

ON THE PEACE MARCH



Having inspired millions from varying religions, faiths and cultures to come together for peace, the flame of the World Peace Flame Foundation will now make its way to India for the first time, thanks to young **Divyesh Bhandari's** Bangalore Peace Project.

Text * Pooja Mujumdar

THE WORLD PEACE FLAME ARRIVES in Byron Bay, Australia, and is led by a candlelit procession to Butler Street Peace Park for the Peace Flame ceremony. The eternally burning light is housed in a sleek lantern; and as it passes through the crowd, its warm, gentle glow rekindles the inner light of love, peace and hope in those present.

Divyesh Bhandari, the 22-year-old owner of Imbroglio Productions in Bengaluru, has collaborated with World Peace Flame Foundation in the Netherlands to bring the flame to India for the first time. "In 2013, I had left for the UK to pursue my MA in English Literature from the University of Leeds. It was while attending a Diwali programme there that I met the representatives of the foundation,"

shares Bhandari, who has also penned an anthology of poetry called *Imbroglio: The Chaos That Creates*. He found out about how the flame burns in thousands of homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship in major cities worldwide. Since there was no such symbol of hope housed in India, Bhandari got talking to Sue Owen, the head of the British division of the foundation, to know more about their work, and later pitched the idea of bringing the flame to India.

The foundation is dedicated to introducing peace education in schools. So, Bhandari trained under the foundation to learn how to deal with children, conduct interactive workshops and teach non-violent ways of dealing with behavioural challenges positively, upon his return to India in mid-



Top: Sarala Birla Academy hosting its cultural fest, 'Impressions', inspired by the Bangalore Peace Project; (Bottom) Students and teachers participating in a workshop under the Inner Peace educational programme

2014. He shares, "We wanted students from classes 7 and 8 to participate in our Inner Peace educational programme, a two-hour, paid workshop, organised by Imbroglio Productions, which included interactive and 'just-a-minute' meditation sessions, designed by Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. I felt that it would be easier for us to get the message across to these students as they are mature enough to be agents of change in their own neighbourhoods. Students of class nine and 10 are too busy preparing for their daunting board exams."

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Bhandari himself supervised the workshops, teaching 3,000 students in batches of 50 each, over two months. I also learn that he has musical trainers on board to help the young singers prepare.

Jenny George and Rohin Joseph (who has an Associate Diploma from the Trinity College of Music, London),

his core team members at Imbroglio, pitched in with their support, and Bhandari launched his Bangalore Peace Project in August 2014 at the Sarala Birla Academy, the official host of the initiative. Principals of 16 schools, who had agreed to support the project, were invited, along with two student 'Peace Representatives'. The project received an excellent response to its call for donation of newspapers, stationery, clothes and unexpired, packaged food. The money collected was used to buy medicines for HIV-positive children residing at Infant Jesus Children Home.

Last November, students from Bishop Cotton Girls' School organised a brass band performance and flash mob at Orion mall, Rajajinagar while their counterparts from Sarala Birla Academy ran a marathon for peace from Jigani Road to their school. These events will culminate in a ticketed choir show, produced by Imbroglio Productions and held between 24th and 25th January at the UB City Amphitheatre in Bengaluru. The World Peace Flame will be lit for the first time in India after the programme. Over 400 students will be representing their schools in front of an audience of over 4,000.

Bhandari has expertly displayed his entrepreneurial thinking, publicising his Imbroglio brand along the way, through the best possible mission: a message of peace amongst Indian youngsters. *