

INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI

Under its

30th Anniversary Celebrations Programme

Organizing

Two-day Seminar on

**“Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India – Creating
a Better Tomorrow through History”**

In collaboration with

The New College, Chennai

On

2-3rd December, 2017

APPROACH NOTE

The march of humanity testifies that man has always striven for creating a better tomorrow. Rise and fall of civilisations primarily indicate various methods and methodologies of change for achieving a better tomorrow. Hence, it has constituted an idea, ideal, programme and aspirations of man in all ages. Rate and degree of change have differed from time to time. This degree in kind and character has accelerated its speed due to adverse application of technology in modern times. This phenomenon has created a situation of alarm as humanity has already created unimaginable strength and potential to kill and destroy itself. There are quarters which believe that this situation may be detrimental to the use of such power. However, it does not spell out all dangers. Human mind and intentions cannot be predicted accurately. Hence it is highly opportune to think about these issues and create a balanced view. We need to have clear-cut directional projections. This direction cannot come through technology alone. One needs guidance from human soul and 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 in 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 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 someone commits and tries to create a better tomorrow. There are certain tested 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 a 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 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 good will and understanding among units. Such elements 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 Hindi and 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 form part of Indian borders with countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, 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 within their own distinct ethos. Consequently, these units require to enjoy 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 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 good will 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 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.

The Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, is organising a seminar on "Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India -- Creating a Better Tomorrow through History" on 2-3rd December, 2017 at Chennai in collaboration with The New College, Chennai. The organisers are conscious of the need to do justice to the theme and delve into all important aspects in detail objectively. All those who contribute would be doing a great service to humanity.

The following would be main themes for Business Sessions:

- 1. Indian Historiography: Methods, objectivity and the capability to shape perception**
- 2. Civilisational contours of ancient Indian history**
- 3. Nature and character of state and society during Middle Ages of Indian history**
- 4. First war of independence and the Indian masses**
- 5. Liberation struggle: Character and expanse**
- 6. Contributions of Muslims to Independence struggle with special reference to Muslim clergy**
- 7. Status and role of Indian Muslims in nation-building**