

CALL FOR PAPERS

The two-day International Conference on Faith and Contemporary Reproductive Practices: Ethical Dilemmas in Religious Traditions invites academicians, researchers, scholars, and practitioners to submit original, unpublished papers relevant to the conference themes. Submissions may take the form of empirical research papers, conceptual frameworks, case studies, or policy analyses.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Abstract Specifications: Submissions must not exceed 250–300 words.
- Required Information: The abstract must include the paper title, author name(s), institutional affiliation, email address, and 3–5 keywords.
- Deadline for Abstract Submission: August 10, 2026
- Submission to: fcprpethics26@gmail.com
- Notification of Acceptance: August 15, 2026 (Following an expert peer review panel evaluation)

REGISTRATION

Registration fees for the Paper Presenters will be as follows

Category	Fee
Faculty from India & SAARC	₹2,000
Students / Research Scholars	₹1,000
International Scholars	US \$ 100
International Students	US \$ 50
Participation Certificate	₹200

Registration Fee is payable through a Demand Draft drawn in favour of 'The Registrar, University of Madras.'

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Faith and Contemporary Reproductive Practices: Ethical Dilemmas in Religious Traditions

JOINTLY ORGANISED BY

Department of Christian Studies,
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Madras



&



Department of Philosophy
Madras Christian College

09th & 10th September 2026



CONCEPT NOTE

In recent years, India has witnessed a rapid and substantial expansion of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) centers focusing on In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), gestational surrogacy (third-party reproduction), uterine transplantation (UTx), cryopreservation, and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. The commercial use of ART was shaped by human capital theory and bio-power adopted by bodies to bio economic circuits. The technical disarticulation of the body perfectly worked with the kind of subject that the neoliberal society created. According to recent market analysis by Prabhu and Rao (2023), India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing global markets for Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). The fertility industry is currently valued at over USD 1.5 billion (exceeding earlier projections of USD 700 million) and is expected to grow exponentially due to rising infertility rates, increasing societal acceptance, and rapid advancements in reproductive medicine. This expansion should not be viewed merely as a trend among urban elites. Instead, ART has begun to penetrate semi-urban and rural contexts, creating a complex intersection of medical promise, market dynamics, and the vernacular religious expectations of everyday practitioners.

In the case of gestational surrogacy, unlike the traditional surrogacy, the embryo is created through IVF and later is transferred into the womb of the surrogate mother. The embryo can be created by using the sperm and egg from the couple, from donors, or from one partner and a donor. Hence the surrogate mother has no genetical connection with the newborn baby, and she plays a mere gestational role. Because of all these possible combinations, it is easy to understand why surrogacy has created many moral, social, legal, economic, cultural and religious concerns. Here, the traditional model of family ties is called into question, and surrogacy urges us to reconsider our understanding of what parenthood is.

This rapid growth brings a host of ethical, spiritual, and social challenges, particularly within a religiously diverse and socially stratified society like India. According to Henk ten Have and Bert Gordijn (2014), the rise of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) forces a confrontation between modern scientific intervention and traditional views on the beginning of life, the commodification of the human body, and the role of technology in procreation. Van Hollen (2003) argues that these issues are heightened in the Indian context, where kinship, fertility, and family honor are deeply interwoven with religious and cultural identity. The increasing use of these technologies has challenged the legitimacy of traditional religious frameworks and values. The rise of these technologies has undermined the standing of traditional religious institutions and principles. The lived experience of these technologies often involves a negotiated faith, where individuals reconcile clinical procedures with local rituals, such as seeking auspicious timings (Muhurat) for embryo transfers or offering prayers at shrines for the success of an IVF cycle.

Scholars have often investigated the practice of ART's, reflecting on both its negative and positive sides. However, they often neglect the actual context in which it works in a contemporary globalized world. Assisted Reproductive Technology in India had to face many obstacles, including misconceptions, ignorance, and religious and cultural resistance. Religious communities in India are increasingly confronted not only with the social stigma of infertility but also with complex ethical, moral, and spiritual questions regarding the use of these technologies. While institutional bodies like the magisterium of the Catholic Church or Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) councils have offered doctrinal positions, as George (2020) claims, the lived reality of practitioners often reveals a more fluid engagement with faith. Beyond the Christian and Islamic perspectives, we must account for Dharmic traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) where concepts of Karma, Vamsa (lineage), and Dharma (duty) play a central role in how technology is embraced or resisted. In many Indian homes, the “sacred” and “technological” occupy the same space where a lab-grown embryo is still viewed through the lens of divine blessing or karmic fruition. Reproductive regulation—which includes both the prevention and termination of pregnancies—poses new moral dilemmas for religious institutions across the board. While many childless couples view reproductive technologies as a miraculous solution to infertility, these advancements also raise profound questions regarding the origin of human life, the nature of the soul, the role of the divine across diverse spiritual landscapes.

The fluid and redefined notions of marriage in modern and postmodern contexts—which often lack an inherent orientation toward fertility and progeny—tend to foster an increased reliance on assisted reproductive technologies (ART), such as IVF, to fulfill the desire for children. Riessman (2000) argues that infertility continues to carry significant social stigma in India, particularly for women. In many communities, a woman's identity, social standing, and marital stability remain closely tied to her ability to conceive.

While IVF and related technologies offer hope and healing to many couples, they also introduce complex moral dilemmas. These include the commodification of life—where eggs, sperm, and embryos are treated as marketable products—embryo disposal, the use of donor gametes, and surrogacy arrangements that often involve economically vulnerable women. These concerns are amplified by the intersection of religion with Gender, Class, and Caste. For instance, the use of gestational surrogates—often from economically vulnerable backgrounds—raises questions about the ethics of the body and how marginalized women use religious narratives of sacrifice or God's will to make sense of their labor.

Furthermore, as Cahill (1996) claims, the separation of reproduction from the sexual union raises deeper anthropological and theological questions regarding the integrity of the procreative act within religious and Christian moral frameworks. This international seminar seeks to provide a space for critical, multi-faith, ecumenical, and interdisciplinary dialogue on these ART-related issues. It invites theologians, philosophers, ethicists, economists, medical professionals, legal experts, researchers, students and practitioners from diverse religious backgrounds to reflect on how religious ethics engage with these pressing issues.

The goal is to move toward contextual religious solutions that reflect the actual lives of believers. For scholars of all traditions, the seminar offers a venue to present pastorally sensitive and culturally grounded responses that affirm the dignity of the human person within a rapidly changing reproductive landscape.

Subthemes may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) in the Neoliberal Globalized World
- Religious and cultural prohibitions against surrogacy
- Fertility Clinics and the Ethics of Medical Practice
- Creating Life in the Lab: Religious Views on Reproduction
- God as sole Author of life and Theology of ART
- Faith and the Embryo: Moral Questions from Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and other religious Traditions
- Between Clinic and Temple: How Patients Balance Faith and Fertility Treatment
- IVF, Surrogacy, and Religion: Navigating the Third Space
- Gender, Class, Caste, Fertility Access and Religion as Moral Compass
- Prayer, Vows, and Astrology in Modern Fertility Treatment
- Interfaith dialogue on Fertility: Finding common moral ground to uphold Human dignity.
- Church Teachings on IVF: Catholic, Protestant, and Ecumenical Perspectives
- State, Religion, Legal and Public Policy questions related to ART
- Religious and Christian responses to ART in migrant/transnational contexts
- The Global Fertility Industry and Religious Ethical Discernment in Transnational Market

Mode of Conference:

- In Hybrid Mode (Online mode only for international participants and presenters)