



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.

Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji



Recommendations from His Holiness Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji of Jagadguru Sri Madhwacharya Moola Maha Samsthanam, Sri Puthige Mutt, Udupi, Karnataka, India. 21st March 2012, Oxford, United Kingdom

Q. What does inter-religious friendship mean to me?

According to me, inter-religious friendship means freedom to practise one's religious faith without any disturbance or hindrance. 'Freedom' means respect and co-operation on the basis of equal rights. "This world is created not only for me but for all similar beings as well". In my understanding, when this message which is based in reality, is taught by all religious leaders along with their inherent religious teachings, then inter-religious friendship is established everywhere.

All religious leaders should emphasise this message along with their routine preaching. They should give prominence for collective thinking rather than individual or sectarian approaches in their speeches and practices.

Religious leaders should also add that each one should try to sacrifice as much as possible, through their actions, expressions or practices, which would be hurtful to other's sentiments.

Religious leaders should be objective and present their views and leave the final decision or judgement to the individual rather than imposing their views.

For example, a bee collects nectar from various flowers and builds its own honeycomb. Similarly, religious should encourage people to be open-minded, study various religions and assist them in making their own judgements rather than imposing doctrines and views. **"Be a Bee"** should be their final message.



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The preaching of the religious leaders should diminish the ego of their followers and make them more open minded rather than fuelling the ego of their followers in a false direction. Ego should be **“blasted out”** rather than **“boosted up”**.

Religious leaders should take the place of pleaders rather than judges.

In my view, the above mentioned points are some of the ways in which we can practice inter-religious friendship.

It is also important that we should not be silent spectators of people who are trying to spoil and misuse their inter-religious friendships for their narrow ends.

Q. How can I practise it?

We will propagate this message in schools, colleges and universities where the personalities are moulded. We will also propagate it through our lectures all across the world, along with practising this message. We will use all other opportunities and possibilities that may come up to spread this message.

Q. What can I bring back to my community?

Creating awareness of this message will be one of the main things. For this we can arrange many programmes such as retreats, debates, classes and camps. Along with this, we will be creating special events for propagating this message.