National Seminar on

Cultivating Social Trust for Inter-religious Peace and Harmony

Proposed Dates: 12 & 13 December, 2012
Venue : University of Madras

It is proposed by social theorists in recent times that social capital - the sum total of structures of social relationships a person or institution wields, produces in direct proportion the much valued social trust (Francis Fukuyama, Robert Putnam, Ashutosh Varshney and others). These structures stand for the face-to-face networks in concrete situations of everyday life. Social theorists distinguish between two major types of networks; one, ‘bonding’ networks, and the other ‘bridging’ networks. While bonding networks are those which bring together persons of the same identity and instil in them strong sense of homogenous community, bridging ones are those which bring together persons of different identities (religious, gender, language, region, etc) and cultivate social trust in an ambience of heterogeneous communities. It is this latter kind of networks which will foster substantive social trust so as to promote inter-religious peace and harmony in the society.

In view of generating research-based insights and plans of action centring round this theme of ‘social trust for inter-religious peace and harmony’, we are planning to organise a national conference on the theme: Cultivating Social Trust for Interreligious Peace and Harmony. As can be seen, the theme is a multi-disciplinary one involving religious studies, social theory, cultural theory, subaltern theory, media studies, etc.

Following are some topics proposed for the conference:

1. Clarifying the concept of social trust and social capital (Robert Putnam, Francis Fukuyama, Ashutosh Varshney and others)
2. Bonding and Bridging Face-to-face Networks and Generation of Social Trust
3. Inter-faith Initiatives as Bridging Networks
4. Re-visiting the Religious Teachings on Social Trust
5. Religions on Peace and Harmony
6. Religions and Violence: a Context-Sensitive Appraisal
7. Role of Rumours in Generation of Conflicts
8. Resisting Rumours through Bridging Face-to-face Networks
9. Associations of Multiple Identities and Nurturing of Vibrant Civil Society
10. Inter-cultural Dialogue for Social Trust
11. Peace Initiatives in a Global Era
12. Market Forces and Violence
13. Forces of Exclusion in the Global Era
14. Religions and Civil Society
15. Faith-based NGOs in the Civil Society
16. Resurgence of Religions and their Social Implications
17. Media and Violence

Paper Presenters:

There will be a key-note speaker, and a team of scholars to speak on some chosen themes. Besides these, research scholars are invited to make presentations on the basis of their researches on the above-mentioned themes or related themes. Those who wish to present papers are requested to send an abstract of 300 words to the e-mail id: gnanapatrick@gmail.com before 05 November 2012. Those selected will be required to send their papers by 05 December 2012. Selected papers will be published in the Indian Journal of Christian Studies with ISSN No: 2231-0835. Paper presenters will have to find their accommodation and travel expenses.