



INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI



in collaboration with

**DEPTT. OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, PUNJABI UNIVERSITY,
PATIALA, PUNJAB**

TWO-DAY ONLINE/OFFLINENATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

**“Inter-religious Understanding and Programming for Sustainable
Goals of Equality and Fraternity”**

On 10-11 October 2022 via Zoom

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The world in its entirety is now preoccupied with the issue of intolerance and conflicts which is resulting in lack of sustainable development.

To spread *fitnah* and *fasad* on earth by shedding blood, disturbing peace and tranquilly, burning the green fields and orchards, and destroying the inhabitants—all these vicious acts are rampant in our times. Therefore, in such situation, there is a dire need for peace and harmony in society at national and international level and for promoting peace and harmony, religion can play a vital role. In the perspective of religion, the dialogue and understanding are very vital.

The term inter-faith dialogue refers to cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e., "faiths") and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels. It is distinct from syncretism or alternative religion, as dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions or beliefs to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs. Throughout the world, there are local, regional, national and international inter-faith initiatives; many are formally or informally linked and constitute larger networks or federations.

The often-quoted statement: "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions", was formulated by the Roman Catholic priest and theologian Dr. Hans Küng, a Professor of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology at University of Tübingen and Professor Emeritus and President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic, Tübingen.

Some inter-faith dialogues have more recently adopted the name inter-belief dialogue, while other proponents have proposed the term inter-path dialogue, to avoid implicitly excluding atheists, agnostics, humanists, and others with no religious faith but with ethical or philosophical beliefs, as well as to be more accurate concerning many world religions that do not place the same emphasis on "faith" as do some Western religions. Similarly, pluralistic rationalist groups have hosted public reasoning dialogues to transcend all worldviews (whether religious, cultural or political), termed Trans belief. Dialogue and searching for common grounds (*KalimatulSawa*) have to be the actual mission of every Muslim according to the Quranic injunctions. Among those people, we have to do the work for mutual

understanding; we have to see whether there is any basic thing which is acceptable to both that can be called *KalimatulSawa*. To some, the term inter-religious dialogue has the same meaning as inter-faith dialogue.'

This dialogical phenomenon can take different forms. In the dialogue of the hands, we all work together to make the world a better place in which we must all live together. "In the dialogue of the heart, we share the experience of the emotions of those different from us. Inter-religious dialogue in contemporary society is conducted to create better relationships between people, belonging to different religions by bringing them together in conversation: it, thus, aims to establish peace and harmony in a society, which has been devastated by religious conflicts. There are several important aspects in dialogue in this regard.

The "religious conflicts" or "conflicts in the name of religions" are often more than "religious" conflicts and, often, not even "religious" conflicts at all. "Religion" has become a mere useful peg to hang the violence.

Thus, in the contemporary period, inter-religious dialogue is not simply any conversation between people with different religious identities. Rather, it is presented as an important step in understanding one's own religion and one's neighbour's religions, and thus a step towards better understanding and relationships between people of different religions. Thus, inter-faith understanding and dialogue is an approach in which positive attitudes and openness to other religions is implied, the view being that such positive attitudes between members of different religions are necessary to create better relationships among humans in society. This positive attitude varies from showing mutual openness and mutual sharing among the participants, while keeping the distinctive features of their respective religions, or affirming and acknowledging the differences between religions while emphasizing the unity of aim or orientation of all religions, even though the latter is sometimes criticized in dialogue circles.

How to maintain peace in our society despite divergent denominational identities is a question in the present chaotic times, which warrants programming for Sustainable Goals of Equality and Fraternity. Therefore, we need various kinds of dialogical engagements for the purpose of understanding. The dialogue that promotes "engaged pluralism" is one that seeks understanding and accepts difference. Dianna Eck says: "The encounter in a pluralistic society is not premised on achieving agreement, but achieving relationship."

For achieving a holistic treatment to communal problems permanently, first of all, we need to know how we can identify the content about inter-religious understanding in our major religions like—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam at a philosophical level. In order to promote progressive agendas of sustainable development, the first prerogative is peace which is dependent on the mutual understanding of various sections of the society. Hence, we go from dialogue to understanding and from understanding to sustainable development in an inclusive manner without shunning our individual or community identities.

Islam is very clear about the relations of Muslims with non-Muslims and had laid down the catalogue for treating them with tolerance and justice because Islam is a religion of peace, progress and prosperity.

It is an honourable intention if a Muslim creates "harmony between himself and the one who does not believe in Islam, so that to have dialogue with him." (*Fatawa Islamiyah, Vol.I, Darussalam Riyadh 2001, p-233* (Permanent Committee)). Even Muslims "can trade with a person who does not believe in Islam" and "there is no objection—to using what they produce in case of need." (*Ibid, Ibn Jibreen, p-234*). Muslims can live among the people who don't believe in Tawhid (Oneness of God) to create the ambience of harmony and

understanding. We can reciprocate the greetings of non-Muslims by “Wa Alaikum” and can ask about the welfare of their family members as had been permitted by number of scholars, including *Ibn Taimiyah*.

There is no objection to shake hands with a non-Muslim and using their things, which they manufacture. (*Ibn Jibreen*)

Muslims have been allowed by Islam to be sympathetic and courteous with non-Muslims in general. According to *Ibn Arabi Maliki*, we may even spend one portion of our wealth on them to do good treatment with them and be kind to them.

In the atmosphere of peace and security, there are more chances of Islam being understood by the people in its legitimate and credible form, and in a war-like circumstance, these all possibilities get diminished.

Creation of a better tomorrow for sustainable development should also include goodwill and understanding among various religious denominations and meeting the sustainable Goals of Equality and Fraternity. Such goals can never be achieved without working in harmony with diverse sections of the society. Ideological overtones cannot create a harmonious environment for sustainable development. Imposition of any one religious orientation would be dangerous for any kind of progress economic social or cultural. Creation of a better tomorrow calls for care and caution to deal with different sections of any state. For example, Indian states represent distinct linguistic and cultural identities, which must be allowed to flourish with their own distinct ethos. Consequently, these units require enjoying a specific space of their own based on their history, culture and philosophy. A better tomorrow has to be ensured in multiple ways. In short, homogenisation has to be contested on valid grounds. Well-being and peaceful existence of minorities are of vital importance. India is fortunate to have a balanced Constitution, which guarantees basic rights in the form of Fundamental Rights. There is no denying the fact that religious minority of Muslims is marginalised in all key sections of development, particularly in education, health, employment. This section of Indian society is suffering even from a fear psychosis created by riots and targeted violence. Communal violence as a tool of mobilisation of majority is finally marginalising the minority and thus goes against the goals of sustainable development in the end. Muslims need protection from political violence for their physical security, which is needed in all forms on an urgent basis. No tomorrow can be peaceful for anybody in the wake of unbridled political violence. Minorities need a special enabling philosophy, policy and action plan. Minorities' communities will have to fight for their legitimate rights in a legal and democratic manner. There is a palpable concern in major marginalised groups on similar lines and Muslims should evolve a common strategy and a common minimum programme. If the constitutional values or cultural traditions of India are not taken into consideration, it will be catastrophic for the society and will harm all the lofty objectives of sustainable development and Goals of Equality and Fraternity. Indians have always attached prime importance to their social traditions marked by unity in diversity. All differences are tolerated and respected. Each community strives to secure goodwill of other groups within its area. Essential elements of fraternity have always been manifest. Indian history, philosophy and culture do sanction a proper framework and environment for such endeavours. Hence, a better tomorrow would not come automatically: it has to be worked out at multiple levels, with a clearcut objective and a manageable work plan.

In light of the above details, the IOS Forum for Inter-Religious Understanding, Institute of Objective Studies is going to organise a two-day offline/online Conference on “Inter-religious Understanding and Programming for Sustainable Goals of Equality and Fraternity” in collaboration with Deptt. of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, on October 10-11, 2022.

Themes for Deliberations

The themes suggested for writing papers are given below:

1. Peace in the context of Religions
2. Religion and Peaceful living
3. Islam and peaceful behaviour
4. Ahinsaand Sustainable Goals of Equality and Fraternity
5. Gandhi and Non-Violence
6. Buddhist traditions of Equality and Fraternity
7. Samvad and its Indian ethos
8. Equality and Fraternity and Indian Constitution.
9. Religion and social justice
10. Sikhism and ideals of Equality and Fraternity.
11. Vivekananda on religious diversity
- 12- Equality and Fraternity and Sufi ethos of India
12. Sangat Pangat and human welfare.
13. The concept of langar and idea of human equality
14. Dialogue for social change and inclusiveness
- 15- Humanising dimensions of religion and sustainable development!
15. Bhakti Movement and Religious harmony
16. Sikhism and its legacy of peaceful co-existence
17. The Islamic ideals of equality and fraternity
18. Indian Constitutional and safeguards for minorities
19. Peace for preserving progress and justice
20. Gender and religious goals of social mobility
21. Legal safeguards for promoting a welfare society.

Any other theme relevant to the Conference.

Please note the important deadlines below and send us your abstracts not exceeding 300 words. After receiving the confirmation email from the Institute regarding selected abstract, you are requested to send us the full paper, which should be around 5000-6000 words.

Important Deadlines:

Last date for receipt of abstracts (in PDF& doc file):	Sept. 10, 2022
Notification of selected abstracts through email:	Sept. 15, 2022
Last date of receipt of full paper (in PDF and doc. file):	Oct. 05, 2022
Language:	English

Register & Submit abstracts at: <https://forms.gle/2tqrufgkkqswUTwy9>

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