



**LYF**



**PRATIGYA**

## **“Am I an Active Citizen?”**

### **Seminar**

**8<sup>th</sup> November,2008 Ranchi, Venue-C I E T Hall, Ranchi**

**Org : PRATIGYA in association with LIBEARL Youth Forum of India**

Pratigya, in collaboration with Liberal Youth Forum of India organized a seminar on the theme active citizenship. The seminar was named “Am I an Active Citizen?” and was aimed at College and Senior Secondary School Youths at Claret Institute of Employment Training, Loyola Centre, Purulia Road, Ranchi. 68 youths across different colleges and schools of Ranchi participated in it.

The seminar began at 9:00 a.m. with a workshop on Right to Information conducted by Rajan Kumar Singh. The process of filing an RTI, where to file it, how to write an application, format of the application, how to frame the question and other relevant details were discussed in detail. A sample application form was given to the participants for future reference, after which a documentary on RTI campaigning was screened, the documentary helped to sensitize participants and also increased their interest in and curiosity about RTI. Success stories and the impact of RTI were also shared with participants in the session, which continued till 10:30 a.m.

Participants also engaged in a group activity, which included a debate on two issues- Censorship and Reservation. Four groups were formed from among the participants and they made presentations for and against the two issues under discussion. This session was designed to make participants think on different, practical issues of life and society and to develop a scientific bent of mind. The 45-minutes session was characterized by heated discussion that charged the environment with energy and vigour.

The Panel Discussion began at 11:15 a.m. The panel members included Chairperson of Women Commission, Jharkhand and Ex Chief-Secretary of Jharkhand Mrs Lakshmi Singh, Deputy-Mayor of Ranchi Municipal Corporation Mr Ajay Nath Shahdeo, Noted Educationist Fr C De Brower from St. Xavier's College and Director of Career Training Institute Anglo Mania Mr Leo.

In her address, Mrs Lakshmi Singh said "Youth is the strength of the nation. In today's situation when our national integrity and unity are being challenged on the basis of caste, region and religion, it is the duty of the youth to think over these issues and open their mouth. Mute spectators can never be active citizens. They should be aware of and fight for the genuine rights of the citizen & become responsible citizens ". In her speech, she supported the idea of education vouchers and also appealed to the participants to volunteer for support.

The young and dynamic Deputy-Mayor, Ajay Nath Shahdeo stressed upon the need of youth to join active politics in his address. Citing the example of Barack Obama, he questioned those who thought change was impossible. Answer to a participant's question, he said that history is evidence of the fact that whenever it came to sacrificing for the nation, those who laid their lives were none other than the youth. However, he added that when it came to their share in decision making, the nation got reluctant.

Fr C De Brower, who has dedicated his whole life to the cause of Education of youth, appealed to them to introspect and question themselves. "Am I an Active and responsible Citizen? Do I feel pain on seeing the condition of my motherland and my people? If yes it's the high time, start taking action for change". He reminded the group of the principles of selflessness and sacrifice followed in the Indian culture. He also made an appeal to PRATIGYA to coordinate a program next year, where he committed to address a gathering of 1,000 young citizens.

Mr Leo, who has shaped the lives of thousands of students in his long career of working with and for youths asked the group to adhere by the duties mentioned in the Constitution and also discussed the issue of curtailed liberty of the citizens. He asked youths to feel the need for liberty and expression as they are quintessential for the economic and social development our nation.

During this session various questions were put up by participants like "Can a poverty stricken individual be expected to act as an active citizen?", "What is the guarantee of change in the system with more youths joining politics, especially Jharkhand has the maximum number of youth MLA's, Ministers and even CMs, it still ranks high in corruption and underdevelopment?" and "Why are roadside vendors beaten and thrashed every now and then in Ranchi?" among others.

After the panel discussion concluded, a documentary on active citizenship was screened. "Country First" by Shiv Khera was followed by a documentary on importance of voting (since Student Union Election in Ranchi are scheduled to be held in December), "Maine tumko Chun Liya" by Freedom Gate, Pakistan was screened. The two documentaries were later discussed among the group. This discussion was facilitated by Rageshree Das Gupta.

There was also a session on "Individual as an Active Citizen", which was conducted by Mr. Leo. Components of Active Citizenship like continuous writing for newspapers, reporting local and

community mishaps, preferably through by mobile or email to any media house, filing as many RTI as possible and being part of the movement against corruption were highlighted. Other components discussed included joining or forming debating clubs or discussion forums and discussing contemporary socio-economic & political issues. Mr. Leo stressed on citizens contributing directly through volunteering for at least for 4-6 hrs per week with organizations like Pratigya and to become a part of change. He also raised the slogan "Each one Teach one".

The day also included presentation on Liberal Youth Forum by Rajan Kumar Singh and on Pratigya by Rageshree Das Gupta. This was followed by distribution of participation certificate. Three prizes for most "Active participation" were awarded to Auroshish, Aman and Durgesh Nandan.

The event was concluded at 4:45 with two songs of Freedom and the inspirational "Hum Honge Kamyab ek din."