



An  
International Seminar  
on

**PEACE AND PROGRESS: ROLE OF RELIGIONS**

Organized by  
INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI  
IN COLLABORATION WITH  
THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY,  
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH  
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Etymologically **peace** stands for freedom from civil disorder. However, one may understand it as a socio-political environment shared by human beings of all orientations living together in harmony with security from any form of violence and conflict. Peace may also be characterized by non violence and relationships based on equal respect, dignity, justice and goodwill towards each other. The term **progress** stands for a positive change in the life of an individual or society which is better than the earlier levels. One of the most influential contemporary contributions to thinking about progress is Amartya Sen's "capabilities approach". According to this approach, people should be free to make choices influencing their own lives and the lives of others. "Capability" refers to the freedom to promote and achieve valuable functioning of human society in order to provide health, education, economic prosperity and happiness. The goal of progress is development of human wellbeing that includes material as well as spiritual aspects.

Religion/Faith is an integral ingredient of human beings. Everyone has her/his faith and those who declare that they have no faith, also have faith in their faithlessness. The religion is the prime source of universal human values but the fact remains that these values have historically been manipulated causing conflicts. The religion is a cohesive force and should ensure peace and progress as no religion preaches hatred and conflict. Even a cursory look at the basic tenets of different religions reveals that every religion cherishes peace. Hindu prayers end with *shanti-paath*. The word *Islam* has been derived from the root '*slm*' in Arabic language which means peace. Islam therefore means the way of life to attain peace. The followers of Islam submit to the will of Allah in all humility. This submission to the will of Allah means abhorrence to one's ego, enmity and violence. While Christianity propagates love, charity and good neighborly relations, Sikhism is based on three basic tenets i.e., *Nam japo Kirat karo* and *vand chhako* which means *Zikr*, Work and eating by sharing (*langar*). Jainism has five basic tenets and these are; *achauryam* (do not steal), *abhyam* (do not be afraid of), *asteyam* (simple living), *aprigrah* (non accumulation of wealth) and

*ahimsa* (non-violence). Buddhism propagates non-violence care for the downtrodden and peace. Buddhists believe in nirvana i.e. end of all the suffering.

Thus peace is an all pervasive concern of all the religions but the fact remains that there have been intra-faith and inter-faith conflicts throughout the world. No religion can claim that it is amorphous and there are no internal differences. Peace accelerates pace of progress and conflicts decelerate it. The experience shows that communities create social and economic infrastructure and a single conflict destroys it and pushes the community to the original level of deprivation. The basic question is where religion per se is the cause of conflict or the cause of conflict lies in the social, economic and political competition and religion is manipulated to justify conflict.

This seminar assumes that religions play a very positive role in establishing peace and promoting progress. The main aim of this seminar is to establish that the religious teaching and guidance are highly compatible with peace and enhance material, moral and spiritual progress of individuals, groups, societies nations and ultimately the world. The seminar may also explore the violence and conflicts caused by ideologies outside the religions. The states and individuals enter into conflict due to ego and not due to differences in the faiths. The participants may also evaluate the causes of contemporary political, economic and social conflicts in the contemporary world.

**Sub-Themes of the Seminar:**

1. The Role of Religion in Society : View points of thinkers / Social Scientists
2. Peace and Progress: Concept of these two elements in Islam / Hinduism / Christianity / Buddhism / Sikhism / Jainism / Judaism etc.
3. A comparative study of religions in the Modern and Postmodern perspective and concept of Peace and Progress.
4. Sources of Conflicts: Genesis and Intervention.
5. Peace and Progress under Muslim Rules: Past and Present.
6. A comparative study of religious and non-religious wars: Historical Perspectives.
7. History of Terrorism: Reasons and Causes, Modes and Magnitude.
8. Religious approaches towards weapon of mass destruction (WMD)
9. Any other topic relevant to the theme

The prospective contributors are requested to submit their abstract by 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2012 and the complete paper by 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2012.