

INDIA PEACE CENTRE



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The India Peace Centre like all other organizations could not do any physical program during the COVID time. However, it could organize many webinars on zoom platform and it also helped many people, who were economically affected due to COVID related restrictions, especially the poor people. India Pece Centre planned programs to get an insight on how the pandemic severely impacted the communities and young people. After the restrictions were revoked, IPC started to hold programs and conferences. Below are the reports of different activities of IPC of the year 2022-23.

The India Peace Centre is extremely grateful to its partners for supporting the idea of organizing four different discourses on understanding the impacts of COVID from diverse perspectives of faith and issues. IPC thank the leadership of ZMÖ for granting financial resources to bring together participants of different age groups and resource persons to one platform in the four programs. The following four programs were held

- 1. Shared future: Reinventing Human Solidarity**
- 2. A National Conference on Shared Future: Reinventing Human Solidarity**
- 3. A National Symposium on Societal Peace and Youth**
- 4. A Peace Conclave on Faiths Seeking Justice and Peace**

These programs brought together about 200 thinkers, academicians, religious leaders, professionals, students & youth from different parts of India who shared perspectives of Peace in the Post Covid situation.

Peace in the Post Covid Context

Objectives of the Conference

- To restore mutual trusts and respects among different faith communities
- To reinforce pluralistic character of Indian society
- To strengthen civil society for societal peace
- To create a national network of young peacemakers

The objective of the conference is developed in the pretext of the emerging challenges of Covid 19 and its adverse impact on individuals, communities. The challenges of coronavirus and its aftermath, in one hand, have exposed the poor health care system and vulnerability of the poor and the marginalised, and yet, on the other hand brought out the best of faith communities. Covid 19 has not only been a health issue, rather, it had its implications in different area of life, particularly in the life of the already neglected and marginalized communities. India Peace Centre took initiatives to address the challenges by providing dry food, rations to the poor people who could not get any work during the lockdown. India Peace Centre also supported young people to start their own small entrepreneurship using computers. India Peace Centre supplied Oxygen cylinders during the peak of Covid 19. Amidst crisis and challenges, communities and especially faith communities came up to feed stranded migrant workers, or serving urban and rural poor, they have led it from the front. The notion of harmony is still there among most Indians, whether they belong to Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism or any other faith including atheism. India Peace Centre took initiatives to engage young people during the time of Covid to distribute relief materials to the neediest. Hundreds of venerable people were benefited by the relief work carried out by India Peace Centre.

People whether belonging to one faith or other or no faith do not wish to face violence. And violence based on faith is no priority for them. Love and compassion are still the most moving sentiments that people in India would like to believe in. Faith communities are still here as a country because of this contrasting reality between love and hate.

important concern in the post-pandemic world remains that we as faith communities along with other likeminded individuals and groups will have to work hard to repair relations among different faith communities. Relations between individuals, relations of an individual with a community and relationship with one's God need to be restored. The conference

intends to bring perspectives to Peace from the context of development in the society, education, interfaith coalition in the post covid time. India Peace Centre, an inter-religious centre for justice and peace initiatives is committed to educate and share ideas of peace in challenging times.

If India wants to emerge in a financially strong position in the post COVID-19 world, faith communities and various ideological groups need to work together without allowing religious divisions and conflicts to distract. The drafters of the Constitution saw India's religious diversity as a strength and an integral part of the ethos of India. Addressing the Constituent Assembly, S. Radhakrishnan, then a member of the Constituent Assembly and later the president of India, noted that, "India is a symphony where there are, as in an orchestra, different instruments, each with its sonority, each with its special sound, all combining to interpret one score. It is this kind of combination that this country has stood for." Therefore, India Peace Centre which practises ministry of reconciliation as its mission mandate brought together, time and again, faith leaders, peace activists, educationists, youth and women from different faiths and ideological groups together for dialogues of life and produce resources for civil society to engage more perceptively in strengthening communal harmony in India.

Reinventing Human Solidarity – A Post Covid Analysis

Faith Leaders seeking peace and justice

New Delhi, 27-29 April, 2023

The following persons were interviewed who spoke about the situations of women, children, students, families during the time to covid.

Aliyamma Thomas, Vice President, NCCI



Covid has been a time of difficulties, and challenges, especially for women. Migrant workers, women at home faced many problems. Domestic violences were reported during this time. So, it was evident that, whenever there is a natural disaster, or a health emergency, most victims have been women.

Women are mostly the struggling section of the society. Irrespective of their socio-economic status and situation. Women staying at home, and even the women working, who lost their job and women who have a job away from home in another city who also lost their jobs and all came back home without job, without monthly income- they were the victims in many ways.

Women have been facing discrimination for ages, but during the time of Covid, the discrimination was more vividly visible. Men forces were mostly allowed to work, while women were sent home. That is a big discrimination that happened, when we talk about the top area. In Case of domestic

workers, it was more evident that, the husbands were working and the women were the bread winners of the family.

During this pandemic time, they were not allowed to work in houses, so they were only at home and the domestic violence was relatively higher during that time. Despite all these, women have the strength to overcome all of these difficulties which is God given. And they started without the job outside the house, they started farming, they started cultivating vegetables.

I'm from Kerala and we have this self-help group called "Kudumbashree", the women were the only members of the Program. This self-help group started in a very small scale and now it has become a big enterprise in Kerala. The presence of the Kudumbashree was felt everywhere in the Society. They give trainings to the young women (age does not matter to become a member), they gave trainings for self-sustainability, they have micro finance schemes as well. So, through these schemes they received money from their Kudumbashree Project and they survived during this pandemic.

Basanti Biswas, Principal, Calcutta Girls High School



"The last two years have been very traumatic for everyone and I would say it was very difficult for our students. Young children being used to coming to school and being part their social network group, suddenly felt locked up at home, suddenly missed all their friends and it created a lot of emotional stress on them.

And to be very honest, once the government declared that we can slowly come back to normalcy, it was a great sign of relief for us, we were very happy to be back on the premises. Yet, after the students returned to school, we noticed a lot of gaps that had been created. We wanted to start off where we had left, but soon we noticed, we cannot do it.

There was a lot of issues of students, many of our students had either lost their parents or near and dear ones during the two years of Covid and that has impacted them in a very bad way. For them, it was coming to terms with a new lifestyle.

I can talk about my own institution which is in the city of Kolkata, Calcutta Girls Highschool. The government announced for shutting down of schools due to heatwave, but students wanted to come to school, because they have a feeling of togetherness which they missed during covid being at home. They have a feeling of friendship, which can help them to improve on their emotional side.

Covid Pandemic of two years took away a lot from the children. But now, that we are slowly coming back to normalcy it is again returning to their laughter they wanted, the care they wanted from us, the feeling of togetherness that they were looking for and of course a sense of peace has come to them.

Coming back to normalcy has been a blessing for many students, especially for those who are from the lower income background. Because when the pandemic began, we switched to online mode of classes, and that made it necessary for the students to have either a laptop or a tablet or a smartphone because without that the platform that we were using was not accessible for them.

I personally know of families where there were two sisters and a brother and the family only having one phone and most of the time the brother was given the privilege to use it, which I strongly opposed, because I felt there shouldn't be any gender bias when education is concerned.

And even some Families I know of, the parent had and had to take the phone along and the child did not have a phone. So the parent used to request us to prepone our class time so that the child could finish the class and then the father could take the phone and go to work. So I feel coming back to normalcy has been a great blessing for those children who, as I said, are from lower economic backgrounds.

And something which came up was child abuse. One is physical abused, because the child is at home getting bored, not knowing what to do and becomes a big problem for their parents, mother is also totally locked down at home, she has all the work to do because there is no help or the maid coming in and there was a factor of irritation where the child was irritating the mother. And the only possible way to get out was to give the child a big slap or beat the child up. So, this has happened during Covid, that children have been exposed to physical abuse.

Dr. Priya John, General Secretary, CMAI



When I was asked about peace and health, I got back into the understanding of the healing ministry itself. The healing ministry is not just about a wholistic healing of Body mind and soul but there is one more Aspect to it, relationships. Relationships between an individual and another individual, relationship between an Individual and himself or herself and the relationship between the Individual and the Community now these are relationships that need healing in today's world. To give and bring the healing, one more relationship is important and that is the relationship with the individual and his or her creator. When a relationship is strong, when a relationship is built on trust, when a relationship is built on mutual respect, it will go a long way in bringing the peace and maintaining the peace.

it reminded me today to bring about that peace in Relationships, to restore relationships through healing ministries. Yes, the work of our hospitals, 275 of them as well as our individual members who form the complete health care team that is the doctor, the nurses the allied health workers, the administrators, they all work together to provide wholistic care.

Covid brought lot of disruption in peace, of relationships, of infrastructure of system. What did we do to contribute to that? The main Idea was to assure that our health professionals were equipped to handle the pandemic, equipped not just in infrastructure and equipment and PPE, but also mentally, emotionally, and intellectually. Giving the facility, building training in various protocols required for Covid Care, treatment plans, guidelines, issued by the ministry of the government the ministry of health and family welfare.

The leadership of many of the hospitals spent time with the staff, just to assure them, to reassure them. To say that the management is looking out for their protection. They spent time, they motivated, they gave knowledge, they gave the updates on a regular basis, and when the leadership did that, the Staff were motivated inspired, to go beyond their call of duty.

Whether it was working two shifts or working without a salary or a salary cut, they did it happily. And I think that brought so much of peace to just the working environment, to handle a very uncertain pandemic. As CMAI we also contributed to the helping of communities, through the hospitals whether it was giving some rations, or some protected gear or even some education programs. This was done through different projects, where the donors were kind enough to use the budget lines in different ways to answer or to respond to the pandemic.

I think that Peace is defined, when you come together for a good beyond ourselves, beyond our organisations, beyond any designation we might have or any project objective that was one of the most beautiful experiences I personally experienced during the pandemic. We are looking at a future and everybody calls it a new normal but if the new normal involves a learning from this whole pandemic experience, where relationships mattered the most, where peace within these relationships mattered the most, then I think it is a good new normal. It is a normal where we cross our boundaries, whether it is an organisational structure or institutional hierarchy, we cross all those borders, just to do something good for a fellow brother or sister. For us I think that would be a victory when we want to look at peace in a post pandemic situation in the aftermath of what the covid has brought with it with all its challenges.

Carmel Tripathy, Baha'i, New Delhi



“One of the areas that the Baha’i community of India has really learned a lot about during the pandemic, was the experience that we had with the families, the space of family, was something that was affected very badly and we saw that how the families a space where the children, the mothers - I’d had a lot of impact on all of them, especially the women in the family.

We could really see one of the silent pandemics was really the women being neglected from the family, the children- particularly the girl child being neglected by the family, which is one of the concerns that the Baha’is really had. And some of the efforts that were made by the institutions, was really how can we have more conversations in the family, where they can talk and talk more about each persons role. How each one of us has an important role to play in bringing about unity just within the family space. We saw examples of where there were options for a boy and a girl child to pursue their education and it was very natural for many families to give that space, that opportunity to the boy child, who could then use his phone for the online classes, whereas the girls they got neglected from this opportunity.

So the institutions of the Baha’i faith then really encouraged the belief to form smaller groups where they can pray together, where they can consult on the holy writings, consult about the role of the institution of the family. How family is a space where these seed beds for change and where you can really nurture the children to embody qualities such as love for each other, care for each other. How can caregiving not only be something that is limited to the women in the family, how can we raise men to become supporters of the equality of women and men. So these were a few questions that we have been trying to learn about and explored together and many spaces have also been created by the office where we explore together the role of the family as a space, as an institution - how these virtues can be embraced by each one of us.”

The institutions, different religious institutions had a very important role to play during covi. The religious leaders had a very important role to play during this period of the pandemic and even after that to really speak with one voice, to really unite everyone and to help people to realize that we're nothing but creation of god and we're all one created by the same God and it is really this expression of love for god which was shown in different ways in our service to humanity, to all those who were serving the front line, be them, government officials, doctors, health workers, educators, everyone served for their love of God. Love of our creator got reflected in our service to humanity. So that is one step that we moved forward and the lessons that we learned, how do we forget each other's differences and really work towards building a better civilization, a civilization where we really consider each one of us as a protagonist for change.

Education is a medium where we really understand, where our potential is developed. The hidden gems that we have within us are only education. And education is one medium, where we realize what we are capable of and we can do for the betterment of humanity. But along with the education how do we serve humanity- so service should also go along with that. So one thing we feel is that, moderation in all things is also important.

We see that the whole aspect of the climate change and the way we are polluting the environment - the realization of this comes when we're conscious, when we're educated. Acknowledge that each one of us can make the world a better place, sometimes we feel like what difference would it make, it's just me, just one person how can they make a difference? But each one of us is conscious and each one of us acts in moderation, that also has its own implications. And now we also realize that when we understand the importance of the equality of women and men- that also has its implications on climate change. How the women also have an important role to play, in bringing about a change.

And this was very strongly felt during the pandemic, how as a community each one of us really strongly believed in the power of prayer and that did not only mean that that person is healed but it really was for the overall well-being of humanity. Where prayers were said not only for our family members but really for each and every one we knew and did not know. So this power of prayer was something that was really strongly felt during the pandemic, the importance of prayer, which is one of the biggest lessons which I think we have learned, is really to have faith and to believe in the divine power of God."

It is very true that one of the major impacts of the pandemic was on the mental health and many of us were affected by that. I can say from what I heard from many friends was, what kept them moving was really the love that they expressed with each and every one they knew. One should show the individual that we are with him/her, he/she is not alone, we're in this together.

Ella Sonawane, ISPCK



There have been ripple effects of Covid 19 and it has been seen globally and of course at different levels. I have been working with women at the rural area even during the pandemic and I've had stories, which some women might be able to identify but of course we all have our own stories which we have experienced during the Covid pandemic and as specially the lockdown. The pandemic had deeper pre-existing inequalities and exposed vulnerabilities in almost all fields, whether it is social, economic or at the home level and it has only amplified those issues. Women and girls have been as specially hit

because of the virtue of being a woman, they have been more hit by this pandemic. Talk about the gender-based violence which is nothing new and it is there all over the world, but it has to a great extent increased because women and girls were forced to be at home. And when we talk about home, I think that is the safest place I can think of, but it is not the safety place for all women and girls.

It is unfortunate that women and girls have faced violence during these times, as specially a lot of men and male members at home lost their jobs and then it became the responsibility of the women to take care of their Family. And women in the urban or even rural areas, I have stories about how women looked after their family when their husbands and boys were at home doing nothing.

I know of a story of one of the women who worked with me and her family had to leave their village and go to their own village in Bengal. It was a tough time for them when they left but we did whatever we could to buy them the tickets and let them go there. Two days later this girl who I worked with; she lost her brother who was drowned in one of the rivers there. This was a great tragedy and later on this family forced this girl to marry someone from the village. She was not prepared in any way to marry but she was forced to marry. Her father even beat her up so that she would marry. These are all effects of Covid. If this had not happened probably, she would have been working with me and continue to empower more women.

But on the other hand, there's a story of another girl, who during this lockdown was able to do higher studies. She was able to do things. So, it's not just the negative affects but there have been some good stories as well which we can talk about. And when we talk about post Covid, I really believe that we need to build a just resilient world and rectify the longstanding inequalities that exist in our society.

We need to designate safe spaces where women can report. Awareness campaigns including targeting men at home. These are the men at home who can influence others. So, to restore peace it is important to build confidence, strengthen public services. While this Covid came as a shocker to the whole world, are we prepared for another shocker?

We are aware of Thursdays in Black- it's a concept which needs to be told to more people. We in the ISPCK observe it. How many of us are able to talk about Thursdays in Black. Wearing a badge or putting up a poster does not help. How are we putting it into action? I would like to quote someone, Mister Elliot Missionburg, he says "culture of peace is no longer limited peace among people or nations, it includes also living in peace with nature, making peace with the planet and all the living things. We must work together united to create fairer, more inclusive, more sustainable society. We must harness the power of diversity as a source of creativity and innovation and equip individuals and communities with the skills they need to understand and cooperate with each other" he concluded.

it is important that in this post pandemic situation each of us are responsible to bring peace, to restore peace in our own environment, in our own surroundings. Let us begin from ourselves, because charity begins from home. And it's important that each of us plays a mayor role in restoring and bringing peace in the society and the world. And create a ripple effect, by putting our foot first into this work of peace. Because we cannot accept a word in which there is violence, as specially against our women and girls.

Day 1

The three days national conference on **Shared Future: Reinventing Human Solidarity in a Post Covid Context** was conducted from **12th to 14th July 2022** by the **India Peace Centre at Nagpur**. The conference began with meditative music, thoughts and words of welcome

followed by the introduction of the participants and introduction to the conference. Rev.Dr.Asir Ebenezer,

Chairperson of India Peace Centre in his opening speech emphasized challenges to peace in the context of COVID and how the



health crisis not only devastated health and livelihood of common people, but also the community being and wellness of families. While acknowledging various ethnic/religious background the participants represent in the conference, he further articulated saying "we are all in the same storm but different boats" with respect to covid and post covid situation. Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal, Acting General Secretary and Treasurer of India Peace Centre also shared greetings and introduced about the India Peace Centre. He illustrated about various interfaith activities the India Peace Centre organises at its Program Centre in Nagpur and other parts of India and its continuous engagement in interfaith dialogues.

Dr. S. Vijay Kumar, Associate Professor, PG Department of Sociology from Hislop College, Nagpur delivered the keynote address. He brought the attention of the participants towards a new mode of education that got prevailed after COVID even hit the educational institutions and students. He expounded on digital divide that emerged during covid and increasing trend of commercialization of education. He made it clear that, the new education system and the new world order will have to deal both with physical and digital form of communication, and thus he introduced the term "Physital" for future learning and development. He proposed the future of education through different ideas for public action.

The conference had the following subthemes

- Legal Resources for Reinventing Human Solidarities
- Scriptural Resources for Reinventing Human Solidarities (Visits)
- Scriptural Resources for Reinventing Human Solidarities
- Reaffirming Pluralistic Character of India
- Post covid contexts: opportunities and challenges for human solidarities

- Ecumenical Peace Initiatives

Adv. Aileen Marques, a Mumbai High Court advocate put together her own experiences of dealing with prisoners and their struggle for peace and freedom and the importance of legal resources for truth, justice, and peace in the life of an individual and community. Adv. Aileen Marques is a member of the government appointee to the prison who are eligible to visit the prisoners and get to talk to them. She narrated her experiences of both comfort and discomfort situations. She also introduced different laws that are required to be known by laypersons. Most participants got to know about them for the first time and found that to be extremely helpful. She contemplated on the rights, responsibilities, protection by law towards the vulnerable, briefing on various articles and sections.

The participants had a field visit to places of religious significance, beginning with the Xing Ye Sheng Tang Temple of the Taiwan people. They believe that the essence of God is within us and God is formless, shapeless and can't be seen with naked eyes, following and adopting scriptures of all religions. Next in the list was Sri SaiBaba Seva Mandal. The birth and death of SaiBaba is unknown while he is considered as a guru and not God, just a person who dispelled of darkness of not knowing things, and preached "all god in one". The terms faith and patience appear everywhere in the temple, while it is decorated with pictures of saints. They served all the participants with prasad (sweets) as a symbol of fellowship and communion. Thirdly, the participants visited a Mosque belonging to the Muslim Bohara community. They are a group who work in all professions across the globe; having received great honours like the peace ambassadors of the country and golden key of the city, they have a lot to speak on brotherhood and respect to all religions. This helped the participants to break the stereotyped ideas about Islam, Muslim, and their various practices.



The visit ended at the India Peace Centre with discussions and sharing of ideas by the participants. This was blessed by the presence of the IPC core committee members from Nagpur, sharing of the vision and orientation of life of each of the

members enlightened the participants to have a greater understanding on the function and structure of IPC and even more. The day 1 session ended with the dinner at IPC.

Day 2

The meaningful morning meditation included reading scripture portions from Baha'i faith, Qur'an, Bhagavath Gita, Buddhist literature, Bible, and other faith scripture, followed by recapitulating and discussion of the thoughts and activities of the previous day, asking individuals to share their experiences including the likes and dislikes and contents/sessions that disturbed them during the course.

Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal was the moderator for the Session on Scriptural Resources for Reinventing Human Solidarities who explained on the beautiful coexistence of all religions.

CA Nimish Sutaria detailed on Jainism and said everything had a soul and all deserve equal



respect and compassion. He shared on their belief in ahimsa, minimalism, reincarnation, aparigraha and many others. Mr. Abdul Majid Parekh explained through the Islamism that pride and prejudice leads to violence and bloodshed, and that religious pride is false pride. Dr. Prasad Siwal from

Hinduism said that God defined on God defiled, that Sansadhanadharma vaildates all faiths, also on the idea of single Supreme Soul. Mr. Rohit Tokhi spoke on a religion which is just 150 years old, the practice having a living master to guide, surprisingly, the religion has no rites, rituals, hierarchy or gathering and the members being veget8arians also abstain from all pleasure-seeking activities of the world. He also explained on the great activities done during the pandemic scenario by the Radha Saomi believers. The session was followed by an intense discussion and exchange which was eye opening to all the listeners

The next session rebegan on the reaffirming pluralistic character of India by Prof. Janbarao Tulsiram Thakre shared from the Baha'i faith perspective on just the superficial difference between people, on the Inter-caste, interreligious and interethnic union which is encouraged in this faith. Further he said the only way to bring harmony is by studying the original scripture.

Dr. Shiluina Jamir presented on the opportunities and challenges for human solidarity developing on resilience, vulnerability, solidarity through the probable model of Moses and perfect example of Jesus. Through love and accepting of everyone is the best way to establish Human Solidarity in society. Solidarity is not tokenism was the concluding statement by Mr. Vinod Shemron

This was followed by a time of sharing from participants representing different organizations on peace initiatives in their respective organizations. the peace initiatives. YMCA participants

shared about being peace agents in conducting interreligious conferences. Making a difference can bring peace said, Annie and Samson who run a disability centre in New Delhi. Bringing gender justice, empowering and destruction of inequalities that can potentially establish peace as expressed by ATTWI. Other representatives shared on teaching and preaching through social activities can function as communities for peace building. KAIROS India partnership works towards peace building among all those in face of oppression and trials with the concluding statement that independence for one is catastrophe for another nation.

Day 3

The day began with a morning prayer emphasizing on the campaign “Thursday in Black” which is global campaign against rape and gender-based violence against women. The participants read out meaningful quotations based on women dignity and equality which was accompanied by beautiful music and sharing from the participants.

Recapturing from day 2 brought many significant aspects about learning, de-learning and relearning and different experiences from the participants.

Rev.Dr. Asir Ebenezer gave leadership to the session on Ecumenical Peace initiatives, saying truth has many facets and nobody has a monopoly over it. He briefed on formulating peace for and in individual contexts connecting with people of other faith like EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment of People in Palestine and Israel), WWPPPI (World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel), BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions), banks which are investment friendly and not investor friendly, interfaith coalitions for peace, networks for building LCP (Local Capacity for Peace), reflective peace practices, through peace education, reading religious scriptures together as a locality or group, GEET (Gender Equity Enabling Timetable).



After a break over the tea, the session resumed by a short sharing by Rev. Dn. Ribin John on Vedik training followed by the Action Plan by Mr. Angelious Michael, for this he used the methodology of group discussions by dividing the team into 5 groups and giving groups a time limit of 20 minutes. This was proceeded by presentation done by a member from each group,



all suggesting possible and feasible ideas which could be implemented soon. Sports, music, dance, food fests, engaging activities, healthy debates and competitions, tuitions centres, language learning classes, inter cultural discussions, interfaith dialogue, outreach programs and most importantly teaching fellow members to love and respect other religion and people of other

religions are some proposals of methods that came from the floor which could be easily practiced in and by all communities. With a final proposal for conclusion and a word of thanks by Mr. Angelious Michael the national conference on Shared Future: Reinventing Human Solidarity in a Post Covid Context I ended.

Expected outcome

- Resources to promote communal harmony
- Radical peace initiatives by participating groups
- Reinvigoration of civil society

Outcome of the Conference

1. Each participant / organization was asked to initiate / continue peace initiatives and also be part of other peace initiative network among faith groups to promote Peace and communal harmony.
2. To stay engaged in dialogue and activities to sustain peace.
3. To continue / form interfaith small groups to discuss issues of common interest
4. To continue to support development and peace initiatives as interfaith community

National Symposium on Societal Peace and Youth in a Post Covid context **26-28 July, 2022 I Nagpur**

Day 1

The three-day National Symposium on Societal Peace and Youth in Post Covid conducted by the India Peace Centre began with meditative music, thoughts and words of welcome by Mr. Angelious Michael on the need of peace and solidarity which is important in the present context, followed by the self-introduction of participants and introduction to the conference, NCCI and IPC by saying "least is the leader" and the sovereignty to enhance peace by Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer.

Tejinder Singh Rawal spoke on the humanity perspective and India has potential of young population, reach out to the youth and channelize the energy of hatred to the cause of peace; even environment degradation destroys peace, the people should learn these things add value to it and spread it on in the society and next generation.

Mr. Angelious Michael moderated the sessions where Dr. Packiam T. Samuel on multifaith perspective disturbed the participants thought process by throwing various questions like how do we see ourselves and others? why are there so many religions? does people believe God or fear God? is God uncomfortable because of our actions?

The great diversity in creation which is interconnected, interdependent harmonious life with abundance of everything and scarce in nothing. While we have created a wonder super world, with many inventions and discoveries which has become the convenience and abundance for few, when majority is in pain. He concluded with the 4 mantras believe, connect, stretch and

eliminate which will liberate, enrich and transform the inhabitants. Rev. Dr. Vincent Rajkumar continued on the socio-political perspective through positive and negative peace. Without the neighbour's there is no salvation, he spoke on the various religions and their perspectives on peace. The effect of Covid 19 on people, the digital gap it created, the political response and the response of faith community was another area of discussion, with the concluding statement to fight against injustice, discrimination and violence. The whole session was followed by an engaging discussion.

Post lunch the session was led by Rev.Dr. Abraham Mathew began on Societal Peace and Religions saying the conventional dialogue is not possible, rather to reoccupy the religion as it belongs to the common people and not the elites. One needs to learn and think about ones own religions and real religious people have the tendency to live for others. Mr. Pradip Bansrior made strong statements on the various challenges faced by Adivasis, Tribals and Dalits. The changes made in policies, and the advantages refused to the Dalit Christians. Strong equality is practiced among the Adivasi tribes.

After a short tea break, Rev. Jyothi Singh stated society is not a group of people but a system of relationship that exists between individual of a group. Status of women in Indian society is pathetic, though subject to changes over periods. Gender roles ascribed leads to unqualified status in society and family. Women are always subject to the men associated and children are forced into labour which disrupts societal peace. The concluding question was if the society is actually safe for women and children? Rev.Dn. Ribin John began with redefining peace as being inclusive and equal, the barriers for the life of a PwD as attitudinal, architectural or physical, information or communication, technology. Pointing out the differences between gender and sexuality and also giving a call to the participants to think that the opposite of normal can be special and extraordinary.

Day 2

Day 2 began with the thought that, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten to belong to each other. With thoughts of peace from the Holy Scriptures of Buddhist, Jain, Singapore, Baha'i, Hinduism, Islam, Parsi, Christian faith. Day 1 was recaptured by Mr. Angelious Michael which was a platform to share new and disturbing thoughts, which was used to the core by the participants explaining their experiences.

Panel Discussion was moderated by Tejinder Singh Rawal saying that there are various aspects of conflict, and the youths though are the important constituents, are ignored as they are either in fantasised and demonized. Societal Peace, Environment and Youth. Future of environment is in danger, peaceful environment should be pure and healthy, legislation to protect the environment, problems related to environmental pollution, to restore the environment one has to manage sustainable and responsible consumption. Laws and articles which protect the environment. We always look for the right and not the duties and responsibilities. Role of youth to enhance the protection of 'One Mother Earth'. Ashish Deshpande spoke on Societal Peace and Urban Deprived Communities. Everyone is equal, just that some people lack in finances. Try to get the elders employed, give education through tuitions, help them get loans for small scale industries, create awareness about basic rights, personal hygiene, and other facilities.

Sonal Hikare elaborated on Societal Peace and Youth in IT Sector, social media is widely used by the youth and they even face most of the challenges in this field. Free speech is not without responsibility. Technology is for convenience but Peace is a prerequisite for human existence. Youths are striving for inner peace. Human connection are decreasing and technology is taking its place. Everyone wants to be listened but no one has time. She concluded with a statement by Steve Jobs, "It's not faith and technology but faith and people". Societal Peace and child upbringing by Lata Toki. She began saying that through responsible parenting establish peace. Rebellious youths are insecure and lonely children those exposed to the evils in society. Setting out good example to children, teaching them to respect women, reading books and movies with children, exposure to diversity from childhood, pointing out unfair stereotypes, value the uniqueness of each member of in family, being compassionate, and concluded saying tolerance is accepting people the way they are.



The afternoon session began with a singing session on the diversity of religions in India and the unity it shares led by Mr. Angelious Michael. Adv. Aileen Marques through an activity conveyed that the same rule and law differ with respect to the way in which it is interpreted, the scope of law expands. She went on explaining fundamental rights, discrimination in marriage, equal opportunities, discrimination, positive discrimination, special laws, POCSO, right to life, right to education, right to privacy, right to information, right to freedom of thought, destructive development, under trial prisoner issues, maintenance of parents and senior citizens, cyber safety, human trafficking, personal laws, maintenance, court procedures, police complaints, succession act.

Mr. Angelious Michael led the Plenary brainstorming session on Creating National Network of Young Peace Makers dividing the participants into 5 groups, asking them to identify existing conflicts, identifying the problem maker and reason for solution. The contents of the groups were presented in the general session in form of enactments, giving all the participants a chance to speak in public.

The day ended with a fellowship at the India Peace Centre, where the core committee members and participants of the Symposium introduced themselves, Tejinder Singh Rawal



shared on the activities like Kabir, skipping games, language school, Nagpur book club, English and soft skill class for the LGBTQ community, interfaith community, sessions on the futility of war, help to people in Assam flood. Rev.Dr. Joshua Peter shared on

Thiruvannamali which is believed as Shiva himself (so people circumambulate the mountain), only place promoting gender equality because of the arthanarishvarai, Quo Vadis dedicated by a Hindu priest, Muslim Imam and a Christian Bishop all at the same time. Faith and spirituality is experience. By a word of thanks by Rev.Dr. Asir Ebenezer and dinner, the day ended

Peace Conclave on Faiths Seeking Justice and Peace

Date: 2nd – 4th December 2022, Nagpur

As the world has entered in the ear of globalization it has been challenged timely in countering ideas of confusions, conflicts, and turmoil which ultimately creates an environment towards the hinderance and alienation to peace and its initiatives. The entire world is on a chase for materialistic happiness and living, ignorant of their social responsibility which makes the living of a larger society more miserable and underwhelming. Peace is nothing but the state of soul consciousness in which lies the true happiness of human beings. Many laureates in the local and global context have shared their views on peace in identifying various factors that leads to peace and have termed it to be the significant factor of human living which emphasizes the importance of peace for any society. Without peace no nation and no individual can move forward. Only in a peaceful atmosphere mankind can secure greater heights. A society without peace is like life in the state of nature-brutish, barbaric, short, dull, and nasty as Thomas Hobbes quotes. Everyone professes a desire for peace as a goal not just as an individual but largely as a society and community. Owing to such scenarios of paradigm shifts in addressing the perspectives on peace in the world, a three days forum ‘**Peace Conclave on Faiths Seeking Justice and Peace**’ was conducted from 2nd to 4th December 2022 by India Peace Centre. The consultation bore witness to the participation of representatives and program heads from diverse peace organizations, institutes, initiatives working in the field of global and local peace in India who also facilitated and shared their work as resource persons involved and engaged in the process of learning, sharing, and expansion of their ideas on the topic of peace building and bringing praxis-oriented change in their contexts.

The conclave began with a meditative music led by Ms. Thula Schamberg and Mr. Helge Laatzen, following with formal greetings and the introduction of the participants gathered for the conclave. **Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer**, Chairperson of India Peace Centre greeted the gathering with words of welcome. He in his speech reflected on the context on which the conclave was aimed in highlighting the contemporary challenges that are emerging in the local and global set up and how diverse peace institutions working on peace, can contribute and partner in creating a just and peace-oriented space for a better world to exist and flourish. **Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal**, Director and Treasurer of India Peace Centre shared about the significance of peace and its vitality in the present times and the initiatives taken by the India Peace Centre and like-minded institutions in reweaving the broken pieces of unity, harmony, and peace that gets hampered in the contemporary times. He illustrated the presence of peace institutions and their work to be the leading path for creating of peaceful spaces for the coexistence of all, which is the need of the hour and a guiding hope for all. **Rev. Dr. Joshuva Peter**, Executive Secretary, UELCI & Treasurer, NCCI appreciated the initiative put forward by the India Peace Centre in organizing and inviting the diverse institutions working on peace from around India for the Peace Conclave and emphasized on the idea of initiating the medium of dialogue to be an essential one while striving towards becoming peacemakers and peace seekers. **Mr. Udipta Fullonton**, Secretary, Resource Mobilization and Special Programmes, National Council of Young Men Christian Association reflected upon training and encouraging the young people from different faith traditions and cultures in promoting the ideas of peace in larger society. He emphasized that the future and initiatives to peace can be achieved when the young minds are drawn and impacted to become peacemakers among their communities and societies.

The Peace Conclave marked the presence of representatives from the diverse institutions who peace initiatives who participated to share, learn, network, and partner in pioneering the goals on peace. The panel sessions were structured in providing unique perspectives through initiatives taken by these diverse institutions in the areas of pursuing and propagating the creative ideas of peace through their ways and in their contexts to be a working model for a panoptic and extensive propagation.

The first panel session of the conclave with the theme '***Building Human Solidarity: Initiatives taken by Dialogue Institutions/ Centres***' was leadoff by **Mr. Rohit Tokhi**, Core Committee Member of India Peace Centre, who welcomed and introduced the panel speakers and moderated the panel session. Sharing on the theme **Mr. M. Behzad Fatmi**, Secretary – General, **Indialogue Foundation**, Nodia, Uttar Pradesh, shared a brief presentation on the inception and peace work of the Indialogue Foundation with the inspiration drawn from Muhammed Fethullah Gülen who founded the Gülen movement, referred to by its participants as *Hizmet* or *Cemaat* since 2016 by the Government of Turkey as FETÖ. Mr. Behzad Fatmi highlighted the objectives of the organization in promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue,

community cohesion and proactive citizenship in building universal values of love, compassion, tolerance, respect, and equality. Mr. M. Fatmi also spoke about the diverse academic courses offered by the organization in dialogue studies which are inspired from dialogical thoughts of Muhammed Fethullah Gülen who has expressed dialogue being significant medium which is respectful of diversity, welcoming and ready to engage.

Rev. Lydia Latha, from the **Ecumenical Dialogue Centre of India**, Chennai, shared the foundational ideas on which the dialogue centre was made like humanity beyond religions, building interfaith relations and spirituality, and inspiration from Quo. She further explained that EDCI is a place where anyone can come to engage in spirituality and love to release tension and create harmony with each other. She shared that the EDCI focuses on the medium of dialogue in the key areas such as spiritual, interfaith, silent, diapraxis, and inter – cultural which can bridge gaps and promote a much-desired transformation in an individual and society. She also elaborated on the activities initiated at the dialogue centre such as *Vaanga Pesalam* a place of debates and dialogues nourishing fellowships and unity, Art Wednesday – children art club, Tuesday informal dialogue, dine and dialogue, ecumenical pastors forum, celebration of festivals, liturgical debates, religious space for hostility or hospitality, and identifying and developing leadership through inviting and training peacemakers which will form a multicultural and multireligious ambience towards the promotion of dialogue. She concluded her presentation highlighting the significant works of relief and help provided to the needy communities during pandemic and upcoming endeavours of EDCI with the aim and hope of creating a new environment for peaceful coexistence.

Rev. A. Jeevarathinam, Associate Director, Quo Vadis Interfaith Dialogue Centre, shared his presentation on the peace program of the Arcot Lutheran Church through **Quo Vadis** (*Latin – Where are You going?*) an Interfaith Dialogue Centre situated at Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. He in his presentation shared the key aspects pioneered by the dialogue centre in achieving certain goals likely liberation for the creation, justice for the humanity and peace, resisting systemic violence, and addressing the various forms of structural violence that exist in the society through peaceful responses coming from social, practical, and critical response would help in the transformation of violence towards peace. He also highlighted the prevalence of peace is possible in the existence of justice as suggested and guided by the reformers like Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in creating and approaching peace. He emphasized on the teachings imparted by Christ Jesus towards Faith, Hope, and Love as reflected in the scriptures which are guiding principles while drawing oneself towards peace. He further elaborated on the initiative of Quo Vadis which include Weekly Meditation, Monthly Dialogue on social and religious concerns, monthly bible studies on interfaith perspectives, strengthening fellowships and alternative perspectives on important to religious and secular celebrations, organizing interfaith dialogue studies and practices. He

also shared important activities that takes place at Quo Vadis namely Red Hut Meditation, Monthly Bible Studies inclusive of interfaith reflections, Monthly Seminars, observing International Day of Peace with rural school children through drawing, poetry, singing, mono identity competition and talent identification, Book Reviews. He also highlighted joint activities creating Human Chain for interreligious amity and towards abolishment of discrimination in reservations for Dalit Christians. He also highlighted celebrations of annual festivals such as Pongal festival, Republic Day, Martyrdom of Gandhi and Quo Vadis Day, International Working Women Day, Reformation Day, *Deepavali* festival of lights, and Christmas. He also included the initiatives with other institutions through exposure visits for the theological college students and their upcoming work with India Peace Centre and the National Council of Churches in India.

The second panel session of the conclave with the theme '*Building Human Solidarity: Initiatives taken by Ecumenical Institutions*' was leadoff by **Dr. John Chelladurai**, Prof. and HOD of the Mahatma Gandhi Mission University, Aurgangabad, Maharashtra, who welcomed and introduced the panel speakers and moderated the panel session. Sharing on the proposed theme **Mr. Udipta Fullonton**, Secretary, Resource Mobilization and Special Programmes, **National Council of YMCAs**, New Delhi, shared a brief presentation on the initiatives taken by NCYMCA's in peacebuilding and training of the young peacemakers through Young Peacemakers module. He further elaborated the previous and ongoing advancements made by 400 YMCAs in nine regions in India in connecting and networking with the youths coming from those areas. He highlighted the various activities that work in contributing to the Young Peacemakers Program through inviting of the regional bodies, training/introducing the concepts of young peacemakers, carrying out peace programs in their regions in their native languages and later helping them understand the same in English, training the youths through the mediums of art/documentaries, social media, content creation and various skill attaining activities. He also highlighted certain challenges that make hamper during the process of learning more likely the limitations to resource persons, having difficulties communicating and sharing in native languages, and make program more eventful and interesting to capture the attention of youths in becoming peacemakers. He concluded his session by sharing the copies of resource guide Young Peacemakers Handbook with the representatives which would help them in taking certain aspects on peacebuilding and creating young peacemakers.

Mr. Rajesh Jadhav, National Coordinator, **NCCI – Urban Rural Mission**, Nagpur, Maharashtra, in his presentation reflected on the challenges and circumstances faced in the URM during its initial phase and how it has helped the communities from margins by becoming a ray of hope in finding peaceful solutions in their conflict-stricken situations. He highlighted that there is a real struggle while aiming for peaceful alternatives in a conflicting area as the challenge perhaps shifts from creating peace to stiving for a

justice-oriented alternative as peace without the presence of justice would mean nothing. He emphasized that according to the modern approach one needs to be critically radical as the social and communitarian values and norms may collapse during the time of conflicting situations. He concluded that while aiming for peace the goal should always be to unite bring a peaceful solution for the welfare of the whole cosmos.

Mr. Ashish Deshpande, Founder & Partner, **Saving Dreams Foundation**, Nagpur, brought forward the idea that was involved in the genesis of his foundation which was aimed towards catering and nurturing the lives of underprivileged children from the urban slums and remote areas. He further added that with the help and support of people from the communities residing in these areas they were able to reach and transform the lives of children coming from such backgrounds. He shared that they were able to open two active centres which would help the children in developing and learning skills which would help them in achieving their desired goals in their studies and lives. He further elaborated that the activities in the areas of education, healthcare, hygiene, and sports have been the targeted areas of development and transformation of children. He concluded with an encouragement that paying back to the society and community to which one belong should be the priority aim of every individual which can start while one contributes through small initiatives in achieving greater change.

The third panel session of the conclave with the theme '***Building Human Solidarity: Initiatives taken by Peace Centres & Programs***' was leadoff by **Ms. Sonal Hikare**, Core Committee Member of India Peace Centre, who welcomed and introduced the panel speakers and moderated the panel session. Speaking on the theme **Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer**, Chairperson, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, reflected on the perspectives of peace which needs to be focused upon while talking on the peace initiatives carry forward by Peace Centres and Programs. He further suggested that interfaith peace can become a foundational beginning while addressing the areas of approaching peace through celebration of festivals in a communitarian space and environment which can inculcate and form bonding of togetherness. He suggested that in order to break stereotypical biases between communities one needs associate with the communities on various levels through activities that involved people from both the communities. He also highlighted the significance of available peace modules and curriculum which could cater in developing new avenues for the religious communities to delve into it and seek out progressive solutions and goals in addressing peace. He shared the working examples from the ventures and approaches made by IPC in the previous years in training young peacemakers, reaching out to people during catastrophic natural calamities in the state of Assam and doing more community building and helping programs on a monthly basis through its contributions. He concluded by sharing the upcoming dream projects taken by IPC in the areas of joining with likeminded peace institutions & organizations, mainstreaming of peace education in

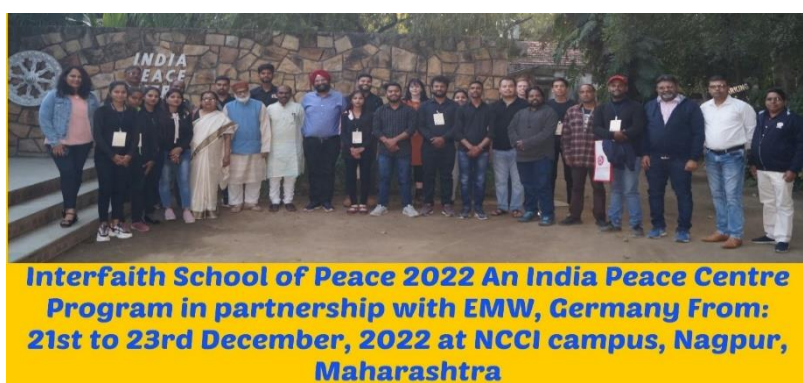
schools and universities, summer schools for children towards associating them in addressing local and global peace movements and initiatives, starting lecture series on peace, reading of religious scriptures in the light of peace in jotting down commonalities which could help in creating a peace nexus through the involvement of all.

Mr. Siman Garda, Peace Campaigner Odisha, shared about his approaches in peacebuilding through various events and activities that have helped people and communities in his context towards developing understanding the ideas on peace. He in his presentation shared the areas which he has been focusing on while talking about peace in the local context where he resides on the specific topics of caste, religion, gender, ecology. He added that in the days to come he will be working on addressing vital areas related to education, women empowerment, and environmental peace. He concluded with a video presentation highlighting the present work in the area of peace and about his future endeavours towards becoming a peace ambassador seeking more associations and help from the local partners and global leaders.

Mr. Sam J. Nallu Prasad, Projects Coordinator, Department of Social & Dalit Concerns, **Mandapasalai Peace Centre**, Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, presented the work and activities run by the peace centre in his area. He in his presentation highlighted that inception of the Mandapasalai Peace Centre which was begun to bring reconciliation and bringing communal harmony among the two predominant caste communities that existed in the region which ultimately resulted in the formation of the peace centre. He further highlighted that in order to bring harmony among the two communities certain communitarian activities were introduced which were a ground breaking initiatives in bringing people from the two communities in a peaceful coexistence.

Interfaith School of Peace **Date: 21st – 23rd December, 2022**

The contemporary globalized age requires enlightened leaders from each faith who will be able to examine their sacred writings, culture, and traditions and identify the aspects that could benefit all humanity as well as those that preserve each religion's identity. In such



significant globalized realm, the role of every individual serves as a sole purpose to the welfare of the whole cosmos, but the importance of inculcating the same values of love, harmony, unity, and

peace which would be perpetual could only happen when the young minds are developed in every generation. In this context the inclusion of youths through meaningful participation would cater a change making process as they will create peaceful societies and serve from the onset of every peacebuilding process. Hence, the need for an active forum which would invite the participation of diverse religious institutions, ideas, and values would serve a pioneering step in knitting every thread together in forming a strong bond which is a possibility through shared initiatives of interfaith and interreligious organizations, religious leaders, scholars, humanitarian entities, and civil society actors. As a matter to address to such concerns a three-day forum '**Interfaith School of Peace**' was organized by India Peace Centre in partnership with EMW Germany between 21st to 23rd December 2022 at the National Council of Churches in India campus, Nagpur. The consultation bore witness to the participation of young delegates and experienced team of resource persons coming from diverse faith traditions who were involved and engaged in process of learning, sharing, and expansion of their ideas on the topic of peace building in bringing praxis-oriented change in their contexts.

Session – I

The session began with the inscription of meditative music helping all the participants and delegates to pause and rejuvenate themselves before the beginning of the sessions for the day by healing their mind and body providing therapeutic tranquillity afresh in the morning time which was led by Mr. Helge Laatzen and Ms. Thula Schamberg who further engaged the participants and delegates through icebreaker games towards knowing each other during the three-day program.

Session – II

The Interfaith School of Peace was inaugurated with the greetings and welcoming words proposed by **Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal**, Acting Director and Treasurer, India Peace Centre. He elaborated on the desired agenda and goal of the Interfaith School of Peace is towards reaching out to the young peace ambassadors who can be a vessel of hope for the whole humanity in serving towards creating a harmonious way in engaging with each other with the message of love and peace. Sharing on a similar note **Mr. Angelious Michael**, shared the significant relevance of peace in contemporary context with regards to training younger generations with the



influence and ideas on peace which would substantiate a close bond of learning and growing with each other in the days to come as peace builders. Taking the inspiration

Mr. Joydeep Rayan Raychowdhury, Regional Secretary, Central India Region of YMCAs, encouraged the delegates to utilize to the fullest the given opportunity through participating in the Interfaith School of Peace which could act as a medium for all of them to experience how peace institutions and initiatives have been contributing and working in the area of peace through various ways and mediums. He expounded that youth being a significant part in working for peace and being the future leaders for making spaces for peace, harmony, and coexistence. He reminded that in order to preserve the aspect and values of peace within a community or an individual the bridge of peace needs to be conserved at all costs.

Session – III

The session on **Understanding Conflict: Group Work** was jointly facilitated by Mr. Angelious Michael and Mr. Rajesh Jadhav. Sharing on the tools and facets aiding in understanding conflict **Mr. Angelious Michael**, in his presentation highlighted the grey areas responsible for inducing a conflicting situation and the myriads of reasons responsible for the genesis of a conflict. He made the session more engaging by sharing various personal experiences and asked the delegates their responses on how and which way they would respond in such situations. He suggested the delegates that conflict is a natural phenomenon to arise and hence during such times it is important for an individual to be observant, caution, and approachable in managing and building peace by keeping in mind the objectives of reconciliation and peacemaking while in their academic or professional areas.



Mr. Rajesh Jadhav, National Coordinator, NCCI – Urban Rural Mission, Nagpur, MH in his presentation shared the various types of conflicts that exist in the societal and communitarian levels. He suggested the examples from the contemporary times with regards to the change and shifts that occur in a conflicting situation in different contexts and places. He highlighted the different views and aspects which could cater in identifying a conflict

and suggested propositions on addressing a conflict. He concluded his presentation on an intriguing note with the song '*Imagine*' by John Lennon, encouraging the delegates to imagine a world of possibilities while referring in the context of peace.

Session – IV

The session on **Perspectives of Peace** was jointly facilitated by Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer and Mr. Asher B. Noah. Sharing on the perspectives of peace **Mr. Asher B. Noah**, Executive Secretary, Youth Concerns – NCCI, explained the schematic tools in understanding peace on different levels and context. He further elaborated the fundamental concepts of how peace works and significant areas needed for an individual to address the same while delving upon the aspects dealt in a conflicting situation. He highlighted the key aspects of building and creating sustainable peace by the young people through identifying elements that disturb peace in the communities and promote peace through different platforms. In conclusion he suggested the mediums with which peace can be further nurtured through dialogue, safe channels of communication and building trust between individuals and groups.

Interfaith Orientation and Exposure Visits

As part of training and learning the delegates and participants of the Interfaith School of Peace journeyed through an orientation and exposure visit to different worship places of faith traditions located in the city of Nagpur. The delegates and participants were able to witness, delve, and conscientize themselves in learning about the unique history, rituals, prayers, and aspects of the faith traditions. The delegates and participants were motivated to perceive similar efforts in creating peace



building activities which could help them as well as people around them towards a progressive growth and harmonious living. The delegates and participants were delighted and pledge to explore the unique teachings and values found in various faith traditions in their daily living.

Day 2



The second day of the Interfaith School of Peace began on an affirming note to support, mark, observe, and carry forward the campaign '*Thursdays in Black: A global movement for a world without rape and violence.*' Marking their support for the campaign the participants, delegates and resource persons wore a black apparel for the day and acknowledge the need for showing

solidarity, unity, and their continuous support for the movement in eradicating all kinds of violence that perpetuate against women and men, boys and girls, diverse gender communities, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work, streets – in all places in our societies during the course of sessions and discussions.

Session – V

The panel session on **Conflict Situations** was jointly facilitated by panel members who presented presentations on Ethnicity & conflict, Religion & conflict, and Gender & conflict. Speaking on the topic ***Ethnicity & conflict***, **Mr. Saurabh Khobragade**, Program Executive, Peace Projects of CSA and IPC, shared the origin and conceptual understanding of the ethnicity when applied in various areas. He shared about the categories that are present in the term ethnicity with regards to its features and distinctions. He also explained the series of evolutions that takes place in conflicts related to one's ethnicity and the conflict theories which could cater in understanding them. In conclusion he shared that ethnic conflicts are result of unequal and systemic oppression done on a particular group or community which is edge away from the progressive mainstream channel which if addressed at the right time could avoid any kind of systemic alienation and ethnic conflict.



Speaking on the topic ***Religion & conflict***, **Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal**, Treasurer and Director of India Peace Centre, presented a holistic view and idea on the universal perspective of religion being an institution that bridges and contributes in human development and harmony. He emphasized that the sole purpose of any religion should be in breaking mental barriers and promoting humanity over negative ideas of communalism and fundamentalism. Referring to the previous topic he expressed that ethnic diversity in a country like India and in other parts of the world must be appreciated as it opens possibilities in knowing, learning and understanding about the richness and uniqueness of their ethnic diversities. He concluded that as part of a progressive society the significance to tolerance, education and awareness for a substantial holistic society needs to be actively nurtured.

Speaking on the topic ***Gender & conflict***, **Ms. Sonal Hikare**, Core Committee Member of IPC, presented an engaging session with the participatory involvement of the delegates and reflected on the various causes and effects that are responsible for the gender related conflicts to happen. She emphasized on the plight of diverse gender identities in the modern-day context but significantly specified on the condition and status women have in the Indian society at large. She discussed and drew attention on the grey areas where the need for ample focus is due to the drawbacks faced by women in Indian society with regards to social, political, economic, psychological, and lack of educational awareness. She concluded that unless the society provides an equal platform and opportunities for every gender to excel the idea of a progressive society leaping towards making a change in wider world may only remain farfetched idea.

Session – VI

The panel session on the topic of **Arts for Peace** was jointly facilitated by panel members who presented presentations on different aspects that play a vital role in addressing peace through the diverse medium of arts. Speaking on the topic **Ms. Tejal Jogewar**, Interior Designer and Radio Jockey, shared the influence of art can be used as an entry point for peace building and the sole purpose being not just to create the piece of art itself, but to deliver a



message through which the objectives of conflict transformation could be conveyed. She emphasized the attributes that contribute towards nurturing the ideas of peace through arts in providing a distinctive space to enhance the marginalized and oppressed communities to grow and progress. She discussed why arts as a humanistic discipline connects everyone going beyond the barriers of generations and nationalities. She concluded that activities with an influence of arts can contribute in transforming existing conflicts in the community and their impact can reinforce and multiple if they are used in combination with other activities in parallel to peace building.

Mr. Parvinder Singh, Musician and Hand Pan artist, shared the significant character played by music in the life and living of every human being and is considered to be an universal language that connects and helps in bringing efficient communitarian bonds of unity and togetherness. He expressed that in the modern times due to drastic changes that have occurred in the lifestyles of people and they are disturbed mentally and physically beyond measures the indulgence of music in their lives could help them relive from their stress and problems to a major extent. He concluded with an encouragement for the participants to learn and indulge themselves in learning musical instruments which could help them in relieving from a stressful living and could work wonders as they delve deeper in it.

Session – VII



The panel session on the topic of **Peace Building and Social Media** was jointly facilitated by panel members who presented presentations on the constructive aspects which cater in peace building through the digital influence of social media. Speaking on the topic **Mrs. Lata Tokhi**, Social Media Influencer and Founder of DotComWomen.com, shared the effects caused by the usage of social media among the communities due to the sharing and promotion of fake news

and digital contents. She highlighted that the emergence of social media on the past decade has revolutionized and damaged the community living as its after effects have been felt and will be felt for the generations to come. She also stressed that the promotion of fake news and diverse communal contents have polarised and promoted in the growth of community conflicts at major levels which is a dire threat to the societal norms and values. She concluded that while sharing or

receiving of any news on social media needs to be evaluated, investigated, and researched before sharing with a known person or even a stranger in order to safeguard oneself from landing into possible problems.

Speaking on the topic **Mrs. Neelam Gaikwad**, Head of Communications Department, National Council of Churches in India, shared her findings and ways in which social media could be utilized in peace building. She suggested that while social media has its positives and negatives it could be an essential tool in connecting people for peace building through setting desired goals for achievement. She gave the examples of how social media played an important role during pandemic in disseminating of information and helping people beyond borders in overcoming the effects of pandemic situations. She concluded sharing that communication portals are an essential medium for life and living of humans as we express, share, motivate, and connect people beyond the barriers of race, creed and nationalities therefore it needs to be utilized carefully and effectively.

Session – VIII

The panel session on the topic of **Knitting Neighbourhood & Youth** was jointly facilitated by panel members who presented presentations relating to the working ways that have helped in approaching and achieving goals through ideas on knitting neighbourhood & youth in their contexts and areas. Speaking on the topic **Mr. Ashish Deshpande**, Founder, Saving Dreams Foundation, engaged with the participants in understanding their views and ideas on approaching youths in their contexts and



any areas they have been working previously with regards to community building and knitting of their neighbourhood. He shared the important areas where youths can be brought together through initiatives of education, sports, and voluntary activities. He suggested that while forming a youth network they need to be guided towards getting productive support by exploring the public support schemes run by the governments and to analyse the possibilities of finding effective measures in working with the administrative bodies. He concluded by suggesting that the voluntary services done for the youths and children in their areas needs to be effectively channelized through registration and formation of an organization with the equal support of local administrative bodies and government agencies.

Speaking on the topic **Mr. Vinod Shemron**, Program Executive, Kairos India Partnership, NCCI – DATA Concerns, shared the basic features of what the topic means while understanding the word ‘knitting’ which emphasizes that the role of not just a single thread but many threads together which could translate that as a community we need to network so that our work will reach beyond barriers. He engaged all the participants towards group activities while suggesting them how the ideas of knitting each other could be driven and learned through such activities. He also suggested that such activities could help them in skill sharing through listening, understanding differences, finding similarities, creating networks and consistent participation. He concluded by saying for a peaceful world, there is a need for constant networking and teaming up with likeminded people to affirm solidarity.



The participants and delegates were then guided for an ecumenical engagement with their participation at the **9th Annual Mathai Zachariah Memorial Lecture** with the theme: **“Harmonizing Self and Society”**. **Dr. John Chelladurai**, Professor and HOD of the Mahatma Gandhi Mission University, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, was the main speaker on the topic which was responded by **Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal**, Treasurer and

Director, India Peace Centre, and **Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer**, Chairperson of India Peace Centre who paid tribute to Dr. Mathai Zachariah and moderated the program. The lecture was attended by the participants together with the presence of eminent scholars, social activists, political analysts, and the distinguished members of the IPC Core Committee.

Day 3

Session – IX

The panel session on the topic of **Cross – National Peace Experiences** was jointly facilitated by panel members who presented presentations relating to the working ways that have helped in approaching and achieving goals through ideas on knitting neighbourhood & youth in their contexts and areas.



Speaking on the cross-national peace experiences **Ms. Thula Schamberg**, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, shared her experiences while journeying with the India Peace Centre in India on what she has learned and observed as a volunteer with IPC during the four months' time. She shared that the peace initiatives through activities and events have aided her in understanding the diverse intercultural and interfaith aspects which can be considered as the soul of Indian culture and faith traditions which she found to be unique while comparing with her native culture. She shared that she would try having a similar approach while applying the similar initiatives in her context and surroundings in order to help her community grow more towards accepting and coexistence. She concluded that she would further invest herself towards learning all the unattended topics while rendering her voluntary services with IPC in the days to come.

Speaking on the topic **Mr. Helge Laatzen**, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, succinctly shared his experience in understanding initiatives of peace building in the light of immigrants and refugees in the context of Germany. He shared that while in the approach towards peace building the native administration of his country have integrated three significant aspects in understanding the German culture through a) learning of the language; b) adapting with the local culture in the context of Germany; and c) integrating the people from diverse/nationalities to work for earning livelihood and sustenance. He concluded that these integrations can work as a bridge in making intercultural exchanges and would help in understanding each other's cultures and values in a peaceful manner.

Session – X



The following session on the topic of **National and Global Peace Movements**, was facilitated by **Rev. Kasta Dip**, Former Director, India Peace Centre, who shared the basic ideas and concepts that were assembled in the formation of this program in reaching young peace makers in the local societies and communities. He emphasized that the basic content intended while understanding peace could be knowing how to minimize the conflict. He highlighted various peace campaigns, movements, and initiatives from the past that have

helped the world and which drew imperative mediums to the wider horizon in the area of peace building and have paved the way towards more communitarian and interfaith approach. He

further explained that the current global and local peace movements are working on the issues of global peace, reconciliation among nations/nationalities in promoting harmonious coexistence of all, and conservation of the environment with the active participation of their pioneers and all the people involved in it. He concluded that the significant need of the time addressing the issues of utilizing Nuclear Energy for the welfare with the effective focus given on tackling the undying issue of hunger on local, national, and global levels.

Session XI & XII

The panel session on scripting the ideas on a way forward was facilitated by Dr. Tejinder Singh Rawal, Mr. Angelious Michael, Mr. Joydeep Rayan Raychowdhury, Ms. Thula Schamberg and Mr. Helge Laatzen, who took the initial feedback and inputs from the participants and delegates in creating and providing more creative approaches in addressing the idea of peace through interfaith, social, communitarian, and environmental initiatives.



The panel also encouraged and suggested the participants while in their approach promoting peace, they should be able to understand the context where they are placed in and go about pursuing peace through the mediums of communication, dialogue, and fellowship. The panel suggested that communication is the vital essence in the area of sustaining peace, restoring peace, and creating a peaceful framework. The panelists also highlighted the importance of approaching peace through the medium of arts activities such as drama, dance, learning of the language, digital peace building initiatives, music, literatures, stories, folklores, and paintings which could help in the transformation of any conflict affected spaces or communities to revive and grow from their appalling state. The panelists emphasized that for a long-lasting peace justice should also be the central idea while placing peace at the pedestal as both are essential qualities while working on the areas of peace building.

Report of the Webinar on Interfaith Response to Climate Change

Zoom | 1 March 2023 ; Organized by : India Peace Centre

Background

Climate change and climate crisis are getting intensified every year with drastic changes being experienced worldwide with temperature increasing, weather pattern changing, water and food insecurity challenging life, species being extinct and many others. Climate change is impacting all, but more the most vulnerable and poor communities. Faith Communities have been making significant contributions towards building a climate friendly society with justice and peace values.

At the Climate COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, faith-based organizations participated on efforts to engage with state and non-state actors, advancing ethical and moral motivations to shift climate actions at all levels including ways to promote a just energy transition, to scale up community-level climate finance, and for climate adaptation.

India Peace centre likes to have grassroot workers, academicians, students and young people, representatives from faith-based organizations and representatives from its board to contribute by presenting on the topic and youth to attend the webinar.

The India Peace Centre through this webinar would like to reach new partners and institutions for possible future cooperation on climate justice. IPC likes to engage grassroot community to understand the Conference of Parties and the policy implications of COPs on ordinary people, it likes students, youth and all interested to be part of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to climate issues. IPC is encouraged by the meaningful engagement of faith groups from across the world in different climate forums including COP in order to build together a sustainable world.

Climate mitigation, Climate and gender, Indigenous knowledge for sustainable climate, climate funding are some of the key components to be addressed in the webinar.

Methodologies

Speakers are invited based on the theme and sub themes of the webinar to present their perspectives and more on the topics.

Possible outcome

1. To work towards preparing / publishing a document on “Interfaith Response to Climate Change”
2. Strengthening Interfaith Network to work towards building sustainable communities
3. To learn good practices on climate safeguarding
4. Building up focus on SDGs and COPs
5. To build up network for climate mobility
6. To develop academic research on climate

Moderation

Mr. Angelious Michael, Director of the India Peace Centre opened the webinar. He welcomed the participants and introduced the objectives of the webinar as mentioned above in the background note. He introduced the speakers. Angelious quoted saying

- The average global surface temperature has risen more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the late 19th century. Most of the increase has happened in just the last 40 years. (internet resoruces)
- Average ocean temperatures, meanwhile, have increased more than half a degree Fahrenheit just since 1969. (Internet resources)

He further quoted Scott Thumma, Ph.D., Director, Hartford Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Sociology of Religion at Hartford Seminary, who said

“The religions of the world are to be the moral and ethical voices on this planet,” “If their collective voices are silent in the face of this impending climate tragedy, they have abandoned their responsibility to humanity and their commitment to the Divine. As stewards of this earth, people of faith, no matter what the faith tradition, have a responsibility to restore and defend God’s creation. One need not be prophetic to see that the hour and time for action is at hand...With both the fate of the globe and future generations hanging in the balance.”

Speakers – Their perspectives and presentations

Elena Cedillo is the Program Executive for Climate Justice at The Lutheran World Federation, Elena Cedillo. She is an engineer and Master of Bio-Commerce and Sustainable Development.

Elena spoke about the Conference of Parties (COP) in general and also specifically about COP27 held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt held during 6-21 November 2022. She shared the proceedings and outcome of COP27. Various aspects including loss and damage and climate funds were central to the discussion at COP. There was no decision on phasing out of fossil fuel, no clear pathways to achieve 1.5-degree target and to meet the target of 100 billion USD in 2020 for climate compensations and hence, new target set for 2025. The impacts of climate change resulting into misbalancing of biodiversity causing floods, cyclones, famine and extinction of animals, birds and other species and human loss are being discussed extensively. It is important to create better development opportunities. Of course, questions are open as who contributes and who benefits!

The role of faith communities at COP27 was to meet with government, start campaigns and do climate justice actions.

Savanna Sullivan serves as Program Executive for Youth at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). With the LWF, Savanna organizes a global network of thousands of Lutheran youths from 149 Member Churches in 99 countries and with her colleagues leads an international youth delegation to the UN Climate COP every year

Savana spoke about

1. Youth and Climate Justice
2. LWF Youth is present at the COP for 10 Years
3. How Climate Change Impacts Young People
4. Health, Education, Migration, Livelihoods

She highlighted the effect of climate change leading to 160 million young people being exposed to severe droughts and flood, and their anxiousness about the future. She gave an insight about families migrating, no regular homes for them which have consequences on education. She also emphasized that climate change disproportionately affects young people. Youth in general are losing jobs and those with less experience are more vulnerable in losing jobs first.

Young people at the Conference of Parties take part in constant dialogues with parties and organizations and initiatives from all over the world and take role in peace building. Savana stated that, "Investment in Youth is an investment in the well-being of the world and the future"

Ekta Sawant (Baha'i faith response) is an Independent Consultant and Editor with over four years of experience working in the social-impact space. At present, she is working as a consultant with UNDP-India on a project to strengthen climate entrepreneurship and the green innovation ecosystem in India. Ekta spoke of Bahai Point of view on Climate Change. She stressed on the fact that, acting for climate is deeply rooted in the Bahai religion. The Baha'i faith does reflect that,

1. "Past development put us in a vulnerable situation, and therefore, one needs for the building of a new ethical framework, where the economy is not greedy, religions have much to offer in that change.
2. Baha'i does address social issues and climate change globally. She emphasized that new mindset is needed to fight climate change, mindset to work together. Part of the economy in our social system needs to be changed.

Dr. Vikas Jambhulkar (Buddhist Faith response) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science RTM Nagpur University past 17 years. Earlier He had taught at the National Law University, Bhopal as an Assistant Professor and also worked as a Research Associate to Dr Shubhash Kashyap (Constitutional Advisor to the Government of India) at Centre for Policy Research New Delhi.

Dr.Vikas spoke from Buddhist perspective. He said, according to Buddhism, one should consider his/her actions and actions should be right, (in speech, action, attention etc.). He expressed his concerns over growing inequalities between people, in which case, the most vulnerable people get affected first and hence they need to be protected. He highlighted the following

1. Poor and vulnerable are not contributing to climate change, but they are suffering through it
2. The idea of participation needs to be redefined.
3. When talking about issues in society about climate Change, we need to hear the opinion of those who are really suffering and not only hear the opinion of the ones causing the problems.
4. Identifying the problem and then also identifying in which the process should be addressed. how problems are being handled need to be questioned critically

Dr.Tejinder Singh Rawal (Sikh faith response) is a Chartered Accountant. He is the honorary Treasurer of the India Peace Centre. He was honored by the President of Turkey for his social achievements. He was conferred with "Pride of Nagpur" award by Qidwai Foundation.

He quoted saying: Air is the Guru, Water is the father and Earth is the great mother of all. According to Sikhism, achieving a blissful state and it is religious to be in harmony with all the Gods' creation. The environment cries out for attention. He drew the attentions of the participants to the following aspects

1. Sikhism has a deep respect for the environment and preserving it for future generations
2. Climate Change affects everybody

3. Partnership of different faith communities for addressing the urgent issue of climate change is sought for as this is the most pressing need of the hour
4. We need to be building Bridges and trust, develop a shared understanding of our issues
5. Promote sustainable lifestyles, adopt environmentally friendly practices, use collective resources (not only money, but brains for example), learn from good actions from others and adapt in own society, create a ground level support to fight climate Change
6. Interfaith Partnership can play a vital role for peace and climate change

Aditya Kothari (Jain faith response) is a chartered accountant working with a company in Nagpur. He had been online tutor for two years in “History of Jainism”

He cited quite a lot of learnings from Jainism. Jainism says

1. Be sensitive to everything and every creature in the world, no matter living or non-living
2. We should do small changes, religion teaches and you need to practice, take small actions and be sensitive

He said, response to climate change is primarily individual; Individualism makes the collection, fight against climate change must come from within. Mahatma Gandhi once said: avoid unnecessary items, to save resources of nature.

One needs to ask himself / herself, what can I do to reduce the quantity of water in my day-to-day use ?

Whenever you want to travel, think about it 10 times over again, is it necessary? Are you sensitive to fuel, are you sensitive to other creatures?

Dr. Anish K Joy who was the respondent in the webinar summarized all presentations in a nutshell saying the presentations had an interconnected chain. We must use education as a path to create awareness and work for a better world. All creation may fulfil the purpose, God intended for them.

Q & A

Jörg Ostermann-Ohno shared his comment on all presentations, the following

Q: What could be the specific role of religions ?

We all walk down the road from our own religious traditions, yet we meet together at this important junction to which the burning challenge of climate change leads us to. Dealing with climate change is



not just a technical issue, but a legal or political one as well. We need to get away from the dominant model of capitalistic and exploitive global economy and find other paradigms and models that allows a good life for all. That needs a substantial shift and transformation of values - both moral and ethical. Here we can and should join hands to motive changes in people s attitudes and practices, particularly in the Northern hemisphere.

Outcome of the Webinar

1. To work towards preparing / publishing a document on “Interfaith Response to Climate Change” : There will be a publication within 3 months
2. Strengthening Interfaith Network to work towards building sustainable communities.
3. To learn good practices on climate safeguarding by organising visits to sustainable farming and other environmentally sustainable projects
4. Building up focus on SDGs and COPs by having more educational program and research on implementation of them
5. To build up network for climate mobility with likeminded organizations
6. To develop academic research on climate by collaborating with academic institutions.

Mr. Angelious Michael expressed his gratitude to all the speakers for their time and contributions. He appreciated the participation of many individuals and organizations for attending the webinar.

Interfaith Discourse on overcoming Religious Prejudices Lotus Temple, New Delhi, 27 March 2023

Religion, Peace, and the End of Otherness

Never in human history have the conditions for achieving peace seemed as promising and yet the prospects for realizing it seemed so remote. The outward preconditions for achieving the coming together of the world's peoples seem to be all in place. Rapid technological development and accelerating processes of globalization have broken down barriers between peoples and shrunk the world into a veritable global neighbourhood. Yet, tightening global interconnectedness has also aggravated forces that have multiplied the propensity for conflict.

Those who have analysed this phenomenon have traced a link between globalization and the politics of identity. Studies have shown how the radical reordering of social, economic, and cultural life triggered by globalization has disrupted the value systems and the cultural milieus that gave people a sense of their place in the world and endowed their lives with meaning. This sense of dislocation along with a growing sense of powerlessness in the masses in the face of widening economic disparities and systemic injustices has fuelled the rise of movements of identity politics that have spread the world over in the past three decades. Such movements, it has been observed, draw their appeal from promising a return to traditional forms of collective identities based on religion, race, nationality, or caste. In a world in flux buffeted by bewildering changes, they provide an illusory, but highly cherished, sense of stability and certainty. They evoke a sense of power through identification with a larger collective and a triumphalist narrative of the group's glorious past. They also instil a sense of the group's moral superiority by casting its identity in opposition to an imagined 'Other' which is usually a rival social group portrayed as being unclean, morally inferior and repulsive. Feelings of collective self-righteousness are often heightened by exaggerated or false narratives of a history of past atrocities committed by the Other that fuel a sense of victimhood and project the Other as an existential threat to the group. Through relentless propaganda campaigns such movements ensure that prejudice remains finely-sharpened.



**Dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals and its Impact
on Faith Communities
Henry Martin Institute, Hyderabad, 28 March 2023**

A joint program of the Henry Martin Institute, Hyderabad and India Peace Centre on Sustainable Development Goals focussing on

SDG, Goal 3 : Health
SGD, Goal 4 : Education

Some health-related facts drawn from the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report

- In 2020, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by an estimated 25 per cent, with young people and women most affected.
- The global mortality rate of children under age 5 fell by 14 per cent from 2015 to 2020
- In 2020, 627,000 people died from malaria, with cases estimated to have reached 241 million.

Some Education related facts drawn from the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report

- Only 20 per cent of countries undertook significant measures to provide additional mental health and psychosocial support for students after school reopening.
- In 2020, about one quarter of primary schools globally did not have access to basic services such as electricity, drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. Roughly 50 per cent of primary schools had access to facilities such as information and communications technology and disability-adapted infrastructure.

The facts given above are universal ones. The Dialogue will have national scenario of India from faith perspectives. It will deal with the following questions

1. How do we look at the concerns on Health and Education from faith perspective
2. How can faith communities get involved in the SDGs implementation
3. How can faith communities contribute
4. What are the academic and community approaches towards solution
5. Interfaith collaboration

History has shown that the one force capable of transforming human consciousness and instilling a profound conviction in the oneness of humankind is religion. Through the wealth of statements enjoining love and unity contained in scriptures, through the exalted and peerless example of all-



embracing fellowship and universal love shown by its prophets and saints and through its enunciation of the concept of a soul as a spiritual identity common to all human beings, religion establishes an unassailable foundation for belief in the oneness of humankind. It not only propounds the concept of equality but also instils those virtues that make unity possible such as unconditional love, compassion, kindness, empathy, mercy, and a willingness to sacrifice for the common good.

Any claim that religion can contribute to the abolition of prejudice is bound to be countered with the objection that religion itself has been turned into a potent source of prejudice. It is here that distinction will need to be made between true religion and the divisive interpretations and practices that are propagated in its name. All religions have a common set of spiritual teachings that enjoin humankind to develop spiritual qualities, to discipline their selfish and aggressive tendencies and to contribute to the betterment of society. All religions derive their inspiration from the same spiritual source and they all aim to achieve the same purpose, which is to unite humanity and ensure the advancement of civilization. Religious prejudice then is the antithesis of the true religious spirit. It arises from interpretations and impositions that fail to see the divine truth at the heart of every religion.