



Shree Pretoria Hindu Seva Samaj

Established in 1932

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"Satyameva Jayate" - Truth Alone Prevails

Celebrating 81 Years of Selfless Service

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SAMAJ OFFICIALS

1. **AIM**

The purpose of this policy document is to provide a set of guidelines to members of the executive and trustees of the Samaj on the kinds of behaviour that are acceptable for members to display in the pursuance of their duties. Such guidelines should, inter alia, deal with enunciating a clear set of shared values, meeting procedures and the management of conflict.

2. **RATIONALE**

It is a sad but undeniable fact that in any organisation, lack of clearly enunciated roles, responsibilities and procedures lead to unhappiness. In addition, conflicts arise as a result of differing values, pre-conceived attitudes, personal agendas, and differing approaches to problem-solving. Unresolved conflict or conflict that is ignored or glossed over has a tendency to intrude on the efficient functioning of an organisation. It is thus incumbent on the Samaj to draw up clear and agreed guidelines that will govern the conduct of Samaj officials and to which they could be held accountable.

3. **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members agree to the following matters as highlighted in this code of conduct.

3.1 ***Dealing with Conflict / Disagreement***

When confronted by a situation of disagreement or conflict, the following procedure is to be followed:

3.1.1 **Written (E-mail) Correspondence**

Step 1. Before responding to the sentiment expressed, the concerned party should carefully read the email again to make sure that his/her understanding is correct;

Step 2. The concerned party should contact the writer directly, **without copying anyone else**, asking for clarification of what was meant;

Step 3. The concerned party must phone or write directly to the person, **without copying anyone else**, and express the disagreement, in language that conveys respect.

Step 4. When the original correspondent replies to the person who disagrees with his/her viewpoint, he/she should remember to respond directly and respectfully.

Step 5. Should the disagreement still remain and a resolution is required, the matter should be referred by the parties concerned to the President. If the President is party to the dispute, then the matter is to be referred to the Chairman of Trustees.

3.1.2 **Verbal Disagreement (e.g. at meetings)**

Step 1: Check your understanding: The concerned person should check his/her understanding of what is being said by reflecting this understanding back to the person in his/her own words.

Step 2: Clearly state your case: If the person confirms your understanding, before voicing your disagreement, frame your thoughts clearly and express them using clear, non-blaming language (e.g. “The way I see it ...” instead of “I think your idea is stupid”...etc)

Step 3: Listen carefully to the response and give feedback

Step 4: If neither party is willing to concede to the other viewpoint, agree to disagree;

Step 5: If a clear decision is required, the President must seek a majority opinion and rule accordingly.

3.2 **LANGUAGE USAGE**

At no time are insults permitted. Words are to be chosen carefully. An emotionally upset person must remain aware that he/she is losing his/her temper and rather wait until he/she has calmed down in order to avoid uttering words that are derogatory.

3.3 **ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Meetings are to be scheduled timeously as per the requirements laid out in the Samaj constitution. Members are required to make every effort to attend all meetings as scheduled. Non-attendance results in delays and inefficiencies and is a reflection of a negative attitude towards one’s responsibilities.

3.4 **ADHERING TO MEETING TIMES**

Not attending meetings at scheduled times is a sign of disrespect towards others. Late-coming should be a rare occurrence and apologies must be tendered to the Secretary or President before the meeting time and again at time of arrival.

3.5 MONTHLY REPORTS

Portfolio and Finance Committee monthly reports must be submitted to the Secretary by the agreed date before the meeting. Verbal or written reports at the meeting are unacceptable as they do not offer members the opportunity to study them and make considered recommendations, waste time and are also open to misinterpretation.

3.6 FOLLOW-UP ON COMMITMENTS

The Secretary is required to produce an action sheet after every meeting. All members are required to follow-up on commitments made to perform any action by a specific date and time. Not doing so results in time-wasting, inefficiency, a feeling that nothing gets done and ultimately to apathy and indifference.

3.7 PROVIDING SUPPORT

To ensure the executive remains unified in terms of purpose, it is important for members to support each other in public and not engage in criticism of their colleagues behind their backs. All criticisms must be dealt with up-front and directly with the person concerned.

3.8 VOLUNTEERING ASSISTANCE

Teamwork is vital and it is therefore incumbent on members to volunteer their services when requested. No member should feel unsupported or that his work is not being valued.

3.9 TRUTHFULNESS

Lying to one another is completely unacceptable and a serious breach of ethics. It destroys credibility and team spirit and eventually leads to a malfunctioning organisation.

3.9 RESPONDING TIMEOUSLY

When a member requests comments & inputs, it is incumbent on members to respond timeously. Failure to respond, even if it is only to say that you have no comments or inputs to give, is disrespectful to the person concerned.

3.10 LIVING THE VALUES

Members commit to live the values as enshrined in the Samaj constitution. These are:

E = Empowerment
T = Transparency
C = Committed to Excellence
H = Honesty and Integrity
E = Education
D = Dharma

3.11 DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The presiding officer (President of the Executive or Chairman of Trustees) is duty bound to follow a consensus seeking model of decision-making. Should a consensus not be found, the presiding officer must seek a majority opinion and such a finding then becomes binding. The presiding officer is not allowed to take unilateral decisions, except in an emergency as provided for in the constitution.

3.12 ABIDING BY MAJORITY DECISIONS

Once a decision has been made by a majority of persons, it is unethical for any member to distance himself from the decision and more so to publicly or surreptitiously work towards undermining such a decision.

3.13 MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

From time to time, issues will be discussed which are sensitive in nature and require a period of confidentiality before a public announcement can be made. Breaching such confidentiality is seen as a serious offence.

3.14 BREACH OF AUTHORITY

Portfolio Heads are granted certain delegated authority needed to take decisions that pertain strictly to their responsibilities. This authority, however, must be exercised with caution and care to ensure that it does not affect the harmonious relationships between portfolio members. Any decision that is likely to impact or impinge on the dignity, rights or activities of others must first be cleared with the President. Failure to do so will be construed as misconduct.

4. BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

In the event of a breach of any provisions of this code of conduct, the following procedure is to be followed:

- 4.1 The President of the Executive or Chairman of the Trustees may, as an initial intervention, confront the individual concerned with the breach to allow the matter to be resolved privately.
- 4.2 Should the matter be deemed to warrant further action, then a proper disciplinary enquiry must be held as described in clause 16 of the constitution of the Seva Samaj.
- 4.3 Should a complaint be brought to the attention of the President of the Executive or the Chairman of the Trustees by a fellow member or a member of the public, alleging a breach of one or more provisions of this code of conduct, then the grievance procedure as outlined in clause 17 of the Samaj constitution must be followed.

This code of conduct was adopted by the executive of the Shree Pretoria Hindu Seva Samaj at a meeting held on Monday, 22 February 2010.



Ramesh Chhagan
PRESIDENT: SPHSS