

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The Foundation Course on Religion offers to all UG students the academic exercise to broaden their knowledge and appreciation of religion as an essential dimension of human experience and life. The course is designed to enrich their perspective in the context of India's civilizational heritage and to empower them for global citizenship.

The First University Education Commission, 1948-49, (UEC) of independent India recommended offering a course on religion as part of university education. The commission, in its deliberation on religious education, noted religious ethos was an integral factor for the growth of rich Indian civilization. For millennia, people from various parts of the world with different religious beliefs have come to India to find a home, to grow and to flourish.

The Vedic saying "truth is one, the wise call it by many names" (Rig Veda 1.164. 46c.), has always been the bedrock of Indian world vision, which welcomed, despite tension and conflict from time to time, all the great religions of the world. Hence, the Commission placed on record in its report: "India is the meeting place of the great religions of the world and will play an increasingly prominent part in the religious life of humankind and Indian students should have this idea of India's role in the world" (UEC, p. 260). All this calls for learning the essentials of religions as part of liberal education which would be uniquely rewarding as a step towards harmony between religions long divided (UEC, p.263).

Moreover, the study of religion provides an invaluable opportunity for exploring the ways in which humans find meaning, purpose, and wonder in their lives. It opens an extraordinary window into how people give structure to their personal identities, their communities and their understandings of the world around them.

An academic exposition to the world's religions inculcates unique cultural sensitivities among students. It opens students' mindsets and aptitudes to a multicultural and international way of being that transcends the boundaries of the conventional and the everyday life. Further, it enables students to equip themselves with critical thinking, communication competence, interpersonal awareness, and intercultural literacy and connectivity necessary for success in an ever evolving global society..

To teach religion, thus, is an academic endeavour and most importantly an educational commitment that aims to provide students with ready access to the rich and exciting world of religious scriptures, history of religions, their doctrines, spiritualities, moral systems, ritual practices and festivals. It is in this backdrop that all the seven units of this course are arranged.

Hence, the academic objective of studying religion is to facilitate students to see and appreciate the goodness embedded in the beliefs of all people within their distinct religious heritages, whereas in the essentials they are interconnected that calls us to create a culture of harmony. For 'Religion is the sum of the expansive impulse of a being' – Henry H. Ellis.

I express my gratitude to Dr. John Romus for the Syllabus of Seven Units prepared systematically and succinctly for the Foundation Course.

A soft copy of the course content will be sent to all first year students.

The second unit of the FC will be on Personality Development in the second semester.

**Dr. John Felix Raj, SJ**

Vice-Chancellor

