

## **BK Participation at the 7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF)**

### **Background to the Forum**

The Youth Forum is organised jointly by the Commonwealth Youth Exchange and the Commonwealth Youth Programme. The primary aim of this forum was to bring young political representatives and young leaders from all over the world together, to voice their opinions on critical issues faced within their respective countries. As a result, a statement of recommendations to the Heads of States is created that will be considered for further policy making within the countries. This statement of recommendations is called a communiqué. These discussions involved roughly 200 International youth leaders and delegates representing governments from across the Commonwealth, and 150 local representatives. The Theme of the conference was "Invest in youth and Sustain the World". In light of this theme four main areas were chosen as sub-themes:

- **Youth Involvement in Decision-making** (Subthemes: Youth involvement in governance and decision-making; Empowering and engaging young people; Best practices for youth engagement)
- **Economic Growth: Building Sustainable Livelihoods** (Subthemes: Impact of economic crisis on youth; finding opportunities in crisis; Coming through the crisis – next steps)
- **Peace Building** (Subthemes: Curbing the Crime (solutions to gang violence and youth crime); Responses to Youth in trafficking, kidnapping and armed violence; Best practices in respect and understanding.)
- **Climate Change** (Climate change and its impact on youth; Finding opportunities through employment in the green economy; New and creative ideas for dealing with climate change.)

Amongst only half a dozen NGO's present, the BK's had the largest delegation of 6 members (others being limited to only 2) - all from Commonwealth countries. Sr Sanisha (South Africa), Sr Kim (Australia), Br Oliver (Canada) and Sr Gaby (UK) were invited as youth representatives, whilst Sr Gopi (India) was invited as a special facilitator and Br Doug (UK) an observer. Sr Usha, who is a member of the National Youth Council for Trinidad was also part of the local planning team contributing towards the event.

Each of the BK representatives joined one of the 4 groups so that there was equal distribution of participation in the discussions. We had to be very clear that our contribution was not from a political stance but that our intention was to offer suggestions and support on inner development and empowerment. This perspective was well received by many. The greatest tangible impact was a significant contribution to the communiqué suggesting that peace building be achieved through increased self awareness and empowerment. Br Oliver and Sr Kim in particular were selected as part of a team of 'rapporteurs' who were directly involved in the initial drafting phases of the communiqué to be presented to Heads of State.

Whilst the rapporteurs were obliged to be completely neutral in their note-taking, we all felt that it was quite auspicious that the energy of Baba's hands were making such a direct contribution to this document, which would also be presented to the Queen.

During the 3 days in Tobago, delegates had an opportunity to get to know each other; begin initial dialogues and exploration of the themes and be part of a variety of learning journeys, to the famous heritage sites of Buccoo Reef and the Cocoa Plantations. For the remainder 4 days, all the delegates were then shipped to Trinidad where they boarded the 'Caribbean Princess', a cruise ship which would remain in dock and act as a hotel and conference venue for the Summit. In Trinidad, the 200 International delegates were joined by 300 more local representatives from Trinidad, making it a much larger group. 4 more local BK's also joined at this point, making it 11 BK's on the ship in total – Baba's wonder!

In addition to Baba being represented at the forum, the BK participants featured many times in the press. Sr Gopi, who had been leading the facilitation for the Peace Building themes, featured in the national newspaper sharing insights into the dialogue process and the need to begin with inner peace and self respect as a pre-requisite to creating sustainable solutions for violent behaviours amongst youth. Each one of us also had the opportunity to be interviewed at different times by different National and International TV and radio, including the BBC – Baba really seemed to want Himself noticed! ☺

We all felt that there was a lot of learning for each of us, as well as a lot of enjoyment in the whole process. It was refreshing to witness the sincere enthusiasm for positive change; as one delegate from Cameroon aptly shared capturing the sentiments of many, 'All I want to leave with is a clearer sense of what I have to do to make a positive contribution to the world' Many of the BK 's involved shared that due to the nature of the event being non-spiritual, the most appropriate form of service was service through the mind, where the delegates were being showered with light and might so that they would be able to catch Baba's signal for them and their tasks.

The CYF 7 ended on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November, just as the Heads of Government conference began. Several youth delegates were selected to present the communiqué to the Heads of Government on Friday, and the Queen on Saturday over lunch. The hope is of course, that it will be taken seriously and that there will be practical follow-up on some of the recommendations made. A copy of the communiqué can be found at the following link: <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/216790/youthcommunique.htm>

From our point of view, the most important thing was the new friendships and connections that were formed, as well as the more subtle contributions that would have been made – contributions which may not be obvious or visible now, but may bear their fruits sometime in the future. It was certainly a significant event for us, and we are looking forward to developing this connection with the Commonwealth and also using this experience to inform youth service in the future.

The international participants were asked to share with Dadi briefly what their experience was. This is what was shared:

*“Increasingly I recognise the need to put the 'planning intellect' aside and to be available so as to catch Baba's signals. As Baba's instrument, souls will then receive what they need without 'me' getting in the way.”* **BK Doug**

*“I've come out with this pakka feeling: I belong to Baba and Baba belongs to me - my task (of becoming pure- is Baba's task) and Baba's task of purifying the world and revealing the father is my task.....it feels like many barriers were broken in the mind.”* **BK Sanisha**

*“I have really enjoyed myself within this experience of being in Trinidad and Tobago. Arriving with the aim of having fun and learning, I have accomplished both. As usual my focus has been on my inner development. I feel this has just been the preparation of great things to come.”* **BK Kim**

*“Attending the CYF was another opportunity among many in a row this year to be consistent in my effort. An opportunity to exemplify the attitude, vision and example which Baba has been calling for us to be. It seems everyone is turning their ear to hear the voice of what the youth of the Commonwealth have to say and it's encouraging to know that Baba's youth are among them to add some quality and 'volume' to that voice”* **BK Oliver**

*“I experienced that when the soul is filled with the power of truth, there is no need to think...or speak. Silence allows others to pick up Baba's vibrations, helping them to realise what they need to be and do. I witnessed the role of the Brahma Kumaris as the 'spiritual conscience' on the global stage, facilitating transformation according to the right method. It's a powerful role and helps others to listen carefully to what is being shared.”* **BK Gopi**

In closing, a heart-filled note of appreciation goes out to Brother Harry and the rest of the souls from the centre in Trinidad and Tobago, as their tireless service and support made the stay easy and comfortable.

Once again Baba has managed to work his wonders through his instruments and in the same breath we would like to thank each of you for all the contributions that were made in the form of your good wishes and pure feelings.

In Baba's Yaad  
**CYF BK representatives**