

Holding a candle for peace

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, Feb. 13 — It was a march of the peace brigade. Like an army of glow worms dotting the twilight sky, hundreds of students lined the boulevard from Mahatma Gandhi statue to the Cauvery emporium junction on MG Road today holding up "candles for peace" and in unison crying for peace.

Drawn from City schools and colleges, the youngsters were a vision of pure delight as they, with untiring zest, kept up the chorus for peace for a full 40 minutes. "We want peace" was interspersed with snatches of "We shall overcome some day" and "Shanti Do" sung in one voice.

The police, unwilling to take chances with such a show of youth force, became mute spectators as the students, true to their campaign, went about in a disciplined manner with least obstruction to traffic. Young volunteers, clad in white T-shirts, were quick to bring violators in line with a self-imposed discipline code.

At 6.30 p.m. sharp, four 10-year-olds jointly lit a "Peace candle" at the foot of the Mahatma Gandhi statue and handed the light to four older students drawn from different religions. The "peace glow" soon caught on, lighting candle after candle down the line until all participants, including escorting parents, were holding aloft the light for peace.

Little Umashankar of United Mission School did not know why he was there although he had signed a pledge card for peace, but 12-year-old Mala of St. Mary's said firmly, "We don't want any more war."

The entire event, organised by the Students for Peace, lasted barely two-and-a-half hours. But days of meticulous planning and hard work by a core group of 80 volunteers, with minimal support from family and adult well-wishers, had preceded today's campaign. Right from mobilising funds through voluntary contributions to enlisting participation of fellow students from various schools and col-

leges and overcoming police curbs, the inexperienced, yet determined, youngsters braved it on their own.

Ravindra and Sunil, students of St. Joseph's College and Dayananda Sagar Engineering College respectively, both volunteers, explained that dignitaries, political parties and even prominent citizens had been kept out of the campaign to avoid any "shift in focus". The four older students chosen to launch the campaign had also been picked on the spot.

An organising member noted that the youth wing of a political party had expressed a desire to join, but kept away when told that party flags would not be allowed.

Among the hurdles overcome was an anonymous threat to blast the Gandhi statue, which immediately prompted a police barricade. However, the students were allowed near the statue briefly to light the main candle.

And indeed there was show of peace.

Candle for peace

BANGALORE:

IF you thought that today's urban teenagers are only tuned in to 10,000 Maniacs or Toad the Wet Sprocket, you can think again. The Ayodhya demolition disturbed them just as much as it did, every sensible adult.

Students For Peace, an independent forum of students from various local colleges, is organising a demonstration, "Light a candle for peace". At least 3,000 youth are expected to meet at the Gandhi statue and line up along M.G. Road at dusk on February 13, "passing on a ray of hope".

The candle has been chosen as a symbol, since it does not lose its brightness when its flame is passed on to another. SFP's 15-member core group and 80-odd volunteers, who have no affiliation to any political or religious organisation, have contacted students of over 50 colleges and high schools. Many individuals and organisations have donated towards publicity material such as handbills, posters, stickers and T-shirts.

Those interested in supporting SFP's efforts can contact Ravindra Walters and Sunil

'Light a candle for peace'

BANGALORE, Feb. 9.

"Light a candle for Peace" will be organised by Students for Peace here on Saturday. The peace demonstration will start at 5.30 p.m. on that day with thousands of college and school students assembling near Gandhi statue. As dusk falls the candles will be lit from a common flame and passed on to others to form a line along M.G. Road at least up to the junction of Kamaraj Road.

THE HINDU
FEB 10, 1993