

Best practice : 1

Title of the Practice: Character-building Education

Objectives of the Practice

- Act as an instrumental in giving shape to Swami Vivekananda's ideas regarding education. So according to Vivekananda, a man whose will does not drag him hither and thither 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'.
- Attempt 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.

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.

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

The Practice

The following are the 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.
- 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.

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. 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.

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. The monks too keep a caring vigilance over the students and guide them in path of righteousness.

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.

Evidence of success

The success in 'character-building' programme is undoubtedly a difficult parameter to gauge. 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. 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.
- Many of our students who are employed in Pharmaceutical Companies spontaneously come forward to supply medicines and eye drops for our Eye camp and medical camp. Some of our students donate generously for the betterment of the college as well the different service activities going on in the villeges. One of our ex students fully sponsors the scheme of Free Tiffin.
- 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.
- During the seminars on Swami Vivekananda's ideas, the enthusiasm, participation and interest that has seen in the students.
- 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.

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.

- 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.

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.

Best practice : 2

Title of the Practice: A parallel Research wing along with curricular academics

Objectives of the Practice

- 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.

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.

The Practice

Research started in the Institution about 35 years back. Some features of research activities and its consequences are given below:

- Our college has Swami Vivekananda Center for Multidisciplinary Research in Basic Sciences and Social Sciences, approved by the West Bengal State university and UGC.
- Most of the Departments have worked on minor research projects.
- The Department of Chemistry, Zoology, Mathematics and the Department of Botany have major research projects.
- All total 31 Research scholars are working for their Doctoral thesis in the college for last five years.
- Till now 3 scholars have completed their Ph. D. research work from the college research centre. But before existence of research Center, 6 students from Chemistry and 4 students from Botany awarded PhD degree by different universities.
- The thrust areas in major Research Projects are Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Plant Tissue Culture, Mycopathology, Ecology, Topology, Complex Analysis, etc.
- Most of the research projects are funded by UGC, DST, DBT, WBDST, Medicinal Plant Board, ICSSR, ICPR, ICHR, etc.
- The college has well-equipped lab infrastructure for research. A rich collection of sophisticated instruments including HPTLC, HPLC, UV & IR Spectrophotometers, Fluorometer, Freeze Dryer, Geldoc, Growth Chamber, Co₂ Incubator, Flash Chromatography, 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) Some certificate courses like Mushroom Cultivation, Floriculture are run in the college with the help of the research scholars.
- The findings in the research labs have been able to find a place in peer-reviewed journals.

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 recognized as centre for research by affiliating university and UGC. The publications prove the quality of research.
- Some of our faculty members have filed patent over their research outcomes.
- 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.
- Three Research scholars have already been awarded the Doctoral Degree under this Research Center.
- 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.
- There is a MOU between North Bengal University for using their e database for our faculty and research scholars.
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In this way the institution is achieving the target of an interactive research wing for creative academics and enriched UG-PG courses.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Problems encountered:

- 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.
- The faculty members involved in Research need to bear a heavy class load along with research. This hinders much of their focus on research.

Resources required:

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.