



Brahma Kumaris activities for 2000 – International Year for the Culture of Peace



BRAHMA KUMARIS
WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

VISIONS of PEACE

NEWSLETTER

June 2000



2000 INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE CULTURE OF PEACE
ANNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA CULTURE DE LA PAIX
AND INTERNACIONAL DE LA CULTURA DE LA PAZ
سنة دولية للثقافة
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ГОД КУЛЬТУРЫ МИРА
国际和平文化年

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, so it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" From the UNESCO Charter

'PEACE IS IN OUR HANDS' in the UK

On Monday, 17th April 2000, Mr. Tony Benn, Member of Parliament, hosted a special event to mark the launch of UK activities by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University for the United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace at the House of Commons in London.

To an audience of 130 guests and dignitaries Tony Benn MP quoted a line from Genesis "Am I my brother's keeper? This is the foundation of peace. Peace is created within each individual but it is also a collective responsibility".

Dadi Janki, Co-administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris said, "There are three things that are prominent in the world today; worry, fear and hopelessness. They have penetrated everyone. For a person to attain real peace there must be courage and truth".

Chris Lewis, England Cricketer said "Peace is a small word but is a large subject. It can mean so much. Most of us spend our time in fear or worry. Imagine what it would be like if we actually had peace. All that time would then be saved".

Reena Basra, an 18 year old Economics and Business Finance student said that "I don't want to grow up in a world where violence is the norm and peace is only something we can dream about. I want to have a future where peace is part of all our lives."

Ambassador Bautista of the Philippines said, "Many of our countries are feeling the need for a different type of peace. It is in the hearts and minds of men that wars begin and this is what we need to change".

Peter Dyson, Deputy Director of the United Nations Association, co-ordinators of the Year in the UK said, "The last century was one of tremendous achievement but also one with many wars and violations of human rights." He emphasised the importance of the schools' programmes in citizenship.

Roan Hackney, sixth form student read



Key Speakers after signing Manifesto 2000 at the House of Commons in London. From left: Mr Chris Kpodo (Deputy High Commissioner for Ghana), Mr Peter Dyson (Deputy Director, United Nations Association UK), Mr Maranan (Information Officer, Embassy of the Philippines), Sister Hemlata (Caribbean Co-ordinator, BKWSU), Mr. Roan Hackney (Student), Sister Jayanti (European Director, BKWSU), H.E. Mr Cesar Bautista (The Ambassador of the Philippines), Dadi Janki (Co-administrative Head, BKWSU), The Rt. Hon Tony Benn (Member of Parliament), Mr Chris Lewis (England Cricketer), Miss Reena Basra (Undergraduate Student, Economics and Business Finance).

out the points of Manifesto 2000 and the event closed with participants signing the Manifesto as a personal commitment to implementing its principles in their lives.

PEACE EVENTS SPREAD THROUGHOUT INDIA

The official launch event for the IYCP by the Brahma Kumaris in India took place at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) Auditorium in New Delhi on 11th April 2000.

Delivering the keynote address to an audience of 500, Dr. L.M. Singhvi MP and former Indian High Commissioner to UK, said that the culture of peace was the most ancient culture of India. The culture of peace was essential to achieve self-realisation and enlightenment. Dr. Singhvi further stressed that movements for peace had to be nurtured in our daily lives. "We want peace here and now. We want a striving for peace to become a part of our mission statement on this earth", he declared.

Mr. R.P. Perera, Programme Officer, IYCP, UNESCO said: "The Brahma Kumaris have been declared Messengers in India of Manifesto 2000 and the partnership will be greatly rewarding for the objective of creating the culture of peace."

H. E. Faruque Mohammed Mustafa, High Commissioner of Bangladesh, conveyed his best wishes on the behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh - "a country which was born in war and which values peace most" as he put it. Bangladesh first proposed the idea of a Culture of Peace in 1997 which, on 17th September 1999, was endorsed and launched as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and as the International Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World from 2001 to 2010.

Speaking as the chairperson, Rajyogini Hirdaya Mohini, co-ordinator of BK centres in Delhi, said that peace and love were the core values desired by all human beings in their lives. She reiterated that the choice for peace lay with us human beings. Nobody can make us miserable or violent if we choose not to give up our peace, she asserted. She urged everyone to make a determined effort to translate the culture of peace as a reality in their personal lives.

Other speakers included Mr. D. R. Kartikeyan, Director General of the National Human Rights Commission, Swami Agnivesh, social reformer, Mr. Feodor Starcevic of the United Nations Information Centre and Mr. M.P.K. Kutty, Chief Sub-Editor of the Times of India, New Delhi.

In a short space of time, the culture of peace project in India has reached a wide part of the country, with 20 BK regional launch events having already taken place.



New Delhi Launching – FICCI Auditorium. (R to L) – Mr RP Perera, Programme Officer, IYCP, UNESCO, New Delhi, Mr Feodor Starcevic, Director UNIC, Dr LM Singhvi, Member of Parliament, Former Indian High Commissioner in UK, Rajyogini Hirdaya Mohini, Joint Chief of Brahma Kumaris.

Key International Events Organised by the Brahma Kumaris

JANUARY

- 17th-19th** Manila, Philippines - 2 work shops at the Global Forum of Women Political Leaders
- 26th** Kingston, Jamaica - Launch and panel discussion on 'Peace 2000 and Beyond'

FEBRUARY

- 4th** Port of Spain, Trinidad - Launch event by UNESCO, BKWSU and Inter Religious Organisation (IRO)
- 7th** Hong Kong, China - Interfaith picnic and dialogue at the Temple of Hidden Peace and Tranquility
- 24th** Washington DC, USA - First in a series of three Conversations on IYCP

MARCH

- 8th** Chiang Mai, Thailand - Launch event to introduce Manifesto 2000
- 12th** Vancouver, Canada - Dialogue on 'How to create a Culture of Peace'

APRIL

- 11th** New Delhi, India - Launch event at FICCI Auditorium
- 17th** London, UK - Launch event at the House of Commons
- 20th** Ahmedabad, India - Launch event for the State of Gujarat
- 22nd** Hong Kong, China - Earth Day 2000 Clean Air Carnival
- 24th** Moscow, Russia - Launch event at the Russian Financial Academy
- 27th** St. Petersburg, Russia - Launch event at the International Centre for Business Co-operation
- 28th** Tamilnadu, South India - Launch event at Chennai
- 29th** Barcelona, Spain - Open air launch event at Parc de la Ciutadella
- 29th** Sydney, Australia - IYCP Weekend Forum at Inner Space Retreat Centre

MAY

- 7th** Istanbul, Turkey - Launch event followed by a piano concert by Idil Biret
- 7th** Nagpur, India - Launch event attended by the Minister of State for Education
- 10th** Colombo, Sri Lanka - Launch event at BMICH Auditorium
- 11th** Las Palmas, Spain - Launch event at Palacio de Congresos
- 11th** Moscow, Russia - Round table discussion for Artists
- 13th** London, UK - First Peace Workshop
- 13th** Amsterdam, Holland - Launch event at the International School, Amstelveen
- 19th** Arhus, Denmark - Launch event on 'Peace Starts in the Mind of Man'
- 27th** Mauritius - Interfaith meeting for the Promotion of Peace
- 31st** Nairobi, Kenya - Launch at the Sarit Expo Centre

"Peace can only be achieved through our behavior and the culture that is shared by all peoples. It is essential for the survival of our planet."

Together, let us construct this world of peace, beginning by signing Manifesto 2000 in our family, our community and our place of work. Together, let us cultivate peace.

Kathmandu, Nepal

The Nepalese New Year celebrations coincided with the IYCP launch in Kathmandu on the 13th April, which was held at the Nepal Film Development Company. Mr Tarani Datta Chataut, Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, formally began the event by lighting a lamp and signed his commitment to peace in front of a gathering of 900 people. The event received national coverage on radio, television and in the newspapers.



Kathmandu, Nepal: Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Mr Tarani Datta Chataut, inaugurating the launching of Manifesto 2000 by lighting Nepalese traditional lamp, on the Nepalese New Year Day of 2057 BS.

Argentina

Brahma Kumaris are holding weekly talks and workshops on peace in Buenos Aires. UNESCO and BKWSU are co-organising the project 'Peace - Here and Now'. Training initiatives have taken off around the country. In Santa Fe an 'Instruments of Peace Manual' has been compiled to provide practical tools for individuals interested in facilitating dialogues on the subject of peace within the community. In Neuguen, a group has been formed called 'Volunteers for Peace Network'. This group has been trained to facilitate training for other people to reach remote areas of the country. 10 more provinces are awaiting training in the next 4 months. Partnerships are being established with organisations and the media in the different provinces to encourage people to make the news by doing something positive.

PEACE PAVILION CARRIES THE SPIRIT OF THE OLYMPIC FLAME

The Olympian spirit of peace will once again be present at the Sydney 2000 Olympics in September. As a dedication to the International Year for the Culture of Peace, a prominent Peace Pavilion will be constructed.

The Peace Pavilion will be an inspiration to athletes and visitors around the world and serve as a reminder of the ancient games that were held in Greece. In those days, the best athletes were often also the best soldiers in the participating countries. An 'Olympic truce' was called during the time of the games to allow them to take part.

The Peace Pavilion, which will be operated by the Brahma Kumaris, will be an interactive facility for people to learn about and experience peace. It will have various exhibits including messages of peace in different languages, suggestions on how to achieve inner peace, a waterwall for a tranquil ambience, an audio wall for contemplative guidance and a special reflection area.

The open structure, in the shape of an upturned leaf, will be sited beside a beautiful lake in Centennial Park, one of Sydney's premier parklands which is one of the venues for the Games.

The Peace Pavilion will also be available for spiritual and community groups to use for peace related activities.

Construction of the Peace Pavilion will be completed in August, allowing it to play a special role in the celebration of the Olympics, Paralympics and Australia's celebration of the Centenary of Federation.

International Culture around the world



South London, UK
'Children for Peace' Interfaith

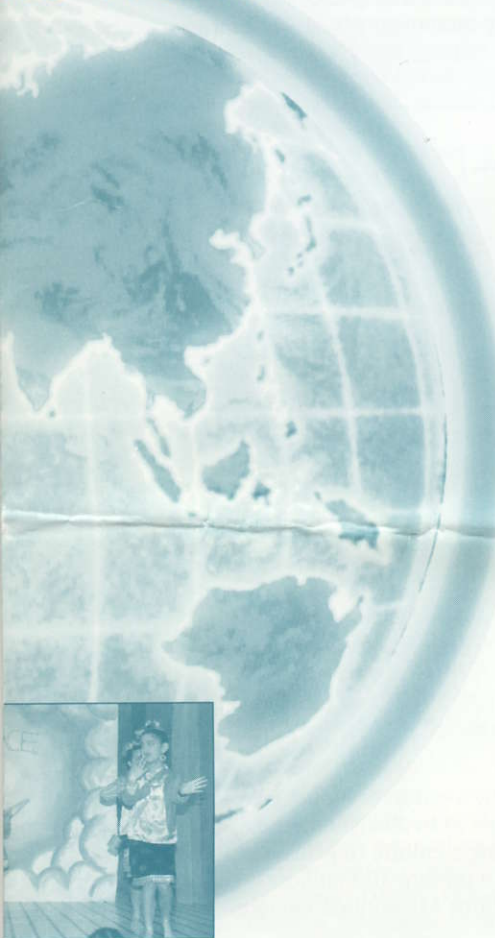


ur, attitudes and everyday acts. The culture of peace is the universal
l to our common humanity.

- whereby each of us undertakes to practise the universal principles of a culture of peace, non-violence and harmony
ce. Let us each ask ourselves, "what can we do for peace today?"

(Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the International Year for the Culture of Peace)

Year for the of Peace he World



rogramme in February.

Port of Spain, Trinidad

His excellency, Arthur N.R. Robinson, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago officially launched an event organised by UNESCO, the Inter Religious Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago and Brahma Kumaris on 4th February. Approximately 500 people, including politicians, representatives from the Ministry of Education and other Government Ministries, members of the Inter Religious Organisation, NGOs and the media attended the event which included messages of peace, prayers and cultural items.

Istanbul, Turkey

The mesmerising music of world-renowned pianist Idil Biret formed the centrepiece to the Brahma Kumaris' IYCP launch event at the Bosphorous University in Istanbul. Attended by 350 people, the hour long concert formed the ideal opportunity for reflecting on the real meaning of peace in their lives.

Barcelona, Spain

The launch of BK activities dedicated to IYCP took place in the beautiful open air setting of Parc de la Ciutadella on 29th April. Messages of hope and peace based on the six points of Manifesto 2000 were given from representatives of different faiths, institutions and UNESCO. The main speakers included Mrs. Joaquina Alemany, Member of the Parliament of Catalunya, Mr. Thubten Wangchen, Buddhist Monk, Mr. Miquel Martí, Centre UNESCO of Catalunya and Dr. Carme Romia, Permanent Seminar of Educators for Peace, University of Barcelona. In addition to the talks, the audience enjoyed an evening of music and dance.



Spain Open air event at Parc de la Ciutadella in Barcelona

Moscow, Russia

The Brahma Kumaris in Moscow launched their IYCP programme at the prestigious Russian Finance Academy on 24th April. The event, which was attended by 800 people, began with a video clip and a song on the theme of the IYCP followed by the decoration of the stage with the flags of the United Nations and Brahma Kumaris. Guests included members of UNESCO, the United Nations and the Ecology Foundation. Mr Vladimir Pavinsky, Deputy Director of the UN Information Centre in Moscow, one of the key speakers, said "Manifesto 2000 unites all those who struggle for the prevention of international conflicts and those who help to create the culture of peace in the minds of people".



Moscow, Russia: Vladimir Pavinsky, Deputy Director of UN Information Centre, Moscow; Valery Sakharov, National Co-ordinator of the Programme 'Culture of Peace in Russia - 2000', Commission of Russian Federation on UNESCO activities, Nikolai Mikhailov, General Director of Ecology Foundation of International Academy of Harmony, Marina Popovich, President of Aviation Company 'Conversavia', Tatiana Shakhnovskaya, President of Regional Foundation 'Ecology of Childhood', BK Sudha, Director, Brahma Kumaris Centre, Moscow; BK Santosh, Director, Brahma Kumaris Centre, St. Petersburg; BK Vijay, Co-ordinator of Centres in Russia, CIS and Baltic countries.

Message from Sonia Gandhi

President
All India Congress Committee

I am glad to learn that the Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya is actively participating in the International Year for the Culture of Peace in partnership with UNESCO.

The purpose of this year, which aims to promote a culture of non-violence, tolerance and understanding, and raise awareness about environmental protection, is one that deserves widespread support and encouragement.

I send my warmest good wishes to the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya for the success of their endeavour.

Events to Look Out For

June 2nd Bangkok, Thailand

'Building a Culture of Peace' - This will be attended by the Deputy Minister of Education and key dignitaries from the business and civil society sectors. The event will include a workshop and dialogue format addressing how we can bring the culture of peace into our daily life.

June 6th Washington DC, USA

The second in a series of three conversations on the International Year for the Culture of Peace with key speaker Congressman Dennis Kucinich (Ohio). Other dignitaries attending include several Ambassadors and representatives of government organisations, corporate groups and NGOs.

August 20th Budapest, Hungary

Anthony Strano, BK Co-ordinator for Greece and Hungary will be speaking on the theme of 'The Meaning of Non-Violence' at a 7 day conference "The Culture of Peace - Manifesto 2000!" Organised by the Vegetarian's Society of Hungary this event is looking to attract up to 10,000 people.



HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE?

Incorporating suggestions from UNESCO

Here are some of the things you can do to participate in the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

- Sign Manifesto 2000 and encourage your family, friends and work colleagues to sign on line:
www.bkwsu.com/manifesto2000.
- Picture peace, imagine peace and have thoughts of peace (See 'A Contemplation on Peace' below).
- Share your hopes and ideas about peace for the children of the world with people you meet.
- Each day, try making someone happy.
- Renew a broken friendship with a friend, family member, neighbour or co-worker.
- If you have a faith tradition, explore its teachings about peace and implement them in your life.
- Plant a tree at your home, school, workplace or place of worship as a symbol of peace and hope for preserving the planet.
- Participate and/or run the Peace Workshop at home, at work, or in your community.
- Join a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or community organisation to promote peace.

THE PEACE EXPERIENCE GOES GLOBAL!

The 'Peace Experience' workshop forms a major part of the Brahma Kumaris' contribution to the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The workshop has been designed for individuals from any background who wish to develop a culture of peace.

The two and a half hour workshop is being conducted worldwide by the Brahma Kumaris. Its aim is to enable the individual to create a practical and highly effective plan of action for easy, everyday use to enjoy a more peaceful lifestyle. Based on the Appreciative Inquiry approach, the workshop comprises 4 phases: Discovering Peace, Visioning peace, Designing Peace and Living Peace.

This creative and versatile workshop is available for families, communities, organisations and groups of people worldwide who wish to conduct the workshop in their own environment. The user-friendly workshop materials contain comprehensive guidelines and tips for facilitators, background information on Appreciative Inquiry and include documents to create acetates for overhead projection.

A CONTEMPLATION ON PEACE

(An extract from The Peace Experience Workshop)

"As I sit and think on what is peace I begin to let go, retreat from my everyday world ... and in the inner room of my mind there is a chance to reflect ...and think on the nature and form of what it would be like to move and live in a world of peace.

"What do I see in this world of peace? What is in people's eyes? What is in the faces of those who reside there?

"In this perfect peaceful world, what is the form of activity ... how do the people of that place move and work ...how do they greet each other?

"What kind of clothes do they wear... what are the buildings and environment like? ... How is its nature ... what beauty do I see?

And what of the animal kingdom ...do all interact and move as one in a world of harmony and deep natural respect?

"What are my feelings being here in this wonderful, peaceful world? ... How am I affected by all that I see?"

What is 2000 - International Year for the Culture of Peace?

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2000 as the 'International Year for the Culture of Peace'.

Manifesto 2000, drafted by a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, aims to enable individuals to make a personal contribution to living a culture of peace on a daily basis. UNESCO aims to present 100 million signatures to the United Nations Millennium General Assembly this September.

The Brahma Kumaris, an international NGO, in general consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and in consultative status with UNICEF, have been designated 'Messenger for Manifesto 2000' by UNESCO. Our aim is to help people live a culture of peace in their lives by offering workshops and other educational activities, as well as bringing communities together in events that celebrate the richness of the world's cultural diversity.

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6 Points of Manifesto 2000

- Respect all Life
- Reject Violence
- Share with Others
- Listen to Understand
- Preserve the Planet
- Rediscover Solidarity