



The Fifth Bi-Annual Meeting of the Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders, Oxford (UK), March 2012

On the final day of the meeting, leaders were asked to reflect on what had been accomplished. They were asked to consider three questions:

- 1. What does Interreligious Friendship mean to you?***
- 2. How do you practise Interreligious Friendship?***
- 3. What messages and practices of Interreligious Friendship can you take back from this meeting to your community?***

Some chose to respond independently to each question while others integrated their answers.

Shrivatsa Goswami



It is my existential predicament hence it is a life enriching process for me. Coming from Vrindavan, which came into being as a holiest of holy town of the Hindus in 1598 as a result of the friendship between my ancestors well known as the Six Goswamis and the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Interfaith encounter may prompt one to either reject or ignore the other or engage. The Goswamis and Mughals both engaged with each other and the results were amazingly beneficial to both and for the humanity at large.

This friendship brought peace to the religio-political hotspot and thus economic prosperity flourished. Cultural and artistic activities got boost. Music, dance, theatre, literature, architecture, paintings—all got to a new height in their creativity. Thus interreligious friendship means peace and peace means prosperity and human good—all round.

Professionally, as a priest I get my ritual utensils, thrones, dresses, ornaments and other things thanks to Muslim artisans. Locally the Muslims are cattle traders, hence our cattle, specially cows come from them. The Christian community, basically missionaries, offer education and healthcare to the Hindu majority. Vrindavan, thus, today survives on the practices of interreligious friendship.

What I want to bring from Elijah to Vrindavan is more intensity to the friendship. For that (a.) I shall propose to the community more social interaction and (b.) formation of local interfaith committees (c.) which will be active for interfaith education in the lower schools, using Elijah tools.

Inshallah!