

BEST PRACTICE I

Discourses in Democracy: Towards a Socially Conscious Campus

Objectives

To create a socially-conscious campus through a culture of dialogues and discourses.

To fine-tune the democratic sensibilities of the students and inculcate the values of equality, secularism and justice in them.

To create a participatory platform wherein the students can evaluate contemporary issues and have a proper perspective.

To bring about a continuity in the academic experiences in books and classrooms and the wider world, nation and society.

To upgrade the institution into a hub of knowledge discourses and social interactions

To make them engage with society on both the levels of ideation and action

The Context

The current scenario requires the active involvement and participation of the younger generation in the specific problems of society. Rather than manufacturing youngsters who cater to the job market, education should create young minds that are sensitive to the larger questions of democracy, equality, secularism and justice and citizens who engage with the social issues of the country in a meaningful manner. The hallmark of any Institute of higher education is the presence of forums which promote fearless and open-ended interdisciplinary discussions on manifold arenas that widen the perspective of students and make them responsible members of society who are responsive to socio-political realities.

The college has a good proportion of courses in Humanities, Sciences and Commerce and the curriculum is designed to impart values of social affability and responsibility. In addition to this, the institution endeavours to accentuate the social consciousness of the students through discussions, invited lectures, open forums, interactions, reach out and extension programmes and field trips. It also taps the potential of artistic and cultural forms to fine tune young minds to the nuances of egalitarian and humanitarian values.

Practice

Discourses on Democracy: The campus attains vibrancy through its various platforms of socio-cultural and political discourses. “Discourses on Democracy”, an open forum talk series touched on socio-political issues of contemporary relevance like constitutional values, gender equality, questions of caste and class and justice. The deliberations helped to formulate ideas and sensitize students on burning issues of the country. Eminent social scientists, activists, writers and thinkers interact with the students in the seminar hall or in the open stage, “Vineetha Garden” located at the heart of the college. These gatherings have proved pivotal in developing social consciousness, through the diversity in the chosen topics. Details of some of the discourses conducted as a part of the programme are given below:

- Caste remains a poignant issue of discourse within the campus. A screening of the documentary, *Kakkoos*, directed by the director Divya Bharati, which addresses the marginalization faced by people involved in manual scavenging, was conducted on

12/3/2018 followed by a discussion and interactive session with the director. Mriduladevi Sasidharan, a Dalit feminist activist engaged the gathering with her talk on caste issues on 05/12/2019.

- The campus organised an interactive session with people of the third gender on 11/10/2018 in which Queer activists, Mx. Praveen and Mx. Unnais took part. An experience sharing session of the LGBT community was also held.
- The students interacted with Sr. Lucy Kalapurackal, an activist fighting against patriarchy and exploitation of women in religious establishments on 25/1/2019. She spoke on sexual exploitation of nuns in convents.
- A discussion on the execution of justice to the marginalised, specially focusing on the Walayar case (molestation of the minor Dalit girls) was held on 04/11/2019.

Research Forum Talks

As a part of the endeavour to inculcate critical thinking on important social issues among students, a Research Forum talk was organised. Eminent scholars and academicians interacted with students and provided them with alternate world views on their area of expertise. Talks ranging from “Patriarchy in Work Spaces” to “Sixty Years of Dalit Lives in Kerala” were conducted from 08/11/18 to 25/01/19. Altogether six talks were conducted as a part of this programme followed by discussions and debates on critical social issues.

Centre of Excellence Lecture Series

The Department of English organised a Centre of Excellence Lecture Series that aimed at amalgamating research sensibility and social outlook. The Lecture Series comprised four public lectures where thinkers, academicians, professors and students from various colleges converged and held deliberations on marginalisation, subaltern studies, progress, modernity, secularism, religion, nation and gender. The lectures include “Question of Subaltern Public Sphere” by Dr. P Sanal Mohan, “Literary Studies and Dalit Literature: Some Reflections” by Professor K. Satyanaryana, EFLU, “Kerala Modernity” by Ameet Parameswaran Assistant Professor at Theatre and Performance Studies, JNU and “Nation, Gender and Islam” by Dr. B. S. Sherin, EFLU.

Field observations

Field visits were conducted to the tribal area of Attapadi to investigate the reason for the increasing rate of drop-outs among tribal students. They visited 21 oorus (hamlets) and interacted with Project Officers, Tribal Extension Officers, student dropouts, college going students, their parents, tribal chieftains and local people. These trips gave the students and teachers the rare opportunity of interacting with the tribal people, whose living conditions and valuable knowledge resources proved to be truly educational.

Chemparathi

This is an artistic and cultural collective of students, teachers and artists that stands across divides of religion, caste, creed, colour or nationality. It aims at sensitizing the general public through the media of art and culture.

Evidence of Success

There is a keen involvement of students in the discourses and activities. The campus becomes the platform where thoughts form, ideas get articulated, deliberated, discussed and students

learn the varied ways of interacting and responding to different social issues. The achievements reflect in the spectacular performance not only in the academic field, but also in arts, sports and social interventions. “Parivarthan”, a *You Tube* Video created by students which centred on the need for women empowerment and liberation is an instance of the success of the discourse on social justice happening in the campus.

Problems faced / resources required

There exist time constraints to hold such forums in the midst of the busy academic schedule of students and teachers.

Fund mobilization required for the conduct of activities on a larger scale.

Support from the government to develop the institution to a hub of social discourses.