

# ISRAEL - ASIA FAITH LEADERS MEET

(Held at JERUSALEM, ISRAEL , from 11th to 15th Sept, 2016)



The Foreign Ministry, Government of Israel, for the first time organized a meeting of Israel-Asia Faith Leaders. The primary objective of this meeting was to find a common cord amongst ancient traditions and address to contemporary realities. The American Jewish community was also the sponsoring partner. The whole meeting, especially the invitation to religious leaders and drafting the agenda was primarily done by Mr Bawa Jain, Secretary General of World Council of Religious Leaders. Religious leaders from various religions and different countries,

besides Jewish delegation were the important invitees.

Dr. Gopalkrishna Dharmarajan (Param Pujya Swamiji's Purvasharam nephew) and Dr. Ashwin Deshmukh - representing Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, USA were also special invitees.

The Conference began on the morning of 12th September with prayers from various

religions-Judaism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrian, Buddhist prayers from Korea

Myanmar and of course Hindu Prayers. H.H.Swami Paramatmanandaji and H.H.M.M.Swami Avadheshanandaji gave prayers and explained their meanings. The opening remarks were given by Rabbi David Rose, Ambassador Mark Sofer, Mr Akiva Tor and Mr Bawa Jain.

In their open remarks, Jewish leaders gave following three parameters for discussion :

1. Early history of religions
2. Scriptural teachings of Judaism and Asian religions
3. Recent history and contemporary affairs.



The secretary Mr Bawa Jain expressed that there is a great hope for humanity from this dialogue, especially in the modern times, when we witness so much of tension, turmoil and violence. Confluence of Jewish with Asian religious leaders brings a new hope for World Peace.



Few members of the delegation called on H. E. Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. The PM welcomed the delegation and said that he was happy with this initiative, this dialogue and thanked all visiting delegates. The PM also said that these meetings should be given permanent structure and delegates should meet every year.

There after the discussion continued on the topic "The purpose and place of Religion in our Societies". The session was led by H.H.M.M.Shri swami Avadheshanandagiriji. The afternoon session discussions were on "Religion and Responsibility : The vision of a Just Society".

In the concluding remarks H.H.Swami Shri Paramatmananda Saraswatiji said : "Religious instructions are nothing but expressions of human ecology or societal order for harmonious living. To be human, means to be ethical. Not to be controlled by instincts is responsible living. Religion confirms common sense ethics and gives us few more. To confirm to this meaningful order, this meaningful ecology and respond and give expected proper response, is basic responsibility."

Next Day morning on 13th September, the delegation was invited for breakfast at the President's residence. After the breakfast the President addressed the delegation.

The President H. E. Reuven Rubi Rivlin said : "Welcome to the holy city for the sons of Abraham." Many years, we had no connection to Asian religious traditions. Today we are more exposed to rich treasures of each other. We must learn from them. We have more problems as well. Yesterday, 11th September is a reminder of distorted religious beliefs. There are problems of global warming also and many more. We must face these problems together – and we can. Our traditions have much in common. We both respect and share deep concern for human life and dignity. This planet does not belong to us – we belong to it. We must take good care of it. Let us join, pray and meditate, for better and better, more healthier, more peaceful and accommodative society.

On behalf of the delegations, Acharya M.M.H.H.Swami Avadheshanandagiriji said : "In this modern era, society at large is focused on fulfilling one's own desires, fancies, luxuries, etc. We are exploiting nature for our comfort and luxury. So we have problems of Global Warming. Moreover, we see all around, most of the citizens are getting alienated from their culture, traditions and religion. More so, the youth of today, in whose hands we are going to hand over the future of the world, is adopting a lifestyle committed to sensual pleasures, selfishness and consumerism. It is said "Vade Vade jayate tattva bodha". Dialogues and discussion leads to clarity and wisdom. I am sure, our dialogue will certainly lead to creating a more peaceful and happy world and we can guide our generation next to the better approach to the world. In our Vedas there is a prayer: "May we move together, may we speak together, may we think together, may we live in harmony". I pray the same. This is our third visit and I feel this is a land of energy and possibilities.



Then delegation moved to Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The whole day discussions were on two topics

H.H.M.M.Acharya Avadheshanandagiriji, Giyani Gurubachan Singhji, Acharya Chandanaji, Bibi Kiranjot Kaurji, Ven. Xue Cheng, Ven. Master Misan, Professors from Hebrew University and few Rabbi actively participated in the discussions.

In his statement, H.H. Swami Paramatmanandaji remembered Param Pujya Swami Dayanandaji and said : "We need not do anything to be healthy. Only when foreign bugs enter our body we become ill. To regain health, you have to just remove these foreign bugs.



Health is natural to us. So also peace is natural. We don't have to do anything for peace. We stop creating disturbances.

At 5 p.m. in the evening, special lecture in the memory of Pujya Swami Dayanandaji was organized by Government of Israel at Jewish Institute of Religion, Hebrew Union College. Giving his welcome remarks, Rabbi Dr David Rosen paid rich tributes to Param Pujya Swamiji. He said, "It is almost one year since Swami Dayananda left his body for heavenly abode. Therefore it is appropriate that we are holding this special lecture in his memory.

Swami Dayananda created a very remarkable body known as Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha.

It's apex Hindu Leadership Movement. It is exciting and moving. He was a remarkable man and a remarkable teacher of global stature. He had great dignity with great humility. He had a very close relationship with us. There was something enchanting about Swami Dayananda.



Offering his respectful tributes full of emotions to Pujya Swamiji, Prof. Daniel Sperber said "He was a man full of compassion. He sacrificed himself for the love and compassion of others. He was a very saintly person with a smiling face, having complete command over language and a clarity of expression full of logic-not Western logic, but consistent Hindu logic. There was something in him that bound us together through his magic personality.

Despite complete distance in cultural background, in religious faith, there was tremendous closeness which overcame all these distances. I think he saw me as his disciple. I think he wanted me to be his disciple. And I saw myself responding to be his disciple. It is a deep loss for us, for the world, and more for you. Yesterday I heard Swami Paramatmananda speaking. I looked at him and heard his exposition, his logic, his body language and the clarity of thoughts, and saw his face. I felt the connection, felt that Swami Dayananda was here."

Giving his introductory remarks Acharya M. M. H. H. Swami Avadheshanandaji said :

"We are here to pay our tributes to Grandeur Personality of the Century, who not only protected,



but also nourished our ancient wisdom, scriptures and traditions. When puja Swamiji visualized to form Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, he invited me to share the vision. It is a matter of joy and pride for me that I was the first member of Acharya sabha and now I am heading this lineage.

He was a great visionary. Earlier, we have met Jewish leadership almost 5-6 times. And today, again we are meeting Jewish leadership along with leaders from 6 different religious traditions. All these meetings are due to his sankalpa and his inspiration. He lived for the entire humanity, nourishing the individuals with spirituality, religion, principles, values etc."

The main Speaker H. H. Swami Paramatmanandaji said "We have unbroken teaching tradition from beginningless time. In this unbroken Guru-Shishya parampara, Param Pujya Swami Dayanandaji was a unique teacher who has given extra lease to this tradition by creating more than 250 teachers like me. In our tradition, Shishya-students live with the Guru-teacher. The teacher is ideal for us. And we get emotionally connected with the teacher. So it is very difficult to talk about my teacher. However, I shall try."

He further said "Traditional view of life of all our religions values the sanctity of life because everything is sacred for us. The aggressive religious attitude to destroy others is because of commitment to certain set of beliefs, strong emotional commitment by the faithfuls to these beliefs. I think it is against the fundamental value of human dignity and human rights.

We need to relook into these beliefs. We need to be more honest cognitively and learn to respect each other in spite of differences.

We find that every person is endowed with a body, mind and sense complex. Everyone has 'buddhi'-intellect and means to make his or her living. Everyone experiences pleasures and pain and each of us is subject to ageing, disease and death.

Moreover all human beings are governed by the same physical, biological, physiological, psychological and cognitive (faculty of knowing) laws of the universe etc. Nobody can deny these common/universal facts. Then how can some people assert that God ensures His grace only for them and their followers and leave others in disgrace?

To conclude, I wish to quote the Founder Convener of Acharya Sabha and My teacher

His Holiness Swami Sri Dayananda Saraswati--,

"The redwoods are tall trees. Each tree is three hundred and sixty five feet or so high. They are big trees that you can drive through. They cannot have long roots to help them stand.

They stand straight but have shallow roots. They hold each other at roots so that no storm can get them. We live together and we are together. These two traditions of Hinduism and

Judaism have to come together. We need to have a set-up that should work actively to promote understanding and harmony among religions. Together, we stand like the coastal redwoods. Therefore, I appeal that there should be dialogue and that they should promote peace. I am committed to peace and shall continue to work for this peace and harmony".

I think Hindus and Jews, all of us, work together to bring this vision into reality, that would be the best tribute to HH Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Namaste

Shalom--"

Secretary General Mr Bawa Jain said "When Jewish and Asia faith religious leaders are meeting here, we have religious leadership of 65% of world's population. I see this as the blessings of Pujya Swamiji. I had good fortune that I knew Pujya Swamiji for good part of my life. I was privileged that he was my father and I was his son."

Dr. Gopalakrishnan Dharmarajan spoke briefly about his experiences with Pujya Swamiji emphasizing our beloved Pujya Swamiji's nature of Daya Compassion as his name conveys and ended his brief speech with a Concluding Prayer: " Sarvesham Svasthir Bhavatu, sarvesham Shantir Bhavatu, Saravesham Purnam Bhavatu, Sarvesham Mangalam Bhavatu."

On the last day the delegation went to Hifa. Hifa is third largest city of Israel. It is symbol of Religious Harmony. There are people from 105 different countries speaking more than 70 languages. In the evening, the delegation went to Dead Sea and some of the members had a dip in it.



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This report is prepared jointly by Kruti Trivedi & Tejal from Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha and Dr. Gopalakrishnan Dharmarajan - Professor and Head (Chair) - Department of Periodontology, Dr. D.Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune, India (Purva Ashrama nephew of Revered H.H. Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati Maharaj Ji)