

Foreword

BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA



All the world's major religious traditions are similar in having the potential to help human beings live at peace with each other and with themselves, while taking care of our natural environment. Therefore, harmony among our different religions is essential for world peace. In order to develop genuine harmony, it is extremely important that we cultivate genuine respect for one another and come to appreciate the value of others' faith traditions.

Since I was a boy in Tibet, I have regarded India with great respect and admiration. Its civilization has given rise to a long series of great teachers endowed with both human intelligence and a sense of responsibility towards the community. Consequently, a rich and sophisticated philosophy of non-violence, tolerance, and pluralism has flourished here. To me, the greatest lesson of India's example is that genuine religious pluralism and toleration are achievable and, indeed, have been a historical fact. I often refer to *ahimsa* and religious harmony as India's treasures, and they have great potential to build a happy, compassionate, and non-violent society.

Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji is someone who seeks to put these ancient Indian traditions into practice today. We have met during interfaith meetings such as the Parliament of World Religions in Capetown in 1999 and

in Melbourne in 2009. Subsequently, I made an enjoyable visit along with other spiritual teachers and leaders including Mr. L. K. Advani, the former Deputy Prime Minister of India, to Haridwar and Rishikesh in April 2010, attending the launch of the admirable *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* project that Swamiji has initiated and the Sparsh Ganga campaign to clean and preserve the Ganges, to which he is particularly dedicated.

This book tells Swamiji's story, from his childhood eagerness to follow a spiritual way of life through his years of training to the present time, when as a spiritual leader, his responsibilities take him to many countries. In the twenty-first century, if spirituality is to contribute to positive change in the world, I believe well-intentioned words are not enough; the meaning of such words needs to be put into effect by taking practical action. There are many instances in the book of Swamiji doing this.

I feel sure that readers will find much in this book to interest and inspire them. I hope they may be encouraged by what they read to take practical steps according to their own circumstances to contribute to making the world in which we live a happier, more peaceful place.