

## Inter Faith Prayer meeting in Sydney on Martyrdom Day of Mahatma Gandhi

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia organise the Interfaith Prayer Meeting on 30 January every year at the Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest apostle of peace, on his Martyrdom Day. This year the prayer meeting was held from 1.00 to 2.00 pm and was well attended by the leaders of diverse religions, MPs, Diplomats and community leaders. Mr.Sujan Chinoy, Consul General of India, Mr. Mohan Kumaran, Consul, Ms.Manju Chanan, Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence, Rev.Pravrajika Ajayaprana Mataji, Atmarama Das of ISKCON, Keysar Trad, Penny Taylor of Bahai Faith, Sister Giovani, Hon. Judy Hopwood MP, Bhakti Johanson of Yoga in Daily Life, Neville J Roach and others.

On the occasion Bhavan released a special Peace issue of its monthly magazine Bhavan Australia containing messages and papers on peace by the senior leaders of the various religions in Australia including Rev. George Cardinal Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence, Chief Rabbi of the Great Sydney Synagogue, Rev. Pravrajika Ajayaprana Mataji of Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of NSW, Atmarama Das of ISKCON, Keysar Trad of Australian Islamic Community, Rev. George Gatenby of Australian Buddhist community, Harmohan Singh Walia from Sikh Community and others.

Gambhir Watts, President of Bhavan Australia welcomed the dignitaries and guests. He expressed in brief the relevance of the Prayer Meeting referring to Shanti Mantra in Yajurveda which defines the meaning and scope of peace:

*May there be peace in heaven, in sky, on earth;  
May all deities be in peace, Supreme Being in peace  
May there be complete, all pervading peace  
May that peace come to me.*

He pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi's thinking on Ahinsa and Shanti is firmly rooted in the ancient traditions and heritage. Mahatma Gandhi had extended, updated and enriched this heritage – the peace must mean total peace – absence of all form of violence between man and man, nation and nation, man and animals and man and nature.

The Consul General of India Mr Chinoy, speaking on the occasion said that the day on which Mahatma Gandhi fell to assassins bullet India lost the "Father of the Nation" and the world a true leader who believed in the lofty principles of truth, "Ahimsa" (non-violence), love, compassion and in the brotherhood of all humankind, regardless of cultural, religious or linguistic differences. He also said that India Australia had several things in common such as a people of several faiths, cultures and languages. He added that Gandhiji's message of peace and communal harmony was relevant

Rev. P.A. Mataji of Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society recited a few verses from Hindu Scriptures. She explained that the Vedas want us to find the peace hidden within ourselves. She stressed that to find peace one need not go to the solitude of the forest, or seek for tranquillity of the mountain – river or escape into the vastness of the ocean. Peace – the real peace is with us, in us, all around us.

One greets family and friends with the words "Shalom Aleichem" - peace into you and the recipient of the greetings reply "Aleichem Shalom" – into you peace said Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence, Chief Rabbi, the Great Synagogue, Sydney. He stated that the Jewish concept also recognises that true peace is part of totality which includes justice and compassion, and no conflict between friends and family.

The word Islam means peace and submission to God – wrote Keysar Trad of Islamic Friendship Association of Australia, who could not attend the prayer meeting and the Speech was read by Professor Mrs. Sneha Joshi. It was also stated that Islam seeks to create peace in the following areas – Peace with oneself, peace with God, peace with fellow human beings, peace with other living things and peace with environment.

Mr. Watanbe from Buddhist monastery recited a prayer. Buddha Dharma is known for its peaceful transmission through out the world. Around 1000 years back it had spread to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Japan and Magnolia. Although it was accomplished without any force or violence

Mr. Atmarama Das, President, Iskcon Sydney and Adelaide addressed the meeting stating that the causes of strife, conflict and war are inherent within the material condition. No efforts to resolve could be fruitful unless we understand the underlying causes material conflict. The root cause of all suffering in material existence is the karmic reactions that result from sinful activities.

Ms Penny Taylor of Bahai Faith recited universal peace prayers. Mr. Harmohan Singh Walia sent a paper on Sikhism and peace and in his absence the same was read by Mr. Gambhir Watts. Guru Nanak founded Sikhism in 15<sup>th</sup> century in Punjab – North India on principles of peace and tolerance. Guru Nanak had a firm faith in peace and prayers for “Sarbat da bhalla” - well being in all. Sikhism stands for humility, compassion, forgiveness, selfless service and love for humanity.

Aishwarya Joshi aged 11 years and studying in year V-VI at Canterbury Public School said that Gandhi was called Mahatma not because he freed India but he himself practised Truth, non-violence and simplicity. She concluded by saying “the man who lived through non-violence, fell into violence, the man who had the power of truth, died from the power of bullet.”

Hon. Judy Hopwood, MP quoting from Martin Luther King spoke about the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi and the relevance of his philosophy, based on the principles of non-violence and love for the Mother Nature, in various fields today.

Prof. Madhukar Joshi informed the gathering that he came from Gujarat, India the land of Mahatma Gandhi and that he was one of those lucky ones to have seen the Mahatma. He has seen the Harijan Ashram at Godhara and his friends who were the inmates of the Ashram. He recalled the day when he joined the asharmities to carry the pot of Mahatma’s ashes for immersion to Mahi River.

