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Getting into the pain of things Cover Story

Growing up to be a person of substance and depth calls for nurturing sensitivity, empathy and attentiveness to the pain in the world

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Hundreds thronged to pay homage to the relics of St John Bosco at Tapesia Gardens, Guwahati, the permanent campus of the first university of Don Bosco Society in India, on 1 June 2011





Assam Don Bosco University gets underway with Ph.D. Programmes in 24 thrust areas covering seven major streams



Prof Sivaji Chakravorti, Chairman of IEEE Calcutta Section, addresses the students of DBCET

From the Vice-Chancellor

The other day, going through a short reflection written by a person who calls himself / herself 'The Observer', I came across this 'observation' – something that I felt I should share with you. Here it is...

***** ***** *****

In the line at the store, the cashier told the older woman that she should bring her own grocery bag because plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologized to him and explained, "We didn't have 'the green thing' back in my day." The clerk responded, "That's our problem today. The former generation did not care enough to save our environment."

He was right, that old generation didn't have 'the green thing' in its day.

Back then, they returned their milk bottles, soda bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. But, of course, they didn't have 'the green thing' back in that customer's day.

In her day, they walked up stairs, because they didn't have an escalator in every store and office building. They walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a car every time they had to go to the nearby market.

But she was right. They didn't have 'the green thing' in her day.

Back then, they washed the baby's diapers because they didn't have the throw-away kind. They dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling washing machine burning up 220 watts - wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

But that old lady is right - they didn't have 'the green thing' back then.

They drank from a fountain when they were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time they had a drink of water. They refilled their writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and they replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.

But, of course, they didn't have 'the green thing' in her days. Back then, they had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And they didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites hundreds of miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza place.

It's true... We have come a long way from when they did not have 'the green thing'! ...Or, have we?

***** ***** *****

'The green thing' is the in thing today. And it is in line with this thinking that we are planning a green campus and green buildings powered by nature's bounty – solar farms and windmills and micro-hydel projects and natural air-conditioning among others.

Wonderful, you might concur... and I agree!

But, having said that, let me share this concern with you: Life has become comfortable now – we have gadgets for ev-



erything. We have surrounded ourselves with a variety of services and products that we cannot do without. We have also learned to showcase our attempts to leave a minimal carbon foot-print, and pat ourselves on the back for that – 'the green thing'...

But, in spite of all that, in our relentless pursuit after comfort and convenience and enjoyment, we are probably losing sight of one thing they had 'back then' – 'learning to get into the pain of things!'

**** ***** *****

Mystics and religious leaders have been telling us for ages that the one inescapable route to becoming a man or a woman of substance and depth is to 'learn to get into the pain of things!' In recent years, psychologists and psychotherapists too have developed similar theories when faced with the reality of having to counsel generations brought up on a heady mix of comfortable living, promiscuity, and easy access to psychedelic and mood-enhancing drugs with just one predominant theme in life – 'enjoy!'

Surprisingly, this idea of getting into the pain of things is not only about the necessity of accepting and enduring pain to achieve anything worthwhile in one's life; it is also (and, more so, perhaps) about getting into the pain of others that makes us grow into rounded human beings with a capacity to truly empathize with the pain in the universe – the empathy leading us to involvement in their stories, the involvement drawing us to walk along with them, and 'the walk' leading us to commitments that we never thought we were capable of...

When we talk about social commitment as a part of life here at the university, this is exactly what we mean – 'getting into the pain of things' and allowing that experience to mark our lives forever, a type of growth and depth that does not come about any other way.

I look forward to hearing about your own stories of delving in to 'the pain of things'.

> Fr Stephen Mavely SDB Rector & Vice Chancellor



Hundreds thronged to pay homage to the relics of St John Bosco at Tapesia Gardens, Guwahati, the permanent campus of the first university of Don Bosco Society in India, on 1 June 2011. The event was marked by a solemn Holy Eucharist presided over by Fr. Joseph Almeida, Chancellor, DBU and Provincial Superior of

Don Bosco Relics at India's First Salesian University

Guwahati Province, concelebrated by a number of priests present on the occasion.

Fr. Almeida addressed the gathering and spoke about Don Bosco's life and the impeccable wisdom that guided him throughout his life. He attributed him as the Saint of the young people and said, "Don Bosco dedicated his entire life for the young. He spared no effort to bring the best in the young people for whom he lived." Calling the attention of the people to the casket containing the relics of the Saint he said, "Today Don Bosco has come to bless this land of the University. His presence amidst us is a sign of God's assurance to make our dream come true."

Speaking on the importance of the pilgrimage that covers some 130 countries, Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Stephen Mavely said, "The Relics of St

John Bosco, which is on a five continent pilgrimage starting from Valdocco, Turin (Mother House of the Salesians of Don Bosco), 25 April 2009, celebrates not only 150th year of the founding of the Salesian Congregation, but also is a preparation to honour the bi-centenary of Don Bosco's birth in 2015 (16 August)." He further added, "The occasion serves also to enliven the commitment of thousands across the world to the ideals and vision of Don Bosco, and that should lead to a resurgence of Don Bosco's mission of reaching out to an ever-widening clientle in India and elsewhere".







The second phase of the programme at Don Bosco College of Engineering and Technology (DBCET), Azara, presented an occasion for everyone to relive the memories of Don Bosco and to revere this great Saint. The beautifully decorated atrium, music, prayers and chorus punctuated the colourful evening.

Assam Don Bosco University is a venture of Don Bosco Educational Society in India to promote quality education, particularly in the Northeast. Currently, it conducts B. Tech.



Degree in four streams and MCA in its campus at Azara (Guwahati) and MBA in its campus at Kharguli.

This year, the University has launched Ph. D. Programmes in 24 thrust areas covering seven major streams, and, several new courses, both post graduate and graduate – such as, M. Tech. in Electronics and Computer Science, Social Work (MSW) and PG Diploma programme in Child Rights and Development. Besides these, it offers a variety of Post Graduate Programmes in Management on-line (www.dbuglobal.com).

Launching Doctoral Studies in 24 Areas



Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU) gets underway with Ph.D. Programmes in 24 thrust areas covering seven major streams including Electrical & Electronics Engineering (Power Systems, Embedded Systems), Electronics & Communication Engineering (Optoelectronics), Computer Science & Engineering (Natural Language Processing), Physics (Nanophysics, Astrophysics, Forensic Science), Chemical Sciences (Green Chemistry, Computational Chemistry, Drug Discovery), Social Work (Conflict, Peace & Development, Sustainable Community Development), and North East India Studies (Ethnicity, Ideology & Identity Formation, Culture, Religious Beliefs & Post Modern Society in NE India).

The research programme is geared to promote research having direct bearing upon the needs of the region and

the thrust areas of the University's academic human programmes with a view to preparing well-trained professionals from the region in these fields.

The Vice Chancellor Dr Stephen Mavely explains, "While graduate education is largely geared to raise the level of employability of students, training them to play leadership roles in providing the services on which a developed society depends, such as chemists, accountants, nurses, social workers, psychologists, museum curators, professors, teachers, and business managers, research is central to our survival and advancement in a digitalized, knowledge-based, global economy."

Coordinator of research at the University, Professor J. N. Viswakarma states, "Following the time-hallowed traditions of the great universities of the world, this University seeks to make itself a centre for culture, knowledge, research, intellectual ferment, for critical thinking and analysis of whatever shapes and impacts human life, a centre that influences thinking, planning and policy making on vital aspects of social life such as religion, culture, society, politics, governance, education, and health care."

A brief period of 'Course Work' is compulsory for all Research Programmes - Course Work for the first batch is all set to begin in August, 2011.

For further details, download the Ph D brochure at www. dbuniversity.ac.in.



Regional Superior of Don Bosco Society South Asia Visits DBCET

"In the educational system of Don Bosco, you are given the central place; the Institution, its infrastructure, the personnel involved etc. are all for your growth and development," said Fr. Maria Arokiam, Regional Superior of the Don Bosco Society, South Asia, while addressing the students of DBCET on 3 May, 2011.

Speaking about the difference between a career and a vocation, he said, "Career is the profession that you undertake while vocation is the driving force of your life." He further added, "Career is only a means to realize your vocation. It may differ in its expression, but vocation is same for all, namely, to love God and neighbour."

He held a special meeting with the Faculty Members of the College and reminded them of their role in inculcating love for the

poor and the underprivileged members of society. He stated, "The Salesian history of India has been one of closeness to the poor. Among them, the poor youth have always taken the centre stage. This was true not only in educational institutions but also in the multifarious social work initiatives of the Society." Commenting on the role of Don Bosco University that is committed to an integral and personalized education of the young people who will be at the service of the world of today and tomorrow, he said that it should be pro-poor, pro-morals and pro-divine.

Later, in the evening while speaking to the students of the College hostels, Carreño Hall and Ferrando Hall, he spoke about the importance of bringing out the best in each one that will lead to the building up of a better world. Giving a new terminology for the most used abbreviation, 'www' he said that the first 'w' stands for the 'wake- up call', the second for 'work' and the third for 'worship' - three elements essential for any life to blossom.

Fr. Maria Arokiam is the Regional Superior for Don Bosco Society, South Asia, which has 11 Provinces and close to three thousand members who work in various centres of education and social work. His office is at the Headquarters of the Society in Rome.

Book Release - Proceedings of the National Conference 2010

The Proceedings of the first National Conference, 'New Approaches to Basic Sciences Towards the Development of Engineering and Technology' -NABSET 2010, organized by the Assam Don Bosco University, was solemnly released on 3 May, 2011 by Fr. Maria Arokiam, Regional Superior of the Don Bosco Society, South Asia.

Releasing the book, Fr Arokiam put on record the dedicated efforts put in by Dr Anuradha Devi and Dr Monmayuri Baruah, the joint co-ordinators of the Conference.

Dr.Monmoyuri Baruah, Joint Coordinator, NABSET



Chairman of IEEE Calcutta at DBCET, Azara



Prof Sivaji Chakravorti, Chairman of IEEE Calcutta Section, addressed the students of DBCET, Azara on 19 April 2011 on the theme "IEEE for students". He elaborated on the activities of IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers), particularly where students are involved. Emphasizing IEEE's mission of serving and preparing next generation leaders, Prof Sivaji called on the faculty and students to get involved with IEEE by forming a student branch.

IEEE is the world's largest professional association dedicated to advancing technological innovation and excellence for the benefit of humanity. IEEE and its members inspire a global community through IEEE's highly cited publications, conferences, technology standards, and professional and educational activities.

Elaborating upon IEEE's role in the present scenario, Prof Sivaji said that it creates an environment where members collaborate on world-changing technologies – from computing and sustainable energy systems to aerospace, communications, robotics, healthcare, and more. He also said that its strategic plan is driven by a vision for the future that uses advances in technology to realize the full potential of humanity.

Developing professional networks, enhancing presentation skills in low risk environments, gaining experience in working with committees, developing management skills like managing projects and leading people were pointed out as some of the benefits a student can have by volunteering in IEEE projects.

Prof Sivaji later met the technical committee of CISP2012 and commented on the role of the Technical Program Committee with respect to review of abstracts and full length papers. He shared strategies for ensuring maximum participation in the conference especially by way of paper presentations.

Student Development Programmes (SDP)

Student Development Programmes for the II Semester Students were held on 30 April and 7 May, 2011 at the College Campus. Sr. Celine D'Cunha, Campus Minister, organized the training sessions around the theme of pursuit of excellence as a way of life. Through interactive games and collaborative projects, she led the students to fresh insights into the theme while buttressing the importance of team-work.

Sessions on Competency Building, Cooperative Learning, and Team Work by Mr. Shahnowaz Hussain, Training and Placement Officer, and Ms. Rashmita Barua, Faculty, captured the imagination of the students.

Barasha Hiloidhari, ECE II, DBCET



Interactive Meeting with Parents

A sizeable group of parents came together for some interactive sessions with the parents on 14 May 2011. Highlights of the programme included an introductory session to welcome the parents, time set aside for the parents to interact with the 'Mentors' of their wards, and an open session for exchange of views and suggestions.

The programme started with a welcome song by the students of DBCET, followed by a speech from the Principal, Prof Manoranjan Kalita. He explained the schedule for the day and spoke about the importance of meeting the respective mentors who could update them on the performance of their wards.

The open session opened a forum for discussion and sharing. Vice Chancellor, Fr. Stephen Mavely, invited the parents to be active collaborators with the college in ensuring the optimum use of the facilities and opportunities provided by the institution. A short presentation by Sr. Celine D'Cunha, the Campus Minister, updated them on the activities of the College; and a presentation by Mr. Shahnowaz Hussain, Training and Placement Officer, highlighted the efforts of the college to make the students competent and skillful.

The open discussion forum was guided by the Principal along with the members from the management and faculty. The parents were appreciative of the discipline that prevailed in the college and its efforts to achieve excellence as a way of life.

Mr. Bikash Agarwal, Faculty, DBCET



World Famous 'Langas & Manganiars' Artist Group at DBCET

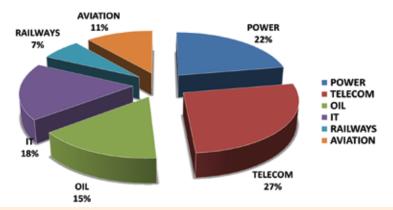
A SPIC-MACAY sponsored 'Folk Music and Dance Programme' by the renowned 'Langas and Manganiars' artist group from the sand dunes of Rajasthan mesmerized the students of DBCET and its neighbouring Colleges and Institutions on 28 April 2011.

The hour long performance which had a fusion of folk music, song and dance unique to the culture of Rajasthan enthralled the audience. Thanks to SPIC-MACAY for bringing closer to us the colours and sounds of Rajasthan!



Updates on Summer Training Programmes, DBCET

The Training and Placement Office of the University has gone into an overdrive to make preparations for the mandatory Summer Training requirement for all students of the VIth Semester in Engineering. Preparations are on track to provide them with training opportunities in reputed external organizations for four weeks / 70 hours of work. Placement details for the summer training are indicated in the chart below.



Welcome on Board...



Don Bosco University accords a warm welcome to Fr Cyriac Vettickathadam who has joined as the Controller of Examinations on 1st June 2011. Fr VA Cyriac, as he is generally known, brings with him an unmatched wealth of experience in the field of higher education as a teacher, an administrator, a builder and a man of vision.

As the Founder Director and Principal of Don Bosco College at Tura, Meghalaya, he nurtured it over 24 years from its inception moulding it into a centre of excellence with a variety of courses reaching out to some of the most backward regions of North-East India. Don Bosco College of Teacher Education that he initiated a decade ago stands out today as the teacher training institute nonpareil in Eastern India.

Welcome to Don Bosco University - we feel privileged to have you with us!

Exposure Trip cum Training

The first year students of DBIM had a three-day exposure trip cum Summer Internship Training Camp at Siloam, an exotic site at the bank of river Umiam, in Meghalaya, from 29 April to 1 May 2011. It was an exposure trip, wherein the students

had the opportunity to visit some of the socially significant sites as well as well as some of the prestigious educational institutes.

Shantivan - the Mother Teresa Leprosy Care Centre, Nongpoh, Meghalaya, Ferrando Speech and Hearing Centre, Barapani, Don Bosco Museum and the Otto Hopefenmueller Library situated in the same campus of the Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong and Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, were some of the places they visited.

Inputs were given on the last day by Fr. V.M. Thomas, Rector and Director of DBIM and Prof Anabil Goswami about Summer Internship Programme (SIP). They highlighted the expectations and purpose of SIP and gave the students some guidelines.

Mr. Bikash Gogoi, Faculty, DBIM





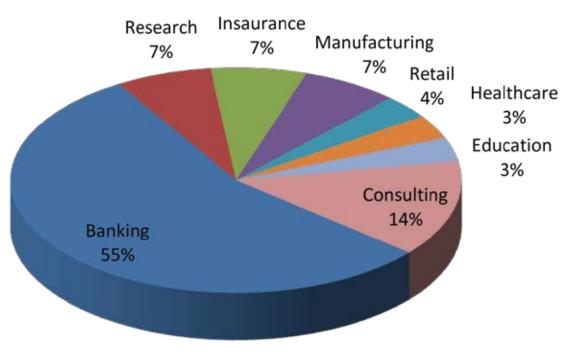
Robust Placement Season at DBIM

The on-going placement season for 2011 batch bore testimony to the dedicated effort of the Placement Team at DBIM and the response of corporate houses from within and without the region. 12 out of the 23 recruiting teams that visited the Institute have confirmed their offers to the fresh graduates. It is a matter of pride that practically all the recruiting teams expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the level of attainment of the students and their readiness to take on the challenges of corporate life. Some relationship for the long term have been established as result of the campaign.

Industry heavy weights from sectors across the spectrum extended their relationship with our first batch: Consulting,

Banking, Insurance, Healthcare, Research, Manufacturing and Retail. Amongst our major recruiters were banks like HDFC Bank, HSBC Bank, ING Vysya Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, financial consulting major, Benzcom Consulting, microfinace research organisation, CMFR, Insurance companies like TATA AIG, Aviva Life, World's largest tea company, McLeod Russel, Education giants like NIIT, one of India's fastest growing retail chain, ReFeel, and the much devoted team associated with NRHM, ASHA amongst others.

> Mr. Anabil Goswami Placement Coordinator, DBIM



Placement by Sectors

Learning to Get into the Pain of Things!



His contented face spoke volumes about joy that one can receive from a simple life which is lived in sincerity and love.

'Getting into the pain of things' was a thought for reflection introduced by Fr. Stephen Mavely, the Rector of our College during a morning assembly. Somehow I was drawn to it to get a further understanding of the thought later that day and in fact, I kept thinking of it for some days. Although I had not much time for pondering over it as I was occupied with the preparations for the end semester examination, I wanted to make an attempt to put together some of my thoughts on this important aspect of life for this issue of 'Spark'... and here is what struck me.

How do you react when you see somebody else in pain? As humans we all know what pain is, and, to an extend we understand the pain of others, even if the kinds of pain we experience as individuals differ. Most of us can empathize with someone who has been injured or sick - we can quite easily put ourselves "into their shoes" and understand the kind of pain they go through. But what about the pain caused by emotional setbacks. Are we able to respond to them or feel with them?

At times with respect to the pain we experience as individuals, we become so involved and absorbed by it that we forget the surroundings and pity ourselves. But being able to deal with our own experiences of pain and overcoming them, and ideally learning from them, can, and perhaps should equip us with an important, vital attribute. This is empathy. Herein lies the wisdom in the adage that one must learn to help oneself before he or she can help others.

The other day I happened to interact with a vegetable vendor who used to come almost every morning on his bi-cycle to the place where I stay. I made it a point to meet him one day and during my conversation with him I enquired about his life and work, and what he did to make a living. I was shockingly surprised to hear that he was the sole earner of his family. With the meager gain from his business, he managed to look after his sick father, wife and three children. Although his earnings were a pittance, he saw that everything went well in the family. He lived in a village named Singimari at Sualkuchi. Every morning he loaded the vegetable bags and peddled his cycle to sell off the vegetable by noon and to return home to tend to the next day's load of vegetables. For him there were no days of rest and he couldn't think of remaining idle. Even then, with a smile on his face he told me that there is happiness at the end of each day as he is able to support his family with the reward of each day's work. His contented face spoke volumes about joy that one can receive from a simple life which is lived in sincerity and love.

I discovered that day a profound truth – the recipe for a happy life! The little wisdom I received from the vegetable vendor kept me thinking for a long time.

True joy consists in being contented with what we have. When we live within our means and not getting trapped into the misery of regrets for the things we do not have, we can be sure of possessing the great gift of joy and peace.

Subir Paul, MCA- IV, DBCET

The Mourning of Love



"I am sorry for the man who cannot feel the whip when it is laid on the other man's back." - Abraham Lincoln

This age in which we live could hardly be called as one in which people are honestly sensitive to others' needs. Each one of us has developed a veneer of sophistication, but with cynicism and hardness. The dearth of compassion and empathy has turned society into an insensitive, self-seeking entity. Our popular music talks constantly about love, and yet divorce rates skyrocket, child abuse is rampant, and the world is shaken by violence and wars. All the major newsmagazines feature articles and cover stories on "The 'Me' Generation". This generation, it seems, would rather see a prizefight than fight for a prize.

It is worth mentioning that even a natural disaster that kills thousands in one country doesn't find much importance in the newspapers of another country if the event is not of enough political significance. The Super Cyclone that rocked the eastern coastal regions of India few years back, killing thousands, rated only a few inches in American newspapers and only a minute or so in their news. This century could well go down in history not so much as a century of progress but as the century of superficiality. All this indicates that there is a terrible scarcity of love and sensitivity among us.

The popular exclamation 'so what' aptly describes the attitude of many towards life. But we miss out on so many opportunities of tasting real happiness when we do not bother to feel the other person's pain. Even a little amount of empathy, a sharing of the other person's burden, brings about an indescribable satisfaction that can hardly be matched by anything else. In the Sermon on the Mount, the famous sermon from which people like Mahatma Gandhi took inspiration for life, Jesus said, "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

This mourning implies that if we are to live life on a higher plane, we are to be sensitive, sympathetic and alert to the needs of others and the world. Tears shed to self are tears of weakness, but the tears of love shed for others are a sign of strength. The world famous evangelist Billy Graham discovered the secret of happiness thus- "I am not sensitive as I ought to be until I am able to weep over the erring one and lift up the fallen. And until I have learned the value of compassionately sharing other's sorrow and misfortune, I cannot know real happiness."

Arpit Das, EEE VI, DBCET

An Experience that Keeps Haunting Me



Tears shed to self are

tears of weakness.

but the tears of love

shed for others are a

sign of strength.

Once, during our School days, we had an opportunity of visiting a home for the aged. We had heard and read a lot about the importance of taking care of old people, but our visit to the place gave us an insight into the sad reality of an old age home.

The day that we had spent there was a lovely experience. Frankly speaking, it keeps haunting me even to this day. We had prepared ourselves with some group songs, a drama, poetry recitation etc. for entertaining them. Although we had seen most of them greeting us with smiles, we wondered if that was just a way of hiding the grief within them. There were some who were sitting in seclusion too. It was easy for us to see that the absence of care and homely surroundings had induced a feeling of emptiness in them.

We spoke to them and listened to their experiences in the home for the aged. One old man cried as he told us how he used to sacrifice everything for his children and how his children paid him back by throwing him to the old-age home, never to visit him. There was also an old lady who couldn't keep back her tears saying we reminded her of her granddaughter. Their sharing undoubtedly expressed their longing to return to their homes - they felt cheated after all the years of love and care they had given to their children.

Amidst the gloom that existed, we had a surprise from a 70 year old lady. She was in tears as she said that she kept asking God to forgive her children and to bless them with a good life.

Surprisingly, the home for the aged that we visited had many inmates who were put there as their children found them to be burdensome. I do remember reading similar stories in newspapers and magazines, and, one of those which astonished me was the story of an old woman who was thrown out of her house by her son just to please his wife.

The day that we had spent there was a lovely experience. Frankly speaking, it keeps haunting me even to this day. Though shocked at seeing how lonely those people were, we realized our visit that day added some joy to their day. Though there are a lot of people who understand the agony and the pain of parents who are forgotten by their children, yet very few care to stop a while and think about them and be compassionate. I thank God for having given me an opportunity to enter into the dark moments of those less privileged ones.

I would like to urge all, especially the young, to take a vow never to keep one's parents in old age homes. HOW CAN WE FORGET WHAT THEY DID FOR US ???

Sumon Chetia, ECE, IV, DBCET









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