

Science within Spirituality: Seekers on a Journey of Explorations  
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Approximately, 80 people gathered on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at the Convocation Hall at the University of Winnipeg to participate in a Public Forum on “Science within Spirituality” convened jointly by the India Centre and the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council.

To recall, India Centre: Academic, Business and Community Excellence is an outcome of a partnership between India Association of Manitoba Inc. and the University of Winnipeg. It is a platform where the academy meets the community and, within an institutional setting facilitates and promotes a better understanding and relationship between Canada and India. It is also to promote a greater understanding and awareness about India and; last but not least, help showcase the contributions of the Indo-Canadian community to the larger Canadian society.

“Science within Spirituality”, starting with the First Nations was joined by Christian, Hindu and Islamic perspectives. The presentations and ensuing discussion was in essence a consideration about prevailing and future underlying currents that inform the Canadian society. What follows are the major ideas listed and/or explained by the speakers.

**Mr. John Salabye/Elder and Educator, Navajo Nation, Arizona-** stressed the need for harmonization between nature and earth. Songs and prayers are used to illustrate and teach. On a hunt, nomadic tribe camps would be built with poles without hammers or nails. The East pole represents mother earth, the west pole the mountain, the South Pole water and, the North Pole plants. The song teaches this order and the gender of all of the poles that are female. When the home is complete, the fire is built. There is recognition for the reciprocity between the earth and the sky and the need to take care of one another. In essence, it is about oneness with self and nature.

**Pundit Venkat Machiraju/Priest, Hindu Society of Manitoba-** promoted the idea of oneness with God, and ‘one in many and, the many in one’. The construction of the image of God is informed by the known that is closest to one’s own culture and traditions. The end goal remains the same: Gods encompass the male and female. This also leads to seeking harmonization with nature and the idea that creation, destruction and transformation is an ongoing and continuous process that also explains why civilizations rise and fall. Spirituality is seen as necessary condition for human happiness.

**Dr. Jane Barbara Moulaison/Chair of Department of Culture and Religion at the University of Winnipeg and Anglican Priest-** in the Christian perspective, religion is viewed as different from science. They are commensurable but not the same. This notion arises from the separation of the personal and public. However, this is a modern understanding as science has argued for their model of rationality. Prior to this “modernity”, there were allegorical understandings arising from a dialogue with pagans.

**Ms. Shahina Siddiqui- Executive Director of Islamic Social Services Association-** scientists are not creators but they are discoverers. There is only one creator. In worshipping the creator, it is about a

reflection upon creation and how it all works. It is not about “science within spirituality” but more about “science of spirituality” and, this where the connection between the two is to be sought. More importantly, it allows for a purposeful exercise as one is constantly required to answer the good versus bad- and dependent upon the response, adopting the appropriate course. Accordingly, Islam is said to depart from science when it is seen to act in a harmful manner.

There was much food for thought! We asked the participants to ponder the prevailing and future underlying currents of Canadian society. An overarching perspective: different streams all flow into the larger ocean. Each is contributing to the larger ocean but in turn is also being churned and shaped by the same.

The session was videotaped and is currently being edited. It will be uploaded on the India Centre website on the University website. It will then be linked to other websites of the partners- India Association of Manitoba Inc. and the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council.

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