



international association for
religious freedom
belief with integrity

Human Rights Education Workshop held at
Sri Parasakthi College for Women

Courtallam, Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu, India.

On 20 & 21, July, 2013



Participants with Guests, Facilitator and College Officials

REPORT

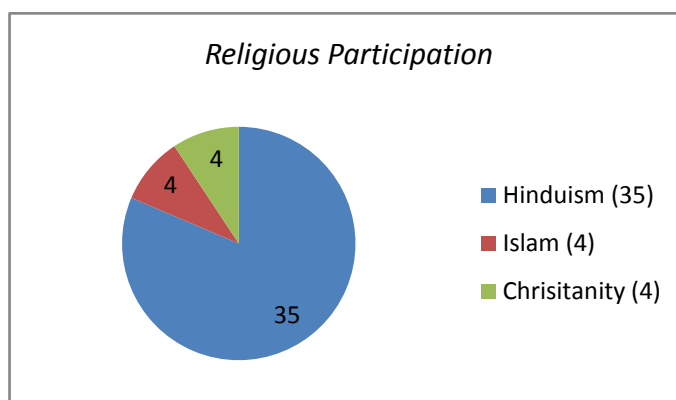
Facilitator: Dr. G. Rajaram

At a Glance

Venue	: Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam, Tamilnadu.
Date	: 20-21, July 2013
Facilitators	: Dr. G. Rajaram
Number of Participants	: 43 (40 students from SP College & 3 youths from UK)
Gender Balance	: Female-40 + 2 & Male -1
Age Group	: 18-26
Religious Representation	: Hinduism (Different sects) – 35, Islam - 4 and Christianity – 4 (Including three youths from UK)

Introduction

Courtallam is a small town in Tamil Nadu. Situated at an elevation of 160 meters, it has a number of waterfalls, cascades and rivers that have earned Courtallam its nickname! The numerous waterfalls and cascades along with the ubiquitous health resorts in the area have earned it the title the Spa of South India. It is a town of religious significance too. There are several temples in Courtallam dedicated to different Gods and Goddesses.



Sri Parasakthi College for Women, situated at Courtallam, is a source of knowledge, with high aims and ideals as the lodestar in its path of progress.

The institution showed steady growth academically and made herself competent to take up new developmental activities of academic and cultural nature. The college was conferred autonomy in 1978, the only and first rural women's college to be conferred autonomous status in the whole of India. With the conferment of academic freedom, the institution has designed its curricular programs with social relevance and academic excellence the watchwords of autonomy. Today it is one of the important centers of higher education in Southern part of the nation.

Main Aim

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

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 20 and 21 July 2013 from morning 9:30 am to 05:30 pm

Session outline

1st session on 20th July at 09:30 am to 01:00pm)

- 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 1st time and responses after the show.

2nd Session (02:00 pm to 05.30 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

3rd Session (on 21st July at 09:30 am to 01:00 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

4th Session (02:00pm – 03:30pm)

- 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

5th Session (03.30 pm to 04:30 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

6th session (04.30 pm to 05:30 pm)

- 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, LCD projector, laptop, flip charts, marker pen etc.

Language Problem

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

Location

Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam, 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?

Forty Participants were selected to represent Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious sectors. However three youths from UK also participated in the program. As it is a Women’s College all participants are women in the age group between 18 to 26 years, except a male among three youths from UK.

What steps have you taken 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 permitted to make open and free discussion.

Did you have ice-breaking /team building activities?

Yes

Which faith traditions attended the program?

Hinduism (Different Sects), Islam and Christianity

How many people from each faith attended the program?

35 from Hindus, 4 from Muslims and 4 from Christian including three youths from UK.

Name of Potential Mediator

Dr. S. Kayarkanni.

Comments by Facilitator



Dr. G. Rajaram

During the ice breaking session, most of the participants shared their experience of gender discrimination, Eve Teasing, Domestic Violence, Dowry Harassment, and caste discrimination. It was mostly reported that the participants fear to raise their voices against these Human Rights Violations because they are weaker sections and parents will also discourage them.

But at the end of the programme they have conveyed that they got confidence and now individually and as a group can protest if any Human Rights Violation takes place in their area. Therefore the programme has brought out change in their attitude.

Comments by Participants (Selected)



B. Maheshwari (F), 20, Hindu

I could learn about the basics Human Rights for the first time from this workshop. The workshop has strengthened me to live and work courageously in my society. Discussions were very interesting and informative. Thanks to the facilitator and organizers for making this event possible.

M. Sabana Begam (F), 20, Islam

I am privileged to participate in the human rights education workshop held at our college. The experience I got from the workshop is really an asset to my future. Now I have got some courage to raise my voice against violations of human rights in my community. I express my sincere thanks to Dr. G. Rajaram.



G. Mani (F), 20, Christian

The workshop was a new experience for me. The opportunity given us to interact with guests from different parts of the state and nation was really gave us lots of exposures. The stories of films were really heart touching. In fact the workshop demands more commitment from youngsters like us to work ardently for a just society.

A. Thirumalai Selvi (F), 20, Hindu

This program is very useful. It has widely improved my self confidence. The insights from the workshop about human rights, violations, religious freedom etc were really eye opening. Thanks to IARF.



A. Barakkath Nisha (F), 20, Islam

The workshop was very good and broadened my mind. Interactive sessions gave me a great opportunity to interact publically with my friends, teachers and guests. I'm grateful to the facilitator and my college for this opportunity.

Ann (F), 26, Christian

We are highly fortunate to attend this HRE program by IARF. Thanks to Dr. Thomas Mathew for bring us here to learn about UDHR. As a teacher in UK, it is very helpful for me to interact with other nationalities living there. We learned a lot about Indian inter-religious problems and we realize that it is one of the causes of slow development in the developing world. We will try our level best to active in interfaith activities in our home town, Manchester.



Follow the link to view the **Photos** of the workshop:

<http://www.iarfsacc.org/media/photos/index.php?cat=121>