

TWO BEST PRACTICES OF SREE SANKARA COLLEGE, KALADY

Best Practice 1 - Renaissance

Title of the Practice: **Renaissance: Centre for Research, Extension and Studies in Literature & Arts** (*Fostering creativity & innovation since 2003* -- Established in the Golden Jubilee Year of the College 2003-04).

Goal:

During the Golden Jubilee year of the college, in 2003-04 the Centre was started as a vibrant gathering with a view to stand together, to work together, and to grow together. The vision is to initiate a campus Renaissance from one corner of the country to other parts, starting from the college named after the saint-philosopher Sree Sankaracharya, the proponent of *Advaita*. The mission is **“To creatively engage the young.”** To mould character, culture and competency with a view to foster creativity and innovation, along with the assimilation of the hallowed principles of family, tolerance, democracy and non violence perpetuated by our great nation. The motto is "to study and serve".

The Context:

The coordinators use this platform to creatively engage the young, who expect to be guided, in areas that suit their individual tastes and interests, so that it will enhance and channel their energy through a positive and fruitful way enabling them choose their own paths, and help them be competent and capable in what they are good at. All along, the coordinators as mentors would be there beside the students. The kernel principles that were adopted included:

- Moulding the future citizens in the values of character, culture, and competency
- Foster creativity and innovation
- Synthesise study and serving the society
- Mutually motivate, and, above all,
- cultivate aesthetic sense blended with Humanism, Integrity, Reason, Nationalism, Resolve & Democracy.

The Practice:

The source of fund decides the character and quality of the enterprise. So far, the Centre has not received any funding from any individual or any agency nor has any plan to do so in future. We the coordinators consider the Centre as a family -- Renaissance family -- which of course is an extension of the individual families. We spent not less than 5% of our monthly salary (in certain years it goes up to 10-12%) for the activities every year. We, the coordinators hold that we have been given education through public funding and we receive salary from the public exchequer, and hence, apart from the monthly tax contribution/deduction, we willingly contribute to a great cause related to students, the future citizens in the making. Whenever the students and the coordinators get free time, we assemble - under the shade of a tree, in the veranda, or in a class room. Through this, those who are part of it, benefit a lot. The students irrespective of their caste, religion, colour, gender, political affiliation, locality, or social status get a feeling of caring and sharing in the continuous presence and support of the coordinators as mentors. However, the Centre does not interfere with the activities of the members in their domestic, social, political and professional realms. We are proud that this family has members

from different castes (including SC/ST, where 3 have acquired their MPhil. degrees. Out of them, two are currently doing PhD), different religions, different social statuses, different regions, both the genders and different political affiliations

· The students/members get active, positive and sympathetic peer group and the coordinators as listeners. They get a space to negotiate the issues that they confront (be it domestic, social, religious, philosophical, political, national or international) regularly, and to express their views without fear. They themselves formulate convictions about various matters/issues related to life. The members do not go to unsafe hands or fall victims to evil influences that are lurking in different pockets of the society. They feel a sense of protection beside the coordinators during their crucial stages of growing up.

· The character formation get influenced remarkably. They have the coordinators to go to during their perilous circumstances, moments if any. Informal brain storming take place that give forth the various activities of the Centre. **Even anger and despair get channelized to socially relevant thoughts or artistic expressions.**

Evidence of Success:

1. Activities Arranged in the Campus

Reading sessions, debates, narrating events and experiences are usual practices. Some activities are organised for the whole campus with a view to motivate others to come up as intellectually and emotionally responsible members of the Renaissance Family.

On Renaissance Day,(The Republic Day of our Nation is also the Renaissance Day),the members of the family have a get-together with the available elderly members(who have left after their studies) of the family.

2. Workshops, Training for the Members

Theatre workshops, film making workshops, personality development sessions etc. are organized where the available elder members of the family voluntarily come back to the college as Resource Persons. The elder members do the work free of cost.

3. Workshops and Training in Other Campuses:

This is a great phase accomplished by the Centre. The students of the Centre go to other campuses as resource persons for their counterparts in those campuses. Theatre workshops and Film making workshops are organized in other campuses every year. The attempt is to *reach out to other campuses, including schools.*

4. Art Visits and Nature Visits

The team of members and coordinators undertake art visits and nature visits every year.

5. Making Theatre Performances by Girls

Short theatre performances are staged especially by girls. We have made street plays on four different occasions already. While addressing the social issues, our theatre performances also highlight the competence of girl students/women.

6. Making Campus Films

Short campus films are made as an aesthetic response to the realities confronted by the students. The Centre, so far, had made 17 campus films. The highlights are

<i>Reminiscences</i>	-	promotes Eye donation
<i>Camino Real</i>	-	awareness against campus violence
<i>Refuge</i>	-	awareness against worldwide violence
<i>Beyond</i>		-learn to respect the lovely people
<i>Book of . . . Not for Sale</i>		-against atrocities against women
<i>Spirit</i>	-	awareness against suicides
<i>Pootham</i>	-	Media, the 4th state, as a twin edged sword
<i>Kuttikkali</i>		-awareness against children assimilating violence

through technology (Child's games/video games)

Neelakurinji - a reusable learning video for school students – about Neelakurinji, a plant that massively blooms once in every 12 years.

7. Participation in Academic Events at the National and International Conferences

The members are motivated, guided and funded by the coordinators to participate in the events like conferences, workshops, conducted by various Universities across the country.

8. Celebrate Learning Series

The Centre's principle-- *mutually motivate*-- become a reality when the members of the Centre began to motivate the coordinators take up great tasks. Thus **Celebrate Learning Series** started, in which the coordinators devise special *innovative* learning modules and present sessions. The motto is 'no pen, no book, & no mobile phone' in the class, and the sessions are made student-centric.

a) 2 Day workshop on Literary Theory

The grey areas of theories of knowledge for the advanced learners of literary scholars are made easy and student centric. Conducted in other campuses also.

b) **Synergy the Classroom Theatre-** An innovative teaching-learning practice that combines theatre and classroom. Conducted in other campuses as well.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

Off Shoots from Renaissance

Renaissance, since its inception, has strived to motivate the young to make high strides in the development of a scholar's career. However, during the tenth year, the Centre started planning for those members who do not/ cannot pursue the career of an advanced scholar. Thus, the Centre began to motivate such members take up start-up enterprises after their graduation. The members from various generations come together as entrepreneurs to plan, and execute new ventures in various fields. Notable firms already started functioning are

1. Spectra EduCorp
2. Lakshya Group of Events
3. Richwood Trades
4. Organic Farm & Agro Foods, and
5. Spectra Global (Developmental Stage)

The biggest problem identified is the financial support. (The estimated cost of Spectra Global is Rupees twenty crores. It is a dream project of the elder members of the Renaissance Family.). The constraint of land also is yet to be solved.

However, the Centre located in the College does not hold sway on these firms, nor it is liable to any activity of such firms, nor is responsible in any manner to any measures or actions of the said firms.

Notes

In a world where increasingly every consideration is by and large determined by economic greed and every goal is furthered by high individualism and narrow mindedness, the formation of families is sure to influence the young in a positive and constructive manner. Those who spend time, energy and money for them are not blood relations. The family keeps all types of fundamentalism and narrow mindedness at bay. Instead, the family embraces values that transcend walls of cultures, castes, religions, genders, absolute party affiliations and linguistic and specific geographical considerations. We dream of '*vasudhaivakudumbakam.*'

Thus, the sublime aims and attitudes are essential in the formation of a family of this kind. Accomplishments and set backs usually found in families can be seen here as well. Even in the darkest hour, care guides the family.

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Conclusion

Renaissance ensures the ease of communication between the student community of the past generation and the present. Without disturbing the learning, teaching, examinations related commitments of the students and the coordinators, The Centre undertakes visits to other campuses to spread the message of Campus Renaissance.



Street Play by Renaissance



Street Play by Renaissance



Reading Yajna



Reading Yajna



Personality Development Class



Personality Development Class

Best Practice 2 - Agamananda Study Circle

- **Title of the Practice: AGAMANANDA STUDY CIRCLE**
- **Goal:**

The Agamananda Study Circle is named after the great sage and guru Sreemad Agamanada Swamikal, the founder of Sree Sankara College. The study circle is committed towards keeping alive the memory of Swami Agamananda, who laid the foundation to the present Kalady. His emphasis on education as a tool for social reforms resulted in the establishment of educational institutions such as Brahmandandodayam School, the very first residential school in Kerala, Sree Sankara College catering to the needs of the downtrodden ensuring inclusiveness.

The broad objective of the Study Circle is to nurture academic enthusiasm along with societal values among college teachers. The study circle is envisioned to create an academic ambience for discussing topics of interdisciplinary nature. Thus, the study circle offers a platform to teachers to present their topics of interest which varies from academics to social interests and service related issues.

- **The Context:**

The Agamananda Study Circle is a discussion forum of the teachers of Sree Sankara College Kalady. The study circle was constituted to cater to the needs of the academic community of the college, to educate themselves with developments happening in other disciplines so that they find themselves equipped enough to meet the requirements of an interdisciplinary academics. The club with its regular interventions tries to energise the academic ambience of the college. The Study Circle, apart from celebrating important calendar days holds presentations of academic and other socially relevant topics of interest to academic community. As its regular activity, the study circle meets every month to provide space to teachers for their presentations followed by discussions. To satisfy its commitment towards the students' community, the study circle hosts classes on topics of relevance. It also regularly conducts essay writing competition, painting competition, elocution competition etc. based on a theme reflecting importance of social values or value education.

- **The Practice:**

Agamananda Study Circle has been functioning in this college since 2013. As the activities of the Agamananda Study Circle begins on the first day on the academic year with all staff members getting together to ensure comradery. The executive committee meets and charts the plan of action for the ensuing academic year.

The Study Circle took the lead in celebrating the jayanthi of great saint Adi Sankaracharya since 2016. On its first ever celebration of Sree Sankara jayanthi, a pushparchana by the staff and students on the idol of Sree Sankaracharya installed in the campus was observed on 11 May 2016, the jayanthi day. The formal meeting on this occasion started with a classical musical performance of Sree Sakara krities by the staff and students of the college. This was followed by a talk on Sankara Vendanta. The celebrations concluded with a classical dance performance on Sanakara krities by the staff and students of the college.

The Study Circle regularly observes the founder's day on Agamanada Jayanthi. On the Agamanada jayanthi, a pushparchana performed on the portrait of Swami Agamanada by the staff and students. It is customary to organise Agamananda memorial talk by an acclaimed personality on the jayanthi celebrations. In association with jayanthi celebrations, the study circle conducts various competitions for students on topics related to social, moral, and ethical values.

Every month the study circle hosts teachers' presentations as its regular activity. The teachers are free to choose their own topics for presentation and discussion. The study circle fixes a chairman for handling the session. Usually the presentation and the following discussion take about one hour during the noon break of Fridays.

- **Evidence of Success**

The study circle has succeeded in impressing upon all stakeholders, a sense of pride with respect to our history, culture and values, in commemorating important calendar days, holding memorial lectures, competitions etc. The study circle also succeeded in keeping the teacher abreast with the emerging trends in the field of education by conducting presentations and discussions on interdisciplinary areas.

- **Problems Encountered and Resources Required**

Paucity of time owing to busy regular work schedule in view of the in-semester examinations, university examinations, valuation, conducting continuous evaluation of students, project/dissertation supervision etc.

The study circle is not funded by any organisation or institutions. Presently the study circle is supported by the contribution/subscription by the executive members.

Notes (Optional)

The study circle intends to bring out an academic diary from next academic year onwards for the teachers. Also, the study circle is planning to come out with a peer reviewed multi-disciplinary journal.

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Inauguration by : 2013



Talk by Prof. C T Francis, St. Thomas College, Pala, 2013



Talk by Sri. Sethuraman IPS, 2014



Talk by Prof. K. P. Babudas, 2015