



FOUNDATION FOR
UNITY OF RELIGIONS AND
ENLIGHTENED CITIZENSHIP

F U R E C

ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT FUREC

Q 1. What Is FUREC?

FUREC is a Non-profit organization set up by 15 spiritual leaders to sustain human spirit on the basis of acceptance of, and respect for, all religions, spirituality, economic well being and on the practice of Non-Violence (Ahimsa).

Q 2. When was FUREC launched?

FUREC was launched by Hon'ble President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on the birthday of H.H. Acharya Mahaprajna, the 15th June 2004 at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.

FUREC was registered as Society with Registrar of Societies, Delhi Government on 21 October 2004.

Q 3. What is the genesis of FUREC?

The Hon'ble President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has always been perturbed by divisive forces and religious fundamentalism disturbing the Unity and bonhomie among our countrymen as well as state of 'underprivileged segment' of our society. His vision for a fully developed beautiful India with prosperous and harmonious life for its citizens, especially the youth, motivated enlightened spiritual and religious leaders who organized a Conclave under the aegis of H.H. Acharya Mahaprajna the spiritual leader of Jain Community at Surat on 15th October 2003 also the birthday of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India. The Action Plan discussed during the Conclave was documented and is known as 'Surat Spiritual Declaration' (SSD).

The SSD Action Plan envisages Five Garland Projects. The emphasis of four projects was on celebration of inter religious festivals, multi religious projects, healthcare and employment, imbibing value based education in schools and encouraging interfaith dialogue among religious/spiritual heads. In order to pursue the above in sustained manner and to coordinate all activities, a national level independent and autonomous organization managed by religious/spiritual leaders as well as scholars and Enlightened Citizens was set up. This organization was named "Foundation for Unity of Religious and Enlightened Citizenship' (FUREC).

Q 4. Who are the signatory of FUREC?

15 Spiritual/Religious Leaders belonging to nine religions followed in India, are the signatory of FUREC. They are, Archbishop Stanislaus Fernandez, Bishop Dr. Thomas Dabre, Brahma Kumari Sudesh Didi, Dr. Homi B. Dhalla, Dr. J.S. Neki, Jagadguru Sri Sri Shivaratri Deshikendra Mahaswamji, Mahathero Rahul Bodhi, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Prince Husaifa Moyiduddin, Rev. Ezekiel Isaac Malekar, Sadhvi Kanakprabha, Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swamiji, Swami Jitatmananda ji, Syed Jilani Ashraf and Yuvacharya Mahasraman.

Q 5. What are the activities of FUREC?

FUREC functions at three levels of Human Existence. At the level of the individual, it seeks to develop a common agenda for the development of a violence free individual or the Enlightened Citizen; at the level of the Society, it seeks to eradicate poverty through economic upliftment, harnessing the teachings of spirituality; at the collective level, it seeks to bring about better understanding between the different faiths/religions and bring about amity between them.

Q 6. Where is FUREC located?

The Registered Office of the FUREC is situated at 2nd Floor, Nehru House 4 Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002. Regional chapters of FUREC are launched by the Signatories.

Q 7. How can we assist / participate in FUREC?

FUREC invites all like minded people to join the Support Group to start a Project especially in rural and underdeveloped areas anywhere in India, and offer their support in terms of their ideas, their time and their influence. Every Project for alleviating poverty requires a Patron. FUREC values its PROJECT PATRONS and hails them for its effective working.

For more details contact FUREC Secretariat at the above given address or contact us on:

phone: 91-11-51509070, Fax:91-11-51509016

Email: info@furec.org Website: www.furec.org.

MESSAGE FROM
HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
DR. A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM
FOR FUREC PROGRAMME IN LUCKNOW

National development, is a collective process, and has to be accomplished through the constructive efforts of enlightened citizens. The evolution of enlightened human beings is indeed a big challenge for the world community. I was asking myself, what will be the components of such a mission? There are three components to that. The first component is education with value system, second is religions graduating into spiritual forces to bring universal brotherhood and the third is poverty eradication by attaining economic prosperity through a national vision.

Even while India is making rapid strides in technological and economic sectors to become a developed country by 2020, India should also endeavour to preserve and build upon its rich heritage. It is in that direction the Surat Spiritual Declaration was made by spiritual leaders of the country during Oct. 2003. I am happy to see the follow up actions taking place rapidly in the north-south-east-west parts of our country.

It is also noteworthy that the Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizens (FUREC) envisioned in the Surat Spiritual Declaration had been established. Its Apex Council has met on 30 October 2004 and the members met me and briefed me of their commitments to FUREC and its objectives.

I am delighted to learn that under the leadership of one of the Founder Apex Council member of FUREC, H.H.S.M. Jilani Ashraf, the U.P. Chapter of FUREC is being launched on 24 November 2004 at Lucknow. The event is also marked by a Seminar jointly organized by FUREC and Spiritual Foundation founded by H.H.S.M. Jilani Ashraf.

True to the spirit of universality the seminar also includes a few international participants. I learn that the U.P. Chapter of FUREC in close collaboration with the Spiritual Foundation will work on spiritual matters as well as education and health care for poor.

I wish the Seminar, the U.P. Chapter of FUREC and Spiritual Foundation many successes in their endeavours.

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
New Delhi 22-11-2004

*Spiritual Foundation organised a seminar on
Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened
Citizenship (FUREC) at Hotel Clarks Avadh Lucknow
on 24th November, 2004.*

On the 24th of November 2004, a function was held in Lucknow to launch the Uttar Pradesh chapter of FUREC at the initiative of Hadrat Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf sahib. Speaking at the function were religious people from different faiths Father Albert D'Souza, Bishop Lucknow, Swami Mukti Nathanand of R. K. Mission and Mahant Ram Chander Das were some of them. The function was a gentle expression of the desire for unity amongst all those present. If one of the spiritual leaders said that the greatest dharma is



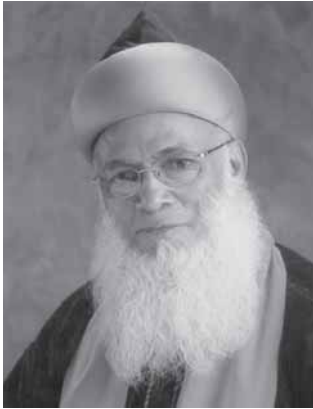
humaneness, another said that Lucknow has always lived amicably with people from all folds, perhaps because of its strong Sufi influence. The Mayor of Lucknow, Mr. S. C. Rai gave a very erudite speech calling for unity in Lucknow which he said, (in the form of an Urdu couplet), is not just a city of tombs and minarets, or gardens and grounds, but is a city where cupid plays in gay abandon and in its lanes are angels and fairies. No wonder then that the Hadrat sahib calling for action said, (again in a couplet) that the world was listening very carefully, we ourselves, (those speaking) slept, telling the story.

The evening acquired a special charm because of the presence of a delegation from the United Kingdom led by Mr. David Foster, Mayor of Blackburn, who shared their impressions of India and identified, what they felt required immediate attention, for example the need to take education to every single human being and making it relevant. They were very enthusiastic in taking the inter-faith platform for discussion to the United Kingdom.

The evening ended with the address of the Chief Guest. Mr. Y.S. Rajan. He detailed the five projects of the Surat Spiritual Declaration and the objectives of the new Foundation. He also gave suggestions on how each of them assembled there could participate including mentioning the International seminar to be hosted at the end of next year. Genuine interest was generated by his talk, which was followed by the benedictory address of Sheikh-e-Tariqat Hadrat Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf.

RIGHT APPROACH TO UNITY AND INTEGRITY OF ALL RELIGIONS

By Hadrat Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf



HADRAT SYED MUHAMMAD
JILANI ASHRAF
*Chairman and Founder of
Spiritual Foundation*

Human beings are the supreme creation of God's all creations. They are destined to have both body and soul together. As the body of human being without soul becomes non entity, similarly soul becomes irrelevant without the body. Therefore,

the spirit and the matter are linked to each other. In other words, there is an inseparable relationship between the divine life and the mundane existence. All religions are at one with this reality that if body is healthy and the soul is sick then it becomes injurious for the existence of human body and soul. And if the soul is strong and the body is weak then human being is deprived of the bounties of nature. Therefore along with the healthy body and strong soul there is a guarantee for prosperous and happy existence.

It is, therefore, imperative that leaders with broader outlook from all the religions should come at one common platform and collectively transcend their wordy expressions into the areas of practical demonstration so that complete harmony between the divine field and the worldly matters could be achieved. A marriage of the two concepts needs to be given effect to for removal of tensions and bickering among humankind. Please remember, neither Islam nor any other religion

whether Hinduism. Christianity. Buddhism. Jainism, Sikhism. Jewish or Parsi prohibits gaining scientific and technical knowledge to further the cause of humanity. However, religions do advocate to put a brake on the aggressive designs, threatening postures, advancements and powers leading to destruction of human society. Use of modern technology and scientific advancement for progress of socio-economic development was essential in past, it is important today and will remain conducive in future development. But care has to be taken that the hedonistic approach to human progress does not lead to destruction of human values and religious persuasions. This is the essence of religion. In every era both the materialistic might and the religious powers have been in existence and the people followed them as per their faith and creed. But the religion always came to rescue of those persons who after ignoring the religious principles deeply involved in mundane affairs got frustrated, tensed and afflicted. Religion showed the righteous path to all the wrong doers who ultimately got solace under the religious umbrella. "Alqalquo kullahum ayalullah". The entire creation is subservient to God. This is a divine outlook which binds us all and helps us solving our problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Today's scientific age which is helping producing fertile minds with progressive ideas and technical know how at the same time, it is necessary for all the religious leaders to explore the truth and the essence of religions to keep a balance in the development of human society. They have to play a pivotal role in

creating and following a harmonious relationship between the religious persuasions and the epicureanistic approach to the life of the people. If we fail in our endeavours to shape the society in this way, our ethical, moral and cultural structure will fall drastically to put the entire society in shambles.

We will be regretting for healthy soul and ailing body and cursing ourselves for allowing the society drifting away from the righteous path and truth abiding existence. Therefore, it is imperative on all of us that God's given gift of spiritual bliss and scientific temper be utilised to their full potential and in a right direction. Scientific explorations, discoveries and inventions be taken forward along with spiritual and moral values. This will lead to healthy and enduring development of humankind.

It has been observed that religion is being hijacked for the purpose of creating terror and fear among the people which is becoming a serious cause of disruption and disharmony among the masses. The persons getting involved in destructive activities such as drugs trafficking, terrorism, killing of innocent people, etc and other anti-social activities need a death blow to save the society from growing restlessness. These are those burning issues which need to be addressed by all the religious leaders both individually as well as collectively. The collective approach for eliminating this malady will bear instant results and have far reaching consequences.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Mysticism and Sufism are more or less the essence of all religions and a central point for discussion and persuasion. They are based on human values and human consciousness. Spiritualism's ambit is very large and that entails love, peace, brotherhood. If wisdom leads to scientific and technological explorations spiritual power tends to provide solace, comforts and mental peace and a sense of happiness and tranquility. Poet Iqbal illustrates this point in his

following couplet:

*Thy raise yourself to such an extent
That God himself ask what is your wish*

Friends: Today Faquir Ashrafi is not on the dais to deliver lecture but will be glad to listen to the learned speakers. Briefing my address I would say that this seminar which is an attempt to bring different religious leaders at one platform to deliberate on the unity of all religions and enlightened citizenship can be termed as a step forward towards implementation of decisions taken during the presence of His Excellency, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam in Surat in October last year. HH Acharya Mahaprajna has been a guiding force and helping us in all spheres of our activities. Mr. Y.S Rajan's advice from time to time has been a great asset for us.

Surat Spiritual Declaration was the outcome of a conclave of all religious leaders held at Surat in October 2003 . The leaders had the privilege to have had an inter action with His Excellency President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam also. A review meeting of the decisions taken during the conclave was held in New Delhi in June, 2004 and that gave birth to the Foundation of Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship (FUREC) It was formally announced at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Today, the 24th November, 2004, is the inaugural day of UP Chapter of FUREC which has been entrusted to Spiritual Foundation and the Foundation feels pleasure to have an august audience on the day of its inauguration. I pray that the target for India getting fully developed and being in the community of advanced nations by 2020, as is the desire and plan of our beloved President of India, gets fulfilled. We have to work with a sense of dedication and sincerity and in a fashion that we could combat the menace of terrorism, inhuman behaviour, poverty, illiteracy and other social malice and to ensure that we live in complete harmony, bonhomie and fraternal atmosphere. Ameen.

REPORTS FROM OTHER PARTS OF INDIA...

Two Functions were held in Udaipur to create awareness of FUREC

Muni Rakesh Kumar, who addressed the gathering emphasized that all religions teach us to work for the upliftment of individual and the society so that all, especially, people in villages have a peaceful and harmonious life.

- The village of Moonwas was adopted.
- An oath administered to village Youth to shun smoking, drinking alcohol and chewing tobacco/ gutka etc.
- Child and women development programme. This function was attended by a large number of village women, young students and school teachers among others.



An inter religious meet brought Father R.H. Laser, Gyani Jogendra Singh, Brahmakumari Rita, Shri Anil Saheb, Mahant Shri Murli Manoharan Sharan and Munishri Rakesh Kumar together. They discussed the SSD and expressed solidarity with unity in religions. In addition to these religious leaders, many

prominent citizens, educationalists, retired police officials, social workers, former Justice S L Mehta and other luminaries were present. A Christmas invitation was given by Father Laser and dates for further programe were given as 5th and 20th February 2005.

*In Tiruvannamalai
an interfaith
celebration of
Christmas was
organised.*



SALVATION IN JUDAISM

A discussion on the concept of Salvation and soul in different religions with the Hon'ble Governor of Delhi Mr. B.L. Joshi and the Signatories of FUREC took place on 30th October 2004 at New Delhi. E.I. Malekar continues the discussion with a note on the Concept of Salvation in Judaism.

In Judaism, salvation is closely related to the idea of redemption—a saving from the states or circumstances that destroy the value of human existence. God as the universal spirit and Creator of the World, is the source of all salvation for mankind, provided we honour him by observing his precepts. In other words, redemption or salvation depends on the human being himself. Judaism stresses that salvation cannot be obtained through anyone else or by just invoking the aid of a Deity or in believing in any outside Power or Influence. A classic example of salvation from the evil of servitude is the redemption of the ancient Jews who suffered 400 years of bondage under the Egyptian rulers, the Pharaohs, nearly 3000 years ago. Under the leadership of the inspired Moses there took place not only the exodus to freedom in the wilderness, but also their deliverance from slaughter at the hands of the pursuing Egyptian forces by the miraculous parting of the waters which allowed the Jews to pass through. That redemption has been echoed in Jewish prayers and supplication throughout the ages and at every possible opportunity (as for example when Jews congregate to pray on Sabbath):-

“Thou, O Lord, sustainest the living with loving kindness, revivest the dead with great mercy, supportest the feeble, healest the sick, freest the bound, and keepest faith with those that sleep in the dust. Who is like unto Thee, Lord of mighty acts, and who resembleth Thee, O King, who orderest death and restorest life, and causest salvation to spring forth”.

“Blessed are thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who has hallowed us by the Thy commandments and hast taken pleasure in us, and in love and favour hast given us Thy holy Sabbath as an inheritance, a memorial of the creation; that day being also the first of the holy convocations in remembrance of the departure from Egypt”

What is the law of God? It is embodied in what Jews know as the Torah—the Law—given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai—the summary of which is comprised in the Ten Commandments, which can be further compressed in just one line. “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” This is the key to mankind’s salvation.

When face to face with dangers, evils and sufferings, the Jewish prophets admonished the people to walk in the way of righteousness, to help the poor and needy, to repent for sin and waywardness and to sing.

“Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid for the Lord God is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation”.

When a pious Jew sets out on a long journey, he is enjoined to utter a prayer to the Creator ending with the words:-

“For Thy salvation I hope O Lord,
I hope, O Lord for Thy salvation
O Lord, for Thy salvation, I hope”

and when Job in the midst of his acute physical sufferings was tested for his faith in God, he did not blame anyone but himself and reaffirmed with inspiring confidence “I know that my Redeemer Liveth.”

There is a figurative passage in the book of the prophet Zechariah in which Joshua the High Priest is shown standing before the angel of the Lord, with Satan (i.e. the evil influence) standing at his right hand to accuse him. Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments, symbolizing the iniquities of the people that retard the completeness of Redemption. The Lord enjoined that the filthy garments should be taken off the High Priest and not only should he be clothed with clean robes but a crown should be placed upon his head. In other words, what was symbolised was the removal of the peoples sin and resultant forgiveness that entitled them to redemption and a life of general felicity and security.

Salvation would also connote a state of society free of oppression, fear, hatred and the threat of war. In other words, a state of peace when people of all kinds would live together in harmony and friendship as the Psalmist puts it;

“Behold, how good and how lovely it is when brethren dwell together in unity”

And what could be a nobler concept of salvation for all mankind that the wonderful words of the Prophet Isaiah: “And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” This brings to mind the idea of the Messiah; as developed over centuries, The Jewish concept of Messiah visualises the return of the prophet Elijah as the harbinger of one who will redeem the world from war and suffering, leading mankind to universal brotherhood under the fatherhood of one God. The Messiah is not considered as a future divine or supernatural being but as a dominating human influence in an age of universal peace, characterised by the spiritual regeneration of humanity.

An important point to be noted in this connection is that in Judaism salvation is open to all people and not limited to those of the Jewish faith; the only important consideration being that the people must observe and practice the ethical pattern of behaviour as summarised in the Ten Commandments. When Jews refer to themselves as the chosen people of God, they do not imply they have been chosen for special favours and privileges but rather they have taken it upon themselves to show to all peoples by precept and example the ethical way of life.

Salvation from death means that death is not the real end of life- the soul lives on and returns to the Creator who made it. As per Judaism, the salvation can be obtained only through good deeds. In the end, on the final day of Judgement there will be a resurrection and life will be restored to all righteous souls; but it is not within man’s intellectual capacity to conceive of how exactly or when the resurrection will take place.

RELIGIONS FOR WORLD PEACE

The “garland project” or the “Small Spiritual Declaration” shows us how inter-faith dialogue can spread light throughout the land. Promoting awareness of FUREC Fr. Francis D’Britto wrote in ‘The Examiner’. We present an excerpt

An Award-winning film titled ‘In the name of God’ by Anand Patwardhan portrays the bloody conflict between two religions over the claim of a religious site. During the past two decades, the world in general and our country in particular have witnessed atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion. Bosnia, Ireland, Rwanda, Nigeria, Indonesia, Sudan and India have been going through the turmoil of religious and ethnic conflicts.

‘Ahimsa Paramo Dharma’, meaning non-violence is the highest form of religion, is the guiding principle of Indian ethos yet we witness in our everyday life that in the name of God, human life is destroyed, nay, man having being made in the image of God, God himself is being destroyed.

Religions per se teach the way of peace and harmony, whereas *Dharma* in the Indian context means various types of duties, e.g. duties towards neighbour, society, parents, gurus etc. Religious have played a major role in building the edifice of culture. Hinduism believes in the all pervading presence of God, Jainism teaches the path of non-violence. Buddhism preaches compassion (Karuna), Christianity practices charity towards all, Islam believes in the unity of God. All these dimensions of religions have contributed towards the making of civilisation. The history of world shows that no

civilisation was totally atheistic.

Religion is an ambivalent reality while it is true that, in the name of religion atrocities, carnages and even genocides have been carried out, it is also a fact that inspired by the teachings of religious hundreds and thousands have devoted and at times sacrificed their lives for the betterment of humanity.

A NEW VISION

Fundamentalist political parties during the past decade have used religion as a ladder to win elections. The secular fabric of our multi-religious and multi-cultural country India seemed to be tearing into pieces, so much so that Mr. Khushwant Singh predicted it to be 'The end of India'. The demolition of Babri Masjid, the bomb explosions in Mumbai, the ghastly killing of Rev. Grahams Stains, the burning of the Sabarmati compartment at Godhra and the genocide that followed in Gujarat haven been the darkest blots on the conscience of the nation. The country lost confidence in itself. Our minds were dominated by fear, suspicion and insecurity. How long could a nation grope in darkness?

However, every cloud has a silver lining. While India was suffering from the evils of communal disharmony, great minds were contemplating a beautiful vision for our country. One such person is our present President

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam firmly believes in the positive power of Religion: He states "Religions arc like exquisite gardens, places full of surpassing beauty and tranquillity, like sacred groves filled with beautiful birds and their melodious songs. Religions are beautiful gardens, but they are islands. They are enchanting islets, veritable oases for the soul and the mind they are islands nevertheless. If we can connect all these islands with love and compassion, in a garland project, we will have a peaceful, happy and prosperous India in front of us."

Religions are full of luminosity, but they are islands, closed in on themselves. The need of the hour is to connect these islands and the best persons to effect this connectivity arc the heads of the religions, dreams the President. It all happened on October 15, 2003, the 84th birthday of His Holiness Acharyashree Mahaprajna, On the previous day, 14th of October, about 20 heads of different religions gathered in a conclave at Surat. In order to achieve the basic spiritual unity of all religions, the highpriests of various religions spent a day in meditation and prepared 'a garland project', called the Surat Spiritual Declaration and presented it to the honourable President of India, the next day.

LETTERS...

Dear Editor,

I am convinced that the word 'secular' used in Indian context is not appropriate since strength of India lies in her spiritual traditions.

The dictionary defines secular as worldly, not sacred, sceptical to religious truths, etc. This meaning of the word secular does not fit into the main characteristics of India. India is basically a sacred country and spirituality is the essence of its culture which is ancient and yet ever fresh. Yoga which is another name for spirituality is a unique gift of India to the entire world. Yoga is not just related some sort of physical postures but to a state of ascension of individual divine spirit to join the universal spirit. On the large canvas of its spirituality, India carries four religions of the world Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism which originated from here. Two other major religions of the world Christianity and Islam are also well established in India. Zoroastrianism and some other faiths have also found their way in our country. This makes India pluralist country being multireligious, multiregional, and multilingual. Due to this, if not properly educated people can tend to get divided into various groups of religions and languages. Religion is a binding force if understood and practiced correctly. But unfortunately the word secular used in our country conveys more of neglect of religion rather than showing equal respect towards all religions and faith found in India. Today in India we have no official organ which can guide its people to remove misunderstandings about religion. There is a need to have an official body of interfaith organization like Parliament of Religions, Temple of Understanding and Assembly of Global Religions which exist in the West.

India is a country where religion is unavoidable. Hence a better understanding of it shall remove all apprehensions from our mind and elevate us to newer heights where man made differences on religions shall cease to exist. World of knowledge may be secular or sacred but in India all knowledge is sacred with a spiritual foundation. India has produced a number of great spiritual masters who have influenced the world and there is no reason why their teachings cannot bring about a spiritual outlook in our own country which is the home of all major world religions. Swami Vivekananda said that India can be lifted only through her spiritual traditions. Strengthen her in spirituality and all other problems will get solved, even the political problems.

FUREC will be most effective to re-establish our spiritual heritage and remove narrow views of people about religions.

With regards,

Lt.Col R. K. Langar (Retd.)

DELHI PEACE SUMMIT

A REPORT

On the 22nd November 2004, an International Summit titled "Pathways to Peace: Transcending Religious Boundaries" was organized by Delhi Peace Summit in collaboration with India International Centre. Dr. J.S. Neki, President, FUREC and Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan, Vice-Chancellor, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University) and Member Secretary, Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship (FUREC), were invited to participate in this Summit.

In the afternoon section, Dr. S. Ausaf Ali introduced the theme "Parliament of World Religions: Some Reflections". The section was chaired by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan. Dr. J.S. Neki spoke of the Chicago Parliament. He gave a graphic discussion of how Swami Vivekananda chanced upon the Parliament of World Religions, how his name did not find mentioned in the list of invitees, how he availed the hospitality of a lady in Chicago and finally how a fellow companion from Boston to Chicago was so impressed with the Swami that he prevailed upon the World Parliament to invite him. The only speech that made news in the years to come was that of Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. Dr. Neki also talked of his experience of being present in Chicago World Parliament 100 years later, in 1993.

Swami Agnivesh was to speak to on Cape Town Parliament. He instead spoke of the need for Spirituality to be translated into action. He emphasized that most conflict was infra-religious and not inter religious. He said spirituality means equality, irrespective of caste, creed and gender. Of Parliaments he said, he was not impressed. He wanted action.

Dr. A.K. Merchant spoke of the Delhi Peace Summit in December 2003 and the gracious presence of the President of India, Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam at the inaugural session. Janab Syed Shahabuddin spoke of the Barcelona Parliament and suggested we take steps to implement the ideas thrown up, then thereafter Ms. Sudhamahi Regunathan took off from where Dr. Neki left off - with a mention of Surat Spiritual Declaration. Giving a brief note of the SSD she spoke of the FUREC and appealed to the intelligentsia gathered in the auditorium to support the cause in every and any possible way. She said this perhaps an answer to Swami Agnivesh's call for action. But it will depend on how much each one of us is willing to make it so.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan looked at all the reports with a temporal and spatial perspective. Steering the discussion to a higher note in terms of the ultimate pursuits of spirituality, she suggested that may be FUREC provided a possible plan of action. Dr. T.D. Singh gave the vote of thanks as also spoke on the need to bring science and spirituality together.

The conference had an afternoon section on the role of youth in the promoting the cultural peace. The summit was organized single handedly by Dr. Mohinder Singh.

I VISITED...

SYED MUHAMMAD JILANI ASHRAF KICHHAUCHHVI

*For good life I realised one needs a heady
combination of Deen and Duniya*

Even before I had met him, his words had etched themselves on my mind. He had said, at the first meeting of the spiritual leaders at Surat, that, "Among all human beings the best one is the one from whom other persons get comfort". What a beautiful definition! Then came his name, which sounds so grand, Sheikh-e-Tariqat Hadrat Syed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf Kichhauchhvi. That was not all, when I met him his very colourful attire caught my attention. In fact at one meeting, another spiritual leader had remarked to Hadrat saheb that he would like to wear his clothes for that catches attention more than any other, the combination of a brilliant yellow and black!

These impressions became watermarks when I recalled a story related by Hadrat saheb. As I boarded the flight to Lucknow, the story came back to me.

Once, he says, three persons of Bani Israel set out on a journey. It suddenly began to rain. The three men hurried to take shelter in a cave. No sooner did they enter, what do you think happened? A huge boulder decided to shift its base and came rolling down to block the mouth of the cave. Our three travellers were stuck within! Anguish gripped them till faith reasoned with them and they lifted their hands to Allah the Merciful.

The first one prayed by saying, "Oh Allah! You know that a person worked in my fields for thirteen kilograms of rice as his wages. One day he left without taking his wages. I used his rice to farm and reaped huge profits very soon. With that I bought several cows. One day the labourer came back and asked for his thirteen kilograms of rice and I instead offered him the cows for they were earned from his share of money. Though he said that he needed only some rice, I gave him the cows bought from his money. So Allah, the ever merciful, please move this boulder and let me go out."

The boulder moved a little bit.

The flight landed in Lucknow and a lady came to greet me with a bouquet of flowers. How did she know who I was? She did not ask me my name nor did she hold up a card. "Hadrat saheb said I would know," she replied. Indeed she did!

As we drove into the city, the prayer of the next man came to my mind.

The next man knelt down and calling upon the Allah, the All Knowing said, “ You will remember that I used to bring goat’s milk for my parents and one day I got late in reaching home and they had fallen asleep. I did not wake them, but sat by their side till morning, not eating a morsel, since I had let them go to sleep hungry.”

The boulder moved a little bit more and now they could see the sky!

Hadrat saheb welcomed us and the evening of the programme came after a relaxed afternoon. There was a certain simplicity with which Jilani Ashraf saheb greeted everybody and organized the whole programme. His concern for all his guests was transparent.

I told Hadrat saheb that I was recollecting his story. He retold it to me.

The third man then, he said, prayed to All, the Almighty saying, “ Oh Allah! You know how in lust I invited my cousin and paying her some money wanted to enjoy myself. Then she asked me to fear Allah and abstain from hurting a girl. I immediately came to my senses and apologized to her.”

The rock moved away completely. This story, said the faqeer, fighting the cause of Sufism, has a message. “It emphasizes the three virtues that man should possess: trustworthiness, obedience and responsibility for your actions. A Sufi learns and teaches values.” He also told me of the University Jamia Sufiya which they are in the process of setting up. “This University will have both *deen* and *duniya* , in other words, spiritual as well as material knowledge,” he said.

Deen, he had given me. As for *duniya*...

At the end of the evening, he told us that somebody would take us to the airport the next morning. “If the flight is not late, we should leave by seven in the morning,” said Mr. Rajan. “Do you have to leave?” he asked. Mr Rajan said he had to since he was scheduled to catch another flight later in the day. Hadrat saheb nodded. “A sufi is never late,” he said leaning on his stick. Everybody likes a little bit of prophecy and so did we as we smiled our way to our rooms. Fog had turned the airport chaotic and both of us had caught upon quite a bit of reading and reflection waiting for our flight! Mr Rajan had arrived one day prior to the programme and his flight had been late. So had mine. Tomorrow morning our flight was early in the morning and the airport authorities told us they were looking to the sky for the following day’s flight timings. We decided we would call up in the morning before leaving.

...as for *duniya*, the flight, next morning, was exactly on time!

Inshahabi Regnuman

FUREC appeals for assistance to Tsunami Victims

Thousands of countrymen have died in one of the worst nature's fury caused by Tsunami hitting the coast of South East India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Thousands are reported missing and lakhs rendered homeless. Casualties are still mounting since surface communication is still not fully restored.

The Government and various other agencies are doing their best but still a massive task of relief and rehabilitation lies ahead. FUREC believes that all of us must come forward to help the cause and mitigate the sufferings of the victims.

FUREC is a non-profit organization set up by 15 spiritual / religious leaders to sustain human spirit on the basis of acceptance of, and respect for, all religious, spirituality, economic well being and on the practice of non-violence (Ahimsa). It has the Blessings of Hon'ble President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam and H.H. Acharya Mahaprajna.

A relief fund has been started to receive contribution / donations which may be sent by cheque/Bank Draft in favour of 'Foundation for Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship' payable at New Delhi on following address:

FUREC
2nd Floor, Nehru House
4 Bahadurshah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110 002

Donors may also kindly contact Member Secretary/Coordinator's Office at: 011-51509015/51509016/51509070 and 9891275887, for further details.

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