

Lieutenant Governor felicitated for degree in Doctor of Letters



(From left): Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen felicitates Dr. Iqbal Singh; Chief Minister V. Vaithilingam honours Dr. Singh.

The Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry at the Jawaharlal Nehru Auditorium here on Dec. 17. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen in his keynote address spoke about the humanism, social commitment and scholarship of Dr. Iqbal Singh, the Chief Rector of the university.

A felicitation ceremony was organised by the Government of



Dr. Iqbal Singh, in expressing acknowledgement of the felicitation, said that he found the people of Puducherry to be warm and simple. He also shared his views on national integration and the need for sincere commitment, and said, "God is one, and work is worship."

PU launches 22 diplomas, 6 certificate courses



Vol.1, No. 3 of *The Inquirer* released on the occasion in the presence of (from left): Mr. Loganathan, Prof. Gnanam, Prof. Tareen, Dr. Iqbal Singh, Mr. Vaithilingam and Mr. Shajahan.

Lt. Governor of Puducherry, Dr. Iqbal Singh inaugurated 22 post-graduate diploma and six language courses offered by the university on Sept. 16, on his maiden visit to the institution as Chief Rector.

Dr. Iqbal Singh opined that innovation is the watchword, when it comes to the context of education. He said, "Educational improvement is not just upgrading infrastructure, but content and quality too. The focus on innovation adds meaning to education."

Referring to the foreign language courses, he added that multi-lingual skills are a must for students and a foreign language in the profile is a bonus, especially to gain better employment.

Prof. Tareen said the student

enrolment in the university has increased from 1,400 to 3,200 this year. According to him, the university aims to reach the 5,000 mark, by the end of 2012 and there are plans to launch new courses next year.

These evening courses aim to add value to the main degree. At the end of two years, students will step out of PU's portals with a degree and two diplomas.

The university is progressing greatly and is becoming a front-runner in our country, said the former Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. A. Gnanam. He also released the third issue of *THE INQUIRER* on this occasion and said that the standard of the journal is world-class.

Silver Jubilee Celebrations take off

On Oct. 16, Pondicherry University entered into its 25th year. The Inaugural Lectures of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations from Nov. 24-26 were introduced by Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Vice-Chancellor, at the Earth and Science Seminar Hall.

Prof. J.A.K. Tareen pointed out that in the celebrations, every activity must be gainful. Inviting scientists and veterans from all over the world to the university is one such activity.

"Let the silver jubilee bring in a new chapter, new *josh* (energy) to the university", he said. He hoped that the presence of global resources, including at least ten Nobel laureates would enthuse and inspire all on campus.

On this occasion, he also expressed the intention to establish a Centre for Green Energy Research and M.Tech. in Green Technology.

The lectures were delivered by Prof. V. Renugopalakrishnan, North-

eastern University, Boston, USA on Green Energy Research and an environmentally sustainable world. In his thought-provoking address, he stressed on the need to conserve and generate energy. He added that through transformative leaps into the future, we will all have a role to play. "We can pierce every barrier and if anyone says we cannot do it, the question is why not? The only requirements are perseverance and tenacity," he added.

2010: Silver Jubilee Year Activities

In an interview with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, about the Silver Jubilee celebrations, *THE INQUIRER* team learnt that the Silver Jubilee year is being celebrated with the following activities:

- Silver Jubilee lectures by eminent scholars from India and abroad.

- Silver Jubilee souvenirs include jackets, ties, t-shirts, wall & table calendars exclusively designed by our Vice-Chancellor.

- Establishing the Silver Jubilee fund.
- Silver Jubilee Cultural Meet of theatre artists from SAARC countries.
- Silver Jubilee coffee table book will be brought out.

- Silver Jubilee Convention Complex at a cost of 35 crores will be constructed.
- Silver Jubilee award for Best Research in Science & Technology, Social Sciences, Management and Humanities.
- University souvenir will be designed.
- Silver Jubilee Scholarship fund.

Coming up : A world-class auditorium on campus



A perspective plan of the Silver Jubilee Auditorium at Pondicherry University

Beyond Disability

Muruganandan, a 2nd year M.A. English student, is one of the brightest students in the university. Nikhila, in 1st year M.C.A, believes in planning and says it is the key to success. Sakthivel, a 1st year M.A. Tamil student, loves books and spends most of his time reading. The three of them have different ideas, concepts, lifestyles, goals and aspirations. But what they have in common is the tag "disability",

which separates them from the so-called "normality".

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A winner against all odds
See Think Tank =>



The fourth issue of *THE INQUIRER* is happy to announce the beginning of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations. The students have worked hard to cover the entire gamut of events that have occurred over the last few months in the university. Luckily, there is just about enough space for this editorial to be squeezed in! Two new sections in this edition, PU Proactive and Think Tank, reflect the engagement with a

range of issues in the university. Both students and faculty are discussing and acting on concerns of education, violence against women, reviving folklore and creating a sustainable world and an eco-friendly campus.

Our special focus on 'Beyond Disability' hopes to sensitize and inspire our readers to proactively help realise the potential of the differently abled. Keep inquiring!

Radhika Khanna
Editor

Welcome to PU's knowledge hub

The zeal to weave dreams into reality needs powerful motivation. Only a select few seize the moment and make a success story. Meet the person behind the changing face of our library, forward-thinking, new age librarian, Dr. R. Samyuktha of the Ananda Rangapillai Library, Pondicherry University. A graduate of Madras University, with 28 years of experience, she is set to give the library a much-needed facelift. THE INQUIRER caught up with her while she talked about her future plans and the role of the library in a new information society.

TI: What made you come here?

This is a central university. However my alma mater, Madras University, will always have a special place in my heart.

TI: What did you have in mind when you first took charge of this library?

My major task was to make our Vice-Chancellor's vision come true. He wanted the library to have the best ambience that will attract library users. Revamping the structure was my primary task. I had to bring the library back to life, work on the value-added services the library could offer and introduce innovative facilities.

TI: How far have you been able to achieve your goal?

In one year, the university has undergone many changes. Through the journal Consortium of the UGC, we have delivered over a thousand articles to various universities and received over 800 for our students. A book exhibition was organized in the campus where e-books were marketed alongside print books. We have regular brainstorming sessions to upgrade library facilities.

TI: How would you rate the library on a 10-point rating scale?

I would like to give the library 8



The Crusader: Dr. R. Samyuktha
Photo: Kamlesh

points for the tremendous improvement it has made in the past year. But we still have a lot of work to do. A new four-storeyed, fully air-conditioned, building with 24 hour reading facility will soon be coming up next to the present one. We will also have a special state-of-the-art section for the visually challenged, a children's library and the Department of Library and Information Science. The library is integrated with a Wi-Fi connection and a Beta version of the library portal, which was launched in August is about to go public soon.

We wish to transform the library into a Knowledge Resource Centre. Orientation programmes, Workshops and software demonstration programmes are being conducted for the benefit of the users. As an extension activity, talks are also broadcast on Community Radio services.

TI: What are the difficulties you have been faced with?

We had the problem of low bandwidth that has been overcome. It has been increased four-fold from 8 mbps to 32 mbps. In this respect, we are on par with top universities like the University of Hyderabad and the University of Delhi. Also, 15,000 print books and 7,000 e-books were

purchased last year. We have access to 18,000 full text e-journals at present. Every section is overflowing with books. Therefore, we are facing the difficulty of space, which will soon be overcome when the new building comes up.

TI: Why is the library not accessible 24-hours?

There isn't enough staff to assist in managing the library on a 24-hour basis. Currently, however, the library does remain open till 10 pm for the examinations. This too will change in the near future.

TI: As the Chief Librarian and as a teacher, what is your view on the subject of Library and Information Science?

Most people are not aware of this field. Our university introduced this course two years ago. Not many

colleges offer this course, but it can be pursued in various universities. A graduate from any stream can apply for a post-graduation in Library Science.

One could also go for M.Phil. or Ph.D. after that. This field provides good employment opportunities.

TI: What could be a possible career option for students of Library Science apart from working as a librarian?

Today, we have Information Scientists and Cyberarians who are frequently picked up by corporate houses like Wipro, Cognizant and Infosys. Database editors and Technical editors are employed by publishing houses. If one studies Chemistry and Library Science, one can work on editing chemistry databases.

TI: Do you have any plans to make

the Ananda Rangapillai Library as renowned as, say, the National Library of Singapore?

We have plans of launching RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Technology) for security and CCTVs (IP enabled) to monitor round-the-clock activities in our library. The infrastructure is being improved. After acquiring an ISO certification for quality services, we should be able to position the library as a global brand.

TI: Finally, what would you like to tell our readers?

One should not be forced to come to the library. One should develop a desire for using it, as it is the heart of any university.

(As told to Kamlesh and Smarak)

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

A stage for new age information professionals

In continuation of our section which is similar to the "Know your University" initiative on the campus, we are happy to showcase yet another department. This issue introduces our readers to the working and accomplishments of the Library and Information Science Department.

-Editor

The Department of Library and Information Science offers a masters' degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS). Started in the academic year 2007-08, it has expanded under the able leadership of Dr. R. Samyukta.

The discipline caters to creating a pool of information professionals who, in society, are traditionally known as librarians. But since the world has changed, the role and concept of a librarian has also achieved a paradigm shift. A new genre of information professionals

are evolving who are better termed as Information Scientists, Cyberarians, Technical Editors and Webmasters.

The course curriculum is designed to suit the growing needs in different spheres of society, such as academic institutions, corporate bodies, hospitals, research libraries, public libraries and publishing houses.

Being part of a central university, it has developed its programme with new avenues in library sciences like modules on Library Automation, Digital Libraries, Web Technologies, E-Publishing, Industrial information systems, Technical writing, Communication skills and Public Relations. It also ensures to provide sufficient hands-on training in different library software and digitization of library. Students also undergo summer internship for two months in reputed libraries to have



Photo: Agni

a proper work experience.

Recently this department has introduced a PG Diploma course on Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN) which will be an added qualification to students.

So it would be a perfect decision to study here for those who wish to excel in the field of Library and Information Science. The department has already set the stage for you!

Dr. R. Samyuktha
Coordinator,

Dept. of Library & Information Science
Pondicherry University.

Celebration bells ring at PU

Onam

The festival of Onam was celebrated at the university on Oct. 11 by organising a cultural programme at the J.N. Auditorium. The event - Ritu '09 showcased music, dance and other cultural aspects of Kerala, including traditional art forms, such as 'thiruvathira' and 'oppana'.

John Thomas, former Registrar of the university, was the Chief Guest. S. Loganathan, the Registrar, inaugurated the event. Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations and Nalini J. Thambi, Coordinator of Department of French were also among the guests.

Diwali

The festival of Diwali was celebrated in a grand manner with music, dance and other cultural programmes and some spectacular fireworks at the J.N. Auditorium on Oct. 17.



An inter-cultural performance from Crossroads '09
Photo: Agni

The show, Crossroads '09 had participants from various departments in the university and representation from almost all parts of the country; hence it lived up to its motto: one region, one nation, one celebration.

Several programmes, such as concerts, dance performances and a play were staged at Crossroads '09 for entertainment.

The programmes, which lasted more than two hours, were preceded

by an inaugural function and ended with a display of fireworks and a dance party.

The inaugural meeting was presided over by the Coordinator, Department of French, Nalini. J. Thampi.

Noel

Noel has become a tradition in the university since it started. The Christmas celebration on Dec. 8 was a two-hour event with indoor games, carol songs, nativity play and choreography show.

Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations, conveyed Christmas wishes on this occasion. Prof. Jayka Chelraj, former Principal of Bishop Herber College, Trichy, gave the Christmas message and highlighted its significance in today's world.

Jai Hind(I)

University observes

Hindi Pakhwara Samaroh

Pondicherry University celebrated Hindi Pakhwara Samaroh (Celebration of Hindi Day) on Sept. 29 at the J.N. Auditorium.

Coordinator of the event Dr. Chakradhar Behera, Reader, Department of Sanskrit, emphasised the importance of promoting Hindi. Dileep Singh, Registrar of Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, Chennai, was the Chief Guest.

Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations stressed on encouraging the usage of Hindi by screening Hindi documentary films, organising skits and other events. He also mentioned the Hindi diploma evening course recently introduced in the university.

PU's tryst with theatre

The Department of Performing Arts staged a drama performance - 'Vellai Vattam' in their Studio Theatre on Oct. 25. The performance followed a 9-day Theru Koothu workshop conducted by the department for the university students. Theru Koothu is one of the oldest and most popular forms of Tamil drama.

On Nov. 11, two plays - 'King Oedipus' and 'La Loba: The Wolf Woman' were staged by the students. La Loba was a solo performance by Jairo Fruto Vergara at the Culture-cum-Convention Centre. Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen was the Chief Guest.

The show was part of a week-long Physical Theatre Workshop conducted by Jairo Fruto Vegara and Yasmin, both from Colombia, for the Performing Arts students.

For coverage of activities in the Campus Buzz, inform us at puinquirer@gmail.com

CURBING CORRUPTION

Vigilance Awareness Week



Pondicherry University observed Vigilance Awareness Week from Nov. 3-7, as per the recommendations of the CVC (Central Vigilance Commission), Government of India, New Delhi.

Essay and poster competitions were conducted for faculty members, non-teaching staff and students of the university and affiliated colleges as part of the Awareness Week. More than hundred people participated in these.

On Nov. 3, all University Officers, Faculty and staff gathered in the J.N.

Auditorium. The winners of the essay and poster competitions were awarded prizes before administering the Pledge. The Vice-Chancellor then addressed the gathering and administered the Pledge to all. It was broadcast live on Puduvas Vaani – the Community Radio Station of the university.

Promos, jingles and programmes, including audio bytes from Statutory Officers, faculty, staff and students on Vigilance Awareness were also broadcast on Puduvas Vaani during this week.

Gandhi and social justice

The Department of Politics and International Studies organised a 3-day national seminar on ‘Social Justice in the Era of Globalization: Invoking Gandhian Ideals’ from Nov. 25-28. Subject experts, professors, research scholars and students from different parts of the country participated and presented papers at the event.

The seminar was inaugurated by S.N. Sahu, Director, Prime Minister’s

Office, New Delhi, who remembered Gandhi’s contribution to securing social equity through non-violence.

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Tareen, called the seminar an eye-opener.

He urged the participants to imbibe values that could help counteract the negative impact of materialism and consumerism. He also said that people in positions of power should play a fair role in ensuring social justice.

Gender Sensitisation workshop

The Centre for Women’s Studies organised a one-day workshop on Oct. 27 at the Earth Sciences Seminar Hall.

The topics discussed in this ‘Gender Sensitisation’ workshop included women’s rights awareness, law enforcement to enable women’s rights and legislation for women’s rights.

S. Kamalini, Chairperson of the Pondicherry Women’s Association,

inaugurated the event.

Sindu Pillai, Senior Superintendent of Police (Crime and Intelligence) Puducherry; Pandimadevi, advocate & social activist and Saraswathi Govindraj, educationist, presented papers on the topics of discussion.

The participants were divided into groups and a Group Discussion session was conducted to talk about general ideas and concepts on gender relations.

Rural camp at Nagapattinam

The Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University, organised its 3rd Annual Rural Camp at the Kameshwaram village in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu.

Forty Masters of Social Work students participated in the week-long camp - RISE (Rural India’s Soul Enlightening) ‘09 from Oct. 25 to Nov. 1.

The camp was organised in collaboration with EKTA, an NGO. The camp exposed the students to the socio-economic conditions, family structure, literacy rate, health and women’s issues.

Malliga Srinivasan, Chairman of the Union in Keezhvelur Block in Nagapattinam inaugurated the camp and T.G. Kanagasundaram, the



An evening of cultural entertainment by the students at RISE ‘09. Photo: Piyush

Kameshwaram Panchayat President, presided over the function.

Various activities, such as surveys, awareness campaigns, sports competitions, puppet shows on issues, such as alcoholism and other cultural programmes were conducted to orient people of the village towards a healthy social life.

Yet another honour for Vice-Chancellor conferred by the Lt. Governor



It was a moment of pride for Pondicherry University, when Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, the Vice-Chancellor, received the Padma Shri from the President of India, Pratibha Patil at a Civil Investiture ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi on March 31, earlier this year.

Once again, the university celebrated when Prof. Tareen was conferred the honorary rank of Colonel Commandant by the NCC Group Headquarters, Puducherry.

Students and faculty arrived in

large numbers for a grand ceremony on Dec. 2 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Auditorium. He was felicitated by the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, Dr. Iqbal Singh, who said that this rank is given to those few who have contributed to society in

a significant way. He also noted that Prof. Tareen has been awarded this honour twice in his lifetime so far.

In his speech, Prof. Tareen acknowledged the role of the NCC in shaping his personality. He was part of the first NCC wing ‘NCC Rifles’ formed soon after India’s independence.

He also reiterated his commitment to promote the NCC in the best possible way in all institutions affiliated to the university.

FACES THAT INSPIRE

Nobel Laureates portraits unveiled

On Dec. 17, the Department of Economics, School of Management, organised a function to unveil the portraits of Nobel Laureates in Economics since the institution of the award in 1969.

Prof. M. Ramadass, Head of the department said that it was a significant day in the annals of the department. He hoped that these would create awareness among students and motivate them to become Nobel Laureates.

Prof. Basheer Ahmed Khan,

Dean, School of Management, reiterated the sentiment and felicitated this initiative. Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Vice-Chancellor, noted that this marked the beginning of a new trend in the university. He hoped that the portraits would inspire youngsters to excel.

He also stressed on the need to experiment in the field of higher education. He emphasised on the need to create various endeavours that enthuse the young and bring out their talents.

Management @ Synapse

The Department of Management Studies organised an ‘Industry-Institution Interface’, *Synapse*, at the Cultural-cum-Convention Centre from Dec. 11-13.

Synapse witnessed participation from industrialists, professional managers, government representatives and academics who discussed contemporary issues on management and industry in India and the world. The theme of the event “Global Integration: Outlook for the Future” covered all aspects of management with special emphasis on Strategy, Marketing, Finance, Operations, HR and Systems.

The marketing panel discussed ‘Global brands Inc: the essence of 4Ps to inspire audience’. The HR panel was about ‘Employee Equity: the Way Forward for Global Recovery’. The finance panel mooted ‘Need of the Hour: Financial Theories or Market Sentiments’. The system panel deliberated on ‘ICT: Reaching the Unreached’.

The global panel presented ‘Global Guns Exploring Business Opportunities to Revolutionize Booming Guns’ and the operation panel offered ideas on ‘India’s Operations Buoyancy Lessons for the Future’.

Seminar on Financing Higher Education

The Department of Economics in association with State Bank of India and Indian Bank in Puducherry organized a one-day seminar on “Financing Higher Education- Issues and Policy Analysis” on Dec. 3.

The Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University, Prof. J.A.K Tareen presided over the seminar. He emphasised on the role of the educational system as being multi-dimensional and called for innovation and experimentation.

Prof M. Ramadoss, Head of the Department, outlined the scope of the seminar.

Among those who shared the dais included Prof. M. Basheer Ahmed Khan, Dean, School of Management; Mr. A.T. Philip Joseph, Deputy General Manager Indian Bank, Puducherry; Mr. R. Suresh Johnson, Regional Business Manager, SBI, Puducherry; and Dr. P. Muthaiyan, Reader, Department of Economics.

New at PU

Free taxi bicycles

The University has provided free taxi bicycles to facilitate students and also as an experiment to teach respect for public property.

The successful launch of yellow ‘taxi’ bicycles for male students was followed up by bright blue bicycles for female students. A convenient facility for the students to move around the campus, its usage prepares them to become responsible citizens.

Canteen renovation

In a move to improve the quality of food available on the campus, the existing canteens have been renovated and one new canteen has been inaugurated.

The canteen near Indian Bank has been renamed as Canteen 1 and the Humanities Block canteen has become Canteen 2. Both the buildings have been given a new makeover.

The new Canteen 3, set up near the School of Management building, has quickly gained popularity. It also has an A/C hall and facilities to celebrate birthdays and other occasions.

Upcoming

Dec. 29-30, 2009
International Conference on <i>Autism: Social Skills And Creativity</i> organised by Department of Social Work & Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth University
Venue: Culture-Cum-Convention Centre Pondicherry University
Jan. 21-22, 2010
National Seminar on <i>Emerging Trends in Media: The rise of digital culture and its impact on information society</i> organised by Centre for Electronic Media
Venue: School of Management Auditorium

News Briefs

The Department of Mathematics organised a national seminar on “Analysis of Partial Differential Equations” from Dec. 18-19. It was inaugurated by Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director, Culture & Cultural Relations, Pondicherry University.

The Department of Tourism Studies conducted a ‘Pondicherry Heritage Promotional Campaign’ on Vysal Street, followed by a street play to celebrate World Tourism Day on Sept. 27. The department also conducted a workshop on “Tourism - Celebrating Diversity” at the School of Management auditorium on this occasion.

The Centre for Tribal and Rural Development (CTRD), in association with the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences, organised an exhibition of carry bags from Oct. 5-7. These were products from more than 250 villages in the Nilgiri region.

PU for education reforms

The university celebrated National Education Day on Nov. 11 in honour of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's birthday.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, speaking on this occasion in New Delhi, insisted that we should find ways and means to improve the quality of our teachers. "Today is an occasion where all of us should rededicate ourselves to the cause of education, and through it to building India as a modern knowledge society. A system of education,

which is built on the premises of quality is central to India's rapid progress," he added.

The School of Education organised an awareness rally, which was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen. The students, faculty members and school students of Kendriya Vidyalaya on campus participated in the rally. A poster exhibition was also organised at the J.N. Auditorium.

Professor S. Sathikh, former

Vice-Chancellor of Madras University was the chief guest of the function. He spoke about the contributions of Maulana Azad towards India's freedom struggle and the development of the country's education.

Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations, S. Loganathan, Registrar of the university and Deans of various departments were among the guests.

Radhika & Smarak

Education for all?

Attempts have been made by the government to give quality education to all children through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). This has been further extended through Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) to the secondary level.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 creates a legal entitlement for compulsory and free education for all children

between the ages of 6 & 14 years.

In higher education, the outlay has been increased by 10 times in the Eleventh Five Year Plan as compared to the Tenth Five Year Plan. National Mission on Education through ICT has been launched in February 2009 with an outlay of about Rs. 5000 crore. This aims to provide internet connectivity to about 20,000 colleges and educational institutions.

Though the government

stands committed to providing quality education to each and every child in our country, especially those who belong to the underprivileged sections of our society; it should be accompanied by efforts to ensure equity and improve access to education. In higher education this will be achieved through structural reforms on the basis of the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission and the Yashpal Committee.

Reviving Folklore

The Kota tribe from the Nilgiris in South India has a population of five thousand persons spread across seven villages.

Their occupations include agriculture, goldsmithing, cattle rearing, carpentry and pottery. They revere God, their parents and nature.

An effort was initiated by the students of the

Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences by inviting the Kota tribe to perform in the university on Oct. 7.

Their folk performances included a series of dances: one that invokes and praises God, another called *Ragaki* (a dance as part of house-warming ceremony) and lastly, the wedding dance called *Lynore*.



A folk dance performance at the Jawaharlal Nehru Auditorium by the Kota tribe from Pudukothagiri, Nilgiris. Photos: Kamlesh

A sustainable world and an eco-friendly campus

The students of the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences launched a signature campaign and encouraged students to join an effort against global warming on the International Day of Climate Action.

The international website - 350.org - was the convergence point of the campaign, which aims to bring down the level of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere from 390 to 350 parts per million. According to scientists, 350 is the safe upper limit for CO₂ in the earth's atmosphere.

On Oct. 24, Pondicherry University became part of an important environmental action through this campaign. Hundreds of students and staff, including the university Registrar joined in.

Tamilselvi, one of the students who took initiative to organise the



A student signing up for the signature campaign Photo: Siddarth

campaign, called it an extremely effective tool for awareness. "We got about 400 signatures. We want people to come forward and support this campaign. Many students asked questions and tried to gain more awareness about global warming and the 350 target," she added.

Balasubbulakshmi



The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences has called for setting up an environmentally sustainable campus.

As part of the Sustainable Campus Initiative, Dr. G. Poyya Moli, Reader, Department of Ecology and Environmental Science emphasised the need to promote and reinforce environmental responsibility.

Addressing the students at the lecture hall on Dec. 18, he urged students to volunteer and participate in this project. He suggested the implementation of

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Standing up for what's right

The United Nations observed the International Fortnight for the Elimination of Violence Against Women from Nov. 25 to Dec. 10. Globally, women are harassed in all spheres of life, both physically and mentally. The patriarchal nature of our society also denies human rights to women. A recent study by National Crime Records Bureau reveals that in every 3 minutes a crime against women takes place, in every 9 minutes a case of abuse by a family member is registered and in every 77 minutes a dowry death is reported.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, on Nov. 24, led a chorus of UN officials in calling on the international community to take greater efforts to tackle this global pandemic.

On this occasion, the Centre for Women's Studies, Pondicherry University, organised signature campaigns, poster exhibitions, film screenings, group discussions, quiz competitions and interactive lectures. Students and research scholars of the department presented

papers based on local level studies. The topics discussed included female foeticide and infanticide, legal provisions to prevent violence, subtle forms of gender violence, violence against women in the media and its consequences, polygamy and women in Puducherry, violence against widows, violence against women at work places and male child preference in Puducherry.

A poster exhibition on 'Unite to Stop Violence Against Women' attracted many students. Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations, unveiled the posters. Dr. Usha V.T., Reader and Coordinator, Centre for Women's Studies, said that collaboration and collective action are the only means by which we can move forward to a better gender-just society. "Problems faced by women is a social issue, not only created by men," she added. Dr. Manimekhalai, Director, Centre for Women's Studies, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, was the guest of honour.

Balasubbulakshmi,
Devanathan & Sukanya

Tradition and modernity must meet

A National Workshop on Folklore and other Disciplines was held by the Subramania Bharati School of Tamil Language and Literature at the School of Management Auditorium on Dec. 18-19.

Addressing the participants, Prof. A. Balasubramanian, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations, said that folklore is a traditional form of entertainment that reflects the culture of the people. He emphasised the need to promote, protect and project folklore, especially Dravidian folklore. In the changing scenario of emerging new media, it is necessary to record the

varied folklore activities on digital forms, he added.

He stressed on the need to include folk media in our educational system and in modern forms of mass communication. He urged media professionals to integrate folk forms into cinema, radio, television, and the Internet. As a step in this direction, the university has initiated the development of a culture portal on the Internet. The revival of folklore would help in changing society and people through social and cultural development.

Radhika



Photos: Enya

rainwater harvesting, solid waste management and efficient utilisation of energy in the university. Stating that colleges and universities all over the world are embracing sustainability goals, he said that such an effort would help to put our university on the global map of sustainable campuses.

Students can play an important

role in promoting environmental awareness by joining the action network initiated under the aegis of the Sustainable Development programme of the department, he added.

Balasubbulakshmi & Devanathan
You too can contribute.
To volunteer, contact Nidhi at 9943579279.



Beyond Disability

=> Continued from Pg.1



Nafisa Buhariwalla, Senior Manager, Central Bank of India, Mumbai.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 1

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder on an equal basis with others.

"I need my friends help to access the internet. JAWS (screen reading software) would make it easier for me to use it myself. There are no scholarships for the visually impaired, no audio recordings of lectures is available and there is a lack of Braille books or books with enlarged fonts in the library. Also, as there is no scribe allowance, it is hard to rope in people to write exams for me. It is really difficult here, but I want to continue my studies," says 22-year-old Muruganandan, who is visually impaired.



Students at the XRCVC, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.

These thoughts catch our attention as the world observes Dec. 3 as the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Established by the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

'Disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders full and effective participation in society on



Abbas, a computer teacher at the Helen Keller Institute for Deaf & Deafblind, Mumbai, with Mrs. Beroz N. Vacha, Founder of the institute.

an equal basis with others' is the definition in the Preamble of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

According to a WHO survey 600 million people in the world are "differently abled", which constitutes 10 percent of the world's population, of which 80 percent live in developing countries.

The theme for this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities is thought-provoking. 'Making the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) Inclusive: Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and their Communities around the World'. It focuses on building a world that is inclusive and much more responsive and sensitive to the needs of the differently abled.

Accessibility and greater mobility are important concepts to be taken into consideration, while promoting the empowerment and inclusion of the differently abled in society. Sakthivel finds it difficult to read books due to poor vision. He has partial visual impairment. He feels that differently abled people should be integrated into the mainstream and they should be provided with ample facilities to aid them in carving a niche for themselves. "A

few additions to the infrastructure and facilities can go a long way in ensuring ease of access to valuable learning resources," he says.

Our common perception blinds us to the potential and ability of a differently abled individual. More often than not, there is an "us and them" attitude towards the differently abled and this is at the root of their feeling of exclusion. Feelings of sympathy, curiosity and condescension often arise from those who are not disabled. Differently abled people do not seek sympathy and don't want to be looked down upon. Instead, respect and facilities that support them are essential. They are entitled to equal opportunity and need to be offered a range of utilities as per individual requirements. These include examination support, specialised equipments and software, library assistance, note-taking in class, readers, sign interpreters and parking provisions.

How can a country like India, with 21.9 million people who are differently abled, overcome the challenges involved? The "Persons with Disability Act, 1995" has been a landmark legislation in recognising their welfare. It outlines the

provisions, including educational facilities, allowances, and privileges of the differently abled.

But few provisions of the Act have been followed up by concrete action. Public utilities, transport system, educational institutions and recreational complexes still are not easily accessible to the differently abled.

Nikhila says that she has been in the university for the past six months, yet she has not stepped out of her department. Mobility is difficult and so she hasn't even seen where the library is. Her father drops her at the university every morning. She is apprehensive about her ability to complete the soft core courses as she has to go to other departments to study them. "I wish they would shift all the classes to our building on the ground floor," she says.

The UN Convention is a step to empower people with disabilities. The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on Dec. 13, 2006. It was opened for signature on March 30, 2007 and entered into force on May 3, 2007.

India was one of the first few countries to accept and ratify this convention. Much needs to be done to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Acknowledgement of their human rights and respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity will help achieve their full and effective participation in society.

Bagalavan, Nandini,
Radhika, Varisha & Vishnu

Photos: Radhika

A winner against all odds

Vijayata Rani is a Ph.D. scholar in the Department of Politics and International Studies at Pondicherry University. She talks to THE INQUIRER about her visual impairment, struggles and success.

"I cannot let my disability stop me from achieving my dreams," says Vijayata, brimming with confidence.

Vijayata, whose name means 'winner', has faced many challenges in her journey - being denied admission in schools because of her disability, surrounded by people unaware of her problems and a lack of proper guidance in school. She has crossed all these hurdles and more with her vivacity and zest for life. Full of energy, she is proud to be in a position few have managed to reach.

The various people who have encouraged her, include her teachers



Vijayata (right) and her friends practice for NOEL '09.

Photo: Aviini

and family. "I learned basic Braille from Dr. Ashwin, a Philosophy professor, when I was in Class VII. Before that, I studied in a regular school, where my mother was a teacher. She read out the books for me and I would take my exams orally. My mother was always there to assist and guide me," she said.

Vijayata was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at the age of two. She has been travelling to

different parts of the country for her treatment as well as for her education.

She first studied in Betiah, her hometown in Bihar, and then moved on to the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH), Dehradun. She was initially a bit apprehensive about living away from her family, but took it as a challenge and the experiences made her stronger.

At NIVH, she completed her higher secondary education and also

received many awards. Subsequently she joined Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi in 2003 and took up Political Science as her major, which was her favourite subject. After her graduation, she came to the South, to do her Masters from Stella Mary's College in Chennai. With the advancement of modern technology, it became easier for her to study and she also learned how to use a computer. Her friends and teachers also assisted and supported her in every way.

After completing her Masters, Vijayata wanted to pursue her Ph.D. and joined Pondicherry University. She is now conducting research on Indo-European Relations.

Even though technology has the potential to facilitate learning, she has observed that there are limited facilities for the visually challenged. Vijayata feels that more emphasis

should be placed on improving library facilities in all educational institutions. Screen reading and magnifying softwares installed on all computers can enable visually challenged students to access the world of knowledge.

Talking about her future, she says with determination in her voice, "I want to hold a strong position, where I'll be financially independent and reach out to people in need."

Her message to young people like her is indeed inspiring. "Ask for help, share your problems, change your weaknesses into strengths and life will become easier - you'll have fun in all that you do," she says with a smile.

"I have fallen down a lot of times, but got up and moved on ahead. If there is a problem there is always a solution."

Aviini

அழகிய பொம்மைகளுக்கு பின்?

நெடுஞ்சாலை ஓரத்தில் நிரந்தரமில்லாத குடில்கள், வடமங்கலம் மேயின் ரோட்டில் இராஜஸ்தானிலிருந்து புலம் பெயர்ந்து வாழும் மக்கள்.

இவ்வூரில் சில நாட்கள், இன்னொரு ஊரில் சில மாதங்கள் இதுதான் இவர்களின் குடியுரிமை.

இவர்களின் வாழ்க்கை முறையைப் பற்றி அறிந்து கொள்ள அணுகியபோது விரக்தியுடன் பேசத்தெடங்கினார்கள். வண்ண வண்ண பொம்மைகள் செய்து அதன் மூலம் வரும் வருமானத்தில் தங்கள் வறுமையைப் போக்கி கொள்ளும் அவர்களில் ஒருவர் பெயர் லாலா. அவருக்கே அவரின் வயது சரியாகத் தெரியவில்லை தோராயமாக 35 இருக்கும் என்றார். இவருக்கு மனைவி மற்றும் ஐந்து பெண் குழந்தைகள் உள்ளனர். குழந்தைகளைப் படிக்கவைக்க வேண்டும் என்ற ஆசை இருந்தாலும், இடம் விட்டு இடம் பெயர்வதாலும், வேலை செய்ய ஆட்கள் இல்லை என்ற காரணத்தாலும் குழந்தைகளைப் படிக்க வைக்க இயலவில்லை என

வருந்துகின்றனர். பொம்மைகளுக்கு சாயம் பூசுதல், தண்ணீர் எடுத்துவருதல், சமையல் செய்தல் போன்ற வேலைகளை மட்டுமே அக்குழந்தைகள் செய்கிறார்கள். இங்கிருக்கும் 60 பேருக்கும் இதுவே பரம்பரைத் தொழிலாகிப்போக, வருமானத்தைப் பொருத்து இவர்களின் பயணம் நீள்கிறது.

மாநில அரசிடமிருந்து உதவிகள் இல்லாத நிலையில் யாரிடமும் கையெந்தவில்லை, எங்க சொந்த முதலீடுதான் என்று கூறுகிறார் லாலா. இந்தியா முழுவதும் சுற்றும் இவர்கள் சைகை மொழியை அதிகம் பயன்படுத்துகின்றனர். தண்ணீர் பிரச்சனை, மின்சாரம், மழை போன்ற இடப்பாடுகளில் புலம் பெயரும் இவர்களுக்கும் தங்களின் பிறந்த ஊர்தான் பிடித்திருக்கிறது.

நாடு முழுவதும் சுற்றினாலும், தங்களின் கலாச்சாரத்தைக் காப்பதைக் கடமையாக நினைக்கின்றனர். தங்களுக்குள் பணிகளை பகிர்ந்து கொள்கின்றனர். திருமணச்சடங்குகளும்,



தாங்கள் தயாரித்த பொம்மைகளை விற்பனைக்கு வண்டியில் ஏற்றுகிறார் படம்: கபா

சம்பிரதாயங்களும் முறையாக பின்பற்றும் இவர்கள், பெண்ணின் 13ஆம் வயதிலேயே திருமணம் செய்கின்றனர். மாப்பிள்ளையும், பெண்ணும் திருமணத்திற்கு ஒரு மாதத்திற்கு முன்பிருந்தே சடங்குகளில் கலந்து கொள்கின்றனர். மருமகள் மாமியார் முகத்தை வாழ்நாள் முழுவதும் பார்க்கக்கூடாது. முகத்தை

மூடிக்கொள்ள வேண்டும், தலைகுனிந்துதான் பேச வேண்டும், இதை மீறினால் தெய்வ குற்றமாகும் என கருதுகின்றனர். அவர்களின் தெய்வமான காளியின் முன்பு புத்தகத்தை படித்து அக்னியை எழுமுறை சுற்றி வந்து இருவரின் கைகளைச் சேர்த்து வைத்தால் திருமணம் முடிந்துவிட்டது, தலையை

மறைக்கும் குஞ்சத்துடன் கழுத்து முதல் கால்வரை மூடிமறைக்கும் 'சோலி காங்ரா' இவர்களின் பாரம்பரிய உடை வெள்ளியாலான அணிகலன் அணிவார்கள். ஆண்கள்மட்டும் தங்க கம்மல் அணிவார்கள்.

ஒரு நாளைக்கு 200, முதல் 300 ரூபாய் வரை இலாபம் பெறும் இவர்களின் வாழ்க்கையில், உடல்நலத்திற்கென சேமிப்பு ஏதுமில்லை, ஆயுர்வேத மருத்துவமுறையும், அரசு மருத்துவமனைகள் மட்டுமே இவர்களது நம்பிக்கை. பொம்மைகள் நமக்கது அலங்காரப் பொருள், ஆனால் அவர்களின் வாழ்வாதாரமே அதுதான். பேனா மை தொடாத பிஞ்சுக்கைகள் வண்ணச் சாயங்களால் சிவந்துள்ளன. வாழ்வில் மாற்றங்களை விரும்பாத இவர்களின் வாழ்க்கை நிலை எந்த மாற்றத்தை நோக்கி செல்லுமோ?

அரவிந்த், பாலமுருகன், சந்துரு, ரஞ்சித், கபா

Caring for the world: Ecology department

"Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it."

- Mahatma Gandhi

It is often easy to feel overwhelmed at a time of species extinction and habitat destruction. The problem is large and complex and it's common for individuals to feel powerless.

Yet, everything we do is vitally important. We may only do a little bit in the grand scheme of things, but together our seemingly small actions add up to a lot.

Doing their part is the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences in Pondicherry University. They observed Wildlife Week from Oct. 5-7. The students tried to spread the message of conservation and environmental awareness through a melange of activities, such as film

and documentary screenings, lectures by eminent speakers, a wildlife photography exhibition, a wildlife quiz, live snake handling and a mini fair with various stalls.

Annamalai University and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) joined the Ecology department in organising the Wildlife Week.

Students from the Centre of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Marine Biology, Annamalai University, led by Associate Professor Dr. T.T. Ajith Kumar, set up a stall as part of Wildlife Week. The stall showcased marine ornamental fish, which were bred for trading purposes. These fish were sourced from the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.

After CMFRI (Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute), CAS is known to have facilities in place for breeding marine ornamental fish in



KING OF KINGS: The photograph that won the Best Picture award at the exhibition.

Photo: Sripad Sridhar



(Top) Students from various departments get together to present an original performance - 'Conserve'. The story focuses on the plight of wild animals and the danger of extinction that many wild species face.

(Bottom) Officials from the Forest Department, Puducherry conducted live snake handling sessions with students to spread awareness that not all snakes are dangerous and they are necessary for the maintenance of the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Photos: Kamlesh & Nandini



India. "We are the first to use water with low saline content for breeding these fish," explained N.B. Dhayanithi, a Ph.D. student from CAS. The real life version of Disney's Nemo and other marine ornamental fish, such as the false clownfish, caught the attention of students.

The department also organised a two-day photo exhibition as part of the Wildlife Week to spread awareness about the importance of preserving wildlife and it showcased at least 500 photographs taken from around the globe.

Regional photos formed the majority and most of them were

taken at the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Every wildlife photograph had a detailed description about the species, along with the picture. The collection covered various species, ranging from insects to blue whales.

Organisations such as Madras Naturalist Society, WWF Chennai, Alliance Française Puducherry and several individuals contributed photographs.

Discussing the relevance of the event, Sidharth R., an M.Sc. student and a member of the organising committee said, "Conservation is the need of the hour. We want to make people aware of the species that are about to disappear from this planet and we want them to do something to prevent that."

When asked if their campaign is focusing on any particular species, he said, "We often find that the students and the security staff in the campus kill snakes and scorpions. We want to let them know that not all of these creatures are dangerous and their existence is important to maintain the balance of the ecosystem."

Films, such as Ice Age 3, Born Free and documentaries by David Attenborough, were also screened as part of the Wildlife Week. The event concluded with a skit about conservation awareness and a dance performance by the Kota tribe from Pudukothagiri, Nilgiris.

The programme was an opportunity to the university students to learn and understand about the customs, beliefs and rituals of the tribe.

When students asked the troupe about their thoughts on modernisation, S. Nandan Camba, the youngest of the troupe, said, "We welcome education, but not complete modernisation. We want to preserve our tradition that has been passed down to us from our ancestors."

Sure enough some tribals were spotted using cell phones, but that is about as far as they let technology influence their lives - they are fighting to ensure that their habitat does not turn into a concrete jungle.

Nandini & Vishnu

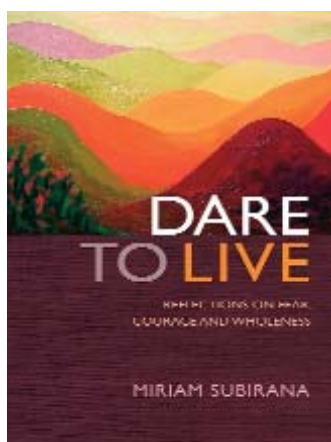
Healing The Past

In order to be authentic, open, sincere and honest, you have to heal the past that has stayed recorded onto the heart of the self. Heal it so that your heart can love without fear, and all your being can show itself without hiding, without bitterness or rigidity.

To overcome fears, it is necessary that your mind is not weighed down by the past nor worried about the future. It is important that you are in peace with your past. Revise your past; if there is some part of the past where you feel bitterness, repentance, hate, fear or unhappiness, it is good to cleanse it.

You can have bad experiences in different moments, but learn not to record them in your memory. With inner strength and with mental power, that is, with a mind that does not repeat the weak, the negative, and does not keep on thinking about bad experiences, you can deal with situations and live through them with flexibility, lightness, tolerance and transformation.

If in your consciousness there remains a minimal impression of something of the past, some experience with someone, when you



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look at and speak to people you will do it with that attitude and vision. That impression of the past will prevent you from seeing things with the necessary cleanliness with which to observe the present moment with clarity and without prejudices.

Thoughts create a world and, when, besides, we speak about something, we widen it or make it bigger on putting it into words. Thoughts about the past are “old” thoughts, which create an atmosphere of this kind, and that influences our interactions and relationships. Your weak and useless thoughts create vibrations that produce a useless and

wasteful atmosphere. It is important to finish with even old vibrations.

If you generate pure, positive and renewing vibrations, with the power of these vibrations you can finish with the useless vibrations. Positive and renewing thoughts can put an end to other thoughts. Cultivate healthy, beautiful and powerful thoughts. These thoughts carry such energy that, definitively, they will put an end to useless thoughts. Begin by cleaning up your thoughts. Then strengthen and generate the power of purity and authenticity in your thoughts; that way you will create thoughts that shine, and are sincere and full of meaning.

Accepting

The healthy attitude that you should have in the face of your past is to accept it fully and to be at peace with yourself and others. If this means to ask forgiveness, if it means to clear things up of any kind or if it means to do the work of transforming a negative experience into positive, it is worth trying to do so. If there is not full acceptance of the past, you will live the present unhappily and it will lead you to become frustrated, get depressed, fall

apart or simply be in a bad mood and have mood swings that are difficult to control.

Reconciliation with things you have lived through

Some fears arise due to the situations we have lived through. There are fears that we carry within us that are not of the present. To overcome this kind of fear due to experiences you have lived through,



Miriam Subirana from Spain is a columnist with THE INQUIRER. She is Director of YESOUI, International Centre for Creativity, Spirituality and Coaching. In this issue we have an extract from her book DARE TO LIVE - Reflections on Fear, Courage and Wholeness.

you have to reconcile yourself with your past and accept it fully. You cannot change your past; lamenting the past doesn't help you; complaining about the past doesn't benefit you either.

Those shields brought about by fears do not disappear unless you do a profound cleansing. Begin to heal your experience of the past. Part of the past is healed with forgiveness. Without forgiving, you cannot forget.

You have to “fit in” the pieces of your past so that they do not continue to generate upsets. You should fit them in, accept that you had to live through them and live the present with a constructive vision of the future.

The work with oneself to see what aspects of your past weigh on you and clarifying yourself with your past requires silence, reflection and meditation. When you reconcile yourself with your own past, you can let go of it and be free of it, not be afraid that that past will come back to you.

Extract from the book: Dare To Live. Reflections on Fear, Courage and Wholeness. Published in India by Indra Publishing House.

THE SAND AT OUR FEET

Artistic expression knows no boundaries. A little known yet unique form of art is sand sculpting. The creation of a masterpiece out of just a pile of sand involves a lot of hard work, creativity and dedication. Sudarshan Pattnaik is a world renowned sand artist who is known for his innovative and detailed sand sculptures. Born in Puri, Orissa, Pattnaik taught himself this complex art since sand art is not considered a professional art form in India yet.

His firm determination and creative zeal made him overcome these limitations and master this art. Today, his work has been appreciated and applauded the world over and he has won a number of different awards for his creations that give sand art a new content and meaning.

“My ultimate aim is to change people's perception that sand art is a temporary form of art,” he said. He has a unique way of depicting social issues symbolically through his art. His work on the Olive Ridley turtles on the Orissa coastline, creations on world peace, AIDS awareness and so on have given his work a meaning that goes beyond the aesthetic.

Sudarshan Pattnaik came to the shores of Pondicherry for an exhibition from Oct. 1-4. Organised by the Rotary Club of Pondicherry, the Pondicherry Tourism Department, ‘Pondy Can’ and Kalakendra, the exhibition's focus was a sand sculpture created for the occasion of

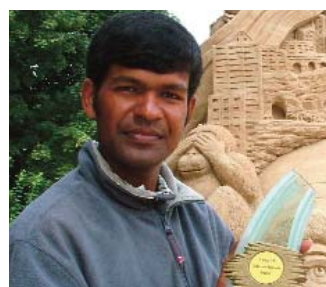


Gandhi Jayanti and also to spread awareness on Global Warming. It was created by him and an 8-member team in 8 hours, using 100 tonnes of sand.

It portrayed Mahatma Gandhi with the famous “three monkeys” against the backdrop of a clean and healthy world. “Save Forest, Clean City, Conserve Water”, read the message on the sculpture. Pattnaik's gift to Pondicherry, therefore, is a unique idea of combining Gandhi's ideals of peace and the need for environmental protection.

Pattnaik has yet another goal –

working towards the conversion of sand art into a professionally recognised form of art. He started providing training to artists through the open air Golden Sand Art Institute at Puri beach, in 1994. Starting with just two students, he now has a 35 member team of sand artists. He has students from India and abroad who enrol for regular and short-term courses, and he helps them undertake projects. “I aim to use the Gurukul concept to help interested persons to become professional sand artists,” he explained. He has conducted



The artist, Sudarshan Pattnaik and some of his masterpieces

workshops in numerous fairs and festivals across the globe to promote sand art.

What makes his work distinctive

is his passion to create awareness on contemporary issues of social relevance through his sculptures.

“Current national and international events based on social problems, such as world peace, threatened wildlife species, terrorism, HIV-AIDS, global warming and similar issues usually form the subject of my sculptures. I use sand art to create public awareness about all these issues,” commented Sudarshan.

Nandini

Photos: Internet

Accolades

- Felicited during the release of the 20th edition of Limca Book of Records 2009 at New Delhi for being among the twenty ‘People of the Year’.
- First Prize at the Berlin World Sand Art Competition in 2008.
- Fourth Prize at China International Sand Sculpture Competition 2003.
- Champion Medal in ‘29th International Snow Statue Contest - 2002’ at Sapporo, Japan.
- Created the world's biggest Santa Claus on sand in 2006 and got a mention in the Limca Book of World Records.

“Jai Telangana”: A Performance

This is a historic time. The 50 year struggle for a separate Telangana has come to a climax. The process for granting it a separate status has begun.

But what went before that? What was the rhetoric that marked the movement, the agitation, the struggle for self-determination? At EFL University, inside Osmania University campus, which is the heart of the struggle, I have been witness to the performance of the demand for a separate nationhood on our campus. This performance included visuals- banners, posters, song and dance, slogans and celebration procession.

The visual representations - the banners- are not very different from earlier nationalisms like Tamil or Kannada or Indian nationalism. The discourse is gendered. The map of Telangana, an empty space, is embodied by a woman - a goddess. The rhetoric of the men rallying around the figure of the mother/ desirable woman has been played out in most nationalisms, it is part of the erotics of nationalism. Though women took part in the student struggle in Osmania, the rallies

which I witnessed on campus mainly comprised men. All banners also carried a map: the visual representation of the land, the rhetoric of the nation imagined and inscribed onto a map - a physical visual space.

The other visual markers on campus were the posters of newspaper cuttings pasted on the walls. They ‘spoke’ of all the atrocities that the police perpetrated - the lathi charge, the martyrs, those who died. Pamphlets which were handed out also carried photos of students who died, gory images of bloody faces, mutilated bodies. The history of the movement was traced; there was also the justification that the movement was not separatist but demanded only a land which had existed 60 years before. The other justification granted in the banners was a quote from Jawaharlal Nehru in Hindi which stated that Telangana was a bride given in marriage to Andhra Pradesh and if there was a discord, she could be granted divorce: Telangana could then demand for a separate state. This quote also has a gendered discourse.

Song and dance also played an integral role in the performance for

the demand of a separate state. Any rally which demanded that the university close down; or a candle light vigil for the martyrs, who died in the lathi charge; was marked by a song which spoke of the struggles of the people, their demand for a land, their mourning for those who had died fighting for it. The songs’ rhetoric was all connected to the land- the demand for water, the crops, the failure of the rains and the appeal to mother earth. There was anger too - that they were suppressed, that the dams and reservoirs - in short the development projects - all went to Andhra, that they did not get employment, that their jobs were going to Andhraites. Andhra Pradesh was the other in determining the self of Telangana. Most important were the rally slogans: “Jai Telangana, we want Telangana, Jai Telangana...”

When Mr. P. Chidambaram announced the separate state there was jubilation at the campus door after midnight. Thousands of students gathered to shout Jai Telangana, burst crackers, congratulated each other, jumped on the road, got drunk, stopped cars and vehicles to

wish them Jai Telangana and wave the TRS flag. It was a jubilation for all those years of effort, a jubilation that they would get jobs in the future, that they would have a land of their own, that they would be able to channel the development to their area. How far this would be fulfilled is another matter. The police who had blocked the roads, pitched tents, put a barbed wire (it looked like a war zone), stood by watching the whole show, waiting for orders to move out. The performance was in full swing - flags, crackers, slogans - all these constituting the basics of any nationalism - and in that this agitation was no different.

The state has been announced now. But the fight is not yet over. With ministers resigning, the bill to be passed at various stages and the process of state formation, there remains a lot to be done. Let us wait and watch what happens.

The writer, Ketaki Chowkhani, completed her M.A. in English this year from Pondicherry University. She is presently pursuing M.Phil. in cultural studies at the EFL University, Hyderabad. The views expressed are entirely her own.

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Bollywood and the desperate act of remaking

Do you feel a sense of *deja vu* when you see Hindi films? While watching *Koi Mil Gaya*, *Sarkar*, *Partner*, *Chak De! India* or *Ghajini*, did you smell something fishy?

There has always been an argument that Bollywood is notorious for plagiarism. There is enough proof to believe that 50% of Hindi movies are remakes of British, American or French films.

Why do Indian filmmakers copy Western or other foreign films? Is it because they suffer from the lack of originality or do the producers think that it is safer to move down the tested path?

The fact is that our audience doesn't care whether a film is original or copied. All they want is an entertainer with songs, music and dance; even if it has nothing to do with the context.

Ghajini is one of the latest ones that have been lifted. It is copied from *Memento*, written by Jonathan Nolan and directed by Christopher Nolan. And sadly, this copy holds the record for the highest earnings at the box office by a Bollywood film - 200 crores.



Another hit of 2008, *Singh is King* is inspired by Frank Capra's *Lady for a Day* and the movie's fight



scenes were modelled on Jackie Chan. The film netted 160 crores.

Let's examine some classic or popular Bollywood movies:

Sarkar is an Indian version of Francis Ford Coppola's classic *The Godfather*, with some desi masala. *Dharmatma* was already copied from *The Godfather* decades earlier.

Partner is a Hindi translation, or should I say word-to-word copy, of Will Smith-starrer *Hitch*. Another Salman movie, *God Tussi Great Ho*, is an out-and-out remake of Jim Carrey-starrer *Bruce Almighty*. Everyone knows how brilliant an actor Jim is and Salman's effort to copy his acting style turned out to be terrible.

Critically acclaimed and commercially successful, *Rang De Basanti* is inspired from both *Jesus of Montreal* and *All My Sons*. Another movie that achieved a similar status, *Chak De! India* has strains from *The Mighty Ducks* and *Remember the Titans*.

Koi... Mil Gaya was inspired from Steven Spielberg's *ET - the Extra Terrestrial* and the Oscar winner *Forrest Gump*. *Dhoom* draws heavily from *The Fast and the Furious* and *Ocean's 11*.

The desi-favourite *Munnaabhai MBBS* (yeah! it is a remake too) is *Patch Adams* in disguise. However, its second part is not a copy (as far

as I know) and was brilliant.

The pathbreaking, sensational, international cult-favourite movie *Fight Club*, starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton has a desi version, with their Indian counterparts doing song and dance.

How about the granddaddy of 'em all - the best, the classic, the icon of Bollywood - *Sholay*. It is inspired from several Western movies, such as *The Magnificent Seven* and *Once upon a Time in the West*.



Dil Walay Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ), which enjoyed a run of 10 years on the silver screen, is inspired from *The Sure Thing*; *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* from *Sleepless in Seattle*; *Black* from *The Miracle Worker*; *Hum Tum from When Harry Met Sally*; *Mohabbatein* from *Dead Poets Society* and *Agneepath*, *Vaastav* and *Satya* from the epic Al Pacino-starrer *Scarface*.

Well, I go for a David Dhawan or Abbas-Mustan film to test myself and to find how much time it will take me to name the original.

I suppose I don't have to write anything about Priyadarshan (or the man who earns a living by merely translating other language movies). Half of his films are copies of Hollywood movies; for example *Garam Masala* (*Boeing Boeing*) and

Kyon Ki... It's Fate (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest) and the other half are remakes of Malayalam movies; example *Bhool Bhulaiyya (Manichitrathazhu)* and *Hera Pheri (Ramji Rao Speaking)*.

These are just a few examples. Why is this happening so often and should it be prevented? Love stories form a majority of storylines for desi movies and Indian filmmakers have tried every variation of a romantic plot – the “boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy finds girl” story. Every variation has been made into a film somewhere. And the filmmakers have to depend on a copied storyline to find something new. After all, how many possibilities are there in a love story?

Then again, we do not have a lot of creative scriptwriters, so there is not much chance of making pathbreaking films. What our scriptwriters do is, they watch some Guy Ritchie and Quentin Tarantino movie and write a similar plot, which is a complete copy.

It is okay to make Bollywood movies that are inspired from other language films. But I read somewhere to actors being shown videos of the original film and being asked to perform in the same manner. Surely that can be avoided.

Now that major corporate houses have become producers in India, imitations are likely to be punished. So copyrights have to be purchased from the original filmmakers and credit should be given. And that is sensible because we can understand that the basic

idea has been taken from somewhere else and there is no pretence of being an original.

However, there's one positive point which benefits those Indians who cannot understand English or do not enjoy watching Hollywood movies. With the indianised version of these movies, they can certainly enjoy some incredible ideas born in Hollywood minds.



The truth is that only a few Indian filmmakers try to come up with original ideas and that leaves us with no option than to watch copied ones. It is fine if a movie openly acknowledges that it is inspired from another movie. But if a imitation pretends to be original, let's just try to avoid it and see the original instead. Because we must learn to enjoy the sheer power of originality.

Vishnu
Photos: Internet

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