

SURAT
SPIRITUAL
DECLARATION

PRESENTED TO
HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
DR. A..P. J. ABDUL KALAM
ON 15TH OCTOBER 2003
AT SURAT, GUJARAT



JAIN VISHVA BHARATI INSTITUTE
(DEEMED UNIVERSITY)
LADNUN

CREATOR'S MESSAGE

God has created the human being with brain and thinking faculty. He has commanded His creation to use the faculty with reasoning to reach His image.

This is the mission of human life.

Science is a recent boon God has bestowed upon mankind. Science with reasoning becomes the capital of the society.

Spirituality is a special quality God has given to the human being. The duty of the human being is to discover it and use it for the benefit of all.

In whatever field we work, be it science, technology, medicine, politics, policing, theology, religion or judiciary, we have to remain in the service of the common man whose well being is central to all human knowledge and endeavour.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

THE PRESENT CONDITION

Even while the above is the main focus of human life we find that our nation is facing loss of confidence in itself, at various levels. There is lack of tolerance for others' religion, faith and philosophy or viewpoints; there is lack of harmony; there is lack of respect for moral, ethical and cultural values and there is lack of sensitivity to poverty and inequality. Womanhood is not given its rightful place. There are various social problems like lack of employment opportunities and the resultant rise in crime and other social evils like addiction to drugs etc. Thus there are various forms of violence spreading in the country. While science and technology and economic growth would help in solving some of these problems, it is possible to manage these complex forces to the benefit of humanity only when the dimension of spirituality is embedded in human knowledge and efforts.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY

Every religion has a central component – spirituality driven by compassion and love. Rationality and logic are intrinsic to science and spirituality. A spiritual experience is the goal of a deeply religious person whereas a major discovery or an invention is the goal of a scientific mind. If both the aspects are unified, amalgamated in our own patterns, we can transcend to that level of thinking, in which unity is a cohesive concept. Then the enlightenment of citizenship will take place. For this environment, the two major components – Science and Spirituality have to interact. A Peace prayer can be the foundation for both.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PEACE PRAYER

*“Oh Almighty, create thoughts and actions
in the minds of the people of the nation
so that they live united.*

*Oh Almighty, bless the people
to take a path of life with righteousness
as righteousness gives the strength of character.*

*Help all religious leaders of the country to
give strength to the people to combat the divisive forces.*

*Guide the people to develop an attitude to appreciate different viewpoints
and ways of lives and transform enmity among individuals,
organizations and nations, into friendliness and harmony.*

*Embed the thought ‘Nation is bigger than the Individual’
in the minds of the leaders and people.*

*Oh God, bless the people to work with perseverance to
transform the country into a peaceful and prosperous nation.”*



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

SPIRITUAL COMPONENT OF RELIGION

In our country, certain regions are presently being subjected to tremendous stress due to violence in body and mind. If we study the history of India over 3000 years, we will find that the country has always stood for peace. It worked for peace; it prayed for peace to live in peace. But these days, peace seems to be endangered due to societal dynamics described briefly earlier. So, how does one bring back peace? Paradoxically, the 'I' in us wants peace. Nevertheless, to get peace one has to first get rid of the 'I' and 'me' as per our scriptures. This may be a tough proposition. For in virtually every sentence, every thought we are dictated by 'I' and 'me'. As said, if we remove "I" and "me" the ego will vanish. When the ego vanishes, hatred fades away. When hatred goes away, violence in mind and body will disappear. Therefore, peace comes when you forsake "I" and "Me". The spiritual goal of every religion is indeed violence free individual in mind and body and thereby a peaceful society. Removal of poverty is one of the components for realizing peace.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

REMOVAL OF POVERTY

We realize that the 300 million young citizens who are below 20 years of age in India want peace, prosperity, happiness and safety. It is our responsibility as religious and spiritual leaders to carry out this mission of removal of poverty from our people. Fortunately, there is a road map to go to the India 2020 of our national dream. That entails working intensively on five important areas that have been identified. These are agriculture and food processing, education and healthcare, information and communication technology, infrastructure development including networking of rivers and providing urban amenities in rural areas. If the villages prosper, the states prosper; if the states prosper, India can prosper. Such a network of prosperity is extremely important to realize the vision of the nation. Removal of poverty means addressing several related elements like removal of illiteracy and providing good governance as it is vital to ensure that funds allotted for the poor and the earnings by the poor people are not frittered away in various forms of social evils like corruption. This is where making of an enlightened citizen comes in. This acquires a moral, ethical and spiritual dimension. Therefore another component for prosperity is religious and spiritual partnership. We have considered how this partnership can be developed.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

RELIGION A BEAUTIFUL PARTNER IN THE NATION'S PROSPERITY

Religions are like exquisite gardens, places full of surpassing beauty and tranquility, like sacred groves filled with beautiful birds and their melodious songs. Religions are beautiful gardens, but they are islands. They are enchanting islets, veritable oases for the soul and the spirit. But they are islands nevertheless. If we can connect all these islands with love and compassion, in a 'garland project', we will have a peaceful, happy and prosperous India in front of us. Universal truths embodied in each religion are very similar and they will help to form the bridge thus reinforcing basic unity. Another fact of today is that the intellectual gap between the opinion maker class and the masses is rather large. The removal of the gap is best done by spreading knowledge and increasing the knowledge base of every citizen in all vital aspects of their lives. As the number of enlightened citizens increases, the ability to cope with and transform problems also increases. In order to achieve this, in addition to concentrating on education of the youth, there is also need for continual education of adult population and senior citizens on values of lives and about the basic spiritual unity of all religions. Education and intellectual activities are vital. In addition these values have to be reinforced in every citizen through specific projects, which can bring people together, irrespective of their social levels or religious beliefs.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

GARLAND PROJECTS

In order to do so we resolve to undertake the following projects and activities.

Project 1 : Celebration of inter—religious festivals.

Project 2 : Multi—religious projects

Project 3 : Education in and with the ambience of unity of religions.

Project 4 : Inter—faith dialogue.

Project 5 : National level independent and autonomous organisation managed by religious and spiritual leaders as well as scholars and enlightened citizens.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PROJECT 1

Every month in all parts of India there can be a multi-religious gathering to convey the core message attempted in the prayer of peace and about the basic truths contained in various religions. Such a prayer should be preceded by prayers from all religions practiced in that part of the country by respective religious and spiritual leaders in the presence of the people. Each month the day selected could be a holy day from one religion: Islam, Hindu, Christianity, Sikh, Parsi, Jain, Buddhist etc. Regular conduct of such meetings by all religious leaders and people from different religions respecting holy days of other religions will send a powerful message. If possible such gatherings can take place at the religious places where all persons from other religions also can gather on that day. People should also exchange pleasantries and sweets during these meetings, as is the practice in some parts of the country where unity of minds prevails. In addition, in order to spread the message of equality to everybody on that day a '*langar*' (community kitchen and eating) can be arranged so that all people eat common food sitting side by side.

How to organize these? We believe that, if all the religious and spiritual groups build strong connectivity between their own beautiful islands of happiness and solace, it is possible to turn these monthly meetings into mass movements for respecting each other's rituals, ways of life or view points. It will bring harmony and love. Peace and happiness will follow.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PROJECT 2

So far, religious groups have taken many efforts towards the removal of poverty and the accruing misery, in large or small scale, but in isolation. We will launch additionally a number of multi-religious projects in education, healthcare and water supply as well as for generating entrepreneurship and employment, to help the poor people. People will see for themselves that multiple religions are working together for common good. These efforts will elevate religions in the minds of the people and the nation will benefit.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PROJECT 3

All religious educational institutions operating in different parts of the country should enroll children from other religions in certain proportions and imbibe values such as religious tolerance, righteousness. The real purpose and the unity of religions should be embedded in the minds of the students. These children who are the pillars of tomorrow, will foster a sense of peace and amity between themselves and for others. Simple exercises to reinforce positive thinking can also attempted. In addition to these, specially designed value based educational material should be generated so that they are supplied in a large scale to the children. Attempts should also be made for large-scale dissemination of these through various forms of media. It may not be necessary to begin an exercise to generate these materials, as a large number of them are available in India and abroad. It may be necessary to search for them and shape them to suit our specific needs.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PROJECT 4

In addition to the above projects impinging directly on common people and citizens, it is also necessary to have a continual Inter-Faith-Dialogue between the religious and spiritual heads as well as scholars. This dialogue can address, among other things, minimum common code between religions, methods of creating congenial atmosphere for various religions, solutions for some of the burning problems of the society etc. Proceedings of and conclusion from such an Inter Faith Dialogues can be widely disseminated among people through various electronic and print media. Models for these Dialogues exist in some other countries as well. Maximum benefit may be derived from such knowledge sharing in addition to finding our own unique methods.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

PROJECT 5

The religious and spiritual leaders came to unanimous conclusion that in order to pursue the above in a sustained manner for achieving speedy results, it is essential to set up a national level independent and autonomous organization managed by religious and spiritual leaders as well as scholars and enlightened citizens. This organization inter-alia, will train persons in various essential aspects of different religions, in methods of spreading love and compassion among people, in removing hatred as well as in the basic theory and practice of non-violence. This organization being an independent entity will also become a focal point and a catalytic agent for organizing the other projects listed above and in extending necessary infrastructure for the expansion of the efforts into a national mass movement.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the congregation of spiritual and religious leaders came to the conclusion that with the above five key elements the "GARLAND PROJECT" for "Unity of Minds" and for creating "Enlightened Citizens" in India and eventually in the world, can be successful if we start taking action in all earnestness after this "SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION" made on 15th October 2003 in the presence of Hon'ble President of India.

India can emerge as a Developed Nation by 2020 with its civilizational heritage and value systems spreading harmony and peace to the whole world. This "Unity of Minds" can be achieved even while keeping intact the rich diversity of rites, rituals, ideas and beliefs amongst us and blending them with modern knowledge and skills.



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

SIGNED IN THE PRESENCE OF H.H. ACHARYA MAHAPRAJNA AT SURAT

Name of Spiritual leaders / Scholars

Signature

Shri Balgangadharanatha Swamiji

Swami Mahadev

Dr. Homi B. Dhalla

H.B. Dhalla

Bishop Dr. Thomas Dabre

Thomas Dabre

Yuvacharya Mahashraman

Yuvacharya Mahashraman

Sādvī Pramukha Kanakprabha

Sādvī Pramukha Kanakprabha

Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Sivaratri Desikendra Mahaswami ji

Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Sivaratri Desikendra Mahaswami ji

Rev. Stanislaus Fernandes

Rev. Stanislaus Fernandes

Swami Jitatmananda

Swami Jitatmananda

Rev. Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf

Rev. Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf

Rev. Ezeikal Isaac Malekar

Rev. Ezeikal Isaac Malekar

Prince Huzaiifa Mohyiuddin

Prince Huzaiifa Mohyiuddin

Brahma Kumari Sudesh Didi

B.K. Sudesh

Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

Ven. Rahul Bodhi

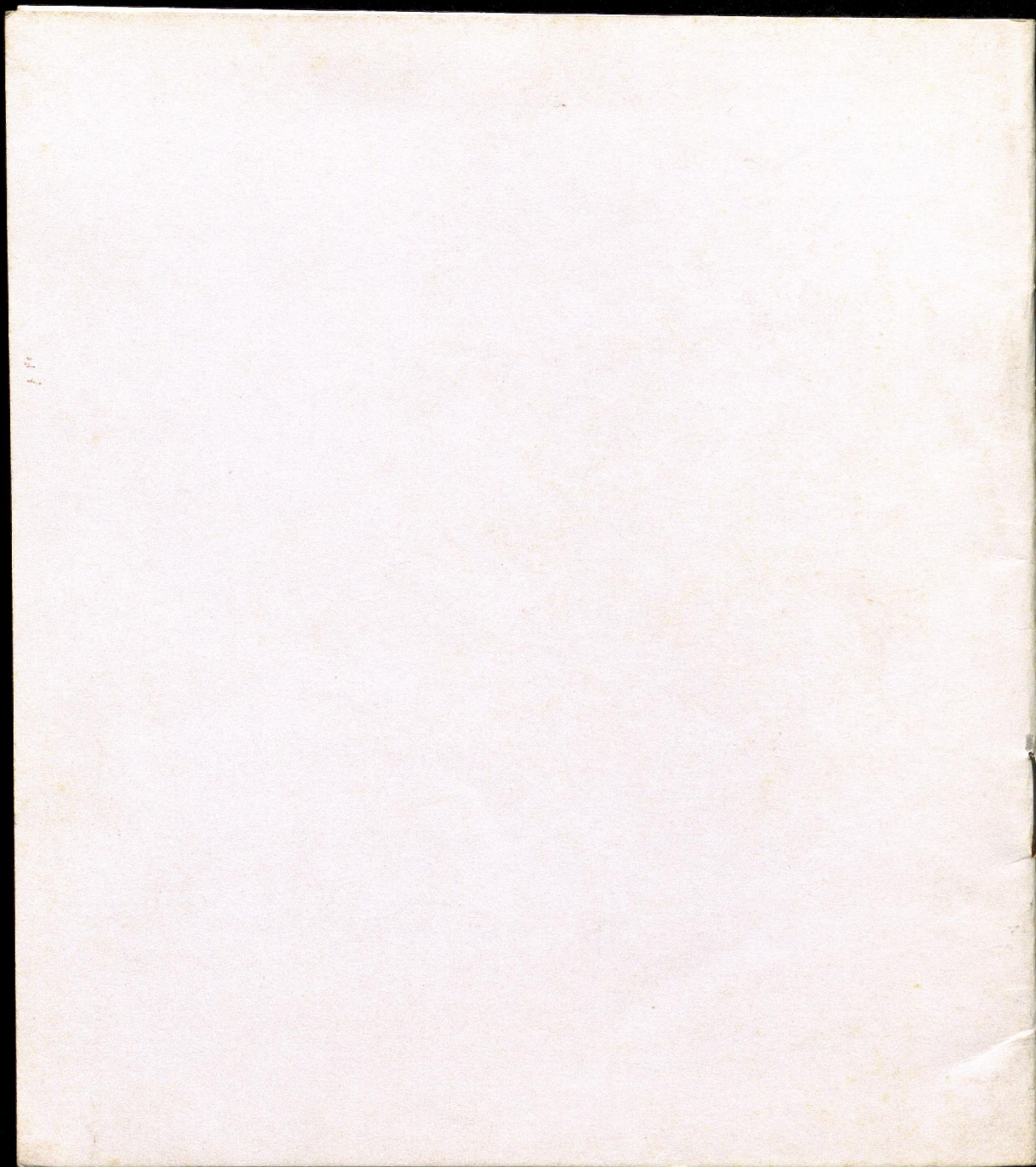
Ven. Rahul Bodhi

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION



TOWARDS ENLIGHTENED CITIZENSHIP



SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION



JAIN VISHVA BHARATI INSTITUTE (DEEMED UNIVERSITY) LADNUN, RAJASTHAN

PEACE PRAYER

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PEACE PRAYER



The Surat Spiritual Declaration has been implemented in many parts of the country. The Venerable spiritual leaders who assembled at Surat had already been practising the ideals embodied in the SSD. The SSD brought them together and we bring you reports from some of them. Few of them have not been able to send in their report due to other preoccupations. Some have been travelling and so have not been able to respond. We have collected as many as possible including that which we have been carrying regularly in our publication, 'U Can Change the World'. Since the SSD, few pages of U Can Change the World have been dedicated to such reports. The magazine itself is an expression of the SSD.



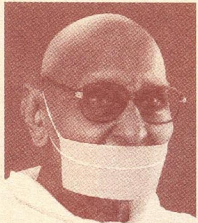


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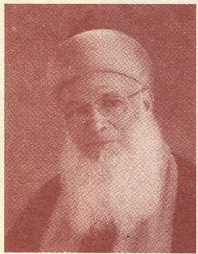
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SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION



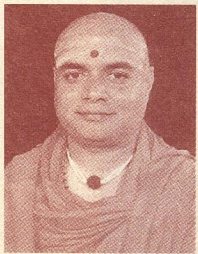
H. H. Acharya Mahaprajna

- “ It is, however, important not to limit human development only to academic exercises but also to sow the seeds of emotional transformation in the consciousness ”



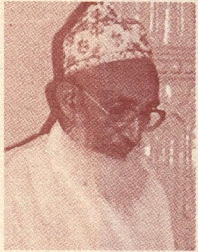
Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf Kichhachachvi

- “ Among all the human beings the best one is the one from whom other persons get comfort ”



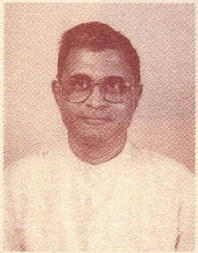
Shri Shri Shri Balagangadharanath Swamiji

- “ Whatever may be the present day pitfalls, which are due to fundamentalism, our country still has the capacity to overcome the deficiency and march ahead to enrich itself with peace and prosperity ”



His Holiness Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin

- “ Learning through the proper channel is easy, and when gained otherwise, proves to be the cause of harm and danger of going astray ”



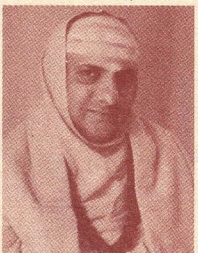
Bishop Thomas Dabre

- “ In the musical scale, there are different notations. That is why we are able to have beautiful music and a joyful symphony. ”



Dr. Homi B Dhalla

- “ Albert Einstein had said 'Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved by understanding.' ”



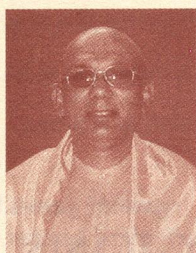
H H Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji

- “ Tolerance is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite ”



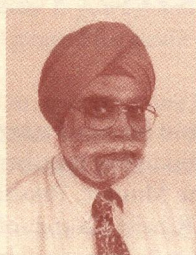
Shri Ezekiel Isaac Malekar

“ We must re-assert the principles of peace, justice and communal harmony so as to create a society that sustains and enriches life based on love, trust and brotherhood ”



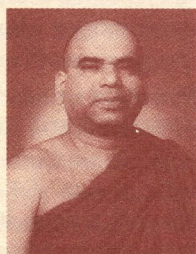
Swami Jitatmananda

“ Truth does not pay homage to any society ancient, or modern. Society has to pay homage to truth or die ”



Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

“ But a real meeting takes place between minds that are really open ”



Ven. Bhadant Rahula Bodhi

“ Becoming a noble person is not depending only on belief in God or belief in the religion or Dharma but it depends on our noble and correct actions our noble karma ”



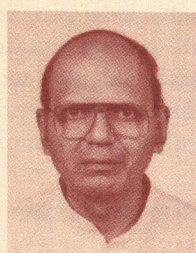
Sudesh Didi

“ So when all of us are united in our minds, in our hearts, we are able to generate spiritual strength in these world to uplift our nation ”



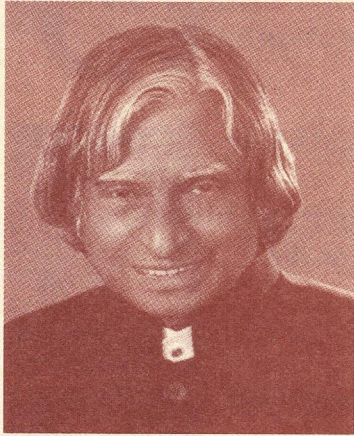
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

“ So we have to live with differences rather than try to eliminate them ”



Reverend Stanislaus Fernandes

“ Religion cannot be a palliative to one's selfishness but a call to service ”



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
AT THE
SURAT SPIRITUAL CONCLAVE
SURAT, OCTOBER 15, 2003

BUILD RESPECT FOR ALL RELIGIONS

I want to share with you one of my childhood experiences at the Island town of Rameswaram. My father had two friends. Father Bodel and Shri. Lakshmana Sasthirigal. This was when I was at the age of 10, these three great human beings discussing together the Bible Quoran and Gita. Interesting part of these three - my father was a custodian and the head of the Mosque. Pakshi Lakshmana Shastrigal was the vedic scholar of Rameswaram Temple and Father Bodel was the founder of Christ Church of Rameswaram. I got the best learning from them. How in an island, where there was no school, these three enlightened souls could sit and discuss about the love and compassion of religions. For me they are the most important learned role models who taught me how a religion could be transformed into spirituality. These three great minds belonging to three religions working together in a small village had provided the foundation for promoting unity of minds for generations to come. Rameswaram is also famous for a Siva temple where Rama had prayed, renowned Abul Kabul Darga and first famous Church in the island.

A flower as described in the Bhagwat Gita:

"See the flower, how generously it distributes perfume and honey. It gives to all, gives freely of its love. When its work is done, it falls away quietly. Try to be like the flower, unassuming despite all its qualities". What a beautiful message for all generation of this nation, on integration of minds and universal mind. We have a tradition of experience with noble leadership, indomitable spirit and universal mind.

At this point I recall a sura from Holy Kuran:

"O' Prophet, you proclaim to the people

Who do not accept your preaching,

What you worship I do not worship,

And what I worship, you do not worship...

The result of your actions belongs to you,

The result of my actions belongs to me."

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;

Where there is hatred let me sow love;

And where there is injury, pardon;

And where there is doubt, faith;

And where there is despair, hope;

And where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

... to be consoled as to console;

...to be understood as to understand;

...to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

...it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

... and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Tawang Message

I learned in the Tawang monestry the concept of peace in the environment of violence in mind and body. The chief monk said that "If you look at the 3,000 years history of India, you'll find that the country has always stood for peace. It worked for peace; it prayed for peace and it will live for peace. But these days, peace does seem to be in short supply".

"So, how does one bring back peace?" the monk asked rhetorically. "Paradoxically, the 'I' in you wants peace. Nevertheless, to get peace you have to first get rid of the 'I' and 'me'. (This is what the Buddha realised after his enlightenment, when he grasped the principle of causation and the lack of self in all that is.)

"So, can you get rid of the self? Seems like a tough proposition. For in virtually every sentence, every thought we have 'I' and 'me'. But if you remove these entities, the ego will vanish," the monk said to me. "When the ego vanishes, hatred fades away. When hatred goes away then violence in mind and body will disappear. Therefore, peace comes when you forsake ego and the sense of self.

Acharya Mahaprajna's Message

All mindlessness begins with the body and being unaware of this fact is the root cause of the fear. Fear can exist only in a state of mindlessness. In a state of mindfulness fear cannot exist. Knowledge is an emancipator. A child fears many things, which an adult does not, because the latter has come to know many laws. Only that man can give others freedom from fear, who has attained such freedom for himself and whose whole being is resonant with vibrations of fearlessness. Only that man has complete protection from fear who offers such protection to others.

Maharishi Pathanjali's Yoga Sutra

"When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds, your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, you will find yourself in a new great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be."

That is something addressed to all of us.

Conclusion

As an individual and as the president of this country, I have studied the democratic setup or any other form of government in many countries. In my view no society of billion people are found to be with such a multi-lingual, multi-community, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-social diversity. Our core competence has been to provide democratic leadership and management for over one billion people. What makes such a big system to move. It is the civilizational heritage of our great country.

Each one of us has a page in history. Everyone has a religion, a family, a supporting society and a dream. We do not have time to observe what is happening around us. We generally tend to revolve around ourselves. Earth revolves around itself and orbits around the sun. The choice before us is of revolving round ourselves to die, or of revolving round the sun in order to live. Hence, our thoughts, ideas and actions have to constantly change and expand. Now it is the right time for all of us to think of the nation beyond the boundaries. National development has two components - economic development and life with value system. That comes from civilizational heritage.

I seek the help of the religious leaders and to be the partners in the national development task leading to a developed India by 2020.

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HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
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This is the mission of human life.

Science is a recent boon God has bestowed upon mankind. Science with reasoning becomes the capital of the society. Spirituality is a special quality God has given to the human being. The duty of the human being is to discover it and use it for the benefit of all.

In whatever field we work, be it science, technology, medicine, politics, policing, theology, religion or judiciary, we have to remain in the service of the common man whose well being is central to all human knowledge and endeavour.

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DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY

Every religion has a central component – spirituality driven by compassion and love. Rationality and logic are intrinsic to science and spirituality. A spiritual experience is the goal of a deeply religious person whereas a major discovery or an invention is the goal of a scientific mind. If both the aspects are unified, amalgamated in our own patterns, we can transcend to that level of thinking, in which unity is a cohesive concept. Then the enlightenment of citizenship will take place. For this environment, the two major components – Science and Spirituality have to interact. A Peace prayer can be the foundation for both.

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SPIRITUAL COMPONENT OF RELIGION

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REMOVAL OF POVERTY

We realize that the 300 million young citizens who are below 20 years of age in India want peace, prosperity, happiness and safety. It is our responsibility as religious and spiritual leaders to carry out this mission of removal of poverty from our people.

Fortunately, there is a road map to go to the India 2020 of our national dream. That entails working intensively on five important areas that have been identified. These are agriculture and food processing, education and healthcare, information and communication technology, infrastructure development including networking of rivers and providing urban amenities in rural areas. If the villages prosper, the states prosper; if the states prosper, India can prosper. Such a network of prosperity is extremely important to realize the vision of the nation. Removal of poverty means addressing several related elements like removal of illiteracy and providing good governance as it is vital to ensure that funds allotted for the poor and the earnings by the poor people are not frittered away in various forms of social evils like corruption. This is where making of an enlightened citizen comes in. This acquires a moral, ethical and spiritual dimension. Therefore another component for prosperity is religious and spiritual partnership. We have considered how this partnership can be developed.

RELIGION A BEAUTIFUL PARTNER IN THE NATION'S PROSPERITY

Religions are like exquisite gardens, places full of surpassing beauty and tranquility, like sacred groves filled with beautiful birds and their melodious songs. Religions are beautiful gardens, but they are islands. They are enchanting islets, veritable oases for the soul and the spirit. But they are islands nevertheless. If we can connect all these islands with love and compassion, in a 'garland project', we will have a peaceful, happy and prosperous India in front of us. Universal truths embodied in each religion are very similar and they will help to form the bridge thus reinforcing basic unity.

Another fact of today is that the intellectual gap between the opinion maker class and the masses is rather large. The removal of the gap is best done by spreading knowledge and increasing the knowledge base of every citizen in all vital aspects of their lives. As the number of enlightened citizens increases, the ability to cope with and transform problems also increases. In order to achieve this, in addition to concentrating on education of the youth, there is also need for continual education of adult population and senior citizens on values of lives and about the basic spiritual unity of all religions.

Education and intellectual activities are vital. In addition these values have to be reinforced in every citizen through specific projects, which can bring people together, irrespective of their social levels or religious beliefs.

GARLAND PROJECTS

In order to do so we resolve to undertake the following projects and activities.

PROJECT 1: CELEBRATION OF INTER-RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Every month in all parts of India there can be a multi-religious gathering to convey the core message attempted in the prayer of peace and about the basic truths contained in various religions. Such a prayer should be preceded by prayers from all religions practiced in that part of the country by respective religious and spiritual leaders in the presence of the people. Each month the day selected could be a holy day from one religion: Islam, Hindu, Christianity, Sikh, Parsi, Jain, Buddhist etc. Regular conduct of such meetings by all religious leaders and people from different religions respecting holy days of other religions will send a powerful message. If possible such gatherings can take place at the religious places where all persons from other religions also can gather on that day. People should also exchange pleasantries and sweets during these meetings, as is the practice in some parts of the country where unity of minds prevails. In addition, in order to spread the message of equality to everybody on that day a 'langar' (community kitchen and eating) can be arranged so that all people eat common food sitting side by side.

How to organize these? We believe that, if all the religious and spiritual groups build strong connectivity between their own beautiful islands of happiness and solace, it is possible to turn these monthly meetings into mass movements for respecting each other's rituals, ways of life or view points. It will bring harmony and love. Peace and happiness will follow.

PROJECT 2: MULTI-RELIGIOUS PROJECTS

So far, religious groups have taken many efforts towards the removal of poverty and the accruing misery, in large or small scale, but in isolation. We will launch additionally a number of **multi-religious** projects in education, healthcare and water supply as well as for generating entrepreneurship and employment, to help the poor people. People will see for themselves that multiple religions are working together for common good. These efforts will elevate religions in the minds of the people and the nation will benefit.

PROJECT 3: EDUCATION IN AND WITH THE AMBIENCE OF UNITY OF RELIGIONS

All religious educational institutions operating in different parts of the country should enroll children from other religions in certain proportions and imbibe values such as religious tolerance, righteousness. The real purpose and the unity of religions should be embedded in the minds of the students. These children who are the pillars of tomorrow, will foster a sense of peace and amity between themselves and for others. Simple exercises to reinforce positive thinking can also attempted. In addition to these, specially designed value based educational material should be generated so that they are supplied in a large scale to the children. Attempts should also be made for large-scale dissemination of these through various forms of media. It may not be necessary to begin an exercise to generate these materials, as a large number of them are available in India and abroad. It may be necessary to search for them and shape them to suit our specific needs.

PROJECT 4: INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

In addition to the above projects impinging directly on common people and citizens, it is also necessary to have a continual Inter-Faith-Dialogue between the religious and spiritual heads as well as scholars. This dialogue can address, among other things, minimum common code between religions, methods of creating congenial atmosphere for various religions, solutions for some of the burning problems of the society etc. Proceedings of and conclusion from such an Inter Faith Dialogues can be widely disseminated among people through various electronic and print media. Models for these Dialogues exist in some other countries as well. Maximum benefit may be derived from such knowledge sharing in addition to finding our own unique methods.

PROJECT 5: NATIONAL LEVEL INDEPENDENT AND AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION MANAGED BY RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS AS WELL AS SCHOLARS AND ENLIGHTENED CITIZENS

In addition to the above projects impinging directly on common people and citizens, it is also necessary to have a continual Inter-Faith-Dialogue between the religious and spiritual heads as well as scholars. This dialogue can address, among other things, minimum common code between religions, methods of creating congenial atmosphere for various religions, solutions for some of the burning problems of the society etc. Proceedings of and conclusion from such an Inter Faith Dialogues can be widely disseminated among people through various electronic and print media. Models for these Dialogues exist in some other countries as well. Maximum benefit may be derived from such knowledge sharing in addition to finding our own unique methods.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the congregation of spiritual and religious leaders came to the conclusion that with the above five key elements the "GARLAND PROJECT" for "Unity of Minds" and for creating "Enlightened Citizens" in India and eventually in the world, can be successful if we start taking action in all earnestness after this "SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION" made on 15th October 2003 in the presence of Hon'ble President of India.

India can emerge as a Developed Nation by 2020 with its civilizational heritage and value systems spreading harmony and peace to the whole world. This "Unity of Minds" can be achieved even while keeping intact the rich diversity of rites, rituals, ideas and beliefs amongst us and blending them with modern knowledge and skills.

HISTORY OF THE SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

BACKGROUND

It all began with the President visiting Surat on 15th October 2003, and meeting a conclave of religious leaders in the presence of His Holiness Acharyashree Mahaprajna. During this visit with religious leaders, he wished to draw up a common agenda for the development of "The Enlightened Citizen". The President had encapsulated his idea in this verse:

*"Oh Almighty, create thoughts and actions in the minds of the people of my nation, so that they live united.
Light the minds of the religious leaders of my country to evolve a bridge among religions with compassion and love.
Embed the thought 'Nation is bigger than the individual or party' in the minds of the leaders.
May god, bless my people to work hard and transform the country into a prosperous nation in a decade"*

To take this further the following programme titled "UNITY OF MINDS" were held drawn up. The programme was held over two days.

14th October 2003 : Pre-Conclave Meeting (3 pm – 5 pm)
15th October 2003 : Conclave Meeting (9.15 am – 11 am and 11. am to 1.00 pm)

In this forum, leaders and philosophers from different faiths deliberated on the above idea and identified specific points of action, which can be followed by the common man so as to ensure "peace, prosperity, happiness and safety". The proceedings of the meeting were recorded and placed before the President at the Conclave Meeting.

A SHORT REPORT

The Terapanth Bhavan wore a festive look on the morning of the 14th of October 2003... about what the President of India was to remark the next day that as he entered the building the ambience was "beautiful". "Beautiful because of the beautiful minds it housed. Indeed Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain spiritual leaders gathered together in the diamond city of Surat to work out a strategy on how to make an Enlightened Citizen. A wonderful form of spiritual activism, if one may call it so, emerged as they looked not only at demands on character made by any and every religion but also on the social conditions that caused the degradation of morality. Chaired by Y.S.Rajan, the pre-Conclave meeting held on the 14th of October found every leader expressing his/ her views. As Acharya Mahaprajna later remarked, "There was complete unison for there was as much receptivity as there was communication." Mr Y.S.Rajan, Vice Chancellor, Punjab Technical University summed up the proceedings to prepare the Surat Spiritual Declaration.

The following day it was presented to the President of India. The hall of Terapanth Bhavan was charged with expectation as the President a picture of goodness and humility walked in. He enjoyed a music presentation by children of a school who sung the verse written by the President himself.

At the Conclave meeting, the President requested the spiritual leaders to add to the declaration if they had any comments. He also said he found the declaration very beautifully prepared. His speech is reproduced in full in the following pages.

An Open Meeting in a pandal housing more than six to seven thousand people followed this meeting. The President inspired everybody and even asked the people to recite after him, a pledge to serve the nation and to take India to the top. There was euphoria amongst the people as well as the spiritual leaders for once again they felt idealism had got a role to play in everyday life.

... FOLLOW UP ...

NOVEMBER UPDATES

13-15 November 2003

A national seminar on The Ethico-Spiritual Paradigm in social work was held in Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University) Ladnun. A participant's perspective follows is given in the following pages.

Two hours per day were devoted to discussion on the Surat Spiritual Declaration. While all participants who included people from different areas of social work were keen and inspired, immediate problems posed themselves. Was it within the mandate of the University? Should an NGO be formed? How should the multi-religious aspect be woven in so as to yield positive results. Discussions ranged from the manner in which the activities could be undertaken to the specific projects that could be undertaken. It was highlighted that development projects pertaining to common problems like that of water could be attempted first. Many examples from Maharashtra, like the Pani Panchayat have shown the way. It was also emphasized that local participation should not be limited to the people but should also extend to the official and political machinery. Lastly it was also considered on how well equipped the University was to undertake such a job in terms of its manpower and know-how. While know-how can always be harnessed, manpower has to be better planned. Planning emerged as the MOST essential feature of the programme.

Equally it was felt that there could be no better place for such a movement to begin. With these ideals already espoused in the Anuvrat programme, with the University already functioning under the spiritual mandate, the ethico-spiritual paradigm for social work should rightfully evolve here and the projects under Surat Spiritual Declaration could spark the entire process. More meetings and brainstorming seemed necessary. It was then that considering all the pros and cons, and taking into account the time required to plan strategies, a suggestion was made to begin with two projects: one to impart training in non-violence and the other to impart training in vocational skills. The training in non-violence has a component of inter-religious understanding. It is also a process of transforming negative thoughts into positive ones, of understanding compassion. Since the discussions in the seminar seemed to point to a lacuna in this area in the field of professional social work specifically, this programme may actually serve more than one purpose. Equally importantly the University is well equipped to deliver the goods.

The second one, which is with regard to imparting vocational training needs networking with government agencies, voluntary agencies and other potential employers. While this falls into place, the University is identifying the villages where work can begin. It will work in co-operation with other local bodies like the Anuvrat Samiti, the Mahila Mandal and so on.

20 November 2003

The President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam inaugurated the 78th Annual Meeting of the Association of Indian Universities, at Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupathi.

Among the many points raised by the President for consideration by Vice Chancellors gathered from around the country, the first dealt with transformation of the student from his entry into the University to his exit by promoting leadership qualities and the evolution of an enlightened citizen. In this context the president spoke of the Surat Spiritual Declaration and wished it to be circulated to all the Vice Chancellors. It was circulated the day after to all present. Dr. Dongaonkar, Secretary-General, AIU said the organization would later send by post to the Vice Chancellor not present.

... FOLLOW UP ...

GLIMPSE OF SEMINAR ON ETHICO-SPIRITUAL PARADIGM LOVE AND JOY IN COMMUNITY EFFORT

"It is the individual who manages a programme, an institution, a social group or a nation. Should he be deficient in moral qualities, the best organisations will collapse... The dream of social and national reconstruction is entirely dependent on individual reform."

—Acharya Sri Tulsi

This quotation from *Anuvrat* came to my mind after attending a recent path-breaking National Seminar on 'Social Work – the Spiritual-Ethico paradigm'. *Anuvrat* is a code of conduct enunciated by the celebrated Jain saint and scholar Acharya Tulsi for building healthy society. (Incidentally, former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had also evinced keen interest in the *Anuvrat* movement.)

The seminar was in a sense a revelation. Speaker after speaker highlighted the bankruptcy of the teaching system in relating the academic curriculum to the grassroots realities. A veteran Social Work teacher confessed: "For the past 40 years my students have been telling me that what they study in their classes is not relevant in the field!"

A virtual endorsement of what Acharya Tulsi had articulated some time ago. The systemic failure was equally responsible for the present state of affairs as the lack of preparedness of an individual social worker. The three-day national seminar from 13 to 15 November 2003, organised by the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (a Deemed University) in Ladnun, Rajasthan, turned out to be an important brain-storming and soul-searching session among representatives from different religious faiths, thinkers, NGOs, and veteran and young social work teachers from leading institutes and colleges in India.

The Ladnun meet appeared to be a natural corollary to the 'Surat Spiritual Declaration' that aims to promote inter-faith efforts for peace, economic prosperity and communal harmony in the country. Initiated by Ladnun's Jain Institute (and signed by the venerable representatives from different religions in the presence of H.H. Acharya Mahaprajna), the 'Declaration' was presented to the President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, at Surat in Gujarat on 15 October 2003.

Among the 'Garland Projects' to be undertaken under the Surat Declaration, Project Number 2 provides clear guidelines to make Social Work efforts meaningful by reaching out to a wider constituency. It states: "So far religious groups have made many efforts towards the removal of poverty and the accruing misery, in large or small scale, but in isolation. We will launch additionally a number of multi-religious projects in education, healthcare and water supply as well for generating entrepreneurship and employment... People will see for themselves that multiple religions are working together for common good..."

Ms Sudhamahi Regunathan, Vice Chancellor of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, explained: "In the recent past religion or religious persuasion has come to be associated more with its potential for creating violence and fissures in the society. The cardinal message of religions extols spirit of joyful participation and compassionate love, and that needs to be translated into interfaith effort for the welfare of the society. And therein comes the importance of the spiritual-ethico paradigm."

In view of the prevailing dismal scenario, as described by a majority of the participants at the seminar, the Project 2 of the Surat Declaration appeared almost like a beacon of light, although a challenging proposition. The consensus at the Ladnun meet was that India and the developing world has to look beyond the Western model of 'Social Work', which was shaped primarily in the post-Industrial Revolution era and, since then, has developed pronounced Western nuances and idiom.

A UNESCO document on *The Challenge Presented to Culture by Science and Technology* (1977) avers: "There is an increasing awareness today that no programme can really improve human welfare and bring positive and lasting results unless it is well anchored in the cultural norms and values of the society in question."

However, the current cultural trend in the West, and elsewhere, has led some people to talk about "unchurched religion", or of being "spiritual but not religious". In the past decade, says Ms Laura J. Praglin of the University of North Iowa, social work in the United States of America and Europe mirrors a multitude of helping professions that are seeking to integrate spiritual perspectives in their knowledge base. These disciplines include not only social work, but also medicine, nursing, religious counseling, psychiatry, and psychology.

The mainstream medical establishment in the West, especially in Britain and the USA, is increasingly incorporating 'Vibrational Medicine' in treating patients in hospitals and clinics. Thus admitting that the 'modern medicine' has its limitations in curing/healing people. Many hospitals are now opening their doors to research in alternative medicine such as homoeopathy, acupuncture, acupressure, hands-on healing (like Reiki), and healing through colour and aromatherapy.

In the West social work continues to struggle with how to practically integrate a spiritual perspective into its mission. Says Edward R. Canda: "Social work is in the process of recovering from collective soul loss...an attempt to formalize, systematize, and apply natural compassion on a large scale through social institutions. This is a worthwhile but dangerous undertaking. Lao Tze, the Chinese founder of Taoism, said that immorality and cruelty came into being when codes of conduct and social control were invented."

Natural compassion, adds Canda, is reduced to artificial, bureaucratized, technocratic intervention as we become role-bound, rule-bound, categorized and socially controlled. "Think for a moment about the metaphor of intervention, used so commonly to describe social work practice; an outsider enters a client's life and manipulates it. This is a militaristic metaphor, like paratroopers dropping out of the sky into a combat zone.

"We have cut ourselves off from our ancestors, the healers and helpers of all cultures who understood helping as a natural response and a sacred imperative. We have often denied or split off the spiritual aspects of ourselves and our clients...In response to legitimate concerns with accountability, we are adopting capitalist, consumerist, fast food approaches to helping – the helping roles must be clearly and narrowly defined, the objectives clearly stated, the outcomes empirically measured, and all this within ten or less sessions. To complete the capitalist paradigm for helping, now the client is often called a consumer."

As the West moves from the strict 'logical positivism' to cautious flirtation with 'spiritualism' in the realm of social work and other fields, we in India need not be so hesitant or scared. In the vibrant and diverse society with various hues of religion and spirituality woven into our social fabric providing a colourful tapestry, it is the Social Work professionals who need to 'empower' themselves first and then venture out to 'empower' others. And herein lies the strength of religious/spiritual guidelines enunciated by religious leaders like Acharya Tulsi to 'empower' an individual.

The Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, an oasis situated in the midst of harsh rural desert, seems an ideal venue for launching a fresh social work paradigm or model. It is good news that the Institute plans to take up the challenge of launching 'multi-religious development projects' in 50 villages. The Institute's Department of Social Work and other NGOs can be usefully associated in this pioneering exercise.

A project that should evoke a great deal of interest among participating religious groups in the desert area is the need to create awareness about the importance of traditional systems of water harvesting. These systems have been extremely useful for centuries. But now because of changing lifestyles and policies are in danger of evaporating like the water itself. A New Delhi-based NGO, *Charkha*, has in the past decade done innovative work in this field by organizing communication workshops at the grassroots level.

It is becoming clear that social work professionals need to supplement their skills by getting out of the four walls of the lecture halls and spend a lot of time working at the grassroots level... Thus leading to the natural evolution of 'spiritual-ethico' approach. What is required for this purpose is an open and receptive mind that finds joy and love in participatory approach to community effort. (*Charkha Features*)

... FOLLOW UP ...

DECEMBER UPDATES

On 15th December 2003, a meeting was convened in the chamber of the Vice-Chancellor in her chairmanship at 2.30 pm to take forward Project number 2 of the Surat Spiritual Declaration. The meeting was attended by the following members.

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan | <i>Vice-Chancellor</i> |
| 2. | Dr. J.R. Bhattacharyya | <i>Registrar</i> |
| 3. | Sh. Vinod Kumar Kakkar | <i>Dy. Registrar</i> |
| 4. | Dr. Anand Prakash Tripathi | <i>Dy. Director and representative of Anurrat Samitis</i> |
| 5. | Dr. Bachhraj Dugar | <i>Head, Deptt. Of Non-Violence</i> |
| 6. | Dr. Ashok Kumar Jain | <i>Head, Deptt. Of Jainology</i> |
| 7. | Dr. Hemlata Talesara | <i>Professor</i> |
| 8. | Dr. B.P. Gaur | <i>Asst. Professor</i> |
| 9. | Samani Rijuprajna | <i>Principal, AKK Mahavidyalaya</i> |
| 10. | Sh. Kanhaiyalal Chhajer | <i>Vice President, Jain Vishva Bharati</i> |
| 11. | Sh. Jesraj Sekhani | <i>Amritvani</i> |
| 12. | Sh. Vijay Singh Barmecha | <i>President, Anuvrat Samiti, Ladnun</i> |
| 13. | Sh. Om Prakash Soni | <i>Vice President, Anuvrat Samiti, Ladnun</i> |
| 14. | Sh. Ranjeet Singh Baid | <i>President, Shri Jain Swetamber Terapanthi Sabha</i> |
| 15. | Smt. Suman Nahta | <i>Akhil Bharatiya Mahila Mandal</i> |
| 16. | Sh. Mod. Ayub | <i>Shaher Qazi</i> |
| 17. | Smt. Gulab Rani Bhojak | <i>Chairman, Nagarpalika, Ladnun</i> |
| 18. | Sh. Rajkumar Choraria | <i>President, Akhil Bharatiya Terapanth Samiti</i> |
| 19. | Smt. Kalpana Baid | <i>Citizen</i> |
| 20. | Smt. Mamta Dugar | <i>Citizen</i> |
| 21. | Smt. Kiran Devi Barmecha | <i>Citizen</i> |
| 22. | Smt. Pulkumari Dugar | <i>Citizen</i> |
| 23. | Sh. Vishnu Bhojak | <i>Citizen</i> |
| 24. | Ms. Veena Jain | <i>Dy. Registrar (Convenor)</i> |

The Vice Chancellor placed before the August gathering the need to embark on the project at two levels.

- 1) Training in living together—harmonial co-existence for which we need to impart training in non-violence.
- 2) Vocational training: With this being the focus, discussions were invited to draw up the modus operandi. Great enthusiasm was shown by all the participants though they also cautioned that the project should consider the reasons why many social development projects have failed and try to address those issues specifically. It was decided that
 - a) an area would be allotted to each of the participating organizations (five Terapanth organizations and one under the leadership of Qazi Muhammad Ayub Sahib)
 - b) The University will provide guidance, support through the following sub-committees:
 - i) The area profile and involvement of the local sarpanch: Department of Social Work will be responsible for it. The Anuvrat representation will also be responsible for the above. He will ensure cooperation with the local area leaders.
 - ii) The Department of Non-violence and Science of Living will be responsible for training in harmonial co-existence, that is learning the skills of Non-violence.
 - iii) The Professor of Education and the Dy. Registrar Administration will be in charge of vocational training.

The first set of meetings with the areas leaders, will take place in the first week of January. The department of social work will provide the area profile. In the second week of January, the area leaders with members of the sub committee will meet with the local area representatives like the sarpanch and hold meetings in the selected area. The course of action charted out will differ from area to area and a report of the progress made will be made available every month.

While the above decisions were taken some other major points thrown up during discussions were that an informal NGO structure may be followed for execution of the project.

More people from the town be invited in the project. The project belongs to everybody. Whosoever is willing to take leadership can take the area and support will be given by University.

The University will supply copies of the Surat Spiritual Declaration in Hindi so that they are freely distributed amongst the people.

It was also suggested that a meeting may be held in Ladnun town to create awareness of Surat Spiritual Declaration.

For health facilities it was suggested a mobile van be donated to the University by whosoever is able to do so.

... FOLLOW UP ...

LIBERATE CHRISTMAS FROM STEREOTYPES

VALSON THAMPU

Rev. Valson Thampu's call for spirituality across religious frontiers has been ringing loud and clear for some time now. Taking the initiative to actualize the idea, Rev Thampu hosted a Christmas party bringing together people from all other faiths. He endorsed the message of the Surat Spiritual Declaration which was distributed to all those present in the gathering. As per project 1 of the Declaration it was decided to hold monthly meetings in different places, on different religious occasions bringing together people from different faiths. Now we take you along to the party held on 21.12.03...

A happy band of people came together to share and to celebrate the meaning of Christmas in TRACI House, New Delhi on December 21, 2003. They were from diverse faiths and walks of life: Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Arya Samajis, and Christians. There were some very poor and some very rich people there. Also a few celebrities and several very ordinary people. Some were old and some young. The goodly company comprised both women and men: the latter more energetic and eloquent, as is the case these days. But all were equal and at home. All at once the joy of Christmas saturated the air. And ourselves, unawares, beginning to sing, "Joy to the World". Mrs. Mohini Giri, formerly the Chairman of the National Commission for Women, gave the lead and the rest joined her. Soon we found ourselves breaking out into zestful singing. In point of fact, we were neither Hindus, nor Sikhs, nor Jains nor Christians. We were utterly unaware of all labels. We were just children of God, rejoicing in the birth of the Holy Babe.

We did not follow any set order of worship or programme. Sure enough we each had some carols photocopied on sheets of paper. We also had a copy of the Bible. We were free in the presence of God to feel and to do what we liked. A group of young people regaled us with angelic Christmas singing, making us feel that the angelic choir on the first Christmas night could not have done much better. It occurred to us to think that the Christmas event was deliberately and dramatically non-stereotypical. But, sadly, we have turned ruined by stereotypes. Only think of your Christmas Father, no further argument will be needed. Christmas is all about giving. But, by inventing the Santa Claus, we have turned Christmas into an excuse for getting. We all want to get something from Santa; but who among us ever thinks of giving anything at all to poor old Santa? Who pays even a moment's thought to this elderly bearded man, or the reality that hides behind this mask? The informal Christmas message was on "Christmas: a date with the Child". It was the theme that forced into my mind as I sat there, taking in the celebratory ambience in the room. Physical age apart, I found ourselves to be a group of children. And it dawned on me that only those who are children at heart can rejoice in the birth of the Babe. Herod, the adult king, was so unnerved by this event, went mad about it and ordered the massacre of two thousand male children. Rulers go mad when the child in them dies. Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you; unless you turn back and become like children you shall in no way enter the Kingdom of God".

SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

The strengths of the child are:

- (a) The child listens. Christmas is all about listening. In the whole of the Nativity story, the human voice is heard rarely. God is speaking and, for a change, humans are listening. That is the exact opposite of what happens in religions. There God is silent and humans are making all sorts of noises. The Babe has come to teach us that it is more blessed to listen than to speak. That alone can eradicate loneliness from this planet. But the whole world is hurting in loneliness because everyone wants to speak and no one wants to listen. The child revels in listening.
- (b) The child is free, especially in the mind. The child is free from stereotypes. Spirituality militates against stereotypes for they amount to inward slavery: the slavery in our minds. There is no trace of the stereotype anywhere in the Nativity Story, which is a spiritual, not religious, event. Stereotypes breed insensitivity, cruelty and hate. They degrade neighbours into enemies and suppress compassion and fellow feeling. Christmas is an invitation to cast out stereotypes of every kind, especially religious stereotypes.
- (c) Finally, the child rejoices in "being with". The deepest joy of a child is in being with others, especially her parents. The mind of a child is not fractured with hate and alienation. The child is free to "be with" all else. Only a child can transcend caste, creed and colour. Only a child will consent to be born in a cattle-shed, which stands outside of all man-made labels of discrimination and division. Cows vary in colour; but the milk they yield has only one colour.

This brief Christmas message was followed by spontaneous sharing. Barely had I concluded my reflections on the meaning of Christmas, when Mrs. Nandita Bakshi, an ex-bureaucrat, sprang to her feet, her face incandescent with joy and eagerness, to acknowledge her gratitude at being able to attend a Christmas service for the first time in her life. She went on to share with us the joy of being able to intuit the child that God has created all of us to be. Mrs. Mohini Giri, felt that Christmas should be celebrated with the children in the slums and on the streets and, in so doing, pointed to the possibilities for Christmas 2004. Mrs. Ameeta Mullah Wattal, a Kashmiri Pandit and the distinguished principal of Springdales School, Pusa Road, went eloquent about her experiences of studying and growing up in Convent schools and the profound influence that Jesus had and continues to have on her. Ms. Nirmala Deshpande, eminent Gandhian and peace activist, expounded in her short and sweet manner, the meaning of Christmas as well as the message of Jesus Christ. Mrs. Promila Kapoor shared her experiences of the Christian community. Mrs. Sudhamahi Regunathan, the Vice Chancellor of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Rajasthan, acknowledged her personal relationship with Jesus as well as her joy in singing Christmas carols and went on to lead in the singing of a few carols. She shared with us the *Surat Declaration* as a call to inter-religious cooperation and trans-religious spirituality. Brig. Kapoor recalled his wonderful experience during World War II when, on Christmas Day, the guns fell silent all along the African theatre of war. "Jesus silenced the guns; and he has the power to do so," said the Brigadier.

A couple of hours had passed without our knowing it. The joy of sharing Christmas was so deep and enchanting. It made us decide that our coming together should not be a mere annual event. Jesus came to enable us to come together and to stay together. So we decided that we would continue to meet, say once a month, moving from place to place and consolidate the peace of God which is a divine gift for all mankind. The carol service ended with a prayer for peace in the world, focusing especially on the peace process now afoot between India and Pakistan.

... FOLLOW UP ...

BRIEF REPORT ON DELHI PEACE SUMMIT

Dr. Homi Dhalla, an Interim Apex Body member of the Surat Spiritual Declaration gives a brief account of the conference of the same genre attended by him.

As a prelude to the next Parliament of the World's Religions, which is to be held in Barcelona in July 2004, a mini-Parliament of religious leaders, scholars and peace activists was held in New Delhi from December 7-10, 2003. It was to initiate an environment of peace that an International Summit on the theme "Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace" was organized by the Delhi Peace Summit in partnership with the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR), Chicago. 70 delegates from 18 countries and about 250 delegates from India attended this conference. Various international organizations such as International Association for Religious Freedom, the Temple of Understanding and the United Religions Initiative had also sent their representatives.

In the evening of December 7, the conference was inaugurated at the Ashoka Hotel by Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India. He called for a harmonious blend of science and spirituality so that the culture of peace and harmony is restored both in the family and in society. He added, "When religion is elevated to the level of spirituality and when science is harmoniously blended with spirituality for development, then real peace, harmony and happiness can be restored in the family, state, nation and the world." In his address he also referred to the importance of the Surat Spiritual Declaration, which has given direction to the interfaith movement in India.

The programme of the conference was chalked out with deep thought as it covered various areas of importance. In the morning of December 7, there were concurrent sessions on the Role of Women in Building the Culture of Peace and a similar session for youth. With so much violence, which has spread its cancerous tentacles in society, the suggestions put forward by the women and youth were most pragmatic.

The afternoon sessions were about sharing stories in interfaith solidarity and workshops on building the culture of peace through inter-faith cooperation. The speakers faced a volley of questions and one was able to obtain fresh insights regarding the above issues.

The morning session of December 8 commenced with devotional prayers. This was followed by presentations on the "Importance of Inter-religious Dialogue for promoting the Culture of Peace." There were nine speakers each representing the major world religions. The new climate of interfaith dialogue has thrown open new paths for a non-confrontational discussion of your brothers' religion. Later in the afternoon a group process on solidarity was conducted by Rev. Dirk Ficca, Executive Director of CPWR.

On the final day, in the morning there were concurrent sessions on the theme "Promoting the Culture of Peace through Social Justice and Empowerment." The topics covered were of great importance and interest viz., globalization, gender equity, ecology, interfaith education, poverty alleviation and empowerment of Dalits. A number of women contributed papers and animated discussions ensued.

This was followed by a debate and the finalization of the Declaration of the Delhi Peace Summit. Dr. Karan Singh chaired this session.

The valedictory function was held at a memorable spot where Mahatma Gandhi fell to an assassin's bullet in January 1948. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the worlds most sought after spiritual leader, delivered the valedictory address. He is a person who exudes quiet authority and has become a legend in his lifetime. This was followed by devotional songs sung by school children. A Declaration of the Delhi Peace Summit was presented and Mr. Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago who is a Trustee of CPWR made the concluding remarks.

... FOLLOW UP ...

JANUARY UPDATES

... LADNUN

On the 5th January 2004, the area sub-committee under the guidance of Prof. Musafir Singh, surveyed eleven villages and collected detailed information about them. For this survey a detailed questionnaire has been prepared through which all the information was collected.

By the 8th January 2004, a report of all the eleven villages was presented. Meanwhile, the Vocation Sub-Committee visited the ITI at Jaswantgarh and met its principal Mr. VK Nagar. They talked to him and the students about the Surat Spiritual Declaration (SSD). Mr. Nagar was very enthusiastic and promised to help in all possible ways in SSD's implementation. The University will motivate women to learn tailoring, the ITI will train them in it and thereafter these women can become master trainers in their respective villages. Some of the students of the institute who have already received vocational training can be asked to train the people in their own villages. Such and similar ideas were discussed.

On the 9th January, after having been acquainted with the survey report, all the members of the committees visited the villages. During this informal visit, Committee members spoke to the members of the society to understand their problems and aspirations.

On the 10th of January 2004, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Prof. Musafir Singh. The villages, Khanpur, Bhayani, Chappara, Gunpalia, Badhed and Shanpura were selected. The sixth area will be a muslim area within Ladnun which will be identified by Qazi Sahib. Each area was visited by the members of the local organizations. Preliminary talks with the local level workers/ leaders was initiated.

On the 15th of January, the sub committee members visited the Muslim area under the guidance of Qazi Saheb

... DELHI

On the 12th of January 2004, a meeting was held in Delhi with Mr. Y.S. Rajan, Mr. S. Regunathan, Mr. M.L. Sethia and Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan in the presence of Muni Lokprakash Lokesh. The meeting was held to discuss the action to be taken on point no. 5 of the SSD.

As intimated earlier the 16 spiritual leaders who met in Surat will be called the Interim Apex Body Members (IABM) and the Founder Members. A small secretariat will be formed to carry forth the activity relating to SSD. Record of the expenses incurred will be kept separately so that they may be given to the National Body as and when it is constituted. The National Level Organisation will be a society. the Memorandum of Article (MOA) for which will be drawn up. The draft of the MOA will be sent to all the IABM. After their approval is sought, further plan of action will be decided.

In the meanwhile, it is suggested to all those believing in or associated with the SSD in any manner to enlist the membership of spiritual leaders who could not attend the SSD at Surat. These spiritual leaders will also be the Interim Apex Body Members.

The meeting also explored various possibilities for collecting funds for the Autonomous organization. It also requested suggestions from the members.

FEBRUARY UPDATE

...From different parts of the country.

The journal of Peace on the Glenn and Gandhian Studies, a quarterly of Gandhi Media Centre brought out a special volume on the Glenn D Paige and Non-Killing Political Science. In the section titled Focus on Ahimsa in Action, Prof. S. Jeyapragasam and Shri N.Vasudevan have written an article titled "A Non-killing and Non-violence Society; H.H. Acharya Mahaprajna shows the way". In this article they have given a brief introduction to the Ahimsa Yatra which is being undertaken by Acharyashre for the past four years.

They have said, The Acharya during his Padayatra stresses in his dialogues, speeches and discussions with people from various walks of life, the supreme importance of developing new ethos, new dialogue and a readiness to respect diversity through profound understanding of Anekant. The lucid and clear analysis that he makes of the contemporary crisis encourages those who listen to him to introspect and sink differences and become agents and tools of genuine ahimsa.....

.....One of the highly significant developments took place on 15th October 2003 at Surat in Gujarat when the Acharya met with 15 religious/spiritual leaders representing different religions and areas of public life and was the signing of the historic Surat Spiritual Declaration which was presented to the President of India, Dr. A.P.J Abdulkalam. The Surat Spiritual Declaration has the potential to initiate a spiritual revolution of unprecedented magnitude and in its essentials appeared to be a new Magna Carta for a non-killing and nonviolent social order...

...In Ladnun

On the 10th February 2004, a meeting was held in Ladnun wherein the following facts were presented.

- i. That the Anuvrat Samiti has adopted the villages of Khanpur and Bhiyani. They will be setting up a tailoring unit. Women and girls will be trained in this unit. After one month of vocational training they will also be given training in non-violence. A Library will also be set up in the villages to promote the reading habits.
- ii. Villages Batede and Gunpalia will replicate the Acharya Tulsi Shiksha Pariyojana (ATSP). The ATSP was first launched in the villages of Koel where in about thirty girls will be taking their class 8th examination through Open School in the third week of April. Classes in Batede and Gunpalia will begin in July/August but the area will be sensitized now.
- iii. In the villages of Shyampura and Chhapara young men and boys will be motivated to go to ITI in Jaswantgarh for vocational training.
- iv. Independent of taking students to ITI, training in Non-Violence will begin in ITI soon.

On 25th Feb 2004 the Tailoring Unit and Library in Khanpur and Bhiyani were inaugurated.

FEBRUARY UPDATE

... In Delhi

A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON THE SURAT SPIRITUAL DECLARATION

Just as little drops of water make a mighty ocean, little groups of thinkers and dedicated people are creating awareness and discussing the modus operandi of the SSD. This meeting brought to fore the need for changes sensitive to interfaith ideas at the level of education and grass root development.

On the 1st February 2004, a Round Table Discussion was held at India International Centre, (Conf. No. II) in the presence of Muni Lokprakash Lokesh and Muni Prashant Kumar. The meeting was chaired by Dr. L.M. Singhvi, Member of Parliament and Chancellor, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University). It was an honour to welcome Dr. Glenn D. Paige Professor Emeritus at University of Hawaii, president of the Center for Global Nonviolence and the author of "Nonkilling Global Political Science."

Mr. Y.S. Rajan, Vice-Chancellor, Punjab Technical University, came to Delhi to participate in the discussion. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, former Director, Gandhi Smriti Darshan Samiti, flew down from Thiruvanthapuram specially for this programme. Another unassuming participant was Dr. Sanjay Paswan, Hon'ble Minister for State, HRD. The participants were a gallery of thinkers among whom were Prof. PV Inderesan, Dr. Ausaf Ali, Ms. Seema Sharma, Mr. R. Venkatanarayan, Ms. Jaya Indiresan, Mr. Ezeikal Isaac Malekar, Mr. J. Veeraraghavan, Brig & Dr. Kapoor, Dr. S.C. Manchanda, Mr. S. Regunathan IAS, Mr. M.L. Sethia, Mr. T.M. Lalani and so on. Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan in her welcome address explained how the declaration was drawn up. On October 15th 2003, when the President of India visited Surat, 15 religious leaders had already met and drawn up this declaration based on what each one felt and decided that each one carried out activities based on the Surat Spiritual Declaration (SSD) in their own field.

'We are meeting today to enable us to draw up a more concrete and larger plan of action with a larger base. We seek your suggestions as to how to take it further' she added.



Dr. Singhvi hailed everyone as fellow travellers in a common cause of unity, harmony, amity, and understanding and in shaping a future of which all may be proud of and in handing over to posterity the wisdom acquired through the ages undamaged. He said he was delighted to see men and women of goodwill, of different ages and faith traditions, and from different backgrounds assembled in a quest for the resolution of the problems which afflict our society. He also said that the Surat Declaration was of great relevance as it was born not only out of the experience derived from our own society but also because it is rooted in the affirmation of the spiritual nature of human consciousness and had the components of the spirituality of all faith traditions. He emphasized that it is not an escapist declaration, but a declaration of an encounter with reality as it dealt with lack of confidence in the heart of humanity, lack of sensitivity to poverty and inequality, denial of the right place to womanhood, lack of tolerance for other religions, faith and philosophy as well as lack of moral, ethical and cultural values among other things. He likened the declaration to a lotus rising out of the muddy water in its effort to see light at the end of the dark tunnel. He said resolving these issues is not just an intellectual problem but a spiritual one for that alone will help us to tackle intellectual and material challenges that the world is facing. He hailed this declaration as a landmark and appreciated the deep sense of urgency behind this declaration. He said it was important to build bridges between the material and spiritual world, so that we do not view the world in fragments. He emphasized that the principle of human dignity ultimately is a spiritual principle in the everyday life of a nation as well as the world.

Prof. Glenn D' Paige in his response to SSD said that he felt comfortable and inspired and was in complete harmony with all the religions in so far as they respected life and did not justify killing, especially of human beings. He said his religion was just three words- 'NO MORE KILLING'. His observation on the 'present condition' was that the declaration was not forceful enough. He observed that most people are not killers and so we must be more positive. On the 'spiritual component' he had this to say- India had a great unprecedented and tremendous spiritual tradition. Prayer alone is not good enough as even with thousands of years of prayers things were getting worse. He felt that the strong point of SSD was that it wanted to connect spirituality to science and wanted to bring spirituality and reality together. He recalled HH Acahrya Mahapragyaji's words- 'We will never get to non-violence by religion alone. Violence is a matter of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, function of the endocrine glands and even the food we eat'. He lauded the efforts to take up poverty seriously, especially at the village level, as the gap between the rich and the poor is widening in every country globally. He said that prayers of all faiths should be translated into a common language so that understanding develops amongst the people. The 'Joint projects' in order to promote harmony must adopt the policy of serving the people first to build peace. On 'Education' he said engaging old people and young people were a good idea because this will teach cooperation among the generations. Regarding 'Dialogue among spiritual leaders' he said that it was equally important to understand the clash within civilizations and must be done with delicacy.



Dr.Paswan in his comments wondered why when there is a World Economic Forum and a World Social Forum, there should not be World Spiritual Forum. He also suggested that such gatherings should be held in every state capital. He said, as a person hailing from Bihar he was passionate in uplifting the state of Bihar and offered his services. He said, ' If Bihar gets corrected, India gets corrected, if India gets corrected the whole world gets corrected'.

Mr. Indiresan observed that wealth could be an even greater problem than poverty. He said that we should aim for a middle path in tackling poverty. He said, 'conflicts arise from prejudice - you judge before having knowledge or information'. Lack of knowledge is because of lack of curiosity. He said that we must inculcate a sense of curiosity among our people. When prejudice comes down, hatred also comes down. He emphasized on self-confidence in oneself. This, he said, must be taught in the children so that we will have a new generation of children of whom the world can be proud of and be happy to live with.

Mr. Veeraraghavan, Director, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in his comments said that the two powerful forces that are the root cause of violence are the economic systems that promote greed and capital accumulation, all in the quest of power.

Mr. Izechael Issac Malekar observed that India is the only country in the world where Jews have never faced anti-Semitism and persecution. He emphasized that to remove poverty and illiteracy it was important to have good governance. He suggested that all the various religious TV channels must cover all the religions and not dedicate themselves to any one particular religion.

Dr.Radhakrishnan applauded the declaration as a well-drafted statement of the existing situation and emerging scenario. He said that the question was as to how to bring into operation the five projects that have been identified. He suggested to focus on Education, especially that of children, youth and women. He said that we must identify at least one project, which we should implement with dedication, conviction and courage. He voted for introducing a program for children, youth and mothers and teachers in community living, which included non-violence and tolerance.

Mr.S.Regunathan had this suggestion to make on the modalities of operation- It required volunteers at two levels, namely the level of conceptualization and strategy planning and at the level of operation (implementation level). He pointed out that no organization could do all the work on its own in isolation. He insisted that as any volunteers as possible must be inducted from across the spectrum of society to carry forward this Herculean task.

The meeting was held in the presence of Munishree Lokprash Lokesh ji and Munishree Prashant Kumarji. Munishree Lokprakash Lokesh said that we have to address permanent or lasting problems and not swept away tackling smaller man-made ones. "These discussions have focused on ahimsa – but is their any provision for training ahimsa? As long as this is not there we cannot really make inroads" one major problems as identified by Acharya Mahaprajna is poverty. So our slogan has to be, "Remove Wealth". Bhagwan Mahavira said those who do not believe in sharing can not attain moksha. Sharing means limiting one's wants. If these points can be considered and all religious leaders concentrate on education with training in ahimsa, and if there is a common platform like the UN or UNESCO we may be able to actualize the dream of the President of India. His dream to see a developed India, is not only at the material level but at a level where science and spirituality compliment each together. For this we need a change in the human heart. While the Govt. can work towards poverty eradication or improving education we have to work at the individual level. Religion is above tradition and Acharya Mahaprajna says human unity is above even religion.

Mr. Y S Rajan complimented the good work done by the various groups. He felt that optimism is the voice of action, whereas pessimism is the voice of caution and both are required whenever something has to be done. He cited an example of a small group in a place called Coimbatore which called itself 'Shiru Thuli' (a small drop). This group comprising of purely volunteers was formed about two years ago, worked towards digging channels connecting 7-8 ponds found in and around that area to improve the water situation and succeeded. In Tamil there is a saying 'Shiru Thuli, Peru Vellam' (small drops of water form a mighty flood). Similarly, drawing a parallel, he said that the number of small organizations while working independently in their field of specialization and in their chosen place must work under an umbrella to make it a powerful force. He also suggested that this expanded network should have inclusiveness and must not be one versus the other; must be volunteer based. Their work and efforts can be independent but the results must be collective.

Some moments that lived longer

Prof. Glenn D Paige put to simple rhythm in a catchy tune, the need of the day,
for he said every movement needs a song:

*We need Spirit, Science, Skill & Song
To make things right, to correct things wrong
We have to work together, YOU & ME
For a new non-violent century*

Refrain:

*(Oh Gandhi, Oh Gandhi, OH Mohandas K Gandhi
Oh Martin, Oh Martin, OH Martin Luther King
OH Petra, Oh Petra Oh Petra Kelly)*

This song sung itself again and again to Mr. Y.S. Rajan as he lay in bed for a night's
rest. Picking up his pen and paper he wrote:

*Glenn D Paige sang a song
A song of peace to shun violence wrong!
Different God's names he told in the song!
"Many is one", was the music of the song
In the rhythm of song his head did dance
Like a laughing Buddha to a simple folk dance!
Glenda Paige was in her photographic trance
Not leaving a moment to ordinary chance!*

*Spirit, Science, Skills and Song
His mantra cure for all that's wrong!
Will curled up elites sing a song
Or jump into actions to make Life a song?*

MARCH UPDATE...

UNDERSTANDING RELIGIONS

A series of talks were delivered by experts in December 2002, on the various religions: their history, content and relevance. The talks were part of a course on UNDERSTANDING RELIGIONS, arranged by the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute. Students who registered for the course went away feeling inspired, and many gained new insights into religions that they had not known so much about earlier. Particularly, it was felt by many that the manner in which certain religions had been portrayed by the media had coloured their view of the religion considerably. It was refreshing to hear about the true spirit of each religion from practicing scholars of each faith.

It was then felt that these talks should be made available to a larger audience, and with this view in mind, a set of Multimedia CDs are being developed by editing these talks and making them user-friendly. Any one who wishes to know more about the religions of the world can sit in the comfort of his/her home or office, and learn about Christianity, Buddhism., Islam, Jainism and Hinduism, just with the click of a mouse!

The team that has been working on the editing and production of this Multimedia CD has found that despite numerous times' replaying of each talk, there is always something new to learn! Each time the team listens to a talk, a new insight is gained. There is no chance of getting bored with this rich treasure, whose value cannot be measured in monetary terms. In fact, the perception of some religions has undergone a change in the minds of some of the team members, and there is a sense of connectedness with people of various faiths. As one listens to each talk, one can sense a change in one's own thought patterns. The teachings of each religion have been explained lucidly and in a manner that touches the heart.

The Multimedia CDs have sections on Parables, Essence of the religion, Festivals, Sacred Hymns, Chants, Frequently Asked Questions, in addition to the edited talks. No previous knowledge is assumed, and the CD will be as useful for a student of philosophy as for a layperson who has an interest in religion. For those who wish to go deeper into the study of each religion, a bibliography is included. There are also interesting hyperlinks between religions so that, for instance, one can gain insight into what each religion has said about Love, Liberation, God, Soul, etc. With a choice of easy skimming as well as in-depth study (one can go to each hyperlink if interested), the Multimedia CD will be a useful addition to the library of most people with even a passing interest in philosophy.

APRIL UPDATE...

INDORE... FUTURE PLANS

In the last week of March, a meeting was held in Indore in the presence of His Holiness Acharya Mahaprajna. Those present were Y.S.Rajan, N. Radhakrishnan, S. Regunathan, M.L.Sethia, Jaskaran Chopra and Sudhamahi Regunathan. The main focus of discussion was the project number 5 of the Surat Declaration. It was decided that the society to be formed under this project would be finalized in the presence of all the spiritual leaders. For this it was important to meet and so on June 6, 2004 a meeting was fixed. This meeting will be organized jointly by Sri Sri Sri Jagadguru Shivaratri Desikendra Mahaswamiji and Shri Balgangadharanatha Swamiji, in Bangalore, Karnataka. It was also decided that others who want to endorse the declaration should also be invited as special honoured guests. An idea, which found favour with all those present, but needs to be approved by the Apex body, was to constitute Harmony groups in violence prone areas.

It was suggested that on the 15th of June, 2004, about two hundred meetings be held all over India to announce the formation of the new society and to announce an International Seminar in 2005 in Delhi. Other details of this programme are in the process of being drawn up. The members of the Apex body would organize the programmes in the different regions.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION IN KOLKATTA



It was a lovely afternoon on the second of April 2004, when many thinkers, activists and religious men and women had gathered together at a meeting organized by the Jain Swetambar Terapanth Mahasabha in Kolkatta. A square hall with a majestic chandelier in the Bengal Chamber of Commerce wove the imperial legacy with present times. It was lined with tables along all four sides. A backdrop announced

the evening to be dedicated to a discussion on Surat Spiritual Declaration. N.Radhakrishnan, Ezekiel Malekar and Sudhamahi Regunathan had come to Kolkatta to conduct the discussion

Sudhamahi Regunathan, who outlined the history of the Declaration and the follow up action initiated till now, led the discussion. "Many of you may feel this Declaration has little new in it. You may wonder what is so great about it. The Declaration recognizes that many people are doing a lot of good work in the country and outside it. The idea is to bring such people together. The idea is to begin consolidating such work both as a force for better development and with a view to sharing the expertise and experience gained to facilitate replication. The SSD is the voice of concern, which tries to bring the vast majority of good people together" she said. She also informed the people gathered together that evening about the idea of forming a society, which is being taken further, the idea of holding regional meetings and of forming Harmony groups.

Mr. Malekar, a signatory to the SSD himself, said that we could not have chosen a better day to talk of the SSD than the eve of Mahavir Jayanti. He talked of the significance of the SSD among spiritual leaders by saying time has come when each spiritual leader should participate and preach another person's religion. He himself spoke on Mahavira the following day. At that level, he said the human comes before religion

and that is what we should emphasize. He emphasized the need to understand each other's religion at all levels. With a little story he illustrated the need for all people to do their mite. Once a forest caught fire and all the animals started tuning away to save their lives. It was only a little sparrow that kept fetching drops of water from the ponds nearby to extinguish the fire. Those who saw her laughed. "Run," they said, "and



save your life." But the sparrow would not. "This forest is my home and I will try to save it," she replied. All the animals saw sense in that and when they all came together, the fire was put out in no time. Today with so much violence around, it is necessary for each one of us to pitch in.

Dr. N. Radhakrishnan brought to light the degradation in society at many levels, specifically with respect to the young and the adolescent. Many books have been written on *sadbhavana*, enough has been talked about it,

now is the time for action, he urged. Consumerism, media and aping the degenerative aspects of some models, we are throwing ourselves to ruin, he said. He pointed to violence in families, the continued and inhuman violence against women, the lack of dignity with which she is treated. Poverty and womanhood can make lethal combination and we have to rise against it. As a direct outcome of our degenerating moral values is the kind of visuals we are being subjected to, commented Dr Radhakrishnan. "To keep quiet is also an offence," he said and therefore we must respond to the times with our wisdom. The SSD is a document that takes into consideration social and economic problems together with spirituality. That is how we must go, taking into account, reality and trying to reshape it.

The audience responded with great enthusiasm and ideas. Dr. Kusum Khemani talked about an interfaith book she has published for children and its success. She offered to give a few copies to the office of the SSD for further propagation. Many others referred to the work already being done. They were told to send in their experience so that others may replicate them. Mohanlal Tulsian suggested everybody contribute Rs.10,000, for all this needs funds and we should all pitch in. Acharya Radha Mohan Upadhyay said spirituality has to put a stop to consumerism. Prabhjot Singh said we have no dearth of excellent philosophies; we have to now start applying them. Mr. Choudhary said GNP should now be measured as GHH or Gross Human Happiness and for that he said we need restraint, sacrifice and tolerance. Mr. Jalan said there can be no doubt that this is a wonderful cause, we have to take the awareness to people, that the magic of all religions is different, the logic is the same. Father Rosario emphasized the need to reach out to the common people and Ms. Vyas said that we need to incorporate these ideas in the school syllabus. A young journalist, Khushboo Jain, said we need to change the mindset of every human being to work against corrupt practices.

In short, the meeting brought to fore some work, which is already being done. It voiced some practical concerns including funds collection that have to be addressed. It expressed grave concern and the need for urgent action with regard to rampant corruption and spreading violence even at the family level. It ended on a positive note lent by Sadvishree Kanchan Prabhaji who observed, as many others, that the world has more good people than bad and that we have to each work to bring out the goodness in ourselves as well as others. Great enthusiasm had been generated with the discussions and everybody at one level or other pledged their support to the ideas discussed.

Mr. Surandra Chouraria, Mr. Tarun Sethia, Mr. B.L.Singhi, and others who had worked hard to organize this event promised to follow up and tap all the resources generated. They also took the initiative to organize a meet inviting people from the north-eastern states sometimes in May either in Kolkatta or Guwahati. The meet at Kolkatta promised to be a hub for SSD activities in the east.

MAY UPDATE

..... in Ladnun

In a village called Koel, about 13 kilometres from the University across non-motorable roads, a small class constituting forty women students was set up. These girls and women had dropped out after class V and were of varying ages. They were taught for a year and a half. Four girls were introduced into mainstream schooling within six months. In the meanwhile, the University obtained accreditation from National Open School and, this March, about thirty girls have written the class VIII examination. This programme is being replicated in other villages.

A one-day programme on Women Empowerment: Condition, Problems and Perspectives was organized by the Department of Education, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun, in collaboration with Leslei Sahani organization, Mumbai, on 30.04.04 in Koel for the new learners.

.....In Delhi

MOA for the Society to be founded has been drafted. Different suggestions for the name of the society are:

1. People's Foundation for Development of Enlightened Citizenship
2. Foundation for Enlightened Citizenship and Unity of Religions
3. Foundation for Enlightenment

The President was gracious in giving us, Mr. Y.S. Rajan, Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, Mr. M.L. Sethia and Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan, some time to review the progress of activities following the declaration. It was at this meeting with the President that he gave his consent to host a small function on 15th June 2004 at Rashtrapati Bhavan. This programme will act as a curtain raiser. For the fortnight after June 15th, programmes creating awareness about SSD will be held all over the country.

Already, news coming in says that events are going to be held in about 30 places. The activities to be organized on this day are as follows:

General nature of the programme on 15th June 2004.

- a. Each programme may be attended by prominent intellectuals, social activists, religious leaders, youth workers, representatives of women groups, journalists and others interested in issues identified by the signatories of the Surat Declaration to present their views for discussion.
- b. A key-note speaker of eminence may be identified in each of the places to present the issues for discussion, so that discussion that might follow will be on focused lines.
- c. The moderator (Chairman of each programme) may be some one who will be able to sharp-focus the general discussion.
- d. Basic materials on Surat Declaration will be made available to the local committees.
- e. Clear guidelines along these lines may be issued to those who will be in charge of organizing meetings in different parts of India.
- f. In State capitals, either Governor/C.M. may be requested to inaugurate these programmes, while in other centres, Chief Justices or other prominent leaders may be identified, so that these programmes will generate sufficient national attention.

- g. Media may also be involved in a big way, in each of these programmes.
- h. Comprehensive reports may be sent to the Central Committee by each of the organizers, as soon as the meetings are over.

The **tentative schedule** may be as follows, while local organizers will have the freedom to elaborate, it according to local insights:

- i. Inter-religious Prayer with reading out of short paragraphs from principal religious faiths on Ahimsa/nonviolence
- ii. Welcome
- iii. Chairman's remarks

a) Announcement of Registration of Society:

As a follow-up to project number 5 of the SSD, a society called 'People's Foundation for Development of Enlightened Citizenship' will be registered in Delhi. This news is to be made public. A copy of the memorandum will be circulated to all.

b) Road map for the next three months:

A road map for the activities of the newly-formed Society will be presented to the President. It will contain guidelines, which can be easily followed by everyone. Every center conducting the programme may give this wide publicity and even make it into a poster for public knowledge.

c) International Seminar on Sustaining the Human Spirit:

Poised, as we are, at that point in the history of human civilization where the very physical survival of the human race depends on a radical change of the human heart, we have to find more dynamic and tangible expressions of peace, we have to set in motion an actual revolution of human transformation, we have to ensure the sustainability of the human spirit. An International Summit on SUSTAINING THE HUMAN SPIRIT towards a violence-free individual in mind and body and, thereby, a peaceful society to be held in the 3rd week of November 2005. This activity of the newly-formed society will be announced.

iv. Inauguration by VIP

v. Release of first copy of the Surat Spiritual Declaration by a religious head of the locality

vi. Release of report on the follow-up activities of SSD by Chairman

A report of the follow-up activities carried out by all the signatories to the SSD has been compiled. The first copy will be presented to the President. The compilation will be released at all the areas where the programme is held.

vii. Key-note address

viii. Presentations by religious heads of the locality

ix. Discussion

x. Exploring the possibility of forming a local committee, for future activities in the locality, on the basis of the Surat Spiritual Declaration.

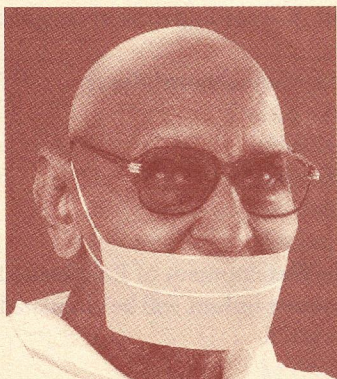
xi. Vote of thanks.

Jain Vishva Bharati Institute has taken the initiative to get SSD translated into as many as languages possible. Kannada has been done by the Office of Sri Jagadguru Shivaratri Desikendra Mahaswami ji, Punjabi translation was done by Mr. Y. S. Rajan, and Urdu Translation was done the Office of Hazrat Syed Jilani Ashraf. Many people have spent their time, translating, editing, computerizing and printing. Since it will be a long list to mention individually, we thank all who contributed to it. There are a large number of people dedicated to SSD.

A CD on Understanding Religions has been prepared. Some of the signatories of SSD have also helped in making the CD. The CD is educational material, meant to create awareness.

A report is being collated to present to the President on the 15th June 2004.

A Road Map is being prepared for the Society's activities, as it should be in its first year.



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF

H.H. ACHARYA MAHAPRAJNA

Ahimsa Yatra has its own immortal script. Surat Spiritual Declaration is among the best achievements of Ahimsa Yatra. After the Surat Spiritual Declaration was presented to the President of India, His Excellency Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, on 15th September 2003. The efforts made in the direction of ahimsa during the 1500 km Ahimsa Yatra are briefly summarized below.

With the view of implementing all the five plans of Surat Spiritual Declaration, the Acharya initiated discussions, dialogues and programmes with intellectuals, religious teachers, social workers, government administrative / police officers, during his Ahimsa Yatra.

On the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti on the 3rd of April 2004, a Non-violence Universal Conference was organized, at Indore. This conference was attended, following the sentiments of Surat Spiritual Declaration, not only by the Acharyas and Munis of various sects of Jainism but also by Hindu, Christian and Islamic heads. For the development of non-violence, under "Ahimsa Sambhav" discussions took place on group meeting, living together, thinking together, decision-making together and working out plans together, etc.

Similarly, on the 5th and 6th of December 2003, a National Seminar on "Ahimsa Samvay" was organized at Dhulia. More than 70 Gandhian and Anuvrata thinkers exchanged their views exhaustively on the problem of violence, and emphasized the need to start various special programmes on non-violence.

Training in non-violence consists of four dimensions:

1. The history and theory of non-violence
2. Change of heart (emotional change)
3. Non-violent lifestyle
4. Balanced livelihood and training in balanced livelihood

The format of training in non-violence presented by Acharyashree is not only theoretical but also practical. Wherever Acharyashree stayed during his Ahimsa Yatra he arranged to impart practical training in non-violence. One-day non-violence training camps have so far been organized at Panchak, Kharad, Ambade, Tonde, Akulkhera and Mangrul in Maharashtra; Theekri, Maanpur and Umariya in Madhya Pradesh and Byara and Limbayata villages in Gujarat. Students, Teachers, Villagers and 24 panchayat representatives received training in those programmes. 350 unemployed youth from Vananchal region promised to participate in the monthly training camps.

Non-violence training camps have also started functioning in Mhasadi, Sanimandal (Maharashtra), Tunkor, Dabari (Rajasthan), Darbhanga (Bihar) and Jhabua, Alirajpur and Indore (Madhya Pradesh). All the non-violence training centers have their own special backgrounds but one trained worker runs the center permanently and imparts training in all the four aspects of non-violence.

The Anuvrata Teachers Assembly has started an ambitious project of developing 108 villages as Anuvrata villages. Following the Surat Spiritual Declaration, education, medical aid, employment, de-addiction and finding a non-violent solution to mutual strife are given priority in these villages. Self-employment programmes include stitching, making incense sticks and candlesticks, computer training, making detergent powder and training in beauty parlour, etc.

On the one hand, if the thought of non-violence is promoted in the cities and metropolises, it is also being spread in small towns and villages. In the City Light area of Surat, behind Terapanth Bhavan, there is a small colony called Panas, of 720 labourer families. Anuvrata workers went to each family there, door to door, and told them of training in non-violence. All of them took a keen interest in it and a permanent center for training in non-violence was stated there. Along with the practice of meditation and yoga, 262 people there received training in self-employment. The number of women among them is more than 50%. Efforts were made to ensure that at least one member from each of the families receives training in self-employment. The people of Panas have, in fact, renamed their locality as Prajna Nagar.

Similarly, fresh enthusiasm is clearly visible in other centers too. As a complementary act to the Surat Spiritual Declaration, World Jain Confederation, Bharat Jain Mahamandal, Jain Social Group Federation, Mahaveer International, Anuvrata Vishva Bharati and Chaitanya Kashyam Foundation presented a five-principles programme in the form of issuing "Ratlam Ahimsa Declaration" at Ratlam (Madhya Pradesh) on 25th April 2004. The five principles are as follows:

1. Non-violence family,
2. Non-violence training center,
3. Non-violence village and locality,
4. Non-violence research institute, and
5. Central institute

In the same programme, following Surat Spiritual Declaration, 7000 people of the community had meals together in a "Langar."

On 30th January 2004, a non-violence conference was organized at Jain Hills, Jalgaon. The Civil Supplies Minister, Maharashtra State, Mr. Suresh Dada declared to establish an International Non-violence Institute there. He has already donated 83 bighas of land for the purpose. Efforts for research, training, awareness and spread of non-violence at international level are being made there. A resource persons Training Center for training in non-violence will commence at the Jain Hills.

During this period, under the Ahimsa Yatra Programme, various programmes have been organized among many intellectuals related to non-violence, at various institutions in Indore like, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Kund-Kund Ashram, Gomat Giri, Hrinkar Giri, Jain Social group, Jain International, Bharatiya Vikas Parishad, Anuvrata Writers Forum, Anuvrata Teachers Assembly, Anuvrata Committees, Jain Vishva Bharati Swaraj Ashram (Bardoli). Hundreds of people took a vow to put in dedicated efforts towards the goal of non-violence.

Among the various achievements of Ahimsa Yatra, communal harmony is a peerless achievement. In this respect, a strong environment of faith created between Hindus and Mohammedans is really encouraging. On a special request of the Bohra Muslim community of Dahod, Yuvacharya Mahashraman reached there and people of all castes and communities participated in the Ahimsa Yatra programme. Religious leaders from Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, all shared their views in the All Religions Harmony Conference.

From the viewpoint of Hindu-Muslim riots, Limbayat in Surat and Male Gaon in Maharashtra are considered very sensitive areas. But when Ahimsa Yatra reached there, thousands of people from both the communities - Hindus and Muslims - took part in it. The very effective atmosphere of non-violence created at Mumbai witnessed, on 2nd May 2004, an incident giving new signs of communal harmony. In the historic rally originating from Khilaphat House, Mumbai on the occasion of the birthday of Paigamber Mohammad Sahib, a new chapter has been added in communal harmony, by inviting the religious gurus from all religions.

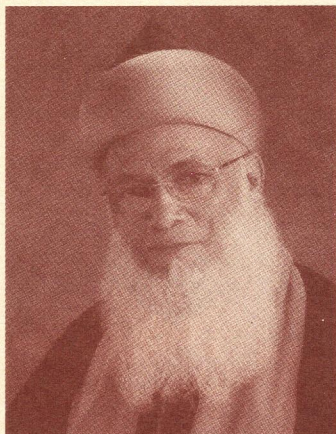
To strengthen the relations established with Muslim brethren - wherever they were established during the Ahimsa Yatra - there was organized a National Seminar on "The Contributions of Muslim community to Anuvrata Movement" on 1st and 2nd April 2004 at Indore. More than 70 Muslims from 7 states of India participated in the seminar. A unanimous decision was taken there, to the effect that such seminars must be organized frequently, and they must be held at the state level too. All the Muslim brothers praised the seminar wholeheartedly. It was a new step towards establishing faith between Hindus and Muslims. Surat Spiritual Declaration expressed the feeling of bringing people from all the communities closer to each other.

Yuvacharya Mahashraman on a separate trail....

Yuvacharya Mahashraman, disciple of HH Acharyashree Mahaprajna, with twelve monks, four lay nuns and some nuns, went on a slight diversion from the ahimsa yatra where he was walking with Acharyashree Mahaprajna. Through Dahod and Jhabua, Yuvacharya walked through tribal belts, stopping to talk to common folk and to understand their problems. "Effortlessly, we came into contact with many spiritual leaders from different religions, as we walked through the area. Communication with them was never a problem. We met a large number of tribals and tried to gently show them the path of ahimsa or non-violence, not just theoretically, but also practically. We trained them in ahimsak way of thinking and living."

This group found many problems of addiction and intoxication and tried to advocate against them. Other social evils like dowry and illiteracy were also addressed by the team. These de-addiction and other programmes to create social awareness were held in collaboration with a large number of Muslim leaders and some Christian leaders also. "This was a very revealing experience, because we did not just talk, but invited discussion. We lived closely with the people and got to know their life style intimately," says the Yuvacharya who feels the response of the people was as forthcoming as their desire to be of use.





SYED MUHAMMAD JILANI ASHRAF KICHHACHACHVI

His Eminence Shaikh-e-Tariqat Hadrat Allama Muhammad Jilani Ashraf was born on 4th July, 1946 at Kichhauchha Sharif, Ambedkar Nagar (U.P) in India. His father Hadrat Syed Muhamid Ashraf was a great Sufi and his grandfather was the greatest Muhaddith-e-Azam-e-Hind (R.A) who expired on 25-12-1961.

Shaikh-e-Tariqat Hadrat Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf is the 28th descendant to Hadrat Ghouth-e-Azam Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) the 38th descendant to Syyidana Hadrat Fatimatuz Zuhra (RA) and the 39th descendant to Hadrat Syyidana Muhammad Mustafa (Sallallahu-Alaihi-Wasallam).

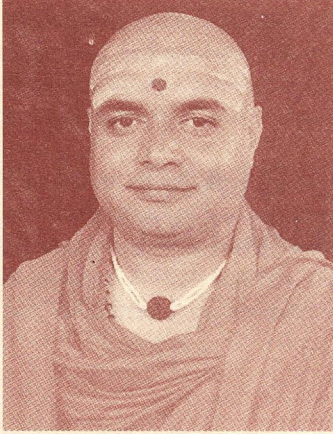
Saintly Order: His Pir-O-Murshid Hazrat Syedina Mukhtar Ashraf Sajjada Nashin Sarkar-E-Kalan (21.11.96) saintly order through Shaikh-e-Tariqat People have obtained righteous guidance and become mureeds (Disciples) by the (saintly order) of Qadria, Chishtia, Ashrafia, Naqshbandia and Shuarwardia, and India and abroad.

For preaching the human, moral and spiritual values, to promote peace, unity, faith and international brotherhood, Shaikh-e-Tariqat has established a "Spiritual Complex" in Dargah Kichhauch Sharif, U.P. India through Sufism, Meditation, Moral Audit, Multi-faith research centers and Jamia Sufia (World's first educational institution of Sufism).

A global visit and sincere work is being done on Spiritual Moral human enhancement by Sheikh-e-Tariqat in many countries of the world, including: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Middle East, Turkey, England, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, France, Spain, Canada, USA, Mozambique, Malawi, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia, Lesotho and South Africa.

The permanent residence of Shaikh-e-Tariqat is at Lucknow where the central office of the Spiritual Foundation is situated.





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
BALAGANGADHARANATHA SWAMI

On the guidelines of Surat Spiritual Declaration, Sree Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Math, has executed some important programmes for the upliftment of the poor and removal of poverty. Sree Kshetra conducted a number of programmes with respect to the unity of people, especially "All Religions Summits" regularly. Math has invited all the religious heads and shown universal brotherhood.

Since 25 years, folk festivals are being conducted each year, in order to encourage the village people. It is called "Janapada Mela", wherein thousands of talented people gather at Sree Kshetra Adichunchanagiri continuously for three days, in a mood of festivity. Sree Math is giving all their conveyance charges, food and shelter. Besides this, prizes are awarded for the Best Folk Artist Groups.

Sri Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Math has organized Free eye camps and Free Medical checkups for the villagers in interior villagers.

1. Free eye-camps are conducted by Adichunchanagiri Medical College
2. Free medicines being served for the rural people by Sri Adichunchanagiri Math.

Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swamiji participated in programmes organised by Muslim and Christian communities.

In order to respect each and every religions, SARVA DHARMA SAMMELANAS are being organized in Adichunchanagiri Math every year.

Sree Kshetra has opened 380 schools in rural areas. The main principle behind this programme is to educate the rural mass. Admissions were given to all people, irrespective of their caste and religion. The main motive of Sri Balagangadharanatha Swamiji is to educate the downtrodden, to uplift the poor people. Free food, clothing, shelter, and books are given to the poor students. There is no discrimination. Tolerance is taught. Cultural activity is a must, Yoga classes are conducted. For the past 14 years, summer camps are being conducted at six places for one month, with 1500-2000 boys and 2500-2700 girls. Cultural orientation is given with abundant knowledge. At Mandya in Viswamanava Kshetra, thousands of cows are protected in a "Healthy Karoti" (cowsheds) with proper feeding and health check-ups.

Sri Balgangedharanatha Swamiji has launched a unique programme of planting 5 (five) crore trees through Karnataka state. Through this programme, Swamiji is giving a message – that "We, the people of India, should save our environment. Nature is our God. Let us worship it".



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
DR. HOMI B. DHALLA

The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi organized a function on January 30 to mark the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In the morning, Children from various schools were invited to sing devotional songs and bhajans at Mani Bhavan (Gandhi Museum) This was the place where Mahatma Gandhi used to live, when he visited Mumbai. In the evening a Peace March was held in South Mumbai, which was followed by an inter-religious prayer meeting.

The Department of Inter-religious Studies of St. Xavier's College organized a seminar on the theme: "What do people of different faiths say about inter-faith prayer?"

The Thane Police Commissionerate and Shwetambar Terapanth, Thane held an inter-faith meeting on the theme "Humanity is the essence of all Religions."

Centre for Study of Society and Secularism organized an Inter-faith Dialogue on "Religion and Violence."

Under the auspices of Sevadham, an inter-religious function was held on the occasion of World Environment Day. The various speakers spoke about the importance of ecology in their religious scriptures. This meeting was organized in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Justice and Peace Commission.

An afforestation programme was organized by school children in village Kale near Lonavala. They planted about 250 saplings during the monsoons. Besides providing school children the opportunity to plant and look after these saplings, it will enable them to interact with those of another faith. This project is being organized every year in the monsoon season.

The Department of Inter-religious Studies of St. Xavier's College held an inter-faith seminar to mark the 134th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The theme of the seminar was "What would the Mahatma do about the situation in India today?"

His Holiness the Dalai Lama had sponsored the Festival of Sacred Chanting and Singing in New Delhi. An inter-faith seminar was held on the theme "Meeting of Cultures: Spiritual Ways of Sustainable and Non-Aggressive Living".

I presented a paper on the above subject from the Zoroastrian viewpoint.

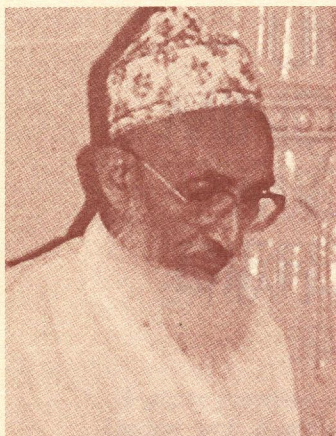
An Essay as well as an elocution competition was organized at the Rjawadi B.M.C. Scholl, Ghatkopar (suburb of Mumbai). The themes were "The Importance of Hindu-Muslim Unity," "Ways of Protecting the Environment" and "The Need for Education in Human Rights". Prizes were awarded to the three best competitors.

Centre for Study of Soceity and Secularism held a seminar on the "Statue of women in Religion". I presented a paper on the "Role of Women in Ancient Iran".

Delhi Peace Summit was organized in partnership with the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago. The theme of the conference was "Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace". Various issues pertaining to the culture of peace was discussed by about 300 delegates who had come from different parts of the world. I participated in two seminars held during the Summit.

I attended and spoke at the inaugural function of the Hindu-Christian Dialogue Symposium on Meditation organized by the K.J. Somaiya Bharatiya Sanskriti Peetham and His Eminence Ivan Cardinal Dias, the Archbishop of Mumbai.





HIS HOLINESS DR. SYEDNA MOHAMMED BURHANUDDIN

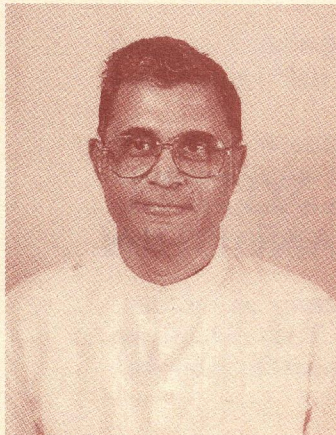
His Holiness Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, the 52nd incumbent of the august office of al-Dal-Mutlaq is an accomplished scholar, an illustrious philanthropist, an untiring traveler and a veritable ambassador of goodwill. He is Head of the Dawoodi Bohra Community which is domiciled all over the world and number about a million.

His Holiness Dr. Syedna Mohammaed Burhanuddin was born in Surat, India on March 6, 1915. His revered father, His Holiness Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin predicted that his son would be a harbinger of honour and glory for the Fatemi Dawat (mission of the Imam that al-Dai al-Mutlad conducts).

At the age of nineteen he was designated successor to the office of al-Dai al-Mutlaq by Syedna Taher Saifuddin, the 51st Dai al-Mutlaq.

'Umdatul-Ulama el-Muwahedeen' a year later by Syedna Taher Saifuddin, himself an erudite Taher Saifuddin, himself an erudite scholar. These are rare honours granted only to the most learned in the community.





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
BISHOP THOMAS DABRE

The following is a brief report of the activities we have had, based on the Surat Spiritual Declaration.

An inter-religious dialogue with Hindus, Muslims, Jains and Christians, with the President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and its Under-Secretary was a great success. People gave their views on the importance of inter-religious dialogue.

In a small village in Vasai, Thane district, there was an inter-religious programme for the Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

An Inter-religious peace programme was organized at Manickpur in Vasai. It was attended by hundreds of Hindus and Catholics.

An Inter-religious programme for harmony was organized by the Muslim Organisation in Mumbai. The theme was "Religious Freedom" I gave a lecture on "Religious Freedom," from the perspective of Christianity. People from other religions gave their point of views on "Religious Freedom."

On Good Friday, the Christians of Vasai observed a fast for peace and harmony in the country.

The followers of Pandurang Shastri Atavle were present at the Good Friday's Worship in various Churches in Vasai.

In my talks to school students, I have encouraged inter-religious harmony.



RADIATING LIGHT – UNITY OF MINDS IN THE MIDST OF DIFFERENCES

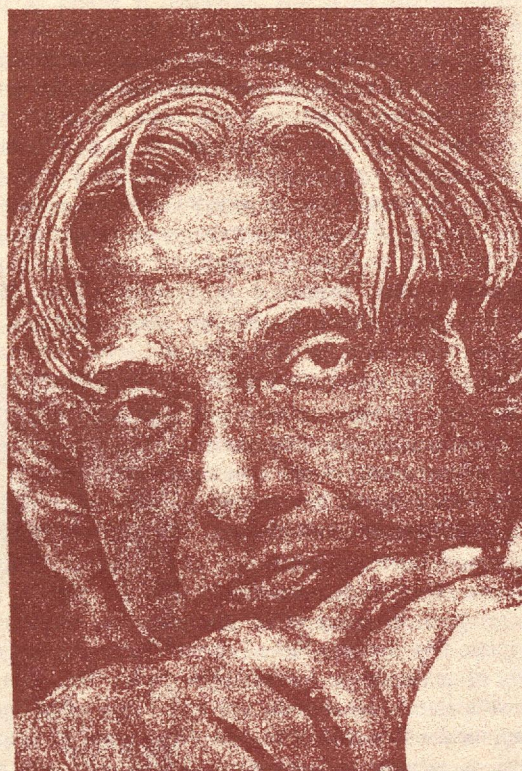
THOMAS DABRE

A paper presented at a congregation of Spiritual Leaders with Hon'ble President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, to develop an agenda for 'Enlightened Citizenship' 14 & 15 October 2003, Surat.

At the very outset I wish to congratulate the President for praying as he addressed the nation. Thereby he has corrected the notion that some people have of secularism as being atheistic, agnostic or indifferent to the matters of God. Such a bold initiative has the potential of illumining the horizon darkened by the decline of spiritual and moral vision. The President of India is quite right when he says in his prayer, "Oh Almighty, create thoughts and actions in the minds of the people of my nation, so that they live united" which he recited in his speech to the nation on the eve of the 57th anniversary of the Independence of our country. For a prosperous India, we definitely need unity of minds. Without unity of minds, we will not be able to achieve our goals. But the unity of mind does not mean uniformity or homogeneity. Unfortunately, that is what some fundamentalists think. Here in India, there is a tendency on the part of some people to impose a monocultural pattern for the entire body politic. Such regimentation will only serve to sow the seeds of discord in the minds and hearts of our peace-loving people.

As a matter of fact, we have people of different religions and cultures in our country. So a sheer sense of realism demands that we learn to live with them in peace and harmony and for that we need to accept the others as others in their differences. We have to admit that people are different and in this admission, we must respect differences and work together with people in their distinctiveness. Indeed, variety is the spice of life. The unity of mind and heart is amid differences and

Bishop Thomas Dabre is Bishop of Vasai Diocese and Chairman of the Inculturation Committee, Western Region Council of Bishops



varieties. All our people of different religions and cultures have to learn that differences are not harmful and divisive but enriching.

In the musical scale, there are different notations. That is why we are able to have beautiful music and a joyful symphony. The unity of the body is realized through its various limbs and organs.

Bridge-builders : In his prayer the President says, "Light the minds of the religious leaders of my country to evolve a bridge among religions with compassion and love". All religions urge their followers to strive for light. God has been described in many religious traditions as light. In India, our forefathers prayed for the divine light. 'Lead me from darkness to light'. Jesus, too, presented himself as the Light of the World. The feast of Diwali is a clarion call for eschewing destructive darkness and strive for the light of the spiritual and moral vision. It is saddening to note that religions are used for promoting hatred and division. We learn from the sacred scriptures of all religions that all human beings are meant to live in peace. *Om shanti* is a familiar Hindu expression. Islam and *salaam* stand for peace. Jesus always greeted people with peace and imparted peace. But to be bridge builders and promoters of peace we have to accept the others as others, to respect the other religions in their otherness and as such to live with them in unity and harmony.

Learn to respect the other : Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated because he loved people of all religions and cultures, in particular, the Moslems. It would be presumptuous for a Hindu to claim that he would love his fellow-Hindus more than Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was a Hindu who loved his fellow-Hindus but he also loved those outside the Hindu fold and some could not bear to see that. Can we in India learn to love the other? While we love our own people, people of our faith and religion, we should also be able to love the people of other religions. But, unfortunately, some people are not able to love and accept those of other religions. Remember, what happened in Gujarat? Over 2000 Moslems were killed. Remember, what happened in Bombay where, over 50 were killed and several thousand injured in two bomb explosions.

We need to learn to love and appreciate the other and to value him. The Bible teaches us that God created every human being in His own image and likeness. No matter what religions they belong to, we must see God's image and likeness in all of them. The disciples of Jesus Christ were dismayed when they saw a man performing miracles. They told Jesus Christ that the person, not belonging to the group of his disciples, was performing miracles. The disciples lacked openness, breadth and the spirit of universality. Jesus taught them, 'He, who is not with us, is not against us' and Jesus urged them to appreciate that man who was doing good to others.

We must learn to appreciate and love the other. For some people, the other is a threat and an enemy but Jesus teaches us that the other can be our friend, our collaborator and our partner. We do not need to compete with others. The others can enrich us. India will have peace, harmony and prosperity if we accept others as friends and partners.

We live in the world not of pure angels and saints. The world is full of people both good and bad, the saints and sinners. We have to live with them and for that we need the spirit of forgiveness. Our failure to accept others renders us incapable of forgiving. It is a lack of forgiveness that brought about a communal carnage of over 2000 Moslems in Gujarat and other communal incidents in different parts of India.

Jesus forgave his killers on the cross. "Father forgive them," he said. He taught us that the clouds in the sky shower their rains on the soil both fertile and infertile. And that the sun shines on the good and the bad. So here is a clarion call for respecting differences and accepting and valuing people of different religions and cultures.

Education must teach our students to accept the pluralistic set up of the Indian Society. Differences cannot be ignored. They are part of our common existence. In order to live in peace, harmony and prosperity, we

need to learn differences and for that education must be used as a powerful weapon or instrument. Unfortunately, that is not happening. Highly educated people are involved in communal incidents and divisive activities. Today, education concentrates on and is used for high performance in examinations ignoring the vital importance of values. That is what is happening in schools and colleges and universities in India. Human values have not been inculcated in the students. That is why we are made to behold the sad and disturbing spectre of discrimination, violence and communalism. We need to have a fresh look at our education system. Education must teach our students to learn to live with others. Others are not enemies, rivals and threats. Others are friends, allies, partners and collaborators. Such is the vision India needs to possess.

The President has indicated that a prosperous and safe India will emerge out of our civilisational heritage. Our Indian civilisation is a mosaic of cultures. Different religious communities have also contributed towards the fashioning of our multi-layered civilisation. Indian music, architecture, literature, languages, customs, traditions and folklore are all shaped by the contributions made by the people of different religions. All this has to be recognised and appreciated and celebrated.

Freedom from Prejudice : Unity of the minds and hearts demands that we eschew all prejudice towards the people of other religions. The minds of our young students are fresh, open, receptive and unsullied. However through text-books, literature, tradition, mass-media and propaganda machinery prejudices are created and perpetuated. Prejudice is the cause of much of the communal tension and rioting that breaks out in our country. Prejudice is born of ignorance. Many a time through our first hand knowledge, contact and interaction we realize that prejudice is subjective, unfounded and unjust towards persons and communities. These are not carbon copies of their counterparts, or fellow-members. God has made them in their specificity which is further reinforced in their concrete circumstances and conditions.

In particular there is prejudice among some of our fellow-Indians regarding the Church. It is charged with conversions by force, fraud and enticements. As long as there is such a prejudice towards the Church there is bound to be tension and antipathy in these communities. Let dispassionate efforts be made to study the position of the Church with regard to conversion. The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church has stated clearly that any conversion by force or deception is unjustified for every person is born free and has his inviolable dignity. Basically what the Church proclaims is that the life and message of Jesus Christ is meant for all and that Jesus died on the cross for all mankind.

(Contd. on Pg.18)

**RADIATING LIGHT - UNITY OF MINDS
IN THE MIDST OF DIFFERENCES (Contd. from Pg.11)**

His forgiveness on the cross is for all mankind. This is at the heart of all activity of the Church and her missionary personnel. Genuine conversion takes place only when an individual freely and joyfully accepts this message. Jesus has said, those who wish to be his disciples should take up their cross and follow him. The way of Jesus and Christian life is hard; the Church's ethical teaching as is known to all is very demanding and uncompromising. In such a religious vision there is no scope for conversion by force, fraud and enticement. We condemn all religious conversions based on force, fraud and enticement.

In this country, some people have fears and anxiety about conversions. Conversions do not mean a lack of respect and tolerance and appreciation for other religions. Indeed, the good in other religions is to be preserved.

The President has enumerated various missions for the development of India by 2020. He speaks of balanced development by ensuring the development of India's villages. This demands commitment, spirit of sacrifice and love. Christianity teaches, "Love thy neighbour as thyself". He has mentioned the problems of commercialisation of education, corruption and immorality. For dealing with these problems and for realizing the President's grand dream of a prosperous, developed and safe India people's minds and hearts need to be renewed. They need to be conscientised. They need to be motivated. This task should be undertaken by religious leaders, preachers and missionaries, *maulavis*, *mullas*, the *sadhus* and the *mahantas*. They are ideally suited for this task. And thus they can play a role complementary to that of economists, scientists, politicians, the bureaucrats, etc. for the progress of our country.

The President says, "Another humane issue is to ensure that HIV affected children are not discriminated in schools and hospitals. It is essential that voluntary organisations and religious leaders of localities provide a humane touch to these members of society, by removing fear from the minds of the people." In general the spirit of compassion is on the decline. Apathy, cruelty, insensitivity and revenge are on the increase. Bomb-explosions, violence, terrorism are all symptoms of a

society loosing the spirit of compassion. All religions teach compassion. Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn was "Vaisnava jana to tene kahiye..." Mother Teresa was inspired by the words of Jesus Christ, 'Whatever you do the least of my brethren that you do to me'. In Maharashtra *sant* Tukaram said, "He who calls the afflicted his own. Know him to be a holy man; know that God is there." We need to create a more compassionate society. Particularly in schools, colleges the value of compassion must be inculcated in our students. The

medical treatment also needs to be affordable to our people. We are aware of the prohibitive costs of medical treatment. In the Dispensaries, Nursing Homes and Hospitals the spirit of compassion should prevail.

Quoting a Tamil verse the President says, "... people who are in high and responsible positions, if they go against righteousness, righteousness itself will get transformed into a destroyer. Whoever deviates from righteousness, whether they are an individual or States, are responsible for their own actions". Like the Ten Commandments in the Holy Bible all religions give a moral code to their adherents. The Western countries have achieved a high level of material and economic development, which has not been accompanied by commensurate moral progress.

That is why they have to grapple with problems of violence, family break-ups, abortions, teenage pregnancies, divorce, consumerism, ecological degradation etc. Material progress has always been in peril wherever morality has been ignored. Religion *ex professo* promotes righteousness. If religious leaders take it upon themselves to inculcate the spirit of righteousness they would be rendering a precious service to the nation.

Spiritual light is the need of the hour. Science and technology do help to transform and develop society but science and technology without spirituality and morality can be destructive as is borne out by developments in the world. It is the light of spirituality and morality coupled with science and technology that will dispel the darkness that is engulfing us. Let us radiate light.



सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा

• बिशप थॉमस डाबरे

भारतातील मूलतत्त्ववादी शक्तीकडून चर्चला सातत्याने विरोध होत असतो. सुमारे ५० वर्षांपूर्वी धर्मांतर विरोधी कायद्यासंबंधीचे विधेयक नियोगी ह्यांनी सुचविले होते. १९७८ च्या सुमारास पंतप्रधान मोरारजी देसाई ह्यांच्या त्यावेळच्या जनता पक्षाच्या श्री. त्यागी ह्या खासदाराने पुनः तसेच विधेयक सादर केले होते. अजूनही पूर्वग्रहदूषित मंडळींकडून सक्तीच्या, फसवणुकीच्या व आमिषाच्या धर्मांतराचे खोटे आरोप चर्चवर करण्यात येत असतात.

सर्वधर्म सुसंवाद

वास्तविक, धार्मिक सुसंवादाची जागतिक चळवळ कैथलिक चर्चनेच सुरू केली आहे. सहिष्णुतेबद्दल लौकिक असलेल्या ह्या देशातील साधुमहंतांच्या आश्रमांत आणि संस्थांमध्ये फक्त हिंदू धर्माचेच शिक्षण दिले जात असे. मात्र चर्चप्रणित धर्मगुरूंच्या ट्रेनिंगसाठी असलेल्या 'सेमिनरीमध्ये' हिंदू, बौद्ध, जैन, मुस्लिम इ. धर्म अभ्यासिले जात असतात. एवढेच नव्हे तर फादर डिनॉबिली, फा. बेस्की, फा. बुल्के, फा. बीड ग्रिफिथ्स इ. अनेक ख्रिश्चन धर्मगुरूंनी अन्य धर्मांचा व्यासंगपूर्वक अभ्यास केला होता. १९६५ साली चर्चचे अखिल जगातील तीन हजारांहून अधिक बिशप्स व्हॅटिकन येथे सर्व धर्म सुसंवादाची चर्चा करण्यासाठी जमले होते. त्यांच्या जाहीर भूमिकेमुळे जागतिक पातळीवर धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे एक नवे ऐतिहासिक पर्व सुरू झाले. धार्मिक सुसंवादाचा विश्वव्यापी कार्यक्रम चर्चने अग्रक्रमाने स्वीकारला आहे. म्हणूनच

ऑक्टोबर १४-१५, २००३ रोजी सुरत येथे संपन्न झालेल्या विविध धर्मियांच्या संमेलनात मी मोठ्या आनंदाने व अपेक्षेने सहभागी झालो होतो.

जैन धर्मीय आचार्य महाप्रज्ञ ह्यांनी हा कार्यक्रम आयोजित केला होता. जैन, हिंदू, बौद्ध, इस्लाम, पारशी, ख्रिश्चन इ. धर्मांच्या सुमारे वीस धार्मिक नेत्यांना ह्या संमेलनासाठी खास निमंत्रित करण्यात आले होते. संमेलनाच्या दुसऱ्या व अखेरच्या दिवशी राष्ट्रपती डॉ. अब्दुल कलाम सकाळी ११ पासून दुपारी ३.३० पर्यंत हजर होते. भारताचा सर्वांगीण विकास व शांती यासाठी सर्व धर्मांनी एकत्रितपणे सहकार्य करणे आवश्यक आहे असे त्यांचे आग्रही प्रतिपादन होते. त्याबाबतचे सविस्तर तपशील त्यांनी आम्हापुढे विचारासाठी ठेवले. राष्ट्रपतींनी गेल्या १५ ऑगस्ट २००३ च्या स्वातंत्र्य दिनानिमित्ते देशाला उद्देशून केलेल्या भाषणावर ही सर्व धर्मीय सुसंवादाची चर्चा संपूर्णपणे आधारित होती.

सुरत येथील हा सर्वधर्मीय संमेलनाचा कार्यक्रम अतिशय सौहार्दपूर्ण वातावरणात संपन्न झाला. ज्या गुजरातेत २००२ साली झालेल्या जातीय दंगलीत २००० मुस्लिमांना ठार करण्यात आले व अजूनही जातीय हिंसाचाराचा वणवा संपूर्णपणे विझलेला नाही त्या गुजरातेत अशा प्रकारचा अनुपम कार्यक्रम व्हावा हे निश्चितच ह्या देशाच्या भवितव्याच्या दृष्टीने महत्त्वाचे आणि आशावर्धक आहे. सर्व धर्मियांनी आपापली भूमिका निर्भिडपणे मांडली. सर्वांनी ती शांतपणे व खुल्या मनाने ऐकून घेतली. स्वतः राष्ट्रपतींनी सर्व

धार्मिक नेत्यांना व्यक्तिगतरीत्या नि आदरपूर्वक भेटून पुष्पगुच्छ दिले सर्वांचे म्हणणे ते लक्षपूर्वक ऐकत होते. धार्मिक सुसंवादासाठी त्यांनी दाखवलेली तळमळ निश्चितच वाखाणण्यासारखी होती.

ह्या सर्वधर्मीय संमेलनाच्या अखेरीस 'सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा' राष्ट्रपतींच्या साक्षीने सर्वसंमत झाला. त्यावर १५ धार्मिक नेते व प्रतिनिधी ह्यांनी स्वाक्षरी केली. प्रस्तुत ऐतिहासिक महत्त्वाच्या दस्तावेजातील सूचना, विचार आणि मुद्दे ह्या देशातील धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यास विशेष चालना आणि दिशा देणारे आहेत.

धर्मनेते आणि शांती

ह्या जाहीरनाम्याच्या प्रारंभी राष्ट्राच्या शांतीसाठी व भरभराटीसाठी करण्यात आलेल्या सुंदर प्रार्थनेत म्हटले आहे, "हे सर्व शक्तिमान परमेश्वरा, फुटीर शक्तीशी झगडण्याचे बळ जनतेला देण्यासाठी ह्या देशातील सर्व धार्मिक नेत्यांना सहाय्य कर." धार्मिक वितंडवाद, विसंवाद, असहिष्णुता; हिंसाचार, अनैतिकता, भ्रष्टाचार, विषमता, गरिबी, स्त्रियांवरील अन्याय, अत्याचार, बेरोजगारी इ. भीषण समस्या ह्या देशासमोर आहेत. त्याबाबतीत धार्मिक नेते अलिप्त राहू शकत नाहीत. अध्यात्म धार्मिकता व सभोवतालच्या मानवांच्या समस्या ह्यांचा घनिष्ट संबंध आहे. पण ह्या देशातील साधु, संतमहंत ह्यांनी सामाजिक समस्यांच्या निराकरणाकडे विशेष लक्ष दिले नाही हे एक कटू ऐतिहासिक सत्य आहे. आजही एखाददुसरा अपवाद वगळता, देशाच्या जटील समस्या सोडविण्यासाठी धार्मिक नेते पुढाकार घेताना दिसत नाहीत



ह्या देशाने शांतीसाठी कार्य केले, शांतीत जगण्यासाठी प्रार्थना केली. पण मध्याच्या दिवसात शांतीला 'गोका निर्माण झाल्याचे दिसते,'

सुसंवादाचे कार्य होत आहे. त्यांच्यात एकसूत्रीपणा आणून नियोजन करणे आवश्यक आहे. शिवाय धार्मिक सामंजस्य महत्वाचे असल्यामुळे त्यात सातत्य असावयास हवे. त्या दृष्टीने पाहता ही राष्ट्रीय समितीची कल्पना स्वागतार्ह आहे. राष्ट्रपती आणि महाप्रज्ञासारखे धार्मिक नेते ह्यांचा ह्या राष्ट्रीय समितीशी निकटचा संबंध असल्यामुळे धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे एक नवे युग ह्या देशात प्रगटेल अशी आशा करण्यात हरकत नाही.

कॅथलिक चर्चच्या दृष्टीने हा कार्यक्रम म्हणजे एक पर्वणीच आहे. मूठभर कॅथलिकांना धार्मिक सुसंवादाबद्दल आस्था नाही. काहीचे धार्मिक सुसंवादाबद्दल आक्षेप आहेत, पण धर्माधर्मातील सुसंवाद हा चर्चच्या मिशन कार्याचा भाग आहे असे पोप जॉन पॉल ह्यांनी त्यांच्या 'तारणाऱ्याचे मिशन' ह्या परिपत्रकात ठामपणे प्रतिपादन केले आहे. पोप जॉन

पॉल ह्यांनी पुढे असे लिहिले आहे, "सुसंवादासाठी फार मोठे क्षेत्र खुले आहे. विविध धर्मातील नेते, पंडित ह्यांच्यामधील विचारविनिमय, सर्वांगीण विकाससाठी सहकार्य, धार्मिक, आध्यात्मिक मूल्यांचे जतन व आध्यात्मिक अनुभवांची देवाण घेवाण ह्या गोष्टी धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे घटक आहेत."

स्वतः पोप जॉन पॉल ह्यांनी धार्मिक सुसंवादाचा महान आदर्श जगापुढे ठेवला आहे. त्यांनी १२० हून अधिक देशांना भेटी दिल्या आहेत. त्या प्रसंगी त्यांनी विविध धर्मांच्या पंडितांना भेटून त्यांच्याशी धार्मिक आणि इतर मानवी हिताच्या प्रश्नांबद्दल चर्चा केली आहे. १९८६ आणि १९९९ साली त्यांनी भारताला भेट दिली. त्याप्रसंगी त्यांनी सर्वधर्मीय नेत्यांबरोबर सभा घेतल्या.

१९८६ आणि २००१ साली त्यांनी इटलीतील असिसी

शहरात सर्वधर्मीय प्रार्थना सभा घेतल्या. दोन्ही वेळेस भारतातील हिंदू धर्मीय प्रतिनिधी हजर होते. १९९९ साली मुंबईतील सोमय्या विद्यापीठाच्या प्रतिनिधींबरोबर मी पोप साहेबांची भेट घेतली.

दिल्लीत पोप साहेबांनी महात्मा गांधींच्या समाधीचे दर्शन घेऊन प्रार्थना केली. त्या वेळी ते प्रार्थनेत एवढे तल्लीन झाले होते की त्यांच्या चिटणीसांना त्यांना पुढील कार्यक्रमासाठी खुणवावे लागले! ह्याच पोप साहेबांनी मुसलमान, ज्यू इत्यादींच्या धर्मस्थळांना भेटी दिल्या आहेत.

आता १६ डिसेंबर रोजी पोप जॉन पॉल ह्यांचे प्रतिनिधी व व्हॅटिकनच्या आंतर धर्मीय सुसंवाद परिषदेचे अध्यक्ष आर्चबिशप मायकल फिट्झजेराल्ड वसईला भेट देत आहेत. तेव्हा सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा चर्चने आधीच सुरू केलेल्या आंतरधर्मीय सुसंवादाच्या मोहिमेस

पूरक आहे. कॅथलिक चर्चकडून ह्या उपक्रमाचे स्वागतच होईल.

कधी कधी माझ्या सारख्या धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यास वाहून घेतलेल्या कार्यकर्त्यांच्या मनात असा प्रश्न निर्माण होतो की चर्चचे हे धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे कार्य एकतर्फी तर नाही ना?

धार्मिक मूलतत्त्ववाद बळावत असताना धार्मिक सुसंवाद टिकाव धरू शकेल काय?

सुरत येथे संपन्न झालेले सर्व धर्मीय संमेलन आणि प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेला सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा मात्र एक चैतन्यशाली, आशादायक संदेश घेऊन येत आहे. त्यामुळे सर्वांकडूनच धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यास उत्स्फूर्त प्रतिसाद व उदार सहकार्य मिळेल अशी आशा बाळगण्यास हरकत नाही.

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धार्मिक सुसंवादाची जागतिक चळवळ कॅथलिक चर्चनेच सुरु केली आहे. चर्चप्रणीत धर्मगुरूंच्या ट्रेनिंगसाठी असलेल्या 'सेमिनरीत' हिंदू, बौद्ध, जैन, मुस्लिम इ. धर्म अभ्यासिले जातात. फादर डिनोबिली, फा. बेस्की, फा. बुल्के, फा. बीड ग्रिफिथ्स इ. अनेक ख्रिश्चन धर्मगुरूंनी अन्य धर्माचा व्यासंगपूर्वक अभ्यास केला होता. १९६५ साली चर्चचे जगातील तीन हजार बिशप व्हॅटिकन येथे सर्व धर्मसुसंवादाची चर्चा करण्यासाठी जमले होते. त्यांच्या जाहीर भूमिकेमुळे जगभर धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे नवे ऐतिहासिक पर्व सुरु झाले. धार्मिक सुसंवादाचा विश्वव्यापी कार्यक्रम चर्चने अग्रक्रमाने स्वीकारला असून, ऑक्टोबरमध्ये सुरत येथे झालेल्या विविध धर्मीयांच्या संमेलनात मी मोठ्या अपेक्षेने सहभागी झालो.

जैन धर्मीय आचार्य महाप्रज्ञ यांनी हा कार्यक्रम आयोजित केला होता. जैन, हिंदू, बौद्ध, इस्लाम, पारशी, ख्रिश्चन इ. धर्मांच्या सुमारे वीस धार्मिक नेत्यांना या संमेलनासाठी खास निमंत्रित करण्यात आले होते. संमेलनाच्या दुसऱ्या व अखेरच्या दिवशी राष्ट्रपती डॉ. अब्दुल कलाम हजर होते. भारताचा सर्वांगीण विकास व शांती यासाठी सर्व धर्मांनी सहकार्य करणे आवश्यक आहे असे त्यांचे आग्रही प्रतिपादन होते.

संमेलनाचा कार्यक्रम सौहार्दपूर्ण वातावरणात संपन्न झाला. ज्या गुजरातेत २००२ साली झालेल्या जातीय दंगलीत २००० लोक ठार झाले, त्या गुजरातेत अशा प्रकारचा अनुपम कार्यक्रम व्हावा हे आशावर्धक आहे. संमेलनाच्या अखेरीस 'सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा' राष्ट्रपतींच्या साक्षीने सर्वसंमत झाला. त्यावर १५ धार्मिक नेते व प्रतिनिधी यांनी स्वाक्षरी केली.

या जाहीरनाम्याच्या प्रारंभी राष्ट्राच्या शांती व भरभराटीसाठी करण्यात आलेल्या सुंदर प्रार्थनेत म्हटले आहे, "हे सर्व शक्तिमान परमेश्वरा, फुटीर शक्तीशी झगडण्याचे बळ जनतेला देण्यासाठी या देशातील सर्व धार्मिक नेत्यांना सहाय्य कर." धार्मिक वितंडवाद, विसंवाद, असहिष्णुता, हिंसाचार, अनैतिकता, भ्रष्टाचार, विषमता, गरिबी, स्त्रियांवरील अन्याय, अत्याचार, बेरोजगारी इ. शीषण समस्या या देशासमोर आहेत. अध्यात्म, धार्मिकता व सभोवतालच्या मानवांच्या समस्या यांचा घनिष्ट संबंध आहे; पण या देशातील साधु, संतमहंत यांनी सामाजिक समस्यांच्या निराकरणकडे विशेष लक्ष दिले नाही हे कटू सत्य आहे.

धर्म व अध्यात्म हे मनुष्याच्या व समाजाच्या संपूर्ण विकासासाठी आहेत असे मानून धार्मिक नेतेमंडळींनी फुटीर शक्तीशी झगडण्याचे मनोबल लोकांना द्यावयास हवे. "भारत हा देश नेहमी शांतीच्या बाजूने

उभा राहिला. पण सध्याच्या दिवसात शांतीला धोका निर्माण झाल्याचे दिसते." असे जाहीरनाम्यात नमूद आहे. सर्व धर्मांनी शांतीचा संदेश दिला आहे. त्याचा आधार घेऊन सर्व धर्मीयांनी सध्याचे अशांत वातावरण दूर करण्यासाठी झटावयास हवे. मात्र आज धर्मांचाच आधार घेऊन शांतीला सुरंग लावला जात आहे. स'कु चि त प ण ॥, मतलबीपणा, स्वार्थ, पूर्वग्रह व द्वेष ही धार्मिक विसंवाद व ताणतणावाची मुख्य कारणे आहेत. तेव्हा

सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा

धर्म मानणाऱ्या सर्वांनी यांच्या पलीकडे जावयास हवे. या कामी प्रबोधन करण्याचे व प्रेरणा देण्याचे कार्य धार्मिक नेत्यांनी करावयास हवे.

जाहीरनाम्यातील प्रार्थनेत पुढे असे म्हणण्यात आले आहे की, भिन्न भिन्न दृष्टिकोन, मतप्रणाली आणि जीवनमार्ग यांचा आदर राखण्याची मानसिकता लोकांनी विकसित करावयास हवी. तेव्हा, केवळ विविध धर्मातील साम्यांपुरता धार्मिक सुसंवाद मर्यादित नसावा. आपला देश अजूनही बराच गरीब व निरक्षर-अशिक्षित आहे. तरीही शास्त्र आणि तंत्रज्ञानाच्या क्षेत्रात या देशाने नेत्रदीपक यश मिळविले आहे.

शास्त्र आणि तंत्रज्ञान यांना अध्यात्माची जोड आवश्यक आहे, नाही तर ती धोकादायक ठरतील. म्हणूनच शास्त्र आणि अध्यात्म यांचा मिलाप होणे या देशाच्या ऐक्य, शांती आणि विकासासाठी अनिवार्य आहे, असे विचार जाहीरनाम्यात मांडण्यात आले आहे.

राष्ट्राच्या सर्वांगीण विकासासाठी सर्व धर्मीयांनी एकत्र येणे आवश्यक आहे असे आवाहन सुरतच्या जाहीरनाम्यात करण्यात आले आहे. त्यासाठी पाच कलमी कार्यक्रम सुचविण्यात आला आहे.

१. महिन्यातून एकदा गावोगावी बहुधर्मीय सभा व्हावी, देशविकासाची चर्चा एकमेकांना विश्वासात घेऊन करावी, आपापल्या धर्माची मूळ शिकवण इतरांना सांगावी.

२ शिक्षण, आरोग्य, पाणीपुरवठा,

रोजगारी इ. क्षेत्रांत सर्व धर्मीयांनी एकत्रित प्रयत्न केल्यास प्रश्न लौकर सुटू शकतील व जनमानसात धर्माची प्रतिमा उंचावेल.

सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनाम्यात सुचविण्यात आलेली ही सर्वधर्मीय राष्ट्रीय समिती धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यात पद्धतशीरपणा आणि स्थैर्य आणण्यास कारणीभूत ठरेल. देशात अनेक ठिकाणी धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे कार्य होत आहे. त्यांच्यात एकसूत्रीपणा आणून नियोजन करणे आवश्यक आहे.

३. विविध धर्मप्रणीत शाळा कॉलेजात सर्व धर्मांच्या विद्यार्थ्यांना प्रवेश दिला जावा. सहिष्णुता, नैतिकता व मानवी मूल्ये यांचे महत्त्व अशा संस्थांमधून विद्यार्थ्यांवर बिंबविले जावे.

४. बुद्धिमतांनी एकत्र येऊन विविध धर्मांच्या संकल्पनांचा वस्तुनिष्ठ अभ्यास करावयास हवा. त्यामुळे वातावरण

चर्चच्या मिशन कार्याचा भाग आहे असे पोप जॉन पॉल यांनी त्यांच्या 'तारणाऱ्यांचे मिशन' या परिपत्रकात ठामपणे प्रतिपादन केले आहे. पोप जॉन पॉल यांनी पुढे असे लिहिले आहे, "सुसंवादासाठी फार मोठे क्षेत्र खुले आहे. विविध धर्मातील नेते, पंडित यांच्यामधील विचारविनिमय, सर्वांगीण विकासासाठी सहकार्य, धार्मिक, आध्यात्मिक मूल्यांचे जतन व आध्यात्मिक अनुभवांचे देवाण घेवाण या गोष्टी धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे घटक आहेत."

स्वतः पोप जॉन पॉल यांनी धार्मिक सुसंवादाचा महान आदर्श जगापुढे ठेवला आहे. त्यांनी १२० हून अधिक देशांना भेटी दिल्या आहेत. त्या प्रसंगी त्यांनी विविध धर्मांच्या पंडितांना भेटून त्यांच्याशी धार्मिक आणि इतर मानवी हिताच्या प्रश्नांबद्दल चर्चा केली आहे. १९८६ आणि १९९९ साली त्यांनी भारताला भेट दिली. त्याप्रसंगी त्यांनी सर्वधर्मीय नेत्यांबरोबरच सभा घेतल्या.

१९८६ आणि २००१ साली त्यांनी इटलीतील असिमी शहरात सर्वधर्मीय प्रार्थना सभा घेतल्या. दोन्ही वेळेस भारतातील हिंदू धर्मीय प्रतिनिधी हजर होते. १९९८ साली मुंबईतील सोमव्या विद्यापीठाच्या प्रतिनिधींबरोबर मी पोप साहेबांची भेट घेतली.

दिल्लीत पोप साहेबांनी महात्मा गांधींच्या समाधीचे दर्शन घेऊन प्रार्थना केली. त्या वेळी ते प्रार्थनेत एवढे तल्लीन झाले होते की, त्यांच्या घिटणीसांना त्यांना पुढील कार्यक्रमासाठी खुणवावे लागते! याच पोप साहेबांनी मुसलमान, ज्यू इत्यादींच्या धर्मस्थळांना भेटी दिल्या आहेत.

आता १६ डिसेंबर रोजी पोप जॉन पॉल यांचे प्रतिनिधी व व्हॅटिकनच्या आंतरधर्मीय सुसंवाद परिषदेचे अध्यक्ष आर्चबिशप मायकल फिट्झजेराल्ड वसईला भेट देत आहेत. तेव्हा सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा चर्चने आधीच सुरु केलेल्या आंतरधर्मीय सुसंवादाच्या मोहिमेस पूरक आहे. कॅथलिक चर्चकडून या उपक्रमाचे स्वागतच होईल.

कधी कधी माझ्यासारख्या धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यास वाहून घेतलेल्या कार्यकर्त्यांच्या मनात असा प्रश्न निर्माण होतो की, चर्चचे हे धार्मिक सुसंवादाचे कार्य एकतर्फी तर नाही ना?

धार्मिक मूलतत्त्ववाद बळवत असताना धार्मिक सुसंवाद टिकाव धरू शकेल काय? सुरत येथे संपन्न झालेले सर्व धर्मीय संमेलन आणि प्रसिद्ध करण्यात आलेला सुरतचा आध्यात्मिक जाहीरनामा मात्र एक चैतन्यशाली, आशादायक संदेश घेऊन येत आहे. त्यामुळे सर्वांकडूनच धार्मिक सुसंवादाच्या कार्यास उत्स्फूर्त प्रतिसाद व उदार सहकार्य मिळेल अशी आशा बाळगण्यास हरकत नाही.

-बिशप थॉमस डाबरे





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF

REV. EZEKIEL ISAAC MALEKAR

All spiritual and religious leaders, signatories to the Surat Spiritual Declaration made on 15th October, 2003, in the presence of Hon'ble President of India, have committed themselves to take action in all earnestness, with regard to five key element of Garland Project for unity of minds. The details of action taken, in this regard, on behalf of the Jewish Community in Delhi are as under.

During the month of December, 2003, the Jewish Community in Delhi celebrated "HANNUKAH" (festival of lights) for eight days at the Judah Hyam Synagogue, when members of other communities were also invited to participate in the prayer meeting. The importance of this festival was explained to non-Jews, while comparing this festival with the Hindu festival Deepavali, which is also a festival of lights.

In the month of January, 2004, the Jews have celebrated a festival called "TU-BESHEVAT" (new year of trees), when brothers and sisters from other communities were invited to participate as well, as they were also requested to plant saplings on this occasion.

A talk on Religion, Environment and Ecology was delivered and, once again, it was emphasised that Mother Earth is a sacred gift to human kind, and we should be 'protectors,' rather than 'destroyers' in the name of progress / development.

During March, 2004, a festival called "PURIM" was celebrated, and members of other communities were also invited to participate. Every year, this festival falls on the same day when Hindus celebrate Holi. Probably, one of the reasons may be that Hindus and Jews follow the Lunar-based calendar.

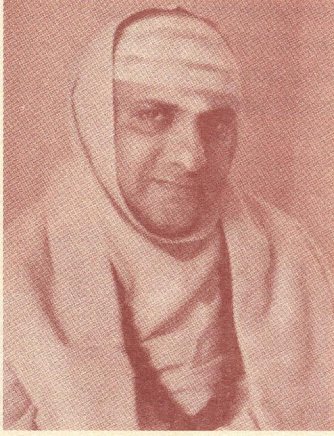
Similar exercises will be undertaken in the future also so as to encourage as many non-Jewish friends to participate in prayer-meetings and festivals.

We also propose to invite spiritual and religious leaders to deliver talks on various aspects of religions or Saints, Prophets etc. in the library hall of the Synagogue. For example there could be an Inter-faith meeting in which a Jewish person could be asked to speak on "Lord Rama" or "Lord Krishna" or even "Gita," and Muslim friends could be asked to enlighten us about "Guru Nanak" or "Guru Granth Sahib". Similarly, Hindus could express their views on "Prophet Mohammad" or "Koran".

The Judah Hyam Synagogue has also established an Inter-faith Study Centre where a comparative study of all religions is being undertaken. Besides, scholars and researchers from various parts of the world take advantage of the books available in the library, to conduct further studies about History of Jews in India.

Besides we also conduct Hebrew classes for the benefit of Jews and non-Jews and they are being enlightened about ethics and morality in each religion. Since India is one of the Pluralistic countries of the world where followers of nine different communities are living in harmony and peace, without coming into conflict with each other, because we all, being Indians, always believed in "Vasudaiva Kutumbakam" and Unity in Diversity.





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF

SRI SRI SRI JAGATGURU SHIVARATRI DESIKENDRA MAHASWAMI

Surat Spiritual Declaration was translated into Kannada and the booklet was released by Sri George Fernandes, Hon'ble Union Minister of Defence, at Suttur on 22nd January 2004, on the occasion of the Jathra Festival. The copies of the Kannada booklet were distributed to the persons who participated in the Jathra Festival in thousands. Later, this booklet was also given to all those who attended the five Spiritual Retreats at Suttur and Ooty.

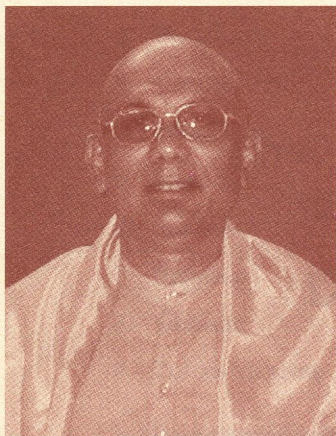
The gist of the declaration was made known to the general public at the week-long Jayanthi Celebration of the Adijagadgruru Sri Shivayogigalu, at Mysore, during December 19 - 27, 2003. Thousands of people witnessed this congregation which was inaugurated by Sri L.K. Advani, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister of India.

The copies of the booklet have been given to many influential persons in Karnataka with a view to make them familiar with the spirit of the Surat Spiritual Declaration.

The Kannada version of SSD was also published in 'Prasada', the Kannada bi-monthly (January-February 2004 issue) and the monthly Newsletter of the JSS Mahavidyapeetha.

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), set up by JSS MVP under the aegis of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), transmits technologies in agriculture and allied fields, through a pool of expertise available, along with an appropriate linkage system. It is responsive to the broader concerns of the farming community and strives to improve the overall quality of their lives. The Rural Development and Self-Employment Training Institution (RUDSETI), at Chamarajanagar, is an effort towards making rural youth self-reliant entrepreneurs, rather than job-seekers.





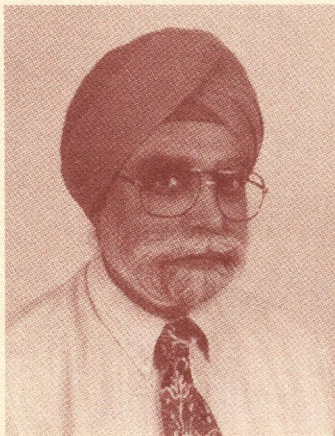
ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
SWAMI JITATMANANDA

The Ramakrishna Mission

The Ramakrishna mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1896, in Kolkata, is the worldwide humanitarian-spiritual organization established in the name of Shri Ramakrishna, for material, social, moral, intellectual, and spiritual elevation of mankind. The Mission is working through more than 160 affiliated centers (130 in India) spread over U.S.A. (15 centres), U.K., France, Germany, Holland, Russia, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, Australia, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and nearly 1000 non-affiliated centers (but guided by the Mission) in India and abroad. The total number of the student population in the Mission's 634 major and minor educational institutions is more than 2.16 lakhs. The total number of patients in 8 major hospitals, and 146 all-department dispensaries and mobile dispensaries is nearly 75 lakhs. Two great aims of the Mission are

1. to establish unity and mutual respect between major world religions
2. to worship God in humanity through educational, cultural, medical, scientific, technological, agricultural, village development and tribal service, turning all work into worship of the Divine in men and women, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
DR. J.S. NEKI

Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, a literary and cultural organisation in the metropolis, has been quite active in promoting inter-faith dialogue and other related activities. A follow up of the Surat Spiritual Declaration Dr. J. S. Neki, Hony. General Secretary of Bhai vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, had the privilege of representing Sikhism and signing the Surat Spiritual Declaration presented to the Hon'ble President of India on 15th October, 2003. Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan has been active in promoting inter-faith activities in different ways. There have been regular lectures, seminars and devotional evenings, wherein representatives from various faith traditions actively participate. A regular feature of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan is an annual lecture in the memory of late Bhai Chanan Singh, wherein, every year, a non-Sikh speaker is invited to speak on a Sikh theme. In the past, Prof Dipankar Gupta of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof B.N. Goswami from Chandigarh and Prof Hew McLeod from the University of Dunedin, New Zealand, have been speakers in this programme. This year, Prof Barun De, an eminent historian from Kolkata, will be delivering this lecture.

Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan played an active role by providing secretarial facilities to the Delhi Peace Summit, for organising an International Summit Towards the Culture of Harmony and Peace. Dr. Mohinder Singh, Director of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, was requested by the Trustees of the Parliament of World's Religions, to act as the Organizing Secretary of this event. This function was organised by the Delhi Peace Summit in partnership with the Council for a Parliament of World's Religions, Chicago, from December 7-10, 2003 in New Delhi.

The Pre-Parliament which was inaugurated by H. E. Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India, on the evening of 7th December, 2003, was attended by nearly 500 delegates from all over the world, with religious leaders and peace activists participating in the event.

An interesting feature of the Delhi event was active involvement of the youth and women. During sessions on the role of youth in building of culture of peace, youth, women and indigenous people from all over the world demonstrated their resolve and capacity for living in harmony and peace. In another session, on the role of women in building culture of peace, the participants highlighted how women could act as catalysts of peace. Peace activists shared their stories of inter-faith solidarity. Some workers at the grassroots level, who played positive role in saving innocent lives in communally motivated violence, in different parts of India and specially in Gujarat state of India inspired the youth. U.N. representatives and leaders of Inter-faith bodies of the world like I.A.R.F., U.R.I., T.O.U. and W.F.I.R.C. also lent their support to the Delhi event.

In a session on 'Importance of Inter-Religious Dialogue for Promoting Culture of Peace,' nine religious traditions were represented by the following:

1. Bahai's: Dr. AK. Merchant
2. Buddhism: Ven. Sri Sumedha Thero
3. Christianity: Fr. M.G. Thomas
4. Hinduism: Swami Veda Bharati
5. Islam: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
6. Jainism: Dr. Sadhvi Sadhna
7. Judaism: Rabi Izekeiel I. Malekar
8. Sikhism: Dr. J.S. Neki
9. Zoroastrianism: General Adi Sethna.

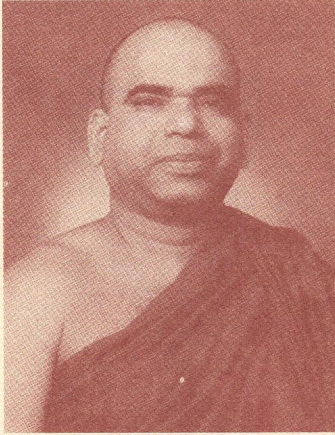
In connection with the quincentenary birthday of Guru Angad Dev, the second Sikh Guru, the Sadan arranged an inter-faith pilgrimage to Khadoor Sahib, wherein the following representatives from various faith traditions participated:

1. H.H. Srivatsav Goswami: Head of Shri Chaitanya Prem Sanstha, Gambhira Jaisingh Ghera, Vrindhavan
2. H.H. Muni Amrinder Kumarji Maharaj (Jain representative)
3. Rev. Lama Lobsang, Head of the Ashoka Mission
4. Maulana Siraj-ul-Hasan Qasmi, Jamaat-E-Islami Hind, Dawat Nagar,
5. Dr. J.S. Neki, General Secretary, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan. (Sikh Representative)
6. Mr. Ezekiel Isaac Malekar, Jewish representative and Secretary, Human Rights Commission
7. Bhai Ranjit Singh, Head Priest, Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, New Delhi, Sikh Representative
8. Dr. A.K. Merchant, Director, Bahai Representative, Bahai's House, New Delhi
9. Rev. Dennis Lal, Cathedral Church of Redemption, New Delhi, Christian Representative

Dr. J.S. Neki on behalf of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan spoke on the inter-faith message of Guru Granth Sahib to an audience of nearly 50,000 people. This function was also attended by the President and the General Secretary of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee, Amritsar and Jathedars of Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib and Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib and other Sikh spiritual and religious leaders. In keeping with Sikh tradition, the conference was followed by *langar* (free community meals).

Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan's Hony. General Secretary, Dr. J.S. Neki and Director Dr. Mohinder Singh, have been invited to participate in the next Parliament of World's Religions in Barcelona from July 7-13, 2004. Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan will be actively collaborating with the Delhi Peace Summit in hosting a Post-Parliament event in New Delhi on November 22, 2004 in the India International Centre, New Delhi.





ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
RAHUL BODHI

We, on behalf of the BHIKKHU SANGHA'S UNITED BUDDHIST MISSION, and with the guide lines of the SSD, organized hundreds of public meetings in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra. More than 150 public meetings were organized and the messages of compassion and non-violence were spread in different localities, different cities and towns. We arranged public meetings in Pune, Nagpur, Solapur, Pandharpur, Satara, Nashik, Manmad, Kolhapur, Amaravati, Bhandara, Wardha, Chandrapur of Maharashtra and Balaghat district of M.P., several lakhs of people benefited from such programmes in Mumbai. We are establishing a good centre for Social, Educational and Cultural awakening in Mumbai.

I hope the SSD should go well and enlighten the people of India and build up the "Unity of Minds" and help the country, our motherland and her innocent people.





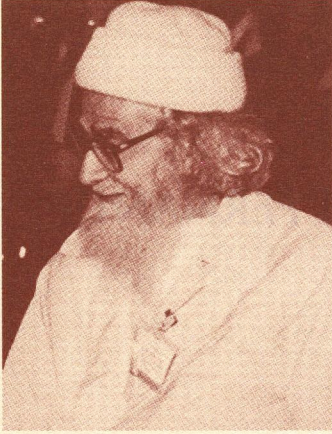
ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT
UNDER THE AEGIS OF
SUDESH DIDI

Inter-faith and other activities of the **Brahma Kumaris Organisation**

1. Cuttack Centre of Brahma Kumaris in Orissa distributed foodgrains at a Relief Camp for flood stricken villagers.
2. In Kolkota, an Inter-faith programme was held in Oct. 2003. Rajyogini Dadi Hirdaya Mohini, Joint Chief of Brahma Kumaris, presided. Participants included Qazi Ismail Zafar, Rev. Noel, Maulana A.A. Rizvi, Swami Sarva Lokanand, Rev. Nirmal Bhootoria, Ven. Bikshu G. Thero and Sheriff Probir Roy.
3. Spirituality oriented Personality Development Camp for children was held at Om Shanti Retreat Centre, Gurgaon.
4. Rural Development programmes were held in various parts of the country to apprise the rural population about the evil effects of drug addiction & tobacco chewing.
5. Pulse Polio camp was organised in Bhilai.
6. Mega Peace Programme with the title 'An Evening to Receive God's Blessings' was organised at Kolkata in December 2003 in which more than one lakh people participated. The programme was inaugurated by the Governor of West Bengal Hon. Veerendra J. Shah and all the four Chief Dadijis of the Brahma Kumaris organisation.
7. A Grand Festival of Peace was organised with one lakh participants at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi on December, 2003 in which three Chief Dadijis of Brahma Kumaris participated. The programme was addressed by H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India and Hon'ble Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Vice President of India.
8. A programme on 'Mercy & Co-operation' was held in Bhopal in the month of January 2004 with over 50,000 participants.
9. In February 2004 a programme titled 'Rural & Social Welfare Mobile Service' was held in Bangalore in which 100 villages around Bangalore were covered.
10. An Inter-faith programme was held at Talkatora Indoor Stadium New Delhi. Participants included Mahamandleshwar Swami Sarvanand Saraswati, Swami Agnivesh of Arya Samaj, Dr. Gulzar Delhvi and others.

11. A grand Sarvadharam Sambhav Sammelan was held at Om Shanti Retreat Centre in Feb. 2004 in which Sardar Tarsem Singh, Swami Sarvanand Saraswati, Dr. M.D. Thomas, Ven. A. Pannasara Thero, Mr. E.I. Malekar and Jain Muni Gurudev Shri Roopchand Muni participated.
12. B.K. sisters administered Plus Polio drops at Civil Hospital, Pathankot.
13. An Inter-faith programme was held at Kurali in which the local religious leaders were invited.
14. An Inter-faith meet was held at Ludhiana in which religious leaders from surrounding areas participated.
15. A grand Religious Harmony meet was organised at Chennai in which eminent religious leaders, including Swami V.V. Madhusudan, Maharaj Swami Ravidas, Thero Vabuthurai Adhinam, Mufti S.M. Ayub, Rev. Father S.S. Param Sivaram, S. Rachapal Singh, and Dhamma Duta Ven. D. Sumangla participated.
16. Twelve Shiv Sandesh Rathas were taken out throughout the rural areas of the country, giving the message of Peace & Harmony.



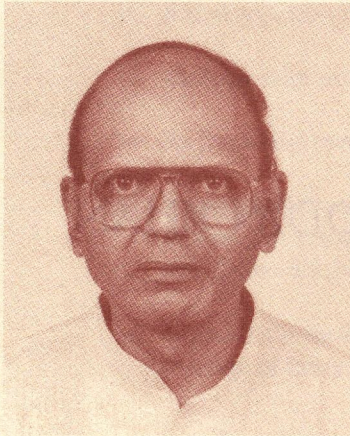


MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Maulana Wahiduddin, an Islamic and spiritual scholar who adopted Peace as a mission of his life, was born in 1925 at Azamgarh in India. After graduating from a seminary of traditional Islamic learning, Maulana focussed his attention on modern thought. Well versed, therefore, in both classical Islamic learning and modern science, Maulana presented to the world the real face of Islam based on peace, tolerance and co-existence, not the violence as it is misunderstood and misrepresented today. A prolific writer, Maulana established the Islamic Centre in September 1970 in New Delhi, India and launched a magazine called Al-Risala, an organ of the centre of Urdu language, launched in 1976.

Maulana, a recipient of several national and International awards, has also represented Islam and spirituality at various International interfaith, Islamic and peace conferences and has been awarded 'Demiurgus Peace International Award 2002' for his outstanding achievements in strengthening peace among nations, developing a complete ideology of peace and presenting Islamic teachings in the style and language of the present day. His latest work includes the publication of God Arises, Islam Rediscovered, True Jihad, Muhammad and The Ideology of Peace.





REVEREND STANISLAUS FERNANDES

Birth: 08 th October 1939, at Ahmedabad (parents belonged to Catholic Church)

Schooling: St. Xavier's High School, Mirzapur, Ahmedabad

Joined Jesuit Order: 20th June 1955 (after S.S.C.)

Spiritual Initiation and Studies in Humanities, Philosophy, Religion

Ordained Priest: 23 rd March 1968

Pastor and Social Worker: 1969 - 1974 in Dediapada,

(Rajpipla sub-division, South Gujarat)

Secretary to Provincial Superior of Gujarat Jesuit Province: 1974-78

Provincial Superior of Gujarat Jesuits (Ahmedabad): 1978-84

Rector of De Nobili College, Ramwadi, Pune : 1984-89

Bishop of Diocese of Ahmedabad: 1990-2002

Archbishop of Gandhinagar (Gujarat): December 2002

Rev. Stanislaus Fernandes writes in saying that while he completely endorses the SSD he has been busy with his duties in the church and so has not been able to actively implement the programmes.



Notes

