2018 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

observed by

The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne on Saturday February 24, 2018

A SHORT REVIEW

I am pleased to share my experience and views on the 2018 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week observed by The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne at Deakin Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia on Saturday February 24, 2018. I had the honour and pleasure to be invited as a guest speaker to represent the Hindu Faith by the organizer. The topic of interfaith discussion was, “Who and Where Are We in a Changing World?”  where the Faith Leaders spoke on creation stories and the Meaning of Life in our Universe.

The event was a big success in every sense. Approximately 80 people of seven faiths: The Indigenous Spirituality, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism participated and enjoyed the speeches and music contributions.

I was invited to speak on the topic and I used the chance to highlight the fact whatever the creation stories might be they are all attempts to look at the same truth from various perspectives spoken in metaphorical language, so as to hint at something which otherwise is difficult to express in words. And the aim of all religions is to search the unity in diversity by relating our individuality with the oneness and interconnectedness underlying the entire creation.

And to sum up the themes that emerged from the talks of all faiths were the core teachings of “Love of God and Love of the Neighbour” or to put it in a universally accepted language “Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour” which were highlighted in diverse ways: e.g., care of the Earth and the environment, reconciliation of Indigenous people in Australia, support for South Sudanese community who are undergoing a backlash due to a group of South Sudanese youth.

Last but not the least, the Celtic Harp music performed by Cath Connelly served as s a sublime background for facilitating interaction among the participants of various faith during the break.

Let me conclude by saying that the Interfaith Centre of Melbourne is doing a great work. Living in harmony is not their only concern. The gift of saplings to all the faith leaders at the end of the seminar, and that too the selection of species of saplings based on the region from which they came from, shows their concern about the preservation and protection of the environment. This made me feel that the Interfaith Centre of Melbourne is an Interfaith organisation that was established to bring together people from different faiths in responding to environmental issues. The actions of this group for interfaith dialogue are of great importance in Australia, as they are saving the world for our future generations to grow up in a healthy environment.

Such type of initiatives should be recognised. That would be a great honour and motivation for such organisations to continue in their mission to pave the way for a better world.

With best wishes,

Swami Sunishthananda

Vedanta Centre of Melbourne

5-7 Angus Avenue, Ringwood East, Victoria – 3135, Australia, 10 March 2018