

EDITORIAL

“Dialogue” literally means words exchanged between two persons. In common usage it implies the mutual exchange of views of two free persons in the presence of each other with the courage to speak boldly and honestly, what one feels and thinks about the other and the matters that pertain to him, and a readiness to listen patiently and attentively to the views and reactions of the other person. Such an exchange of views provides scope for promoting the right understanding about each other, corrects any distortions about each other’s perceptions of matters that are related to both and, finally, enriches their mutual relationship and thus enables them to grow more fully human, more noble, more refined and even more divine, while sharing mutually these values of life which should underlie every dialogue related to religious matters.

“Dialogue of Religions” is primarily aimed at an exchange of religious experience between persons who are committed to their own respective religious traditions, which they believe to be true and practice in their lives as a motive force for their entire perception of values in life, both transient and transcendent. In order that such an exchange of experiences of well-meaning people who have genuine faith in their own living religious traditions may be mutually enriching and help perfect each other’s religious pursuits, the atmosphere of such dialogue should be free, fearless and frank. Any pre-planned non-religious motivation on either side would certainly vitiate the openness that is needed for understanding and recognizing the truth from one another’s point of view and, indeed, from every point of view.

Though truth in the abstract is one and selfconsistent, in its concrete manifestations it takes many and varied forms of expression corresponding to the phenomenon of pluralism actually existing in this world, in the geographical, cultural, ethnic, racial, economic, political, social and linguistic contexts that diversify the perceptions of people, practically in all matters that regulate our human life, including even the so-called “common sense” of justice. It does not have the same connotation for all people all over the world. The meaning is relative to the exigencies of various peoples. In the prevailing pluralistic context of life, perceptions of values, norms of actions, and every expression of truth are limited and conditioned

by the relativity of the dynamics of space and time, culture and civilization, mutation and progress, and above all by the growth and development of human consciousness which is transmitted around the globe by the fast developing mass-media.

It is in such an accelerated pace consciousness of the people about the limitation and relativity of the expressions of truth subject to the conditions of human life as it appears in the concrete pluralistic contexts of culture and history that we have also to accept the pluralism of truth-expression in the sphere of religion. No religion can lay claim to the total experience and expression of all dimensions of truth, or hope exclusively to possess the whole truth, because truth itself unfolded in history and is still unfolding itself in our times subject to the conditions of the historical process of development and decay. Every truth-model that we claimed to have possessed are already undergoing review, renewal, and transformation in the light of the recent discoveries of the laws of dynamic Nature. Cosmic Nature is limited; man is limited and his perceptions are likewise limited. Hence we who belong to different religious traditions need mutual enrichment by way of complementing each other in all aspects of our religious experience and expression. Here there is the room and necessity for honest and humble exchange of our religious experiences by means of sincerely pursued dialogues. The main purpose of such dialogue can be clarification of one's own perceptions of truth in the light of new insights dialogically obtainable from one's fellow-seekers of truth; and such clarification may contribute to his/her own perfection of religious experience and thereby help to enjoy a greater degree of freedom of association with every human being who might be following a path different from one's own to the Fountain of Truth, which appears to be ever beyond every human reach.

It is with a view to encouraging renewed enthusiasm in interreligious dialogue and thereby help scholars as well as ordinary people enter into more meaningful relationship with people of various religious persuasions and, consequently, live a more humane and peaceful life of co-existence with all people of good will that *JOURNAL OF DHARMA* invited research scholars to assess and review the concepts related to interreligious dialogue today. In response to this invitation Dr Arvind Sharma of the University of Sydney, Australia, contributed a well-documented and comprehensive survey

of the development of the concept of interreligious dialogue. In his highly informative and interpretative article Dr Sharma reviews the conceptual development of the Dialogue of religions, its various contexts, pre-requisites, motives, goals, modes and dynamics, and future course of the living dialogues of religions.

Following the same line of thinking, "Prospects of Christian Dialogue with other Religions", contributed by Dr Pushparajan of Arul Anandar College, Madurai, India, is also very significant, especially in the living context of many religions traditionally claiming to be equal ways towards realizing the spiritual ultimate concerns of mankind. Reviewing Christianity's contribution to the movement of interreligious dialogue in the past, Dr Pushparajan is of the opinion that unless Christianity is prepared to accept truly and sincerely the fact of equality of religions in a fundamental sense the initiative taken by Christianity for interreligious dialogue will not be regarded as a spiritual move by the co-pilgrims, the followers of other religions.

But this preparedness requires indepth and sympathetic study of the doctrinal implications of the faith-systems of other religions and their various forms of expressions. Dr William Madtha of Karnataka University, Dharwad, India, links up some of the doctrinal points in the string of dialogue connecting Viraśaivism (Lingayat denomination of Hinduism, widely practised in Karnataka State) and Christianity. As a pioneering attempt in this direction, which needs to go a long way still for a living assimilation by both sides, Dr Madtha's attempt is commendable.

Another attempt on the same lines of doctrinal interpretation which is necessary for intelligibility of our mutual commitments to the understanding of truth and its revelation has been made by Dr Michael von Brück of the Gurukul Theological College, Madras. Proposing the Hegelian non-dualistic concepts of Trinity to substitute for the dualistic model of Trinitarian theology developed in the West after the thought patterns of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and others, and bringing it in line with the principles of Advaita Vedanta in the East, Dr Brück is highlighting on the possibility of the development of a more unistic, if not absolutely monistic, model of a theology of the Trinity in the Advaitic frame of revelation of God as *Sat-Cit-Ananda*.

To share the same spirit of dialogue with a view to enriching one's own religious commitments in one's own lived tradition as truly open also to the Jewish brethren, Dr Harold Kasimow of Grinnel College, recommends *Bhagavadgita* as one of the most enriching non-Jewish scriptures selected from the Hindu tradition fruitfully relatable to some of the important insights of *Torah*.

Finally, Dr Leonard Swidler, Editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University, offers his tried maxims of interreligious dialogue in the style of the "Decalogue". Though this article was published first in the above said Journal and in some others we decided in favour of publishing it also in our Journal in order to honour the request of Professor Leonard Swidler, a fellow-promoter of the good cause of interreligious and ecumenical dialogues. We hope that the ten principles, which are now more or less accepted in almost all serious academic and non-academic circles or forums of interreligious dialogues, will enlighten our readers also for more enriching experiences in the contexts of their own dialogues and ecumenical meetings.

This issue of *Journal of Dharma* also carries a chronicle of the Annual International Interreligious Seminar of the Centre for Indian and Interreligious Studies, Rome, jointly conducted with the newly opened Dharmanivas Center for Interreligious Research at South Orange, New Jersey, U.S.A., prepared by one of its participants, Michael A. DeMarco of Seton Hall University, New Jersey. The theme of this Seminar, held in March 18-20, 1983 was "Spiritual Resources and Contemporary Problems."

Here we are with our new perspectives and hopes for the future of the Dialogue of Religions which is not to be confined to the pages of Journals and annual Seminar-tables, but has to be carried on and on in the real life situations of each one of us wherever we meet another human being who is engaged in the struggle to solve some of his/her living problems of life to free them from the strangle hold of conflicting religious claims of mutual exclusions and fanatic rivalries for absolutization. "Let truth come from all corners of this revolving planet."

Thomas Manickam
Editor-in-Chief