

Global director of Communications for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, urges world leaders to take responsibility to bring the change at Parliament of the World's Religions



Anuttama Dasa urged world leaders to “take responsibility to bring the change” at Parliament of the World’s Religions. [Courtesy of Suresh Bodiwala]

Submitted by Suresh Bodiwala

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Chicago hosted the largest gathering of the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center, 2301 S King Drive, Chicago, with a representation of 212 world religions and 95 countries. The convention was from Monday to Friday, Aug. 14-18, drew a lot of religious leaders who discussed social issues that plague the planet. The convention has its historic roots tied to Chicago where it began in 1893, and then again reconvened in 1993. The parliament aims at bringing the world’s religious and spiritual communities to create a better world. The convention creates a unique platform for the most inclusive interfaith dialogue and draws the wisdom and richness of traditions to address world problems. This year’s theme was “A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom and Human Rights,” and the program began with a colorful parade of faiths.

Anuttama Dasa, the global director of communications for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness said, “The world Parliament of religions is a wonderful event because it gives a chance for people of all different religious persuasions, spirituality’s, different countries, different traditions to come together and learn from each other.”

He also said, “A lot of issues have been discussed here whether it goes from human trafficking, proliferation of nuclear weapons, exploitation of women etc. that are social issues that affect all of us whether we are Hindu or Jewish or Muslim or Christian.”

He urged everyone to take responsibility to bring about the change.

He said, “I would encourage everyone to take advantage of the spirit of this world parliament to look into our own hearts and our lifestyles and see how we can minimize the violence in our lives, how we can minimize the tension and the misunderstanding between communities, how we can actually make the kind of personal endeavor, personal sacrifices to benefit others and benefit the planet.”

The sessions featured 120 minute programs as panel discussion, films, performances, workshops, art exhibits, plenaries and community service on topics about protecting human rights, climate change, women’s rights and other social issues.

Subala Dasa, one of the directors of ISKCON Chicago talked about the contribution of the Parliament of World’s Religions

and said that it is providing a spiritual alternative to the society’s ailments. He said, “It’s an important work because the ailments of society, not only here in the United States but the entire world, there is so much conflict. In this country, we have issues with equality, with social justice, with women’s rights, violence. All these ailments can be addressed by spiritual knowledge. Our process is to provide that spiritual education and support to bring about a whole revolution in the consciousness of the people of the day.”

Speaking about the contribution of the International Society for Krishna consciousness he said, “We provide transcendental knowledge, spiritual education and the means and the process by which you can actually connect with the essence of the self and obtain happiness and peace. We teach meditation and recommend chanting this mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Mantra means to free the mind. On this day, we see so many ailments to do with mental anxieties and mental illness. This Hare Krishna mantra, this meditation goes at the heart of this problem and immediately cleanses the heart of the obstacles that bring people to so much suffering. It is a powerful means that is recommended in the ancient scriptures of India.”

The Sikh community offered a special langar feast to all the attendees. The program ended with special prayers for the refugees of war and people of Ukraine.