



MANY RIVERS ONE OCEAN

Inter-faith Sharing on Significance of Water
WATER SYMPOSIUM

24 NOVEMBER, SUNDAY

TIME: 10am to 1pm (Inc. lunch)

VENUE: Furama City Centre Hotel

Water is the source of life. However it has also been the source of conflict and tension among mankind over many centuries. Its importance has often been overshadowed by the poor understanding of this precious resource. It is only in times when there is too much water, too little or when it becomes too dirty that we begin to consider the dire consequences.

For religion, water takes on an added significance. Used in different ways for various rituals and ceremonies, water is sacred and a basic unifying element between people and religions.

With the shared aim of promoting harmony through a better appreciation of water and its religious applications, Shinnyo-en Singapore and its partners at the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), Ba'alwi Mosque Singapore and Taoist Federation, jointly organised the first Water Symposium to encourage active inter-faith sharing.



Guest-of-Honour,
Mr Abdullah Tarmugi,
Former Speaker of Parliament

As a small island city-state with a multi-cultural population, Singapore does not take water security and religious harmony for granted. The government plays an important role in ensuring a safe supply of water and is committed to ensuring friendly ties between people and religions.

However, this burden is a shared responsibility and this is why nearly 200 participants from all walks of life came together on one Sunday morning in November to learn more about the significance of water in a religious context.

The Guest-of-Honour, Mr Abdullah Tarmugi (L), former speaker of Parliament, spoke at length about the importance of awareness of water issues and its understanding in religious use. More than just a simple liquid, water is a scarce resource and Singaporeans need to unite in ensuring every person contributes in their own way to saving water.

The event proceedings began with a highly insightful presentation by a representative of the Islamic faith, Imam Syed Hassan Al-Attas (R) from Ba'alwi Mosque. The Imam touched on many everyday aspects of a Muslim's life and explained what water means to a practitioner.

As a revered religious elder, the Imam also shared his personal experiences on his travels around the world and clarified the Islamic position on water. He also stirred the interest of participants through storytelling and even offered samples of water from the holy Well of Zamzam for participants to taste.

The Imam left a lasting impression with the participants as he dispelled myths about Muslim practices and welcomed people from other faiths to visit the mosque to learn about Islam.



Imam Syed Hassan Al-Attas,
Head of Ba'alwi Mosque



Master Chung Kwang Tong,
Administrator, Taoist Federation

The second speaker at the event was Master Chung Kwang Tong (top) from the Taoist Federation. Master Chung spoke extensively about water as one of the five critical elements in Taoism and its relationship to the health of an individual as well as the well-being of the environment.

Master Chung also took the opportunity to clarify common misconceptions about water and Taoism. He also touched on several important life concepts behind Taoist popular teachings.

The third speaker was Reverend Minoru Shitara (R) from Shinnyo-en. Presenting in Japanese with consecutive English translation, the Reverend used videos to demonstrate how religious rituals with water are conducted.

Participants were also shown a video of a large scale lantern floating festival in Hawaii that showed the healing nature of water in a remembrance context, and the spiritual connection between people and water.



Reverend Minoru Shitara,
Shinnyo-en Buddhist Order



The first-ever Water Symposium concluded with a question and answer session moderated by Mr Fais from the Inter-Religious Organisation. The participants touched on pertinent issues including the role of religion, water and natural calamities such as the recent Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. The speakers spoke in turn to address the questions and offered unique religious perspectives.

As the event came to a close, the event objective of inter-faith sharing was met as participants were enlightened and they left with a much better appreciation of the critical role that water has in different religions and how it can bond people together.