

1. Title of the Practice

'Character-building Education'

2. Goal

Being a part of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Institution is instrumental in giving shape to Swami Vivekananda's ideas regarding education. Swami Vivekananda says *'What is education? Is it book-learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.'* So according to Vivekananda, a man whose will does not drag him hither and tither but rather he himself possessing full control over his will employs it along positive and beneficial channels is a truly educated man. Such an education which rests on self-control and correct self-exertion is what Vivekananda called 'Man-making, Character-building Education'.

Inspired by such a lofty ideal of education the Institution attempts to inculcate a combination of practical skills to fulfill the basic needs, moral values for a superior inter-personal relationship, spiritual wisdom for a fearless existence.

3. The Context

After the Independence of India, a gradual decline in the moral integrity of the society as a whole, a slow poisoning of the youth psyche by the glitter egocentric pleasures, a clouded wisdom of the elders unable to show the path of strength and peace is undoubtedly evident to any careful observer. Time is ripe enough to save the youth, the future citizens from a disastrous tragedy. So the Institution along with its leader, Swami Vivekananda, possesses genuine feeling for the youth and wants to empower them with a strength that is imperishable, with a hope that is unflinching and with a freedom that is unselfish. Swami Vivekananda says, *'money does not pay, nor name; fame does not pay, nor learning. It is love that pays; it is character that cleaves its way through adamant walls of difficulties.'*

Hence, the Institution is trying to guide the youth along the lines of character- building so that tomorrow's sunrise becomes more golden.

4. The Practice

Practices:

- First of all the very ambience of the Institution instills orderliness and calmness in one and all. As one enters the college the gigantic portraits of Swami Vivekananda as if calls upon the 'sleeping soul' towards a glorious way of life based on self-confidence and self-sacrifice. The main campus welcomes the visitors into the holy precincts of a Universal Temple dedicated to Shri Ramakrishna, the Prophet of Religious harmony. Thus just an unplanned entry into the campus is gifted with an elevating experience. The students having got an opportunity to study in such an environment imbibes the spirit of holiness and serenity within them.

- A number of programmes are arranged to expose the students to the ideals of Indian Culture and Spirituality with a background of Universalism as propounded by the great lives and teachings of Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. Some of the important measures taken in this direction to fortify the character of the youth are given below:

- a) Seminars on Swami Vivekananda's ideas are arranged in the college. Eminent speakers from all walks of life starting from Professors coming from Science, Arts and Engineering fields, Vice-Chancellors, Monks of the Ramakrishna Mission and many other

dignitaries enlighten the students towards right understanding and implementation of Swamiji's bold and strong ideas. They shed light on different aspects of the great one's life and message like Vivekananda's concepts on Education, Science and Technology, Service, Nation-building, Youth, Human Development and so on. Thus, inspirations run along varying channels and mould the student community according to one's unique tendencies but always in a positive direction.

b) Books on value education and personality development are often distributed among the students free of cost.

c) Swami Vivekananda has emphasized on service to country men as the chief means for character building. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Ideal of Service is *Service to man as service to God*. Swami Vivekananda calls upon the youth '*What is life but growth, i.e. expansion, i.e. love? Therefore all love is life, it is the only law of life; all selfishness is death, and this is true here or hereafter. It is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. Ninety per cent of human brutes you see are dead, are ghosts — for none lives, my boys, but he who loves. Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden;..*'. The young students are given a taste of the bliss involved in selfless service and its efficacy in elevating oneself. During the Annual Voluntary Blood Donation Camp, the Annual Eye Operation Camp etc. the students are given a chance to serve the 'Living-God' as manifested in the form of the suffering patient hailing from dire circumstances.

d) The students are often assigned responsibilities for conducting different cultural programmes, preparing wall magazines or poster presentations or exhibitions etc. This arouses the self-confidence of the students and moulds them as leaders for future.

e) Discourses on various spiritual topics are arranged in the Universal Temple of the main campus. The birthdays of luminaries of different religions are celebrated with equal sanctity and devotion. These include the birthday celebrations of Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Shri Krishna, Adi Shankaracharya, Shri Ramakrishna, Shri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and many others. The students have full access to these discussions and to learn about the ennobling features in the lives and teaching of these great ones. On the other side since the Organisation emphasizes the harmony of all religions, Universal brotherhood and reverence towards Teachers of every Religion, hence the spirit of a spiritual Oneness amidst diverse courses of each religion is inculcated among the youth for a much more all-inclusive feeling to develop. This feature is very much pertinent when separatist ideas still create strife among men.

f) Every evening there is congregational prayer and vesper service in the Temple. Interested students participate in it.

g) One of the rare opportunities which the students enjoy is the close contact with the monastic members who try to help them build a strong foundation for their character-building. Often the students come up with several psycho-social complications and seek solutions from the monastic members of the College. The monks too keep a caring vigilance over the students and guide them in path of righteousness. Some of the students have received spiritual instructions from the President or Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Mission and engage themselves in regular meditation.

h) The college library has books on Value Education, Personality Development and Swami Vivekananda; monthly journals on spiritual culture brought out by the Ramakrishna Mission like *Prabuddha Bharata*, *Vedanta-Kesari* etc.; e-books, CDs and DVDs on Personality Development, Education, Spiritual development etc. for giving the students easy access to the rich heritage and the legacy which they bear.

i) All the cultural programmes held in the college have a goal to invigorate the urge for becoming better, enlightened human beings.

j) Festivals like Saraswati Puja, Durga Puja, etc. held in the college and the main campus introduce the students to the rich and deep spiritual heritage of India. The students

participate in a colourful procession organized to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of Shri Ramakrishna in which folk artists of rural Bengal take part. This is a novel experience to know the legacy which we bear.

Challenges before us

- The College is affiliated to the West Bengal State University and must mandatorily follow the curriculum as prescribed by the University. Hence there are no opportunities for incorporating value- education as a compulsory subject in the syllabus for a much more detailed discussion on this vital issue.
- In a fast moving age when most of the people are running to grab an opportunity for self-centred pleasure, the issue of character-building and value education seems to be out of context. Keeping apart some exceptions, most of the people abhor ideas like ‘spiritual growth’, ‘character-building’, ‘selfless service’, ‘self-control’ and the like. So many students coming from such a society fail to realize the urgent need to have a strong footing in this arena. As a result only the students who have a genuine thirst for a higher way of life, for a more meaningful path for satisfaction are more benefitted by the arrangements put forth by the college. Rest are either slow learners or remain bound by stagnation with regard to the complete manifestation of the inner wisdom.

5. Evidence of Success

The success in ‘character-building’ programme is undoubtedly a difficult parameter to gauge. Its subtle consequences take time to sprout. However, for the last 50 years, the Institution is trying to sow the seeds of holistic personality development in the fertile grounds of the young minds. Some signs of success may be mentioned in the following terms:

- The healthy interaction between the junior and the senior students without any tinge of ragging or any sort of harassment is a silent evidence for the natural sense of decorum prevalent in the college. This cordial, fearless, helping attitude among the students develops without any specific sermons or anti-ragging campaigns. This may be counted as an achievement where inter-personal relationship need not pass through the test of harassment for gaining acceptance.
- All the students of the college are Day Scholars. They come from far and near to the college every day. As a result they get a chance to mix with the society. So they are able to assess the importance of the values they receive at the college in comparison with the greater societal cross section. They can freely adopt the ideas which they feel is vital for their workaday life. The students understand the difference in the standards which life as such attain by imbibing greatness and how pathetic it becomes when bereft of such a dimension. This they realize more when they step into the wider expanse of the world in future. Occasionally they come to the college years after passing out and express their gratitude for this kind of training for their moral depth.
- The spirit of selfless service which the students imbibe in their college days often grow in dimensions in future. Many of them while pursuing their higher studies or jobs start their own NGOs for serving the society especially the poor and the afflicted. One of our student, Ritwik Bhattacharya, University topper in Mathematics is now pursuing his PhD from the reputed Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata. He, along with some other young men have started a NGO, which provide academic assistance to many students coming from extremely constrained financial background even in some remote villages.
- Many of our students who are employed in Pharmaceutical Companies spontaneously come forward to supply medicines and eye drops for our Eye camp. Some of our students donate generously for the betterment of the college.

- Many renowned ex-students of our college when invited for a talk come and emphasise the issue of moral growth to the students which they had once learnt from the college and from the inspiring ideas of Swami Vivekananda. For example, Dr. Shankar Narayan Paul, an ex-student of our college is the recipient of the Padmashri Award for Physics. He, while addressing the students, asserted the importance of Swami Vivekananda's ideas to the youth. This shows that academic brilliance and supreme recognition has not made the issue of character-building education meaningless to him but has become much more relevant.
- During the seminars on Swami Vivekananda's ideas, the enthusiasm, participation and interest that has seen in the students once again proved the positive and strengthening impact of these life-giving ideas among the college youth.
- Spirituality and Character building may not be just an alien practice which has nothing to do with one's worldly prosperity. Rather it rouses the maximum power and will force in man and concentrates them towards achievement of any goal which so ever he chooses. So emphasis is laid on self-reliance, self-confidence, fearlessness and practical wisdom for winning over any goal essential for one's life. Examples are plenty, where many of our students hailing from rural and economically backward homes gush forth into the brilliance of excellence in academics, job sectors and other walks of life.
- Last but not the least, the students of the college is a class apart by their politeness, their reverential attitude towards the teachers and elders, by their sincerity and honesty in academic career and by their adherence towards service.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Problems encountered:

- The society is still not yet unanimous towards the initiation of character-building education system as a vital and urgent requirement. Hence it is the institution alone that stresses the need for such a necessity along with few guardian, teachers and students in favour of such a move.
- The long- lost faith in the efficacy of having an all-square personality with a pure and unselfish character has resulted in many misconceptions regarding issues like happiness, freedom, motivations etc. These have gone to the vitals of the society and have metamorphosed it into a completely different cast. Hence, it is a herculean task to trace back the path along the steep rise to the peak. Thus the Institution must be patient enough to see men of wonderful glory and greatness to bloom out from its lap. Therefore, having lost the background for developing the character on positive lines due to blind imitation, greed for quick pleasures and the lack of true self-respect, few more generations will be needed to revert back to the eternal path of a superior manifestation.

Resources required:

The institution possesses a band of dedicated monks and teachers for invigorating the positive values in the students. Thus, man power is rich in supply. However, if the institution wishes to hold large programmes for instilling the spirit of man-making and character-building say for example seminars, youth conventions, Retreats etc. then financial grants are required.

7. Notes

Few points which are kept in mind while working on this practice:

- a. The growth of Science and Technology and modern developments are never condemned. But rather it is complemented with the science of inner wellbeing and outer welfare of one and all.
- b. The spirit of Universalism and non-sectarianism burns bright in every attempt. The target is to create a harmonious social fabric without any discordant note of separatism.

c. The revival of the Indian spiritual culture to go beyond the fear of misery, disease and death is the goal.

d. As opposed to focusing solely on one's own spiritual growth, the institution practices and preaches the path of physical, intellectual and spiritual nourishment of the entire world as vivified by Swami Vivekananda in his dictum -by helping others we help ourselves.

1. Title of the Practice

'A parallel Research wing along with curricular academics'

2. Goal

The institution feels that it is necessary to pursue research along with the regular curriculum to create a deep-rooted academic ambience. The main reason behind it is the common observation that a fixed curriculum with minor changes often leads to stereotyped teaching-learning process. Whereas, research brings about creativity and exploration along newer avenues. For the faculty, research helps them to get greater grasp over the subject and opens the windows to explore the recent findings in the field of science. For the students this offers a glimpse beyond the walls of curriculum. The taste of a few drops trickling down from the research world will motivate them to pursue higher studies and research in Pure Science in future. This is vital for the nation since the students engaged in serious research work in pure science should increase and complement the growth in Technology.

3. The Context

At one point of time, the Institution felt that it possesses many faculty members with hidden research potential. Upon being encouraged several faculty members started pursuing research. Later on with the availability of grants from the Government and Non-Government agencies the laboratory infrastructure and instrumental facility enhanced. Therefore, more and more scopes for research enabled growth along this line.

Challenges:

Research demands a sophisticated infrastructure with expensive instruments and chemicals. For this the institute has to be financially equipped. But receiving research grants at the college level is not at all easy. Hence, in spite of talents, efforts and interests funds pose a threat towards the future of research in the college.

4. The Practice

Research started in the Institution about 20 years back. Some features of research activities and its consequences are given below:

- Every Department has worked on minor research projects.
- The Department of Chemistry and the Department of Botany have major research projects.
- All total 11 Research scholars are working for their Doctoral thesis in the college. Out of them 7 Research scholars are in the Department of Botany and 4 Research scholars are in the Department of Chemistry.
- Till now 4 scholars have completed their Ph. D. research work from the college.
- The thrust areas in major Research Projects are Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Plant Tissue Culture, Mycopathology etc.

- Most of the research projects are funded by UGC, DST etc.
- The college has a well-equipped lab infrastructure for research. A rich collection of sophisticated instruments including HPTLC, UV & IR Spectrophotometers, Fluorometer, Freeze Dryer, Geldoc, Growth Chamber, *Leica* microscopes etc. are supporting the rapid growth of research.
- The research wing has not been kept divorced from the rest of the college curriculum.
 - a) The PG students must work on some project in these research labs.
 - b) Often the Research scholars guide the UG and PG students in Laboratory classes.
 - c) The interaction between the UG and PG students with the Research Labs is highly beneficial for developing a creative knack in the subject.
 - d) The UGC-Certified Mushroom Cultivation Course is run in the college with the help of the Mycopathology Research lab.
- The findings in the research labs have been able to find a place in peer-reviewed journals.

Limitations:

Due to the shortage in teachers which the college is facing, the faculty members involved in Research need to bear a heavy class load along with research. This hinders much of their focus on research.

The college is bound to follow the syllabus and curriculum framed by the affiliating University at the UG level. At present the curriculum prescribes no lab-based project works as mandatory part of the syllabus. Therefore, it has not been possible to provide any research experience at the UG level.

5. Evidence of Success

The college has been successful in fulfilling its vision of carrying on Research along with curricular academics. Some outcomes of such a pursuit may be difficult to enumerate at this early stage. Yet some important consequences are:

- The college has turned out to be an important centre for research. The publications prove the quality of research.
- Some of our faculty members have patent over their research outcomes. For e.g. In Plant Tissue Culture Lab some of the rice varieties have received recognition from NCBI and has received unique NCBI accession numbers.
- Research scholars from other reputed Institutes come to our research labs for summer projects or for using our instrumental facility.
- Several collaborative research schemes are active with other Research Institutes.
- Four Research scholars have already been awarded the Doctoral Degree.
- Retention of many faculty members with research aptitude has been possible by this well-established research facility in the college.
- The college is self-sufficient to carry on PG project works at the college itself with the support of the Research Labs.
- Unlike typical Research Institutes, the Research scholars get a chance to guide the UG and PG practical classes which gives them a teaching experience.

In this way the institution is achieving the target of an interactive research wing for creative academics and enriched UG-PG courses.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- The main crisis felt in the field of research is the financial crunch. With exorbitantly expensive instruments, chemicals and reagents the smooth and unhindered research work at college level at times comes into question.

7. Notes

The long tradition of research in the college has given the institution confidence and glory. In spite of regular UG and PG courses the faculty members engage in research work to increase the perimeter of their knowledge and to bring the students into the light of the ever-expanding arena of science.