



The 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Pyeongchang, Korea

Report week 2, 12th -17th October 2014

Over the weekend the conference closed, so after a busy first week the Brahma Kumaris delegation had a day by the beach, including some meditation for the elements.



Picture 1. Meditating at the beach.

Sonja Ohlsson, Denmark and Piero Musini, Italy joined the team for the second week. They had particularly come to do the Brahma Kumaris presentations at the CEPA fair and an UN side event.



Picture 2. Sonja, Soon, Piero, Jessica, Andrea and Meera.

Two presentations: presentations by the Brahma Kumaris and Lotus World:

Living in Harmony with Nature – CEPA Fair

The Power of Human Awareness in Safeguarding Biodiversity -UN side event

These presentations were by Sonja Ohlsson, the international coordinator of Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative, Piero Musini, a Brahma Kumaris farmer practising sustainable yogic agriculture in Italy and Min Junghee, the director of general affairs of Lotus World, a Korean NGO doing international conservation work. Dr Andrea Gutierrez, senior researcher in Biofuels in Finland moderated the discussion.



Sonja Ohlsson began by sharing how the Brahma Kumaris use spiritual tools to address environmental problems. She said when we bring the head and heart together, we have an attitude and vision of love and this is what will make real a change in the world. She explained how meditation helps us develop this loving attitude. Thoughts are not just for making comment, but are to be used to create. Choosing our thoughts we can create the future we want.

Min Junghee presented about a project Lotus World is supporting in Myanmar. Villages depending on agriculture there are suffering from drought and deforestation. Lotus World helped one village of 900 who needed electricity to pump water up to the gardens and also for lighting the buildings. They installed a biogas generator which converts cow manure into ethanol which could then generate the electricity. They also propagated and planted trees with the youth of the village to help reforest the area. This wonderful work is still continuing.

Piero Musini shared about yogic agriculture, a method of organic farming he practises which also incorporates meditation. Around 700 farmers in India are also experimenting with this method of farming. The seeds are kept for at least 10 days before planting in a meditation room in the farmer's home or a meditation centre. Then during all stages of growth until harvesting, meditation is done in the field once a week. It appears that germination and growth is faster and that the produce contains more protein and nutrients. Two agricultural universities in India will soon have results from a five year study on the yogic agriculture to confirm this.



Picture 3. CEPA fair and UN side events.

Exhibition

The exhibition booth continued quietly over the second week. We were happy to see India One featured on the promotional material of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation Building a Nuclear Safety.

Some dignitaries who visited the exhibition were the Mayor of Gangwon Province, Korea; Vice President of Ministry of Environment, Japan; Minister of Environment, Thailand; DG of Ministry of Environment, Bhutan, and Dr. Kamal Bawa, the President of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE, a winner of the MIDORE prize for biodiversity, 2014). They found the sustainable yogic agriculture project new & interesting.



Pictures 4. and 5. Moon Soon Choi, Mayor of Gangwon Province and Dr. Kamal Bawa, President of ATREE.

Some of the interesting side events we attended

The BK delegation attended up to 4-6 per day to network and to learn more about the topic. UNDP/GEF Central Forest Spine project in Malaysia involving the creation forest and biodiversity conservation by linking 4 regions of forest to allow a larger space for biodiversity to move around – They invited the BKs to do some projects that would help in forest conservation and to help to reach out and connect with different communities in Malaysia.

An event close to our heart was on using behavioural psychology as a conservation tool for behaviour change by the IUCN-Commission on Education and Communication & Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. The small group that gathered had an open discussion together on methods they had used to create behavior change. They were interested to hear about yogic agriculture and how meditation supported the farmers in changing their method of farming to organic.

Closing reception

The closing dinner was hosted by Mexico who will be hosting COP13 in 2016 in Los Cabos. A fully packed hall enjoyed music, dancing and a video on biodiversity in Mexico.

Sonja conveyed greetings from the Brahma Kumaris to the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias. He remembered his visit to Brahma Kumaris retreat centre Shanti Sarovar in Hyderabad during last COP11 in 2012. He was also appreciative of the fact that Brahma Kumaris was instrumental in creating contact to the local Buddhist temple.

Outcomes of the convention

The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias said “Parties have listened to the evidence, and have responded by committing themselves to redoubling their efforts in support of the vision of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the financial resources needed to make this a reality. Their commitments show the world that biodiversity is a solution to the challenges of sustainable development.”



He wished delegates the courage and energy in implementing the plan at home and what was decided in the meeting. He said “As the Abbot of the Woljeong temple, His Holiness Reverend Jeong Nyeom, declared: *Saving life in crisis is an urgent, universal task. The moment to commence the walk to this goal is now. We cannot afford the luxury of further delay.*



Figure 6. Main plenary hall CBD.

Preparing for interfaith conference in Korea 2015.

Meera Ruy and Min Junghee interviewed Mr. John Scott Programme Officer of Traditional Knowledge from the Secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention. He shared his message for the Interreligious climate change (ICE) conference to be held next May in Korea. He shared that there has been 5 predicted threats of human extinction in traditional knowledge. This is the sixth one, but the only one that is created by human beings themselves.



Goodbye Pyeongchang! Hello Seoul!



Evening program in Seoul

The *Open Forum on Climate Change and Sustainable Development with the Brahma Kumaris* was organised by Korean Organizing Committee in response to Climate Change - Social WELFARE Foundation of Chogye Sect of Korean Buddhism, Lotus World, Buddhist EcoContent Institute, One Buddhism Environmental Coalition, Catholic Creation & Preservation Alliance, Green Asia Network, Peace Village Network and Korea Brahma Kumaris Association. The program was particularly for environmental activists and students. About 30 attended in the Rachel Carson Hall of the Environmental Foundation. The organisers wanted us to stress the urgency of climate change.

Andrea explained about renewable energies, providing facts on the limited non-renewable energy still available to us. Sonja shared how she feels we don't change out of fear, but that understanding and compassion will allow us to change. Piero shared about his farm and yogic agriculture. Jessica shared about the effect of our behaviour on the environment. It is ego that prevents us from acting with compassion.



Picture 7. Evening program in Seoul.

Program at Seoul Brahma Kumaris Centre

There was a program at the Seoul Centre where the four international guests shared their experiences on the inner and outer environment. Sonja delighted the audience of 25 by saying she had come to Seoul to look for green angels.



Figure 8. Saturday program in Seoul center.

Thanks to Meera and the BK Korean hosting team for their tireless cooperation and making these two weeks possible.

