

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), DEVAGIRI

BEST PRACTICES 2018-2019

SATSANG

- an endeavour to illuminate

Objectives of the Practice

SATSANG which etymologically means 'to be in the company of true people' denotes a gathering of people who share noble thoughts and enlighten each other. It is indeed a profound thought to organize such Satsangs in our hostels on an everyday basis. The main objectives are the following:

1. To inculcate noble values in the minds of the students.
2. To promote unity among the students.
3. To enhance the interests of the students in reading and reflection of ideas and thoughts.
4. To inspire the students to come out of fear with no inhibition in addressing people.

The Context

It is disheartening to observe that today's society is polarized on different grounds and it is quite natural that there would be a reflection of this trend in the campuses as well. St. Joseph's College, Devagiri is fortunate enough to get cream of students in terms of both academic and non academic quality with sterling character. Keeping in track the competitive world, the academic pursuits of the students striving for excellence, adolescent issues, peer pressure, addiction to mobile phone and the social media, the college realized that an extra initiative has to be taken to mould the students approach life in a holistic manner. As a first step, the initiative gathered momentum among the hostel students redefining them to reflect on the finer aspects of life.

Practice

Satsang gatherings are held in a hall exclusively assigned for this particular cause where all members of the hostel assemble at a stipulated time. The Mayor of the hostel, in consultation with the hostel warden prepares the schedule of students supposed to guide and enlighten the gathering on an array of topics which could be sharing a life experience, an inspirational story, lives of eminent personalities or explaining a philosophical thought/a moral value etc. The person assigned to speak on that particular day addresses on a topic of his/her choice for ten minutes bearing in mind that one has to avoid sensitive or sensational issues which could create tension or polarization in the group.

Evidence of Success

A paradigm shift in culture among the hostel students is evident. The students encourage each other, appreciate values in life, discourage the tendencies among their friends to get involved in unhealthy practices and are found more loving, unified, competitive, confident addressing people and crowd at large sans fear.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Initial reluctance of a couple of students to address the gathering due to fear and lack of confidence could raise a concern. The hostel warden has to invest a good deal of time to nurture students meeting them personally, encouraging them to take up the challenge and help them identify a topic

to prepare the content. At times, hostel warden will have to interrupt a session if the students deliver a controversial note. It is challenging for the hostel warden to be consistently attending all the Satsangs and as the working days are less compared to the strength of some hostels, every student may not get an opportunity to lead the Satsang. Hence it is necessary that equal opportunity be provided to all the students. Our hostel performs Satsangs with the best of interests bearing in mind the positive metamorphosis of the students however painful and time consuming it may be.

GREEN AND TRANSFORMATIVE REFORMATION

- a return to nature and humanity

Objectives of the Practice

The purpose of character reformation is improvement and not the degradation of the offender. The mode of punishment practiced in the campuses at times turns out to be destructive rather than transformative. From an ecological perspective and with the power of redeeming an offender, Green and Transformative Reformation as a practice is heralded with the following objectives:

1. To ensure that a real character moulding happens to the offenders
2. To help the students to identify their flaws by themselves
3. To create a sense of belonging to the institution
4. To enable the students experience the bliss of doing philanthropic deeds

The Context

St. Joseph's College, Devagiri is certainly fortunate enough to get the best prodigies in terms of academic quality, talents and character. However, some cases of misconduct of students are reported occasionally. In such cases it is imperative for the authority to take appropriate disciplinary action against them. Dismissal, Suspension, writing an apology etc were the common practices. Observing that these disciplinary methods would only repel a person from embracing virtues in life, Green and Transformative Reformation Practices is introduced with an altruistic vision.

Practice

On the receipt of complaints on the misconduct of students, the Principal of the college decide whether the cases must be forwarded to the discipline committee or handle it by himself, depending on the gravity of the issue. The merit of the complaint will be thoroughly examined by the discipline committee after addressing the offender/s, witnesses, teachers concerned, the aggrieved persons as the case demands. If the student is found guilty, appropriate disciplinary action will be proposed by the committee.

Green and Transformative Reformation practices are introduced as a path breaking step from the shackles of the age old punitive measures. One such practice is to instruct them to plant a sapling in the campus. The offender would be instructed to plant a sapling, put fencing to it, water it regularly and take care of it as long as he/she is studying in the campus. The name of the tree, the location where it is planted and the details of the student are entered in a register book. It is noted that the act has inculcated a sense of responsibility towards nature as well as towards themselves.

If the case is found to be more serious, he/she will be instructed to visit the Home of Love, an old age home which is situated in the city and to render service for one or two days with an

accompanying staff to monitor the task assigned in such homes. A growing sense of responsibility towards the society could bring a huge difference in the offenders' lives.

Evidence of Success

It was found that once the offenders are put to tasks, to our great surprise, one could witness a positive change in the attitude and character of those students. There were instances where students posted their photos engraving 'with my tree'. The practice was found effective when the offenders accepted those compulsory services graciously, expressed their willingness to visit and serve the inmates, their self esteem boosted and were found reluctant to commit mistakes thereafter. The votary of love and compassion sprouting amongst them towards their fellow beings marked the success of this practice.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Since the disciplinary committee will have to do the follow up of its disciplinary actions, its time consuming for the teachers. One has to make sure that these students behave well in the centres assigned for compulsory services. Some students have the tendency to treat them as 'soft penalties' and repeat the mistakes. At times, the students never realize their mistakes and one cannot brush it aside treating it on a lighter vein. It is challenging for the teachers to act very prudently in handling sensitive students and their issues. However, the fraternity at large works together with a note of compassion so that the real spirit of teaching and learning is cherished here.