

## **FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**Theme: The Family at the Threshold of the Twenty First Century**

**Dates: August 6 -10, 1997**

**Venue: SERFAC, Chennai 600 048. India.**

### **PREAMBLE**

0.1. The Fifth International Conference for the Family was held at SERFAC, Chennai, India under the auspices of the **SERVICE AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF ASIA ON FAMILY AND CULTURE** (SERFAC) from August 6-10, 1997. 65 participants from 12 countries focussed on the theme, "**THE FAMILY AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY**".

0.2 SERFAC which is an autonomous, nonprofit and non-governmental organization while celebrating its tenth anniversary of service to the Family had the unique privilege of inaugurating and holding the Fifth International Conference in its newly constructed premises at 140, Manimangalam Road, Vara-darajapuram, Chennai-600 048. India

0.3 This International Conference was the fifth in a series organized to create global awareness of the situations affecting the family. The first of the series held in 1983 had the theme "The Family at the Service of Human Life". The Second International Congress in 1984 reflected on "The Family in a Technological Society", and the Third Congress held in 1986 focussed on various aspects of "Family and Culture".

0.4. The Fourth International Congress held in 1991 studied the theme "Family, Builder of a New Society" This Congress took into consideration contemporary global crises affecting the Family. Recognizing the role of science and technology for the process of modernization, the congress also took stock of the impact of these processes on the **Family**. Taking note of these situations the Congress challenged the participants to give to the Family its unique role in the Building Up of A New Society.

0.5 In keeping with spirit of the earlier Congresses, the Fifth International Conference focussed on the resources inherent in the **Family**. These resources when recognised and integrated would form the foundation of family life and relationships as we move into the Twenty first Century.

## **1. The Fifth International Conference on Family.**

1.0 The conclusions of these four earlier congresses offered a springboard for the deliberations on the key issues of the Fifth International Conference. Further more, the purpose of this conference was to concentrate on offering alternatives, insights and possible solutions and creating a platform for action on behalf of the Family.

1.1. Recognizing the all pervading presence of God, the Conference was held in an atmosphere of plurality of faith traditions

1.2. the necessity of peace and harmony in our world today the Prince of Arcot Nawab Mohammad Ali on behalf of SERFAC. launched the **FAMILIES FOR PEACE MOVEMENT.**

1.3. Appreciating the close association of Drs. Evelyn and John Billings with SERFAC, the Drs. Billings inaugurated the **ASIAN CENTRE FOR THE BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING.** This centre will be located on the premises of SERFAC

## **2. Commitment to Marriage is the Basic Culture of the Family.**

2.1 The Conference emphasized that the Family is the natural and basic unit of society

2.2. Based on marriage, the family is a community of love and life, and is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, social, ethical, religious and spiritual values essential for the development and well-being of its own members and that of society

2.3. The rapidly changing conditions of today are posing a threat to the institution of marriage. Hence, the Conference avers the commitment to marriage as the basic culture for stable family life.

## **3. Family, Home of virtues and values**

3.1 When the needs of the Family as a fundamental unit are not adequately provided for or met the family is not able to function in the given environment

3.2 This inability to function positively results in situations such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation, deviant behaviour, prostitution, abortion, female infanticide, degradation and exploitation of women, substance abuse, child labour and various forms of child abuse

3-3 These situations are further aggravated by poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, crisis

of identity, armed insurgencies, political instabilities and religious fundamentalism

3.4 Other areas of concern are the increasing number of divorces, resulting in an increase of single parents, neglect of the handicapped, disabled and the aged in the families and the rapid spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic

3.5 The Conference also took note of the impact of the process of urbanization, globalization, the mass media, technological progress, contraception and abortion which further erode family values

3.6 The Conference also recognized the massive destruction of the environment which has a debilitating effect on the family.

#### **4. The Interconnection between Individual, Family and Social Well-being and Sustainable Human Development.**

4.1 Having recognised and analysed the increasing problems affecting contemporary families, the conference recommended

##### **4.1.1 All-Out Awareness-Building**

(a) regarding the dignity of the human person

(b) the dignity of the family as the fundamental unit of society

(c) the dignity and the value of conjugal faithfulness.

(d) the natural way of regulating conception and propagating the Natural Methods of family planning

##### **4.1.2 Education and Training**

Non-formal and formal systematic education through universities, colleges, schools and related institutions, training in responsible parenthood, emotional well being and social development, sustained economic progress and better utilization of family resources for self-help programmes. To provide other supports such as legal, psychological, emotional and spiritual support for an integral approach to Family This includes help for the growth and development of the disabled and aged members of the Family

4.1.3 Recognizing increasing vulnerability of women and children in the fast changing world scenario the conference strongly recommends the protection of the Rights of the Child and empowerment of women at all stages and spheres of life.

##### **4.1.4 Spiritual awareness:**

The total well being of the Family in our pluralistic society is enhanced and strengthened by spirituality. The conference, therefore affirms and endorses the need for a spirituality of the family. Such a spirituality would enhance family life and can be extended to incorporate all religious values

#### **4.1.5. Political Action:**

The Conference urged that pro-life and family friendly policies should emerge at the local, regional, national and international levels among organizations, governmental. Inter Governmental. Transnational and Church related institutions. Such action should be taken through a well planned strategy of lobby, persuasion and enactment of policies in favour of the Family

#### **5.1. Conclusion:**

To enhance the spirit of collaborative effort on behalf of the family, there was the sharing of the work done in the different countries through the World-Round-Up. This sharing helped strengthen the bonds of solidarity among the participants. The participants considered appropriate to further collaborate and network with each other so as to realize common goals on behalf of the family

5.2 In conclusion the participants of the Fifth International Conference on "**The Family at the Threshold of the Twenty First Century**", reaffirmed with the help of the Almighty their commitment to work for the well being of the Family as it enters the Twentifirst Century