

A REPORT ON GRAND CHALLENGES WEEK

University of Exeter, the 49th best university in the world and Jain University, ranked No.1 among private universities in Southern India recently signed an MoU to explore academic opportunities including exchange programmes for students, faculty and staff for the purpose of education, training, research, cultural enrichment, development and implementation of joint projects.

As a part of the student exchange programme, 11 students with a background in history participated in **The Grand Challenges Week** organized by Jain University from June 2 – 9 2013 at Jain Global Campus.

2 June 2013 – Arrival of University of Exeter students at Jain Global Campus



3 June 2013

The first day of the Grand Challenges Week was dedicated to Indian Culture. The day began with morning Yoga sessions for the students followed by breakfast. The formal interactive session with the students was kept post-breakfast. The introduction began with a formal invocation to Lord Ganesha with 'Ganesha Pancharatna Stotra'. Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan introduced the speakers of the day to the students and spoke in brief about the collaboration of Jain University and University of Exeter, the MoU and the various activities that have been conducted and planned further as part of this relationship.

Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, Prof and Head of the Research Department of Cultural Studies and Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Jain University then delivered the orientation lecture where she briefed on the itinerary of the week-long programme and spoke at length about Indian Culture in its essence.

A second lecture was followed by Dr. Nalini Rao, a well known Art Historian from Soka University California USA. Dr. Rao threw light upon the uniqueness of Indian culture and its

contribution to the world. She gave references of Cambodia and Angkor and showed slides of Barabudur temples. She briefed how the Indian thought and styles were updated with Indonesian perceptions.

The concluding lecture of the day was delivered by Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal on the Evolution and Development of Indian Art and Architecture. She went through the different phases, periods, influences, styles, symbolism of Indian Art and Architecture. All these were appended with the audio-visual presentation. The students were interactive through all these presentations.

4 June 2013

The sessions for the second day began with a lecture on Nutrition from the Indian perspective by Dr. Jayalakshmi, Nutritionist of Jayadeva Hospital. She spoke about different Indian food with their qualities and percentage of nutrition. Also elaborated on the effects of a particular food on the five sheaths of the body namely, *annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manonmaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha* and *anandamaya kosha* and how one derives the essence of bliss through the effect of the food on these sheaths.



The second session of the day was focused on Indian Psychology and re-orienting the mind or '*manas*' from Indian perspective. Resource persons, Dr. Vinay Chandra and Dr. Anuradha, the Research Associates from the Centre for Indian Psychology, Jain University also explained about the three sheaths of human body- *annamaya*, *pranamaya* and *manonmaya* and explained the mind from an Indian perspective. They also conducted an interactive and self-imploring workshop where the students were made to fill some questionnaires which would suggest the working of their inner consciousness.



The second day concluded with a lecture on *Vruksha Ayurveda* by Prof. S Sundarajan. He dealt with the traditional perspective of plants and trees in India. He called the science of *Vruksha Ayurveda* as a positive science and exposed two aspects of *Vruksha Ayurveda*:

1. ***Vruksha Ayurveda*** as the Sanskrit term for Botany; the nature of plants and human is not just rational but very emotional
2. And how plants were considered sacred; He also spoke about the importance of some trees namely, Basil, Pipal tree, Mango tree, Goose berry tree and Bilwa tree.

5 June 2013

The third day was dedicated to a trip to Shantidham, to study the ancient system of education, the *Gurukula* in India followed by a tour to a village in the Kanakapura vicinity. The students along with resource persons and faculty reached Shantidham early in the morning. The students were welcomed with all respects with the sacred chantings along with the *Poorna Kumbha*, the sacred water-pot. They were led to the *yagna kuteera*, where the *Vedi* was constructed and decorated. Verses were chanted which revered the mother, father, master and guests as divine beings. The rituals commenced with the chanting of Vedas by the *guruji*, faculty and the students of the Gurukula. The three Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama were chanted and the fire oblations were offered along with explanations.

After the Vedic oblations the students were taken through a guided meditation. This comprised of seating arrangement facing the east. Freedom was given to take a comfortable posture and was asked to concentrate. Most of them were captivated by the Vedic chanting that was going on in the background. The meditation was followed with a lecture on the purpose of the meditation. There are three aspects in our being, one the

physical, the second is the causal body and third is the soul or *atma*. The human heart as the seat of divinity is the seat of god and within is the divine light. The students were asked to focus on the divine light and imagining the divine light in the heart, the effulgent divine light. Experience the presence of the divine within each one and they were asked to share their experiences.



An introduction to *ashtanga yoga*, the eight steps of yoga being *yama*, *niyama*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *asana*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and followed by *the samadhi*. There was enough interaction by the students to know more about the power of *mantras* and everyone participated well. The students raised many queries to which the *acharyas* responded till their curiosity was satisfied. Significance of the fire sacrifice was explained as five elements were propitiated which purifies the nature. And the rains showered would bring the positive energy and the grains grown here will produce good children. A visit to the *goshala*, the cow shed was an experience. This was followed by a short cultural programme.

Arun Bharadvaj, Research Scholar of the Dept of Cultural Studies took the students throughout the Shantidhama entourage by igniting the minds of students towards Indian culture. Traditional lunch on plantain leaf was served. The students were very comfortable and enjoyed the sumptuous meal. This was followed by interviews of two students.

The students were taken to a nearby village Shivoharanahalli. The traditional village home and the system of storage, cooking, architecture, the three generation family leaving under one roof fascinated the students. They appreciated the hospitality of the villagers and

enjoyed eating the fried ground nuts with jiggery. Later they visited the sericulture rearing centre and gained the knowledge of making of the fine silk yarn.



6 June 2013

The fourth day was focused on the indigenous games and a mask workshop. Of late indigenous games are drawing the attention world over. Kavita D.K. who is an artist and researcher on indigenous games, acquired an M Phil degree from the Research Department of Cultural Studies Jain University, studying indigenous games. She made a presentation on the values, simplicity and universal appeal of indigenous games. She related significance of the *panchamahabutas*, the primordial elements to the games. Her presentation followed with a game session where the students learnt the indigenous games and they were presented with small kit containing the games hand-crafted by Kavita.



The resource person, Ms Vidhi Shah, spoke with a power point presentation about the masks, their origin, types and about different masks from the world. Vidhi explained about the purpose of masks in different cultures and introduced students to the versatile and significant masks of India and the mask heritage.



An interactive workshop on masks followed the session wherein separate masks were given to each student and were asked to paint. The students thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and the masks were carried by them back home.

After the workshop, they were taken to the Vidyaniketan school of JGS to see the way an Indian school conducts its activities. This was followed by a visit to the Sai Baba temple at Jain Global Campus to witness an *Arati* and procession in the temple.

7 June 2013

The fifth day of the Grand Challenges week focused on Indian Cinema. The first half of the day was spent on the Global Campus of Jain University where the students attended two interactive sessions on Indian Cinema.

In introductory session, Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan, HOD, Department of Visual Arts, Jain University gave an overall picture of the Indian film industry, focusing mainly on the



Hindi film industry, the actors, the major movies, songs, posters and a brief on the film market. She supported her lecture with ample slides and clippings. Her lecture threw light on the popular aspects of Indian Cinema as a whole and the elements which makes it the largest producer of motion pictures in the world.

The second session on Cinema was by Mr. Prakash Belawadi, a noted journalist, theatre director, scriptwriter and director of films and TV soaps. Mr. Belawadi dealt with the problems of representation in Indian Cinema and its demographic structures. He also went through various concepts of aesthetics in connect with effects of the moving image and the way it is made. He stressed on an awareness of different cultures, different issues in order to understand the politics of representation itself.

Post-lunch, the students were taken to toy factory in Channapatna to show them the indigenous toy making industry and its styles. The students enjoyed the visit and also purchased toys for their collection. After the Channapatna, they were brought back to the Global campus. In continuance with the thread of Indian Cinema, they were screened the Hindi film, 'English Vinglish'. They were appreciative of the film and gave good reviews about it.

8 June 2013

The sixth day of the Grand Challenges week was entirely dedicated to the visit to heritage city of Mysore. Jain University facilitated a one-day Mysore trip for the students to give them the experience of visiting a historical city in India. The journey to Mysore started early in the morning in order to cover all the significant places with ample amount of time for each of the spots. The places of visit included the town of Srirangapatana, the ancient Vishnu Temple, Tipu's Summer Palace, Mysore Palace, Chamundi Hills.



The students were given guided tour at Tipu's Summer Palace and the Mysore Palace. They took keen interest in the intricacies of the design, architecture and various carvings of the palaces. They enjoyed the elephant and camel rides in the Mysore palace pathways. They also showed interest to visit the Chamundi temple at the hills and relished the view from the hill. On the way back from the temple, Mr. Paramesh Jolad, a PhD student of Visual Arts, Jain University demonstrated a landscape painting to the students. They were also attracted by the collections in the Mysore emporiums and shopped items according to their interest.



Their curiosity and enthusiasm for the Indian culture was evident from their constant queries about religion, art and the traditions of India and their interest to visit as many places as possible to experience the element of Indian tradition.

The trip concluded with the emporium visit and dinner at Channapattna.

9 June 2013

The final day of the week long event was focused on the legacy of British rule in India and their presence in Bangalore and followed with a general tour around the city. The day started with a quick shopping at an Indian Art Mela at Ashoka Pillar. They were then taken to Chitrakala Parishath to acquaint them with the idea of an art institution and its history in Bangalore and the current practicing trends. Post-lunch, a stroll around Cubbon Park and Vidhana Soundha acquainted them with some of the reminiscences of British architecture and planning in Bangalore and also, the architectural styles of major buildings post British rule. Their attention was drawn to the Queen's Statue a King's Statue at Cubbon Park, built during the British rule and also British heritage buildings like Attara Kachari, Venkatappa Museum, Mythic Society building, St. Martha's Hospital and various churches.





The students gathered at the JC road campus where Chairman, Dr. Chenraj Roychand addressed the students on their visit and congratulated them for completing the Grand Challenges Week successfully in the midst of a varied and different setting other than their home country. After a brief interaction with the students, Dr. Roychand distributed the certificates to them. The day was concluded with a shopping trip to MG Road.



The Research Department of Cultural Studies and Dean, Faculty of Humanities and social Sciences wish to thank with gratitude the respected Dr. Chenraj Roychand, President, Jain University Trust, Dr. N Sundararajan, the Vice-chancellor, Prof. Krishnan the Registrar of Jain University for evincing keen interest and encouragement. Our team members Ms. Aparna Prasad, Director HR, Communications & Corporate Affairs, Mr. Parswanath the Director for Facilities and Dr.Soumya Manjunath Chavan are specially complemented for making this programme a grand success. Ms. Indrani Sharma, our Coordinator, Akila Lakshminarayan, Minnu Kejriwal, Paramesh Jolad, Vidhi Shah, Kavitha DK and Arun Bharadwaj, all research scholars of the Research Department of Cultural Studies deserve the recognition for supporting whole heartedly in this endeavor.