



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Spring 1981

No 13

Some Highlights of the International Conference held at Anand Niketan Ashram, Gujarat, India 27.12.80-1.1.81

I. The spirit of our SERVAS International Conference in India and subsequent six-day tour should have been a 'once in a lifetime' experience for most of us, but for those of us who have been associated with SERVAS for some time, the overwhelming hospitality, joy of sharing, fellowship and new friendships made while participating in numerous activities, came as no surprise.

Let us take our time together in India and use it as an example to others, so that the message of love, truth and non-violence will spread like ripples around the world.

Graham Thomas
International President
14.1.81

II All participants were warmly welcomed in Bombay, where they stayed with SERVAS hosts and were entertained at a 'get-together'. On 26th December the group travelled overnight by train to Baroda, occupying three-tier bunks facing one another the entire length of a coach! A great experience, even if none of us got much sleep!

At Baroda we transferred to coaches and were driven through the unfamiliar countryside. One of the more rare crops from our viewpoint being field after field of plumed sugarcane swaying in the breeze. As we neared the Ashram, we stopped at local

villages where the entire population came out to greet us with smiles and speeches of welcome and to garland us with marigolds, roses and other flowers.

Our guide throughout was Harivallabh Parikh, founder of the Ashram and SERVAS Secretary for India. Harivallabh has spent more than thirty years promoting the welfare of the Adivasis (tribal people) and to them he is a hero. They refer to him always as 'Bhai', which means 'Brother', and that is the name by which he is generally known.



'Bhai'

Finally, we crossed a little river and arrived at Anand Niketan Ashram, meaning The Abode of Joy, and there 114 participants from 27 countries were splendidly taken care of by Bhai and his large extended Ashram family.

The following were elected as SERVAS

International Officers and members of the Executive Committee for the period 1980/1982:
President Graham Thomas
Vice President Don Fawcett
Secretary Barbara Whitehead
Asst. General Denise Waech
Peace Secretary Reva King Editor S.I.N.
Treasurer Denise Waech
Regional Coordinators:
Africa Lydia Jones
Southern Asia Harivallabh Parikh
Southeast Asia Kunio Tanaka
South Pacific Nan Smith
South America Jorge Zoppolo
North America & Caribbean Kay Lazarus
Europe & Near East Antonie Fried

Among the various activities enjoyed by the visitors were tours conducted by Bhai around the workshops, dairy and school on the

Ashram itself; visits to Rangpur and other local villages; an outing to a tribal fair at which the Adivasis sold their decorated cattle and other wares; and a visit

to a fluorspar mill. Most of us attended the daily prayer meetings at the Ashram, and some of us contributed hymns and songs from our own corners of the globe. University students gave us an evening of folk dancing and music, but the main event was the evening in the compound under the giant banyan trees and the stars, when thousands of Adivasis poured in from the surrounding countryside for a triple celebration: the thirty-third anniversary of the founding of the Ashram; Bhai's fifty-seventh birthday and the SERVAS Conference. We were regaled by exciting dances performed by young men and women in fascinating costumes. Some of us were so exhilarated by the spectacle that we jumped into the compound and joined in, despite our lack of peacock feathers and body paint with which to adorn ourselves! According to a decision taken at the Conference, the next one will take place in 1982/3 in Nahariya, Israel, where our hosts will be

Benjamin and Hanna
Jeremias and other Israeli
members.

On the last morning the
participants gathered in
the Ashram garden, where
Barbara Whitehead planted
a peepul tree in memory of
Masuo Ammo, who for so
long was secretary for
Japan and coordinator for
South-east Asia, and whose
dedication to the aims of
SERVAS and the welfare of
so many travellers will
not soon be forgotten.

'Seva Mandir' at Udaipur
and the 'Khadi' (hand-
woven cloth) Institute at
Jaipur, where a whole
coach-load of us slept in
a vast dormitory, though
perhaps 'slept' was
scarcely the relevant
word! We were also shown a
school where Gandhi's
ideas of basic education
are being applied. The
school is divided into
three departments - 1.
infants; 2. secondary; and
3. teacher training.
Thus children's education
is undertaken with
unbroken continuity from
beginning to end, with the

time to witness the
fantastic spectacle of the
sunset on the lake and
forested mountainsides.
Then, after a night in the
dormitories of the
Temple's hostel, I arose
before sunrise and was
treated to another
wonderful sight when the
sun arose too and painted
the entire scene in a
palette of dazzling
colours. Then I was joined
by a family of small,
grey, black-faced monkies,
who descended the trees
and the roof-tops into the
compound, the mothers
carrying their tiny babies
clinging to their fur.
They shared our breakfast,
starting by putting out
their hands, so like our
own, quite politely, then
snatching, and finishing
off by jumping on the
tables and grabbing the
food before we could get
at it!

Among the many famous
sights we saw were the
marvellous Red Fort and
the Taj Mahal at Agra,
though not by moonlight!
We visited the Mosque at
Ajmer, where 2,000 poor
people are fed every day,
and Bhai contributed
Rs.275 - on behalf of the
SERVAS group.
Throughout the journey,
and after our arrival in
Delhi we were all
entertained by kindly and
hospitable SERVAS hosts,
who made us feel more than
welcome in India, that
land of striking
contrasts.

Rosalind Schama Editor

III. I am sure all those
who could not attend the
International Conference
in India are eager to get
some news. The re-elected
General Secretary, Barbara
Whitehead, will certainly
be sending you the minutes
of the Conference soon, so
I do not want to give a
summary of the discussions
and decisions taken there.
I only want to make some
comments and tell you what
a great experience it was
to stay in the Anand
Niketani Ashram (Abode of
Joy). I think you all know
that Harivallabh Parikh,

the Servas Secretary in
India, lovingly called
'Bhai' ('Brother') by all
his friends and a great
Gandhian, founded the
Ashram in 1948 to free the
tribals from poverty and
inequality. He helped them
to get their land back from
moneylenders and landlords
by Satyagraha (non-violent
action), started
cooperatives to provide
loans to farmers,
introduced irrigation
projects and many other
schemes to improve their
living conditions.

Bhai showed us personally
around the Ashram and
introduced us to all the
members, whose everyday
life we shared. We had the
opportunity of looking
inside their houses and
workshops, saw the dairy
and the healthy cattle, the
irrigation pump and the gas
plant. At the end of the
tour we came to the school,
where the children welcomed
us with songs. I was most
thrilled to meet the boy I
have sponsored for three
years. The 'Jeevan Shala'
('Life and Education
Project'), makes it
possible for children from
the tribal villages to go
to the
boarding school in the
Ashram, provided there is a
sponsor willing to pay \$
100.-a year. After five
years of basic education
and two years of technical
training, they choose
whether they want to be
farmers, drivers, tailors,
carpenters, mechanics or
accountants and return to
their villages as
specialists. It is hoped
that girls will benefit by
this project too, once a
new hostel has been built
for them, to which we
donated money.

Bhai also walked with us
to three tribal villages
in the neighbourhood,
where the villagers gave
us a hearty welcome. We
could feel the great love,
admiration and gratitude
they bear for their



Barbara planting the Peepul tree

A gift of Rs.8,500- was
donated to the Ashram as a
token of our appreciation
of the splendid
hospitality we had
received. Bhai will decide
whether to use the money
towards a hostel for young
women or for the sinking
of a new well to extend
the local irrigation.
The last song sung to us
by the enchanting young
woman singer, Panthini,
who had entertained us
daily, was "Do not let us
break this Garland of Love
we have woven!", and the
entire Ashram family
turned out to bid us
farewell and wish us a
safe journey. It was
difficult indeed to part
with all our new-found
friends. We set off in two
coaches, with Bhai as our
guide, to visit a number
of famous Gandhian centres
and
several well-known
historic sites. Those of us
who have studied the life
of Mahatma Gandhi were
delighted to visit his
first ashram, Sabarmati,
at Ahmedabad where he
started his campaign of
'satyagraha'.
We were entertained at the

same teachers to see them
all the way through. In
New Delhi we were
entertained at the Gandhi
Peace Foundation, of whose
hospitable

premises we were all made
freely welcome to come and
go as we desired. We were
taken to pay our respects
at Gandhi's 'Samadhi'
(tomb) at Rajghat,
participated in a
discussion on Gandhi at
the
Foundation and met the
Prime Minister. One or two
of us had the opportunity
to visit the headquarters
of the Indian Council for
Child Welfare. The writer
was taken to the Delhi
Centre for founding and
neglected children, where
the matron showed her all
the wonderful work being
done there to save,
educate and find homes for
many children. A number of
them are in Europe, where
they have been adopted by
families.

For me, perhaps the
most impressive of all
the sights we saw was
the sacred Mound Abu.
Our gallant drivers
drove the coaches up a
series of hairpin bends
to the top of the 4,500
ft. mountain with its
lake and magnificent
temple,

Dilwara. We arrived in



Antonie Fried with her sponsored child

Bhai. One afternoon we were driven to a tribal fair in a nearby village, with a cattle market and many people crowding the streets, which was a unique experience.

In the evenings we attended the prayer meeting of our generous hosts, and cultural programmes such as tribal music, tribal dances and classical dancing.

On the last day the farewell celebration coincided with thirty-third anniversary of the Ashram and Bhai's birthday, and was attended by Gandhian

leaders from many parts of India, Gujarati government ministers and some thousands of tribal people. It is a pity that many more of you could not share in this unique experience of universal brotherhood and understanding.

Antonie Fried
Coordinator for Europe &
the Near East

The above is an extract from Antonie's Circular letter, dated January, 1981, to SERVAS secretaries and contacts.

An Experiment in Community Living and Learning

Jeevan Shala is part of Anand Niketan Ashram. It is the school at which children from the surrounding countryside are growing up in the Gandhian way, acquiring basic education along with a trade and an insight into communal living. Each child learns their own language, Gujarati, their national language, Hindi; and some English, mathematics, science and history. But apart from books, they are shown how to grow vegetables; the usefulness of irrigation; the way to alternate crops in the field; the secrets of a tractor's engine; how to work a sewing-machine. After five years of basic education, they go on to acquire various skills: mechanical maintenance and repairs; management of a cooperative; the way to drive different types of engine; work in the office; carpentry, tailoring, improved farming. Then they are ready for a useful life in their villages.

SPONSORSHIP



It costs only \$100.- a year to sponsor a child for a period of five years. All that is required is to deposit \$100.- (or the equivalent in other currencies) with the Bank of India through your own bank. Ask for the money to be transferred to:

Anand Niketan Ashram
Trust,
Account No. 5,
Central Bank of
India, Naswadi,
Dist. Baroda
(Gujarat), India.

The Ashram will send every sponsor the name of the child he or she is helping and every year you will be sent a report on the child's progress. Sponsors can also correspond with their child and learn about his daily life at home and in the Ashram.

Benenson Joins

SERVAS is delighted to be able to announce that Peter Benenson, founder of Amnesty International, has joined us as a host. He is offering hospitality at his country home Westcott Farm, Westcott, Near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England to SERVAS travellers.

We should like to draw attention to Peter's latest international movement, NEVERMORE, which he has initiated in response to the growing fears of another world war. NEVERMORE's first task is to identify those areas where tension is building up

towards violence. Its second task is to analyse the causes underlying the tension; its third to assist in the removal of the causes by sending skilled volunteers into the area of danger. As its first contribution, hydraulic engineers and planners recruited by NEVERMORE are preparing a scheme to restore water to the once fertile Nugal Valley in the Horn of Africa.

For further information write to:
6 Linnett
Drive,
Westcott,
Bucks., U.K.

For Non Members; What is SERVAS all about anyway?

"With every true friendship we build more firmly the foundation on which the peace of the whole world rests." - M. K. Gandhi.

Servas is an international co-operative system of travellers and volunteer hosts, established to help build world peace, good will, and understanding by providing opportunities for contacts between persons of different cultures and backgrounds. Hosts (mostly individuals and families, plus some community groups) provide information about themselves for listing in a national host directory. Approved Servas travellers choose the hosts they wish to write to, or telephone, about possible visits

(usually two nights), to share life in the hosts' homes and communities.

Servas charges travellers a small fee. No money changes hands between travellers and hosts. (Ideas, we hope, pass freely between them.) Servas is nonprofit, interracial, and interfaith. It has consultative status as a Non-Governmental Organization with ECOSOC in the United Nations.

Women 1980

The world Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was held in Copenhagen from 14th to the 30th of July 1980. The representatives of 145 countries participating in the Conference adopted the Programme of Action for the Second half of the Decade by a roll-call vote of 94 in favor, 4 against with 22 abstentions. The Programme contains recommendations for governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to improve the situation of women world-wide during the next five years and beyond. It indicates the need for action to be taken simultaneously on several fronts at once and gives high priority to improving the condition of the most disadvantaged groups of women, particularly the rural and urban poor, with special emphasis on the areas of health, education and employment.

In addition, The Conference adopted 48 resolutions covering a wide range of concern to women. These, along with the Programme of Action, were submitted to the 1980/81 session of the General Assembly for approval. Of particular interest to SERVAS are two of the resolutions, which are summarized as follows:

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PREPARATION OF SOCIETIES FOR LIFE AND PEACE

The resolution states that peace is a precondition for life and survival, and that the preparation of societies for life in peace calls for a special kind of education: one that ensures that future generations, in their attitudes towards other nations, will not have to overcome the legacies of ignorance and prejudices of the past epochs. Impeding the economic, social and political participation of women is contrary to the ideals of the preparation of societies for life in peace. Preparation of societies starts with an in the family, where men and women should be encouraged to instill in their children the values of mutual respect and understanding of all peoples, tolerance, racial equality, sexual equality the right of every nation to self-determination, and the desire to maintain international cooperation, peace and security in the world.

States are called on to provide women with new opportunities to become more closely involved with the process of preparing societies for life in peace. Women, particularly those involved in the public and political life of their countries, are called on to discourage and eliminate incitement to racial hatred, prejudice, discrimination, injustice or advocacy of violence of war.

Members of SERVAS gathered at Anand Niketan Ashram were saddened to learn of the death of Bill Brown of New Zealand, who had been about to set off with his wife Yvonne to attend the conference. Bill and Yvonne have done a splendid job as joint Secretaries for New Zealand and he will be greatly missed by many travelers and hosts

Women's Participation in the Strengthening of International Peace and Security and in the Struggle against Colonialism, Racism, Racial Discrimination, Foreign Aggression and Occupation and All Forms of Foreign Domination.

The Conference requested the General Assembly to further the elaboration of a draft declaration on this subject at its next session. Full details of the Conference are contained in the following United Nations documents:

1. WOMEN 1980- World Conference of the United Nations Decade of Women : Equality, Development and Peace - Newsletter No. 6 issued by the division for Economic and Social Information/DPI
2. 48 resolution adopted by World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women - Document DPI/DESI NOTE IWD/28, 10 Oct 1980.
3. Programme of action for the second half of the United Nations Decade of Women - Document DOI/DESI NOTE IWD/27, 10 Oct. 1980.
4. FROM PAINTERS TO HUMAN FERTILITY: Germaine Greer Speaks Out. A feature article issued by the DPI/DESI, May, 1980.

JOIN, SUBSCRIBE, DONATE.

Join the several thousand Servas hosts and travelers worldwide, whose friendship can perhaps help to hold the fragile world together.

Check one or more of the boxes at right; enclose a donation if possible, and a long envelope addressed to yourself; and mail the form.

Thank you.

TO:

Servas International News
9, Partway Lane,
Coker Hill, Yeovil,
Somerset, England.

I am not now a Servas member of Servas, but I'm interested in the organization. Please send me information including the name and address of someone who can tell me more about Servas in this part of the world.

Please send me the next four issues of your publication. I am enclosing the equivalent of £1.50 or more-International Postal Coupons, money order, or cheque.

To help Servas in its efforts toward peace and international understanding, I enclose donation.

SERVAS THANKS YOU. PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS.