

And Miles to Go.....!

Dr.Nair Anup Chandrasekharan in conversation with Dr.Mathew Koshy who retires on 31st March, 2011 as the Principal of Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara.

- 1) While congratulating you for your illustrious stint as a Principal of Bishop Moore College, Sir, may we know what goes on in your mind when you are all set to bid adieu to this College?**

Two emotions: a) Nostalgia and b) Satisfaction. Nostalgia because before I became the Principal of this College, I was a teacher here and even before that was a student of this College. It has been a thirty three year long association with Bishop Moore College and still I always feel as if it was just yesterday that I first set my foot here!

Secondly, the satisfaction that I experience is the kind that comes with the realisation of always having done one's work well. As a Student, Teacher and a Principal I know I have always tried to do justice to the opportunities lent to me by God. I know that Bishop Moore College is today so much a part of my system that I could never, 'retire' myself from serving it even though formal 'retirement' is just round the corner.

- 2) Recently Bishop Moore College got an award from All India Association for Higher Education, New Delhi for undertaking innovative projects. Will you throw more light on this success?**

Yes, the award is a huge morale booster and is recognition at the national level for the innovative practices undertaken by this college. For instance, we implemented a unique rain water harvesting project in our College. Not so long ago, we had been experiencing acute water shortage during February and March of every year. The Well in the College, the main source of water supply here, used to dry up after January. We tried several techniques like deepening it but the drinking water shortage continued. At last we got the idea of rain water harvesting from Mr. Sree Padre. He came to Bishop Moore College and conducted a three day Workshop in rain water harvesting. Teachers, students and even political leaders attended it.

As per his advice we made two small Wells near the main well and directed all the water falling on the terrace of the College to the small wells using PVC pipes. The idea is that the water in the small wells will be absorbed by the soil and it will remain in the small holes of the laterite soil. During summer when the well dries up, this water stored in the small holes of the laterite soil will be released to the main well. The success of this project has ensured that we have not been

experiencing any water shortage for the last two years. We also planted Vetiver in the campus to recharge ground water.

3) Can you elaborate on the significance of planting Vetiver in the campus?

Vetiver is an indigenous plant that is now widely cultivated in over fifteen countries due to its numerous benefits. Various researches have proved that the plant can prevent soil erosion, recharge ground water due to its three metre long roots, purify contaminated water, stabilize river banks and road slopes and reduce coliform bacteria in polluted water. The purpose of planting Vetiver on a large scale in Bishop Moore College campus is to recharge ground water and to prevent soil erosion.

4) Your stint as a Principal has seen the College give a lot of importance to environmental activities....!

Yes. Environmental activism has always been close to my heart and I have always strongly believed that the ecological crisis that stares at the world in its face can be mitigated only with the participation of the common multitudes. I strongly believe that the students of the Schools, Colleges and Universities of the world can be the saviours of mother earth. The young have to be made 'eco sensitive' and 'eco friendly' right from their formative years so that commingling with nature comes naturally to them. Bishop Moore College has always taken an initiative in this regard and that is why we started an Environmental Centre in the College in 2007.

The Centre trains select students, who in turn train their classmates. For instance, once 50 students were trained in studying the behavioural patterns of the society. They in turn gave training to their classmates. In all about 1000 students visited the houses in the neighbourhood with a questionnaire. They visited about 10,000 houses and collected information that would help researchers understand how to modulate behavioural patterns to suit environmental conservation. This hands on experience was an eye opener for the students who became aware of the ground realities and the horrors associated with it, thus prompting them towards remedial action.

5) Besides making this a 'Green Campus' what has been your focus as the Principal of the College?

I have always maintained that real education lies in the discovery of the self, an idea that does not seem to hold much currency in this madly competitive society of ours. The students are hardly aware of what they want in life and which area of study would complement their mental and spiritual makeup, leading them to choose options that would end up in a lifetime of frustration. The responsibility for this lies squarely with their parents and teachers who force them into careers which may bring in the lucre but with which they cannot connect to. Bishop Moore College has always endeavoured to set this right by providing the students right

information regarding the myriad options available to them, options they can choose according to their likings and life situations.

As the College is situated in a rural area many of its students come from families that belong to the low income group. These students lack awareness of the courses on offer and their requirements may differ from the rest of their classmates. Most of the students in our College are talented. The College gives opportunities to these students to find their skills and hone it to excel in life. I have tried to ensure that the different types of associations, committees, clubs function in our College, lead the students to the discovery of the self.

6) You are an alumnus of this College and you have been teaching in this College for the last 33 years. Can I have your take on Bishop Moore College?

Bishop Moore College was founded in 1964. The First Principal of the College was Rev. Father Prof. K.C.Mathew. He served here as Principal for 25 years. He looked at the Bishop Moorians, past and present as part of one big family. Rev. Father K.C.Mathew was very particular that teachers should mingle with the students and they should be guides and mentors to the students. Hence teachers of our College are not merely 'lecturers' but close associates of the pupils. During my stint I tried to continue this noble tradition.

Besides this, I have always been conscious of the fact that our students do not have the kind of exposure that students of the cities have. Hence both as a teacher and as a principal of this College, I have endeavoured to bring in, every year, at least five or six eminent personalities to our college to deliver lectures. We conduct four endowment lectures every year. Whenever an eminent personality visits Kerala, I strive to invite them to our College to deliver lectures and interact with students.

One thing that I take great pride in is our library which has a rich collection of over 50,000 valuable books. Besides this, the green house of the Botany department, museum of the Zoology Department, approved research centre status of the Chemistry department are some of the notable features in our College that I, as a Principal of the College, feel proud of.

Bishop Moore College has a very good Alumni Association which has been functioning since 1982. Today the College provides free internet access through 50 computers in the computer lab and computers in departments to all the students. Researchers and students have free access to the latest international journals. Since last year we have been conducting coaching classes for P.S.C and Bank exam. Women's cell is conducting life skills training classes for girl students. We started Journalism and Medical Laboratory Technician course with the help of UGC. UGC has already sanctioned a Women's Hostel for Rs. 80 lakhs. We will start its construction soon

We are changing to ICT enabled teaching methods. We are going to provide an LCD projector and a computer system to all the departments for ICT enabled teaching. We already have four fully functional smart class rooms. We plan to have Post Graduate departments for Zoology,

Malayalam, Biotechnology, Commerce and Maths and also an Administrative and Research Block in the College. We are coming up with more short term courses and tie ups with industrial and academic groups. We have set up a cell called 'Campus to Community' under which we undertake community oriented programs. So our march towards excellence continues with us re-inventing ourselves, each passing moment