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# ***jnanadeepa***

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

**Inter-Religious Dialogue**



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# *jnanadeepa*

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## Inter-Religious Dialogue Contemporary Relevance

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**The Editor, *Jnanadeepa*, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune 411 014, India**

Tel (office): +91-20-41026226,

(res): +91-20-41036111

E-mail: <journalpune@gmail.com>

<kuru@jdv.edu.in>

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## **Fostering Culture of Dialogue**

In a time when the world is mired in conflicts, religious leaders have a duty to show that it is possible to set aside differences and work together for the common good, Pope Francis said.

“Dialogue and cooperation are essential at a time like our own when complex and unprecedented factors have led to increased tensions and conflicts, accompanied by violence on both a small and a large scale,” the pope said May 16, 2018.

Before attending his weekly general audience, Francis met with a delegation from the Dharmic religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism - who were in Rome attending an interreligious conference.

Participants of the conference released a joint declaration in the afternoon reaffirming their commitment to “mutual human solidarity” and respect for religious traditions “to effectively confront the challenges of our time and to build a culture of encounter and dialogue.”

“We appeal to religious leaders, professors and followers of our religions to build bridges and unite our hands with all people of good will to contribute in building peace in the world today and tomorrow,” the statement said.

The pope thanked the delegation for their efforts in creating “a culture of encounter” through dialogue that is “in the service of life, human dignity and the care of creation.”

“I thank you for what you have done by coming together, in accordance with your respective religious traditions, to promote goodness in our world,” he said, “and upon you and your communities, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.”

Francis also met with a group of Buddhists from Thailand who gave him a translation of an ancient text that was given as a gift to Pope Pius XI in 1934 by the late Thai King Rama VII, the last absolute monarch of the country.



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## **Editorial: Dialogue as Way of Life**

As you know Prof Noel Sheth SJ was a man of ahimsa, compassion and dialogue. Calm and sober in his attitude, he reached out to others respectfully and reverentially. His meticulous and methodological nature and analytic-synthetic mind made him a humble servant, erudite scholar, efficient teacher and responsible administrator. He reached out to other traditions, religions and cultures with a warm heart and open arms, so that our world may be better and more peaceful place.

He mastered Sanskrit so well that he could authoritatively read and interpret the Indian religious texts. This made him reach out to the Hindu scholars. He learnt also Pali which made him reach out to the Buddhist teachers. His scholarship enabled him to build bridges between Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, so that we could understand and appreciate each other (including our differences and diversities) better.

Prof Noel Sheth SJ, sadly and unexpectedly, passed away on July 8, 2017. To commemorate meaningfully his 75th birthday (October 31, 2018), some of us, his friends, well-wishers and colleagues, decided to bring out this memorial volume.

In the Call for Papers send out to the writers, the following mission and vision of the life of Prof Sheth were emphasised.

- Unwaveringly compassionate
- Reaching out to the other

- Dialoguing differently
- Compassionate and reverential dialogue
- Compassion (karuna), dialogue and service;
- Good teacher; gentleman; calm and sober;
- Respect and reverence for all
- Meticulous, analytic-synthesis
- Passionately compassionate

The general thrust was to convey the message and mission of Noel Sheth, Accordingly we also proposed tentatively the following titles of the articles that could be written:

1. “Divinity of Krishna:” An Appraisal
2. Hindu- Christian engagement
3. Muslim-Christian dialogue
4. Identity-Conflict-Development
5. Buddhist Concern and Compassion to Other Religions
6. Subaltern perspectives on Living Together
7. Christian Appreciation of the Other
8. Befriending the Other
9. Indian Genius for Religious Harmony
10. Alliance of Civilizations
11. An Indian Ending
12. Praxis as Testing Ground for Theory
13. Altruism: Christian and Beyond
14. Science-Religion Dialogue
15. The Value of Comparative Philosophy and Theology
16. The Flute of Krishna

17. "Religious and Cultural Resources for Peace"

18. Any other related topic of your choice

### The General Outline of the Book

This book is about encountering other traditions, building friendly bridges with them, affirming others compassionately, enabling them and appreciating their diversity and difference, through dialogue, interaction and cooperation.

The first article by Rekha Chennattu, Assumption Sisters, delves into the need to build bridges, drawing from the New Testament.

Vadappuram M Jose, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, pleads for religious harmony and sees in Prof Noel Sheth that Indian genius, who is the need of the hour.

Rt Rev Thomas Menampampil Emeritus Bishop of Guwahati affirms the need for The Dialogue of Civilizations, following the model of Matteo Ricci, the great Italian Jesuit of 16th century with his Chinese connection.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu studies the philosophical basis for dialogue, which is seen as essential for today's world. He talks of dialogue truly as a way of life. This is followed by the article by Kamladevi Kunkolienker, P.E.S.' College of Arts and Science, Farmagudi-Ponda-Goa, who sees science-religion dialogue as a necessary component in our pursuit for happiness.

The next article by Rudy Heredia, a close friend of Noel Sheth, sets the general tone when he reflects on triple dialogue as learning together with the other.

J. Charles Davis, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany, explores human dignity in different religions, especially in Islam as a bridging space for dialogue



May this volume contribute to a better harmony among our different religious traditions in India and in the world! May it help us to learn deeply from others' religious traditions and grow in wisdom. May this book be an inspiration to reach out to everyone and everything with compassion, wisdom and love!

This volume is a tribute to Prof Noel Sheth SJ, who has been one of the pioneers of Hindu-Christian dialogue, from his colleagues and friends. We affirm that Noel has tirelessly worked for inter-religious dialogue, has attempted dialogue between science and religion and has assiduously sought for wisdom deeply rooted in our Indian traditions and the Christian heritage! He has also contributed to the continuation of *Jnanadeep: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, which we gratefully acknowledge.

The Editor

November 28, 2018