

One-day State-Level Conference held at Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women, Malleswaram

Values are the core that holds together an individual and a system of education as enunciated by Swami Vivekananda is the need of the hour for empowering the youth of India.

This was the conclusive point reiterated by the participants of the one-day state-level conference on "Empower Youth – Empower Nation through Value Initiatives." This conference held on 12/02/14 was jointly organized by Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women, Malleswaram and DISHA, a non-profit social initiative, to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Dr. K. Subramanian, Pro-Vice Chancellor of S-VYASA Yoga University Bangalore and former Principal, National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, who emphasized the importance of giving value to values. With interesting examples from the scriptures as well as daily life, he conveyed the significant need for value education to equip the youth with skills for life. Dr. Subramanian also highlighted the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's message in contemporary times because it is based on a scientific as well as spiritual viewpoint as opposed to a religious one. He urged teachers to identify the hidden gift in students, give them appropriate training and then direct them to work for the welfare of society.

Vid. Dr. T. S. Sathyavathi, renowned Carnatic musician and HOD, Sanskrit Department of VVS First Grade College for Women, Bangalore chaired an interactive session with faculty members that saw a lively discussion of the dynamic and practical approaches to value education. The central point that emerged from this session was the need for teachers to elevate themselves to become role models for the students they teach.

This was followed by paper presentations in 2 parallel sessions by 29 faculty members from colleges across the state. The papers covered a wide spectrum of profound ideas right from the true meaning of values and their eternal nature to the need for value education and methods for its practical implementation. There was also an emphasis on the role that students play in empowering the nation and the need to make them aware of this responsibility. The best 2 presentations from both sessions were chosen for the final round of presentation; at the end of this round, prizes were awarded to the best two papers. The first prize went to Mrs. Anusuya R. Kashi, Vivekananda College of Pharmacy, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru and second prize to Dr. Arathi V.B. from the Academy for Creative Teaching, Bengaluru

The valedictory function was presided over by Dr. B. Mahadevan, Professor of Operations Management, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. In his address, Dr. Mahadevan commended the efforts of the teachers who presented papers on the conference theme; he also underscored the role of values in enriching human life and elaborated on the guidelines to implement value education to students. Drawing attention to the vital role of teachers as the catalysts for change in society, Dr. Mahadevan appealed to the teachers to inculcate leadership traits and resilience in students.

Other eminent persons such as Prof.N.V.Raghuram(President, Yoga Bharathi), Dr.GaneshaBhatta(Principal, MES Teachers Training College)andDr S.Ranganath(Director of RV Samskrit Studies) also graced this occasionand evaluatedthe papers.

About 42 faculty members from colleges and many guests from different NGOs all over Karnataka participated enthusiastically in this conference making it a great success.

On the same occasion, MLACW in association with DISHA conducted Inter-Collegiate competitions for students of UG and PG courses. There was an overwhelming response from the student community with 57 students from 13 colleges participating in the essay competition and 54 students from 20 colleges participating in the speech contest.

Writing on the topic **“To be good and to do good is the whole of religion,”** students exhibited a remarkable ability to articulate their thoughts with clarity and creativity. The first prize went to Ms.Nandini P. K. from Seshadripuram Evening College; second prize to Mr.Santhosh C. V. from VVN Evening College and the third prize was shared by Mr.Nagaraja from MES Institute of Management and Ms.Annet Harry Mathias from MLACW.

The speech contest saw myriad ideas presented on the topic **“Is technology taking us closer to our roots or farther away from our roots?”** In 3 parallel sessions, the speech contest was judged by a distinguished panel of judges that included Mr. D. M. Kiran, MD of iSol Consultancy, Mr.Venkatesh Murthy, National Coordinator of Youth for Seva, Ms.Parimala Murthy, social worker, Mr.Kiran Kumar, writer and software engineer, Mr.ViswanathanPanchukrishnan, chartered accountant, Ms.BharathiKasargod, Kannada writer and Mr. Rajesh A., HR Manager.

While some students highlighted the negative aspects of technology, others voiced their opinion about how technology plays a positive role. However, all agreed that technology in itself cannot be labelled good or bad and that one should use discrimination and harness the power of technology to move ahead without sacrificing our cultural heritage.