

Publicity on Confucianism is good, says consultant

By HEDWIG ALFRED

PEOPLE of various faiths in Singapore should have a positive attitude to the recent publicity and discussions on Confucian ethics and how it should be taught in schools.

They should not feel disturbed by government and public interest in the topic because it is not a threat to their faith.

Mr Manoj Das, a consultant from India for the Hindu Studies course, said this when asked to comment on the fears expressed by some groups that Confucian ethics may be seen as being superior to their ethnic philosophies.

He said: "Their fears are baseless. If one is true to his faith, nobody can ask him to change it.

"Any amount of intellectual discourse on the

manner suitable for 15- and 16-year-old students.

From next year, religious studies will be a compulsory subject for Secondary 3 and 4 pupils. Hindu studies is one of the options students can take.

Mr Das has held talks with the Minister of State (Education), Dr Tay Eng Soon, and the chairman of the Hindu Advisory Board, Mr S.R. Nathan.

He has also met Education Ministry officials engaged in preparing textbooks for the course.

Mr Das is a follower of Sri Aurobindo, a visionary philosopher and mystic who lived during the early part of this century.

Mr Das is best known as a writer of short stories and articles in English on a variety of subjects.

These have been published in magazines, journals and anthologies. He has also written a number of books for children.

He said that the move to include religious education for the young was very relevant, especially in a progressive and multi-racial society such as Singapore.

Respect

"It will acquaint students with the knowledge and learning which has been built over the generations," he said.

On living in a multi-religious society, he said: "If I want to understand the feelings of other human beings better, I must first understand myself.

"I can't give other religions their due respect without properly understanding the value and dignity of my own religion."

On the Hindu Studies course, Mr Das said a simple and practical course for teaching the basic principles of Hinduism is being planned.

Mr Das will return to India on Saturday.



MR MANOJ DAS

subject will only stimulate him to think more about his faith and help him compare and contrast it with others."

Mr Das is a professor of English Literature and Indian Literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry in southern India.

He arrived in Singapore on Aug 19 at the invitation of the Hindu Advisory Board.

Mr Das is here to help determine how best to implement the syllabus for Hindu Studies in a