



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

### **COVID-19 Relief Work**

The coronavirus induced lockdown affected the poor and stranded migrant workers very badly. Not being able to find jobs and loss of regular income forced them to wait for government and civil society to respond to their needs. In such a situation India Peace Centre joined hands with Together We Can, a temporary forum which brought some NGOs in Nagpur together to respond to their immediate needs of food and shelter. With volunteers from the participating organisation everyday 50 families in need were reached out with ration packets containing rice, lentils, and snacks. In two months of April and May more than 3000 families have been helped with their daily needs and medicines.

### **Prospects of Peace in Post Lockdown India**

While the COVID-19 virus induced lockdown had brought the whole world to a standstill India Peace Centre continued its engagement with civil society and organised a webinar on the “Prospects of Peace in post lockdown India” inviting its stakeholders and accompaniers on 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. Opening the webinar Mr. Kasta Dip, Director of India Peace Centre said that touching lives of people in a time of crisis paves way to peace. He referred to the plight of migrant workers who had no option but to walk on foot hundreds of miles to reach their villages after loosing their jobs and livelihoods. Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal who moderated the sessions reiterated that the aim of the Webinar was to learn from the crisis that has created complete disruption of the economy. Rev. Philp Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness, WCRC also highlighted the present crisis terming it unprecedented in the history of humanity. The virus has travelled through the trade routes. Capitalism has played the spoilsport in it. Under the impact of neoliberalism, health care has been side-lined, with disastrous results. A section of the society has been excluded from the benefits of development. Dr. Mubashira Zaidi, Research Fellow, Institute of Social Studies Trust, shed lights on how COVID-19 has created a lot of agony for the migrant labours stressing that women workers bear the brunt of the lockdown. In normal situations many times they have to skip their meals to keep the work going on. In the lock down women workers are not able to buy medicines and contraceptives. They even cannot buy sanitary napkins. This puts them in an awkward situation. Social distancing puts workers in a tight spot. When they return to their villages, they are asked to stay outside the village. Continuing in the same line of thoughts Ms. Joyce Pereira, General Secretary of YWCA of India, said that women are the frontline warriors in the fight against COVID-19. Lockdown has brought different kind of violence against women. It is creating a lot of mental trauma for the women everywhere.

On the impacts of COVID-19 on water and environment, Mr. Dinesh Suna, Programme Executive, Ecumenical Water Network (WCC) asserted that it is easy to talk of washing hands as a simple solution against corona spread but what about 4.5 billion people on the earth who don't have simple access to water. About 3.5 billion people in the world live in a water scarcity area. In India about 1 billion people do not have easy access to water. Post COVID-19 the entire world must look at more sustainable source of energy. Prof. Ashit Sinha, a Gandhian and social thinker, urged to start a movement for minimalization of our needs. He affirmed that this is a good time to get over the culture of greed. As migrants are going back to villages, we need to focus on a village based economic model and enhance dignity of labour. This is the time to talk about appropriate technology and adopt physical distancing and digital proximity. Eighty-seven participants from different parts of the world took part in the webinar and interacted with the panellists suggesting areas of concerns for the India Peace Centre to work on in a post COVID-19 situation.

### **Prospects for Peace in Post Pandemic India**

The second part of the webinar was organised on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2020 to continue to build our perspectives on prospects for peace in post pandemic India which was attended by 65 participants from different parts of the world. Mr. Kasta Dip, Director of India Peace Centre, recapped the earlier webinar and shared about the expectations IPC has from the resource persons and participants while welcoming them. Speaking on the prospects Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala, Area Executive for South Asia, UCC asserted that pandemic expresses its fury without any discriminations. All of us are vulnerable and are in the grip of fear and anxiety. Our vocation of peace in a situation like this is not only teaching compassion and the virtues of unity but also upholding justice and equality. Every human being has inherent rights to enjoy and to experience the divine gift of life.

Prof. Meera Baindur, a Hindu philosopher highlighted issues of women and said that when the primary caregivers, women at home, get infected then there is nobody to care for them. Women are the nurses at home. It is a kind of violence on women. Understanding the repercussion of systemic violence and resisting that violence and non-hierarchical thinking is need of the hour. It is a time for us to see differently. Young people are recruited to satisfy the political agenda of some communities in a situation like this, said Ms. Saumya Aggarwal, Director of Youth for Peace International. She said that young people are the real torchbearers of peace and they should be given space to contribute more practically and creatively. Mr. Behzad Fatmi, Secretary General, Indialogue Foundation, said that people have been inspired by their religions to respond to situations like this. Although we hear news about divisions and injustice there are also stories of positive impacts. We must foster communal harmony in a time like this and be the messengers of peace. Concluding the webinar Ms. Piyali Kanabar, who moderated the webinar said that we must overthrow hatred and dominance and organise ourselves to fight the virus together.

### **Empires and Religions: Contemporary Stories**

On 24<sup>th</sup> of July an inter-religious discussion was organised by India Peace Centre and the National Council of Churches in India on Empires and Religions: Contemporary Stories. It was organised in the context of religious freedom being throttled in different parts of the world where majoritarian religious groups are at the helm of political affairs. Leading the discussion Rev. Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary of NCCI and Chairperson of IPC, highlighted about the shrinking space of public places that were symbolic to peace and harmony. Hard fought peace agreements are being infringed to establish religious nationalism. He appealed for alternate discourses to strengthen secularism that leads to peace. Several organisations working on peace, particularly on inter-religious engagements, participated and condemned the happenings around the world and more so in our own country. Faith communities must respect each other and uphold their beliefs and practices so that a more tolerant society which is the basis of secularism can flourish. Those who participated in the discourse include Adv. Irfan Engineer, Director of CSSS, Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar, Director of CISRS, Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness, WCRC, Dr. G. S. Khwaja, Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew, Ms. Pratishruti Agrawal and Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal. The discussion resulted in a joint statement to appeal social movements to strengthen secularism and negotiate peace.

### **Towards a Nuclear Free World: Decrying 75 years of Nuclear Horror**

India Peace Centre (IPC) and Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) Organized webinar on 6th August 2020 on the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Atomic Bombing on Hiroshima. Experts who led the discourses were Prof. Achin Vanayak, Retired HOD of Political Department of Delhi University and founder of CNDP, Dr. Suvrat Raju, Scientist and founder of CNDP from Bangalore and Dr. Vaishali Patil from Raigad Dist. Maharashtra. Achin Vanayak pointed out that we must strive to achieve the object of 'Nuclear free World', like many countries who have the capacity to develop Nuclear Weapons but opted not to do so. He also explained the importance of Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on July 7, 2017 at UN Conference by 122 nations. He also stressed on the fact that in view of continuous tension between India and Pakistan, he expressed that both nations should sign no first use pact in respect of Nuclear Weapons.

Dr. Suvrat Raju stated that it is also equally important that Pakistan and India should also sign no War Pact and expressed the need to reduce expenditure on defence and increase the same for the Education and Health. Dr. Vaishali Patil explained the need to have movement of people against Nuclear Weapons as well as Nuclear Energy as both are inter-connected closely. She also asked the participants to be aware about Nuclear Waste and dangers from the same to entire humanity.

More than 100 participants from all over India as well as from abroad participated in this webinar and pledged for working towards a nuclear free world for peace. The webinar was moderated jointly by Adv. Prakash Meghe and Director of IPC Kasta Dip. At the end of the webinar, it was a unanimous suggestion made by the participants that it is necessary to demand from Indian Government that it should sign treaty to prohibit Nuclear Weapons. Similarly, there was consensus on the aspect that Indian Government also should be made to sign no first use treaty in respect of Nuclear Weapons between India and Pakistan, looking to the fact that tension is mounting day by day on the borders.

### **Towards our shared future: Challenges to opportunities**

It is said that every challenge is a disguised opportunity. COVID-19 has brought so many challenges to life and living but. However, are there any disguised opportunities to protect and promote life in a situation like this? To explore together on this question and what we can do to turn the challenges into opportunities a webinar was organised on 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 inviting members of various peace movements and civil society. Bishop Pradeep Kumar Samantaroy, Bishop of Diocese of Amritsar, Church of North India led the discussions in which he mentioned that the lockdown has given the church an opportunity to serve the migrant workers and their families as they lost their jobs and future is uncertain. His diocese had served meals to many such stranded migrant workers and people and the congregations came forward to help them in all possible ways to keep them safe, fed and sheltered until they went home. He also said how church became an everyday church and got multiplied.

Rev. Vinod Victor cited that pandemic has extended edges and many people have been pushed into them. Paradigmatic attitude has affected sever people across the world. Lockdown has made care for children and care for elderly a full-time unpaid engagement determined by gender role. Medical services front liners are women, but decisions are taken by men. As a whole the pandemic has affected women the most and put them at the receiving end of food insecurity. In such a context Shalom is total wellbeing, fearless living, justice personified, community in harmony and living as one with nature. Redeeming religions and reclaim its core values can effectively facilitate peace in a

society divided on the lines of religions and ideologies, said Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew, Executive Secretary for Public Witness and Governance, NCCI. He further said that ecumenical bodies can challenge religious communities to take up justice issues as doing justice is a core value of religion. Serious and action-oriented dialogue among faith communities can make a difference in a time such as this.

Rev. Joy Hoppe brought the perspective from a dalit woman and shared her experience of discrimination and marginalisation as she grew up, studied and started working. She vehemently criticised the patriarchal system both in church and society that subjugate women and subject them to structural and physical violence. God has created women as human being and therefore our concern for justice, peace and equality should also include them. For a dalit woman prejudice is doubled. Therefore, our focus of justice should ensure equality and dignity. Ms. Helga Thomas, a research scholar, speaking from the perspective of tribal and indigenous people underscored the fact that tribals struggle to preserve their access to jal, jungle and jameen creates conflicts between the state and the forest people and often leads to instances of human rights violations by the state. She also decried the impacts of industrialisation and globalisation on tribal and indigenous society causing large scale displacement, migration, human trafficking, bonded labour, and loss of livelihood and culture. She also said that there are opportunities of social justice, economic empowerment, and political representation.

## Pushing Boundaries: Shaping Peace Together

To celebrate International Day of Peace, India Peace Centre organised an international webinar on Pushing Boundaries: Shaping Peace Together on 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2020 inviting people from different faiths to share their perspectives on peace. A summary of their talks given below reveal the potential and scope religions have in building sustained peace in our society in particular and in our world in general.



## Pushing Boundaries: Shaping Peace Together

**Panellists and Perspectives**

 <b>A. K. Merchant</b> <i>Bahai</i>	 <b>C. Vasantha Rao</b> <i>Christianity</i>	 <b>Harpreet Kaur</b> <i>Sikhism</i>	 <b>Jill Carr Harris</b> <i>Gandhian</i>	 <b>Sophia Ansari</b> <i>Islam</i>	 <b>Kabir Saxena</b> <i>Buddhism</i>	 <b>K. K. Narayan</b> <i>Hinduism</i>
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Bahá'ís believe that universal peace is the destination towards which humanity has been moving under the influence of the Word of God that has been progressively imparted by the Creator to His creation. Every individual, institution, and community is urged to seize the unprecedented opportunities to participate. "These fruitless strifes", is Baha'u'llah's confident promise, "these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."

Sikh worldview and faith impart message of universalism; human, humanity and humanism. This could be witnessed in the principles of Sikh faith - kirat karo, naam japo, vand chhako and Sikh code of conduct that includes discipline, decency, gender dignity, healthy diet, keep hair and use Singh or Kaur

as last name to avoid casteism completely. Sikh way of life believes in creating blue oceans and sustainable development including everyone.

Hinduism affirms that adherence to the guidelines of own religion, respect for other religions, cleansing inner self by regular meditation, inculcating the positive feeling of nationalism and universal brotherhood may open the pious gate of world peace. Selfless service to the needy and deprived section of society yields happiness.

Buddhist views to be religious is to be an active servant of humankind here and now, to use one's talents and capacities to address contemporary challenges and to contribute to the well-being of all without distinction.

Being true to divine perception and consciousness which gives ultimate religious dictum is key to Christian faith. Love thy neighbour commandment holds significance in a multifaith society which calls for peaceful coexistence of people of different faiths and ideologies. By respecting others and seeking socio-political and economic justice for the marginalised and oppressed people get invited to participate in God's kingdom.

There are plenty of examples of communal harmony maintained in a situation of pandemic in India and they are obvious from the joint appeals made by faith leaders brought together by India Peace Centre and its network from time to time. Faiths when lived out meaningfully beget peace and lead to fuller life.

### **Reclaiming Gandhi's Legacy of Communal Harmony in India Today**

The India Peace Centre, Nagpur organized a panel discussion 'Reclaiming Gandhi's Legacy of Communal Harmony in India Today' on virtual platform to commemorate the 151st birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The speakers for the discussion were Ms. Rasna Rawal, Entrepreneur, Prof. Aparup Adawadkar, Educationist and Prof. Ashit Sinha, Educationist. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Pratishruti Singh Agarwal. The discussion began with a formal welcome address by Dr. Kasta Dip, Director, IPC and a brief introduction of the guests.

Ms. Rasna Rawal in her speech, referred to the current happenings leading to disharmony in the society and how the millenials can take lessons from Gandhi's ideology to instill peace and sharmony. She talked about the broader sense of community, rise of social media to help bring change in the society and the importance of raising one's voice against injustice. Also, she talked about issues like need for gender equality, colourism, struggle of validation and resistance to change which need to be addressed in the Gandhian way. Ms. Rawal acknowledged that Mahatma Gandhi was a management and a leadership guru.



## Reclaiming Gandhi's Legacy of Communal Harmony in India Today

A webinar to mark 151<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and International Day of Nonviolence

### Panellists and Perspectives



**Aparup Adwadadkar**  
Educationist



**Ashit Sinha**  
Social Thinker



**Rasna Rawal**  
Entrepreneur



**Pratishruti Agarwal**  
Educationist

The next speaker, Prof Aparup Adawadkar spoke at length about Mahatma Gandhi being an environmentalist and how his vision for working towards sustainable development can assist the society in maintaining communal harmony. Prof. Adawadkar referred to Gandhi's Constructive Programme, the importance of leading a simple life, benefitting the last man of the society, the concept of sharing more and consuming less and equality of ends and means. He referred to Gandhi as the apostle of human ecology. Lastly, he said that science and Gandhi, if brought together can work wonders for the society and bring egalitarian development.

The last speaker of the session, Prof. Ashit Sinha referred to the ongoing class and caste struggle in the Indian society and the Gandhian ways of getting rid of the problem. He highlighted the issue of the migrant workers that was seen during the current pandemic situation and how Gandhi's values, ideology and his teachings have been forgotten by the population of India. He stressed on the fact that communal harmony cannot be realized without economic harmony. Lastly he talked on Gandhi's focal point on making villages self-sufficient and the gram panchayats as autonomous bodies which can act as the able arm to the government.

The discussion was followed by an audience interaction where the panelists answered questions put by the audience. The programme ended with a formal vote of thanks. The panel discussion was attended by senior IPC members, Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal, Dr. Yugal Rayalu, Adv. Mohd. Rafiq, other IPC members and audience from across India.

### Indian Constitution and Peace

To mark Indian Constitution Day a webinar was organised by India Peace Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2020 in which Dr. Vijay Kumar Singh, Professor and Dean at UPES, Dehradun talked about the rights and duties of citizens as enshrined in the Constitution. He emphasized the importance of Constitution Day, the significance of its celebration and paid tribute to people who contributed to the development of Indian constitution. He highlighted the basic differences of Indian constitution than that of other countries with examples indicating the prerequisites of the constitution such as societal, familial and individual needs. The preamble of Indian Constitution i.e. India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic which is aiming to secure justice, liberty, equality to all citizens and promote fraternity to maintain unity and integrity of the nation were stressed in his speech as these rights are necessity and are not a privilege.

# Indian Constitution and Peace

A talk by

**Dr. Vijay Kumar Singh**



26<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
4:00PM (IST)

Zoom App  
Meeting ID: 990 3630 6500

He also spoke on social revolution and ‘harmony and balance between our rights and duties’ enshrined in the Constitution of India. In his address he said, “The constitution is the foundation of the country’s political system under which its people are governed. Constitution of any State legislature, executive and judiciary wings establishes their powers, the demarcation of their obligations and regulates their relations with the public. In fact, each of the ideals of its founders and creators of the Constitution is the mirror of the values and dreams of the people and is based on the specific social, political and economic goals and faith and aspirations of its people.” Further, he said, “Dr. B. R. Ambedkar studied all of these issues in depth and presented the Constitution of India for the elimination of all these social disparities for which we all are grateful to him. He appealed the participants of the webinar to stay committed and to get guided by Constitution, and to strive to build on this foundation for progressive development of the country.” The webinar was concluded by reading out in unison the preamble of the Constitution of India.

## Seeking Peace in a World of Prejudice and Pandemic

India Peace Centre organised 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture in memory of Dr. Mathai Zachariah, the founder of India Peace Centre, on 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2020. Dr. Aruna Gnanadason, who worked very closely with Dr. Mathai Zachariah in the formative years of the centre delivered the lecture and paid tribute to the great ecumenical visionary and leader. After highlighting the plight and pain of people due to lockdown and COVID-19 pandemic, she questioned “what can be the response of faith communities is the challenge for us today? The coronavirus has taken away almost the whole of 2020 – religious places have been forced to stay closed or welcome only a very small safe number of worshippers. All our religions believe in a God of compassion and love and yet we have been forced to stand back and watch the death and devastation around us and not even be able to grieve with family and friends who had lost loved ones to the virus. Many are dying without access to last rites. This is a challenge to the pastoral responsibility of the church and other religious institutions.



# Seeking Peace in a World of Prejudice and Pandemic

Dr. Mathai Zachariah Annual Memorial Lecture | December 18, 2020 | 4:00PM (IST)

Zoom App  
Meeting ID: 943 5958 2438  
Passcode: 889626

**Mathai Zachariah**  
1925-2012

**Asir Ebenezer**  
Chairperson, India Peace Centre

**Aruna Gnanadason**  
Feminist Thinker

**Sameema Zahra**  
Philosopher

**Sharath Sowseelya**  
Theologian

**Renuka Damani**  
Lawyer

Lecturer  
Respondents

[www.indiapeacecentre.org](http://www.indiapeacecentre.org) | [ipc@indiapeacecentre.org](mailto:ipc@indiapeacecentre.org) | [www.facebook.com/IndiaPeaceCentre](https://www.facebook.com/IndiaPeaceCentre)

The time is ripe for religious institutions to “reinvent” themselves, their diaconal responsibilities and their mission in the world. All religious communities in India did offer relief work to the migrants and to continuing response to poor communities propelled by all our faiths. However, she affirmed that we need to take a moment to pause and consider what is required of us as we move to “a new normal” as we have often been reminded - it cannot be just going back to a world of unjust relationships and un-peace.

## Youth Combating Climate Change

A webinar on youth combating climate change was organised by India Peace Centre on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to observe Youth Day. Facilitated by Mr. Kasta Dip, Director, India Peace Centre, Mr. Angelious Michael, Partnership Coordinator of JELC and Mr. Punya Murthy Khristodas, PhD Research Scholar, Centre for Climate Change and Disaster Management Anna University, the webinar affirmed that youths can help stop climate change in their own simple yet purposeful ways. Such as: joining environmental organizations or groups; participating in various governmental, non-governmental, school or community programs and projects against climate change; joining clean-up drives at school or in community; participating in tree planting and go-green activities; garbage picking and recycling initiatives; getting involved in environmental protests and campaigns; using social media like Facebook, twitter or Instagram in promoting climate change and environmental awareness to the public; limiting the use of plastics; helping report illegal activities to authorities; walking or biking in short distances instead of riding fuelled vehicles; segregating garbage at home and lastly, encouraging our friends, schoolmates and our family to do what we are doing.

Doing those things can help mitigate climate change. Today, we should realize that we have a moral responsibility towards our environment and our planet. Stopping climate change is not easy. But if we work together as one, our micro-efforts will have a macro effect on our environment and our planet. The survival of every living being on Earth depends on how we handle our environment. We humans are the highest form of being in this planet, so we are to blame if things go wrong in our planet. To me

and to all the youths around the world, let us act now. Let us be involved in this fight. As a young generation, let us help the former generation in shaping our environment. Our voice matters and our life matters. So what are we waiting for? Let us stand together in stopping climate change.



**INDIA PEACE CENTRE**  
Weaving Peace since 1988



Webinar on

# Youth Combating Climate Change



Kindly join with us

Zoom Meeting ID: 94683104442

Passcode: 510611

12 January 2021

4 P. M