



## IARF- RFYN Annual Summit - 2014



Organized by

### IARF-Human Rights Resource Centre INDIA

Venue: **Montfort International Spirituality Centre, Bangalore**

Date: - 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

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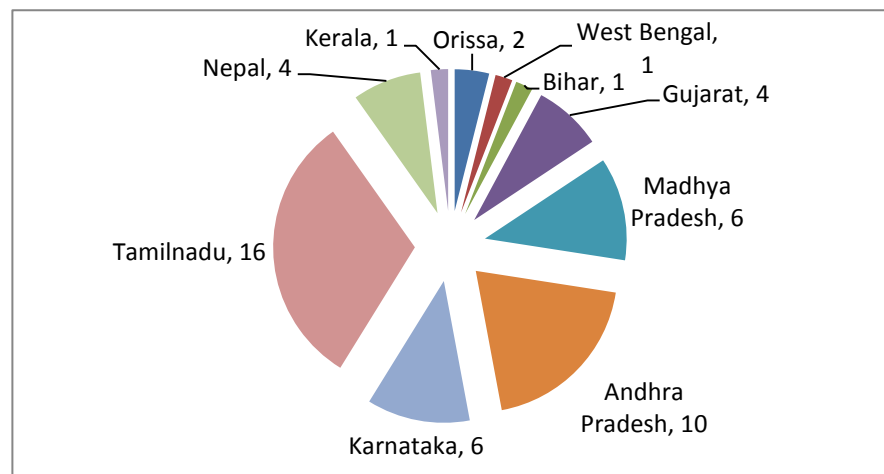
IARF-RFYN Annual Summit 2014 organized by IARF-HRRC, INDIA on 24-27 Jan 2014, at Montfort Spirituality Centre, Bangalore, INDIA

# Introduction

The RFYN Annual Summit 2014, which brought together young adults from all over the country and erased state boundaries. It was organized by IARF-HRRC in association with Sacred Heart Brothers, at Montfort Spirituality Centre, Bangalore on 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Young adults from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Nepal participated to make the event a successful.

The summit's theme "*Freedom and Rights of Young Adults in the Digital Age*" was based on the upcoming 34<sup>th</sup> IARF World Congress theme. This summit was organized taking in consideration the congress pre-planning. A total of 55 participants from three religious background participated in this four-day residential training program. They were been selected from the Human Rights Education (HRE) programs organized during the year 2013.

## Participants



## Inaugural Celebration

The program began with registration at 9: 00 am followed by a welcome ceremony of the chief guest and dignitaries. The dignitaries were welcomed in the traditional Indian way of



applying sandal and kumkum. Bro. Saviraj (Director BIRDS, Bangalore) and Janhvi Gupte (the RFYN HRE facilitator) were the Masters of Ceremony for the inaugural celebration.

The event started with a lamp-lighting ceremony. Eminent personalities such as Dr. Wooday P. Krishna (chairman, central council of Brahma Samaj & General Secretary, Seshadripuram Education Foundation), Shri Bhikku Sugananda-ji (Mahabodhi Society, Bangalore), Rev. Bro. M.D. Sebastian SHJ (President, CIRSM-IARF Member Group), Mr. Robert Papini (Admin. IARF, London), Dr. CNN Raju (Founder National Secretary, IARF-India Chapter) enlightened the gathering with their valuable presence. The guests were honored with garlands and mementoes.

As IARF tradition we had inter-religious prayers, followed by a welcome address by Bro. Albert Xaviour covering the topics such as; a brief history about IARF, HRE training programs, HRRC function, program outline of Annual Summit 2014 and forthcoming events.



The presidential address was given by Dr. Wooday P. Krishna. Being a long-time IARF member who “lives with the values of IARF”, he encouraged the young adults to inculcate IARF values in themselves and propagate them. He was moved by the Gandhiji’s portrait on the memento, presented by IARF-HRRC. He advised the young adults to perform their

duties diligently to make human rights to reach the correct places. He said; it is the duty of senior citizens to develop conscious minds among young adults

Shri Bhikkhu Sukananda Swami-ji (B.Com, LL) of IARF member group, Mahabodhi Society, is a corporate law practitioner. He gave the inaugural address, with best wishes and blessing. In his address, he emphasized on the pros and cons of digitization and the fast-growing tech-savvy world.

Dr. CNN Raju shared his valuable memories of inaugurating IARF's India chapter in 1995, and starting 42 branches in 16 states. He has boosted the energies of young adults by his valuable contribution to IARF. He encouraged today's youth to use technology to stay connected with global causes.

Mr. Robert Papini gave a brief outline about the 34th World Congress, and discussed about the congress theme. He shared the way in which RFYN Annual Summit 2014 could be helpful in pre-planning of congress.

Rev. Bro. M.D. Sebastian inaugurated the new website of IARF-HRRC, and Bro. Albert Xaviour informed the participants about its main features and uses. He said that for young adults this was a step into the domain of digital self-representation. The inaugural celebration ended with a vote of thanks from Immanuel Manish, young adult leader, M.P., and followed by the National Anthem.



## Summit Day One

The participants gathered after a short break for introductory and ice-breaking session with many interesting games to introduce the participants to each other. This session was conducted by Bro. Britto and Bro. Albert Xaviour.

### Session One:- History of IARF in India and its functioning

Dr. CNN. Raju, one of the founder member and roots of IARF India chapter was the key speaker for the first Session. He boosted the participants with his thoughts on the evolution of IARF in India - its vision and mission.

He shared the hierarchal structure and formation of member groups. He explained to the participants their role as RFYN. He mentioned that HRRC is a milestone, what RFYN has achieved after many years. Dr. Raju's session was divided into two segments of 90 minutes each for effective two-way communications. Some of the key words of Dr. Raju:



*“In March 1980, IARF General Secretary Diether Gehrman and Lucie Meijer plus several members from different parts of the world, visited India. From 1981 onwards a number of social projects were taken up by IARF through its members groups in India. The triennial congress in 1981 at Amsterdam had a number of Indians participants. P. Roychoudhury was elected as a member of the IARF council, the first Indian to be elected.*

*The first all-India IARF conference – 1982 – was held at Ramakrishna Mission (RKM) Institute of Calcutta, West Bengal. An IARF India steering committee was formed, being nominated with representatives from Unitarians, RKM, Brehmo Samaj, Guru Nanak Foundation, the Seng Khasi and Donyi Polo Mission of Arunachala Pradesh, etc. Roychoudhury was the Chairman and CNN Raju was the Convener-cum-Treasurer. This committee was authorized to form branches of IARF in India”.*

Soon after lunch, circle group discussion was organized based on Dr. Raju's talk. In this all participants were divided into groups and given the topic **“How to involve as a young adult in the development of IARF”**. Participants performed skits, mono acts, chart presentation and speeches to reflect their ideas. After all the group presentations; the judges (Dr. CNN. Raju and Robert Papini) announced the winners. Immanuel Manish's group received the winner's awards for creative and best role play.

#### **Key outcomes of discussion:**

1. IARF needs enthusiastic and active leaders
2. The members of IARF should commit themselves for its development
3. Youth needs to stay connected.
4. Use of free time visiting various religious leaders to introduce IARF activities.

5. Visit the rural areas to introduce IARF activities, especially Interfaith and Human Rights programs.

Participants dispersed to relax, then gathered for recreation after dinner: teams games like Hi Hello, 'standing on paper', 'passing the whistle' were played. Fareena Maria presented a magic show at the end. The first day concluded with a silent prayer.



## Summit Day Two

The second summit day began with a lot of hope and anticipation among participants. The first session started with an evaluation of the events of the previous day, presided over by Bro. Edward Francis, provincial superior, Angelo Province, SHJ. He is an eminent personality and an ardent supporter of RFYN (Religious Freedom Young Adult Network). He has provided moral and economical support to organize many programs to motivate young people in field of protecting Human Rights.

The important sharing's of participants were -

- a) Gowthami – Liked the group discussion because even though there were many people from different states, there was unity among everyone.
- b) Sudarshan – Liked Games because it boosted everyone and made everyone feel energized throughout.
- c) Prof. Reddy – Activities done in the session with a lot of joy, and respecting one another's thoughts and feelings.
- d) Shama – Preparing a whole skit in little time shows our strength of will and oneness because despite us being from different states, unity was prevalent and success was attained. This also going along to show us how talented we are.



## Session two :- 2: Human Rights Education

Mr. Robert used PowerPoint with imagery to keep participants interested, and gave them an enlightening presentation on how to move from HRE – Human Rights Education – to HRD – Human Rights Defence. He highlighted the use of technology as an HRD tool, emphasizing the capturing of evidence at violation sites. After a short tea break, participants were posed a question – How does the ‘citizen warrior’ defend rights?



Participants were divided into regional groups for discussion, after which one state representative spoke on behalf of her or his team. After the sharing of thoughts, participants came to the conclusion that they needed to get “The Evidence”.

Key outcomes of the discussion:

1. The participants were able to understand the importance of moving beyond Human Rights Education to Human Rights Defence (HRD), as ‘citizen warriors’ in the sense of being digitally-empowered activists for the rights of the disenfranchised
2. The session impressed participants and urged for the need of deepening technological knowledge available for HRD
3. To surrender themselves for Human Rights activities
4. Deep knowledge about IARF-HRRC objectives

Mr. Robert began with second half of the presentation, in which he enlightened the participants about organizations and software that could be helpful, this includes: Global Voices; Witness.org; Bambuser; InformaCam; ObscuraCam.

After lunch, Bro. Albert Xaviour gave an overview of the whole Human Rights Education program.

He mentioned about the training module and its importance and impact. He emphasized on HRE training is helping all the ways in the formation of HRD. He distributed the copies of the HRRC’s 2- day HRE training agenda in CDs,

### Participants had a small signature game –

- The participants were divided into 10 teams and were asked to make videos on three Human Rights articles each.
- They were dispersed to discuss, plan and practice their acts. The acts were then presented and recorded on stage.

After dinner, a fabulous cultural night was organized by the participants. There were group dances, solo performances, regional representations of music, and comedies. The whole audience danced and enjoyed the array of events. The second day summit ended with a prayer and a token of thanks to the Almighty.

## Summit Day Three

### Republic Day Celebration

A patriotic feeling was experienced on Republic Day. On 26th January 2014 morning (7am), people of different regions, religions, culture gathered, giving the true sense of united India. As per Indian tradition, with the sunrise the national flag should be hoisted. The RFYN youth, with students of Montfort College of family counseling & psychology department, hoisted the flag before the main building of Montfort Spirituality Centre at 7:15 am, and sang the national anthem. The republic day message was given, and sweets were distributed to the all.





All the participants were dressed in White symbolizing “Peace”. All were gathered in the quadrangle of the Montfort building to form a figure spelling out ‘IARF’, ‘HRCC’ and ‘RFYN’.



Before the third day sessions began, participants were asked to share views about the changes brought about in them over the last 2 days. Bro. Britto and Janhvi Gupte headed this evaluation session. Participants mentioned:

- Better communication skills
- Improved social interaction
- More awareness on social issues
- A wider knowledge base
- Connections with the people all over the country
- Knowledge about different religions and regions
- More transparency and adaptability

### [Session 3:- Challenges of Young Adults to Promote Religious Freedom in the Digital Age](#)

To begin this session, Janhvi gave the participants a task: to write 5 good things about other own religion and 5 good things about other religion they like the most. Participants shared their views thus:

- Bro. Lijo (Christian) likes Sikhism: the way people are united in their commitment to the service to God, and also 24hrs availability of food for everyone (without discrimination) at Gurudwara.

- Kausarjan (Islam) likes Hinduism: the way people touch elders' feet and respect them. Also, the pujas offered to nature, treating every living and non-living to be the God and giving respect.
- Shri Ram (Hindu) likes Christianity: the “confession box”, where you can speak up your heart and the silent prayers of every individual.
- Shantanu (Hindu) likes Islam: the people united, and their punctuality and dedication to the prayers.
- Janhvi (Hindu) likes Jainism: treating every organism with respect and care about their life. Also, the “theory of detachment” can be experienced.

The session about religious freedom was prescribed over by Father. Rony Prabhu, who belongs to the Society of Jesus and has 35 years of experience in Religious Freedom work and interfaith dialogue, He is the director of the Bangalore Catholic Diocese's interfaith activities. He started off by giving participants his viewpoints about religion. He mentioned “how religion is bad, and should be completely wiped out for a better world.”



With this shocking revelation, participants were divided into groups and allowed to speak ‘for’ and ‘against’ his points. After a group discussion, team representatives came out with very interesting points such as:

1. Religion is a way of life
2. If people follow religion completely, then there will be peace throughout
3. No religion talks bad about other religions
4. Religious people live longer than non-believers
5. Religion creates boundaries and superiority among people
6. Religion will create war and disturbances
7. Corruption in the name of religion is rampant
8. People are made to beg and plead with no avail
9. It makes people immature
10. Religion should be abolished to have unity

Then Bro. Albert concluded the session with points about how one must know one's own religion completely so as to answer queries from others and to respect other religions.

Proper knowledge about religion will overcome all the wrong beliefs of the society pertaining to religion.

Participants were served a special lunch on the special occasion of Republic Day.

In the next session, participants were divided into their regional groups to chart out a plan for the future. They brainstormed and charted out their plans, clarifying their doubts with Bro. Xaviour regarding organizing programs and making the arrangements. Regional leaders were appointed, and an overview of the magazine and website was given to all the participants. Each group decided upon meeting schedules, and came up with ingenious new ideas on how to spread the human rights movement faster. After hours of discussion, the groups all took leave for dinner.

After assembling again, each group was asked to present their agenda for the coming year to all. The overall future planning for the HRE programs was finalized, and after an interesting yet hectic day, all went to bed after having thanked the Lord.



# Summit Day Four

The last day saw everyone having breakfast with a heavy heart. Participant proceeded towards the seminar hall, post where an evaluation was conducted by Janhvi. Participants were asked to share the changes they could experience in their thoughts after 3 days sessions.

## Session Four:- Guiding the way into the digital age (get into the Rhythm of Leadership)

The first session was on leadership, and started with a game of blindfold to build the sense of mutual trust for the strengthening the leadership qualities.

The session was taken by Bro. Paul Raj, the director of Montfort Spirituality Centre. He spoke about the principle of humanity and how we should have a fraternal community. He also threw light on the present digital age and how it can be advantageous. He mentioned the two different types of leaders such as: Hitler or Alexander, and Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Theresa. The participants were asked to share their views about “how leadership relates to humanity”.



The final session was conducted by Mr. Robert Papini who gave participants an insight into the IARF 34<sup>th</sup> World Congress, to be held in Birmingham on 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August. He explained the theme and scope of interaction with the speakers. He briefed the youth on the topics that could be brought to the panel, and the questions which may arise. After detailed information about the plenary sessions, participants dispersed for lunch.

## **Nomination of RFYN Representative to IC**

Bro. Albert Xaviour and Robert Papini explained the role of RFYN to the International Council and his/her responsibilities. They also said the RFYN representative usually select

during the RFYN pre-congress but the present RFYN (Bro Albert Xaviour) was nominated by Dr. Thomas Mathew, because of his commitment towards IARF activities. He explained the trend of selection for past two instances, and specified that the nomination for next RFYN will happen in this Summit. He/she will be nominated to the nominating committee by Bro. Albert Xaviour during his annual meeting in April 2014. The Nominating committee Chairperson will select the RFYN representative then.

The participants nominated Janhvi Gupte & Immanuel Mannish from North India with the virtue of extending IARF activities in North and North Eastern states of India. Participants elected Janhvi Gupte, as she holds experience in IARF and RFYN activities since 2008. Few of her service to IARF:-



- 2009 joined IARF through HRE program
- 2009 she organized first HRE program in Indore, M.P
- 2009 she participated International RFYN program at Chennai and was awarded for best caption writer
- 2010 She organized state level HRE program in Tamilnadu
- 2010 participated IARF 33<sup>rd</sup> world congress and she was in the organizing committee. She was the one who brought congress jute bags, writing pad, pen, file etc from Indore, M.P to Cochin, by train which is 1800km distance
- 2011 she was selected for IARF-HRE young adult facilitator training program, and was certified
- 2011 she participated in RFYN Annul Summit at Kolkata
- 2011 she was selected by Dr. Thomas Mathew to participate Hiroshima program at Hiroshima, Japan
- 2011 she organized HRE program at Goa
- 2012 host committee chair of RFYN annual summit at Madurai

- 2012 she organized Hiroshima & Nagasaki memorial day celebration in Bangalore
- 2012 HRE programs at Chennai, Hindupur and Gujarat
- 2013 host committee chair to launching New IARF HRRC at Hindupur
- 2013 HRE programs at Bangalore,
- 2013 onwards Editor for IARF-HRRC Quarterly news bulletin
- 2013 onwards she is the secretary of IARF-HRRC, Hindupur
- 2014 host committee chair of RFYN Annual summit 2014

At present she is working in Compliance Department (Ethics) at State Street Corp, Boston based MNC at Bangalore.

The participants were very happy to select Janhvi Gupte as a successor of Bro. Albert Xaviour and all the participants anonymously selected her for RFYN representative to the International Council. She also accepted this and requested the participants to support her to do the IARF mission to bring changes in the society.

## Valedictory Celebration



The valedictory function began with welcoming the chief guests, to enlighten the gathering with their valuable presence. Interfaith prayers were performed by participants. A few participants like Sindhu, Rabin and Shanthanu were called on stage to share their experiences of the last 4days.

Bro. Albert Xaviour gave a brief about IARF-HRRC works and shared the importance of Human Rights Education. He also mentioned the changes he experienced among the participants during his HRE trainings from 2005 onwards. One of the key topic of his talk was the impact of this RFYN Annual Summit 2014.

Mr. UB. Bhat, Governor of Bangalore Rotary, spoke on how youth should become digital citizens. He asked the participants to be active and always voice their concerns. He mentioned the fast evolution of technology and faster adaptability among the youth.



Next was a very enlightening speech by Mr. Jaspreet Singh, who accurately mentioned how Eve exercising her right when she ate the forbidden apple. Mr. Singh emphasized that; the rights are important, but always supported by duties. He also mentioned human rights and its awareness could be linked to digitalization which can bring peace in the society.

In his speech Bro. S. Pancras stressed spirituality among youth and its benefits in bringing peace in the society. He said Human Rights and respect for humanity is mentioned in all religions, and we need to practice it.

Dr. CNN Raju concluded the session by recalling some humorous incidents, and urging the participants, to whole- heartedly contribute towards the betterment of society.

An award ceremony was organized in which awards were given for three categories:

1. **Best RFYN award 2013-2014:** given to Ms. Janhvi Gupte for her incredible service to RFYN and IARF in India
2. **Best RFYN activist and defender 2013-2014:** given to Immanuel Manish for introducing human rights education program into the rural communities of Chhindwara, M.P
3. **Best Participant of RFYN Annual Summit 2014:** presented to Arjun Sindhav from Gujarat for his active participation in the summit.

All participants received a certificate for participating in this RFYN Annual Summit 2014. Bro. Albert Xaviour presented vote of thanks. The program ended with the national anthem followed by group photos.



The RFYN decided to have the next Annual Summit in the month of January 2015, in Nepal

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