



INDIA

# KEEPING THE FAITH THROUGH INTERFAITH PROJECTS

Praveena Balasundaram, former senior editor of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge ([www.acpl.com/ispck](http://www.acpl.com/ispck)), in New Delhi, India, revealed its passions in an interview with writer Stephanie Dickerson.

**W**e need to be open to authors of other faiths," says Praveena Balasundaram, who this past May attended Cook Communications' International Christian Publishing Institute on editorial management.

The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCCK) has traditionally focused on publishing liturgy, Bible study guides, contextual theology, and other materials for the church of North India. It recently took a step toward encouraging interfaith understanding.

"Last year, ISPCCK published *Finding Jesus in Dharma*, by Chaturvedi Badrinath, a Hindu," reports Balasundaram. "ISPCCK wants to promote sensitivity and awareness for other religions and Badrinath's book gives us credibility," she adds.

"India has become quite strict about conversion, so it is critically important for us to be careful," explains Balasundaram. "*Finding Jesus in Dharma* was released in a secular setting by a high-ranking government official. This is something big for us!"

Hindus constitute most of the population of India, followed by Muslims and Sikhs. Christians are just over two percent of the country's one billion people.

ISPCCK is opening a door that will allow Christians and people of other faiths to begin communication with each other. ISPCCK realizes that this is a serious undertaking as it is a highly sensitive matter to both sides.

"The possibility of having peace and reconciliation in our multi-faith society is most important to us," says Balasundaram. "ISPCCK can function in a society that is predominantly Hindu. We *can* have unity and harmony."

Balasundaram and others at ISPCCK know that this will be an uphill battle. "We are challenged to encourage the church to think of this issue of unity. We think not only

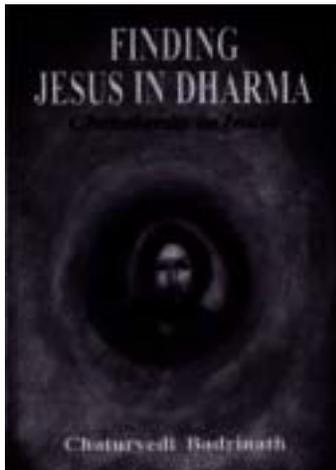
of creating awareness, but also of creating a forum welcoming other faiths and creative discussions," she says. "Anything in the interfaith category

must be very sensitive to people of other faiths; the editors must be very careful."

### Recruiting new authors

ISPCCK's interfaith line, and the multitude of the books it publishes each year, provides many opportunities for new authors.

"We are attracting new authorship," says Balasundaram. "We had 96 new authors publish with ISPCCK in the past two years. It is an established organization, so that helps. People send us manuscripts, we have contact with seminaries, and we also commission authors to write for one of our series. In addition, we have writer's workshops at least twice a year, one in Delhi and one in another city."



ISPCCK's controversial title has been well received.

### New products

Besides Bible studies, liturgy, theology, and books on interfaith issues, ISPCCK publishes materials for development and education. "We have books on women's studies, church history, interfaith issues, stewardship, social and political concerns," she adds. "We want to continue to strengthen our existing lines, but we hope to go into new things in the next two years such as cards and calendars."

"We are exploring new avenues such as audio cassettes," she explains. "ISPCCK produced seven cassettes in the last year and will work on some more. We are constantly challenging ourselves to look for new ways to communicate our faith. We want to be sensitive to other faiths, while keeping our own faith."

Referring to Badrinath's book, *Finding Jesus in Dharma*, Balasundaram says, "We will see how we can use this book to make it possible for people of other faiths to publish with us."v