



international association for

**religious freedom**

belief with integrity

South Asia Coordinating Council

Human Rights Education Workshop Held at  
**Guru community College, Paramakudi,  
Tamilnadu**

On  
23 & 24, February, 2013



# REPORT

Facilitator: Dr. G. Rajaram

## At a Glance

Venue	: Guru Community College, Paramakudi, Tamilnadu
Date	: 23-24 February, 2013
Facilitator	: Dr. G. Rajaram
Number of Participants	: 30
Gender Balance	: Male-7, Female-23
Age Group	: 18-26
Religious Representation	: Hinduism (Different sects) -30

## Introduction

Paramakudi is the second largest town in the district of Ramanathapuram of Tamilnadu State. It is situated on NH 47 just 80 km from Madurai and 85 km from Rameshwaram, a famous Hindu religious pilgrimage center. River Vaigai flow through this city. Hindus, Muslims and Christians live in the city. They live very peacefully and no religious conflict reported in the recent past. However, the town is often appearing in headlines of leading Newspapers for the reported communal conflicts between upper and lower caste conflicts.

Guru Community college is a newly established institution, concentrating in the rural development of youth and aiming at empowering youth through rights education. Students were selected mainly from Pasumpon Thevar Memorial College, Kamuthi, a town which is notorious for caste conflicts. It is often found place in news because of conflicts between upper caste and Adhi Dravida (Dalit and indigenous) caste youths.

Therefore, it was a challenging task before the IARF SACC to organize a Human Rights Education workshop in the town to sensitize the young people, especially in caste issues. But there is a great need to inculcate the sense of tolerance and appreciation in the minds of young students.

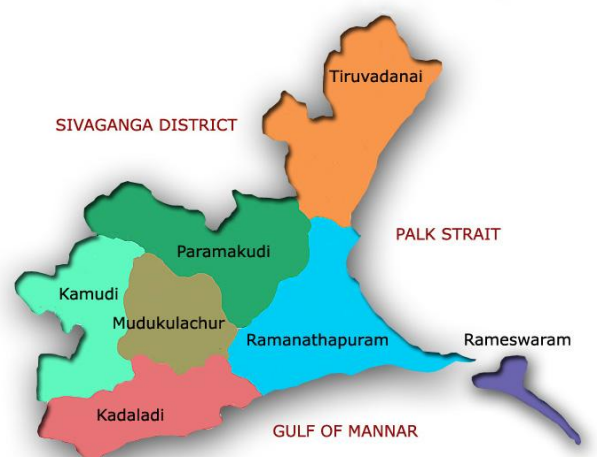
As a result on 23 and 24 February 2013, two day HRE workshop was organized at Guru Community College, Paramakudi in collaboration with Guru Rural Empowerment and Action Trust (GREAT). Mr. Sekaran, President, Consumer Rights Protection Association of Paramakudi Taluk inaugurated the program in the presence of Mr. Balasubramaniam, Director, Alagappa University Evening College, Paramakudi. Dr. G. Rajaram has facilitated the workshop.

## Main Aim

- Sensitize people about the rights of freedom of religion and belief.
- Promote Religious Harmony and Peace in backward state of India.



## Ramanathapuram District



## Objective

Minimize socio-cultural and political conflict, violence and tension from the society. Eliminate all form of intolerance, humiliation and hatred through exchange of dialogue among different faith groups.

## Timeline

Two days program - On 23 and 24 February, 2013 from morning 9.30 am to 5.30 pm

## Session outline

### 1<sup>st</sup> Session on 9<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30 am to 1pm)

- Inauguration
- Greetings from the facilitator for joining this learning / action process.
- Introduction of participants and ice-breaking and the expectation.
- Identifying their concerns about intolerance, religious discrimination and Conflict-sharing and categorizing their concerns
- Social purposes, learning goal, social goal of this HRE workshop proposing goal for social change to overcome obstacles to religious Freedom
- Sharing goals
- Thinking about action
- Film show 1<sup>st</sup> time and responses after the show.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Session (2mp to 5.30 pm)

- Reading, acknowledging, and clarifying – Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- The declaration on the Elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (DIDRB).
- Majors Human Rights Treaties
- Relate the goals of the participants to the rights describe in the UDHR and DIDRB

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Session (on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan at 9.30 am to 1 pm)

- Film show – ‘Rita’s Choices’
- Responding the film - awakening their awareness
- Inquiry about injustice
- Analyses the injustice within a Human Rights framework.
- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices
- Applying HR (DIDRB) what actions may be undertaken

### 4<sup>th</sup> Session

- Review – Rita’s Choices on the light of DIDRB and the said goal
- Film Show – ‘Sacred Grove’
- Responding the film - awakening their awareness
- Inquiry about multiple injustice
- Analyses the injustice within a Human Rights framework.
- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices
- Action to be undertaken

### 5<sup>th</sup> Session (2.00 pm to 5.30 pm)

- Review of Sacred Grove on the light of said goal
- Film show – ‘Where is Home’
- Responding the film - awakening their awareness
- Inquiry about multiple injustice
- Analyses the inter-religious injustice within a Human Rights framework.

- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices
- Action to be undertaken

### **6<sup>th</sup> Session**

- Reviewing their concern and goals
- Recommending actions
- Planning action for social change
- Strategic planning for action

### **Methodology**

Group works - discussions, lectures, case studies, Audio visual learning and group report presentation.

### **Issues rose**

Hatred, humiliation, intolerance, Religious and caste conflicts, Rights to freedom of religion and belief.

### **Assumptions**

Lower caste Hindu and upper caste Hindus live in this area. In rural and remote villages still hatred exists among these sects. Sometimes they fight each other and communal tension prevails over the area, therefore this issue raised in the discussion.

### **Risk factors**

Little tension and risks are found in the area in regards to their communal feelings and violation of Human rights.

### **Expected learning outcomes**

#### **Short-term**

Participants change their mind set up and oriented and motivated to accept the freedom of religion and beliefs as important Human rights.

#### **Long-term**

All sorts of social violence, conflicts and tension will be resolved.

### **Resources Required**

- Cooperation and man power support from the local organization
- Teaching and training materials like pad, pen, TV, DVD player, flip charts, marker pen etc.

### **Language Problem**

There was no language problem (English and Tamil are used)

### **Location**

Guru Community College, Paramakudi, Tamilnadu.

### **Have you already had contact with the Institute?**

Yes

### **Why have you chosen this community/ target group?**

It is presumed, tension and misunderstanding present among the young generation of this locality, that's why it is chosen.

### **How did you ensure the balance of gender, ages etc?**

Originally 40 Participants were selected to represent Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious sectors. But due to preoccupation and other commitments there were only 23 Girls and 7 boys participated in the program and age group between 18 to 26 years.

**What steps have you undertaken in order to lessen the tension between the participants from different faith groups?**

I inspired and insisted participants to maintain peace and to be calm and patience during discussion. They were allowed to start open and free discussion instead of loud voice.

**Did you have ice-breaking /team building activities?**

Yes

**Which faith traditions attended the program?**

Hindus (comprising different sects). The program mainly conducted to build a good relation between upper and lower castes (upper caste and Adhi Dravida caste youths). Paramakudi often found place in news because of conflicts between upper caste and Adhi Dravida caste youths.

**Name of Potential Mediator**

Mr. Guru Govind.

**Participants' Comments (Selected)**



**K. Murugeswari (F), 18**

I like this program very much. After attending the program I come to know about human rights. I think knowledge about human rights will make a change in my life. So everyone has to give importance to human rights. I promise that I'll not join in any act that violates human rights and religious freedom.

Thanks to International Association for Religious Freedom.

The workshop was very good in every sense. It was my first experience and privilege to attend an interactive seminar. Films and discussion based on them were very interesting. I never thought of the extreme stage of human rights violation in different parts of our district and villages. Thanks to IARF and I am obliged to them for the insights given.

**N. Kumaran Sethupathi (M), 20**



**B. Pandi Meena (F), 18**

I am thankful to my college and IARF HRE Facilitator Dr. G. Rajaram for spending time with us to educate us about human rights and religious freedom. Lots of cases of human rights and religious rights violations are reporting very often in our province. After attending the workshop I understood the way to deal with such issues. Moreover it gave us a platform to speak out our views.

**N. Murugan (M), 19**

I got self confidence from this program. Now I can speak publically. Facilitator asked opinions and views pertaining to Human Rights and Religious Freedom, from all participants. By this all got equal opportunity to express their views. The curriculum for two day workshop is very sound and provided us lot of knowledge and insights. Thanks to our facilitator and college for this wonderful program.



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**Photos** (Please follow the link given below)

<http://www.iarfsacc.org/media/photos/index.php?cat=97>