

Samvaad@Goa University: A Report on the Inter-faith Dialogue Sessions for Students

The Inter-faith Dialogue sessions for students of Philosophy (Master's level and Doctoral level candidates) at Goa University was conducted by Prof. Koshy Tharakan via Google Meet on October 11th, 13th, 16th, 18th and 20th of two hours of duration each, thus 10 hours in total. Out of the 24 (twenty four) students enrolled for Philosophy at GU, only 12 (twelve) students have participated actively in the dialogue sessions. The details of the sessions are given below:

October 11th (Monday), from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Topic: Nature of Dialogue, Art of Nonviolent Communication. Resources: Film: Chicken @ Swamy's kitchen, Article: 1. Bhiku Parekh: "Conversation between Gandhi and Bin Laden." 2. David Bohm: "On Dialogue" (Chapter 2 from his book *On Dialogue*.) 3. Akeel Bilgrami: "Gandhi's Integrity: The Philosophy behind the Politics." during the session the participants were informed about the nature of dialogue as well as Gandhi's notion of moral judgement sans moral criticism (as a way of nonviolent communication). The participants were asked to respond to the short film (link was given to them), specifically with regard to the space for dialogue in the family. Participants had interesting perspectives to share with others mostly based on their own personal situations at home.

October 13th (Wednesday), from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Topic: Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue. Resources: Film: The Imam and the Pastor, Article: 1. Swami Vivekananda: "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." 2. Scarboro Missions Monograph on Principles and Guidelines for Inter-faith Dialogue. 3. Margaret Chatterjee: "Reflections on Religious Pluralism in the Indian Context." The discussions ensued focused on the need to respect religious diversity and everyone agreed on the greater need of cultivating a "dialogical self" in order to foster the same.

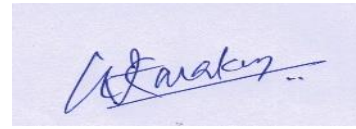
October 16th (Saturday), from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Topic: Caste and Religion. Resources: Film: "Caste on the Menu Card." Articles: 1. N. J. Demerath, Surinder Jodhka and Loren R. Demerath: "Interrogating Caste and Religion in India's Emerging Middle Class." 2. Poulomi Chakrabarti: "Caste Inequality in Indian States." 3. T. K. Oommen: "Civil Society: Religion, Caste and Language in India." Many students confessed the privileges they had on the basis of their caste identity with respect to others and also were sensitive to the friction such privileges create.

October 18th (Monday), from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Topic: Gender and Religion. Resources: Film: Trailer and the interview with the crew of the Macedonian film, "God Exists, and Her Name is Petrunija." Article: 1. Zoya Hassan: "Gender, Religion and Democratic Politics in India." 2. Laura M. Krull, Lisa D. Pearce and Elyse A. Jennings: "How Religion, Social Class, and Race Intersect in the Shaping of Young Women's Understandings of Sex, Reproduction and Contraception." 3. Shefali Kamat and Koshy Tharakan: "The Sacred and the Profane: Menstrual

Flow and Religious Values.” The participants recalled how being born as a female, the family, society as well as religious institutions molded their gendered identities that were subject to discrimination. Some of them opened up in admitting that the dialogue session enabled them to share their pains and in fact was to some extent helped healing the wounds.

October 20th (Wednesday), from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Topic: Science and Religion. Film: “Infinite Potential: The Life and Ideas of David Bohm.” Article: Koshy Tharakan: “Science amidst Religion: The Politics of Knowledge.” The dialogue focused on the relation between Science as a mode of “knowledge” and Religion as a source of inspiration, a different kind of knowledge altogether. However, the participants pointed out that dogmatic assertion in both the scientific as well as religious beliefs result in one-sided perspectives.

Over all, these 10 hours of dialogue sessions enabled the participants to appreciate divergences and differences with regard to one’s beliefs and practices in general and about religion in particular. Many times the dialogue was “open-ended” and at times there were agreements amongst the participants about a particular issue (e.g. the discriminatory role of gender and caste identities.) Some of the feedbacks received from the participants through e-mail as well as attached documents on the dialogue sessions are enclosed herewith.



Sd/-

Koshy Tharakan, Ph. D. (UoH, Hyderabad)
Professor, School of Sanskrit, Philosophy & Indic Studies
Goa University



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FACILITATION TRAINING

11 December, 2021

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Seeds of Peace India and the U.S. Consulate General Mumbai are pleased to certify Prof. Koshy Tharakan as having successfully completed all phases of The Samvaad Project.

Prof. Tharakan, Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, Goa University, Goa, was part of the first edition of The Samvaad Project, a pioneer program for interfaith dialogue facilitation training for college and university educators, and has actively participated in the first two phases of the virtual training session held April to June 2021. Per program guidelines, he has conducted the mandated ten hours of interfaith dialogue facilitation sessions with a select set of students of Goa University, in October 2021.

As a Seeds of Peace-certified facilitator, he is now equipped to conduct interfaith dialogue with adult participants, especially students.

Seeds of Peace and the U.S. Consulate General hope that The Samvaad Project is just the first step in their journey to interfaith integration and wish them great success in their future.

Thanks and regards,

SAGAR GANGURDE,
Director of Programs,
Seeds of Peace India



1st April 2021.

To,

The Director,
Seeds of Peace India,
Bandra – East,
Mumbai - 400051

Re: Support for staff participation in The Samvaad Project

Dear Mr. Sagar Gangurde,

I hereby commend and acknowledge the participation of Dr. Koshy Tharakan, Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Goa University in The Samvaad Project.

I understand that the program requires the participant to conduct sessions on Interfaith Dialogue Facilitation with the students of our institution upon the completion of their training period.

I am happy to allow Dr. Koshy Tharakan to conduct monthly sessions in our precincts or online (as the case may be) with our students, with up to 30 students per group, insofar it does not overlap with any academic commitments of our students. He may use available spaces and any AV aids necessary within the University premises during these sessions.

I hope this program will be beneficial to all involved.

Thank you and regards,

Prof. Radhika Nayak
Officiating Registrar
Goa University



Dr. Koshy Tharakan <koshy@unigoa.ac.in>

Completion of Samvaad-Interfaith Dialogue at GU

Dr. Koshy Tharakan <koshy@unigoa.ac.in>

Mon, Oct 25, 2021 at 5:49 PM

To: Registrar Goa University <registrar@unigoa.ac.in>

Cc: Sagar Gangurde <SGangurde@seedsofpeace.org>, Urmi Chanda <uchanda@seedsofpeace.org>, Private Secretary to VC <ps_vc@unigoa.ac.in>

Dear Madam,

You may kindly recall that I had requested Goa University in March 2021 to permit me to take part in the Samvaad Inter-faith Dialogue training programme conducted by the Seeds of Peace India, Mumbai. Accordingly, you had issued a Letter of support to Seeds of Peace (attached herewith) in favour of me. **Now I wish to inform you that I have completed the training imparted by the Seeds of Peace, Mumbai and also facilitated 10 hours (ten hours) of Inter-faith Dialogue session with the students of Philosophy at Goa University.**

The Inter-faith Dialogue for students was conducted via Google Meet on October 11th, 13th, 16th, 18th and 20th of two hours of duration each, thus 10 hours in total. There were 12 (twelve) students of Philosophy who have actively participated in the dialogue sessions.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Koshy Tharakan, Ph. D.(UoH, Hyderabad)
Professor
School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies
Goa University