

CULTURAL ACADEMY FOR PEACE

NEWSLETTER



Interactive Session on “IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY”

Cultural Academy for Peace always attempts to transform opportunities to a new experience. It was such a novel experience, to have an able and committed person, Rev. Deanna Brown, from United States of America and Ms. Frida Karlsson from Sweden to address us on ‘the Impact of globalization on Religion and Spirituality’. As the founder of “Cultural Connections: Women Weaving Worlds” she had several opportunities to travel to India for the purpose of becoming Ambassadors of Cultural understanding, interfaith dialogue and Peace. Rev Deanna Brown admitted that ‘inter-action with different religions generates respect’ and that dialogue opens up new vistas of understanding. Knowledge only enhances esteem for other “faith”. Ms. Frida Karlsson, spoke about her experience with people of other ‘faith’ or ‘no-faith’. Over there people stay connected with their mobile, i-pod etc, but seem not to be concerned with what is happening around. Later on with the discussion that followed Ms Samuel, a participant compared Oyster to religion and the pearl inside to spirituality and that one has to find the God within. Mr Basheer another participant was of opinion that one has to transcend religion to reach divinity. Each one of us has our own spirituality and this should not be lost as a result of globalization. Deeply rooted in one’s own faith one can continue the search without being swayed by the onslaught of globalization.



Ongoing interactive discussion during the session

Gender Training Workshop

Cultural Academy's "Institute for Training in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution, Gender and Peace Building" organized a Gender Training Workshop for the Social Workers and representatives of Voluntary Sectors and Social Work students on May 14th 2012. Ms. Beena Sebastian and Ms. Frida Karlsson, trainer from Sweden facilitated the session. Domination Techniques, Pillar of Power, Role Reversal play were some of the sessions taken during the workshop. The participants were able to understand the concept of Gender as a result of this workshop and requested further training on this topic.



Participants during the workshop

Environment protection programme

Cultural Academy as a part of the environment protection initiative had designated the month of June as the Save our Environment Month. We had several environment training classes organized in schools; tree saplings were given to students to grow trees in their homes. Waste Management has been a serious issue that has been affecting the community and with regard to this cleaning day was one of the major initiatives to mobilize the community participation in Vypin. Cultural Academy for Peace members discussed this with the village action team members in the committee meeting, and they selected the public cemetery for cleaning because this public asset has been polluted in so many ways like throwing waste inside the cemetery and it was fully isolated from the main life of the people even it is situated near to the main road.

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Suddenly the women members of the committee raised their concern that there was a belief among them that no woman is supposed to enter inside the cemetery as it is ruled by the spirits of dead, hence they agreed to clean up the outside only.



Community members involved in cleaning activities, tree sapling presented to students

On the day set apart for cleaning, the women were at first afraid to enter inside the cemetery. When members of Cultural Academy entered along with the male members and started cleaning the other women were also motivated and entered inside after half an hour. On seeing the women inside the cemetery engaged in cleaning, the local people who walked around on the street also joined to help them. This illustrates how the attitudinal change affects the mindset of the community. It enabled them to get rid of the taboos and stigmas attached to their view of the public asset.



Class taken by environmentalist Mr. Geo Jose

Convocation ceremony “Wheels for Women” Auto Rickshaw training program

“Wheels for Women” is a new venture of Cultural Academy for Peace. It is a training programme which gives them the opportunity to learn how to drive an Auto Rickshaw and provides the means to acquire license. The target group includes single mother, survivors of abuse, trafficking and economically deprived women in the community.



The Women in training



The trainees receiving the certificate

Impact of Wheels for Women Training Program

- Change in the patriarchal attitude of the society- acknowledging women’s ability to opt a career tag lined as a Man’s job.
- Acceptance and increased support for female auto rickshaw drivers
- More women are coming forward with aim of becoming auto rickshaw drivers
- Encouragement and support from men(husband/father/male auto rickshaw drivers)
- More support from the public(passengers)
- Backing and more assistance received from the authorities

The first batch of “Wheels for Women” training program, who completed their training and acquired their license, now pursue their dream of purchasing a vehicle.

The Convocation ceremony for the women who have completed the “Wheels for Women” Auto Rickshaw training programme was held on 14th June 2012.

Seminar on “Care and Protection of Girl Child”

Being aware of the present scenario of violence and unrest, the Cultural Academy for Peace organized a seminar on the “Care & Protection of the Girl Child”, along with the Convocation Ceremony of ‘Wheels for Women’ – Auto rickshaw Training Program on 14th June, 2012 at Santhwana Counseling Centre, Ernakulam. Ms Rosie Martin, Board member of Cultural Academy in her welcome address drew the attention of the audience to the incidents of violent deaths of girl children, like Baby Afreen, the student Arya, and the deplorable death of Soumya, victim of rape, which the media exposed. Such tragic occurrences call for vigilance and reflection. She congratulated them for coming together for the cause of the Care & Protection of the Girl Child. Justice P.K Shamsudheen, President of the World Fellowship of Inter Religious Councils inaugurated the seminar, Mr. A.S Shenoy, National President of the Indian Council of Social Welfare, Ms. Elizabeth Teacher, Counselor of the Cochin Corporation and Ms. Shimna, Protection Officer, Ernakulam District, along with Ms. Beena Sebastian Chair person of Cultural Academy for Peace addressed the audience. Then the topic presentation on the “Care and Protection of Girl Child” were carried on by Fr. Roby Kannanchira, the Director of the Chavara Cultural Centre, Mr. Aravindakshan, Former Assistant Manager at FACT and Ms. Shobha, Auxiliary Board Member of the Counselors of Asia. The session was moderated by Ms. Padmaja, Chairperson Child Welfare Committee, Ernakulam.

Major questions raised during the seminar were

1. Is the current legislation adequate for the care and protection of girl children?
2. Are Poverty and male domination the major causes for human trafficking and harassment of girl children?
3. Do families and the State have a prominent role to play in the care and protection of girls?
4. Is the Dowry system practiced a major reason for the abuse and oppression of girl children?



Ms. Padmaja, Chairperson of Child Welfare Committee, Ernakulam District addressing the gathering

CHANGING LIVES

Elsy is a 35 year old lady who belongs to a middle class family. She got married to Paul. Although she established good relations with her husband's family, her marriage started to fall apart when Paul started drinking alcohol. He started to abuse Elsy verbally and physically, he also accused her of having affairs with other men. Despite the attempts of the relatives, Elsy and the kids, Paul showed no signs of improvement. Depressed Elsy left home, deciding to commit suicide along with her two kids. But at the last moment decided to seek help from SAKHI the Emergency Crisis centre of Cultural Academy for Peace. She was given emotional First aid and counseling at the centre and was placed at the Short Stay home of Cultural Academy for women, Shanthi Bhavan.



The counselors of SAKHI contacted Paul and his relatives as well as Elsy's family for further investigation and intervention. To our surprise everyone participated in these sessions. As a result Paul expressed his willingness to change and to stop drinking alcohol. After careful counseling sessions, group interventions Paul proved himself that he can live without alcohol. Finally they decided to live together.

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