



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.

Swami Amarananda



Interfaith friendship (IF) means to me the following:

It means (i) my effort to fetch my interlocuter belonging to a religion which is not my own, to the milieu where he can comprehend my religion, at least to the level of appreciating certain broad features of it, (ii) my adventure into the garden of another religion to do the same, and if possible, derive some benefit out of it in course of my intimate spiritual practice, (iii) deriving pleasure in seeing the mosaic of religious patterns and in enjoying the warmth of heart from a distant “neighbour” ..

Evidently, IF presupposes for me that I do not think that my religion is not imperative for all, that I have no prejudice against other religions, and that I am able to do auto-criticism (which means, among other things, I am able to take a balanced view regarding the positive as well as the negative points of the behaviour pattern of my co-religionists).

Practising IF:

I should have an open mind regarding all religions. But I should be cautious about only those religious groups who derive their inspiration from masters who have not passed the test of time. (There are charlatans in every domain of life. Their number in the field of religion is menacingly great. I am talking about fake spiritual masters.)

I should do many things--reading, listening, thinking, correlating, participating, interrogating the so-called “other”—when I begin to take the IF seriously.

Taking IF to my community (certain steps, list not exhaustive):

To talk about the great mystics of other religions .



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To highlight certain good habits generally observed in this or that religion.

To ask people to become bold to distance themselves from certain practices or attitudes which hinder religious harmony

To have a grasp on the basics of major religions.

To tell people that ideas about God may be quite different from God as understood by greatest mystics who had purity, patience and interiorisation.

To turn away from the practice of double talking—one thing to one's own community, and quite another thing in the interfaith milieu.

To be able to see the negative things in books considered holy in their historical context.

And many other things