

Institutional Distinctiveness	Vidyamandira - a milieu for twin-manifestations: “Divinity” and “Perfection”.
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Ideology

In our modern times, the luminous mind of Swami Vivekananda probed man to his very depth and came up with the astounding revelation that infinite goodness and infinite perfection are lying buried in every man, waiting to be called out. Just as friction brings out the hidden fire from a flint, right kinds of external suggestions would likewise call forth ethical excellence and elements of creativity already present in their potential forms in man. True education, if anything, helps this manifestation through creating “right kinds of external suggestions”. To the extent an academic milieu furnishes such “right kinds of external suggestions”, it serves the purpose of education.

Based on this educational ethos of Swami Vivekananda, our College, ever since its inception, has been striving to build up an environment that would help manifest in its learners

- Divinity (i.e. such scintillating values as selflessness, moral courage, truthfulness etc.) &
- Perfection (i.e. academic excellence)

Now, what precisely is the method through which this manifestation is effected? The answer to this question necessarily takes us to appreciating a-priori a unique contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the world-thought.

Methodology

Having pointed out the divine as the buried treasure in each of us, Swami Vivekananda went on to provide the scheme of unearthing the same: “Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these - and be free.”

The uniqueness of Swami Vivekananda's presentation of the above mentioned practices lies in the fact that he offered them based on the primary functions of the mind – the affective function of the heart, the cognitive function of the intellect, and the conative function of the will.

- To the practice in which emotions plays a major role he gave the name 'Bhakti yoga'.
- That in which reasoning predominates was given the name 'Jnana yoga'.
- The practice in which the 'will' is dominant was recognized by him either as 'Raja Yoga' or 'Karma yoga'.
 - In Raja yoga, the 'will' is primarily directed inward, studying, analyzing, and controlling the powers of the mind.
 - In Karma yoga, the 'will' is primarily directed outward, studying, analyzing, and controlling our engagement with work.

Swami Vivekananda advocated the harmonious blending of these paths, on the recognition that a human being necessarily possesses all the faculties of thinking, feeling, and willing. It is the combination of four 'yogas' that constitutes a healthy and balanced approach towards creating a well-rounded personality. Vidyamandira has indeed been following such an integral approach to help the students manifest their potential divinity and perfection. How are these practices interwoven into the scheme of Vidyamandira's daily life? To this we now turn our attention.

Praxis

It is in the context of a fully residential setting that a typical day in Vidyamandira will be looked at. Indeed, Vidyamandira, tracing as it does its origin to Swami Vivekananda's vision of a temple of learning - effortlessly combining the elements of 'Gurukula' tradition of India and the scientific temper of the West, quite suitably opted for an infrastructural lay-out in which the academic buildings and the dormitories would be in close juxtaposition – making education a 'lived' experience. Against the backdrop of such a setting, let us now trace the progression of a typical day in Vidyamandira.

- ✓ Morning shows the day: Vidyamandira is literally up with the lark. Waking up to the rising bell rung at 5.00 AM, the students get prepared to go to the shrine in their respective hostels. The morning prayer, under the ministrations of the resident monk of the hostel, consists of meditation, simple hymns and devotional songs.

Prayer and meditation gives their minds an undercurrent of poise like the lingering sound of the bell rung in the early morning.

- ✓ As the day wears on:

Indeed, starting the day with '*Raja yoga*', the students step into the rest of the day, their minds calmed and focused.

- It is with reasonably concentrated minds that they set down to morning study and attend the classes afterwards.
- The day ahead for a student is necessarily full of interactions with the teachers and fellow-students. What can make such interactions respectful and loving is the implicit recognition of the divine in every being. Such an attitude easily makes one's heart warm up to others. The students are inspired to cultivate this noble emotion, thereby practising '*Bhakti yoga*' in their interactions with others.
- The day often springs surprises in the form of dilemma of choice. It is the power of discrimination that enables a student to settle for the 'desirable', avoiding the 'pleasurable'. The Indian Spiritual tradition is verily the tradition of holding on to what is 'desirable', giving up the 'pleasurable'. Through the regular holding of classes on 'Spiritual Heritage of India', our students are acquainted with such priceless principles and inspired to make the right choice through the exercise of reasoning. This is verily the practice of '*Jnana yoga*'.
- In their dealings with others throughout the day, the students are always encouraged to practise unselfishness – the hallmark of '*Karma yoga*'. Their practice of '*Karma yoga*' becomes quite evident in their participation in various social service activities conducted by the college.

- ✓ The evening descends: As the day draws to a close, it is again time for prayer and meditation. After the hard day's toil, the boys taste true mental repose in the peaceful environment of the shrine.

Exposed to the above mentioned practices day after day, our students quite unobtrusively develop concentration of mind, warmth of heart, power of decision making, & unselfishness. These character treasures verily enable them to manifest their inherent 'perfection' in the form of academic excellence and express their innate 'divinity' in the form of unselfish behavior.

Indeed, Vidyamandira, through the concerted efforts of monks, teachers, and supporting staff, is ever busy sustaining such a distinctive environment to help the students flower into ideal citizens of our country and into noble human beings for the world at large.

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