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Editorial: Befriending the Other

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion (JDV) has celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of its transfer from Kandy, Ceylon to Pune, India in 1955. At the time of transfer JDV was known as the Papal Athaneum, the academic wing of Papal Seminary. In 1994 the Vatican declared Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth and Papal Seminary to be thenceforth two institutions but still related to each other in friendly cooperation. On this auspicious occasion, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth is commemorating this event through various academic and cultural activities including this International Conference on the theme “Befriending the Other” on 24-28 November 2015. The papers in this special double issue of *Jnanadeepa* are selections from this International Conference.

Since the conference takes into account the religious and cultural pluralism of India, Asia and Africa, we want to focus on the living together in harmony. So from diverse theological, philosophical sociological, psychological and anthropological perspectives, we attempt at various means and modes of befriending the others, while preserving the identities (“other”) of the other.

Given the prevalence of terrorist violence,¹ cultural conflicts (“clash of civilizations”), religious rivalries and national struggle in our contemporary world (particularly in the Asian and African context), we are challenged to present

a world-view that engages people and bring them together. It is our Christian responsibility to bring different communities together, so that the diversity of the other as the other is reaffirmed. Such genuine encounter with the other fosters creativity and affirms one's own identity.

In this context the conference aims to encounter the actual situation of conflict and struggle and the consequent suffering that affects thousands of people. Based on these actual experiences of woundedness and pain, the conference explores the larger issues of identity, community and otherness, which are central to our understanding of differences and possible confrontation. This is followed by specific examples of actual living together, with a view to enlarge our horizon of understanding so that we can acknowledge, affirm and accept the other as individual and communities, who are different from (even sometimes opposed to) us.

So the conference is an invitation to genuine encounter between different cultures, communities and groups that fosters creative interaction and harmonious progress.

Some of the topics the Organising Committee proposed for deeper study and reflection are as follows:

Theological Perspectives

- Trinity And Perichoresis: Discovering the Fundamental Human Interrelatedness
- Christ and the Other: The Woman at the Well
- God as the *Ganz Andere* (Totally Other)
- Table Fellowship with the Other: Jesus Approach to the Marginalized
- The Trace of God and the Human Face
- Universalism and Inclusiveness in the Bible
- Boundary Making and Breaking an the Bible
- Is Not Christ the Only Saviour?

- Towards an All-Inclusive and Dialogical Church
- Encountering The Other Religions in Vatican II Documents
- “My Father Was a Wandering Aramaean” OT Perspectives on the Stranger
- Christian Fundamentalism Today: A Theological Perspective
- Fear of the Other and the Genesis of Original Sin
- Christ: The Otherness Of God/ Son as the Otherness of the Father

Religious Dimensions

- The other in Islam
- Judaism: Wanderer
- Hindu Understanding of Other
- The Other in the Jain Tradition
- The Other in the Sikh Tradition
- Washing the Feet of the Guests: Tribal Hospitality Towards the Other.
- The Pagans and the Gentiles: St Paul and The Early Christian Approach to the Other
- The Church’s Approach to the Other Religions: A Historical Evolution
- Quakers and the Treatment of the Other
- One In Many or Many In One? Ecumenical Efforts at Rediscovering Our Fractured Identity and Tradition
- Christian Fundamentalism And Challenge of ‘The Other Faiths’
- Significance of the Other in Church’s Understanding of Other Religions
- Starting with The Family: Befriending in The Domestic Churches

Philosophical Basis

- Oneself as the Other: The Other as Distinct from and Related to Me

- The Other as Constitutive of Me
- The Other as a Phenomenological Thou
- I-Thou Relationship Leading to the Acceptance of the Other
- Identity, Difference and Crisscrossing
- Dancing to Diversity: The Other as The Possibility of Me
- Ricoeur: History, Memory, Forgetting and Befriending
- Derrida: Unconditional Hospitality to The Other
- Levinas: Responsibility to the Other
- Jürgen Habermas and Pope Benedict: Communication and Consensus
- Every Insider as an Outsider Here or There
- Trace of God in the Face of the Other: Levinas

Moral Issues

- The Other: A Moral Dilemma or Opportunity
- Moral Dilemmas in Bioethics
- The Relational-Ethics to the Other
- Feminist Viewpoints
- The Widow and the Orphans: The Women as the Other
- The Valuable and Vulnerable Other: Women Perspectives on Diversity and Differences
- The Unsayable Atrocity on The Female Bodies: Objectifying the Other

Sociobiological/ Psychological Outlook

- Evolution of Altruism in the Animal Species
- Mirror Neuron: Neurological Appraisal of the Other as Other
- In-Group and Out-Group as Binaries in Identity Formation
- The Other: Psychological Perspectives
- Reconciliation as Recognizing the Other
- Desire: Meeting With and Parting From the Other

- Wounded Healers: Transformation through Self-Transformation
- Nomads (Gypsies) as Strangers of Today
- Socio-Economic and Political Angles
- The Poor Does Not Exist: The Economics of the Other as Disregarding Those Without the Buying Power
- The Poor and the Marginalized as the Other
- The Caste and the Exclusion of the Other

Identity Formation and Nationalism

- War And Violence: The Wounded Self and the Wounded Other
- Manufacturing Violence: Economic And Political Struggles
- Boundaries And Thresholds: Erasing or Crossing
- The Subaltern Other: Voices from Below
- The Otherness: Addressing Issues of Racial, Class and Caste Divisions
- Refugees and The Migrants Today: The Other in Their Otherness
- The African Approach to the Other.
- The Japanese Understanding of the Other.
- Construction of the Other and The Politics of Identity.

Ecological Vision

- Essential Interconnectedness of Cosmos
- The Leaf that Smiles: Befriending Nature
- Human Uniqueness: Human vs Animals

Indian Perspectives

- Ambedkar and Gandhi: Befriending the Other Respectfully
- Sanskritisation: Appropriating the Symbolic Significance of the Other
- Advaita and the Relation to the Other.
- Befriending the Other

- “An Eye For An Eye Makes The Whole World Blind.”
Gandhian Way of Befriending by Forgiving
- Forgiveness as Being The Essence of Relationship: A Study of the Christian Vision of Reconciliation
- Loving Your Enemies: A Christian Vision of Dealing With Violence
- Communal Conflicts: A Case Study at Befriending Two Communities
- Inter-Religious Dialogue Leading to Communal Harmony
- Dealing with The Opponents and Rivals: Psychological Approach to Inclusive Growth
- “*Live Together As Brothers Or Perish Together As Fools.*”
An Approach to Befriending the Other
- Pope Francis and the Other: A Pastoral Approach

Case Studies

- The Stockholm Syndrome: Real or Illusory?
- Sri-Lankan Tragedy: Need for Community Befriending
- Thomas Chakalaka: Converting the Kidnappers
- Graham Staines: Conversation and Conversion
- Peace and Reconciliation: The Irish Story
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission: South African Experiment
- Naxal Movement In India: Need For Ecological and Economic Befriending

JDV Specific Topics

- 60/123 Some Contributions of JDV to the Local Church: A Historical Overview
- Some Stalwarts of JDV: George Soares-Prabhu, George Lobo, Richard Desmet, Salvino Azzopardi, Etc.
- Inculturation and Indigenization: JDV’s Contribution to the Indian Church?
- JDV: The Future Vision

Given these different themes, we have been able to take up some of them. It is hoped that the insights drawn out of our modest living encounters will enhance our lives, making a significant contribution to the Church and Nation.²

So these collection of articles is a small step to foster “the culture of encounter” and promote life in its diversity and richness! May we work together to foster love, compassion and friendship among ourselves! In this connection it may be remembered that the JDV Family – Administration, Staff, Students, Co-workers and many volunteers – has made the diamond jubilee celebration a truly memorable one!

Further, it may be noted that *Jnanadeepa* has completed 20 years of its existence and the editorial team wants to thank the readers, contributors and well-wishers of the this journal. We have been able become what we are only because of you.³

Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ

Editor

December 2016

Notes

1. For example the coordinated assault on Paris on the evening of November 13, 2015 that killed 129 people. It may be recalled that along with the world leaders Pope Francis explicitly addressed the Paris carnage, expressing his “deep sorrow for the terrorist attacks that bloodied France late on Friday, causing many casualties.” Along with offering his condolences to the victims and their families, Francis condemned the massacre as an “unspeakable affront to human dignity.”
2. Adapted from *Abstracts and Proceedings of the International Conference on “Befriending the Other,”* JDV, Pune, 2015
3. More events connected with the twenty years of *Jnanadeepa* are planned. It will be communicated to the readers in due course.

