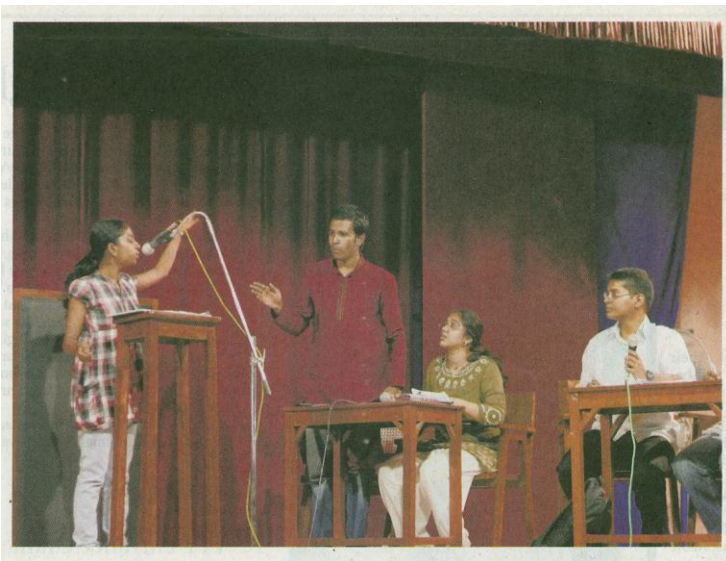


December 17, 2012

Debates with a difference

Parliamentary debates have become a popular student forum with the latest one at Stella Maris, Chennai.



Stella Maris College organized their first edition of a nationwide British Parliamentary Debate tournament from November 30 to December 2 this year. It would be apt to call this an initiative as this was the first national level BP tournament to be held in the city.

“We wanted to try something new and parliamentary debates seemed fitting as the city had already seen a fair share of Model UN conferences”, says Purna Gupta, III BA Economics, the convenor of the tournament who initiated the process. She adds, “Such a format is very popular in the debating circuits of Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai. We wanted Chennai to be a part of this .”

In a Parliamentary Debate, there are two entities which the participants represent. The governing body speaks in favour of the motion passed, while the opposition

speaks against it. The motion is declared just prior to the debate. Four teams participate in each debate; two teams represent the Government, and two teams, the opposition. Each participant is given seven minutes to speak, in which, his or her argument is introduced, explained and a conclusion is drawn.

SMCPD or Stella Maris College Parliamentary Debate saw the participation of more than a hundred students from prestigious universities across the country and overseas such as IIT Madras, NLS Bangalore, IIT Bombay, NUS Singapore, Christ University, R.V College of Engineering, Asian College of Journalism, Loyola, MOP-Vaishnav, and so on.

Diverse topics

The speakers brutally battled one another to convince the judges that their approach to the given motion, and their opinions and beliefs were better and more suitable. The topics included controversial issues such as the circumcision of minors for non-medical reasons, whether tax deductions must be made to amounts donated to charity, the privatisation of law enforcement, the deregulation of genetic modification of animals, whether States should exercise control over the internet. The topics highlighted the contrasting differences in thought that gave way to an enriching debate, filled with wit, humour, harmless jibes, and of course, good substance. Two teams from NLS Bangalore, one team from RVCE and the IIT Madras-NUS cross team competed in the final round of the tournament. The duo from IITM-NUS went on to win the tournament, with the team from RVCE coming in a close second.

The success of any event, particularly an event of such a grand scale depends on the team that organizes it. The core committee of the SMCPD consisted of eight members; Prerna Gupta was the convenor while Anjana Logan and Nayantara Nayar were deputy conveners. Shilpa Sajeev, Aditi Parakh, Swetha Viswanathan, Varsha Thomas and Mahima Sashank headed hospitality, sponsorship, student affairs, internal affairs and publicity design respectively.

Two of the finalists, Diboyojyoti Mainak and Vinodhini, of the National Law School of India, Bangalore say, “It was a great debate. A lot of effort was put in by the organizing team. Extremely hospitable too! The SMC might just have started a much needed BP tradition in Chennai.”

Leela Murali, III BA English

Mahima Sashank, III BA Economics



“SMCPD deserves credit for adopting the dynamic and fast-paced British Parliamentary (BP) debate format at a time when it is still relatively new in India. Especially with the BP World Championship scheduled to happen in Chennai next year, the exposure that the Indian debating community received to BP debating at tournaments like SMCPD is invaluable. But long-term benefits apart, it has also simply been a fun and exciting tournament!” –

Anil Sebastian, NLS Bangalore – Best Speaker



‘What started to look like a small debate turned out to be one of the most competitive debates I’ve been to, with the top debaters in India battling it out, making it a grand success in their first try. Stellar competition, Stella indeed.’ –

Ashwin Shanbag, CMR, Law College, Bangalore



“SMCPD was great fun . I'd like to think that I played a part in forging a brand new debate circuit in Chennai and get them excited about Chennai Worlds.” –

Karthik Sivaram, Chief Adjudicator.



“This was our first time with the British Parliamentary format and I can honestly say that from the motions to the kind of teams we faced to the overall organization, we absolutely loved the experience. The standards were excellent in terms of judging and competition” –

Padma Priya and Siddharth, (IIT Madras and NUS Singapore), Winners