Before this, Hindus and Muslims lived side by side since the time of the sultanate, roughly for 700 years. The colonial rule for 200 years shaped the history of South Asia. The agonies of displacement experienced by both Hindus and Muslims as a result of the Partition resulted in bitterness and resentment causing further schism among the two communities.

In the 10 days of the training all the participants lived in the same premises sharing the same food, breathing the same air and being part of each other's pain and sorrows. It was a unique experience for us. We toured around South India to visit some of the places of historical significance. Among them were Chamudeswari Temple (a temple of Ma Durga which is situated 3000 feet above ground level), Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace Daulat Daria, the present king of Mysore's Palace designed in Indo-Saracenic style by the well known British architect, Henry Irwin, the palace is a treasure house of exquisite carvings and works of art from all over the world.



Lal Bagh Gardens

We also visited Somnathpur Temple, which was built in 1268 A.D. by Somnath and is dedicated to Lord Keshava. Somnathpur, a village, is located on the bank of river Kaveri. The temple is a symbol of Hoysala Dynasty that ruled for 350 years. While visiting these historical places the participants got to know each other better and came to the conclusion that all religions in fact sprouted from the same tree echoing professor Rambachan's (Chair and Head of Theology Dept. Olaf College, USA) famous saying "The one being the wise call by many names" was once again reiterated by the Bangladeshis, Indians, the Nepalis, Burmese and the Sri Lankans.

The four main religions of the world shared their faith with the ones who believe that their gods are the spirits of their ancestors (a religion known as Animism).

The most interesting place that we visited was the village of the Machur Kare Jenukuruba tribal village, which is situated in Rajib Gandhi National Park, which is a government-owned area.

It's a village of the adivasis; the notable thing about the village is that there was not a single piece of litter in the whole village even though there was no water flow or a proper sewerage system in the village. These villagers are conscious about their environment; they live on the fruits and vegetables that grow in the forest without exploiting nature. Villagers with honey they collected as their livelihood welcomed us. The tribe also shares their livelihood with the bears of the forest as the bears also live on honey. We were told that all tribal people follow similar lifestyles.

The first five days of our trip, we traveled around South India. The second five days we had informative discussions about the four main religions of the world, plenary session and there were committees formed which would do the recording of the proceedings and prepare a report. We heard the voices of the minority communities of Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The scholars of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, who came from different parts of the world, gave speeches about their respective religions and cleared a lot of confusion about the different religions. It was unanimously accepted that all major and minor religions of the world talk about the oneness of the Supreme Being; they talk about loving all creations of the nature along with nature itself. And that there is no space in any religion for hatred or intolerance it's only the followers who want to gain some earthly benefit who use religion to do so.

Many so-called self-interested leaders of different religions always mislead ordinary people by misinterpreting the scriptures or books. We came to the conclusion that all the main religions and the minor religions of the world more or less talk about the same things. Believing in God, co-existence of different religions, loving nature and other beings are some of the commonalities of different religions. But then why do we have conflicts in the name of religion is a prime question of today's generation. Religion should be a private affair to the devotees. Politicians should not use religion in order to win the vote banks neither should they be allowed to politicise religion for their benefit.

The fact that religion is the major reason for clashes between different ethnic groups can't be denied. So it is up to the young people of today to stop violence that is inflicted in the name of religion.

It is up to us to correct the misconceptions that people have regarding our respective faiths.

The writer teaches English language and lives in Dhaka.