

# Vasanthi Bhat Adresses the World Peace Conference

By Meena yeggina

The International Conference on World Peace was held in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, during December 29th, 2003 to January 2nd, 2004. Department of Philosophy, Gujarat University and Pranav Bharati Foundation, Ahmedabad sponsored and organized the conference. The conference was inaugurated by the Governor of Gujarat, Mr. Kailash Mishra. The invitees to the conference included eminent educationists, philosophers, religious thinkers, scientists, economists, psychologists and sociologists from across the world.

The objective of the conference was to develop a systematic philosophical treatment of the problems of humanity and nations, as well as possible clues and clarifications throwing light on social, political and cultural issues related to peace.

Prominent Bay Area Yoga specialist and instructor



Vasanthi Bhat with other Delegates

Vasanthi Bhat was invited to attend this prestigious conference and India Parent took this opportunity to ask her about her experiences there. Excerpts.

*India Parent: We, the Indian Community here in the Bay Area are all so proud that you were invited to chair the Yoga and Psychology and speak on yoga and spirituality theme at the World Peace Conference. How did it all start Vasanthi?*

**Vasanthi Bhat (VB):** Thank you Meena. Dr. Yajneshwara Shastri, Director of the Department of Philosophy, Gujarat University, and a lead-

ing member of the Organizing Committee invited me to the conference. He had previously read my book on Yoga and was familiar with my work on Yoga. He was particularly impressed by my emphasis on spirituality and practical aspects, and wanted me to participate in the conference to highlight these aspects of Yoga towards human development and peace.

*India Parent: What made you accept this invitation and how did you find time to attend it in spite of such heavy schedule here?*

**VB:** First of all, I was surprised at the invitation. He not only invited me to the conference but also asked me to chair the session on Yoga and Spirituality. I felt honored by his confidence and faith in me and immediately accepted the invitation. Fortunately, my

classes in the Bay Area were handled by my student teachers for the duration.

*India Parent: Why Yoga at the peace conference? What is its significance to peace?*

**VB:** Many people have asked me this question. What many people do not know is that yoga is not just asanas and physical movements. It is a combination of asana, pranayama, and meditation. Asanas and pranayama techniques are the means to achieve peaceful meditative state, which helps unfold spirituality. This continued unfolding of spirituality thus helps the practitioners to expand their consciousness. It is believed that pure conscious-

ness is God. It is important to know that through yoga, every human being has the power to unfold spirituality, which is in a dormant state. Swami Vivenkananda said, "Every soul is potentially divine." If we are spiritual, we tend to be calm and peaceful while embracing patience, understanding, forgiveness and openness. These are divine qualities. People who reach higher level of consciousness can never insult or hurt others. Better yet, Swami Sivananda said that, if we hurt or insult others, our consciousness immediately reminds us to correct. This is the very essence of yoga and meditation. This openness helps the person to develop open communication

skills that are needed to maintain healthy relationships. The positivity we learn to embrace in our lives through yoga practice gradually enables us to respect and feel unconditional love for others, regardless of age, race, status, and religion. As stated in the Bhagavad Gita, "He who feels and sees others sufferings as if it is his, is considered a great yogi." Therefore, if everyone practices this theme, there will be harmony in the world. Thus, Yoga is a powerful means to achieve peace in the world. This is the reason for the relevance of Yoga in this conference.

*India Parent:* Please tell us what happened there. †We know you spoke about a lot of

things but can you enlighten our readers with at least some pointers?

**VB:** Well, I started with a prayer to Lord Shiva who is the originator of yoga as stated in the scriptures. I talked on religion and quoted from Bhagavad Gita and Bible explaining that the fundamental teachings are the same as to respect one and all. Swami Sivananda said, "You are a moving temple of God. Whatever you do is an offering to God." Lord Jesus Christ said, "Look through the eyes and you can see me inside." Lord Krishna said, "He who sees me in everybody, and he who sees everyone in me, becomes aware of universality." Therefore, respecting and honoring all religions irrespective of age, status, and nationality is real spirituality. Also, as many world leaders and saints sacrificed their entire life, it is our duty now to practice what they preached. Yoga is philosophy, psychology, common sense, energy, divinity, and the guiding light.

I also emphasized that chanting God's name, like Shri Ram, Jesus, Allah, or any other, alone is not a solution to achieve peace. Adopting their patience, forgiveness and generosity in real life starting at home is the first step for us to achieve that. I have myself seen many who do the rituals hours together, later abusing their own family members or others. That is the time



people need to really practice the theme of divinity, which is spirituality. Children who are our future leaders and philosophers, should be taught spirituality, as many adulthood crimes are related to childhood miseries and misunderstandings, and accumulated agitation. Children should be taught to pray in a constructive manner. I gave the example of Shri Ram and Ravana, who prayed to Lord Shiva for construction and destruction. They both were granted with their wishes. When you pray with sincerity your wishes are granted, however, you must use it for constructive purpose like Shri Ram did, and not destructively like Ravana did.

Generally, misunderstanding and miscommunication lead to hasty decisions and abuse

starting from home to elsewhere. Here I gave emphasis on pranayama, how long exhalations can help relieve mental agitation along with toxins such as carbon dioxide. We must help people who committed crime to forgive themselves. This would prevent them from committing similar crime again. Kiran Bedi has been emphasizing the same theme for prisoners. Why fight under the name of religion? I feel that there are only two religions in the world: MALE and FEMALE. If all the leaders of all nations meet under one roof thinking that they

are one family, discussing differences, and forgiving the mishaps, the outcome would be a great step towards peace in the world! Yoga can be the substantial media to achieve world peace starting from family, friends, states, nation and the entire world.

I also explained how asanas help stimulate the charkas that are considered as divine powerhouses, and pranayama (Yogic Breathing) helps relieve tension and calms the mind.

I concluded with Swami Vivekananda's quote "We are what our thoughts made us; so take care of what you think."

Cont'd on Pg. 54  
See Vasanthi Bhat

Vasanthi Bhat  
Cont'd from Pg. 46

*India Parent: Were you impressed with other delegates? Who were they?*

**VB:** Yes. Many had delivered excellent lectures on wide ranging topics such as philosophy, ecology, religion, education, science and technology, and ethics. There were leading educationists, philosophers, social scientists, religious leaders, scientists and technologists from different

countries including India, USA, Germany, Netherlands, Bangladesh, Nepal and others. The underlying theme in all lectures was the relevance of the subject to world peace.

*India Parent: How did the public respond to your lecture?*

**VB:** I wish you were there. It was amazing how people responded. They were pleased with my speech on Hathayoga and spirituality and congratulated me. They really liked how

I spoke on the practical steps on spirituality. Two medical companies expressed their interest on hosting yoga programs. Many others requested me to stay there and teach yoga, pranayama, and meditation.

*India Parent: We know that you wrote a paper on Yoga and Peace to be distributed at this conference. Can you make it available to our readers here in the Bay Area? If yes, what is the procedure to get hold of one copy?*

**VB:** Copies of the paper are available and can be obtained by contacting me by phone or e-mail.

*I n d i a P a r e n t : Vasanthi, do you have message to our readers?*

**VB:** I feel that many present day agitation between fam-

ilies and nations go back many years. I feel it is solely due to misunderstandings and miscommunications. This is the time to forgive and move on rather than continuing with more agitation while feeling the divinity existing in everyone.

*India Parent: How did you feel about your speech?*

**VB:** When I finished my part, I felt so happy on my speech because, God was quietly guiding me as I asked God to help me convey his message to the world. This was the first time I delivered a lecture with full confidence facing many world-renowned scholars. I know that God helps anyone who helps themselves and others with good intentions.

