

Research Scholars' Conference

Centre for the Study of Comparative Religions & Civilisations,
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Studying Religions in South Asia: Multidisciplinary
Perspectives**

Asia has been the birth place of diverse religious faiths; Hinduism's genesis in the Vedic period was followed by the emergence of Śramanic traditions, viz., Buddhism and Jainism. The religious milieu was further enriched during the medieval period by the appearance of Islam, and other sectarian traditions within what is now known as Hinduism—Bhakti, Tantra and Agama—besides the mushrooming of multiple regional cultures. Later, the Semitic religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism further added to the complexity of the religious and cultural milieu. However, despite the major role that religion has played in moulding the Asian identity, the study of religion has not found a place of prestige and sound footing in the Indian academia.

Religious ideas, doctrines, practices, discourses, institutions, etc., are seldom static and are subject to continuous processes of change and evolution; more so in societies that are plural. The problem of studying religions in a pluralistic society thus remains one of the most importunate desiderata of scholarship in the annals of South Asian religious traditions. This is particularly legitimate for historical and sociological researches on religions, where the bottom line is, that scholars – with a few noteworthy exceptions – have often ignored to view religions as a cultural and civilisational phenomenon, most intimately linked to the people and culture as a whole. The unravelling of such aspects of any religion is admittedly a stupendously complex task than mere chronicling of religious doctrines, events and activities. And it is precisely in this regard that this conference would attempt and hope to force and formulate new ways of thinking in the field of South Asian religions, *sans* loosing contact with the linkages between history, education and contemporary social-political problems.

The conference, 'Studying Religions in South Asia: Multidisciplinary Perspectives' hopes to demonstrate that religion in a plural society like India matters more than it meets the eye. Studying religion is not just one of the diverse aspects of culture to be taken up casually or when convenient, but is fundamental to the historical understanding of our cultural identity; may serve as a roadmap to alleviate social, cultural and environmental problems and to find resolutions to the challenges faced by culturally plural societies. The study of religion should be made a basis for the interpretation of Asia's cultural history. Today our understanding of religions is hijacked by an extreme form of fundamentalist interpretations. Earnest and objective academic investigations must be carried out so as to foreclose and dispel misrepresentations and misinterpretations of religious concepts and ideas.

Today when the phenomena of studying religions has aggressively returned to the agenda of world affairs, exploring the multi-faceted aspects of religious traditions in a multicultural, pluralistic society, by employing the tools, methodologies, theories and techniques, developed across multiple disciplines is more than merely a matter of curiosity or academic augmentation, for *sensu stricto* it impinges on the way in which current realities are being constructed, projected and comprehended.

One of the concerns of this conference is its interdisciplinary context. Studying religions with a multidisciplinary approach will help to create a healthy dialogue between diverse faiths and offer scholarship and provide insight into newer ways of perceiving and understanding religions in South Asia in general and India in particular.

Conference Themes:

Archaeology of Religion

Historical Perspectives on Religion

Methodologies and Theories for the Study of Religion

Oral Cultures and Tribal Religions

Practices and Discourses

Philosophy of Religion

Pilgrimage: Concepts, Centres, Historical and Cultural Practices
Religion and Politics
Recovery, Conservation and Preservation of Religious Sites
Religion and Civilizational Dialogue
Religion and Ecology
Religion and Ethics
Religion and Ethnicity
Religion and Gender
Religion and Media
Religion and Trade
Religion, Art and Architecture
Religion, Conflict and Peace
Religion, Ritual and Symbolism
Religious Communities: Continuities, Adaptations and Transformations
Religious Identity: Faith and Negotiation
Religious Pluralism
Religious Trends and Patterns of Life in South Asia
Sacred Texts and Literature
Sociology of Religion

Venue: Jamia Millia Islamia

Dates: 24 - 25 October 2013

Note: Mail your Abstracts by 7th October 2013 at:
conference.csrc@gmail.com

Kindly mention your full name, academic and institutional references (viz., Name, Research degree registered for, academic institution registered at)