

**Practicing St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* in Asia:
Imagination, Insight, and Clarity in Interreligious Encounter**

1. There are general dispositions in the *Exercises* that aid us in interreligious encounter in richly diverse religious worlds such as those of Asia
 - a. Imagination, exercised in contemplation, is a privileged way of encounter with God
 - b. Knowledge of God is a matter of affectivity as well as of reason
 - c. Discipline, regular practice, patience are intrinsic to how one comes to know God
 - d. Jesuit educating: ideas and insights, and emotion, moral values, truth, for full “humanity”
 - e. Sin is real and effective, but so too redemption, conversion
 - f. There is an immediacy to encounter with God, in experience and by way of practice
 - g. We can find God in all things, for the triune God is present everywhere in the world
 - h. The *Exercises* are Christocentric — and Christ revalorizes all human reality
 - i. Service, not ideology, is the key fruit of the *Exercises*
 - j. Communication is always possible, beginning with the interlocutors’ current contexts
2. In the pre-Suppression tradition (in Asia, elsewhere), the *Exercises* played an important — but largely implicit — role, guiding and inspiring mission
 - a. Making retreats, giving retreats, engaging in arguments with intellectual, spiritual import
 - b. The *Exercises* as inspiration for mission, consolation in suffering
 - c. The *Exercises*, education, and ongoing efforts to re-imagine missionary projects
3. The *Exercises* in relation to the intellectual work of Jesuits and Ignatian theologies: unions with mixed results?
 - a. From action to theory, doctrine: imaginative engagement within the margins of settled theologies
 - b. The *Exercises* are theologically underdetermined — open to multiple theologies, but also vulnerable to overlays of theology/ies extrinsically applied and gaining credibility by the linkage [c. Compare: the “fate” of yoga in India: multiple uses and meanings layered onto practice]
4. We need to learn from actual practice and reflection rooted in practice:
 - a. Deciphering what we learn from spiritual exercise/s, and how we verbalize our learning
 - b. E.g., in India: retreat houses, centers, ashrams as places for intensive reflection on the Indian meanings of our practice and its theologies; habits of practical reflection, over extended periods
 - c. Indian Jesuits’ re-reading of the *Exercises* in light of (Hindu) Indian spiritual practices and theologies
 - i. e.g., articles in *Ignis*: myriad micro comparisons, re-reading Ignatian theology and practices in light of theologies and practices rooted in other religious traditions in the Indian context
 - ii. books on Ignatian and Indian spiritualities: e.g., M. Amaladoss, SJ, *Inigo in India*
 - d. Similarly, the practice, reflection, and writing of Ignatian authors elsewhere in Asia
5. Beyond a monologue about the *Exercises* in Asia: a dialogue — today — across religious boundaries among theologians who are committed both to spiritual practice, to reflecting theologically on practice, and to articulating insights arising in reflection:
 - a. More than affirming the value of practice; more than honoring each other’s practice; more than applying neutral theories theologies that “include” the practices of various traditions
 - b. E.g., my reflection on the spiritual theology of the *Exercises* in relation to the spiritual theology composed around a south Indian Hindu mantra — the *Dvaya* (Double) mantra, expressive of surrender to a God and Goddess before whom surrender is appropriate, desired, efficacious
 - i. *To Narayana with Sri I come for refuge; praise to Narayana with Sri!* — in light of the *Exercises*
 - ii. *You have given all to me: to You, O Lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your will* — in light of the spiritual theology of Srivaisnava Hinduism
 - c. Bringing *spiritual exercises* into interreligious conversations that intensify insightful, reflective practice, and guide grounded interreligious theologies arising in and from practice — (among other goals) for the sake of theology, but not bound permanently to any particular theology