

Building religious Inclusivity

At the present juncture of human history, building religious inclusivity is an urgent global issue. In Raheel's words, "while the world has become a global village in terms of technology, travel and trade, the same strides are not seen in the world of faith."

New perspectives and models are needed in search of answers based on a deep respect for the diversity of cultures and religions in the world community.

Raheel points to the need of a deeper change of consciousness for effective action by faith communities, educators, politicians, and others. Raheel is of the opinion that "Religious inclusivity has to be promoted from the pulpit. In places of worship, whether they are churches, temples, mosques or synagogues – the message should be one of pluralism and respect."

Raheel is a firm believer in the writing of the Sufi philosopher, Saadi, "Human beings are like parts of one body – when one section is wounded, the whole body hurts."

Raheel works for the Government of Ontario and freelances as a journalist and a media consultant. She is an articulate public speaker addressing issues such as human rights, status of women, media stereotypes etc. Raheel is deeply involved in many organizations including Forum For Learning, the Snowstar Institute. Raheel presented this seminar at the University of Waterloo to an audience of 31.

The Quality of Life

We often hear the phrase 'quality of life'. What does it mean? It is not enough for us to be alive; we want a good life, a high quality of life. If we have a close brush with death, we might feel grateful just to be alive. But that feeling does not last, and once again, we pine for something more. On the other hand, if in the same brush with death we lose a loved one, we might feel that it is a curse to be alive; we feel that there has been a significant deterioration of the quality of our life.

There are research groups (such as the Quality of Life Research Unit at the University of Toronto), which try to identify and measure the factors affecting quality of life. For the most part, they deal with externals. According to them, we are looking for meaning and happiness and these determine our quality of life. But from a spiritual point of view, we are looking for a state beyond happiness and unhappiness. This can be described as a state of peace. From this point of view, if we want to improve the quality of our life, we should try to discover a peaceful state of mind. It is a state which if discovered enables us to live much more efficiently.

Kumar is a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Toronto and a long-time student of Vedanta. Professor Murty presented this seminar to an audience of 27 at the University of Waterloo.

Consciousness From A Different Perspective

In this presentation, Meenakshi talks about consciousness as it relates to Bhartrhari's philosophy of language. The chief text of this grammarian philosopher is his investigation of the relationship between language, thought and reality.

In presenting Bhartrhari's theory, Meenakshi highlights the contributions of Indian philosophy to the study of consciousness and language. In doing so, she points to a significant influence of ancient Indian thought on the intellectual history of the West. In the spirit of globalization, she believes in the interconnectedness of culture and thought and the interrelatedness of people.

Meenakshi shares with us the result of reading of a process that Bhartrhari would call it a journey from one to another level of consciousness. To Meenakshi, it is a process towards self-actualization.

According to Indian thought, there are three ways to seek reality or unity – through the yoga of devotion, work, and knowledge. In pursuit of knowledge through reading, one can sometimes feel the reality behind the words. Bhartrhari would describe this as a process towards liberation.

Meenakshi teaches English as a Second Language in Ottawa. Meenakshi presented this seminar at the University of Waterloo to an audience of 28.