

INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI

30th Anniversary Celebrations Programme

Three-day International Conference on

Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India - Creating a Better Tomorrow

February 16-18, 2018 at New Delhi (India)

APPROACH NOTE

The trajectory of march of civilisation and contribution of human race to it have always assumed vital importance. Creating a better tomorrow has acted as a concept, struggle, programme and objective for welfare. It is pertinent to point out that eastern civilisations and thought have given importance to human endeavour as man is the pivot of the whole dynamic of change and progress. Eastern terminology contains words like *hikmah* and *vivek* as the guiding instrumentality of change and progress. Man is endowed with this potential as a divine trait. History provides the story of struggle of man to create a better tomorrow and it satisfies his moral sense of contributing to development and establishment of society based on the principles of equality, justice and fraternity in society. This story indicates various methods and methodologies of change for achieving civilisational excellence through creating a better tomorrow. In this process, conclusions are also drawn about rate and degree of change and transformation. The pace and character of change have differed from time to time. Human effort to set things right is always appreciated and this contribution is recognised in this life and hereafter. Hence, creating a better tomorrow is important in all its aspects. Great souls are generally assessed on parameters designed around this truth. However, on the other side of the story, modern technological advancement has created a situation of imbalance by providing immense depth and speed to technology and its place in modern civilisation. It is influencing all walks of life and a gap is noticed between aspiration and performance. Present civilisation and, particularly eastern ways of thought and action, are under pressure. Hence, humanity has to think and act for establishing equality, justice and fraternity.

Besides the overall situation, contemporary Indian state of affairs is reflecting an acute challenge to its heritage of striving for peace and accommodation. It is difficult to cover the whole range of developments in one go. However, certain prominent trends are visible which certainly act as adverse trends against these valuable principles.

First and foremost, mobilisation of electorate on religious identity is being practised in an organised manner. There is ample evidence that democratic institutions are facing challenges in operating on the ground. Constitutional structure is under pressure and threat. These institutions, including the press, are being managed through administrative coercion and private business houses. TV channels are being purchased and honest journalists are being hounded out. Bureaucracy is being managed in more ways than one. The law and order situation is

deteriorating disturbing scales. Political interference in institutional functioning is the order of the day. Social media is being used to the maximum to divert public images and opinions. There are hard times and Indian democracy is facing new kinds of pressures and threats. In such a situation, struggle to save the present structure and ethos is really difficult and acute. However, India can also boast to have worked for democratic values for long, including its struggle for national independence. Due to that struggle, Indian masses are committed to constitutional values and to work towards equality, justice and fraternity in any situation of challenge to that true national spirit.

In a globalised environment, developments in India also call for serious thought and an action plan to establish constitutional values and sustain cultural heritage of this great civilisation. India as a civilisation has a tremendous past and a bright future. It is in continuum and there are certain features which have persistently been followed, including spirituo-moral obligations practised through all ages. No plan depicting change can flourish without these values. Hence, no present or future can be planned and pursued without these values. A better tomorrow cannot be perceived without values of Indian civilisation and philosophy. All sections of society in India have contributed to the growth of this civilisation and with the consent and participation of all stakeholders. Imposition of unjust codes will be repelled by people of India. No political mechanism can prove to be successful without these Indian values of tolerance and respect for each other. A better tomorrow would emerge from the womb of a balanced today. No tomorrow can be detached from its today. Hence, this generation will have to take up the challenges and strive hard to create a good and balanced present for creating a better tomorrow.

There are scores of favourable points as well provided we commit to create a better tomorrow. There are certain areas of concern, which are regulated through the governing system, market and civil society. All these are to be kept in balance and geared to welfare and well being of all sections of society, particularly those that are deprived, marginalised and weak. These institutions should work in harmony and create a favourable balance based on equality, liberty and fraternity. Justice, including social justice, should form the corner stone of planning and execution of policies. Representative character of these institutions must be ensured in all areas. Impact evaluation and assessment studies should form a part of scheme of things. These should also include monitoring mechanisms, which must create a balanced and reliable feedback. This would enhance the quality of governance that in turn may create a proper environment to take up the issues relating to the creation of a better tomorrow.

The Indian situation also demands proper thought and action plan to nurse federating units and regions. It is a vast country and the Founding Fathers had worked hard to provide adequate measures to protect and develop regional units of the Indian federation. The working of Indian federal system has shown that a cooperative federal system is the call of the times. Whenever this would suffer from ideological or administrative hegemonisation, it would harm itself in spirit and action. Results of such situations would be dangerous for the whole nation. Creation of a better tomorrow should also include goodwill and understanding among units. Such goals can never be achieved without working in harmony with federating units. Ideological overtones cannot create a harmonious environment for Centre-state relations. Secondly, Indian federal units are cultural units as well, based on language distinctions to a large extent. These cultures must be given proper space to flourish in their own style and fashion. Imposition of Hindutva would be dangerous for Indian federal system. Creation of a better tomorrow calls for care and caution to

deal with the federating units of the Indian state. A few of these states also have borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal etc. Dealing with foreign affairs is an exclusive domain of the Central government. Indian federating units, including North-East, are important and can influence politics in a big way. Sentimentalisation of foreign relations should be handled with a lot of care. A better tomorrow is part of such policies dealing with foreign relations and concerning border-states of the Indian federation. Peaceful and well-protected borders of states are vital to peace and prosperity of federating units. 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 vote is engineered in elections, particularly in the Hindi belt. 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. Muslims need a special enabling philosophy, policy and action plan. Muslim community will have to fight for its legitimate rights in a legal and democratic manner. Maybe, it will have to forge ties of cooperation and joint action with other similarly suffering sections of Indian society. There is a palpable concern in major marginalised groups on similar lines and Muslims should evolve a common strategy and a common minimum programme. However, the Hindutva forces look to be least bothered and continue their strategy of intimidation and use of violence as a tool to subjugate the opposition. Secondly, forces in power do not care to observe constitutional values or cultural traditions of India. 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 clear-cut objective and a manageable work plan.

In this context, rise and fall of civilisations has a great importance. India may take due credit in claiming consistency and continuity of its civilisational march. This aspect requires a serious effort to look into history of Indian civilisation and role of Muslims in its march. Quite a good number of works covering these aspects are available. However, new dimensions of historical evidence are to be added. The role of different communities, particularly Muslims, is important in creating a composite culture, which is sanctioned by Indian philosophy and tradition. Role and contribution of Muslim clergy, civil society and educational centres are praiseworthy. Islamic scholars and clergy have suffered and sacrificed their lives for the cause of India's freedom. To sum up, no strategy to work for creating a better tomorrow is possible without analysing history and judging actual trajectory of role of different sections of Indian society. Equality, freedom, social justice etc. may form the important segments of analysis.

In present context of a technologically globalised world, spaces are narrowed down to an amazing scale. These factors have provided tremendous speed to change and consequent adaptation. This struggle, is in turn, required to be able to select a path of creating a better tomorrow through adoption of basic civilisational values of augmenting equality, liberty and fraternity for creating a humane society at all levels. On the other side, modern civilisation is also facing immense challenges as it is confronting adverse situations dominated by all sorts of violence and disturbances. Humanity is groaning under immense pressure of exploitation, stress and use of power to kill in large numbers available to many nations. This paradox calls for sincere efforts to work for establishing these directional values and save humanity from endangering challenges. Equality, liberty and fraternity are hard earned values of human species. These are basic to existence. Technology and its effects on human civilisation are to be dealt with caution and care. These values are to be applied in all areas to create a better tomorrow. The present generation has an added responsibility to safeguard these values in proper proportion and perspective.

Another endangering phenomenon particularly in areas of foreign relations in this globalised world is imbalances in power relations among nations. There are multiple centres of power in modern world scenario. These centres are to be taken seriously and world leadership is under obligation to translate these values into practice to keep the torch of peace, prosperity and progress high. To sum up, these values are universal in their adoption and application. However, these cannot be left to chance or accident. Those who care for welfare and are eager to create a humane society should work in a planned and balanced manner to uphold these values. The globalised world is highly interdependent and relationship pattern does not depend on power struggle. International relations do require careful and safe handling. This provides a special and urgent opportunity to international institutions and organisations to augment efforts to fulfill their role. Equality, liberty and fraternity are universal values and do require to replace theories of power struggle to mutual cooperation to establish these values in areas of international relations. Multi-polarity of power balance requires careful handling and adoption of these universal values in the fields of international cooperation, peace and progress. International and regional institutions to support the ideals of peaceful coexistence do require synergy to come up to a level of practical utility for the poor, down-trodden and deprived. These values are universal in their application by UN agencies, continental and regional organisations like Organisation for African Unity, SAARC, ASEAN etc. Relevance of these ideals in the field of international relations is urgent and timely. However, intellectual input to place things in proper perspective is urgently needed.

The Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, to celebrate its **30th anniversary**, has already organised four conferences on the broader theme: **“Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India - Creating a Better Tomorrow”** with a particular theme for focus for each conference as given below:

S. No.	Date	Particular Theme for focus	Collaboration with	Place
1	5 November 2016	...Through Education	-	Constitution Club, New Delhi

2.	22-23 April 2017	...Through Law	Deptt. of English, Aliah University, Kolkata	Kolkata (W. Bengal)
3.	20-21 October 2017	...Through Islamic Studies	Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur	Jodhpur (Rajasthan)
4.	2-3 December 2017	...Through History	New College, Chennai	Chennai (T.N.)

The above four conferences have been successfully concluded with utmost appreciation of all concerned. Participation in these events has been remarkably good. A number of resolutions have been adopted in their deliberative sessions. The IOS is working to put these resolutions in proper perspective and try to implement them.

The Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, is to conclude the **30th anniversary celebrations programme** by organising the concluding **Three-day International Conference** on: **“Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India - Creating a Better Tomorrow”** on 16th, 17th and 18th February 2018 in New Delhi.

THEMES FOR BUSINESS SESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE ARE:

1. Ideational foundations of concepts of equality, justice and fraternity in the light of the Indian Constitution and UN concerns for minorities.

A. Indian Constitution:

Indian constitution is a living document reflecting wisdom and commitment of the founding fathers which is particularly evident in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. Equality, Justice and Fraternity are cornerstones of functioning of the total political structure which can easily be adjudged on this basis. Elements of promise and performance can be identified and studied easily. Basics of the Indian Constitution have to be analysed in the light of Constituent Assembly debates. Its fundamental character is to be ascertained in the same light.

B. UN and other Bodies' Concerns:

These elements are the main concerns of entire humanity. The growing realisation of importance of these values can be seen in a number of documents relating to UN agencies' functioning and performance. The character of minority rights forms a major part of details about UN concerns for protection of rights of minorities. In a way, protection of minorities is basic responsibility of UN and its agencies. A constant analysis of these aspects is needed in the matter so that a global environment may be created for creating synergy for fostering these values.

2. Role of religion in promotion of peace, equality, justice and fraternity.

A. Islam:

Religion claims to cover all aspects of life and hereafter. In this respect Islam gives in-depth insight into fundamental questions. Islam needs a constant effort to study and analyse its relevance to different modes and methods. Equality, justice and fraternity form part of basics of religion. This has immensely contributed to the growth of civilisational parameters and direction of human effort. These aspects need consistent efforts to study and analyse religion, particularly Islam.

B. Other religions, including Hinduism:

Most other religions, including Semitic and Indian ones also emphasise these aspects. However, there are diverse opinions about these values. Some religions may believe in hierarchy of groups and their placement on different basis. Questions relating to these values are sharp in regard to these religions. Nevertheless, presence of these values should be studied in all aspects in other religions as well.

3. Patterns and agents of change in different sets, including public health, technology and development models.

A. Public health:

Recognisable change is one of most prominent features of the present-day world. Advancement in technology has created a new paradigm to look into matters of thought and action. Public health in this scenario is assuming new dimensions. The role of state, society and market have to be considered seriously, but no relief to humanity is possible without including equality, justice and fraternity as core values. The cornerstone of excellence of functioning of the system is to assess the quantum and speed of change. Development must be viewed in the context of observance of equality, justice and fraternity. Inclusion of the downtrodden is called for and everybody should participate in the process. An enabling environment has to be created and made available to all sections.

B. Technology and development:

One of the most impressive aspects of modern times is the sets of change in all walks of life due to progress in technology. It is a well recognised fact that growth should not be confused with development. Development covers all aspects of human life and all members of human species. There is no denying the fact that technology has covered all major sectors and influenced human thought and action patterns. However, equality, justice and fraternity has to be applied in full measure to areas of technology and models of development.

4. Role of values of equality, justice and fraternity influencing the contours of international relations.

A. Indian foreign policy:

In this age of progress in areas of ITC in the back drop of globalisation, conduct of foreign relations has acquired immense value. Nobody can exist or progress in isolation.

Framing and conduct of foreign policy in India is important and whole system is conscious of this fact. Our geographical position also brings additional advantages and value to Indian foreign policy. This is a vast area and India may be credited to have worked hard in this field. India's position in regional, continental and global context is important and complicated. Furthermore, India believes in having certain principles and notions in its foreign policy right from the very beginning. This makes the situation difficult and complicated. Nevertheless, India has cognitive and normative commitment to practise principles of equality, justice and fraternity in Indian foreign policy.

B. Dominant patterns in international relations:

International relations are vital in more ways than one. This is multi-polar world and there is a need for a constant balance to be maintained. The power to kill millions available at different centres has made the situation extreme and vulnerable. International organisations are not having proper power and position to control the situation. These are reduced to discussion forums without having effective power and functional mechanism. Any bad player or even terror groups may create havoc for the humanity. This area also needs to observe principles of equality, justice and fraternity with commitment.

5. Role of national and international law in modern day globalised world with reference to equality, justice and fraternity.

A. National legal system:

The role of legal system in national context is important to achieve equality, justice and fraternity. The Indian Constitution through its Preamble commits itself to observe ideals of equality, justice and fraternity in India. Arrangements to deliver are in place and the judiciary is made custodian of these principles. The system is impressive on paper. However, it has developed many shortcomings and can be reduced to a position of weak and ineffective institution. These questions need thorough inquiry and analysis. The system needs to be free from impediments. Such questions have attracted the attention of all concerned. The executive has to be watched in its designs and actions.

B. International law in the age of globalisation:

The international relations take into account a multipolar world. A proper balance has to be maintained. Any haste or imbalance in approach, policy or action would create an unprecedented situation. The next war would be the end of war as the whole globe would be destroyed. Hence, this area is of immense potential and has to be balanced with proper caution and care. All national, regional and international institutions and organisations need to work in unison. Principles of equality, justice and fraternity are essentially needed.

6. Placement and role of higher education in bringing about a universal family.

A. National scenario:

Education in general and higher education in particular are prominent in the context of peace and progress. The Indian scene in education covers a wide range and in this regard, the Education Commission Report spells major details about Indian education system. This can be the starting point to consider the educational scene in India. Working of an

educational institution also calls for review and improvement. Government has to give better financial support to this sector. However, principles of merit and excellence are to be properly linked with issues of equality justice and fraternity. National aspirations should be looked from the perspective of education for all. Minorities are to be protected in this field with sincerity and goodwill. Furthermore, education has to be seen in the light of mitigating gender gap in different fields and gender justice is to be kept in mind.

B. Internationalisation of education creating a universal family:

Education has assumed importance as a means to creating a universal family. Humanity has taken advantage of education as a method to bring people together. An added factor of making things easy is technological input. There is a big market for ideas and ideals to be propagated. However, a better tomorrow can be envisaged through opportunities to internationalise education and bringing people together to understand and fight for issues. Now the principles of equality, justice and fraternity are vital in their application in creating a universal family.

7. Character and role of media in fostering values of equality, justice and fraternity.

A. National media including regional media:

Media is a wide term, which includes local, regional and national media as well as net-based media. This has made its character complex and sometimes intriguing. For instance, a news appears at local level, is magnified with its reference at higher levels of media. Fake news, motivated news and features are every day incidents. Electronic media, including social media is playing havoc as it is being used as a means of mobilising vote. Another worrisome feature is creation of unrealistic images in the minds of common people. In India, this mode and method of media is being practised at a large scale. Stories of rise and fall of governments are depicted through media in a big way. In this field also the principles of equality, justice and fraternity are to be observed with and a sense of responsibility.

B. International media:

In a globalised world, information and image building are being practised through print and electronic media. Intellectuals are being roped in for their views and comments on matters of politics, economy, international relations etc. Flow and availability of news and information are regulated by experts to foster desired image building of politicians. Here also principles of justice, equality and fraternity are applicable.

8. Economic development and elimination of poverty: Role of these values

A. National scene:

Striking questions relate to economic development and elimination of poverty in the context of national development. These areas are full of complications as extensive exploitation is rampant in these fields. Growth and distribution patterns are to be balanced on the principles of welfare of society. Economic development in national context calls for equal opportunity to all and major decisions to overcome poverty and unemployment. Concentration of wealth must not be allowed in few hands. Distribution of wealth has to be a major concern of the process of development. The whole of

humanity is to enjoy the benefits of wealth generation and development. Inclusion of moral values is the foundation stone of economy. These sectors are prominently related to common man and call for care and caution. Principles of equal opportunities and common welfare are to be applied with a marked sense of responsibility. India may claim a special position in this area as its Constitution provides justicable guarantees for equal opportunities to all. Rule of law has to be applied in all situations.

B. International commitments:

This area is important in the context of behavior of international organisations and agencies. These are related to international commitments. A number of agencies are active. But primary complication comes when territorial jurisdiction of the national state clashes with international commitments. There should be serious effort to resolve the issue of jurisdiction and mutual respect and effort for elimination of poverty. This area needs serious effort to identify steps to resolve the problems so that India could aspire for creating a better tomorrow.

9. Any other items related to above themes.

Interested members of academia, legal fraternity, bureaucracy, civil society, policy-making bodies and other scholars and public-spirited persons are invited to submit research papers on any of the above-mentioned themes and cooperate in this academic endeavour.

Important Dates:

Last date for submission of abstracts (in pdf & doc file)	January 22, 2018
Notification of acceptance/rejection of abstracts	January 30, 2018
Last date for submission of full paper (in pdf and doc. File)	February 07, 2018

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