



Lessons in Faith and Harmony

Description

A conference on Faith and Harmony was held on 15 February, 2014 by Students Council of Pondicherry University, in collaboration with KMCC, Pondicherry State Committee. Celebrated speakers from different universities participated in discussions on Religious Pluralism, Multi-Culturalism, Multiple Traditions and Distinct Faith. The function was presided by Sayyed Munavvarali Shihab Thangal and the keynote address was delivered by Dr. Zubair Hudawi, Darul Huda Islamic University. Prof. MT Ansari, Hyderabad Central University, Prof. Nalini J. Thampi, Cultural coordinator, Pondicherry University and Vijay Kumar, Student Council President were present among the other guests. The sessions were followed by cultural programs.

What I Learnt: Stand together in Faith and Harmony



Sayyed Munavvarali Shihab Thangal
delivering the presidential address

India is a country of different cultures, languages and religions. But how do we live in a world of diversities? For that we need to establish and sustain a community where people help and respect each other. Our culture and religion teach us to be good humans and to do good for the humanity.

The Hindu concept of unity is 'Vasudeva Kutumbakam' which means 'The earth indeed is a family'. The Bible preaches 'Love your neighbours as you love yourself'. According to the Quran, 'Humankind is the best among all creations'. Religions serve to bring togetherness. They teach us the values that have to be inculcated in the society to make the world a better place for all of us.

The conference aimed to make a change in the society by teaching the youth how faith can bring humanity. It is the responsibility of this generation to rework and reinvent the relationship between spirituality and society, belief and pluralism and faith and harmony. Sayyed Munavvarali Shihab Thangal said, "India believes in secularism. Every religion stands for good thoughts; in other words, when people follow a set of thoughts, it becomes a religion." Speaking about Islam religion, he said that Islam is a religion which has been misinterpreted for many years. We see the news stereotyping Muslims as terrorists in the western countries. But the real value system of Islam is not violent. It is a religion of compassion and dedication to God. Quoting from history, he also reminded the audience that, when Prophet Mohammed migrated from Mecca to Medina, what he did first was to sign a charter between Jews and Muslims which was a conduct of doing no harm to each other, and building a step of universal brotherhood.

The teachings of Prophet Mohammed have relevance in the contemporary scenario also. The Prophet taught his followers the importance of women and he wanted women to be respected in the best way. Prophet also taught about nature and about the protection of environment.

Islam teaches us the need for peace, love, compassion and fraternity. The one reason behind all the misconceptions is ignorance and it can lead to chaos. The one thing that everybody stressed upon when one believes in one religion, is that they should try to learn and respect other religions too. Our faith shouldn't disturb others' faith and beliefs.

The western definition of secularism is 'the equal distance to all religions' and the Indian definition of secularism is 'the equal closeness to all religions'. This signals the welcoming attitude of India towards all religions. Islam is a liberal, convenient and a protecting religion. What is important to establish harmony in society is to know each other which ultimately brings togetherness.

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