

## EXTRAMURAL LECTURE BY NOBEL LAUREATE SATYARTHI: SAMBALPUR VARSITY REJOICES OVER THE BIG EVENT

Sambalpur University invited Sri Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Laureate for Peace (2014) to deliver an extramural lecture on Children's Rights on 22 February, 2018. It was a red letter day in the history of this institution to have hosted this lecture by so eminent and internationally renowned a person. Intellectuals, former vice chancellors, senior academics, social activists, faculties, students and media persons thronged in a large number to the Biju Patnaik Auditorium to hear his inspiring lecture.

A ceremony of welcome and introduction of the Guest preceded the lecture of Sri Satyarthi. The Vice Chancellor, Prof Deepak K Behera, introduced him as 'the Ambassador of Peace' and Sri D.V. Swami (IAS), former Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University, also addressed the gathering, exhorting the students to act as a deterrent to the evils of immoral trafficking in children and child labour rather than doing lip service. Protest against the ills suffered by children is more needed than ceremonials and empty rhetoric. Prof Biswajit Satpathy, Chairman, P.G. Council, threw light on the 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan' by Sri Satyarthi while introducing him and his wife Smt. Sumedha Kailash, a social activist herself, to the audience.

Sri Satyarthi's one-and-a-half hour lecture was substantial and inspiring, structured upon a lively narrative of reminiscences and anecdotes, with strongly autobiographic touch. In a deeply engaging style he gave a moving account of a child cobbler, deprived of the privilege of education and victimized by the oppressive caste system. He argued that the caste system legitimizes the social structures of oppression and exploitative practices. As part of his own personal crusade against this iniquitous system way he chose to bear the title 'Satyarthi' (Seeker of the Truth), dispensing with his original Brahminic title.

Asserting that the youth can combat the social evils, Sri Satyarthi emphasized three guiding principles for the students to follow, beginning with three 'D's, namely 'Dream', 'Discover' and 'Do'. He elaborated dreaming as the noble ambition of freeing the world from oppression as well as exploitation and doing good to children and other vulnerable social beings whom one does not know personally. Discovering, he elaborated, is acknowledging one's own potential to make a difference to humankind with a sense of resolve. Doing means taking real action to put an end to social inequity, gender discrimination, exploitation of children and removing all forms of obscurantism. He inspired the audience with his own mission of fighting for children's rights, which was accomplished through the UN legislation of Children's Right in 1990. His organization of rallies in Sao Paolo, Cape Town and Manila also bore fruit when ILO legislated an international law for the protection of children's rights. His campaign for the incorporation of the right to education as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India also led to a milestone constitutional amendment in the interest of the poor, vulnerable, marginalised, disenfranchised millions in India. Sri Satyarthi's statement: "Solution to every problem is born with the problem itself" struck a chord with the audience.

At the end, Dr Soorya Thankappan (IPS), Registrar of Sambalpur University, offered a vote of thanks.