

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

### The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture : Activities during 2007

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The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, one of the main branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, has always striven for upgrading the cultural values through the dissemination of the basic teachings of Vedanta as interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and demonstrated through their divine lives and teachings. In its nearly seven decades of existence, the Institute has come to occupy a significant place for its philanthropic, cultural and educational activities through the dissemination of Indology, especially Indian philosophy and culture in all their aspects. Below is given a brief account of its activities of the Institute during 2007 :

#### Institute as Heritage Building

The most important and heartening event that took place during the year under review was that the Kolkata Municipal Corporation had declared the Institute Building as a '**Heritage Building**'. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed between the Corporation authorities and the Institute.

#### Foundation Day celebration

With a daylong programme, the Institute celebrated its 69<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day on 29 January 2007. The programme started with garlanding the statue of Swami Vivekananda at Gol Park, the statue of Sister Nivedita at Nivedita Park and the marble statue of Swamiji in the campus. This was followed by the lighting of lamps at the Central Lobby and the function of devotional songs by Swami Ritananda, Rebati Bhusan Mandal and Group in the Vivekananda Hall, reading in Bengali from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother by Swami Sarvabhutananda, reading in English from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda by Swami Swagatananda, devotional songs by Ashesh Bandyopadhyay and Group and an address by Swami Prabhananda. It came to an end with a film show entitled '**Briksha Manav**'. At 6.00 pm, a Reception was held for distinguished scholars, educationists, intellectuals and other citizens from all walks of life. Mr Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, accompanied by Smt. Tara Gandhi attended the Reception and went round the Children's Art Exhibition set up by the Sarada Devi School of Arts and Crafts. The Governor presided over the Foundation Day meeting in the evening. The Foundation Day Oration was given by Prof. B. B. Bhattacharya, Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University on '**Challenges of Socio-Economic Disparities in India**'.

#### Anniversary celebration of Sri Sri Thakur, Sri Sri Ma and Swamiji

To mark the 144<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, a Grand Music Festival on 12 January 2007 was inaugurated by Swami Prabhananda. The festival continued with 3 sessions—Morning, Afternoon, and Evening—with eminent and distinguished vocalists, instrumentalists and performing artists. As in previous years, this year too the Institute celebrated the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda with a colourful procession followed by a Rally, at Nazrul Mancha on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007. At the Rally devotional songs were sung. The function at Nazrul Mancha started with Vedic chanting and was followed by reading a few pages from the *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* and *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Sarvabhutananda and Swami Vedaśvarupananda respectively. Swami Sarvalokananda gave a speech on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The Presidential address was given by Swami Prabhananda. Besides this,

symposia in English, Bengali and Hindi on the life and teachings of the Holy Trio were organized in the Vivekananda Hall on 27 January, 17 February and 23 March respectively.

#### Cultural programmes

As a part of the Institute's regular activities for the spread and promotion of knowledge and higher values, the Institute, throughout the year, maintains a busy schedule of lectures, seminars, symposia, music programmes, etc. 269 public functions were also held throughout the year. Of these, 32 were public lectures, 135 were scripture-classes and discourses, 99 endowment lectures, 7 special lectures, 11 recitals and 1 music festival, 11 seminars (collaboration programmes) and 3 symposia. The Institute also organized 7 special programmes to celebrate the Foundation Day and to hold Convocation and to inaugurate the Exhibitions. On 24<sup>th</sup> of December, Christmas Eve was observed in which

Father Gaston Roberg, S. J., gave a speech on '**Messages of the Christmas**'.

The Institute also conducted an All-India Elocution Competition on Swami Vivekananda in which there were 460 contestants from various schools and colleges and 73 candidates won prizes.

#### Library

One of the busiest departments of the Institute is its Library in a well-ventilated, adequately illuminated spacious Reading Room in a computerized environment with the average daily attendance of 1687 readers. The Library which now functions with the added space of the new extension building is one of the most popular and well-serviced libraries in the eastern part of India. The Library has three wings—General, Children and Junior Section. The number of books purchased, obtained as gifts and bound periodicals during the year under report, was 6056 raising the stock to 231395.

#### Value Orientation Programme

To encourage young people to imbibe the ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Institute started a Youth Forum called Vivekananda Study Circle and later another youth wing called **Vivekananda Anushilan** for a deeper study of the life and philosophy of Swamiji. The Vivekananda Anushilan conducted 26 sessions with an average attendance of 75 and the Vivekananda Study Circle conducted 18 sessions with an average attendance of 8 only. The Institute in its Value Orientation Programme carried a man-making message of Swamiji further to the youths at large through 211 Youth Conferences held in 11 districts of Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, Burdwan, Bankura, Murshidabad, Paschim Medinipur, Purba Medinipur, North and South 24-Parganas in which 40,625 youths participated. In one District Level Teachers' Conference in Nadia 350 teachers participated. Besides these, 2 Central Youth Conventions were held on 25.5.2007 and 2.12.2007 at the Institute in which 2300 youth delegates and 300 observers participated.

#### Value Education Programme

In pursuance of the guidelines framed by the Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, the Institute organized Value Education Programme involving three vital sectors of the society, namely students, parents and teachers. In the Value Education Workshop, 304 senior students participated in a five-day class room session during 6-11 September 2007 and they took part in a two-day-long service-oriented project work at Gopalpur village during 24-25 November 2007.

#### Publications

The Institute's activities are supported by its publications and the Institute has a very active Publication Department. The monthly **Bulletin** with contributions from eminent scholars was regularly published. The popularity of the **Bulletin** in academic circles, both in India and abroad, is steadily rising. Among other publications brought out this year by the Department, mention may be made of **The Cultural Heritage of India**, Vol. VII (part-I) (Hard bound and paperback) released by Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh; **Punthi**; **Uttara-Gitā**; **Sri Ramakrishna in the Eyes of Brahmo and Christian Admirers**; **Spiritual Values to Live by**; **Religion: Theory and practice**, **Shabdaparokshabad** and **Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News (1893-1902), Vol-II**. A good number of the Institute's earlier publications were also reprinted.

#### Vivekananda Archive

Since its establishment in 1995, the **Vivekananda Archive** has been engaged in the collection of all kinds of materials, specially publications in all languages—Indian and foreign (i) on and by Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples, sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Order and other personalities related to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. (ii) Thoughts and ideas expressed in Swamiji's work (iii) Reference to the personality of Swamiji in the Western press and also help research scholars on the same subject. With a bigger space the Archive has widened its activities. It has added to its Library, during the year under Report, 260 Books, 17 Souvenirs and 15 Annual Reports of the Ramakrishna Movement Organizations. The Archive has been continuing projects on (i) Compilation of a Bibliography on books written on and by Swami Vivekananda (English and Bengali) (ii) Determining the dates/periods related to Swami Vivekananda's life and activities for preparing a comprehensive biography of Swami Vivekananda.

#### Museum and Art Gallery

The Museum and Art Gallery has developed as a place of interest to the art-loving people. It helps people gain a fair knowledge of Indian Art in its diverse forms. It has 5 major sections—Paintings, Sculpture, Folk Arts, Manuscript and Metal Wares. During the year, the Museum did not purchase any objects. 18 objects were rather gifted or donated by Sri Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty and Mrs Mira Dutta to enrich collection of the Museum. During the period, the Museum and Art Gallery sent 42 rare articles for restoration to INTACH. The Museum has also been modernized. A good number of small sculptures and relief works on Plaster of Paris made by the renowned sculptor, late Sri Pramatha Nath Mullick, became fragile with the passage of time. Two of them have been transferred into fibre glass.

The Annual Art Exhibition of the Sarada Devi School of Fine Arts and Crafts was held on 29 January 2007. A total of 253 students got admitted for the Academic Session 2007-2008.

The Annual Exhibition '**Art in Daily Life**' was opened on 5 March 2007 which continued till 27 March 2007. During the Exhibition, demonstration was given on **Pata** and **Alpana**. A major Academic Programme of this department is to run a ten-month Post-graduate Diploma Course comprising 75 modules in **Appreciation of Indian Art**. The Convocation for the Academic Session 2006-07 was held on 13 November 2007.

#### Centre for Indological Studies and Research

In pursuance of the objective that Research is the inherent and continuous activity of this Institute, the Centre for Indological Studies and Research carried on during the year research work with scholars of the country and abroad. The Centre conducted this year too very successfully P. G. Diploma Courses in Indology, Functional Sanskrit and Appreciation of Indian Art.

A nine-month popular course in '**International Understanding for Human Unity**' was also conducted with the support of the UNESCO and the Ministry of Human Resource Development where reputed

academics and representatives of the UNESCO shared their knowledge and experiences when delivering lectures to the participants of the course. The Centre's Library has also been strengthened. Some scholars obtained doctorate and post-doctorate degrees while some fresh scholars have also joined the Centre. 14 Pre-doctoral and 5 Post-doctoral scholars and 7 scholars are working in various projects. The total number of Research Professors and Visiting Professors is 27. The Centre organized a 3-day National Seminar from 4 to 6 January 2007 on 'Exploring Harmony among Religious Traditions in India,' when Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, delivered the Inaugural Address and Prof. J. N. Mohanty, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Temple University, U.S.A., delivered the Key-note Address.

Two Sanskrit Workshops—Preliminary and Advance—were held this year. A 15-day Sanskrit Preliminary level Workshop was conducted from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 17 February 2007 to promote Sanskrit language. A 12-day Sanskrit Workshop in Advance level was also conducted from 19 March to 4<sup>th</sup> April. In a 15-day Sanskrit Preliminary Workshop held during 18 September to 5 October, 50 students got enrolled in which 44 students received certificates from the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University for their Learning Proficiency. The Centre also conducted a Sanskrit Debate Competition. A total of 61 students in Group A (Beginners) and 24 students in Group B (Advance level) from different schools, colleges and universities participated. The Convocation of the Centre was held on 13 October 2007. The Centre also organized two Preparatory Workshops on 'Historical Evaluation of India'. The Introductory Workshop was organized on 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2007, while the second workshop on Poetry, Art, Aesthetics, and analytical schemes of Engineering was held on 25 August 2007. The Centre also provided research facilities to Prof. Amulya Chandra Roy, a Physicist, Kalodic Kapilo, a French Physicist and Dr. Amartya Dutta of I.S.I. from time to time.

#### School of Languages

One of the major wings and centre of activities of the Institute is its School of Languages. During the year the School taught 17 languages: 5 Indian (Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu) and 12 Foreign (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Persian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish). The total enrolment in 2007 was 19,208. English language accounted for 82.46% of the total enrolment. This year 325 students were exempted from paying their tuition fees and 166 scholarships were given to the needy and meritorious students of the English Language Course. Sri Pradip Chowdhury of London donated 120 Oxford Dictionaries to deserving candidates of English Language. The Convocation of the School of Languages was held on 24 March 2007. Professor Radha Raman Chakraborty, formerly Vice-Chancellor, Netaji Subhas Open University, delivered a very interesting speech as Chief Guest and distributed the prizes and certificates. 1509 students were awarded their certificates after the Convocation.

The Tulsi-Beena Goswami Debate Competition was held on 6 October 2007. The topic was: In the Opinion of the House 'Tradition and Modernity cannot go hand in hand'. On 26 March 2007, the German Department held a very impressive programme on the Life of Sri Sri Thakur. A renowned French Professor visited the school on February 2. Swami Baneshanandaji Maharaj delivered an enlightening speech to the students and teachers of the School on 13 February 2007. A Workshop for the English Language Teachers was held by Ms. Jennifer Erandall, an English language Fellow of the American Center. Madam Riehatakeyama, Japanese Language Advisor for South India and some officials of the Japan Foundation, New Delhi visited the School on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and expressed their eagerness for co-operation with the Japanese language department.

A Heiku Session was conducted on 13 November by the internationally known Heiku Poet, Ms. Emiko Miyashita, in the presence of Motoyoshi Noro, Consul General, Consulate General of Japan, and a renowned Bengali writer Sri Sunil Gangopadhyay.

### Educational assistance

During the period under review, with the income from endowments created by the donors the Institute gave a large number of scholarships and stipends to needy but meritorious students. Besides this, 4 scholarships of Rs. 1,00,000/- each for higher studies abroad were awarded to 4 scholars through Debesh-Kamal Scholarship and a few more scholarships to medical students in West Bengal. The total educational assistance rendered by the Institute during the year was Rs. 18,26,400.

### Charitable work among slum children

During the year, the Institute served  $\frac{1}{2}$  liter of milk, 200 gm bread and a bun bread everyday to poor children up to 6 years of age. They were given Puja garments and blankets. Besides this, 150 pieces of blankets were given to the poor and old destitutes.

### International House

The Institute has an International House meant for Institute's guests, scholars and students from various parts of India and abroad. During the year 3342 guests stayed at this International House of which 2221 came from India and the rest from various countries like U.S.A., U.K., Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Korea, Italy, Nigeria, Romania, Thailand etc.

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