

Four Days of Celebrating Education: SDET's Annual Convention and Convocation



For four days, the village of Manjakkudi celebrated education, culture and Vedanta, marking an important milestone in the history of the organization that has completely transformed it.

For the ninth year in succession, Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) hosted a three-day show of theatre, music and dance, bringing Indian culture to the doorsteps of Manjakkudi. The celebration, held from July 4 to July 6, also commemorated the 10th anniversary of SDET.

The three-day convention was topped by the 9th annual convocation of Swami Dayananda College of Arts and Science on July 7.

Ms. Sheela Balaji, the secretary and Managing trustee of SDET welcomed the gathering and walked them through the development/progress of SDET over the decade. She detailed how the college, from a situation of having classrooms without electricity now boasts of facilities on par with any college in the country, including the well-equipped science and computer laboratories, and a state-of-the-art auditorium. Ms. Balaji fondly remembered the contributions of Late Sri G. Ramachandran, the former correspondent of SDET, and paid a silent tribute to his memory. An audio-visual presentation on the history of SDET was also screened.



On the occasion, Pujya Swamiji released the souvenir commemorating the 10th anniversary of SDET. Copies of the souvenir were presented to the distinguished guests and sannyasis who graced the event with their presence.

Soon after, seven graduates of the seven-year course of the Swami Dayananda Vedapathashala were felicitated by Pujya Swamiji and given a cash prize of Rs. 30,000. One student, Chi. Rakesh Sharma, was presented with a cash gift of Rs. 50,000.

The second day of the convention was an eye opener for the students of the college. They were introduced to the sannyasa parampara first hand, as Ms. Sheela Balaji honoured some of the sannyasis who attended the convention. The sannyasis—Swamini Brahmalinananda, Swamini Brahma prakasananda, Swami Aiswaryananda, Swamini Atmaprajananda, Swami Pranavarthananda, Swamini Svatmabodhananda, and Acharya Navneet—spoke about their experience with Pujya Swamiji, their exposure to Vedantic studies, and finally, adapting Sannyasa as a lifestyle.

On all three days of the convention, Pujya Swamiji addressed the 1,100 second and third year students of the Swami Dayananda College of Arts and Science on various aspects of



Vedanta. He then clarified some of the insightful questions that the students put forth to him. The first day's discussion was focused on values and attitudes, and understanding all that is Isvara. He touched upon various aspects of Vedanta that affect a student.

Over two days, eminent epigraphist and art historian Dr. K. Balasubramanian gave talks on the temples of Kanchipuram and Tiruvarur, bringing to light little known details about the temples and the societies they served.

The chief guest for the first day, Sri Babaji Rajah Bhonsle, senior prince of Thanjavur, felicitated Pujya Swamiji. The chief guest for the second day of the convention, Dr. N. Kamakoti, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, City Union Bank, Kumbakonam and Dr. S. Vaidhyasubramaniam, Dean, Planning and Development, SASTRA University, was the Chief Guest for the third day of the convention. It may be recalled that Dr. S Vaidhyasubramaniam and his family were the first ones to introduce Samashti Bhandara in our Rishikesh Ashram in March 2011.

The evenings were devoted to dance, theatre and music. From all over the country, cultural groups enthralled the people from the village of Manjakkudi with their performances.

The inaugural programme was "Natya", a drama by Koumarane Valavane Group, Indianostrum Theatre, Pondicherry. The drama depicted life in a Kathakali gurukulam, and the way that knowledge and tradition travel through time and space.



On the second evening, there was a vocal recital by Smt. Sudha Raghuraman, supported on the flute by her husband Sri Raghuraman, Sri A.S. Ranganathan on the mridangam, and Madippakkam Sri Murali on the ghatam. Smt. Sudha rendered many of Pujya Swamiji's compositions—Mahadeva Shambho, Vandeham Sharada, etc.

The grand finale of the convention was an enthralling Odissi performance by Srjan Group of Orissa, and the auditorium was packed to capacity with over 1500 people from the village attending the programme. The group, headed by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, featured five pieces, including devotional, contemporary, and patriotic pieces, reflecting the vision of Pujya Swamiji.

Following the three-day convention, Sunday, July 7 saw 523 students, including eight university rank holders, take a confident step towards a secure future, as they were conferred degrees at the Ninth Graduation Day of the Swami Dayananda College of Arts and Science, Manjakkudi.

Smt. Sheela Balaji, Secretary of the college welcomed the gathering. Dr. N.R. Vembu, Principal of the college, presented the progress made by the college during the academic year 2012-13. Ms. Geetha Anantharaman, Vice President, Wipro BPO, began her address by reminding the students of the role their parents played in their achieving the milestone of becoming a graduate. "Look towards your parents, wherever they may be, and thank them," she told the students. She impressed upon the new excited graduates the importance of "working hard with full involvement and dedication."

Pujya Swamiji, who presented the degrees to the students and blessed them, explained to them the concept of success. "You can become successful if you are at the right place at the right time. And that is possible through grace," he said. "But the grace we are talking about cannot be planned for. You can only receive grace in two ways: through prayer and by reaching out."



Sri V.A. Raghu, Director-Finance, TVS Educational Society, Chennai, Sri S.M. Rao and Sri Upendra Madhav Kini, industrialists from Dubai and Sri Ram Kini, industrialist from Mumbai felicitated the graduates. Dr. R. Selvanayagam, Member-Syndicate, Bharathidasan University was present and felicitated. Sri.V.Rengarajan, Vice Principal of the college, proposed the vote of thanks, bringing to a fitting end the events of the preceding four days.