



international association for

religious freedom
belief with integrity

IARF SACC RFYN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

At Sri Adhichunchanagiri Mutt, Mysore, Karnataka

On 30-31 October 2012



REPORT



INTRODUCTION

“Give me a few men and women who are pure and selfless, and I shall shake the world” - Swami Vivekananda.

The IARF through its young adult project by RFYN has been trying to bring about change in this world through young adults by way of training, human rights education, capacity building etc. In the same vein I was given an opportunity to meet and train around **296** young adults as part of the RFYN International Young Adult Conference on the sidelines of the 14th IARF-IC National Conference.

VENUE: SRI ADHICHUNCHANAGIRI MUTT



Sri Adhichunchanagiri Mutt is engulfed with divine resonance and vibration. Ancient Vedic culture is founded here on spirituality, where Nature is valued and worshipped. The Mutt is surrounded by beautiful forest appears radiating an aura of abiding serenity, spiritual solitude and peace. This beautiful forest like area is known as “Mayura Vana”, where enchanting peacocks are living freely forgetting fear of the world.

His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swamiji’s efforts have focused on the basic necessities like Anna, Akshara and Arogya i.e., Food, Education and Health respectively. As of 2007, Sri Swamiji has established more than 400 recognized and highly regarded educational institutions, where more than -

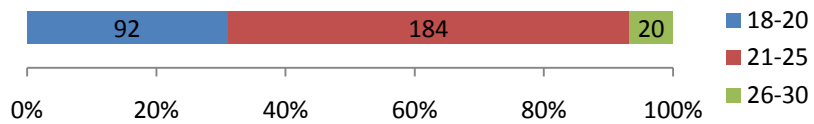
70,000 students are quenching their thirst for knowledge, a significant number are from rural areas. His Holiness is involved in a number of programs like free feeding for more than 20,000 people every single day. Incidentally, Sri Mutt conducts Character Building Programs, Leadership Training Camps etc. Youngsters are taught essence of all Religions, Yoga, Universal Brotherhood, and also are taught Indian Arts, Rituals, Public Speaking and Traditional Sports of the land. Youth are taught through stories, multimedia, discussions, dramas, spiritual reading and introspection. Hence, it is indeed appropriate that our organization IARF-SACC-RFYN and Sri Adhichunchanagiri Mutt have collaborated in this endeavor.

PROFILE OF YOUNG ADULTS

296 national and international delegates from 10 states¹ within India and 4 countries² outside India attended the Conference. Interestingly, the ratio of male vs. female participants was fair in the sense we had 132 male students and 164 female students. The mix of religion was there but majority of them being practicing Hindus (but varying in faith traditions, practices and worshipping deities) and a small percentage were from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism.

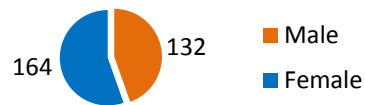
Age Group

18-20 : 92
21-25 : 184
26-30 : 20



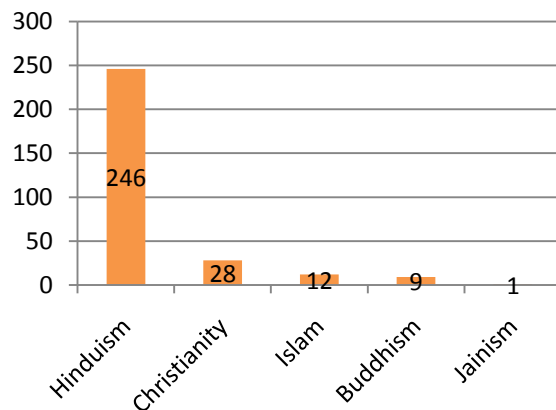
Gender Status

Male - 132
Female - 164



Religious Representation

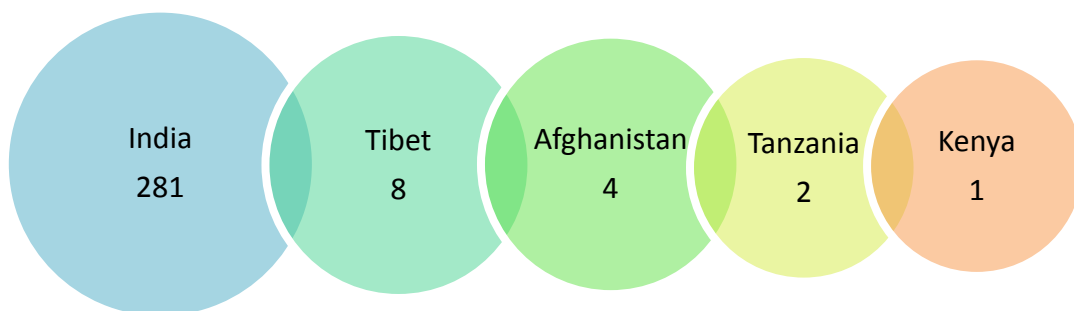
Hinduism* - 246
Christianity - 28
Islam - 12
Buddhism - 09
Jainism - 01



**Representing Various Faith Traditions and Classes*

Country-wise break-up of Young Adults

India - 281
Tibet - 008
Afghanistan - 004
Tanzania - 002
Kenya - 001



¹ Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Utttar Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Odisha and Delhi.

² Tibet, Afghanistan, Tanzania and Kenya.

Indian State-wise Representation

1. Karnataka (Mysore and Mandya Districts)	-	184
Karnataka (Bangalore- Metro City)	-	46
2. Kerala	-	50
3. Tamil Nadu	-	06
4. Bihar	-	03
5. Uttar Pradesh	-	02
6. Andhra Pradesh	-	01
7. Mizoram	-	01
8. Delhi NCR	-	01
9. Assam	-	01
10. Odisha	-	01

Education Level

LLB (Law)	-	116
B.Ed. (PG)	-	100
Under Graduate	-	080

DAY 1 – 30.10.2012

Yoga & Meditation (6.30 am – 7.30 am)

The India Chapter had organized for two yoga experts Mr. S. Sudhesh Chand, Mysore and Mr. P.S. Shivakumar, Bangalore who were with the young adults on the two days. They gave specific yoga exercises for the young adults in the mornings and highlighted the importance of meditation in keeping one's mind and body as one. The young adults were refreshed during the yoga sessions because it helped them to concentrate better on the program.



DELEGATES practicing yoga

Registration & Inauguration (10.00am – 1.00pm)

The delegates both adult and young adults registered themselves after breakfast and proceeded to the conference hall. The inauguration function was exciting with the galaxy of guests who addressed the young adults. The program started with "Vedagosha" by the practicing students of Kala Bhairaveshvara Sanskrit College, Adhichunchanagiri Mutt, and Mysore (Chanting of selected verses from the Vedas which are the oldest texts of Hinduism). The inter-religious prayers were rendered by Dr. Lakshmi (Hinduism), Lhadup Group, Tibet (Buddhist Prayer), Maulana Usman Shariff Saheb, Sirkhazi, Mysore (Muslim Prayer) and Rev. Father Gerald Sequira (Christian Prayer).

Mr. Md. Shabeer Ahmed, National Secretary, IARF IC welcomed the gathering. The program again went into an auspicious mood with the traditional lighting of the lamp by the guests on the dais. Dr. Thomas Mathew, Chairman, IARF-SACC, delivered the keynote address. Other guests who spoke on the occasion were Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, Secretary, Adhichunchanagiri Mutt; Poojya Sri Muktidananda Swamiji, President, Ramakrishna Mutt, Mysore; Maulana Usman Shariff Saheb, Sirkhazi of Mysore; M. Subramaniam, Patron IARF IC, Vice Chairman, SACC and M. A. Hemalatha, National President, IARF IC delivered the presidential address. Mr. B. T. Chidambaram,

National Treasurer, IARF IC delivered the vote of thanks. It was heartening to see that all the speakers touched upon the need for young minds to be trained in the right path for peace and prosperity in the world we are in today.



POOJYA SRI MUKTIDANANDA SWAMIJI, President of Ramakrishna Mutt Inaugurating the Conference

Session I- Introduction & Ice-Breaking (2.30 pm – 3.30pm)

The first session of the young adults took off after lunch. Mr. K. Ramachandran, Vice-President, IARF IC and HRE Facilitator was the coordinator for the Young Adult Program. A man who is young at heart and mind age not withstanding. Managing a group of 296 young adults who were waiting for our program was not an easy task. We devised a few games to initiate ice-breaking and that kicked off fresh energy among the students. Later, we divided them into groups ensuring that there was a proper mix of religion, country, and gender in all the groups. This helped in the students circle group discussions and group presentations later in the conference. The groups were monitored throughout the program by moderators. Again, I am happy the moderators were an energetic bunch of young adult leaders and HRE trainers who have been with RFYN in the past and have been trained by IARF-SACC-RFYN. The moderators were K. Ramachandran, Anbumani Arumugam, International President, RFYN, M. R. Preethan, Young Adult Leader, Mysore, Mahesh, Lecturer, JSS Law College, Mysore, and Gautham Bharathi, Young Adult Leader, Chennai.

The groups were left with the task of pairing up with each one and introduce the other person in the pair to their group. This simple task was very effective in enabling the group to know each other at a basic level. After the ice-breaking the groups showcased talents among their members within their group as part of the ice-breaking. It was nice to see all the group members being so energetic and excited about the whole process which was simplified and gave them ample opportunity to get to know each other's skills. For us the moderators it was emphatic to see other youngsters going through the process which we all had gone through years back as part of the young adult process. It was also heartening to see us develop into young adult leaders to handle such a huge group of participants.



CIRCLE Groups Discussion

Session II – Video Documentary Presentation & Student Discussion (3.30pm – 5.30pm)

The three movies Rita's Choice, Where is Home? and Sacred Grove was shown to the students. They huddled into their respective groups which were formed earlier in the day. The three movies had issues which are equally relevant today and impacted the young adults in a diverse manner. We gave each group 20 minutes to discuss the movies and present the views of their group by any creative form of expression. They were given 5 minutes each to do their presentation. The stationery required was given to the groups to enable their presentation. The presentation by the groups once again highlighted the impact these three movies have had on thousands of youngsters who have watched them earlier in many HRE programs and otherwise. Here too it was no different with several young adults expressing their views by way of chart presentation etc. The positive effect this session had on the young adults was that they seemed to be vary of such communal events and also their intent was mature to accept friendships as they come. It is important to showcase to the young minds gathered about the awareness of human rights concept as many of them are not aware, secondly, it is also important to emphasis the positive impact of understanding inter-faith in a multicultural society such as India.



DELEGATES watching HRE films

Cultural Events – (6.00pm – 7.00pm)

The students of the colleges run by the Adhichunchanagiri Mutt showcased their skills through the cultural program arranged for the young adults in the evening on the first day. The performances included a display of their Bharathanatyam (traditional dance form in Karnataka), folk dance, dance drama with theme on national integration. The young students also performed some songs for the audience. The cultural show was a good dose of entertainment for the young adults after a long day of activities. Also, appreciable was the eagerness of the students of the cultural program to showcase their skills to the visiting delegates.



CULTURAL program

DAY 2 – 31.10.2012

Yoga & Meditation (6.30am – 7.30am)

The trainers continued to impress upon the youngsters about physical and mental fitness in the present day routine. They also shared their experience about the importance of exercise which are targeted at specific groups doing specific work, they also felt it would be important to study the pattern of work people do and give them yoga and meditation training accordingly. The exercise routine continued on day two for the young adults and the trainers left the venue after the session on day two.

Recap of Day 1 (9.00am – 9.45am)

The moderators initiated circle groups amongst the young adults for discussion of the events that transpired on Day 1 of the conference. The participants were given space to discuss their thoughts about the program design on Day 1 of the conference. Also, the young adults expressed interest in knowing about IARF as an organisation and expressed that such programs helped them understand the very basics of human rights.

Session III – Role of Youth in Inter-Faith & Human Rights Activities in India (9.45am – 12.30pm)

This session was one of the relevant sessions for youngsters who face diverse challenges and lack awareness on their human rights and the need for more inter-faith activities. The speakers for the session were Dr. Thomas Mathew, Adv. M.A. Hemalatha, K. Ramachandran, Adv. Md. Shabeer Ahmed and Prof. Anbumani Arumugam. The speakers were a mix of three major religions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Islam respectively. Dr. Thomas Mathew highlighted the work done by IARF among youngsters of inter-faith communities to strengthen ties with each other. Md. Shabeer Ahmed emphasized the need to counter the misperception among communities rather by a proud and longstanding tradition of religious freedom, tolerance and pluralism. K. Ramachandran highlighted that the HRE project will not only serve as a model for tolerance and cooperation and promote local faith leaders as champions of such, but it will also create a concrete opportunity to build and strengthen working ties between faith communities moving forward. Hemalatha expressed satisfaction at the huge turnout students from various colleges in Mysore and Bangalore for such a conference. Anbumani Arumugam highlighted the need for youngsters to be equipped with knowledge about other religions and expressed the need for subjects to be included in the syllabi of the institutions to educate the young minds about other faith and human rights. The students appreciated the session for it was an enlightening for many of them to hear from people from diverse backgrounds speaking on the theme of human rights and inter-faith. Some of the students felt they were not exposed to human rights violations and were not aware of it much, others shared their views on the theme and the experiences in their lives on the theme.

Session IV – UDHR Presentation & Discussion (12.30pm – 1.30pm)

After the Session III, we wanted to enlighten the students about UDHR and highlight the need for awareness among young adults on human rights. The young adults were shown the UDHR Article movie which has a short film for each of the 30 Articles in the UDHR. The impact of the UDHR movie on the participants again emphasized the need for more and more programs such as these for youngsters as they are a major part of the society and community which we want to see change in and I believe that we can see change through them by training them with knowledge and experience sharing which is what IARF-SACC-RFYN has been doing in the past.



PROF. ANBUMANI ARUMUGAM & Mr. K. Ramachandran

Session V – Presentation by Dr. Thomas Mathew on HRE Activities in India (2.30pm – 4.00pm)

Dr. Thomas Mathew, Chairman, SACC and Former President, IARF made a presentation to the young adults about IARF-HRE. He spoke in great detail about the vision, mission of the organization. He highlighted the relevance and importance of IARF in today's world though it is the oldest inter-faith organization in the world. He spoke about the role of IARF within the UNO and the general consultative status the organization holds with UNECOSOC. He also shared his experience in the recently concluded Sustainable Development Summit in Rio, Brazil. He spoke about the role and opportunities for young adults in the field of human rights in many organizations leading up to even the UNO. He later showcased a presentation of the HRE activities in India by our facilitators across various states, throughout the length and breadth of the country. The session was very useful for the youngsters in terms of sheer knowledge about IARF and opportunities in store for them in the future.



DR. THOMAS MATHEW explaining HRE activities of IARF in India

Valedictory Function (4.00pm – 5.00pm)

The curtains were brought down on the two-day 14th National Conference of IARF-IC and RFYN International Conference with the valedictory function held on the 31st October evening the Mutt Conference Hall. The dignitaries who graced the occasion were Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, Secretary, Adhichunchanagiri Mutt, Rev. Fr. Ronnie Prabhu, PRO, SJ, Bangalore, Dr. Thomas Mathew, Chairman, SACC, Anbumani Arumugam, International President, IARF-RFYN and the organizers of the conference M. A. Hemalatha, National President, IARF-IC and Md. Shabeer Ahmed, National Secretary, IARF-IC. All the dignitaries spoke on the occasion and appreciated the youngsters for gathering in such numbers for this conference.



VALEDICTORY Function

Session VI – Brainstorming Session of Young Adult Leaders and Young Adult Participants (6.00pm – 7.00pm)

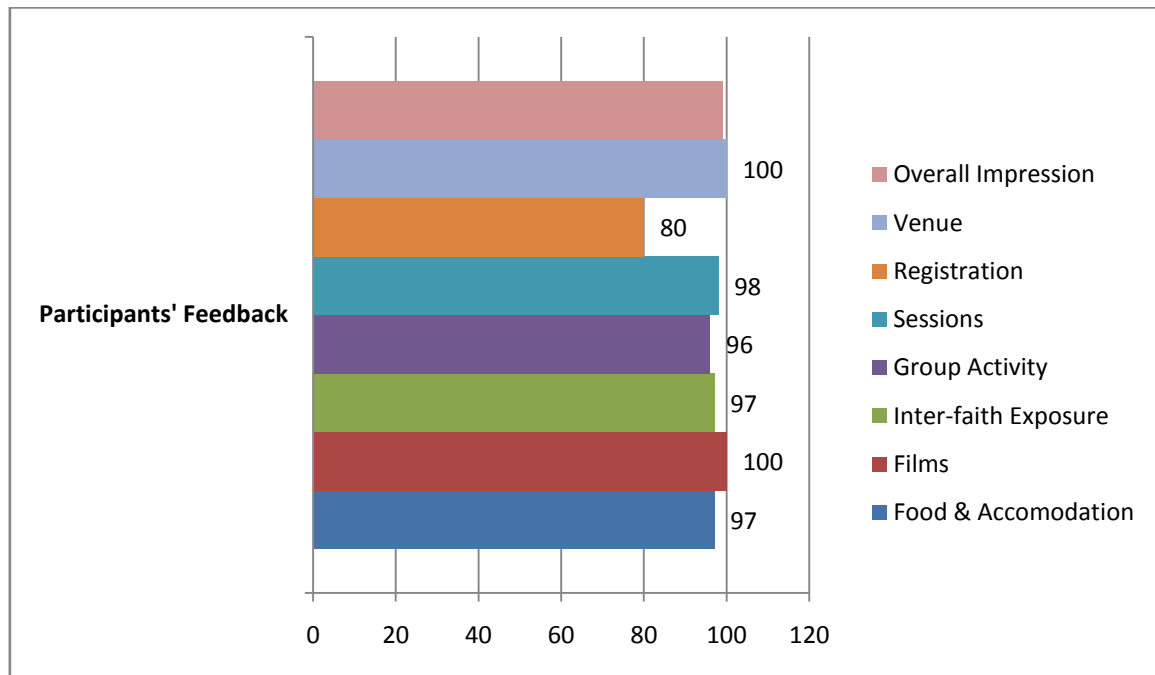
The young adult leaders Anbumani Arumugam, M. R. Preethan, Gautham Bharathi, Mahesh; young adult program coordinator K. Ramachandran and the young adults gathered for a brainstorming session over the conference.

Some of the points are as follows:

1.) RFYN International Conference

- Participants were excited about having been in this conference and felt it was worth their time.

- Young Adults expressed that they had gained knowledge about human rights issues and were more aware of human rights instruments such as UDHR etc.
- They felt the sessions on the three movies Rita's Choice, Where is Home? And Sacred Groove was really moving and impacted them greatly.
- The perspective was diverse with participants coming from 10 states and 4 countries each having diverse views on human rights.
- Participants felt the session handled by Dr. Thomas Mathew was excellent for its content and presentation in highlighting several key issues in human rights and inter-faith but also for explaining in detail about IARF and its relevance in the present world.



2.) IARF-RFYN

- Young Adults expressed that they were more aware of the organization after the two-day conference.
- Participants expressed to the Young Adult moderators to establish a line of communication through mail to keep them abreast of the events and human rights issues.
- They expressed solidarity with the organization in its work on HRE.
- The delegates invited the moderators to conduct HRE programs exclusively in their institutions in the near future.
- Young adults assured us that they would communicate with us for a full-fledged HRE program for young adults probably early next year in their respective institutions.
- Some of the more involved young adults during the program evinced interest in continuing their participation in future IARF-RFYN activities.
- The International Congress of IARF featured in the brainstorming session and the participants shared excitement at the venue of next World Congress.

Closing Remarks

In this report I take the opportunity to highlight some points on the conduct of this conference and points for future reference.

- a.) The very organization of this conference on the sidelines of the National Conference of IARF-IC is a model for future organization as it is economical in nature.
- b.) The young adults also get to meet and interact with the peers of this organization in India.
- c.) The organizers and the Adhichunchanagiri Mutt made this conference a memorable one for all concerned.
- d.) I really appreciate the care taken in the food provided to all the delegates all through the conference. The menu was excellent and all the delegates enjoyed the variety and sheer scale of arrangements made to provide hearty meals to all.



- e.) I am happy to see the participation of our Young Adult Leaders trained by IARF-RFYN such as M. R. Preethan, Mysore, Gautham Bharathi, Chennai, Mahesh, and Mysore. Their active participation showcases the success of HRE programs of IARF-RFYN. Their continued association with RFYN and maturing into Young Adult Leaders is something to be nurtured more for the betterment of the organization.
- f.) Another point of success which I mention with sincere thanks is to Dr. Thomas Mathew, Chairman, SACC and K. Ramachandran, Vice-President, IARF-IC for inspiring the young adults with their presentation and coordination respectively.
- g.) I am profoundly grateful to Adv. Md. Shabeer Ahmed, IARF International Council Member and Adv. Hemalatha Rao (President- IARF India Chapter) for supporting us to organize and **fully sponsoring** the RFYN conference.

The conference has been an eye-opener for many of us and participating delegates. I am hopeful of conducting more programs in the near future for the betterment and awareness among young adults through this platform of IARF-SACC-RFYN. I am thankful to Mr. Abin K. Vincent (SACC-Coordinator) for the yeoman service rendered to us throughout the program and for the preparation of the report³.

I once again thank one and all concerned for their cooperation in the successful conduct of this RFYN International Conference.

VIEW PHOTOS of the event at

<https://picasaweb.google.com/106048874172816275704/IARFRFYNMysore2012?authkey=Gv1sRgCPjdxbe9-PHHCQ>

<http://www.iarfsacc.org/media/photos/index.php?cat=78>

³ The visual identity of the Conference is designed by SACC Office.



Annex-1: Conference Team

- 1.) Anbumani Arumugam – International President, IARF-RFYN
- 2.) K. Ramachandran – Coordinator, Young Adult Program
- 3.) M. R. Preethan – Young Adult Leader, Mysore
- 4.) Mahesh – Young Adult Leader, Mysore
- 5.) Gautham Bharathi – Young Adult Leader, Mysore

Annex-2: Conference Schedule

Day-1 30/10/2012	
06:30-07:30am	Yoga & Meditation
08:00-09:00am	Breakfast
09:00-09:45am	Registration
11:00-01:00pm	Inaugural Ceremony Inter-religious Prayer, Welcome Speech, Lighting the lamp, Inaugural Address, Presidential Address & Vote of Thanks
01:30-02:30pm	Lunch
02:30-03:30pm	Session-1 Introduction & Ice Breaking By Mr. K. Ramachandran & Prof. Anbumani Arumugam
03:30-04:30pm	Session-2 Video Documentary Presentation & Discussion By Mr. K. Ramachandran
04:30-05:30pm	Session-3 SACC Activities-Power point Presentation
06:00-07:00pm	Cultural Night
08:00-09:00pm	Dinner
09:00-10:00pm	Visit to Musical Fountain
Day-2 31/10/2012	
06:30-07:30am	Yoga & Meditation
08:00-09:00am	Breakfast
09:00-09:45am	Recap of Day-1
09:45-11:00am	Session-4 Inter-faith and Human Rights Activities in India: Role of Youth Speakers: Dr. Thomas Mathew, Adv. M.A. Hemalatha, Adv. Md. Shabeer Ahmed, Mr. K. Ramachandran and Prof. Anbumani Arumugam
11:00-11:30pm	Break
11:00-12:30pm	Session-5 Presentation by speakers continues on the theme and forum is open for interaction by Young Adults
12:30-01:30pm	Session-6 Human Rights Awareness Among Young Adults (UDHR Documentary Video Presentation and Discussion) By Mr. K. Ramachandran
01:30-02:30pm	Lunch
02:30-04:00pm	Circle Group Discussion
04:00-05:00pm	Valedictory Function
05:00-06:00pm	Visit to Holy Places
06:00-07:00pm	Brain Storming Session (Forum open for youngsters to discuss the day's events)
07:00-08:30pm	Cultural Night
08:30-09:15	Dinner