

The [DC School of Management and Technology](#) (DCSMAT) in the state of Kerala, India, is a new elite school training some of the brightest young Indians to become entrepreneurs, government officials, businessmen and leaders in the third sector. Notably, the School's founding ethos stresses the need for the students to become not only skilled managers and businessmen, but also conscientious citizens. Believing that economic progress is not possible without human development, the school promotes education in the values of democratic society, human rights, treatment of minorities, and other civic values. Students are involved in a community development program, volunteering in literacy training and running a public library for neighboring villages. They expressed interest to be further involved in communities, assisting with communal conflict prevention, resolution and mediation of disputes caused by communal tensions and violence.

During a visit to the School organized by the US Department of State, Hillel Levine proposed to these most talented entrepreneurs-in-training that they apply and sharpen their business skills, including marketing, financial analysis, HR, and organizational development, by assessing the countervailing forces to communalism and that they and their professors do a strategic study on how to end the riots across India within five years. Students, faculty, and administration endorsed this proposal and immediately began its implementation.

In February 2005, the Center led three days of workshops on ethnic identity, historic memory and basic skills in research and preparation for fieldwork with the full participation of DCSMAT administration and faculty. As a result of the workshops, a student organization was formed to pursue these topics in an ongoing project. The organization titled itself Shanti (Peace, harmony) and elected a chairman and a fifteen member steering committee. Shanti's goal is to build a self-perpetuating student-run body that will train new students each semester in mediation and dispute resolution, research cases of countervailing forces to communal violence and conflicts, and get involved in identifying solutions to these problems, as well as in an outreach towards the wider public to initiate discourses of communalism and to discover multicultural solutions to it. Students are engaging in collecting materials for case studies and developing a network of cooperating non-governmental organizations, universities, and other institutions for future initiatives. In the future, students will work with a group of supervisors from business and non-governmental settings around India. Supervisors will help students with logistical arrangements for their trip (recommending accommodation for the student team, helping the group to get around), networking (suggesting useful contact persons and introducing students to them, setting up meetings), supervision and feedback to students' work. Students are also organizing a number of on-campus activities to pursue their interest in understanding communalism and finding ways to reduce it through business activity.

The ICfC is involved in further training and supervision of the work of the students and in helping the student to build networks of cooperation with institutions and sponsors/hosts for their research in communities across India. In August 2005 we returned to the School, and a team of four trained ICfC mediators (David Baharvar, Dagmar Kusa, Jasmine Marwaha, and Hillel Levine) conducted two 20-hour workshops in negotiation, mediation and research skills for members of Shanti. One training was for the 2nd-year students and one training was for the incoming 1st-year students. In 2006, further training was provided by the ICfC in partnership with the Henry Martyn Institute's Praxis trainers, again at the DC School. The ICfC developed a unique program, sequence, and corpus of training materials in cooperation with mediators experienced in Indian settings and with India-specific intercommunal conflict. These materials, passed on to the members of Shanti for their own use and adaptation, allow senior students to pass their knowledge to incoming student generations and guarantee continuity of the project. We are proud to say that this project has the full and enthusiastic support of the faculty of this business school, who see the connection between business skills and skills at peacebuilding. The School, working with the student organization Shanti, has commenced sending students on field trips to various parts of the state of Kerala, where the school is based, to do field research interviews and collect data on how and why certain diverse communities manage to avoid violence and reactionary communal politics, while others do not, and the costs suffered by the latter as a result. The ICfC continues to consult with students and faculty as they make this unique program a reality and strive to find ways to give students credit toward the sincere work they put into the group.

The ICfC is happy to report that it has already received requests for consultation and help in implementing similar programs at several other institutions of higher learning in India, including business schools and journalism schools. Our goal is to spread the idea and inspiration for professionals from all sectors of Indian society to use their skills toward saving lives by reducing communal tension.