the world to recognise the fundamental principle that the earth is the mother of humanity and all living species, and that cleanliness is godliness, all of which motivates many to pledge to work with dedication for the realisation of environmental cleanliness and hygiene. So far, this pledge has been taken by more

than one million people throughout India. Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is enough for everybody's need but not enough for anybody's greed." It is imperative that we realise that unless we live in harmony with nature, unless we are able to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases by moving towards the adoption of renewable energy technologies and unless we change our lifestyle appropriately, the world will increasingly become inhospitable for human habitation.

Our ancestors, particularly in India, placed emphasis on ethics and social morality; they perhaps had less comforts of the type that we aspire to and covet but certainly had more fresh air and water. In this regard, it is extremely important for us to develop knowledge on the impacts of climate change and the vulnerability of different communities and ecosystems. We would need to integrate adaptation measures with wider development policies, improve disaster preparedness and management, promote good governance at every level. I have always maintained that spirituality must be well-integrated into the education system all across the globe and the focus should be on training the body, mind and spirit in a comprehensive manner. All along in over three decades of this uniquely extraordinary expression of universal love, Amma has shown that everyone, rich or poor, has the power to make a difference in the life of another, and that no selfless gesture is insignificant. Rather, it is the selfless actions we perform for one another that hold the keys to true peace - peace in the mind of the individual, peace in the community and peace and prosperity among diverse cultures, nations and faiths. Amma's centres in many countries contribute to this humanitarian effort by inspiring people to serve selflessly.

Once again, I am happy to have this opportunity to greet Amma on Her 61st birthday and hope that she will continue to inspire all of us to come together in the cause of global unity and to transform the world for a better, happier tomorrow. When I had the privilege of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the IPCC, I referred in my acceptance speech to the Indian expression "Vasudev Kutumbakam," which means the universe is one family. Amma is the eternal embodiment of that belief.