

267. Experiences of Jana Vignana Vedika in Communication of Science and Technology Among the People in Andhra Pradesh

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Science and Technology Communication

Our Constitution prescribes Developing Scientific Temper, Humanism and Spirit of Inquiry and Reform as some of the fundamental duties of every citizen. Popularization of science and inculcation of scientific temper among the people is one of Jana Vignana Vedika's (JVV) major tasks and priority areas. Its modes of popularization of science among people include folk arts, street plays, dance, magic, sound and music and other art forms besides the usual speeches, book exhibitions, demonstrations, debates, presentations, mobile science laboratories, gauntlet challenges against baseless claims, etc. Some of the activists of JVV regularly contribute articles and science features in vernacular dailies and magazines besides participation in electronic media and AIR. JVV has developed a series of radio episodes on 'Chemistry in Daily Life' (13 episodes of 30 minute duration), 'Emergence of Modern Science'

(another 13 episodes of 30 minute duration) and 'Mana Nela Mana Bhoomi, meaning Our Land and Our Earth (a 52 radio episodes of 30 minute duration, developed in connection with the International Year of Planet Earth, in 2008) and other areas of science with a collaboration of the DST's Vigyan Prasar and All India Radio. Whenever astronomical events such as eclipses, meteors, comets, occultation's, etc. occur, JVV would be the first to go to people at their habitats and make them understand the underlying principles of such phenomena lest they should attach obscurantist cause to them and continue to be eternal slaves of paranormal and superstitious belief systems. Further, during events of calamity, such as tsunami, storms and floods, accidents and other untoward situations, it gears up its human and material resources to go to the material and mental needs of the victims and the aggrieved. Fake god men, soothsayers, palmists, quacks and unscientific medical prescriptions are on the waning due to the protracted activities of JVV. It has been rated the topper in celebrating the United Nations' International Year of Physics, 2005. As a befitting culmination of the celebrations of the International Year of Physics, JVV has installed a life-size statue of Albert Einstein, the genius of the millennium and on the basis of whose scientific works was the year, 2005, declared as the International Year of Physics.

Education

With the strength of several thousands of teachers as its members, the JVV organizes teacher training to make them enjoy teaching and promotes pedagogic innovations to make learning an enjoyable activity for children. In consultation and association with teacher organizations, it holds frequently workshops to enhance the teachers' information on the latest developments in science and technology by closeting them to eminent scientists and academicians of premier institutes of higher learning. It also assesses curriculum and textbook contents and concepts and organizes children's science festivals, such as balotsavs, srijanotsavs, joyful learning, bala melas, etc, frequently on massive scales. Further, it has developed PowerPoint slideshows and software modules in several subjects of academic interest besides lecture notes and booklets. To promote quest for knowledge and bent of socio-scientific and technological awareness among school children, JVV conducts Chekumuki Science Talent Test every year for high school children. As many as 6 lakh students have participated in this test during the year, 2007. The state level chekumuki science talent test, known as Sainsu Sambaralu, is not a competition but a festive convergence of bright minds from all over the state. It is marked by the so-called, Science Carnival, in which science toys, science shows, science demonstrations are staged all along roads.

The adult literacy, neo-literacy and post-literacy programmes, JVV organized, have brought praises to JVV from many corners. The mobile science laboratories (with help of DPEP), workshops on Low-Cost and No-Cost Science Teaching Aids, activities by name Joy of Learning, Summer Camps and Winter Camps for school children and teachers, etc some of the other very acclaimed activities of JVV in the Educational front.

Health

Over the last few decades, JVV has actively been campaigning for people-oriented health policies and medicare. Led by a band of dedicated doctors and activists, the organization conducts surveys and analyzes the ground realities of health care at all levels while preparing village level health plans and cost-effective and lasting solutions. As an active

partner of Jana Swasthya Abhyan (People's Health Movement), JVV has been critically examining the health policies of the governments and formulating alternative health policies while cooperating on certain areas many were baptized to JVV when there was a Prohibition in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It was the Literacy Movement, spearheaded by JVV, and one of the many short stories written by JVV for the illiterates, that sparked the Anti Arrack Movement. It has been a milestone in the successful chronology of events of Jana Vignana Vedika. JVV has been organizing workshops and conventions to impress upon the people and the polity that giving healthcare to everyone is State's responsibility as per the Alma Ata Declaration, which stated "Health for All by 2000 AD". It also conducts seminars on various issues related to health such as HIV/AIDS, PC and PNDT Act and general public health awareness. It brings into light some of the unscientific and corporate-based health policies and strives to protect the PHCs.

It vehemently fights against the misuse of medical technology for looting people's purse and against unethical practice of sex determination and organ trafficking. It holds health camps and health-awareness programmes frequently all over the state. It fights against spurious drugs, quacks and clinically unfounded medical claims. It emphasizes the need for medical research towards lasting remedies for epidemics, gross ailments, community healthcare, rural hygiene, women and child healthcare and social and preventive medical systems. It welcomes traditional methods of medical practice for scientific scrutiny and physiological causative verification so as to be mounted on unquestionable scientific disposition.

Publications

One of the major strengths of JVV is its publication wing. To promote quest for knowledge and love for science and technology among school children, the JVV has been running the largest circulated Telugu children's science monthly magazine, Vidyarthi Chekumuki, since 1990. In addition, it has been publishing and circulating different kinds of books on science, culture, history, education, health etc. for all levels of people. Promotion of reading habit among children is a regular and ongoing activity of JVV. It organizes book exhibitions, reading festivals and readers' clubs. Most importantly, it publishes and circulates booklets, pamphlets, science bulletins, science calendars and diaries. It has brought more than 300 titles on various socio-scientific topics and on popular science. It also runs Jana Vignanam, the JVV's organizational monthly.
