

Ashwini N V Ganig, redefining the scope of psychology

Her idea was voted as the best at St. Gallen Symposium in the plenary session titled “What is the next small BIG thing?” on May 7th, 2015, Switzerland. Her idea was selected among entries that came from over 108 countries. In the final round, she competed with students from Harvard University, Fordham University, and Copenhagen Business School. She secured over 50% of the votes and emerged as the winner. Ashwini Ganig, research scholar at Jain University, shared her thoughts on the experience.

“I had the opportunity to share space with over 600 top decision makers from politics, business, media, and academia. Some of them were Prime ministers, CEOs of top business corporations, journalists, academicians you have looked up to. In addition, I met 200 more youngsters in my age range, engaged in various fields, from all over the world. The experience was definitely enriching. For me, the most exciting and emotionally satisfying experience was that I could share my thoughts on mental health issues and ideas on ways to promote mental health in low- and middle-income countries, of which India is one, on the big stage amidst such esteemed folks.”

Her winning idea consisted of five micro-strategies

- **‘Flourish’ clinics**, instead of grand institutes for mental health
- **Outsourcing** psychotherapeutic skills to smaller communities
- **Culture-specific conceptualisation** of mental illness and treatment
- **Unassuming philanthropy** for mental health cause
- **Skilling individuals** with psychological skills

“It is a set of five micro-strategies that I propose with a belief that it has the potential to foster mental health promotion in low- and middle-income countries.”

When asked about her upcoming projects, she said, “My doctoral research work is on psychology of women who burn themselves. I aim to understand their motives in choosing burning as the method to commit suicide, their intrapersonal experiences and test the validity of a technique that I have developed to help them recover from psychological trauma. So, this is my primary focus right now. Apart from this, I have developed several modules on prevention of abuse of all kinds, and skills to promote mental health. I have been reaching out to thousands of people through workshops and training programmes. I plan to continue and hopefully scale it up. I have been planning to conduct a series of workshops on unaddressed topics such as “Dealing with breakup blues” and “Dealing with psychological distress caused by irregular menstrual cycles among young girls”. These are topics that are not addressed from a psychological perspective. I think we mental health professionals must gear up to addressing these topics, as they matter too. Also, currently, on the top of my mind is this urge to facilitate building a strong community of people committed to the cause of promoting mental health.”