



Discussing the Special Relationship between The Netherlands and Surinam

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, March 2, 2019

By Hans Campman

On Saturday 2 March 2019, UPF/WFP organized a Lunch Meeting with the theme “Discussing the Special Relationship between The Netherlands and Surinam” in Amsterdam. The focus was on the special interreligious cohesion in Surinam where different religions are living peacefully and warmly together and what this means for the association between religions in The Netherlands.

Among the 16 participants there were Pandit Tewari (Hindu Priest) and his wife, Dr. Van Eekelen (former Dutch Minister of Defense) and his wife, Mrs. Waal (a famous gospel singer), Mr. Fofana (President of the Liberian Association in The Netherlands) and Mrs. Schmitt (a WFP volunteer who worked in Surinam).

Summary of speech by Pandit Tewarie

I was born in Paramaribo, Surinam. As I studied for Pandit in India, I was sent to the Netherlands to set up a place where Hindu people can meet and worship together. Now we have a large Hindu Center in The Hague. In daily life I work for the Ministry of Justice, precisely as a spiritual pastoral worker

in Dutch prisons. So I usually have an audience different from you people here.

Surinam is one of the few nations where religions live together with a warm heart. It is true. Some years ago the city government of The Hague wanted to learn from Surinam’s example and I worked on a report about Surinam’s society. Thanks to this report produced by City of The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam have followed as well. I was one of the delegates. After returning from Surinam we set up many programs in the city of The Hague.

For instance we have “Worldwide Knowing Day” every year in March, when all the religions and traditions open the doors to visit each other’s temple/church/mosque etc. The city of The Hague supports this program by giving free public transport tickets. All thanks to Surinam, indeed.

What’s special about Surinam? There are so many different people, from Africa, Asia, etc, who have each their own tradition. But people have some realization that we are here not alone with our own identity but also with other people as inhabitants of Surinam. How can we all build together society?

Even when the political situation is difficult, I have seen that thanks to the religious leaders, Surinam is going to a better and more hopeful direction. At present Surinam is politically and economically isolated.

Thanks to UPF we could help organize the Peace Walk of Gandhi in The Hague last year with the Ambassador of India. We have been emphasizing that if you want to change the nation to a better direction, one needs to gather the religious leaders. This is exactly what UPF is trying as well through many conferences, promoting morals and values.

You see me, but you see only my outside: that’s my hardware, my religion. But what you cannot see is my inside, my software. That is my spirituality. You might have a giant computer, but if you do not have software nothing functions. The spirituality is inside of you, not outside. What you see from outside is my religion.

“One is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, etc.” But that’s all just the outside, right? We give just a stamp. Holy Books, Holy Rituals, all might be perfect, but if our inside is empty, then what? The spiritual side is the software. If we are honest, we have

forgotten the software a little bit – inside ourselves.

If you do not update your software, you stay the same. To understand each other better and to live together, we need to update our software, our spirituality.

In Hindu's Holy Scripture it teaches about one human family, but most of us only talk about it theoretically and do not even think of realizing it. But Father and Mother Moon have been seriously working to realize this ideal. That's why I truly respect Father and Mother Moon.

I have attended many UPF conferences and have been to Korea. We have received the Blessing from Father and Mother Moon. I am happy to be able to work together with Mother Moon now,

to realize one human family, which Hindu Scripture talks about.

Thank you.

Additional quote: "if a religion doesn't work for peace it might as well not exist".

A quote of a young participant: "It was a wonderful day. I learned a lot. It was very well spoken about peace and how to achieve it. The idea of all the religions live together in peace gave me the most inspiration. Surinam has shown that it is in fact possible. Father and Mother Moon must be truly strong people who have created this peace movement. I never heard of their names, but I would like to learn more about them. How wonderful it would be if we can live in love and peace with each other instead of killing each

other! I respect you all that you are fighting for the ideal."

Mrs. Masae Schmitt, WFWP volunteer for Surinam gave a moving story about her experience in Surinam. When she was in Surinam, people warmly welcomed her and were hospitable. Indeed, she was impressed that people from different religions are living together peacefully and celebrate each other's festival days. In the forest she met a medicine woman, who prepared something for her for good health. She helped to organize meetings to promote peace, which were inspiring and have given her good memories to Surinam.