

### Procedures :-

- Ø Send a brief proposal not exceeding 300 words to (MuElon2025@gmail.com) by 15th December 2024.
- Ø The results of the selected papers will be notified by 23 rd December 2024.
- Ø Selected paper presenters must send their final paper by 10 th February 2024. Essays should not exceed 4,000 words.
- Ø Papers with clarity of thought, cogency of ideas, and critical reflections will be considered for publication in an edited volume / peer - reviewed journal post - conference.

### Registration :-

Registration forms will be sent after the selection of proposals and the fees for Paper Presenters will be :

- Ø Faculty from India and other SAARC countries Rs.1000/-
- Ø Students/Research Scholars from India and SAARC countries Rs.500/-
- Ø International Scholars other than SAARC countries USD 50/-
- Ø International Students other than SAARC countries USD 20/-
- Ø Participation certificate (if needed) Rs.100/-
- Ø Registration Fees are payable through a Demand Draft drawn in favour of 'The Registrar, University of Madras.' Registration format will be sent after the selection of proposals.

### **Convenor**

**Dr. JAMES PONNIAH**

Asst. Professor & Head i/c  
Dept. of Christian Studies  
University of Madras.

### **Coordinators**

**Dr. V. ULAGARAJA**

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### **Organising Secretary**

**Mr. P. KANAGARAJ**

PG Student  
Dept. of Christian Studies  
University of Madras.

### **Venue :-**

F50, Centenary Building,  
Chepauk Campus  
University of Madras,  
Chennai - 600 005.

**AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**ON**

**RELIGION AND CITIES**

**(HYBRID MODE)**

**ORGANIZED BY**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES,**

**UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS, INDIA**

**AND**

**THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION,**

**CULTURE, AND SOCIETY**

**ELON UNIVERSITY, USA**

**ON**

**11-12 MARCH 2025**



**ELON**  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF  
Religion, Culture,  
and Society

Religion and the city are often framed in contrastive fashion: the city is the site of the modern and the progressive; religion is the bearer of unchanging tradition. Urbanity facilitates cosmopolitan diversity as well as the untidy and squalid, while religions tend towards uniformity, homogeneity, and there liably formulaic. Authentic religion, such framings suggest, emanates from the rural, whether in the village, on mountaintops, or from the countryside. From other points of view, however, the city and religion are inseparable. Religious innovation spills out of urban sites, where crosscurrents meet and new forms emerge. Around temples grow cities. Religious institutions and actors flock to urban centers to address their inevitable inequalities and the corruption believed to pervade them. Religion and the city are both products and engines of globalization.

This conference draws from recent trends in scholarship that focus on burgeoning Indian cities as sites of contemporary religious practices (e.g. Chaudhuri 2022; Elison 2018; Moodie 2018; Srinivas, S. 2001; Srinivas, T. 2018). When India's urban centers began attracting attention as potential field sites in the late 1960s, early urban ethnographers were primarily interested in "how towns and villages oscillated along the 'continuum' of Indian civilization or functioned as opposed categories" (Clark-Decès 2011, 9). Cities represented modern, dynamic, and plural spaces while villages were understood as traditional, unchanging, caste-bound, and religious. This mutually reinforcing city/village dynamic persists in spite of broad changes that suggest a much more complicated reality. The population growth of rural India, for example, continues to surpass the rate of outmigration to urban centers (Jodhka 2023), and villages remain vibrant sites for the production of culture, community, environments, bodies, and persons (Mines and Yazgi, 2010). Globalization and urbanization contribute to the fashioning of locality as "complex

transformations that produce new spatial transformations" and defy urban/rural binaries (van der Veer 2015, 2). As urban sprawl reaches ever farther, migration continues to advance, and flows of people, goods, and ideas increasingly structure daily reality, the categories of "village" and "city" grow progressively more blurry. Indeed, as van der Veer puts it, "cities are not contained" (2015, 11), and yet the village remains powerfully present in the city, particularly in religious practices that may challenge but at least as often animate urban aspirations and self-fashionings.

This conference will examine the convergences between religion and the city and interrogate the complex and organic relationship between the two. Accepted proposals will not only deal topically with their subject matter but also contribute towards the theorization of urban religion.

#### **The objectives of the conference are :**

- To explore how religion shapes the city and the city shapes religion.
- To examine the contours and dynamics of urban religious formations as well as their relation to peri-urban and rural formations.
- To study both the institutionalized religions and lived religions of urban peoples.
- To explore both the public expressions and private practices of religions in Indian cities, including the celebratory and the spectacular dimensions as well as the quieter side of urban religion.
- To provide a platform for interdisciplinary study of urban religion that includes voices from fields such as sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and history.

- To surface global variation in the patterns of urban religious dynamics through international dialogue.

In promotion of these objectives, the conference invites papers representing a variety of methods and perspectives on urban religion, including (but not limited to) the following themes.

#### **Themes :**

1. *Urban innovations* – exploring cities as sites for religious and spiritual experimentation
2. *Urban Space and Sacred Place* – including studies of temple cities
3. *Site studies* – examining specific religious sites in urban settings or dynamics in a single city
4. *Texts* – studying such urban religious literature as *māhātmyas*, guidebooks, and tracts
5. *Material religions of the city* – exploring built spaces, architecture, the implications of urban planning and development projects, or religion and urban aesthetics
6. *Migrant urban religion* - examining the practices of newcomers to cities and their mutual influence on more established populations
7. *Urban processional and festival practices* – considering how festival performances map, sacralize, or lay claim to urban spaces and render religious celebrations in / accessible to particular communities
8. *Urban identities* – examining how religious groups shape and are shaped by urban spaces, the formation of religious selves in urban settings, or urban selves in religious settings
9. *Relationships across difference* – analyzing interreligious or intercommunal relations in urban settings
10. *Urban religion and social justice* – studying faith-based urban activism