

From Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1912)

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life. This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable. Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill. (n. 1)

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger... Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar. When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of many. (n. 63)

From the Bhagavad Gita (2nd c BCE)

Give up in thought to Me all that you do, make Me your goal: relying on the integration of your soul, think on Me constantly. Thinking on Me you will surmount all danger by my grace, but if through selfishness you will not listen, then surely will you perish... In the Lord alone seek refuge with all your being, all your love; and by his grace you will attain an eternal state, the highest peace. Of all the mysteries the most mysterious, this wisdom have I told you. Ponder it in all its amplitude, then do whatever you will. And now again give ear to this my highest Word, of all the most mysterious: 'I love you well.' Therefore, I will tell you your salvation. Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me, and so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me. Giving up all things of righteousness, take refuge with Me alone. I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve. (18: 57-66, adapted from RC Zaehner tr.)

From a South Indian Hindu Poet (9th c)

Incomparable mysterious lord, peerless and supreme,
You became the life of all things. You became the mother
who bore me, you became my father. You teach me what I don't know
lord, this servant can't know all that you do.

In that time of ignorance, you made this servant
caught in a great, ignorant delusion love your service
As an innocent dwarf you said, "Three steps of land, Mahabali"
You tricked him, him so ignorant. Now you have mingled with my breath.

In return for the great, good gift of mingling with my breath
I gave you my breath. Now what is left to return?
You are the breath within my breath, father who ate the seven worlds
Whose is this breath? Who am I? But that which you gave, made, kept. (Shatakopan's *Holy Word of Mouth* II.3.2-4)

From the New Testament

Rejoice in the Lord always — again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God,

Learning Interreligiously as a Catholic: Reflections on 40 years of Experience

which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
(Philippians 4:4-9)

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’ *(John 14:1-6)*

From Vatican II

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language... The Catholic Church rejects none of the things that are true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere attentiveness those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless by no means rarely reflect the radiance of that Truth which enlightens all people. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the way, the truth, and the life” *(John 14:6)*, in whom humans may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself. The Church, therefore, exhorts her children that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these peoples. (*Nostra Aetate* n. 2)

From a Speech by Pope John Paul II, Madras 1986

By dialogue we let God be present in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God.

Some of my books

Hindu Wisdom for All God’s Children (1998)

Divine Mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary (2005)

Beyond Compare: St Francis de Sales and Sri Vedanta Deshika on Loving Surrender to God (2008)

Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders (2010)

His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence (2013)

The Future of Hindu-Christian Studies: A Theological Inquiry (2017)