

Remedial: *With a Difference*

The Departments in the Social Science and Humanities attract equal number of students from the urban and rural areas. Over 50% of the students in the Departments come from socially and economically marginalized backgrounds. Many of them come from the draught prone backward areas and aspire for career opportunities in teaching, State and Union Public Services and the NGO sector. However, almost all of them have Marathi as their language of instruction, reading and examination up to the graduation level. Hence developing reading, comprehension, writing and communication skills in English becomes essential. The major theoretical debates, discussions on contemporary theoretical and substantive issues are all available in English. This leads to a major gap in the theoretical, analytical and writing skills of the students belonging to the above mentioned categories. However this course recognizes also that a typical English medium education also causes fractures and underlines the value of experience and knowledge of the 'region'. It builds upon a perspective of continuous process of back- translations arguing that Indian languages must also develop as languages of relevant social science discourse.

Such a remedial course then does not limit itself to an English language skills course, and is supported by faculty efforts to develop reading and analytical skills in the social sciences and humanities as also getting hands-on training with basics of information and communication technology.

This remedial course *with a difference* is based on the principles of mutuality of learning/teaching processes and does not view the activity as 'correctional'. The students of the underprivileged categories bring with them a rich experience and the effort is to promote a sense of self-respect and an analytical understanding of the connections between personal, social and theoretical.

The course builds upon a continuous dialogue with faculty members across disciplines and is organized so as to :

- Help students 'translate' debates culturally and linguistically
- Improve linguistic skills by teaching basic grammar and phonetics but also by integrating social science books as 'texts' for reading and comprehension skills.
- Develop Marathi as a language of social science discourse
- Develop skills of argumentation and presentation of subject matter.
- Develop basic skills of data entry and processing through social science packages.
- Enhance analytical skills by additional discussions and presentations by experts

The sessions organized under this Remedial programme started in October 2005 and ever since students from Departments of Economics, Political Science, Sociology, History, Marathi, Women's Studies and Sanskrit (on an average 100 students per academic year) register for the course. A total of 40 students per year successfully complete the training programme in using Excel and SPSS and three modules on developing research proposals. Relevant source materials focusing on social theory and philosophy and methodology of research in Marathi are being collected and consolidated. In addition occasional workshops which have focused on 'New career options and skill building' and on practical aspects of writing and presenting the self to different interview boards through a curriculum have been well received.

We hope to build upon the experience of the last two and more years to integrate the Remedial programme with a student- faculty mentorship programme.