

SWYAA-India Taking Indo-Japan Friendship to a New Pedestal Through Regular Activities

U.K.S. Chauhan
President, SWYAA-India
(umeshuchauhan@yahoo.co.in)

The legacy of ‘Ship for World Youth (SWY)’ keeps always sailing all across our minds in SWYAA – India. Ever since we got associated in the shape of this organization, as a body registered under Indian Charitable Societies Registration Law, we have found our spirits held high to carry forward the agenda of SWY. We have found tremendous encouragement and support from the Indo-Japan Friendship Group (IJFG) in our endeavors, which was initiated in April, 2008 as an informal joint group by SWYAA-India while celebrating SWY’s 20th Anniversary, to promote alliance and cross cultural exchange between India and Japan. Socio-cultural and economic relations between India and Japan are age old and these two societies have always been imbibing the best of the oriental culture. IJFG is trying to capitalize on these historical linkages between the two societies and is trying to create an atmosphere where ties between the two societies can be further strengthened.

SWYAA-India with its members spread all over the country, finds it difficult to collectively organize its activities all through the year. Therefore, those of us who are in Delhi have a keen interest in capturing new ideas from the Meetings of the Indo-Japan Friendship Group and then spreading these ideas across the country to our members for adoption. Normally Meetings of the Indo-Japan Friendship Group are held once in two months and we share information of common interest to each other in this Group.

Last meeting of the group was held on 12/06/2009, which was marked by the presence of HE Mr. Hideaki Domichi, Ambassador of Japan to India as a Chief Guest and lectures/ presentations of Professor Lokesh Chandra, former Member of Parliament, Dr. Unita Sachidananda and Dr. Dharitri Chakravarty, focusing on inter-relationships between Indian and Japanese culture and literature.



Each member of SWYAA-India is independently promoting the same philosophy of oneness and friendship, which we have successfully imbibed and professed together during our participation in the SWY Programs. We believe in one world, one community and we think that entire mankind should work collectively for making this Earth a better place to live peacefully, happily and sustainably. The post programme activities of SWYAA-India members are, therefore, focused on promotion of education and skills of under privileged children and evoking a sense of self-pride and achievement among them, spreading the message of peace and inculcating habit of non-violent conflict resolution among youth, awareness on social issues, sensitization about health and hygiene among the slum-dwellers and conservation of environment and natural resource management besides promoting international fraternity and cooperation.

Last one year has been a very active period for us in SWYAA-India during which we have collaborated with other agencies and NGOs to undertake several activities in full association with the authorities of Government of India and Embassy of Japan in India. We organized a painting workshop in collaboration with an NPO DISHA headed by an Ex-PY for the under-privileged children of Municipal Corporation Schools in New Delhi in November, 2008. These children were given an insight into the world of art during the workshop and they were also introduced to the paintings of Japanese school children, brought by me from the Ship 'Nippon Maru' in 1994 (gifted by a Japanese PY), when I participated in the SWY Program as National Leader of Youth of India. At the end of the workshop these children made their paintings, mainly focusing on the terrorist attack on Mumbai on 26/11/08 which had affected them most immensely.

These paintings were exhibited in IJFG meeting in December 08 and in January 09 a display of these paintings and an interactive session of Indian children with Japanese children was organized in Japanese school of New Delhi with the help of their Principal Mr. Iwao Sawada and Mr. Toshiyuki Abe, an Ex-JPY.

These paintings were also exhibited at India International Centre, New Delhi in January 09 in the presence of Smt. Tara Bhattacharjee Gandhi, Vice-Chairman of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti and grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Member of Parliament, Mr. Arjun Asrani, former Ambassador of India to Japan, Mr. Masashi Mizukami, Minister in Embassy of Japan and Mr. Kojiro Uchiyama, Director of Japan Information Centre, New Delhi.



An album of these paintings was presented to the HE President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil by SWYAA-India representatives along with a group of children who participated in the painting workshop. SWYAA-India has also released a set of six-picture post-card depicting the paintings of these children on their impressions of Mumbai terror attack and their message for peace and harmony.

In January 09, the Canon India Pvt. Ltd. supported SWYAA-India for conducting a month-long photography workshop for 40 slum children of New Delhi under the guidance of Mr. Ravi Chopra, Ex-PY and General Secretary of SWYAA-India and Ms. Shobhana Radhakrishna, CEO of SWYAA – India. The major activities of the workshop included introducing children to photography, types of cameras, training in handling different types of cameras for indoor and outdoor shooting, discussion about the camera angles, perspective and treatment of different subjects, at the end of the workshop, some of the best photographs of the children were selected and an exhibition titled “Our World One World” was organized both at New Delhi and Mumbai with the support of Canon India Pvt. Ltd..



Exhibition in Delhi was organized in February 09, in association with Japan Foundation in Tensin Okakura Art Gallery with Mr. Nao Endo, Director General of Japan Foundation, New Delhi as Chief Guest. The exhibition in Mumbai was arranged at Canon India Image Lounge in April 09 in the presence of Mr. Kensaku Konishi, President and CEO of Canon India and Mr. Teiichi Torikai, Consul in the Consulate General of Japan in Mumbai.

Subsequently, a Coffee Table Book of these photographs brought out by SWYAA-India was presented to the HE Mr. Hideaki Domichi, Ambassador of Japan to India by SWYAA-India representatives along with a group of children who participated in the workshop.



SWYAA-India has further organized an annual get together of Ex-Indian PYs in February 09, in New Delhi and the highlight of the event was an Indo-Japan musical evening, in which, besides a light music concert by Mr. Pradip Somasundram, Ex-PY, many Japanese artists also performed. In all, various activities undertaken by SWYAA-India during last one year have helped in driving all Ex-PYs of India closer to the organization and motivated them to associate in maximum number with each activity.



These activities have drawn a considerable attention from the Indian Governmental Authorities up to the highest level and left a highly meaningful impression in the minds of the local citizens on the one hand and on the other, these have attracted both participation and support from various organizations of the Government of Japan functioning in India including the Embassy of Japan and also the Japanese Private Sector Companies. The future plans of SWYAA-India are generating a lot of hope in the minds of everyone on both sides that such activities will soon make the movement of Indo-Japan Friendship attain new heights and meaning.
