

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH HARMONY

WORLD INTERFAITH



HARMONY WEEK

Organized by



SUBALTERN'S ALLIANCE FOR PEACE (SAP)

In association with



INDIAN ACADEMY DEGREE COLLEGE
(AUTONOMOUS)

Supportive Partners

India Peace Center

IARF Karnataka Branch

Human Rights Resource Center

World Fellowship of Inter Religious Council

World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation

Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum

United Religious Initiative (URI), Bangalore South

National Assembly of Religious Brothers India

Centre for Amenities Rehabilitation and Education

Peace Makers & Peace India

THEME

INTERFAITH

Initiatives in Promoting

PEACE

& RECONCILIATION

with SPECIFIC REFERENCE to

RELIGIOUS

VALUES & TRADITION

Date:

8 & 9
FEB
2019

Venue:

**INDIAN
ACADEMY
DEGREE
COLLEGE**
Bangalore, India

SUBALTERN'S ALLIANCE FOR PEACE (SAP)

BIRDS Campus, Geddalahalli, Kothanur Post, Bangalore – 77, Karnataka, India.

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Report

1. Introduction:

Subaltern Alliance for Peace (SAP) is a network (an apex forum) of NGOs working for promotion of peace and reconciliation among marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, Adivasis and Minorities. This initiative is supported by Mensen met een Missie, Netherlands. SAP envisages building resilience among local communities to counter violence and create a culture of peace. The over-arching Goal of SAP is to “contribute towards a peaceful and dignified coexistence of Dalits, Adivasis and other minorities with other communities exercising their rightful claims/entitlements”. In order to commemorate the UN Interfaith week, SAP in collaboration with Indian Academy Degree College and various other NGOs working for conflict resolution and peace organized a conference on the theme ***“Interfaith initiatives in promoting peace and reconciliation with specific reference to religious values and tradition”*** on **February 8th and 9th, 2019** in Bangalore, Karnataka. The need for Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace is a theme that has attracted increased attention amongst governments, UN agencies, religious communities, spiritual movements, civil society and humanists since the beginning of the 21st century.

The main goal of this conference was to pave a way for various religions to come together at a common platform for the promotion of peace.

2. Objectives:

- Gain perspectives on peace building and conflict resolution in today’s context, and develop a conceptual apparatus for understanding contemporary peace building efforts, especially in India
- Understand concepts that are considered in detail including violence, truce, justice, trauma, peacekeeping, reconciliation, anomie, truth, healing and resolution, with special attention to those situations where peace processes have consistently failed to achieve their goals.
- Strengthen ecumenical advocacy for peace by bringing key stakeholders together to share existing initiatives and best practices on advocacy for peace in India.
- Develop a joint advocacy plan for peacebuilding in India considering national, regional and international factors contributing to the conflict.

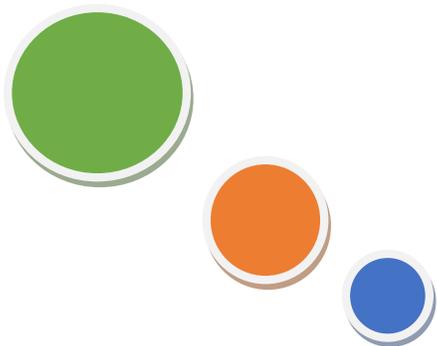


3. Program Schedule:

Date & Time	Sessions	Theme	Resource Persons
8 / 02/2019 09.30am	Opening Ceremony	Introduction to the conference theme – “Interfaith Initiatives in Promoting Peace and Reconciliation with specific reference to religious values and tradition.”	1. Dr. Wooday P. Krishna 2. Dr. SomasekharThumalla 3. Dr. Chand Bhardwaj 4. Fr. Roby Kannanchira CMI 5. Rev. Dr. Fr. Yessumarian
11.30am	Panel Discussion - I	The role of religious education in today’s social development	Moderator: Dr. HomiDhalla Panelists: 1) Dr. Rekha Jain 2) Mr. Umar Shariff
02.15pm	Session - I	How to strengthen secularism and democracy in the context of increasing religious fundamentalism	Rev. Dr. PackiamT Samuel
03.15 pm	Panel Discussion - II	What are the relations between culture & religion? Is there a widely accepted relation or does it depends on context, historical and local differences?	Moderator: Ms. KathyayiniChamaraj Panelists: 1) Mr. Dinesh Rao 2) Dr. Justin Antony
Day 2			
09/02/2019 09.30am	Session - II	The Role of the Religious Leaders in politics in promoting the culture of peace	Dr. HomiB.Dhalla
10.30am	Panel Discussion - III	How religious teachings support the youth to come together to promote peace	Moderator: Prof. H S Bhatia Panelists: 1) Ms. Anjana T J 2) Ms. MathankiKalithas
11.30am	Session - III	What are the possible disturbances that could crop up	Dr. Chand Bharadwaj
02.15pm	Way forward		Fr. Stephen
03.15pm	Closing Ceremony		1) Mr. Michael Fernandes 2) Mr. Rabbi Jayakaran 3) Mr. Manohar Ranganathan

4. Conference at a glance:

1. Conference : International conference on Interfaith Harmony
2. Theme : Interfaith initiatives in promoting peace & reconciliation with specific reference to religious values and tradition
3. Date : 08 and 09 February, 2019
4. Venue : Indian Academy PU College, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
5. Organized by : Subaltern's Alliance for Peace (SAP)
6. Collaboration : Indian Academy Degree College (Autonomous)
7. Partners : India Peace Center / IARF Karnataka Branch / Human Rights Resource Center / World Fellowship of Inter Religious Council / World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation / Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum / United Religious Initiative, Bangalore South / National Assembly of Religious Brothers India / Center for Amenities Rehabilitation and Education / Peace Makers / Peace India
8. Other NGOs : Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi / Peace and Harmony Forum / Interfaith Coalition for Peace / Sri Guru Sing Saba /
9. Educational Inst : Seshadripuram Educational Trust / St. Ann's College for Women / Discover Islam Educational Trust / St. Aloysius Degree College / Jain University / Sacred Heart College / Indian Academy College / Lady Doak College
10. Participants : 124 Participants from NGOs, Colleges and public
11. Achievements :
 - a. for the first time more than 15 organization who are working for Interfaith and peace come together to host this conference.
 - b. This conference supported to form a National forum for organization working for interfaith and peace in India
 - c. Most the youngsters come forward to host next conference on Interfaith and peace in India
12. Religions Represented: Hindu, Islam, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, Bahai, Brahma Samaj, Sikh, Lingayat and Zoroastrianism



5. Participants:

The participants of the International conference were mostly college students. Apart from that a number of scholars, educationists, religious leaders and NGO representatives were present.



6. Inaugural Ceremony:

The International interfaith conference began with an inaugural ceremony on 08 February, 2019 at 10.30am. The ceremony with an invocation prayer and followed by lighting the lamp. Dr. Jerome Xavier, the principal of Indian Academy Degree College welcomed the guests and the gathering. The Inaugural address was presented by **Dr. Chand Bhardwaj Singh**, the Ambassador for Peace and Harmony, New Delhi. He spoke about the inter-connection of the body, mind and soul, which governs the very life of human beings and how if mind and soul are well controlled and disciplined will lead to distance from violence. The Keynote address was given by **Dr. Wooday P. Krishna** the President, Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and General Secretary, Seshadripuram Educational Trust and also the President, IARF, Karnataka Branch.

Dr. Krishna began with the importance of organizing such a conference which he called “Satsang” which means a gathering of people from different religion. He highlighted one great concept in our Indian tradition which is “Ekam Sat VipraBahudhaVadanti”, a Sutra quote from of all the over one hundred Upnishads. This aphorism means: “That which exists is ONE sages call it by various names.” Interfaith generally indicates believers and not non-believers (atheist) but one should always remember that interfaith conferences is inclusive of all, irrespective of whether the person has faith or not. The core of the concept is that all religions should help one to become a better human being. India has sheltered or nurtured number of religions and India is known for it. The concept of “Aga DeivaVishwaBratva” meaning, Universal fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man was emphasized Dr. Krishna. He brought about Gandhi’s way of conducting meetings which always began with a plea to the almighty “Sabkoshanmati debhagavan” meaning, let good sense prevail each and every one and how the Father of the Nation prepared everyone for a non-violent approach in their endeavours. Dr. Krishna thus elucidated how such a conference can be used as a podium to create a new moral man in a communitarian society. (see More in YouTube: <https://youtu.be/zwSNFdz381I>)

Dr. SomasekharThummala, Chairman, Indian Academy Degree College addressed the gathering with the following message.

“Every religion allows the people to question, but some religious leaders never allow the people to raise any question or clarify their doubts, which is why the young adults especially have numerous problems with their religious leaders. Religious freedom is very importance in today’s society and I believe this two-day conference will mould the youngsters to understand different

faiths and it will also help them to understand that religion is a means to bring people together and help them find the purpose of life.”

Fr. Robby Kannanchira CMI, Director, Chavara Cultural Centre, spoke about his experiences and expertise as an educationist. He elaborated about the ministry that he is involved in and encouraged the youths present to respect and accept. He has taken efforts in spreading the message of peace and harmony among religions and highlighted his philosophy of life which is:

“I am here to “CELEBRATE YOUR FAITH” without losing mine.

I am here to “UPHOLD MY RELIGION” without hurting yours.

I am here to “APPRECIATE OUR DIFFERENCES” without giving up our uniqueness.”

Dr. Fr. Yesumarian, Director, Dalith Human Rights Center, Tamilnadu addressed the gathering with the message of how Peace and reconciliation is an important requirement and condition for the survival of human committee in today’s context. The man who was voiceless till yesterday now stands up, cries out and rebels and therefore turns into a conflict that challenges peace and harmony. He believes that the root cause of this conflict is alienation due to lack of opportunity, inequality, poverty, globalization, culture, caste, political scenario, language etc. Thus, according to Dr. Fr. Yesumarian, de alienation is the first step towards peace. Interfaith initiatives taken in promoting peace and reconciliation is a religious paradigm for conflict resolution and peace building and hence it should promote and inculcate such critical consciousness among the people. He highlighted that the anatomy of peace is love, equality, equity and solidarity and that every religion teaches love. However, the antonym of love is not hatred but indifference. Therefore, peace has to start from home as charity.

The Inaugural ceremony was followed by a series of panel discussions and sessions. The panel discussions and sessions served as a platform for intensive discussions and contribution of ideas from the likeminded audience.

Panel Discussion I :

The panel discussion was Moderated by **Dr. Homi B. Dhalla**, President, World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, Mumbai and the Speakers were **Dr. Reka Jain**, Ret. Proff. Jain University, Bangalore and **Sri. Umar Shariff**, President, Discover Islam Educational Trust, Bangalore.



The topic for the discussion was “**The role of religious education in today’s social development**” (see.: <https://youtu.be/ht1Y3I93RW0>)

Session I:

The speaker for the first session was **Rev. Dr. Packiam T Samuel**, Director, Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad and Secretary General, Interfaith Coalition for Peace, New Delhi where he spoke on “**How to strengthen secularism and democracy in the context of increasing religious fundamentalism**”

(See: <https://youtu.be/ph09dOmsn34>)



Panel Discussion II:

The second panel discussion was moderated by **Srm. Kathyayini Chamaraj**, Executive Trustee, CIVIC, Bangalore and the speakers are **Mr. Dinesh Rao**, Secretary, Bahai Council of Karnataka, and **Dr. Justin Antony** Member, UN International Youth Council, India.

The topic for the discussion was “**What are the relations between culture & religion? Is there a widely accepted relation or does it depends on context, historical and local differences?**”

(See: https://youtu.be/jVbmdQQP_4g)

09 February, 2019

Session II:

The Second day of the conference began at 9.30am with the second session. The speaker for this session was **Dr. Homi B. Dhalla**, President, World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, Mumbai and his topic was “**The Role of the Religious Leaders in politics in promoting the culture of peace**”. (See: <https://youtu.be/2h6VYhrql0g>)

Panel Discussion III:

The third Panel Discussion was on “**How religious teachings support the youth to come together to promote peace**”. This discussion was moderated by **Prof. H.S. Bhatia**, State Secretary- Gurudwara, Sri Guru Singh Saba, Bangalore and the speakers were **Ms. Anjana**, Asst. Manager, Talent Sourcing, Flexi Partners, Bangalore and **Ms. Mathanki**, program Asst. International Study and Life Center, Lady Doak College, Tamilnadu. (See: <https://youtu.be/HSudH062Xuk>)

Session III:

The third session was on the topic “**What are the possible disturbances that could crop up**”. The speaker for this session was **Dr. Chand Bhardwaj Singh**, Ambassador, Peace and Harmony, New Delhi. This session was based on the link between human beings and science which paves way to peace and the stumbling blocks that exists.

7. Way forward:

This session was moderated by **Fr. Stephen**, SAP member representative from NeetiVedhi Organization, Kerala. A thorough discussion concluded with two important plans subsequently.

- 1) **The Young Adult's will host an interfaith conference for youngsters in 2019 to promote the culture of peace in India.**
- 2) **Networking with various organizations working for Peace building and Conflict resolution in India and eventually build a forum to promote Peace building and Conflict resolution.**

8. Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony for the two-day conference began at 3.30 pm with an invocation prayer. **Bro. Albert Xaviour**, the convener of the conference welcomed the guests and the gathering. The valedictory address was delivered by the Chief Guest **Mr. Michael Fernandes**, President, Hind MazdoorKisan Panchayat wherein he emphasized the importance of a peaceful society. **Mr Rabbi Jayakaran**, Managing Trustee, Peacemakers India, spoke about his work at a glance and highlighted about the various steps his organization has taken in effort to promote a peaceful society. **Mr. Manohar Ranganathan**, Executive Director, CARE, also encouraged the participants to promote and respect the rights of every human being in order to build peace in the society. Finally, **Mr. Ambrose Christy**, South India Coordinator, Mensen Met een Missie, presented the report on the two-day conference and the way forward. This was followed **Dr. Jerome Xavier**, Principal, Indian Academy Degree College, thanking the guests, speakers and the participants on behalf of the organizing committee. With the distribution of certificates to the participants and a group photo, the conference come to a close.

Bro. Albert Xaviour

Convener, Interfaith Conference

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