



The Parliament of World Religions
Make a World of Difference - Hearing each other, Healing the Earth - Melbourne, Australia 3. – 9.12.2009

A convergence of people from diverse backgrounds, religious and spiritual practices as well as ‘non believers’ of all kinds, the Parliament of World Religions is an opportunity to experience how literally a ‘World of Difference’ is being cultivated to address the momentous problems that challenge our human community today. Can this contribute to finding solutions? Can a renewed sense of the sacredness of the natural world motivate a critical mass of people to adopt ways of living that will heal the earth? Can a recovery of the message of compassion and a commitment to the inestimable value of every life form break through all that prevents us from making poverty history? Can religious and spiritual values help to build a new world ethos in which families, communities and nations hear, respect and value each other? Each participant’s and community’s response to these questions will be the measure by which this will be judged.

Who am I? When does religion or spiritual practice contribute towards becoming a member of one human family sharing resources equitably, and when does it become misused as a divisive label of identity in the absence of justice, economic security and stability? While challenged to seek wisdom and guidance within ourselves towards developing our human potential, with commitment to action, can we draw from and contribute to our religious and spiritual communities? Religious or atheist, all recognise that these communities represent an enormous force which we are compelled to face and take responsibility for how we can enable it to shape a healthy society. Building a good life is a religious act with and without observance of specific religious ritual.

By sharing views, insights and challenges in such a forum, we were invited to learn and reflect more deeply about the way our religious and spiritual beings work and discover not only the immense resources available to us for reaching our goals, but also to become more articulate about our own hurdles that need honest and straightforward approaches. Ignorance, fear, inhumane practice, poverty, injustice as well as our ailing earth were identified as issues to be blatantly addressed, while the question of how to harness the forces of compassion, love and forgiveness as valuable if not vital fuel was explored from different perspectives.





Learning through our spiritual training how to work together to fulfil our human and humanitarian aims, Subud encompasses people of any or no religion from all cultures. The association is naturally 'interfaith' in its composition, and in our spiritual practice, we learn to surrender to the guidance of God, the Great Life Force, the Almighty, the Divine or any given name to the Force bigger than ourselves. While we seek to develop our true human nature and know who we are, to what extent do we surrender or take our own responsibility to make choices and take action towards human and sustainable development? To what extent do we 'hear each other' and value our differences? Can we do more to support the development of talent and harness resources to strengthen ourselves and the larger human community?

We are encouraged by our founder and founding members to be involved in our own religious communities, interfaith forums and even in the United Nations. Yet some hesitate feeling self-sufficient or helpless and ask, why engage? At the Parliament of World Religions, others addressing similar questions were offered answers which apply to interactions within the family, the Subud community as well as within our local our world communities: If we want to be true to our values, we must work with those that share our values or else we might betray our own. If we want to be understood, we must understand. While we must be true to who we are, in interaction and relationships with others we can deepen our own identity; our differences are perhaps in form but not in content.



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