

# Learning spirituality from a different perspective

## *Intervention of IARF by involving with HION meeting along with WFIRC-2008 assembly*

Representatives from international interfaith organizations meet to review the progress and crisis of environment related spirituality and to discuss an effective communication among its members. Interfaith education, e learning, connectivity, UN initiatives, eco-theology, spiritual dimensions etc came under the preview of the world assembly.

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions[CPWR], Chicago, Illinois, USA, Elijah Interfaith Institute, Jerusalem, Israel, Interfaith Youth Core[IFYC] Chicago, USA, **International Association for Religious Freedom[IARF], Osaka, Japan**, International Interfaith Centre[IIC], Oxford, UK, International Movement for a Just World, Selangor, Malaysia, Minorities of Europe[MoE], Coventry CV2 4HE, UK, North American Interfaith Network, Peace Council, USA, Religion for Peace, NY 10017, USA, Temple of Understanding, NY 10017, USA, Three Faiths Forum, London, UK, United Religions Initiative[URI], San Francisco, USA, World Congress of Faiths[WCF] , London, UK and World Fellowship of Inter- Religious Councils [WFIRC], Kerala, India participated and shared their view on spirituality and environment.

IARF took the initiative in extending the peace laden strives and international amity through pedantic discourses for an issue driven society. The challenge before IARF is to address various world issues from a different viewpoint by adding the flavour of dialogue and decision-making. The arguments in favour of these goals are the following: Peace and development are complementary. Sustainable development should be attained by inculcating a spirit of co-existence and consistent action.

The dynamics of the State should be emphasized by linking NGO's with governmental structures and by linking people with NGO. The richness of interfaith dialogue must be understood by involving youth in the peace making process. IARF has organized more than 200 human rights education sessions for people from various occupations across India. For that India's long cultural heritage, pluralism and diversity should be considered with at most care and precision. It is argued that we must be the caregivers in a conflict bound society.

Pluralism and diversity components are integral in the secular development of India. This is applicable to many other countries. Unfortunately, the trends of homogenization are in the air. We need unified action along with unanimous agenda in the midst of various pluralistic tendencies.

Accessibility to information is crucial in developing a worldview about spirituality and environment. Stereotypes can be disregarded instead synchronized actions and assessments are essential. Time invites us to interact, intervene, involve in the social issues and inspire the weak knees. It is proposed that IARF should empower the afflicted

masses, who are suffering from alienation, economic divide, social rifts, political apartheid, under utilization of knowledge and so on. IARF upholds the social cohesion across different societies, believing that we are called to be neighbors.

Peace web is an innovative and lucrative idea, which has been evolved through the research bound intervention of IARF since 2004. The HRE project highlights the potentials of technology integration, propaganda, active learning, discussion, sharing, dialogue building and there by erect the peace infrastructure. Therefore, peace web is not mere idea; instead, it works in real life situations.

Networking of able, hearted NGO's is to be undertaken. IARF sticks to produce intellectually competent, morally upright and emotionally balanced inter-faith communities internationally. The global outlook shared by IARF- 'Unity with diversity' is to be taken care of the needs and challenges of new millennium.

Mr. Thomas Mathew, President, IARF, Dr Alex Philip, HRE facilitator, IARF and Mr. Jyothiraj, HRE facilitator, IARF, represented the ideas and policies of IARF at the WFIRC Assembly. Mr. Thomas Mathew said that, "We must discuss a model for inter religious activities in this modern world. The model should preserve the interest of the oppressed and afflicted communities and should understand the language of the voiceless. More attention should be given in fixing the medium and in finalizing the agenda as well as action. Though the language is symbolic, the real discourse develops only through multipolar interaction and effective communication.

Dr Alex Philip suggested that, "having grounded with social realities and refreshed with authentic inventions, the human beings must develop a critical existential approach in defining the problems of the world. Instead of antagonizing communities, we must integrate them through this approach. Every spiritual worker must be a critique of his or her own religion and dominating cultures. We must be sympathetic to the assertions and aggressions of ignorant others.

Mr. Jyothiraj emphasized that, "the human beings are divine in nature. It is the duty of every environmental activist to mediate the human being with nature. Spirituality must foster the divinity in human beings. The shared dialogical process should ignite the god given talents and there by enhance the transfer of information in a mutually beneficial manner. The eco-theology of the West and the spirituality of the East are different. Diverse traditions are embodied in every ritual of all religions of the East, which are the manifestation of rare model of environmental preservation.

Mr. Subramaniam, President of IARF India Chapter along with 80 members, most of them are youths also attended the WFIRC assembly.

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