

Report on the XII World Conference of Grand Lodges

From Nov 21 – Nov 24, I was privileged to represent the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario at the World Conference of Grand Lodges and the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of India in Chennai, India. Following is a short report on my visit.

1 XII World Conference of Regular Grand Lodges Nov 21-23 2012:

Location:

The Conference was held at the Radisson Blu Temple Bay Resort and Conference Center, Mamallapuram, India, about an hour and a half drive from Chennai. The Grand Lodge of India was held in the city of Chennai at Freemason's Hall.

Chennai, is in the middle of India, on the shore of the Bay of Bengal, in what is called the Southern Province. Chennai is a city of over 7 million people. Mamallapuram is a small village on the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, an hour and a half outside Chennai.

Traveling to Chennai from the Resort is an experience in itself. To say that traffic is congested doesn't begin to tell the story. Temperatures range from 30-32 degrees in Nov.

Conference Attendees:

The World Conference of Regular Grand Lodges is held every 18 months at different locations throughout the world. This was the second time that India had hosted the Conference, the last one being held in New Delhi in 2002.

The purpose of the Conference is to share information and to propose solutions that promote the stability, progress and universality of Craft Masonry.

Participation in the Conference is limited to Regular Masonic Grand Lodges recognized by a minimum of 15 other Regular Grand Lodges.

The Grand Master (or his representative) and the Grand Secretary (or Grand Chancellor) are the only ones permitted to be seated at the Conference table and address the Conference.

In attendance this year were 35 Regular Grand Lodges, including 18 Grand Masters.

The general theme of this year's Conference was "The Role of Freemasonry in Universal Peacekeeping". The theme was designed to be broad and general to allow for diverse thinking and choice in papers submitted for presentation. Eleven papers were submitted and 10 were presented at the Conference.

It is worthy of note that one of the papers submitted was a paper by **M.W. Bro. Raymond S. J. Daniels**, our own Past Grand Master. The paper was titled, appropriately, “The Role of Freemasonry in Universal Peacekeeping” and was delivered on M.W. Bro. Daniels behalf by M.W. Bro., Terence Shand.

Keynote Address:

The Keynote Address at the Conference was delivered by a well known and respected Indian Mystic, Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, who spoke on enhancing your perceptions of the world around you by looking inward. Several comments from the keynote address:

- Our education systems are all memory based and not perception based – leading to repetitiveness of thought and action
- As human beings we live our whole lives worrying about how to be good human beings
- Our eyes can only see things that stop light – enhancing our perception means being able to train ourselves to see things that don’t stop light
- Our five senses (taste, smell, etc.) are all outward bound, but our experiences (pain, fear, etc.) are all inward bound
- We know how we use things and what they do, but we do not know what they are
- Time and space are limiting because our definitions of them are memory based
- All our educators want to teach us something about something that did not work for them. Therefore to be a better person, we shouldn’t listen to anyone else. Be influenced, not by others, but by ourselves. Listen to the light within us, while at the same time recognizing that walking with a guide is easier

Presentation of Papers:

All but one of the remaining papers was then presented to the attendees, with simultaneous translation being done in three languages.

Proceedings:

For the first time since the inception of the Conference a copy (in English) of all papers submitted was distributed to all attendees at the end of the Conference. These Proceedings were distributed in a 40 page hard copy booklet.

We are in the process of getting these proceedings in a PDF format and when completed they will be published on the Grand Lodge of Canada Website.

2 Grand Lodge of India Annual Communication (Grand Festival) Nov 24 2012:

The Grand Lodge session was held at a conference facility just a few blocks from Freemason's Hall, with the reception being held at Freemason's Hall itself.

Approximately 1200-1300 Masons attended the Annual Communication on the afternoon of Nov 24. Most business is conducted ahead of time and the Annual Communication consists primarily of award presentations, the Installation of the new Grand Lodge Officers and the Addresses of the outgoing and the incoming Grand Masters.

The Grand Lodge of India is divided into four (4) regions, each one being under the jurisdiction of a Regional Grand Master. This Conference was hosted in the Southern Region (which includes Chennai).

India has approximately 20,000 Masons in total, with 368 Lodges.
The Southern Province has approximately 9000 Masons in 130 Lodges.

The Grand Master and the Regional Grand Masters have jurisdiction over the craft Lodges and all York Rite Chapters (including Mark Master Mason).

3 Items of note from Conversations with Other Jurisdictions:

Eyeopeners:

In Canada and Ontario, it is hard to comprehend the culture in which Freemasonry operates in other continents and countries. It is immediately obvious in talking with other Grand jurisdictions that, in most cases, we take for granted our freedom to meet and operate without being subjected to political and religious influences.

Even the ability of our Grand Lodge to function as an independent organization without owing allegiance to any other Masonic body is something we do not appreciate until being exposed to situations elsewhere.

Grand Lodge of Spain:

Prior to 1975 Freemasonry had been banned in Spain under a decree issued by General Franco banning Freemasonry, communism and other secret societies. However, since 1975, Freemasonry in Spain has been growing at a fairly rapid pace. There are now 2500 Masons in approximately 134 Lodges.

Grand Lodge of Serbia:

Since the fall of Communism in 1990, Freemasonry has started to make a comeback in Serbia. There are now 34 Lodges in operation. However, one major inhibitor to the growth of Lodges has been the resistance to the creation of rural Lodges. Rural Masons

will travel to urban centers to meetings, but, they will not establish Lodges in the country because of the fear of persecution by being labelled a Mason (the culture that members of the Jewish faith and Masons were responsible for all things 'bad' has not completely disappeared).

However, the Grand Lodge is attracting new young members. They are very selective in guarding the West Gate because of their history.

Grand Lodge of Utah:

This Grand Lodge has approximately 2000 Masons in some 30 Lodges. The biggest challenges they face are leadership development and succession planning for Grand Lodge Officers. Other significant concerns are the guarding of the West Gate and the affordability of Lodge buildings.

Respectfully submitted,
D. Garry Dowling
Grand Master,
Grand Lodge of Canada
In the Province of Ontario