

## **BK Charlie in Sri Lanka, 17-24 Feb 2014**

BK Charlie Hogg, National Coordinator (NC) of Brahma Kumaris Australia, left Sydney on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb for Singapore where he spent a night and flew on to Sri Lanka the next day. His eight day visit included five areas; Colombo, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa and Kandy. He gave many classes, public talks and met contacts.

### **COLOMBO**

In Colombo Charlie was met by Br Ganesh who is the NC for Sri Lanka and Br Mohan. They went straight to the large BK Centre which is just in front of the ocean. From 5.30-6.20pm Charlie and Ganesh had a spiritual chit chat on the theme “Merciful Heart” with a small gathering of contacts.



Charlie shared some examples of leaders with merciful hearts who had won the hearts of the people by being embodiments of virtues. There was a discussion on how to help people who are in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. It was suggested that our good wishes and pure feelings for humanity with a merciful heart can benefit others. Guests at the meeting were:

- Maj. Gen. K.J. Wijetilleke, Commissioner General of Rehabilitation
- Colonel Manjula Kaluarachchi, Program Coordinator, Rehabilitation Bureau
- Mr P. P. Devraj, Former Minister of Hindu Cultural Affairs
- Mr & Mrs Somasundaram, Retired Deputy Director General of National Institute of Education
- Mrs. Shanthi Wijesinghe, Directress of Seekers Research

That night Charlie gave class for around 100 BKs who attended even though it was a workday evening. Charlie was welcomed in front of the BK gathering by Br Ganesh who presented a flower bouquet and Sr Sreema who delivered a welcome speech. In the class Charlie shared practical points about increasing spiritual efforts. He mainly mentioned not to have any internal barriers to receiving God’s love and to instil the practices of soul consciousness and self-respect. He also shared the story of how he started to practice Raja Yoga in the 1970s. Later Charlie had an informal meeting with 15 young brothers (kumars). He encouraged them to be good examples, saying that disciplined practice will bring success in this spiritual lifestyle.



### **JAFFNA**

The next morning Charlie flew to Jaffna in the very northern tip of the country. The plane was just a 12 seater and there was only one other passenger.

On arrival in Jaffna he went to the BK Centre and 200 metres from the Centre he was welcomed in a traditional way with a procession and school brass band in bright red jackets. He was escorted from Kalati Junction into the Centre by



the band with BKs lining the road with Shiv Baba flags. There are around 150 BKs in Jaffna and after some beautiful welcome dances he gave remembrances from the Australian BK family, especially the Tamil BKs living in Australia who are originally from Jaffna.



There was a morning retreat for around 105 BKs including a class on "Maintaining Zeal and Enthusiasm and Becoming Obstacle Free" and a Q&A session. Jaffna was the centre of the Tamil resistance during the war and all families have suffered losses. Everyone has many stories to tell. One student commented, "The class was subtle, interesting and practical and Br Charlie gave some useful techniques for overcoming obstacles."



In the evening around 70 special guests attended a program at the centre on "Ways to Challenge the Challenges." The program started with a video presentation. A lecture was followed by Q&As. Although the war has finished there are many social problems and difficulties in the community and there were many questions about this. There was a vibrant discussion and the whole gathering was very supportive of spiritual solutions. The program was concluded with supper. Some guests commented that they felt the talk was from Charlie's own experience and that was what touched their hearts.



The next morning Charlie conducted early morning meditation with around 30 BKs. On taking leave he gave out sweets and reminded everyone to see the scenes of life as accurate and beneficial and remain carefree.



## VAVUNIYA

On the way to Vavuniya, two hours from Jaffna in the central north, Charlie passed many forests with palm trees with no tops, which was the result of heavy bombing for many years. Vavuniya has a lovely BK Centre with a beautiful garden with mango and banana trees. There was a class with BKs then a program at the city administration office for around 150 people.

## BATTICALOA

Charlie then went by car another five hours to Batticaloa on the east coast. Batticaloa took the main brunt of the tsunami in 2004 and 50,000 people died. He visited the site where BKs are building a new museum. The two brothers building the museum had both lost their wives and two children in the tsunami. Batticaloa has a huge purpose built BK Centre with an auditorium for around 800 and there are 800 BKs in the region. On Thu 20 Feb there was a half day retreat with a one hour meditation commentary and class. More than 250 BKs of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kalmunai and Pandiruppu joined this gathering.



In the evening around 75 people, including BKs, local government staff and members of the public gathered at Paddipalai Junction in the Kokkadicholai area to inaugurate a huge billboard (hoarding) advertising the centre in an area close to the ocean. Special guests were the local priest, and administrator Mr Krishnapillai, the secretary of Prathesa Shaba (Local Government) in Kokkadicholai. Mr Krishnapillai is a BK and gave the billboard space free of charge. Together with Charlie all three cracked coconuts and gave blessings. At Kokkaticholai BK Centre Charlie conducted a class for 40 BKs.

On returning to Batticaloa, from 7.00-8.30 pm around 15-20 past and future Peace of Mind retreat guests came to the centre where they had a discussion on the topic "Harmonizing Relationships". Charlie especially invited all the participants to come for a retreat in Australia. Throughout his Sri Lankan visit he met quite a few Peace of Mind guests all over Sri Lanka who have become regular BKs.

On 21 Feb Charlie visited Eravur centre for morning class with nearly 25 BKs, then returned to Batticaloa to inaugurate the "Safety Drivers" project with Br Ganesh.



The main participants were:

- Mr S Kanagasuntharam, C.T.B Regional operating manager, Kalmunai
- Mr ULA Wahab, Motor traffic examiner, Department of motor traffic examination
- Mr KK Vasuthevan, Director of private transport service, Eastern region
- Mr Nazeer, administrator, traffic division Kaluwanchikudy
- Mr ABM Sanooz, Depot manager, CTB Rithithenna
- Mr MSM Ganee, Depot manager, CTB Eravur
- Mr MIA Azeez, Depot manager, CTB Valaichennai

Guest Mr ULA Wahab said that worldwide approximately 13 lakhs (100,000) people died per year and in Sri Lanka on average seven people died per day in road accidents.

Participants Mr Kanakasuntharam and Mr Raventhiran said that all drivers should receive spiritual knowledge that would help them to have a good state of mind while driving. Mr Nazeer said that not only those employed as drivers but all holders of driving licenses could participate in such a program. Previously the Centre has conducted many programs where participants were Hindus but this time the majority were from the Muslim community. Mr Ajma, a leader of the Eravur Muslim Youth Club, requested a program



immediately at his youth club. Though the number of drivers attending was less than expected, the program was successful in connecting with the Muslim community.

After that Charlie went to Pasikkudah to see the Exhibition Centre's construction works, visited Kalkudah and conducted a class for 32 BKs from Valaichenai area, then took leave from Batticaloa to drive to Kandy.

## KANDY

Kandy, in the mountains, is close to the heart of the tea plantations. It is a very beautiful area and has a lovely BK centre, an information centre in the heart of town and a large seminar hall "Jyoti Bhavan", where there was a public event for special contacts. Sri Lanka is blessed with excellent facilities. On Friday night Charlie was welcomed and shared his BK life experience with 40 BKs. The next morning he conducted morning class with 45 BKs.



Charlie gave a talk at the Kandy Society of Medicine for 80 medical professionals and doctors, many of whom had studied in Australia. The topic was "Finding Balance in IQ, EQ & SQ". He also gave a class for 50 BKs at another centre, Inner Space.





There was a half day BK Retreat at “Jyoti Bhavan” on Sunday 23 Feb. Br Ganesh introduced Charlie and explained his specialities. Charlie gave a class on “How to Become Obstacle Free” which was followed by a Q&A session. 102 BKs from Kandy, Matale, N-Eliya, Bandarawela, Badulla, Nawalapitiya, Galaha and Balagolla took benefit.



In the evening there was a public talk on “Peace of Mind” for 76 participants including 48 business people and professionals of different disciplines. Charlie introduced meditation and how it can contribute to peace of mind.



Guests of honour:



Prof. Upali Illangasekera from the Teaching Hospital



Mr WD Weeraratna, Senior Attorney at Law



Prof. Chandra Abeysekera from the Faculty of Medicine.



Br Ganesh told guests about the Peace of Mind retreat held annually in Mount Abu, India.

From Sri Lanka, Charlie went to Hyderabad in South India for two days on the way to Mount Abu.