

EDITORIAL

Despite the easing of the Covid pandemic, the level of ease and security among nations continues to diminish. In fact, the level of dissatisfaction and anxiety among people seems to be increasing day by day. Witness the war in Ukraine, the financial and economic downturn in Sri Lanka and other Asian countries, the shootings in the USA, the continuous flow of refugees looking for a better life, the disruption brought by climate change, the daily reports of disrespect for basic human rights, and so on. Human beings yearn for freedom, security, and a peaceful environment. They are continuously searching for meaning, purpose and a sense of direction in their lives.

Even when everything seems bleak and apparently hopeless in the midst of conflict, dissension, war, social unrest and economic depletion, human beings have a proven track record of survival as long as they find meaning, purpose and a sense of direction in life. Spiritual paths that respond to these inner yearnings and promptings of the human heart have been opened up by the Prophets, mystics, and sages of the many religions of the world because they all contain wisdom, often referred to as 'spirituality'. The articles in this edition of our journal discuss this wisdom.

In October last year (2021), the *School of Religion & Philosophy* at Minhaj University Lahore organized an international conference on the theme: *Spirituality and Religion*. The background to the selection of this theme for an international conference was the realization that, throughout the ages, world religions have provided people with the kind of meaning they seem to be yearning for. But we can practice religion without drawing on its source of spirituality. When the religions no longer respond to the deep yearnings and questions of human beings, the practice of religion can become little more than ritual and routine. The papers presented at this conference aspired to capture the depths of wisdom present in each of the religious traditions. Despite their varying

doctrines, codes and warnings, each religious tradition has inherited a spirituality that has been of profound benefit for humanity.

This edition of the *South Asian Journal of Religion & Philosophy* has published some of the papers presented at the conference in October 2021. In the first article, Alan Race explores the theme of interfaith dialogue. The author describes the issues discussed at the inaugural session of the World Conference of Faiths (WCF) back in 1936 and expresses the view that the dialogue between traditions on issues of spirituality and theology has probably not changed drastically since 1936. The fact that there was such a conference so long ago is an indication that the issues the world is confronting at present had already occupied the minds of concerned men and women at the WCF in 1936. The author thinks that ‘absolutism’ normally associated with religious convictions is becoming less tenable in the new one-world, where consciousness of cyberspace cloud technology and volatile geopolitics have become increasingly widespread.

In the second article, John Dupuche makes the point that the four kinds of interfaith dialogue do not constitute a threat to Christianity but, on the contrary, open up new ways to understand the bountiful ways in which the Word of God has been manifested (or incarnated) in various faith traditions. He is of the view that by learning from a faith tradition that is not their own, followers of each faith tradition can understand their own tradition better. The truth of each faith tradition, however, is unique and cannot be completely articulated. Ultimately we can find no words to express our awe and wonder of one another’s faith tradition.

In the third article, Hussain Mohi-ud-din Qadri discusses the concept of *nafs* in Qur’anic teachings, a concept which is well thought-out within Sufi spirituality and its long tradition of exegesis. In his discussion, he describes the seven stages of *nafs* as the form of a spiritual journey that could beckon this lower self to a deeper religious experience, which is pleasing to the Almighty and, therefore, a journey well worth

undertaking. The article also evokes the possibility for readers of other religious traditions to reflect on the inter-connectedness of spirituality.

The fourth article, by Lukáš Alí Větrovec, is an investigation into the implications of one *hadith*, which is a parable about passengers on a boat, some of whom present a danger to the other passengers. The parable suggests that something should be done to prevent this danger from causing serious harm or even death to everyone on board. In a similar way, the Qur'an tells Muslims to prevent evil and to promote the good. This article describes the duty of Muslims to speak out against all forms of moral, social and environmental corruption. Only a person with clear spiritual vision will be able to respond to this call from the *hadith* and from the Qur'an.

Finally, in their joint article, Hafiz Abdul Ghani and Fatima Ghani draw inspiration from the *Risale-i-Nur*, the *Magnum Opus* of Said Nursi, and conclude that the very DNA of spirituality is its ability to embrace that which is good and future-oriented, even in the face of modernity and its preference for secular values. The writers capture the exegetical imagination of Said Nursi and suggest that we not 'get stuck in the trivial' during our own spiritual journeys towards the lofty goals of human life. ■

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Vision

Respectful and critical discussion of issues related to religion and philosophy will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of different religions in the world and promote peace among people.

Mission

To provide a forum for the discussion of critical issues related to religion and philosophy with a special focus on South Asia.

Aims and Objectives

To encourage a profound and more regular exchange of ideas on the subject of religion and philosophy, particularly on South Asia and to publish original articles selected through a peer review process.

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