

Last speech of Paramahansa Yogananda

Your Excellency, our Ambassador, illustrious and understanding Ambassador of free India; Madame Sen; gracious Consul General of India Mr. Ahuja; and Dr. Sharma and Dr. Saund, who have brought such harmony and understanding among the people of India, Pakistan, and America; and all honoured guests present here from all nations, all guests present here from my India, my America, and my world. I bow to the God in you.

I am not here in an advisory capacity. So I will relate a few snatches of my experiences. I remember my meeting with Mahatma Gandhi. The great prophet brought a practical method for peace to the warring modern world. Gandhi, who for the first time applied Christ principles to politics and who won freedom for India, gave an example that should be followed by all nations to solve their troubles.

You, your Excellency, represent the great spiritual India. I wish that you bring the very best of my India to my America, and take the very best of my America to my India. But that is a very difficult task, no doubt, for in this world nations and men are all a little bit crazy, and they don't know it - because people with the same kind of craziness mix together. But when differently crazy people get together and compare notes, they find out their particular craziness.

Indeed your Excellency can discover the goodness of different persons. I think if we would gather together the great men of all lands - the great industrialists of America and the good men of all countries - we could build such a model civilisation that all nations would eventually form a United World, with God guiding them through their conscience. (Applause)

India has great things to give to you, and America can very greatly help India. But people often concentrate on the faults and not on the good qualities of a nation. I remember that just before I first came to America in 1920, I was warned by Hindu friends never to go in dark alleys, lest my scalp be removed by Red Indians! And whenever I saw a bald-headed man, I thought some Indians had been at work! (Laughter)

I remember, too, that in 1920, I was riding one day to the seashore in Massachusetts when I noticed some "Hot Dog" signs. In imagination I saw all kinds of dogs going through the meat chopper! And I thought, "My Lord, why did You bring me to the land where people eat dogs?" I asked a man what was inside those mysterious bags and he said, "Pork and Beef." I gasped in relief to find that Americans don't eat dogs. (Laughter)

One morning I was passing by an empty field next to a store. That evening, as I passed that same way again, I saw a house standing in the field. I enquired of a man if the house had been there in the morning. "No," he replied, "they just put it up."

When I think of such energy, I like to be an American. But when I hear of so many American millionaires who die prematurely after making a business success, then I like to be a Hindu - to sit on the banks of the Ganges and concentrate on the factory of Mind from which spiritual skyscrapers can come, and to think of the great masters

of India who are her perennial glory. Somewhere between the two great civilisations of efficient America and spiritual India lies the answer for a model world civilisation.

It seems there is always plenty of money for war, which brings in its wake great sufferings. We don't seem to learn from these. If we can raise money for wholesale killings, couldn't we picture the possibility that if all big leaders and all peoples got together, they could collect a vast fund that would banish poverty and ignorance from the face of the globe?

I do hope and pray, your Excellency, that you will always emphasise the airplanes of mercy from one country to another instead of airplanes that carry bombs to destroy. Let us work for peace on earth as never before. We want a congress of scientists, of ambassadors, of religious men who will constantly think how to make this world a better home, a spiritual home with God as our Guide. (Applause)

I am proud that I was born in India. I am proud that we have a great Ambassador representing my spiritual India. I am very proud today.

I often say:

Mortal fires may raze all her homes and golden paddy fields;

Yet to sleep on her ashes and dream immortality,

O India, I will be there!

God made the earth, and man made confining countries

And their fancy-frozen boundaries.

Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God -

I am hallowed, my body touched that sod.

With these last words, Paramahansa ji slid to the floor, a beatific smile on his face. He had often said: "I do not wish to die in bed, but with my boots on, speaking of God and India."