



# **Melodies from the Flute: A Tribute to Prof Noel Sheth SJ**

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A man of ahimsa, compassion and dialogue! That was, indeed, Prof. Noel Kantilal Sheth SJ. Calm and sober in his attitude, he reached out to others respectfully and reverentially. His meticulous and methodological nature and analytic-synthetic mind made him a humble servant, erudite scholar, efficient teacher and responsible administrator. He had a good eye for details and would plan his personal, professional, academic life extremely meticulously. He reached out to other traditions, religions and cultures with a warm heart and open arms, so that our world may be a better and more peaceful place. He mastered Sanskrit so well that he could authoritatively read and interpret the Indian religious texts. This made him reach out to the Hindu scholars. He learnt also Pali which made him reach out to the Buddhist scholars and devotees. His scholarship enabled him to build bridges between Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, so that we could understand and appreciate each other (including our genuine differences and creative diversities) better. Prof. Noel Sheth SJ passed away on July 8, 2017, sadly and unexpectedly at Bagota Columbia (local date: July 7).

To commemorate meaningfully his 75th birthday (October 31, 2018), some of us, his friends, well-wishers and colleagues, decided to bring out this memorial volume. In the Call for Papers send out to the writers, the following mission and vision of the life of Prof Sheth were recalled.

- Unwaveringly compassionate
- Reaching out to the other
- Dialoguing differently
- Compassionate and reverential dialogue
- Compassion (karuna), dialogue and service
- Good teacher; gentleman; calm and sober
- Respect and reverence for all
- Meticulous, analytic-synthesis
- Passionately compassionate

The general thrust was to convey the message and mission of Noel Sheth, accordingly we also proposed tentatively the following titles of the articles that could be written:

- “Divinity of Krishna:” An Appraisal
- Hindu-Christian engagement
- Muslim-Christian dialogue
- Identity-Conflict-Development
- Buddhist Concern and Compassion to Other Religions
- Subaltern perspectives on Living Together
- Christian Appreciation of the Other
- Befriending the Other
- Indian Genius for Religious Harmony
- Alliance of Civilizations
- An Indian Ending
- Praxis as Testing Ground for Theory
- Altruism: Christian and Beyond
- Science-Religion Dialogue
- The Value of Comparative Philosophy and Theology
- The Flute of Krishna
- “Religious and Cultural Resources for Peace”

## **General Overview of the Book**

This book is about encountering other traditions, building friendly bridges with them, affirming others compassionately, enabling them and appreciating their diversity and difference, through dialogue, interaction and cooperation. The first article by Rudy Heredia, a close friend of Noel Sheth, sets the general tone when he reflects on triple dialogue as learning together with the other. The next section of articles delves on the Christian heritage and base that urges to

affirm the other. Dr. Boris Repschinski SJ, University of Innsbruck, Austria, elaborates on welcoming and affirming hospitality, where he deals with the creative tension between Jesus as guest and God as host. The next article by Dr. Thomas Karimundackal bases himself on the Biblical wisdom tradition and looks for metaphors of wisdom in the Indian traditions, especially in the Upanishadic and Vaishnavite traditions. The next article by Rekha M. Chennattu, Superior General, Religious of the Assumption, delves into the need to build bridges, drawing from the New Testament. The following section explores the Indian roots of both Prof. Noel Sheth and the readers. The first article by Prof. Selva Rathinam, President, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, looks at the wisdom of the Book of Qoheleth and compares it with the Indian thought. Taking a more concrete step, the Israeli scholar, Ithamar Theodor, exposes the centrality of Gītā and its profound relationship to non-Hindu religions. In the next article, Prof Nishant Irudayadason, Papal Seminary, Pune, bases himself on the ethical subjectivity of Levinas and shows that the Tamil Vaishnavite tradition, particularly Andal has shown us that the erotic love can also be a way towards the divine. The succeeding article by Dolichan Kollareth, De Nobili College, Pune, studies the psychoanalysis of Girindrasekhar Bose as a model for East-West dialogue.

The final article in this section by Prof. Victor Ferrao, Dean, Rachol Seminary, reflects on translation between self and the other as a prelude to dialogue, especially in the Goan context, which may be applied to the larger Indian scenario. The next section on “The Religious Vision,” talks of the diversity of religious traditions that is characteristic of India. Professor James Ponniah, University of Madras, revisits comparative approaches in the study of religion for contemporary times, providing new insights on the need for a creative study of comparative religions. While J. Charles Davis, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany, explores human dignity in Islam as a bridging space for dialogue, M.D. Joseph, Research Fellow, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune studies the emancipatory dimension of subaltern religions. Vadappuram M. Jose, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, pleads for religious harmony and sees in Prof. Noel Sheth that Indian genius, who is the need of the hour.

The next set of articles reflects Noel Sheth’s attempts at dialogu-

ing between science and religion. He himself has many articles in this area. While two scientists Donald Frohlich, University of St. Thomas, Houston and Felipe Andrés Piedra, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, reflects on biology and philosophy to reach a unity, Prof. Stephen Jayard, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, focusses on Nanotechnology and Prof. Kamladevi Kunkolienker, P.E.S.' College of Arts and Science, Farmagudi-Ponda-Goa sees science-religion dialogue as a necessary component in our pursuit for happiness.

The final section explores our life as essentially dialogical. Kuvilla Pandikattu studies the philosophical basis for dialogue. Rev Sr Mudita Menona Sodder, Sophia College, Mumbai, pleads for inter-faith dialogue for ecological justice and peace on earth.

Rt Rev Thomas Menampampil Emeritus Bishop of Guwahati affirms the need for The Dialogue of Civilizations, following the model of Matteo Ricci, the great Italian Jesuit of 16th century with his Chinese connection. The next article by Dr. Keith D'Souza, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, proposes the requirements or criteria for religion as a pathway for peace. The concluding article by Prof. Subhah Anand, a close friend and colleague of Prof. Sheth at Pune, looks at humans as pilgrims going beyond every code, cult, community and creed in our journey to the Divine!

We have conveniently divided the 21 articles into five sections, which are named after some of the deepest aspirations and hopes of Prof. Sheth. We hope that his vision and mission will be carried on by his colleagues, companions and friends. May this book contribute to a better harmony among our different religious traditions! May it help us to learn deeply from others' religious traditions and grow in wisdom. May this book be an inspiration to reach out to everyone and everything with compassion, wisdom and love!

Since this book values diversity, we have not uniformised the technical details. While trying to be accurate and rigorous in its content, we have left the authors the freedom to follow their own methodology of research. We are really grateful to the staff and community of both Papal Seminary and JnanaDeepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, for encouraging this venture. We also thank the Provincial and Socius

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