

## SEMINAR B – FAITH & FORTITUDE

### Perspectives on Faith, Fortitude and Social Justice from diverse faith traditions

#### Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

##### **Rosemary Hudson-Miller**

- self-sustainability through humour in her work
- commitment to justice, peace, tolerance, compassion, non-violence, loving and caring community
- out of obedience to God, struggle against injustice
- Christian world view, gave examples of saints that have demonstrated this commitment throughout history, including women, lesbian subjected to vilification
- Churches working together on social justice issues, different faiths working together, eg industrial relations, refugees, human rights
- Coalition working to assist refugees with housing, health and advocacy and tackling detention of adults and children, lobbying to prevent deportation
- Woman of great faith committed to her people and culture, indigenous education and relations
- Long journey requires qualities such as persistence, bravery, wisdom, engagement, resilience, cultural grounding, humour, core to the Christian faith, linked to sustainability
- Faith sustains and motivates individuals committed to a better society
- Most important value, love God and love others as your self
- Question: Involvement of Young people?
- Answer: there has been a decline, but it seems to be reversing, people coming back to the church, motivated by looking to places to belong and contribute to society, social justice streak

##### **Sheikh Faizel Gaffur – Muslim Theological Council WA**

- Difference between Islam and Moslems as individuals with responsibility to own behaviour ie the teaching of Islam is not necessarily what you see in its adherents
- Has been some drifting away from core values, real teachings of Islam, by some of the practices of the adherents
- Islam offers a path to perfection, means of perfecting ones own value system and morals, follows one God, angels etc
- Respect all people, whoever they are, whatever they believe in, when digress from this effects social justice
- Need to educate what is Islam, what is culturally based, what are whims and fancies – compared to true meaning of values of Islam, moral perfection
- Link between religion and social justice is important
- Islam is a complete way of life – what does that mean? Daily life governed by system to adhere to, guided by codes and values

- Mohammed (prophet) social justice is the core of Islam quotation "the poor of my people..." gives the message it is not only about rituals, dress etc but also social behaviour and values, individual responsibility and collective morality, Quran teaches - equality, justice, fairness, brotherhood, freedom of choice
- Comes down to implementation by individuals and their qualities, for which they are accountable
- Leaders have responsibility for social justice, need to engage, encourage respect for law of land, other religions, sense of belonging to Australia
- Recommendations to introduce education in schools about social justice, benefits, inter-faith workshops of grass-roots levels, youth conferences, discussion on solutions, support organisations promoting social justice on all levels, working together with religious leaders
- Question: Moslems have respect for other religions, how does that sit with the objective of conversion of other religions
- Answer: claim it is the best religion, but don't require or enforce others to agree, contradictions come down to individuals and difference of understandings and that challenge will remain
- Council of Islamic scholars, needs to act as an anti-dote to extremism, radical views of some clerics
- Definition of radicalism = not showing tolerance of other people
- How can Islamic leaders impress upon young people with a tendency towards radicalism, the values of tolerance and social justice?
- Not generally a problem, apart from a minority in the youth, complex response, integration, multicultural, need to educate...

#### **Rabbi Freilich** – Jewish leader

- religions share common point, respect for other faiths
- Judaism is forbidden to enforce values on other people, or encourage others to join the faith, all human beings have right to world to come as Jews do
- deep respect for all human beings
- common law, no obligation to save someone you see in need eg drowning, Jewish law says you can not stand idly by in the face of the need of others – all people are connected by the image of God, therefore there is an obligation to save all human beings
- Premise on which social justice stands, all are created in the image of God, love neighbour as your self – message of God, not just Jesus (according to Old Testament and Torah)
- Forms of justice, retributive justice and distributive justice which is social justice, difference between possession and ownership – everything is owned by and given to us by God, therefore God is entitled to instruct what we do with God's possessions, merely guardians
- Principles of trusteeship; what is often regarded as charity, is actually an obligation of Judaism, this was to be the society of Israelites
- Everyone has a right to be equal citizens with equal rights
- Therefore there are funds to distribute to the needy as a duty

- Should provide people with their needs AND their dignity, to give and help without maintaining dignity is not good enough “better to give a smile than to give milk without a smile”
- Helping people to feel good is better than to give them money, the act of kindness and compassion (Hessed)
- No religion can give policies for alleviation of poverty and disease but can inspire compassion and humanity, to serve as a template for what is fair and just treatment for the world, more should be invested into combating poverty around the world – to restore dignity and independence to nations and individuals, global imperative (Sudakah)
- Question: how does it sit with new IR laws?
- Answer: we are all servants of God, not servants of Gods servants, therefore we should be treated with dignity
- Discussion of bloodshed and war in the bible – can unfortunately muddy the concepts

**Peter Brett** – Origins social respite and activity centre, Balingup, Buddhism

- respect and encouragement of diversity in culture
- living a more peaceful life
- contemporary expressions of truth
- social justice, need to care for people who are seeking to care for their community and for others
- one central idea of Buddhism, is the Buddha nature within everyone, the capacity for renewal can inspire and sustain people
- another central idea is refuge, recognising the helpfulness of remembering aspirations and purposes for supporting self and others, eg thinking about a good friend who has compassion for self and others
- a skill taught by the historical Buddha is mindfulness practice, physical body is a good starting point: respect for life, self and others and awareness of own body and seek to become more familiar with how to care for ones own responses to life, to calm tensions in the body
- Buddha; can see the arising and passing of the universe in one body
- Pythagorous; to seem to be what you seek to become
- St Augustine; love and do what thou shalt
- Important element of recovery and supporting people in need is to help them recognise and achieve their potentials
- Healing environments, inner and outer environments are interdependent and reflect each other, if one has an inner environment of respect then the outcome is respect and possibility of treating other people and physical environment is a respectful and compassionate way
- Recognising the good things we have, often the focus is on what is lacking
- Inspiring statement – when wake up in the morning, there can be a range of responses to the approaching day – to say this is brilliant, a brand new 24 hours in which to practice loving kindness and compassion
- Question: Buddhism is a very personal religion, we do not hear a lot from Buddhist monks publicly on issues to do with social justice, is there any reason?

- Answer: the purpose of the religion is not only to develop the self for only their own purpose, but to then be able to also help others also

**Mukesh Mani** – president Hindu Association of WA

- Faith, can be to religion, to family, to society, to fellow people
- Fortitude, the willingness to stand
- Religion plays a pivotal role in everyday life
- Unity within diversity, common ideals, spiritual progression
- Human tendency is to shift blame to God, rather than self-responsibility, for example karma in Hindu tradition
- Co-existence in society of multitude of faiths
- Share your happiness, but not your sorrow with others, turn to God, to values, to what will bring happiness to life of you and others
- Should not tolerate injustice that can appear in all religions
- The origin of Hinduism is not known, no common creed, no rules, unique to a social system, believe born into a specific social class, can believe in many Gods, one God or no God at all, believe in reincarnation, continuity of existence in unbroken for millions of years from beginning to end of evolution
- Unity within diversity is a fundamental of life, common belief, common practices, duties
- Common ideals of Hinduism, non-violence, truthfulness (reality), friendship, compassion, fortitude, self-restraint, purity, to be generous and to be giving
- Spiritual values, biological values, material values,
- Key to understanding Hinduism is its understanding of history, core point is the righteousness and justice the sages achieved
- Social justice responsibility rests upon all of us as individuals and the leaders of every nation

**Bayan Meshgin** – Baha'i Faith

- application of justice as individuals gives us the opportunity to search the meaning of justice within ourselves, rather than what others tell us
- myriad hidden injustices we don't hear about, overseas and next door, have become a way of life
- those who seek to tackle injustice are often faced with challenges, disappointment, frustration, due to the complexity of injustice
- Development has brought many benefits, but must recognise the reality of the vast population in poverty, we must identify symptoms and cause of injustice
- Baha'i perspective, must challenge the foundations of injustice, human beings are capable of acting in non-selfish ways, seek to establish a new mindset concerned with human honour and dignity, responsible for promoting well being of others, reciprocity between rights and responsibilities, achieving justice needs to be creative, not just reactive
- Social transformation needs the assistance of religion, reaches the roots of motivation, worlds great belief systems, capacity to love, to forgive, to create, dare greatly, sacrifice for common good, discipline animal instinct

- It makes sense to turn toward religion when facing challenge of overcoming injustice within societies
- Religions (individuals) have been unwilling to give up the idea that "we" are right and "others" are wrong – hearing a different perspective today
- Need to move away from superiority, work cooperatively together, common golden thread that links all religions
- Must face honestly, the implications of the truth, God or source is one, away from cultural divergence, walk the path of justice
- Without justice there is no cause for fortitude or worth having faith