

**Report of**  
**The UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair**  
**for**  
**Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue**  
**2017-2018**

**4 July'17** - The activities were initiated for the year 2017-2018 with an *Iftaari* celebration, which is a grand feast marked by the end of the Ramadan season. On this day, students went on an excursion to Muhammad Ali Road.

**7 July'17** - An Orientation session was conducted for the first year students to familiarize them with the activities of the Chair.

**September '17** Various outings were also organized with enthusiasm. On the occasion of the feast of the Nativity of Mother Mary students of all faiths visited Mount Mary Basilica to honor the Mother of God in prayerful adoration. Students also visited Ganapati pandals and Durga Devi pandals on the occasion of the Navratri festival.

**10 September'17** - A Quiz competition was held with multiple-choice-type questions based on religion and culture. The competition was stiff with all teams vying for the first position.

**15 September '17** - There was a screening of the film *Ghazi Attack*. The film was critically analyzed and issues like Nationalism were discussed. *Tiger Zinda Hai* was also screened.

**21 September '17** The department set up *Strings of Peace* - to promote peace and harmony among different religions and cultures. The students wore peace bracelets and tied colourful strings on the wrists of all those who came to college. The bracelets signified the need for all of humanity to treat each other as friends, brothers and sisters.

**8 January'17** *Turn Coat* Competition was held on the topic "The Indian Education System Fosters Religious Harmony". The competition was a precursor to the International symposium *The Role of Education to Foster Religious Harmony*. Students from all over India sent in their papers. These were assessed for quality and the ability of the participant to make a convincing argument with regards to their stand on the subject. The winners of the grand prize were Ms. Prajakta Vibhute of Mithibai College, Ms. Arundhati Chakraborty of St. Stephens College, Delhi, and Md. Saqlain Jameel, of MES Degree College, Bengaluru. All these myriad competitions helped in understanding the core and evolution of religions.

**9 January'18** An elocution competition was arranged on the subject, “India needs to be more Casteless than Cashless”. The participants debated on the current situation in India as well as the world.

**10 January '18** The department held a guest lecture by Dr. Sr. Teresa Joseph on the theme, ‘The Role of Education to Foster Religious Harmony’. Later this was taken up as the topic for the Cardinal Paul Poupard Conference.

**12 January' 18** A presentation competition was organized on the *Temples of India* for the students.

**13 January '18** A field visit to Shree Naryani Dham temple & Aga Khan Palace was organized.

Prof. Sharmila Dhote looks after the activities of the UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Chairs

**30 January '18** - The International Conference - ‘The Role of Education to Foster Religious Harmony’ provided a platform for discussing modern day issues with religious significance. The Chief Guest for the conference was H.E. Cardinal Oswald Gracias and he delivered the Presidential address. Mr. Harsh Mander, an activist, who works with survivors of mass violence and hunger, as well as homeless persons and street children was the Keynote Speaker at the Conference. He is also the Director of the Centre for Equity Studies.

Marco Cardelli, National Youth Coordinator from the Focolare Movement raised issues that the young faced. Mr. Jehangir Patel, Editor of the magazine Parsiana – touched on the matter of ‘Resolving Religious Differences in Communities’. Dr. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas, the Ex-Principal of St. Xavier’s College discussed Education from a Principal’s Perspective. Sameera Khan, Journalist and Researcher focused on ‘What are Our Children Learning – The Role of Parents’. Carol Andrade, Journalist and Director of SPICE deliberated on the ‘Success and Failure of Inspiring Leaders to overcome Religious Conflict’

This was followed by a Panel discussion moderated by Mr. Dilip D’Souza. Our student, Mikael D’Souza too was part of the discussion. The vote of thanks was given by Fr. Magi Murzello. The yearly journal was also released during the session.

## **Diploma Course**

A diploma course on Religion, Society, Peace and Dialogue was initiated in 2014, approved by the University of Mumbai. This course has enabled students to gain insight into the pluralism of India's religious diversity along with the teachings, customs, ethnicities, rituals and feasts and recent developments across several religions athwart the globe. It inculcates different values in students, the means to tolerate other religions, update their knowledge by working toward nation building and playing a transformational role to be ambassadors of peace in the national integration of the country.

There are two core papers and one elective paper.

### **1. Core Papers:**

- ✓ Religion and Society: Study of Indian Religions – Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism-
- ✓ Religion and Society: Study of Indian Religions - Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity.

### **2. Electives**

- ✓ The 'Golden Rule' as Basis for Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue.

In 2014-15 thirty students registered for the course. In 2015-16 twenty-three students registered for the course and in 2016-17 nineteen students registered for the course.

For the year 2017-18 fifteen students have enrolled for the diploma course. They completed their praxis hours by participating in different activities that are organized by the Cardinal Poupard Paul Chair. Alongside the core papers, the students were given an orientation on 'how to do research' as research skills are emphasized as an essential part of the programme. These skills include fundamental methodologies such as a discussion of ethics, data gathering and management, and critical approaches to the assessment of this data. This ensures that the students can provide a rounded approach in terms of their approach to the study as well as their analysis.

Dr. Vatika Sibal is in-charge of the Diploma course.

Previously, five students in the academic year 2015-2017 completed the course by appearing for the papers and submitting their dissertations.

In order to make teaching and learning an interesting experience, students are part of a praxis programme. It helps to link knowledge with everyday life and

broaden their horizon with visits to religious places, and be involved in debates and discussion. At the end of the course the students will have to present a dissertation of around 4000 words.

### **Post Graduate Diploma Course**

“Water for Sustainable Development” was the theme selected for the post-graduate diploma course. This course is run in collaboration with St. Andrew’s College, Institute of Indian Culture and Nirmala Niketan Institute. The course is conducted at Nirmala Niketan. Dr. Fr. S.M. Michael, Professor, Institute of Indian Culture delivered a few lectures along with other faculty members and the funds for running the course is provided by St. Andrew’s College, through the Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation.

The inauguration of UNESCO course took place on 9 August 2017 Cardinal Oswald Gracias was the Chief Guest at the Inauguration programme. The welcome address was given by Dr. Gracy Fernandes Programme Convener and Vice President, Nirmala Niketan Institute. Dr. Marie Fernandes, Principal, St. Andrews College, explained the genesis of the Cardinal Paul Poupard and UNESCO Chair and the various Conferences and activities that are organized under its banner. The introduction to the programme was given by Dr. Fr. S.M. Michael. His Eminence, Cardinal Oswald Gracias delivered the Inaugural Address and the Vote of Thanks was done by Dr. Lidwin Dias, Principal, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan.

Dr. Ronald Yesudhas was the main teacher for the paper titled “Sustainable Development and Alternative Energy”. Classes for this paper were held from 13 October to 15 December 2017. The topics covered in this paper included Environment, Conservation Science, Environmental Law and Policy, Theories on Development, Concepts in Ecological Economics, Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Sustainable Future. Resource persons invited for this paper were Sabeena Gonsalves, Nikhil Chavan, Maryam Agarbattiwala, and Albin Thomas. Students submitted their assignment on 28 February 2018. Assessment of the completed assignments of students was done by Ronald Yesudhas. Mark sheet of this paper was submitted to Mr. Elvis Thomas, Coordinator of the Course.

Report of Water, Governance and Development was handled by Ms Roshni Louis Alphanso an Assistant Professor at College of Social work, the following sub topics were dealt with in detail.

1. Introduction to Water
2. Gender and Water
3. Environmental Hazards and Water

4. Laws and Schemes related to Water
5. Role of NGOs in issue of water
6. Water and urban crisis
7. Agriculture, water resource and suicides
8. Water management practice

Seventeen students registered for the session. The objective of the facilitator was to orient the students to the reality about water, Governance and Development and to understand the magnitude of the issue. It also encouraged them to think of alternatives to remedy the situation. The facilitator tried to bring in the rural as well as the urban perspective.

The group seemed to be very enthusiastic and interested in the subject. Various interactive methods were used to create better learning situations than classic lectures. The session was a mixture of different methods such as case study discussion, short films, power point presentations and lecture method. An attempt was also made to analyze some acts and regulations of the government pertaining to water and ecology.

The first module on 'Inter Religious Faith Dialogue on Water', will be taken by Dr. Fr. S.M. Michael in the month of August 2018 and the final module which will be the Project work, will be done by Dr. Lidwin Dias in the month of September, 2018.

The projects will be in the form of a scholarly paper on a topic selected by the students. It will consist of a minimum of 30 pages.

After the end of the first batch the College would like to continue the Course, this could later be developed into a self-financing course with accreditation by the University of Mumbai.

The Course Coordinator, Prof. Elvis Thomas, Associate Professor, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, is in charge of the course.