

# GANDHIJI TODAY

*Promoting Truth, Non-Violence, Communal Harmony, Humanitarian Service & Peace in Contemporary Society*

*Newsletter of Sarvodaya International Trust for 2007  
(covering activities upto end of February 2008)*

The most notable event of 2007 was a very sad one. Justice R. S. Pathak, distinguished and revered Chairman of Sarvodaya International Trust (SIT) since Nov 3rd 1997, passed away on November 17, 2007, after a short illness. During his tenure as Chairman, seven new regional chapters were opened and their activities along with those of the two chapters earlier opened covered all of southern and western India.



After a brief two month hiatus, the new Chairman Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah took over as requested by all SIT Trustees who still fondly remembered his visionary and inspiring leadership in the first two years after the Trust was launched. His letter of acceptance dated January 17, 2008 stated :

“Your invitation to me to come back to Sarvodaya International Trust is as gracious as it is compelling, though the occasion for it is under the shadow of the unfortunate passing away of my esteemed friend Justice Sri R. S. Pathak.

I accept your invitation in all humility. I thank the Trustees for their kindness. It is always a privilege to work with you in this noble endeavour.

With kind regards, yours sincerely,  
*M.N. Venkatachaliah*

The other very notable event of 2007 was the presentation of the U Thant Peace Award to SIT Managing Trustee Pascal Alan Nazareth by the Sri Chinmoy Peace Meditation Group at the United Nations on October 9th, 2007 for his “ Life Time of Dedication and World Service by promoting the Gandhian ideals of Truth, nonviolence, communal harmony, humanitarian service and peace”. This award was instituted in 1982 to honour the memory of the greatly respected and deeply spiritual former UN Secretary General U Thant. Among its previous recipients are Pope John Paul II, The Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa, Mikhail Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Pandit Ravi Shankar.



On April 14, 2007, the Sarvodaya Community Centre built by the Karnataka Chapter SIT in collaboration with SIT and two local NGOs named DRRT & AVAS at Nallakadirenahalli village on the outskirts of Chickballpur



town, was inaugurated by Lt. General (Retd) S.S.Mehta, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industries, who came from New Delhi specially for this event.

On September 14, 2007 Bishop Cotton Girls School in collaboration with SIT organized an inter-school citizenship contest on the theme of Gandhiji’s well known quotation “Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition

of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused”. Nine elite Bangalore schools participated in it, each with four member student teams and 15 minute multi-media presentations. Justice M.N. Venkatachala, former Lok Ayukta of Karnataka chaired the three member panel of judges and delivered the valedictory address. The prize winning teams were Army Public School, Bishop Cotton Boys School & Clarence School.

**Gandhi Jayanti 2007 was joyfully celebrated with concerts of music and dance in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Chennai, Kochi, Goa and Bhubaneshwar.** Details of these concerts, organized by SIT Regional Chapters, are as under :

At Bangalore, thanks to Karnataka Governor Dr. Rameshwar Thakur’s gracious support, the concert was held at the Raj Bhavan Glass House and telecast live by Bangalore Doordarshan Kendra within India and to over 50 countries where Kannada speaking NRIs reside. As the UN General Assembly has adopted October 2<sup>nd</sup> as ‘International Non Violence Day’ the concert was titled ‘Gandhi Jayanti Ahimsa Mahotsav’ and given an international dimension by including a Tibetan dance



group, a Japanese Choir, an Indonesian Angklung recital and a German Jazz ensemble along with the usual Indian music/dance items. The Governor and Mrs Thakur were chief guests. Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India, was guest of honour.

At New Delhi, children from several schools presented music, dance and theatre items in an impactful programme titled ‘In the Footsteps of Bapu’. The Vice President Dr. Hamid Ansari and Mrs Ansari were chief guests.

At Hyderabad, a Kuchipudi ballet portraying Gandhiji’s message of Truth, & non violence, specially choreographed by Smt. Vanaja Uday, was presented along with bhajans sung by Smt. Subra Mohanta and orchestral music by E. M. Centre’s ‘Pipes & Drums’.



Justice K. Chandra Reddy Chairman, Press Council of India was chief guest.

At Ahmedabad, Rabindranath Tagore’s famous play *Visarjan* “dedicated to all those heroes who bravely stood up for peace when human sacrifices were being demanded for the Goddess of War” was staged by artistes of Darpana Academy. Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai, Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust was Chief Guest

At Mumbai, a programme of Kabir, Goraknath and Macchindranath Nirgun Bhajans, sung by Kalapini Komakali was presented at the National



Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA). The chief guest was Mr. Ashok Vajpayee, President, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.

At Chennai the Gandhi Jayanti celebration was titled 'Aadu Raattai' and consisted of songs and dances in praise of Gandhiji and the Charka. It was presented by singers and dancers of Avvai Home



and Kalakshetra Foundation. The chief guest was Justice S. Mohan former Supreme Court Judge and Chairman, Kalakshetra Foundation.

At Bhubaneswar, an Odissi dance recital titled 'Arpan' was presented by Smt. Puspita Mishra's dance group and Gandhiji's favourite bhajans were sung by Lakshmi Kanta Palit and the Utkal Choral Group. Sri Rabi Ray, former Lok Sabha Speaker, was the chief guest.

At Goa, a programme of devotional songs, a children's elocution contest and a designer Khadi exhibition cum sale was held at Kala Academy, Goa.

At Kochi, the concert was held in collaboration with Rotary Club of Kochi North and comprised a music/dance presentation by pupils of Dharani School of Performing arts and distribution of sewing machines, wheel chairs and blankets to handicapped persons and NGOs. Rotarian Baby Joseph, past Rotary District Governor was chief guest.

Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Godrej Industries co-sponsored all the above concerts as their respectful tribute to Gandhiji. The Bangalore concert was also supported by Karnataka Government's Department of Kannada & Culture, Indian Council for Cultural Relations Bangalore Development Authority & Ganjam Nagappa & Son, and the Hyderabad concert by Satyam Computers Services Ltd.

Events in observance of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gandhiji's martyrdom day were also organized by Regional chapters. The two events organized by the New Delhi chapter were particularly noteworthy as the one held in the morning at India International Centre was addressed by Rev. Jesse Jackson, close associate of Martin Luther King. The one held in the evening at Lady Sri Ram College brought together young minds from Delhi,



Mumbai & Kolkata Colleges to debate on the theme 'Non-violence is the best counter-terror mechanism'. This theme also found expression in creative writing, art and photography. Lady Sri Ram College won the Best Team Trophy and St. Xavier's College Kolkata was adjudged second best Team. Ritayan Mukherjee of St. Xavier's and Sneha Iyer of LSR were adjudged the Best & Second Best Speaker. An excellent pencil sketch by Vidhu Tyagi & a thought provoking piece by Harshita Yalamarty were also awarded prizes. The judges were Prof. Niraja Gopal Jayal of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Mr. Keki Daruwalla the well known poet and Ms. Abha Adams, Education Consultant.

The Goa chapter's commemorative function, titled 'A drop of sensitivity and sensibility' was held at Raj Bhavan. H.E. Sri S.C.Jamir, Governor of Goa delivered the keynote address.

At Bhubaneswar, the Orissa chapter had a seminar on 'Non Violence as a Way of Life' in association with Mahabodhi Society of India (Orissa)

**During 2007 SIT provided financial assistance as under :**

- i) Rs 10,000 to **Siksha Sastra**, Viswabharati University, Shrinetan, West Bengal (in support of a seminar on 'Educational Ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi')
- ii) Rs 10,000 to Manav Sadhana, Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad.
- iii) Rs 10,000 to Kasturba Mahila Utthan Mandal Kumaun, Lakshmi Ashram, Kasauni P.O. Dt. Almora, Uttaranchal.
- iv) Rs 10,000 to Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal, Mumbai
- v) Rs 10,000 to Nayi Azadi Abhiyan, Mumbai
- vi) Rs 10,000 to Kalahandi Vikash Parishad Sunbaheli Nuapada Dt. Orissa.
- vii) Rs 10,000 to 'Maithri Project' of Kerala Shanti Samiti, Kochi.
- viii) Rs 10,000 to Inter Religious Harmony Group, Bangalore
- ix) Rs 25,000 to SITKC (as final contribution towards construction of the Sarvodaya community center at Nallkadirehalli village near Chikballapur)

**Gandhi book sets were presented to :**

- a) Gandhi Centre, St. Stephens College, New Delhi.
- b) Nelson Mandela Centre, Jamia Millia University, New Delhi
- c) National Bal Bhavan Library, New Delhi
- d) Army School Libraries at Bangalore and Bhopal.
- e) Gandhi Memorial Centre, Washington.
- f) Colorado College Library, Boulder, Colorado.
- g) Barnard College Library, Columbia University, New York.
- h) Trust for Rural Development, Qasimabad, Hyderabad, Pakistan

During 2007 SIT Managing Trustee P. A. Nazareth delivered lectures on/at:

'Gandhi as National Liberator & Social Emancipator' at Southern Command's Army School Principals Conference at Bangalore (July 26), and School of International Studies, American University, Washington (October 3<sup>rd</sup>)

'Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership' at Gandhi Memorial Centre, Washington DC, (October 2nd) Consulate General Of India, New York (October 5).

"Gandhi for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" at St. Stephen's College (August 1) and Jamia Millia University (September 8), Gandhi Memorial Centre, Washington DC (October 2), School of South Asian Studies, Yale University, New Haven (October 4), SUNY Stonybrook (October 8), School of South Asian Studies, Columbia University (October 10) and Gandhi Study Centre, University of Jaipur. (Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>)