

International Day of Peace 2004 The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in consultative status with The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) and affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI).

The Brahma Kumaris has been involved in celebrating the International Day of Peace since its creation in 1981 and is now represented on the NGO Committee for the International Day of Peace, which co-ordinates preparations for the day and encourages NGO activities around the world.

On the third Sunday of the month all the Brahma Kumaris centers concurrently dedicate an hour in reflection and meditation to world peace. This hour on September 19, 2004 was dedicated specifically to the International Day of Peace. Over 500,000 people in 84 countries came together in collective meditation focusing on a unified thought in the power of silence in bringing about world peace.

Below are activities coordinated by the Brahma Kumaris Worldwide:

Belgium

Brussels: On the evening of September 21, an hour's meditation was held followed by 'a peace reception' with drinks and finger-food. During this time about 30 people shared their good wishes for the world and made personal commitments to put these into reality.

Brazil

Olinda - Pernambuco: An event was held in a public square in the community in which the Brahma Kumaris, the Boys and Girls Association of Olinda and the Episcopal Church of Olinda participated. These three groups came together and observed the International Day of Peace in a number of different ways. These activities were also supported by the Councilor of Olanda:

- 60 children created paintings of doves with messages attached to them and these doves were given to other children affiliated to the Episcopal Church of Olinda.
- Homemade sweets with peace messages were distributed to approximately 1,000 passengers on the public buses.
- A huge cloth banner with the words "Peace is to Be" invited individuals to contribute virtues by writing these on the banner

Canada

Toronto: An event was held at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga on Friday September 10, at which over 1200 people attended, on the subject of. ***Living Peace in Extraordinary Times.*** The evening featured:

- An interview with Dadi Janki, co-administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris by media personality, Meena Bhandari.
- A unique and moving performance by the Children's Peace Theatre of Toronto, led by Artistic Director Robert Morgan, delivering their own dramatic interpretation on the theme of peace.
- A special musical performance by the multi-talented, award-winning international composer, producer, songwriter and musician Rahman Rajan
- A collective meditation in deep silence for peace.

China

Hong Kong: On September 21st ***Let Peace Begin with Me*** was the theme used to send vibrations of peace to heal the world through inspirational messages of meditation.

There was also a community event organized by MV Reach Communications, at the Shangri-la Hotel bringing together a network of faith-based organizations which included: The Hong Kong Network for Religion and Peace (Interfaith group), Sacred Peace Centre (Sta. Ana, US), ISKCON, Khalsa Divan (Sikh Temple), Soko Gakkai International, Sri Aurobindo Society of Hong Kong, Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, Baha'i Faith, Brahma Kumaris Raja Yoga Centre, Hong Kong and others. At this event there was the unveiling ceremony of a 7 foot Peace Pole contributed by The World Peace Prayer Society. Following the unveiling ceremony the World Peace Flame was lit. This flame is originally from the LIFE Foundation, United Kingdom and has been lit by dignitaries from around the world and it was especially flown in by the Australian Air Force

Colombia

Cali: A message to raise awareness of the International Day of Peace was sent out by email to key individuals in the community. Public radio stations also made announcements to highlight the observance of the Day.

Denmark

Copenhagen: UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan's message and a peace message from Dadi Janki, Co-Administrative Head, of the Brahma Kumaris, were two pieces of inspiration for a meditation session which brought together a small group of individuals. This small group contributed to an experience of peace that was intimate and sweet.

France

Paris: Elisabeth Vaast, a nurse by profession and Mr. Philippe Descham, Main leader of the French Rosicrucians, were interviewed on the subject of ***A Thought of Peace, A Thought of Life***. The focus of their answers related to the responsibility of the self in creating peace and on the under-pinning values of attention, commitment, and a positive attitude.

Saint Genevieve des Bois: *Does Spirituality Contribute to Peace?* was the question considered by 40 peace makers of different philosophies. Serge Beckrich, the moderator of the discussion posed two dynamic questions:

- Can spirituality contribute to peace?
- What are your methods to achieve it?

This event was co-sponsored by The Brahma Kumaris and the Equilibre Association and participants included: Father Gesmier, Chaplain at Evry College, Nacer Makhzoum, Buddhist, educator specialized in danger zones; Father Jourdan, a Catholic priest in charge of relations with Islam; Jean Philippe Deterville, member of the Rose Croix and Brigitte Fohanno, Brahma Kumaris Representative.

Ghana

Accra: A symposium on the theme ***Advancing Human Rights for the Establishment of a Culture of Peace*** was organised by the Ghana Commission on Human Rights, the Administration of Justice [CHRAJ], and the Brahma Kumaris. One of the substantive papers submitted was on the subject of ***Maintenance of Peace and Avoidance of Anger***.

Germany

Bremen: A workshop was held on the Sunday before the International Day of Peace at which three pivotal questions were reflected on and discussed:

- What does peace feel like to me?
- What situations cause peacelessness in me?"
- What special task will I do on the International Day of Peace?

On September 21 participants of the workshop re-assembled to share their experiences of what had emerged from these questions.

Hanover: The students of the Brahma Kumaris experimented with the power of a peaceful thought starting from their early morning meditation (4 a.m.) until the end of the day. This was done in an individual capacity. One week later on the evening of September 21, they came together as a group and had an exchange on the collective impact of this experiment.

Mexico

Merida: The Culture of Peace Week was celebrated from Sept 16th to the 26th. It started with a Peace Walk along the city's main avenue. This peace walk was organized jointly by the Brahma Kumaris and the local Sport Authority in which 500 people participated.

A Special Peace Concert featuring local musical groups culminated the peace week. Joining the local artists was the vocal group ***Bliss*** from England who rendered a blend of Spanish and English songs. Dignitaries present at the event included: The City Mayor of Mérida, Mr Manuel Fuentes; the Director of Youth Affairs, Mr. Fidel

Antuñía and the Director of the Mayan Culture Institute, and Mrs. Diana Canto Moreno.

Another special event honoring the day of peace was held at the Peón Contreras State Theater at which approximately 760 people came to listen to a spiritual message of peace by Dadi Janki, Co-Administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris and joining Dadi Janki was Mr. Juan Miguel Díez, UN representative to Mexico.

A series of seminars was held at the Technology University addressing the subject of values in creating a culture of peace:

- **Values as a Means of Success** by Juan Carlos Murillo, Advisor for Innovation and Quality, President's Office,
- **A Workshop - Peace and Management of Emotions**, facilitated by Valerian Bernard, teacher and Business consultant
- **Values in Professional Learning**, by Vivien von Son, Coordinator of the Living Values Programme in México
- **Education, Autonomy, and the Culture of Peace within the Indigenous community in Chiapas**. by Antonio Paoli

New Zealand

Wellington: A peace celebration was organized by the Wellington Interfaith Group. It was a simple affair at which members shared on what peace is in relation to their faith. It concluded in a ceremony in which names of each of the member states of the United Nations was announced and the group sent good wishes of peace to that country.

Philippines

Naga: The Naga College Foundation cooperated with the Brahma Kumaris to co-host an event that brought together the whole community of the college. It was a whole day's event with the following features:

- Peace March around the major thoroughfares of Naga City;
- Essay/Poetry/Slogan Writing /Poster Making on Peace Contests for students;
- Peace Workshop and Storytelling;
- Inner Peace, Inner Power (A meditation Experience)
- Student Leaders Peace Conference, and;
- Peace Cultural Program.

Some of these events were covered by the media and there was an interview on the local TV station (PBN5)

Russia

Moscow: Children Bring Peace was dedicated to the children of Russia. Children from 5 to 15 years were asked to contribute a few minutes of peace every day in any of the following forms:

- Positive thoughts about peace and harmony;

- Good wishes for the world;
- Prayer for peace;
- Pictures, stories and other creative works, creating a stage of peace, joy, and harmony.

There were also two other programmes, a concert with the theme: ***The Beauty of Eternal Radiance*** and a public lecture on ***Vision of a Better World and the Art of Looking at the Specialty in Others***.

Singapore

A programme was held at the Gujurati Bhawan Hall where 70 people gathered to dialogue on the subject of peace within the self. After discussing various aspects of peace at the personal level participants wrote down their wishes for the world on a heart-shaped piece of paper and placed them on a huge poster, in the shape of a heart, that hung on the wall.

South Africa

Durban: A peace march was held on the main street of Tongaat, a small town on the north coast of Durban. Participating in the Peace March were various interfaith community groups and schools. The magic of the march was seen in the form of over 600 individuals representing different race groups and socio-economic backgrounds all unified in a common aim of creating a more peaceful community. They carried banners and flags with messages in support of peace and universal values as they marched towards the town hall. They were welcomed by a program to celebrate peace with song, dance, and messages of peace. Everything that transpired during the celebration was translated into Zulu so that everyone could participate at a level that brings a deep significance of peace to their lives

Pietermaritzburg, Natal: September was declared as Peace Month and Heritage Month. The Brahma Kumaris and the Living Values Educational Programme created a number of events.

Children from the Living Values Programme in partnership with children from the Youth Club created a number of tokens such as: name tags, cards, paper bags, virtue boxes, a peace tower, trees of virtues, peace posters and emblems on peace as peace gifts and took them to the rural area of Mpumuza and presented them to 25 children from disadvantaged families. Examples of such children are: child-headed families, children positive with HIV and AIDS and orphans. The children thanked their peers for the peace gifts they offered them, for the values they brought to their lives, and for the wonderful meal they provided.

Women of different local clubs: Andhra Sabha, Copesville, and Brahma Kumaris shared the value of co-operation by combining their skills to successfully make 4 wall hangings on Peace. This initiative was called ***Linking Values with our Heritage and Celebration of Peace Month***

The 4 wall hangings are described below:

- peace garden-linking value of peace with different cultures

- Heritage and Values depicting ubuntu and respect for all cultures.
- Peace towers
- Trees

These were presented to 'Continental Ink', The Department of Arts and Culture and Mr Yusuf Bhamjee, MP Member of Parliament.

Spain

Under the banner ***Living in Peace in Extraordinary Times*** peace activities were held in a number of cities in Spain. It is important to experience peace in our lives in a practical way in order to be the creators of peace in the world.

Barcelona: Artist Miriam Subirana and writer and singer, Ton Dalmau and the Soprano Andrea Fernández created an evening of living peace. Together they generated a magical atmosphere of hope and unity through art, music, feelings and beauty.

Las Palmas: The Newspaper "La Provincia de las Palmas" published an article on ***Courageous Peace*** focusing on Inner Peace for World Peace.

Sevilla: There was ***Meditation for Peace*** together with a musical program.

Valencia: The interfaith community joined thoughts together for peace.

Torrent: (province of Valencia) the Brahma Kumaris joined the NGO community in an all day street fair to promote peace in the city. This was followed by meditation, and songs for peace at the Hall of Culture (city council).

Switzerland

A call to reflect on the values that have contributed to Switzerland's worldwide reputation as a country of peace was made to individuals as a contribution to the International Day of Peace. **Serenity, Wisdom, Integrity, Solidarity, and Stability (SWISS)** were the values identified, reflected on, and used to help spread peace into the world.

Thailand

Bangkok: Sarasas Witaed Romklao School opened their doors to the celebration of the International Day of Peace starting with a flag ceremony and the Romklao prayer at the school morning assembly. This was followed by a talk which referred to the UN declaration of the Day and included a message of peace. It concluded with Dr. Sutthipong Yongkamol, the Director of the school inviting the 3,000 student body, 89 foreign staff and 200 Thai staff to observe one minute of silence with one thought "May peace prevail on Earth." Holding the one thought the school choir sang a rendition of "Let there be peace on Earth", to bring everyone out of their silence.. Dr. Yongkamol then lit a candle in front of Mother Maria 's statue shedding light on the assembled students while 108 of their peers performed a spectacular rainbow meditation dance on the front lawn.

United Kingdom

Cambridge: At the downtown Cambridge Brahma Kumaris' "Inner Space" information centre, September 21, was a day dedicated to meditation with half hourly sessions. One half hour attracted a number of American veterans from the last world war attending a memorial service at an American Cemetery in Cambridge.

Leeds: A workshop for the public at Weetwood Hall Conference Centre in Leeds, ***Living Near but Beyond Fear*** was presented to approximately 70 people, by Lee James who has degrees in psychology and whose focus is on post-trauma counseling and acting.

'An Open Meeting' for those interested in world peace and the mental well-being of refugees and asylum seekers and for those working closely with them was organized by the Brahma Kumaris in conjunction with other organizations: Leeds Church Institute, Leeds Justice and Peace, and Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network. Those attending included two individuals who are refugees waiting for asylum status and who shared their moving personal journey toward asylum status. The overall experience, pointed to the strength and achievements of people seeking refugee status in the UK and those working to help support this

West Bromwich: A representative from the Brahma Kumaris, Sister Sherry, shared her personal journey entitled ***A peaceful Self Helps to Bring About a Peaceful World*** at the Newhampton Arts Centre in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. She demonstrated how one person can make a difference and spoke about her interest in peace starting with a Peace March and how it evolved into the emerging peace within herself. She then invited participants to reflect on their own personal journey and the difference they are making as individuals.

Wales, Cardiff: With the cooperation of The Temple of Peace and Health and the local UN Association, 50 people gathered in conversation on the theme: ***It's time for peace.*** It was a diverse group in terms of backgrounds and interest but nevertheless the group recognized that each one's contribution was a unique piece of the whole Peace

The Main contributors were:

- Prof. Bharat Jasani, a Medical Scientist (Hindu);
- Mr. Idrees Khan, (Muslim) retired business executive, Justice of the Peace, Trustee of the Welsh Refugee Council. Now works with "Initiatives of Change" in areas of peace and reconciliation;
- Lorna Edwards, experienced in health & family therapy in Africa, now with a school based programme in Cardiff working with mental health needs of asylum seekers and refugee children and their families;
- Maria Contreras a dancer, representing the Brahma Kumaris;
- Ruth Jewel, a sax player, and her sister Laura a flautist;
- The Faris family performed drumming "inspired by Buddhism, African connections and other forms of spirituality".

United States of America

Boston: A Gallery of Peace was created to exhibit various expressions of the value of peace. Some of these included symbols of peace and peacefulness in a quiet atmosphere. The gallery was hosted by the Watertown Centre of the Brahma Kumaris. It also provided an opportunity for individuals to come together through dance, poetry, drama and discussion to look at peace from different levels.

New York, New York: It was Fashion Week in New York City when investigative reporter Roberta Baskin uncovered inner wisdom in the understanding of the living dynamic of peace, in an event at the Fashion Institute of Technology. The target of her investigation was Dadi Janki, an 88 year old practicing Raja Yogi, and the topic of her investigation was ***Living Peace in Extraordinary Times***. This was done in front of an audience of over 700 people. The Amy Marshall Dance Company performed ***Vortex*** depicting a journey of challenges and confrontations in the quest for the ultimate destination of peace. * Please see the enclosed press Kit for details of this event.

The Meditation Center and Gallery, on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan invited busy New Yorkers to ***Come into the Quiet***. There was continuous meditation for world peace throughout the entire day of September 21.

Haines Falls, New York: The **Peace Village Learning and Retreat Center**, included a celebration of the International Day of Peace during a weekend retreat entitled 'Peace of Mind' The evening celebration was called ***Experience the Peace*** in which retreat participants and members of the local community gathered together to watch a play depicting Arjuna and Krishna (characters of the Gita) in dialogue about how to bring peace to the war happening in the mind.

Uruguay

Montevideo: The ***III Interfaith Forum*** held within the framework of the International Day of Peace, was organized by UNESCO Center of Montevideo in cooperation with the Brahma Kumaris and the United Religions Initiative (URI). As a gesture of friendship and brotherhood 120 participants tied the bracelet of the "Link of Love Project" that originated from Brahma Kumaris San Francisco, USA