

IGNCA Nari Samvaad Prakalp A Report on Two days International Conference

-- Dr. Sushma Jatoo,
Project Director,
Nari Samvaad Prakalp,
IGNCA

A Two days International Conference on “**Centres of Educational Excellence and Sites of Knowledge in Early India up to 13th Century A.D: History, Dimensions and New Researches (CESKE-2018)**” was organized under the aegis of the Nari Samvaad Prakalp (NSP) of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi and the Department of History & Social Sciences, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College (DDU), University of Delhi in the campus of the DDU College, from October 12th to 13th, 2018. Dr. Radha Madhav Bhardwaj, Associate Professor, Department of History, DDU and Dr. Sushma Jatoo, Project Director, NSP were the chief conveners of the Conference.

The inaugural ceremony of the two days International Conference was held at the auditorium of DDU College on 12th of October, 2018. Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, MS, IGNCA, Dr. S. K. Garg, Principal, DDU College, Prof. K. T. S. Sarao, eminent Buddhist scholar of DU and Prof. P. S. Filliozat, noted Sanskrit Scholar lighted the ceremonial lamp. Dr. Vasundhara Filliozat, Prof. Shailendra Raj Mehta, President (MICA), Ahmedabad, and other scholars and faculty members of different disciplines of DDU College along with an impressive number of students were present in the auditorium. Dr. S. K. Garg welcomed the guests to the college campus and highlighted the achievements of the college. Dr. Radha Madhav Bhardwaj presented the concept of the Conference. On this occasion, the proceedings of the last International Conference on the ‘Contribution of Indologists’ conducted by DDU was released by the dignitaries. Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, MS IGNCA addressed the gathering in his lucid style beginning with the Vedic prayer in which the seer seeks the path of righteousness, enlightenment and immortality. He stated that the topic of the Conference is extremely relevant in the present day scenario as a lot of misinformation about the Indian University system is being created. He further shared his concern regarding the Indian Universities not figuring in the top ranking Universities or educational institutions of the world. He pointed out that the sheer size of students which the Indian Universities host and the number of colleges that are there under major Indian Universities speak volumes about the education facilities being provided by this system and the government. He expressed his desire that there should be a different system of ranking the educational institutions of India taking all these factors into consideration.

Delivering the key-note address Prof. K. T. S. Sarao underlined the significance of the ancient centres of learning, with Takshashila and Nalanda being the foremost centres, which attracted students from all over the world. These sites of knowledge provided education, shelter and food free of cost to the students and never discriminated on account of caste, creed, religion or gender. Dr. Sushma Jatoo delivered the formal vote of thanks, highlighting the age-old phenomenon of the Guru-Shishya Parampara in India and emphasized on the role of students in the Indian education system. She stressed upon the importance of this complementary role of both and testified her statement with a verse from the Guru-Gita to appreciate and extol the role of the Guru, and another verse from the Srimad Bhagvadgita where the disciple is advised to undergo the threefold procedure of obtaining true knowledge as *pranipatena* – by approaching a

(spiritual) master; *pariprashnena* -- by persistent enquiries; and *sevaya* -- by constant servitude. She expressed gratitude towards Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi for his generous consent to organise the collaborative conference and also for gracing the inaugural function. She thanked Dr. S. K. Garg for providing active collaboration in hosting the Conference at his college. She also thanked Prof. K. T. S. Sarao for delivering the exhaustive and scholarly key-note address along with Prof. P. S. Filliozat, other dignitaries and participating scholars and students for their kind presence.

Afterwards, the academic sessions of the conference set about and in all, about thirty presentations were made by scholars from France, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bihar, Bengal, Pondicherry, Delhi and other parts of India. There was a strong representation of senior scholars and young researchers from about fifteen Universities and research institutions in the Conference. Prof. P. S. Filliozat, Dr. Vasundhara Filliozat, Dr. S. A. S. Sarma, Dr. Sushma Jatoo, Dr. Radha Madhav Bhardwaj, Dr. Devasia M. Antony, Dr. Saswati Mutsuddy, Dr. Yuthika Mishra, Dr. B. L. Das, Dr. S. K. Mishra, Dr. T. Chakravarty, Dr. Bhuvan Jha, Dr. Neeraj Kumar, Dr. R. P. Singh, Dr. S. Lall, Dr. A. Dixit, and other scholars presented learned papers related to different aspects of the theme, for example, on Nalanda, Vikramsheel, Takshashila, Tol Vidyalayas, Valabhi, Sharada Peeth, and various other institutions. Three parallel sessions were also arranged in which about seventeen young scholars from different universities made their presentations.

Another highlight of the International Conference was organization of a special session of '*Shastratha*'; the age-old traditional Indian practice of debate. Dr. Ramakant Pandey, the Director of Mukta Svadhyaya Vidyapeeth of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan was the chief examiner, as two young scholars from BHU were engaged in a serious intellectual wrestle. One scholar defended the duality of the supreme soul (*paramatman*) and the other emphasized on its non-duality. The session was attended by all the delegates with great sense of interest and enthusiasm.

In the evening of the first day, Dr. Dimple Kaur, noted psycho-therapist and classical danseuse presented a 'Vachika Abhinaya' titled 'Rise Woman Rise'. In this solo act, Dr. Dimple Kaur presented before the audiences the real-life account of a survivor, whose modesty had been outraged. She emphasized on the growing insecurity of women in modern day Indian society; where on the one hand, a young girl is worshipped as the incarnation of the Goddess and on the other, she is shackled into societal norms, which forbid her to even speak up against any wrongdoings. This act was extremely moving and heart-rending and the audience, which comprised a large number of students, expressed their empathy with the message conveyed by the 'Abhinaya'. The students promised to fight against this social evil and pledged their support in eradicating this grave problem.

On the second day a special panel on the 'Role of Women in Education' was organized, which was chaired by Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi. While introducing the panelists and the theme, Dr. Sushma Jatoo stated that the Indian gender discourse is quite different in nature from that of its Western counterpart and it is necessary that the Indian perspective pertaining to role of women in education needs to be brought out through such panels. Dr. Vasundhara Filliozat, Dr. Dimple Kaur, Dr. Yuthika Mishra, and Dr. Bhuvan Kumar Jha made their presentations on different aspects of the theme. While summing it up, Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi stated that in Indian perspective, it is very necessary to understand the unique position enjoyed by women in ancient Indian tradition and how up till now the position continues to be strong. Replying to a

query, he emphatically underlined the fact that Women in India have been venerated as Goddesses bestowing knowledge, wealth and might as Sarasvati, Laskmi and Durga, respectively.

The session was followed by screening of a small documentary on the Sharada Peeth, an ancient seat of learning of Kashmir, by Mr. Ravindra Pandita an enthusiast who works selflessly for revival of the Sharada Peeth. It was very well received by all present. The concluding session of the Conference saw some very interesting presentations by both senior and junior scholars. Prof. B. N. Labh, Vice-Chancellor of the Nava-Nalanda Mahavihar also joined this session and addressed the audience with his highly informative discourse on Indian education.

The valedictory session of the Conference was chaired by Prof. Shailendra Raj Mehta, President (MICA), Ahmedabad, in which Dr. Sushma Jatoo welcomed the dignitaries and Dr. Yuthika Msihra presented a brief report of the Conference. In his Valedictory address, Prof. Shailendra Raj Mehta made a Power Point presentation about the role of Universities and gave a comprehensive study on the University system prevalent worldwide. He also stated that once Takshashila was the hub of educational as well as trade activities; and then gradually the centre of gravity of all this activity started moving Westwards. Through a graph he showed that it is anticipated that within the next decade or so; it will come back to Indian peninsula. His address was greatly welcomed by all the audiences. Dr. Radha Madhav Bhardwaj and Dr. Hem Chand Jain, the Vice-Principal of DDU offered the formal vote of thanks to all the scholars, experts and above all students, who participated in large numbers to make the International Conference a huge success.



Inaugural



Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi felicitating Dr.B.N. Labh, VC, Nalanda University



Prof. Shailendra Raj Mehta making his presentation



Dr. Dimple Kaur during performance



Participating scholars after the performance of Dr. Dimple Kaur