

NUEPA Celebrates
National Youth Day
(12 January, 2017)



A Discussion Meet 'Educational Ideas of Swami Vivekananda in Policy Perspective' was organised at NUEPA on January 12, 2017 to commemorate 154 birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. In this meet around 40 students and faculty members, from different academic institutions participated. The celebration began with *pushpanjali*, and lighting of lamps, followed by inauguration of the book exhibition on the life and works of Swami Vivekananda. In the Discussion Meet, the experts from different institutions shared their views and experiences related to Swamiji's contribution to education and development of society.

The Discussion Meet began with welcome address by Prof. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, Vice-Chancellor, NUEPA. Prof. Tilak highlighted the importance of the occasion for people working in the field of education, as the contribution by Swami Vivekananda is of immense value. Vivekananda is a personification of the core values of Indianism – *Bhartiyata*; he had also immense faith in the potential of the youth for the transformation of India; and he strongly believed that it is education

that would be capable of building youth with great character which is required for the building of the nation. Hence, it is appropriate to celebrate his birthday, 12th January as National Youth Day every year. Following the welcome address Prof. Avinash Kumar Singh, Head Department of Educational Policy, introduced the programme schedule and agenda for discussion in the Meet. He highlighted the need to take forward the ideas and vision of Swami Vivekananda to deal with current and emerging problems of the society. Keeping in mind Swami Vivekananda as a youth icon, he advocated designing policies and programmes for the involvement of the youth in the development of nation.



As India has the largest youth population, larger than even China, Swami Vivekananda's ideas and vision will serve as guiding force to the youth of our nation. Vivekananda was one of the leading Indian thinkers who gave utmost importance to the role of education in the development of individual and society. According to him, education is the main difference between rich and poor people and rich and poor countries. He gave the most appropriate definition of education as "*the manifestation of perfection already in men*" and also emphasised the need to universalise education especially amongst the girls, disadvantaged and marginalised. During the Discussion Meet, the three invited experts, Shri Devashis Mukherjee of Ramakrishan Mission, Delhi, Shri Atul Kothari, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas and Prof. Avijit Pathak, JNU, New Delhi, dwelled at length on basic teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

Shri Devashis Mukherjee highlighted the importance of applying Swami Vivekananda's ideas in day to day life of the students and

teachers. According to Mr. Mukherjee, if we follow Swami Vivekananda's definition of education (... *as the manifestation of perfection already in men*) a large number of educational problems will be solved. He illustrated some of the works currently being done by the Ramakrishna Mission in the field of school education. He gave an example of a group work in a classroom in which students were asked to do some difficult tasks. Some of the students in the group felt the tasks very difficult and withdrew from the group work. While others took up the challenge and started working on that. And at the end it was seen that even those who were initially not good in their activities, did better than others because in the words of Swami Vivekananda, they believed in themselves. *'We become what we think. If we think we are strong, we become stronger. If we think we are weak, we become weaker.'* So Vivekananda's remark, *'strength is life, weakness is death'* holds good for our motivation to do things confidently and effectively. Mr. Mukherjee also cited other examples which explained the main philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

Shri Atul Kothari, Secretary, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas started his presentation with chanting of the word 'OM', invoking the audience to follow and feel the difference and significance of the chanting. The audience felt the difference caused by the chanting, in terms of having soothing effect. According to him, if just chanting 'OM' word in one sitting can make us feel more relaxed, one may imagine its impact, when it is done on regular basis. This also means that this kind of chanting will lead to higher level of concentration and which in turn will help in doing various other things. He explained that lot of energy is wasted by human beings in distractions caused in various ways. By demonstrating the case of concentration through chanting, he re-enforced Swami Vivekananda's principle that *'concentration is the main instrument of gaining knowledge'*. He reiterated this point by referring Vivekananda's statement, "If I were born again, I would like to practice the art of concentration rather than going to schools and colleges. This way I can get knowledge at my will". Shri Kothari talked about various efforts being made by his organization in the field of higher education. In response to the innovative experiments initiated by his organization, three-four universities have revised their curriculum and launched new courses. He also talked about the need to introduce value education in schools because of lack of proper value orientation amongst the youth of the country. He called upon university teachers and students to learn from the ideas of Swami Vivekananda to transform their lives and make India great again.

Prof. Avijit Pathak (JNU) highlighted the academic contributions made by Swami Vivekananda in the field of knowledge, skills and values. According to him, Vivekananda who achieved so much in a very short span of his life that he has left a long legacy to be followed by youth, generation after generation. According to Prof. Pathak, Vivekananda's ideas are universal in application, these cannot be confined within a country or within boundaries made by particular groups. According to him, Vivekananda is one of the most important thinkers in the country who influenced the psychic unity of human beings. His ideas should be read and followed along with ideas of other international thinkers. In this way, we will be able to do justice to the ideas and vision given by Swami Vivekananda, not simply by replicating his ideas in life. According to him, many thinkers and leaders have followed Swami Vivekananda's ideas in their life and by doing so they have achieved greatness in their lives. If we see Gandhi's contribution to freedom struggle in India, one can see the impact of Swami Vivekananda on Gandhi's day to day life routines.



The speeches were followed by a questions-answers session. A number of queries, observations and suggestions were made by the audience, to which the invited experts responded effectively, highlighting further significance of Swami Vivekananda's ideas and vision.

The Discussion Meet ended with a Vote of Thanks presented by Prof. A K Singh to the participants and resource persons.