

Citizens' Commission for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation swings into action

The newly constituted Citizens' Commission for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation swung into action when Prof. N. Radhakrishnan National Convenor with three others visited some of the areas in the Lalgarth region, and Shri P. V. Rajagopal one of the Vice Chairmen and Radhakrishnan writing separate letters to the Prime Minister and Home Minister drawing their attention to the deteriorating situation in the trouble-hit areas and offering the support and help of the commission in which our way the government would like to utilise in the resolution of the conflict.

In their letters they have pointed out that a team of peace activists on behalf of the **Himsamukt Bharat Aandolan (Violence-Free Society Campaign)** and **Nonkilling India Initiative** has plans to tour some areas of Chattisgarh where the Maoist groups had gunned down several innocent people including police. Prof. N. Radhakrishnan in his letter to the Prime Minister drew his attention to the following:

"Dear Prime Minister, it appears to be a fact that more and more people are taking up arms against the State and the bulk of them are youth. Should we not try to find out why it is so? Sometime ago, the Hindustan Times ran a series of articles on the alarming growth of the Naxal, Maoist and other violent groups. Should we not respond adequately to understand the seriousness of the situation?"

A five-point agenda to combat violence and terror by involving civil society

1. Realizing Gandhi's Dream of Shantisena:

Mahatma Gandhi suggested the formation of Shantisena as a people's nonviolent volunteer force to tackle the problem of violence and unfortunately the creative role the shantisena will be able to play is being forgotten. A national effort to rebuild the shantisena of Gandhi's dream will be a very creative response to bring nonviolence to the centre of our strivings.

2. Towards a Himsamukt Bharat (Violence-free India):

The thrust of the on going Himsamukt Bharat Campaign is to make family the focus of values and empowerment. As a first step nation-wide campaigns were undertaken to identify one lakh families committed to nonviolence. The first stage of the campaign has offered remarkable insights on the readiness of citizens to join efforts to strengthen conflict management efforts. It is time that the Government and the civil society took note of the possibilities of strengthening these initiatives.

3. Shanti Kendras in Educational Institutions:

The efforts which are under way to establish Community Peace Centers (CPCs) or Peace Cells in educational institutions in association with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Government of Delhi Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and voluntary organizations need to receive national attention and in whichever way national support is required to make this an ongoing program in educational institutions so that educational institutions will be able to play a crucial role in peace building, peace making and peace keeping process.

4. Establishment of Department of Peace/ Ministry of Peace (DoP):

As part of the activities of the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies and in association with the Global Campaign for the establishment of Department of Peace in National Government efforts are being taken to persuade the Government of India to establish a Department of Peace. A Campaign to collect 5 lakhs of signatures from the public to be submitted to the Prime Minister requesting him to move a bill in the parliament for the creation of a Department of Peace in Government of India was launched on 30th January 2006. Until March 2008 over 60,000 signatures have been collected. The campaign continues.

In view of the fact that large number of youth population are being lured into the self destructive orbit of terror and violence by various outfits, sustained and creative orientation and training programs on values and attitudes such as communal harmony, tolerance, nonviolent living, respect for diversity, and other personal and social virtues are to become regular features of our social and community living. Quite a few organizations are involved in this task at present but taking into account (to be contd on p. 18)



VIOLENCE-FREE

PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST VIOLENCE



INDIAN COUNCIL OF GANDHIAN STUDIES & HIMSAMUKHT BHARAT CAMPAIGN

National Youth Assembly to launch Shantisena against Terror, Violence and for a nonkilling India

New Delhi witnessed on 21st November 2009 a huge Youth Assembly of 920 youth representatives from 28 States and Union Territories of India resolving to dedicate themselves to promote Peace and Harmony by launching the **Yuva Shanti Sena** (Youth Peace Brigade) of Gandhi's dream. Two major initiatives were also launched on the occasion. They are launching of 100 **Community Peace Centres** in the community colleges of Indira Gandhi National Open University and setting up of 100 **Shanti Kendras** in the schools of Delhi.

This National initiative, led by the distinguished senior member of Indian Parliament and former Minister **Shri Oscar Fernandes** was a sequel to the 186 Youth Assemblies that were held in various parts of India during the last two years by the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies and Violence free and Nonkilling India Campaign Committee in association with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatan, Shobhit University, Ekta Parishad, Indira Gandhi National Open University, Kamrah Institute of Information Technology, Anuvrat Global Organization, Forum of Gandhian Thought & Traditional Values, Gandhi Global Forum & Yuvasatta.



Smt. Sonia Gandhi lauds Yuva Shantisena

In a message the UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi MP lauded the efforts to launch Yuva Shantisena;

It is indeed a fitting conclusion to the centenary celebrations of Gandhi's Hind Swaraj to launch a Yuva Shantisena to work nationwide for peace, harmony and national integration.

I am confident that the Yuva Shanti Sena will work with dedication and passion to promote nonviolence and communal harmony; to ensure social justice, especially to the most vulnerable sections of our society, and to solve problems with what we now a days call the "Gandhigiri approach. It is, as we are discovering a new, a much more effective way to solve problems and reconcile differences than confrontation and violence.

I wish the members of the Yuva Shanti Sena all success in their mission.

Delhi CM Smt. Sheila Dikshit offers co-operation in Peace Education Programmes in Schools

Much I would have liked to be present in this important gathering of over thousand youth from all over India but I am unable to do so because of a certain hard-pressing official engagements, though, the loss is mine.

I am glad to learn that the announcement to commence Shanti Kendra programs in selected schools of Delhi will be made in National Youth Assembly. This will facilitate commencement of Peace Education Programs on a regular basis in selected schools. I assure that my government will provide all possible co-operation in setting up of peace Kendras. I am sure that the National Youth assembly against violence and terror would be able to deliberate on the challenges being faced by the world in view of spurt in terrorist activities in various countries. There is a dire need of peace to ensure conducive atmosphere to prosperity and development. (Excerpts from the message the CM sent on the occasion)





Message from Sri Acharya Mahapragya

(Reproduced below is a message of benediction sent by the Acharya)



Violence and Non violence had remained antagonistic in the past, are so in the present and will be so in the future. Only those people who ponder over the root causes of violence can solve the problem arising out of violence. Only the people who ponder over the means of Non-violence can develop the consciousness of Non-violence.

Mahatma Gandhi has remained foremost amongst the people who have pondered over the root causes of violence. He used non-violence in the independence movement and subsequently a new philosophy of non-violence got evolved before the world. I want to make it clear that the principle of non

violence needs to be brought on the plane of application. We can not restrict any principle with some person. The value of the principle of non-violence lies in its application through which can evolve a non-violent personality.

The development of morality is not possible without non-violence and viceversa. Acharya Tulsi paid attention to this fact and put forward the code of conduct of Anuvrat.

Through Anuvrat Vishva Bharati the programme of training in non-violence is being conducted. Through this, programme, an experiment of the transformation of consciousness is being carried out.

Let the workers working in the field of Gandhian philosophy and those of he Anuvrat Vishva Bharati together make strenuous effort so that the problems like suicide, killing, terrorism and extremism could be solved and the truth that these problems can not be solved by violence be made distinct.

9 November 2009

Acharya Mahapragya
Jain Vishva Bharati, Ladnun (Raj)



100 children dressed like Gandhi undertook a Padayatra along the main thoroughfare of Thiruvananthapuram to express their anguish against the raging violence and terror in the country

HIMSAMUKT BHARAT ANDOLAN
NATIONAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY
AGAINST VIOLENCE AND TERROR
To Launch **YUVA SHANTI SENA** For Peace
NEW DELHI 21 NOVEMBER 2009
ORGANIZED BY: **INDIAN COUNCIL OF GANDHIAN STUDIES**
In association with: Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatan (NYKS), Shobhit University, Ekta Parish
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Kamrah Institute of Information Technolo
Anuvrat Global Organization (ANUVIBHA), Forum For Gandhian Thought &
Traditional Values, Global Gandhi Forum, and Yuvasatta

SUPPORTED BY:
ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.)
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
Steel Authority of India

Speakers and Organizers:
 Dr. Y.P. Anand (Advisor)
 Dr. N. Radhakrishnan (General Secretary)
 N. Vasudevan (Secretary)
 Dr. Vinod Thyagi (Secretary)
 Dr. S.N. Subba Rao
 Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai
 Kunwar Vijendra Sekhar
 Dr. Akash Ouchi
 Babulal Sharma
 Dr. C. S. Pran
 Pramod Sharma
 T. K. Jain
 Laxmi Das
 Prof. M. L. Sharma
 Baldev Kamra

New initiative launched

Citizens' Commission for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation launched

The Hiroshima Day of 2009 witnessed in New Delhi representatives of over thirty NGOs, Gandhian Constructive workers, academics, thinkers, journalists, social activists and environmental activists after a three-hour discussion signing the following historic declaration:

'This day, 6th August 2009, the 64th anniversary of Hiroshima atomic bombing, we a section of the citizens of India, assembled under the aegis of the Violence-Free India Campaign (Himsamukt Bharat Andolan) at the University Tower, Shobhit University, Mayur Vihar Phase II, New Delhi, being deeply concerned with the emerging wide-spread threats of social unrest, violence and terror, hereby resolve to support and institute an independent Citizens' Commission on Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation to facilitate ushering in of a Culture of Peace through nonviolent intervention in areas of conflicts and confrontation and strive to promote elimination of factors which are responsible for violence and killing and encourage both the authorities and civil society to look for nonviolent problem solving and promote the spirit of a non killing India.'

The genesis of the declaration

The Indian Council of Gandhian studies and the Himsamukt Bharat Campaign, in association with several educational institutions and like-minded NGOs have been organizing during the last five years quite a few innovative programmes to sensitize the civil society on its role in the emerging situation.

The meeting on 6th August, held at Shobhit University Tower, at Mayur Vihar analyzed the present explosive situation prevailing in the country due to escalation of extremist violence including Maoist-Naxal violence and the growing confrontationist trends leading to all-round tension, unrest and increasing alienation, and visible frustration and disappointment among large sections of Indian population, particularly among the dalits and tribals. This situation, they felt, does not augur well for the country's democratic traditions and orderly development and progress.

The meeting unanimously adopted the resolution moved by Prof. N. Radhakrishnan and seconded by Dr. Anoop Swaroop on setting up a "Citizens' Commission for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation".

In the coming days, the Commission will spell out the various initiatives it proposes to undertake in furtherance of its objectives.

In the meanwhile, the meeting appealed the Government not to look at the prevailing situation from a Law and Order angle. Prudence requires that it has also to initiate dialogue with the representatives of various Naxal and other groups engaged in violent activities. The meeting also appealed the Naxal groups to abjure confrontation and violence and urged them to create congenial atmosphere for dialogue to get their grievances redressed.

The meeting elected the veteran Gandhian leader Dr S.N. Subba Rao to head the Citizens' Commission with Dr Y. P. Anand as Principal Advisor.

As a first step, a Fact-finding Team, led by Sri P. V. Rajagopal was constituted to visit some of the Naxal-affected States like Chhatisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand to make a realistic assessment of the ground reality.

Launching of the Citizens' Commission for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation

At an impressive public function on 27th January 2010 at Gandhi Sikshak Sadan, Juhu North, Bombay Dr. S. N. Subba Rao, National Chair launched the Maharashtra Chapter of the Commission. Prominent among those who attended the function were Adv. P. A. Menon, Dr. A. N. Tripathi, Dr. Usha Murugan, Yatish.B.Mehta, Dr.Baroocha.

The first meeting of the interim committee for Maharashtra met under the chairmanship of Dr.Subbha Rao and elected Dr.Usha Murugan as the Principal Co-ordinator and Dr. A.N.Tripathi as Honorary Secretary.

Minister Shri Pratik P. Patil administers Shantisena pledge



Minister Shri Pratik P Patil administers the Shantisena pledge to the Shantisainiks at Gandhisamadhi at Rajghat. On his left is Shri Oscar Fernandes.

Administering the Shantisena pledge at the Mahatma Gandhi Samadhi at Rajghat to Youth Peace Volunteers (Shantisena) from 28 states & Union Territories of India, Shri Pradip P. Patil, Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt. of India exhorted the Shantisainiks to be fearless, brave and courageous to fight the enemies of the nation. The courage and readiness you have shown today to join the Shantisena which is being revived under the leadership of senior leader Shri Oscar Fernandesji and Dr. N. Radhakrishnan are praiseworthy and I congratulate all of you on this great initiative.

You have all come from different parts of the country and you represent the youth of the country, their spirit and determination to protect the freedom of the country through peaceful means. We are happy that the youth realise the great role they have to play to make the country strong and great. The father of the nation had great expectation from the youth. I am happy to see today that you are dedicating yourself to defined the freedom and stability of the country through peaceful means.



Shri Oscar Fernandez MP with his child friends



With Mahatma Gandhi as their witness, the Shantisainiks on their march to spread the brilliance of peace and harmony as dremt by the Mahatman through Shantisena.

Oscarji shows the way to the Shanti Sainiks

While the inaugural session of the National Youth Assembly was in progress four 'uninvited' guests came up to the dais. While one of them promptly sat on the lap of Shri Oscar Fernandez the other three found seats for themselves. They were child friends of Oscarji from the neighbourhoods. Oscarji and others who were amused made these children comfortable. In his address to the youth Shri Oscar Fernandez made special mention of these children and exhorted them to take care of needy and deprived children and the real Shantisena work begins with taking care of children.



Veterans' support to Yuva Shantisena

Oscar Fernandes MP and Chairman of the National Youth Assembly, chairing the inaugural session, hoped that this initiative

being launched during the communal harmony fortnight will have the potential to become a national youth movement along Gandhian lines to promote peace and harmony in the country.

Gandhiji's Shantisena is universally acclaimed to be powerful agents of unity and peace.

We have to develop appropriate strategies and programs to sustain the initiative being launched today. The young friends who have gathered today from different parts of India are all a motivated group and we have great expectations from each of you. Let us hope the Yuva Shantisena launched today will turn out to be a historic initiative (excerpts from his presidential speech)



Motilal Vohra MP, Treasurer of AICC and Senior Leader while inaugurating the National Youth Assembly said, "the Shantisena is one of the

great gifts of the father of the nation. The global community has recognized now its importance in community-peace-making. That so many youth from different parts of the country have gathered in this hall today to reaffirm your faith in nonviolence and Gandhian ideals speak volumes of your determination to fight evil forces which promote violence and terror in this country. Gandhi's concept of Shantisena and the role of youth in preserving the freedom and integrity of the nation have been greatly emphasized. Your resolve to promote peace and harmony through Shantisena is highly laudable and I am happy to associate myself with this national initiative. Let me wish all of you good luck. (Excerpts from inaugural address)



A view of the Youth Assembly

(Excerpts from the concept note on Yuva Shanti Sena prepared by Dr. Y. P. Anand)

Yuva Shanti Sena

Dr. Y. P. Anand



All over the world, particularly after World War II, local groups of peace workers and organisations have increasingly become visible.

They function on a voluntary basis, are very sincere, mostly idealistic, in their desire for peace and against violence, war, nuclear weapons and terrorism. They organize seminars and peace gatherings and marches, and some of these have grown into well-established groups. They try mostly to sensitize people and governments against violence, wars, and terrorism. However, these efforts, through well-intentioned, too do not fulfill the deeply felt need for having Shanti Sena (Peace Army)—an army based on principles of 'non-violence', 'as against the traditional armies based on the principle of 'violence'—as conceived by Gandhiji in 1938.

It was in this context that, after the start of the 21st century, the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies, with its associated organizations and individuals, had initiated a National Campaign (Andolan) for a 'Violence free India – Himsamukt Bharat'. Movements such as Himsamukt Bharat Andolan are particularly relevant to today's situation when violence, extremism and terrorism, both internal and external, seem to have become wide spread in India and Indian youth are increasingly being drawn towards such tendencies.

As a part of Himsamukt Bharat Andolan, a series of efforts have been made to enlist families committed to non violence, to hold youth camps in colleges and universities, to hold essay and elocution contests among school students, to organize peace yatras and discussions, to organize lectures and seminars, to campaign for establishment of Department/Ministry of Peace in Government of India, to set up Shanti Kendras (Peace Cells) in educational institutions, to hold youth interactive sessions and youth camps and youth assemblies against extremism, violence and terror, and hold National Conferences on 'An India without Hunger and Violence' and on 'Challenges from Violence and Terror- Methods and Strategies to Counter them'.

It is a culmination of all these varied efforts that the present 'National Youth Assembly Against

Violence and Terror, has been organised during the 'Quami ekta week' on 21 November 2009, in New Delhi. It is dedicated to the memory of former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi – himself a martyr to the struggle against violence and terrorism. On this occasion, it has also been proposed to initiate the setting up of Shanti Sena Mahatma Gandhi's concept starting with the launching of Yuva Shanti Sena (YSS).

The youth participants in the National Youth Assembly will constitute the first batch of its Yuva Shanti Sainiks (Young Soldiers of Peace). Based on the experience of the functioning of the Yuva Shanti Sena during next one year period, its Constitution will be reviewed and any changes found necessary will be given effect to, the ultimate aim being to launch a nation wide campaign to enroll more Shanti Sainiks so that Yuva Shanti Sena may gradually grow in size and thus finally cover the whole of India.

The Concept of Yuva Shanti Sena

In the context of a Shanti Sena, the term 'violence' includes both its various direct forms as violence, terrorism and wars, as well as its various indirect forms, such as extremism, exploitation, poverty and other serious disparities, which may lead to violent conflicts and alienation within the Indian society. While the overall goal may be defined as working for a 'nonviolent, egalitarian, humane and happy, progressive and prosperous India', the role of Yuva Shanti Sena will be particularly work for having an India free from the various manifestations of violence and terrorism which tend to prevail and recur. Yuva Shanti Sena, being based on the principles of non-violence, character-building, and purity of both ends and means, has a great potential to become an ideal instrument for bringing about individual as well as social transformation, and thus set an example of a truly non-violent social order, which the world may follow.

Before laying down the Constitution for the functioning of the proposed Yuva Shanti Sena, it is necessary to understand fully the philosophy and principles behind the very concept of Shanti Sena, which is best done by studying the relevant writings of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave. Hence, before proceeding further, a selection from these is present below.

- ❖ My Community
Join efforts to get themselves trained in Peace building, Peace making and Peace keeping in their community and in the institution where they study.

The activities of the Peace Cells (*Shanti Kendras*) in each of the institution will be supervised by a Committee consisting of representatives of Indian Council for Gandhian Studies and G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena, School/College, Violence-Free India Foundation and G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena will make available trained and experienced resource persons and supporting material, the PTA/School Authorities will ensure proper implementation of the programme in the respective institution.

Methodology to be followed in each of the participating schools

The activities of each of the Shanti Kendra will be under the over all charge of the head of the respective educational institutions.

Each of the schools may nominate two staff members who will be the staff-in-charge of the programme. A member of G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena to whom the school is assigned will periodically visit the school to guide and assist the school in the planning and implementation of programmes. Five student representatives may also be nominated to the organising committee.

Orientation to the Staff and Student

At the beginning of the academic year an orientation programme for the functionaries of the various Shanti Kendras will be held at a suitable place near the school. A three-monthly review of activities will also be undertaken jointly in order to modify or assess the programmes.

The students' group in each school

Each Shanti Kendra should have a minimum of 50 students as members and these students, the staff advisors and a member of the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies will form the core group of the Shanti Kendra in each school.

Incentives to students

- Creative talent competitions will be held periodically and prizes will be given to winners.
- Participation in Bharat Darshan Programmes: outstanding students will be considered for Bharat Darshan Programmes.
- Certificates to all active participants.
- Special camps and children's programmes: students who evince keen interest in the activities of the Kendra will be invited to special camps and national programmes organised by various Gandhian organizations and others from time to time.

It is obvious that the success of this project will depend on the initiative of individual school. They may devise their own programmes.

100 Seminars to commemorate 100 years of *Hind Swaraj*

As a prelude to this National Youth Assembly 100 Seminars on the problem of violence and terror and to promote a non-killing India were also held in various parts of the country between 13 and 22 November 2009 to commemorate the 100 years of *Hind Swaraj* by Gandhi. These seminars, held in almost all the states of India, have attracted the attention of a large number of youth

Simultaneously, Discussions, Seminars, Special Lectures etc. were also held in several parts of India. Governors, Chief Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies, Legal luminaries, Vice-Chancellors, Former Diplomats, Gandhian thinkers and activists, Youth Leaders, Film Artists, Human Rights Activists were also among those who led these



Ms. Kumud Joshi, Chairperson of KVIC inaugurates the seminar series at Miranda House on 13th November 2009. Seated are Dr. Anoop Swaroop (Vice Chancellor, Shobhit University) and Dr. Y. P. Anand (Former Director, National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi)

discussions and seminars. The places where these 100 Programs were held besides Delhi are:


Bangalore, Ranchi, Mumbai, Trivandrum, Kazargode, Palakkad, Alleppy, Vocational Higher Secondary School Mulavana, Hindu College Nagercoil, Kanyaku mari, Lady Doak College Madurai, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dindigul, Gandhi Niketan Kallupatti, Tutu corin, Setu Bhaskara Higher Secondary School (Chennai), Karaikudi, Devakotai, Sivaganga, Gandhigram Rural University, Dindigul, Ballabgarh (Faridabad), Bhopal, Bhuvane

and others. Quite a few educational and social institutions have collaborated with these efforts.

In Delhi, the Seminar series was inaugurated by Ms. Kumud Joshi, Chairperson of Khadi & Village Industries Commission at Miranda House on 13th November 2009. On subsequent days the Seminars were held in Deshbandhu College, Shobhit University, Shyamal College, Deendayal Upadhyaya College, Rajadhani College, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Sri Venkateshwara College. The concluding seminar of this series in Delhi was held at Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University on 22nd November 2009. Prof. Vinod Thyagi & Dr. Nisha Thyagi co-ordinated the seminars in Delhi.



A view of the audience at the seminar at Miranda House



100 Community Peace Centers in the community colleges of IGNOU

Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice Chancellor IGNOU announced the decision of Indira Gandhi National Open University to associate with the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies to establish 100 Community Peace Centers in the Community Colleges of IGNOU in various parts of the country to commemorate the Centenary of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*.

He also said that the details of the program have been worked out by the representatives of the IGNOU and ICGS and these centers would start functioning from the 30th of January 2010.

Before that the identification centers, orientation to the functionaries who will be in charge of each center, modalities of co operation and other required details will be worked out between ICGS and IGNOU.

The focus of the Community Centers will be

- to link community with educational institutions
- to inculcate values in children and youth
- to bring academics and activists together
- to develop conflict-free zones
- to contribute to sustainable development

National Youth Assembly against Terror, Violence & for a Nonkilling India

New Delhi, capital of India, witnessed on 21st November 2009 a huge Youth Assembly of 920 youth representatives from 28 States and Union Territories of India resolving to dedicate themselves to promote Peace and Harmony and a Nonkilling India by launching the Yuva Shanti Sena (Youth Peace Brigade) of Gandhi's dream.

This National initiative, to which the distinguished senior member of Indian Parliament and former Minister Sri Oscar Fernandes is Chairman of the Organising Committee and Dr. N.Radhakrishnan General Convenor, was a sequel to the 186 Youth Assemblies that were held in various parts of India during the last two years by the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies and Violence-free and Nonkilling India Campaign Committee in association with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatan, Shobhit University, Ekta Parishad, Indira Gandhi Open University, Kamrah Institute of Information Technology, Anuvrat Global Organization, Forum of Gandhian Thought and Traditional Values, Gandhi Global Forum & Yuvasatta.

According to Prof.N. Radhakrishnan, the focuses of the National Youth Assembly are:

- to sensitize the youth that intolerance, extremism, violence and terror are against the Indian ethos and culture and the youth should avoid them and become aware that they disrupt and impede development and national progress.
- to drive home the point that combating violence and terror cannot be left to the government alone and that the efforts of the Civil society, especially the youth too has major role to augmenting the government in fighting violence and terror.
- to organize various educational programs in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions to prepare the students and youth to reflect and develop appropriate strategies to fight these two evils.

- to revive and re-launch Gandhiji's Shanti Sena and create National Standing Body of Young Peace Volunteers (Shanti Sainiks) , who will promote and maintain peace and harmony in the community in their respective places. And for this purpose, prepare a national Register of Peace Volunteers (shanti Sainiks).

Realizing that every youth of India has a great role to play in ensuring harmony , peace and goodwill among various segments of our population and more so the youth since it is they who are most affected, it is imperative that we create a conducive atmosphere for development , which will be an appropriate occasion reflect on ways and means to promote harmony in society. The participants in the National Youth Assembly will constitute the first batch of Shanti Sainiks / Peace Volunteers.

100 Seminars in different parts of India to commemorate 100 years of Gandhi's Hind Swaraj as a prelude to the National Youth assembly:

As a prelude to this National Youth Assembly 100 Seminars on the problem of violence and terror were held mostly in various parts of the country between 13 and 22 November 2009 to commemorate the Centenary year of *Hind Swaraj* written by Gandhi. These seminars held in almost all the states of India, have attracted the attention of a large number of youth. Quite a few educational and social institutions have collaborated with these efforts.



Shri Thennala G. Balakrishna Pillai Ex. MP delivers the presidential address at the special functions to mark the 100 years of Hind Swaraj at Gandhi Park, Trivandrum. Seated are Shri R.S. Gawai, Governor of Kerala and others

What is Shanti Kendra?

It is long felt that sustained efforts are to be made to inculcate in the children & youth values for which appropriate educational inputs are to be provided right in the homes where they grow up, in the schools where they study and in the society where they blossom into adults. Unfortunately very little serious attention is paid at the level of children's education and precious little is done to catch the children young and lead them on with concrete and imaginative programmes which alone will generate in the children what the adult world always want the children to be.

A new emphasis on value inculcation

Gandhi wanted educational institutions to help the child to discover the child in himself or herself and certainly not to give them doses of advice which the children are not normally able to digest. This can be done only with the full and joyous involvement of children, parents and teachers.

In the present context of growing violence, terror and frustration, serious efforts to involve children in meaningful creative activities which will supplement their education are to be thought about. In the anxiety of every parent to ensure that every child gets quality education and she or he should invariably become the topper in their class which is possible only by scoring highest marks in the subjects becomes 'be all and the end all' of education. The principals and teachers of the institutions in their anxiety to 'cover' the portion and 'produce' rank-holders and obtain highest percentage of marks are again only shaky characters on a chess board. The child suffers silently and the amazing thing is the fortitude a creative child exhibits in surviving. Infact, learning has become the most poignant and difficult process in the present day society for a child.

It is in these circumstances that peace cells (shanti kendra) in educational institutions is designed to involve large number of students in activities which will give them opportunities to involve joyfully in a variety of activities which will, in turn, offer them fresh insights, cooperative learning, instead of competitive spirit, develop attitude of tolerance, love and compassion.

The ultimate aim of education is to produce good human beings, men and women of

character. This is possible only if there is a meaningful input of human values in the process of the development of young people. The traditional sources of this input, the school, the home and the environment have unfortunately ceased to be the active generators of positive values due to distortions that have crept into these systems.

With the changeover to the nuclear family set-up and the pressure of existential problems, the parents get too little time to help the children to ease their tensions and solve their problems. The environment, on the other hand, is completely under the grip of television and other mass media that have shut their eyes to the attitudes in the minds of the younger generation. Character and the moral fabric of the society are the biggest causality in this situation and that should rightly agitate the mind of all those who care for our nation and the society.

Children and youth need to be helped to ease pressure and anxiety, reduce aggressive traits and negative inputs, and encourage positive thinking and healthy attitudes to overcome difficult situations.

With this background the Indian Council for Gandhian Studies and G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena, propose to introduce Peace Cells (*Shanti Kendras*) in Schools. This will be a joint programme in active association of school authorities, Parent-Teacher Associations and local government and non-government bodies:

Focus of activities

Through these *Shanti Kendras*, Indian Council for Gandhian Studies and G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena endeavor to help train children and youth in:

- ❖ Inter personal relations and promote dialogue leading to identify structures of violence Become conscious of those who advocate terror
- ❖ Group activities for confidence building
- ❖ Individual-focused efforts to enhance communicative competence
- ❖ Leadership and self-management
- ❖ Generate love of nature
- ❖ The concept of My School/

Hence a national effort to inculcate values right from early childhood, from primary school up to the college should also be thought about by the nation.

They were happy to associate themselves with the new initiative. Sri. Apurva Pathak from the North- East and who bravely challenged terrorists was very categorical that the future of India lies in movement like Shanti Sena.

Winding up the discussions Prof. Radhakrishnan assured the youth on behalf of the organising committee that very serious and meaningful follow-up orientation programs, training sessions will be held in a structured pattern in the coming months and those who are committed among them to nonviolence, Gandhian ideals, social commitment are welcome to join the grand dream of reviving the Yuva Shanti Sena of

Gandhi during the centenary of Gandhi's classic on the problem of survival. Sri N.Vasudevan, Director Indian Council of Gandhian Studies proposed a vote of thanks.

Oganising committee of the Youth Assembly

Chairman: Sri.Oscar Fernades MP

Dr. Y.P. Anand, Prof. V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Laxmi Das, Dr. Akash Ouchi, Babulal Sharma, Atul Dev Sarmah, Dr Anil Dutt Kaushik, T. K. Jain, Satish Gupta, Dr N.P. Singh, Dr M.L. Sharma, Pramod Sharma, T.K. Mishra, Dr Bipin Tiwary, Sri Baldev Raj Kamrah, Nisha Tyagi, Ms Jaya Iyer

Vice Chairmen: Dr Anoop Swaroop & Sri P.V. Rajagopal

General Secretary: Prof. N. Radhakrishnan

Youth Assembly Coordinator: Dr. C. S. Pran

Secretaries: Sri N. Vasudevan and Prof. Vinod Tyagi

Citizens' Commission for Dialogue-(contd from p.24)

the gigantic proportion of the challenge before us a comprehensive and well coordinated national effort might be considered so that these individual efforts might swell into a massive national assertion against the enemies of humanity.

Even an allotment of 0.5% in our annual budget for these purposes would yield high returns in future. If this materializes, it will be an investment for the security of the nation.

May I with all humility submit on the basis of over four decades of my active involvement in youth training, teaching, conflict management initiatives, experience from over 800 youth training camps in nonviolence and Youth Assemblies against violence and terror both in India and abroad, that

- (a) *Conscious and sustained efforts are necessary to encourage, motivate and initiate the civil society to supplement the efforts of the Government in tackling the menace of terror and violence. Suitable mechanism is to be designed towards this. Civil Society has to become an equal partner in the national effort to counter the menace of violence and terror.*
- (b) *Enlisting Yuva Shakti (youth power) to preserve the integrity of the nation. Let us remember:*
 - (i) *that the back bone of the terror outfits are youth*
 - (ii) *that the number of youth who are taking arms against the nation are increasing*
 - (iii) *the Maoists, the Naxallites, People's War Groups and those who are running parallel Government in several parts of North-East and elsewhere are essentially youth movements*
 - (iv) *imported terrorism and home-grown terrorism attract a large number of youth who are getting more and more disenchanted with the socio-political system or influenced by anti-social forces or external forces.*
 - (v) *that children and school-drop-outs in large numbers are being recruited to the training cadets of most of these terror outfits.*

5. Youth Assemblies against Violence and Terror

In continuation of the 186 youth Assemblies we have held in different parts of India during the last two years and as a natural follow-up of the various initiatives we have been promoting over the years we are now convinced that possibility of making the Shanti Sena a standing body of youth activists for peace be explored. This cannot be done without the support and guidance of the government. We are happy to inform you that in the conduct of the National Youth Assembly which was held in New Delhi on 21st November 2009 with this objective we were guided by the distinguished Sri Oscar Fernandez, MP as Chairman of the Organising Committee.

Our understanding of the situation is that it is much more than a law and order problem; and that Police or Army alone with all their might may not be able to solve this."



Shri Thennala G. Balakrishna Pillai (Ex MP) leads the youth rally in Thiruvananthapuram against terror and violence

In Delhi, the Seminar series was inaugurated by Ms. Kumud Joshi, Chairperson Khadi and Village Industries Commission at Miranda House on November 13, 2009. On subsequent days the Seminars were held in Deshbandhu College, Shobhit University, Shyamlal College, Deendayal Upadaya College, Rajadhani College, J.N.U and Shri Venketeshwara College. The concluding seminar in this series in Delhi was held at Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University on November 22, 2009.

Simultaneously, Youth Assemblies, Discussions, Seminars, Special Lectures etc were held in several parts of India.

Governors, Chief Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies, Legal luminaries, Vice-Chancellors, Former Diplomats, Gandhian thinkers and activists, Youth Leaders, Film Artists, Human Rights Activists were among those who led these discussions and seminars.

The places where these 100 Programs were held besides Delhi are:

Bangalore, Ranchi, Mumbai, Mahatma Gandhi Vidyaptham, Trivandrum, Kazargode, Palakkad, Gandhi Smarak Kendra (Mararikulam, Alleppey), Vocational Hr. Sec. School Mulavana, Hindu



Flaging off youth march in Kollam against terror and violence

College Nagercoil, Kanyakumari, Lady Doak College Madurai, Chennai, Coimbatore, Ambathurai, Dindigul, Gandhi Niketan Kallu patti, Tutucorin, Setu Bhaskara Hr. Sec. School (Chennai), Karaikudi, Devakotai, Sivaganga, Gandhi gram Rural University Dindigul, Ballabh garh (Faridabad), Bhopal, Bhuvaneshwar, Chandigarh, Guwahati Shillong, Izowal, Agartala, Itanagar, Imphal, Kolkatta, Birbhum (Shanti Nikatan, Vishva Bharati), Raveendra Bharathi University, Puri, Indore, Gwalior, Bilaspur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Meerut, Jhansi, Bareilly, Patna, Chapra, Hazaribag, Jaipur, Alwar, Ahmedabad, Amritsar (Jalianwala Bagh), Ferozepur (Hussaniwala Border), Shimla, Chandigarh, Jammu, Nagpur, Sholapur, Panaji, Dharward, Hyderabad, Vijaya wada, Chittor (Tirupathi), Gangtok, Port Blair, Kohima, Vardhman Mahavir Open University (Kota).



Pledge against violence and terror

It was very encouraging to see that both those who had read the book and those who have not, approached the text with an open mind. *Hind Swaraj* in most of the places of the seminars was examined as Gandhi's vision of a just and nonviolent society.

Many young readers were particularly happy with the fresh line of thinking against the stereotyped opinions on the book. The 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's writing of this seminal work brings to one's mind how Gandhi's country chose to ignore the warning he offered in *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi's critique of violence, the nonviolent alternatives he offered, his analysis of the growing tentacles of terror and violence, unprincipled growth of materialism and callous indifference to values etc. have all been ignored or not taken seriously.

The National Youth Assembly on 21 November at Delhi

Phase I at Gandhi Samadhi, Rajghat

The National Youth Assembly began at 8.30 am at Gandhi Samadhi, Rajghat when "Ahimsa Jyothis" were lit on behalf of the different States

and Union Territories of India after a Sarvadharm Prarthana led by Kumari Kusum Behn.



Union Minister Shri Pratik Patil lights the Gandhi Flames at the Gandhi Samadhi, Rajghat.

The Chairman of the Organising Committee Sri. Oscar Fernades welcomed the Minister and the other participants. Prominent among those who were present were Dr Y.P.Anand, Lakshmi Das, P.V.Rajagopal, Prof.V.N.Rajasekharan Pillai, Kunvar Vijendra Sekhar, Dr Anoop Swaoop, Dr C.S.Pran , Dr N.P.Singh. Dr.Akash Ouchi.

Sri Pratik P Patil, State Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Government of India who was the Chief Guest administered the Shanti Sena pledge to the Youth and lit the Ahimsa Jyotis (Ahimsa Flames) and handed over each flame to the respective State representatives .Sri Patil exhorted the Shanti Sainiks :

“to be fearless, brave courageous to fight the enemies of the nation. The courage and readiness you have shown today to join the Shantisena which is being revived under the leadership of senior leader Shri Oscar Fernadesji and Dr. N. Radhakrishnan are praise worthy and I congratulate all of you on this great initiative. You have all come from different parts of the country and you represent the youth of the country, their spirit and determination to protect the freedom of the country, their spirit and determination to protect the freedom of the country through peaceful means. We are happy that the youth realize the great role they have to play to make the country strong and great. The father of the nation had great expectation from the Youth. I am happy to see today that you are dedicating yourself to define the freedom and stability of the Country through peaceful means”.

The minister then administered the following Shantisena pledge:

I pledge that —

That I have faith in Gandhi’s Shantisena to combat Violence and Terror and to ensure justice;
I shall shun violence in all circumstances;
I shall avoid violence through word and deed;
I shall resolve all disputes through dialogue, not through confrontation;
I shall practice and encourage tolerance of dissenting views and differing faiths;
I shall, to the best of my ability, resist violence with nonviolence;
and I shall strive to promote a Culture of Peace in my family, in the institution I study or work with, and in my community where I live.

I shall be a disciplined member of the Yuva Shanti Sena of Gandhiji’s Dreams and work to promote a nonviolent and nonkilling India. The Shanti Sainiks carried the Ahimsa Jyotis around the Rajghat Gandhi Samadhi before they solemnly placed the jyotis at the entrance of the V.I. P gate reiterating their determination to fight Terror, Violence and Killing and promote peace and harmony, inspired by the glorious legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.

100 of the Youth who came from Desbandhu College under the leadership of NSS officer Prof. T.K.Mishra and Dr. Bipin Tiwari moved on their motor bikes towards the venue of the second part of their program while the rest left in specially chartered buses for the Mavalankar Hall.

Phase II

The inaugural session of the Youth Assembly began at the Mavanlankar Hall with a prayer song rendered by the students of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan . The 926 registered Peace Volunteers who filled the spacious hall and balcony applauded lustily as the veteran Shanti Sena trainer Dr. S.N.Subba Rao entered the Hall. The Senior Congress Leader Shri Motilal Vora was greeted by the Youth Assembly with a standing ovation.

Dr. Anoop Swaroop , Vice Chancellor Shobhit University was the Master of ceremony for the inaugural session. Dr. S.N. Subba Rao , Senior most youth trainer in the country electrified the assembly with his songs of harmony and inspiring message of benediction .He hoped that

“this initiative will receive necessary national support and attention from all quarters and this should not be allowed to die. The future of the country is not in the hands of the soldiers alone but in the hands of the youth who are prepared to sacrifice and die. The question is are we going to trust them and encourage them?. We have plenty of money for the purchase of arms but not for training

Violence and Terror, has been organised during the ‘ Quami ekta week’ on 21 November 2009, in New Delhi. It is dedicated to the memory of formere Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi – himself a martyr to the struggle against violence and terrorism. On this occasion, it has also been proposed to initiate the setting up of Shanti Sena Mahatma Gandhi’s concept starting with the launching of Yuva Shanti Sena (YSS)

The youth participants in the National Youth Assembly will constitute the first batch of its Yuva Shanti Sainiks (Young Soldiers of Peace). Based on the experience of the functioning of the Yuva Shanti Sena during next one year period, its Constitution will be reviewed and any changes found necessary will be given effect to, the ultimate aim being to launch a nation wide campaign to enroll more Shanti Sainiks so that Yuva Shanti Sena may gradually grow in size and thus finally cover the whole of India.

In the context of a Shanti Sena, the term ‘violence’ includes both its various direct forms as violence, terrorism and wars, as well as its various indirect forms, such as extremism, exploitation, poverty and other serious disparities, which may lead to violent conflicts and alienation within the Indian society. While the overall goal may be defined as working for a ‘nonviolent, egalitarian, humane and happy, progressive and prosperous India’, the role of Yuva Shanti Sena will be particularly work for having an India free from the various manifestations of violence and terrorism which tend to prevail and recur. Yuva Shanti Sena, being based on the principles of non- violence , character- building, and purity of both ends and means , has a geat potential to become an ideal instrument for bringing about individual as we well as social transformation, and

thus set an example of a truly non- violent social order, which the world may follow.

Before laying down the Constitution for the functioning of the proposed Yuva Shanti Sena, it is necessary to understand fully the philosophy and principles behind the very concept of Shanti Sena, which is best done by studying the relevant writings of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhawe, Hence, before proceeding further, a selection from these is present below.

Youth Speak

Taking part in discussions, though there was a constraint of time, 22 youth representatives from different parts of India offered their views on the inadequacy of opportunities for them to contribute to social work.

Many of them were forthright in identifying the various forces contributing to disharmony in the nation.

Violence, Terror, Killing, Looting, flourish under political patronage. The nexus between criminals, police, many important and influential politicians are bad models.

Violence-abetting films, violence-glorifying culture, lack of dialogue between parents and children, teachers and students, voters and politicians are major factors that are to be taken a serious note of.

Violence and Terror, injustice and killing, poverty and deprivation are enemies who are to be fought tooth and nail.

Efforts to involve youth in creative and sustainable work which will promote peace and harmony are highly appreciable according to them. But then care has to be taken to ensure the sustainability and acceptability of the efforts.

The Shanti Sena idea has not been properly understood by the youth in the prevailing atmosphere of Violence and Terror.



The Shanti sainiks from Deshbandhu College (evening) on a campaign mode on motor bikes



The voice of the youth -- Youth representatives express their views on the contemporary crisis

and deeper application of mind than a soldier in arms.

Gandhiji's Shanti Sena is an alternative to all forms of violence terror and injustice, Dr Rao reminded the volunteers.

Dr.N.Radhakrishnan General Convener of the National Youth Assembly and Chairman Indian Council of Gandhian Studies shared his experiences as a Shanti Sena Trainer both in India and abroad during the last 35 years.

Launching of Community Peace Centres

Prof.V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice Chancellor Indira Gandhi National Open University announced the decision of Indira Gandhi National Open University to associate with the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies to establish 100 Community Peace Centers in the Community Colleges of IGNOU in various parts of the country to commemorate the Centenary of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*. He also said that:

the details of the program have been worked out by the representatives of the IGNOU and ICGS and these centers would start functioning from the 30th of January 2010. Before that the identification centers, orientation to the functionaries who will be in charge of each center, modalities of co operation and other required details will be worked out between ICGS and IGNOU. The focus of the Community Centers will be

- to link community with educational institutions
- to inculcate values in children and youth
- to bring academics and activists together
- to develop conflict-free zones
- to contribute to sustainable development

This was followed by the circulation of an exhaustive note on Yuva Shanti Sena prepared by Dr. Y.P Anand, former Chairman Railway Board and Director National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi for reading by the volunteers so that the salient points outlined by the author will be discussed during the orientation programs, as and when they are organised. Dr.Anand in his note highlighted the salient points of Yuva Shanti Sena as follows:

All over the world, particularly after World War II, local groups of peace workers and organisations have increasingly become visible. They function on a voluntary basis, are very sincere, mostly idealistic, in their desire for peace and against violence, war, nuclear weapons and terrorism. They organize seminars and peace gatherings and marches, and some of these have grown into well-established groups. They try mostly to sensitize people and governments against violence, wars, and terrorism. However, these efforts, though well-intentioned, do not fulfill the deeply felt need for having Shanti Sena (Peace Army)—an army based on principles of 'non-violence', as against the traditional armies based on the principle of 'violence'—as conceived by Gandhiji in 1938.

It was in this context that, after the start of the 21st century, the Indian Council of Gandhian Studies, with its associated organizations and individuals, had initiated a National Campaign (Andolan) for a 'Violence free India – Himsamukt Bharat. Movements such as Himsamukt Bharat Andolan are particularly relevant to today's situation when violence, extremism and terrorism, both internal and external, seem to have become widespread in India and Indian youth are increasingly being drawn towards such tendencies.

As a part of Himsamukt Bharat Andolan, a series of efforts have been made to enlist families committed to non-violence, to hold youth camps in colleges and universities, to hold essay and elocution contests among school students, to organize peace yatras and discussions, to organize lectures and seminars, to campaign for establishment of Department/ Ministry of Peace in Government of India, to set up Shanti Kendras (Peace Cells) in educational institutions, to hold youth interactive sessions and youth camps and youth assemblies against extremism, violence and terror, and hold National Conferences on 'An India without Hunger and Violence' and on 'Challenges from Violence and Terror- Methods and Strategies to Counter them'.

It is a culmination of all these varied efforts that the present 'National Youth Assembly Against



Let us sing for peace -- veteran trainer of youth Dr. S. N. Subba Rao leads the youth in community singing

the youth in nonviolent conflict management. let us hope sanity will prevail and there will be change in the attitude of the powers that be".

The invocation and benediction were followed by the lighting of the lamp to signify the commencement of the session by the senior leader and AICC Treasurer and Member of Parliament Sri Motilal Vohra. Sri Vohra in his inaugural address said:

"The Shatisena is one of the great gifts of the father of nation. The global community has recognized now its importance in community-peace-making. That so many youth from different parts of the country have gathered in this hall today to reaffirm your faith in nonviolence and Gandhian ideals speak volumes of your determination to fight evil forces which promote violence and terror in this country. Gandhi's concept of Shantisena and the role of youth in preserving the freedom and integrity of the nation have been greatly emphasized. Your resolve to promote peace and harmony through Shantisena is highly laudable and I am happy to associate myself with this national initiative. Let me wish all of you good luck".

This was followed by the reading by Sri Oscar Fernandes of a special message from Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chair Person of UPA

"It is indeed a fitting conclusion to the centenary celebrations of Gandhi's Hind Swaraj to launch a Yuva Shanti Sena to work nationwide for peace, harmony and national integration. I am confident that the Yuva Shanti Sena will work with dedication and passion to promote non-violence and communal harmony; to ensure

social justice, especially to the most vulnerable sections of our society, and to solve problems with what we now a days call the " Gandhigiri approach. It is, as we are discovering a new, a much more effective way to solve problems and reconcile differences than confrontation and violence. I wish the members of the Yuva Shanti sena all success in their mission".

Sri . T.K.Jain, Chairman, Anuvibha read out a message from the Acharya Sri. Mahapragya.

Violence and Non-violence had remained antagonistic in the past, are so in the present and will be so in the future. Only those people who ponder over the root causes of violence can solve the problem arising out of violence. Only the people who ponder over the means of Non-violence can develop the consciousness of Non-violence.

Mahatma Gandhi .has remained foremost amongst the people who have pondered over the root causes of violence. He used non-violence in the independence movement and subsequently a new philosophy of non-violence got evolved before the world. I want to make it clear that the principle of non-violence needs to be brought on the plane of application. We can not restrict any principle with some person. The value of the principle of non-violence lies in its application through which can evolve a non-violent personality.

The development of morality is not possible without non-violence and viceversa. Acharya Tulsi paid attention to this fact and put forward the code of conduct of Anuvrat.

Through Anuvrat Vishva Bharati the programme of training in non-violence is being conducted. Through this, programme, an

experiment of the transformation of consciousness is being carried out.

Let the workers working in the field of Gandhian philosophy and those of the Anuvrat Vishva Bharati together make strenuous effort so that the problems like suicide, killing, terrorism and extremism could be solved and the truth that these problems can not be solved by violence be made distinct.

Sri N. Vasudevan, read out a special message sent by the Chief Minister of Delhi Smt Sheila Dikshit on the Shanti Kendras.

"It gives me immense pleasure to know that Indian Council of Gandhian Studies and Himsamukt Bharat Andolan are jointly organizing a National Youth Assembly Against Violence and Terror on 21 November, 2009 at New Delhi.

Much I would have liked to be present in this important gathering of over thousand youth from all over India but I am unable to do so because of a certain hard-pressing official engagements, though, the loss is mine.

I am glad to learn that the announcement to commence Shanti Kendra programs in selected schools of Delhi will be made in National Youth Assembly. This will facilitate commencement of Peace Education Programs on a regular basis in selected schools. I assure that my government will provide all possible cooperation in setting up of peace Kendras. I am sure that the National Youth assembly against violence and terror would be able to deliberate on the challenges being faced by the world in view of spurt in terrorist activities in various countries. There is a dire need of peace to ensure conducive atmosphere to prosperity and development. Please accept my sincere and best wishes for success of entire endeavor".

Launching of Shantikendras for peace education:

The occasion also witnessed the launching of Shanti Kendras in select educational institutions in Delhi. Dr. Y.P. Anand, Advisor to National Youth Assembly and former Director National Gandhi Museum introduced the concept, practice and salient features of the Shanti Kendras in Educational institutions.

Gandhi wanted educational institutions to help the child to discover the child in himself or herself and certainly not to give them doses of advice which the children are not normally able to digest. This can be done only with the full and joyous involvement of children, parents and teachers.

In the present context of growing violence, terror and frustration, serious efforts to involve children in meaningful creative activities which will supplement their education are to be thought about. In the anxiety of every parent to ensure that every child gets quality education and she or he should invariably become the topper in their class which is possible only by scoring highest marks in the subjects becomes 'be all and the end all' of education. The principals and teachers of the institutions in their anxiety to 'cover' the portion and 'produce' rank-holders and obtain highest percentage of marks are again only shaky characters on a chess board. The child suffers silently and the amazing thing is the fortitude a creative child exhibits in surviving. Infact, learning has become the most poignant and difficult process in the present day society for a child.

It is in these circumstances that peace cells (shanti kendra) in educational institutions is designed to involve large number of students in activities which will give them opportunities to involve joyfully in a variety of activities which will, in turn, offer them fresh insights, cooperative learning, instead of competitive spirit, develop attitude of tolerance, love and compassion.

The ultimate aim of education is to produce good human beings, men and women of character. This is possible only if there is a meaningful input of human values in the process of the development of young people. The traditional sources of this input, the school, the home and the environment have unfortunately ceased to be the active generators of positive values due to distortions that have crept into these systems.

With the changeover to the nuclear family set-up and the pressure of existential problems, the parents get too little time to help the children to ease their tensions and solve their problems. The environment, on the other hand, is completely under the grip of television and other mass media that have shut their eyes to the attitudes in the minds of the younger generation. Character and the moral fabric of the society are the biggest causality in this situation and that should rightly agitate the mind of all those who care for our nation and the society.

Children and youth need to be helped to ease pressure and anxiety, reduce aggressive traits and negative inputs, and encourage positive thinking and healthy attitudes to overcome difficult situations.

With this background the Indian Council for Gandhian Studies and G. Ramachandran

Institute of Nonviolence & Shantisena, propose to introduce Peace Cells (Shanti Kendras) in Schools. This will be a joint programme in active association of school authorities, Parent-Teacher Associations and local government and non-government bodies.

Sri. Oscar Fenades MP and Chairman of the National Youth Assembly, chairing the inaugural session, hoped

"that this initiative being launched during the communal harmony fortnight will have the potential to become a national youth movement along Gandhian lines to promote peace and the harmony in the country.

Gandhiji's Shantisena is a universally acclaimed to be powerful agents of unity and peace.

We have to develop appropriate strategies and programs to sustain the initiative being launched today. The Young friends who have gathered today from different parts of India are all a motivated group and we have great expectations from each of you. Let us hope the Yuva Shantisena launched today will turn out to be a historic initiative (excerpts from presidential speech)".

Shri J.D. Seelam M.P offering felicitation described the initiative historic and congratulated both the organisers and the students youth on realising the importance of united action to root out Violence and Terror. The Shantisena according to him is the dream of the father of the nation to fight both violence and injustice and by strengthening it we are doing our bit to realise Gandhi's wish Sri. Seelam also offered all support to make the Yuva shantisena an important initiative.

Sri. P.V. Rajagopal, Chairman Ekta Parishad and Vice Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, in his address hoped that

"the threatening clouds of disappointment and helplessness of the marginalised and dispossessed will not be ignored and the nation will take cognize of what is happening around. The Gandhian constructive workers are standing between chaos and order and it will not be right to describe them a spent-force. Many of them are very actively promoting peace and stability and what is important is to realize their potentials and sit with them before it is too late. The atmosphere is

full of discriminations and disparities. The cries of the people for food, job and shelter cannot be ignored. The importance of the National Youth Assembly and the revivals of the Shanti Sena are to be viewed from this angle".

Sri. Kunwar Vijendra Sekhar, Pro-Chancellor, Shobhit University found in the initiative great hope and offered all support of his university in this timely step.

Dr. Prthibha Pragma also offered felicitations.

Dr. Vinod Tyagi, one of the Secretaries of the organising committee proposed a vote of thanks.



Phase III

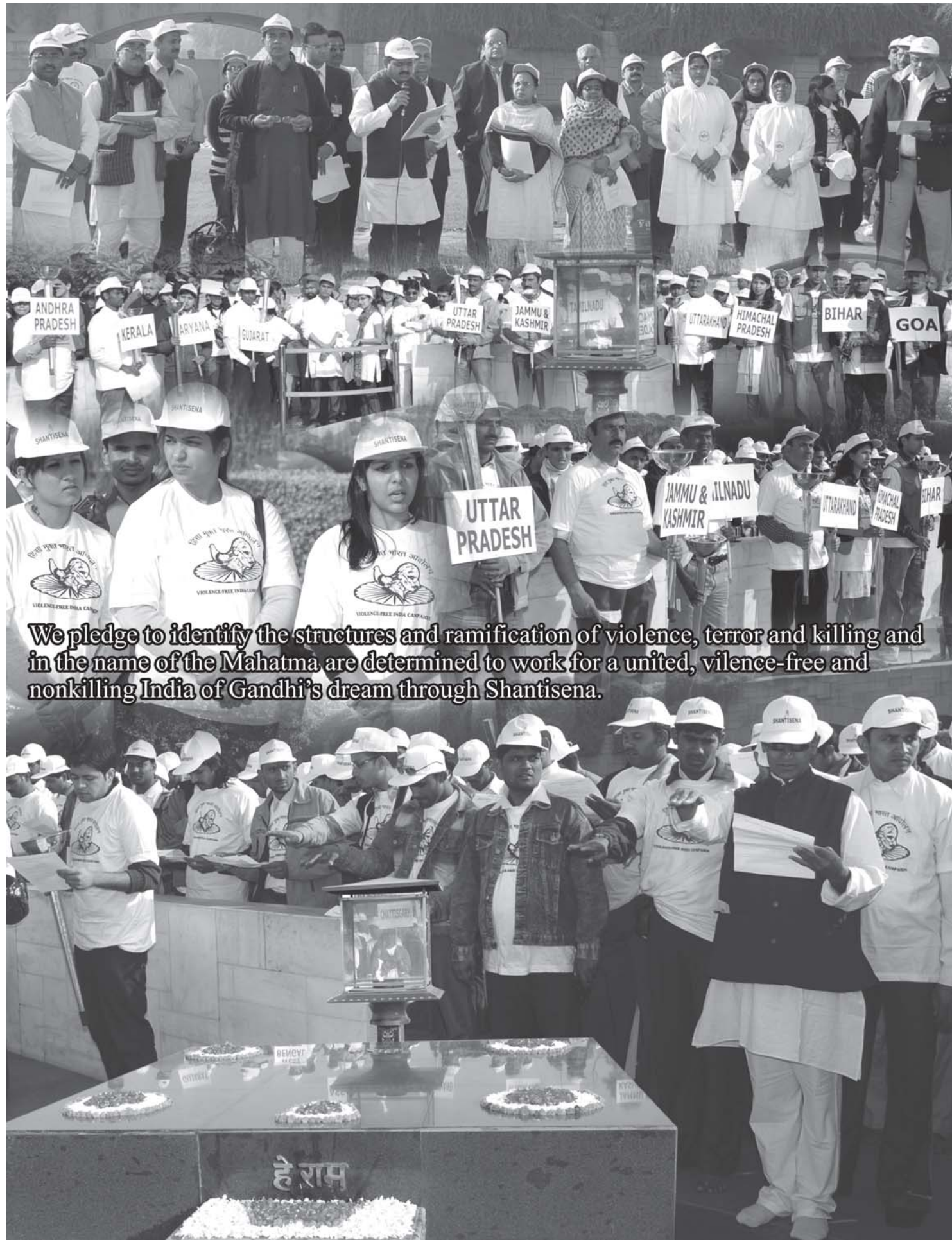
The inaugural session was followed by a working session at which modalities and strategies for sustained, motivated and meaningful peace promotion initiatives by youth were discussed. The focus was to identify, train and sustain a Standing Body of Youth committed to nonviolence and encourage them to work to promote peace and harmony in the country.

This was a session which offered opportunity for both the elders and the youngsters to express their views.

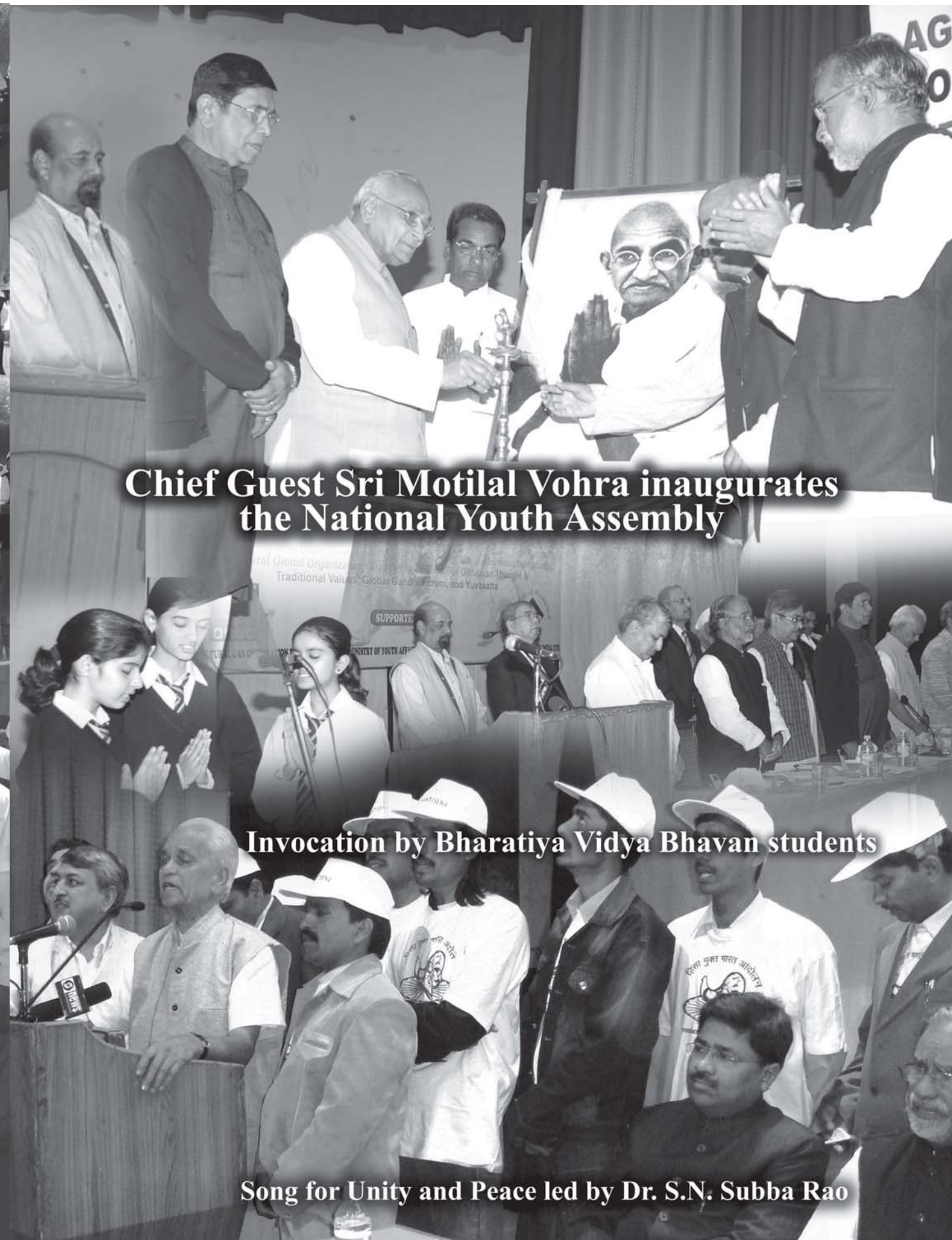
This session was coordinated by Prof. N. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Anoop Swaroop, Sri. P.V. Ragagopal and Sri. Laxmi Das, Dr. S.N. Subba Rao



started the ball rolling with his inspiring songs on harmony and unity. sharing with the Youth his rich experience of over 60 years of youth training for peace and national integration, Dr. Rao reminded them that it was not easy to become a soldier of peace. A soldier of peace requires greater training



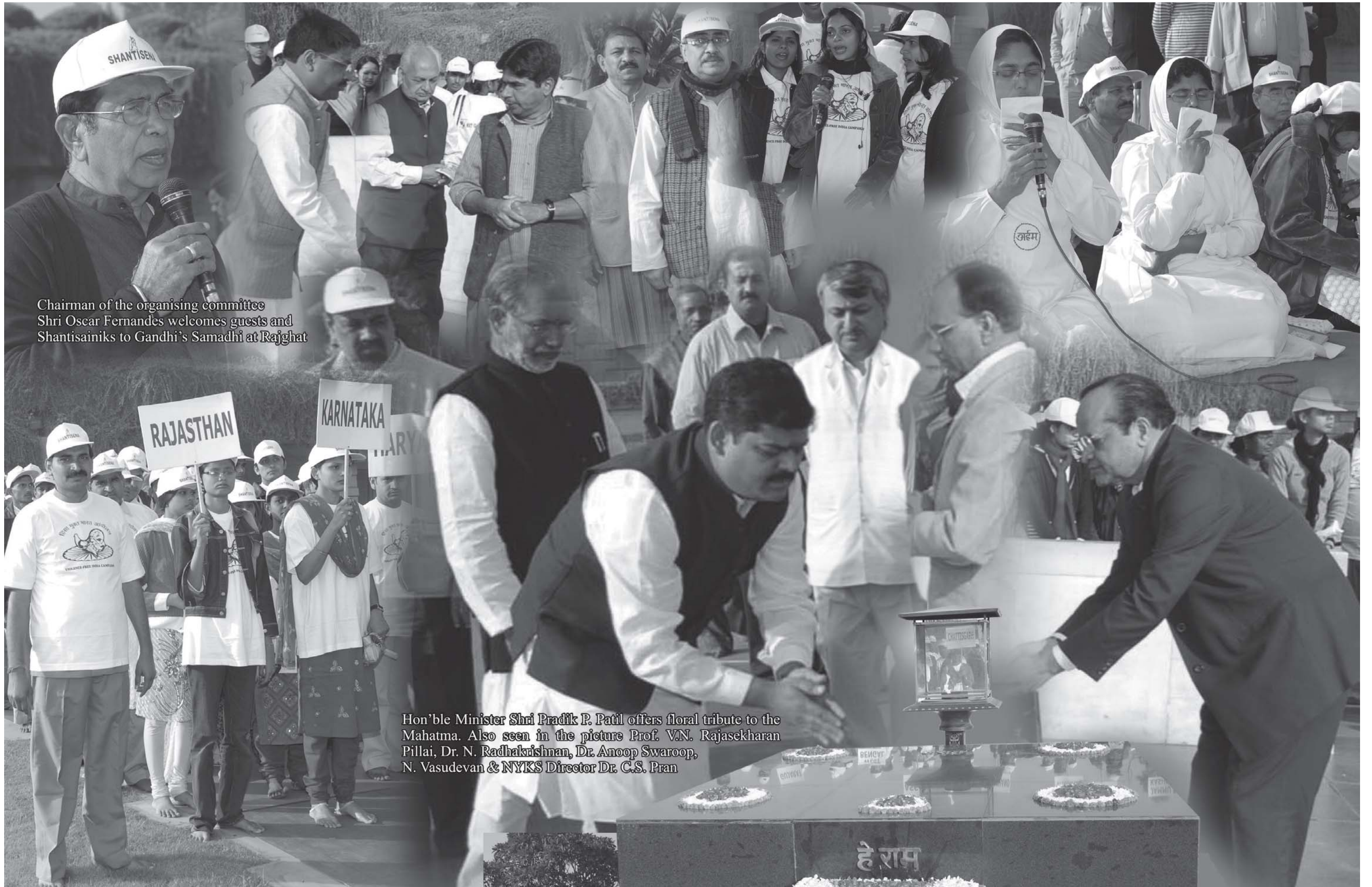
We pledge to identify the structures and ramification of violence, terror and killing and in the name of the Mahatma are determined to work for a united, violence-free and nonkilling India of Gandhi's dream through Shantisena.



Chief Guest Sri Motilal Vohra inaugurates the National Youth Assembly

Invocation by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan students

Song for Unity and Peace led by Dr. S.N. Subba Rao



Chairman of the organising committee
Shri Oscar Fernandes welcomes guests and
Shantisainiks to Gandhi's Samadhi at Rajghat

Hon'ble Minister Shri Pradik P. Patil offers floral tribute to the
Mahatma. Also seen in the picture Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan
Pillai, Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Anoop Swaroop,
N. Vasudevan & NYKS Director Dr. C.S. Pran