

Title: Economics of Compassion: A Book Collection & Donation Project

Objectives of the Practice:

Indian society is divided on many grounds. Caste, Religion, Language are some of the most common factors that we know of and vociferously raise our voice against. Another factor that hides beneath these and is the one that is more real and perhaps the ugliest in the current age of consumerism is Class. In both rural and urban societies we find stark and scary differences on the basis of class. The effects of it have been showing ever more clearly on the education 'industry' too. Barring the government publishing agencies, practically all private publishers have packaged and designed the books and other curriculum support material in a manner that its prices have skyrocketed in the recent times. This has raised the school and university education costs exponentially. Low income group bears the brunt of it and becomes difficult for such families to afford any type of formal education. This problem poses a serious threat to India's growth in these times. The government is doing a lot in providing affordable education to the masses but we as an institution have taken up the responsibility to do our share at the grass root level. The Department of Economics collaborated in this direction with an NGO, Open Eyes Foundation. The project 'Economics of Compassion' aims to reach out to people and encourage them to donate books that they are not using so that they can be channelized in a manner that needy students can have an access to them.

TheContext

Books is something that academicians understand very well. It is their *Dharma* as well as *Karma*. In this respect, conceptualizing the practice was easy while its implementation was met with challenges which the college authorities were prepared for. The students come from different economic groups and realize the need for raising awareness in this regard. This has also been a way to sensitize and educate our students in this direction. As a higher education institution, we understand that we are perfectly poised to undertake such a project and help, however marginally, bridge the ever widening economic gap between different classes.

ThePractice

The practice was started in 2021 and has been running smoothly and efficiently. Department of Economics collaborated with an NGO called Open Eyes Foundation that had already been undertaking a similar project by the name *Raddi Se Shiksha*. Our college took a leaf from their book and decided to implement it in our campus with a vision to help the needy students who might be thinking twice before enrolling in colleges and universities for a simple yet complex reason- Affordability. It's an unfortunate yet real reason for many youngsters to not look in the direction of getting formal education. The college has successfully implemented this practice and plan to continue in the far future. The books are collected in huge number and are distributed to the needy through Open Eyes Foundation on a periodical basis. Our students as well as teachers are involved in the practice wholeheartedly. The students go out and raise awareness amongst the general public and get books from them and put them in a box that is installed specifically and strategically so that it is easy to locate for even the visitors. The mere presence of the donation box inspires everyone who walk past it to do the needful for a noble cause.

EvidenceofSuccess

This ambitious project didn't just see the light of day, but is one of the most successful ventures that the college has undertaken recently. On the first day of installation of the donation box, it was full and the collection was sent for distribution to the needy. On 25th May, 2022, non-teaching staff of the college also contributed towards the noble cause and donated old books to Book Man of city Mr. Sandeep, founder of Open Eyes Foundation for the cause. In all, 4 box-full books have been collected and sent to Open Eyes Foundation for learners in need.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

It is a project that requires to be monitored continuously. Also there is an impending fear of losing the box itself since it is installed in the open. Thankfully, we have round-the-clock security provided in the form of CCTV cameras and deployment of security personnel. Another minor problem is that during the vacation days, we experience a leaner period of book collection compared to the days when the academic session is on. Perhaps, we think that it is a problem because we want to collect as many books as possible for the benefit of the learners.

Notes (Optional)

It is a matter of great pride for our college that such activities are undertaken by our students and teachers together. It gives our institution a chance to call ourselves true imparters of knowledge where we believe that real knowledge should not be, and cannot be, restricted to classrooms and prescribed curriculum alone. It is the duty of every educational institution that they should reflect the fundamentals of their educational institution. This is how their knowledge and their education will become relevant and meaningful in the true sense.

Title: Self Defense Training for Girl Students

Objectives of the Practice:

The women in our country are, unfortunately, one of the most vulnerable social groups. There are so many cases of rape, and other forms of physical and psychological trauma that women have to undergo on a day-to-day basis. The infamous and much talked about 'Nirbhaya' case has been a wake-up call for all women of our country. The biggest objective with which our college undertook this activity was to make the girl students of our college feel self-sufficient and ready in case of any such transgression that they may have to go through at any time in their lives.

The Context

Crime against women is matter of national shame for our country. The fear that such incidents instil in our women is not an indicator of their weakness. In fact, it is an indicator of the society's failure to provide them with secure and safe environment where they can dream big and grow in their professional and personal life. The movement of *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* spearheaded by none other than our Honourable Prime Minister, Shri. Narendra Modi inspired us to start an initiative of this kind. The college started a self-defence training programme for the girl students so that they could grow in confidence and rather than feeling insecure, could focus on their dreams and aspirations. The college authorities strongly believe that real education doesn't reach fruition if the mind is preoccupied with

insecurities and safety concerns. Fear of such incidents of crimes against women prove as a handicap and hinders an individual's growth in professional and personal life.

The Practice

As an educational institution, providing a safe and secure environment to all students is the duty of the college administration. The college takes utmost care that no student feels unsafe in the campus. CCTV cameras, regular proctorial duties by teachers, availability of security staff in the college helps prevent untoward incidents within the campus. Although great care is taken to ensure all this inside the campus, it cannot be guaranteed beyond the college premises. It is for this reason, in 2019, the college authorities felt that they must do something in this direction. They could instil as much confidence in the girl students as they wanted within the four walls of the college but the security could not be guaranteed outside the campus. The fact of the matter is that the students only spend a few hours in the college every day. Many have to use public transport and other modes of conveyance to commute to college. Some even have to walk to college every day. While we may boast of safe environment within the college, the outside world was still unsafe for many. The college authorities felt that there was an urgent need of a programme that would minimize the threat posed to especially the girl students of the college. With this idea in mind, the college started a Self-Defence Training Programme for girl students of our college in collaboration with Chandigarh Police. We successfully trained many students under this programme which was designed especially for them. A professional trainer of Chandigarh Police is outsourced by the college for this purpose and regular training sessions were held in batches for the students ensuring effective training. There has been a positive response consistently from the students as they also feel that such programmes are a must in this day and age when crimes against women are on the rise. The training programme is organized regularly in the college where women teachers are also put on duty to ensure smooth conduct of the training sessions.

Evidence of Success

The training programme is an ongoing practice which is being regularly conducted. The demand from students is the biggest evidence of success of this practice initiated by our college. The participation of students in various activities of the college proves that there has been a built-up of confidence in them and they are ready to meet any challenge that life throws at them. Self-Defence is not merely a way for women to defend themselves from physical transgressions by the criminal minded, it also works at a psychological level providing women with confidence and a sense of belief that they can protect themselves and achieve anything that they set their minds to. It is not surprising therefore that the girl students of our college feel safe when they have to stay at the college campus during late hours due to many college and university events. Even during the pandemic lockdowns, the college organized this event online for the girl students.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Other than the problems of logistics during the lockdown due to the pandemic situation, we are happy that there have hardly been any challenges that came in the way of conducting this programme. Since the beneficiaries of the programme are college students, they understand that these training sessions are a need of the hour and they would definitely prove beneficial to them. Before the training sessions, the teachers hold orientation sessions with the students

where they are familiarised with the idea and the need for such programmes. The students' response has been overwhelmingly positive.

As far as the resources are concerned, the college is self-sufficient in this regard. There are sprawling green fields that provide with a positive and safe environment for such activities. Hiring a trainer is also done following government guidelines of outsourcing services like these, which makes the programme run smoothly and ensures security of our girl students. The trainer is outsourced through Chandigarh Police which lends credibility to the programme.

Notes (optional)

We are proud to have taken an initiative towards women security and development in the college following the movement of *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*. It shall surely prove to be a boon for our students who have been making their *alma mater* proud by bringing laurels to it. Our students have shone brightly in both academics and co-curriculars and this training programme, among many other such practices, is a way for us to ensure success and development of our students.

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