

THE VOICE OF ASDS

Amrita Students Debating Society

Newsletter

February 2024



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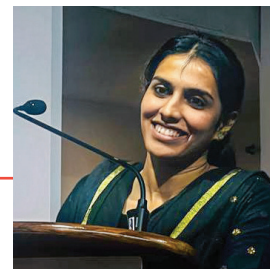
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EDITOR'S COLUMN

Navami Govind
Faculty-in-charge
Amrita Students Debating Society



Virtues of Debating

Debate, often perceived as a battleground of ideas, serves as a platform where values, besides other things, are learned and refined. Beyond the clash of arguments lies a profound journey that instils enduring virtues in the participants. Debating requires facing opposing views and understanding others' perspectives. This fosters empathy, which helps bridge gaps and encourages accommodation even in disagreements. Debate also teaches us humility as we get an opportunity to test the limits of our knowledge and views. This humbles us by making us open to new ideas and take opposing views and arguments in our stride.

Debating is also about learning to build resilience. Facing tough arguments requires strength and perseverance. Resilience helps us become mentally stronger which in turn makes us face life's challenges with increased confidence and determination. Furthermore, in an era marked by polarisation, debate offers a model of respectful engagement and constructive dialogue. By upholding principles of mutual respect, active listening, and reasoned exchange, debaters foster a society where ideas flourish and understanding thrives. As we traverse the "labyrinth" of life, let us embrace the priceless lessons that debate teaches us to make our lives more and more enriched.



MAJOR EVENTS



ASDS Members Presented with Badges

The badge distribution ceremony held at Radhakrishna Hall, CIR Block on 6 December 2023 marked a significant milestone in the journey of ASDS. The event commenced with the distribution of badges to the President, Vice President, and Wing coordinators by V Suresh, Faculty Advisor-ASDS. Following this, members received their badges from the faculty coordinators: G Rameshkumar, Navami Govind, M Sundara Kamalam, and S Nithya Kalyani. Besides giving every ASDS member a distinct identity, the badge symbolises commitment to excellence, the power of knowledge, and the spirit of inquiry.

The event featured informative presentations by M.S. Sree Mridhula (III Year-Artificial Intelligence) and Sowmya M S (III Year-Computer and Communication Engineering) on "Speaker Roles," Abhijeeth Sreyas (III Year-Aerospace Engineering) talked about "Argumentative Logic," and Moheshwara L (III Year-Aerospace Engineering) took everyone through some salient features of "Judging and Feedback". The event came to an end with a group photograph.

Orientation Session on Debating for New Members

On 30 January 2024, ASDS conducted an orientation session for new members on the fundamentals of debating. Ananya R (III year-Computer Science and Engineering) and Pravinkumar G (III year-Mechanical Engineering) were the presenters. With 30 participants in attendance, the orientation covered key aspects such as the significance of logic, ARE (Argument, Reasoning, Evidence), and common logical fallacies in debates. The presenters also explained the format of debates at ASDS and the roles of the first, second and third speakers. Also, the significance of reply speech was elucidated. The session concluded with a vibrant Q&A session wherein attendees asked pertinent questions. V Suresh, Faculty Advisor-ASDS, exhorted the new members to perceive debating as a means to develop effective communication and critical thinking.





ASDS Hosted Secret Santa Event for Christmas Celebration

ASDS organised a get-together event, Secret Santa on 24 January 2024. Around 35 members joined the celebration. Arya S R (III Year Chemical Engineering) played a key role in organising this event to bring ASDS members together. The event was also an opportunity to express appreciation and build relationships through thoughtful gift-giving. Participants carefully selected presents for their chosen friend, creating a sense of anticipation and excitement leading up to the event.

As the evening unfolded, the room buzzed with fun and laughter as members exchanged gifts and shared their experiences about selecting the gifts. The unveiling of Secret Santa pairings sparked smiles and warm interactions, reinforcing the bonds of friendship within the ASDS community. Chinese Whisper and Bursting Balloons added a special flavour to the celebration. The event turned out to be a special one for some M.Tech students, for they were presented with ASDS badges. At the end, everyone left with uplifted spirits and memories which they would cherish for a long time.





DEBATE HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from Last Two Months of Debate



THIS HOUSE BELIEVES WESTERN CULTURE HAS HAD A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON INDIAN SOCIETY

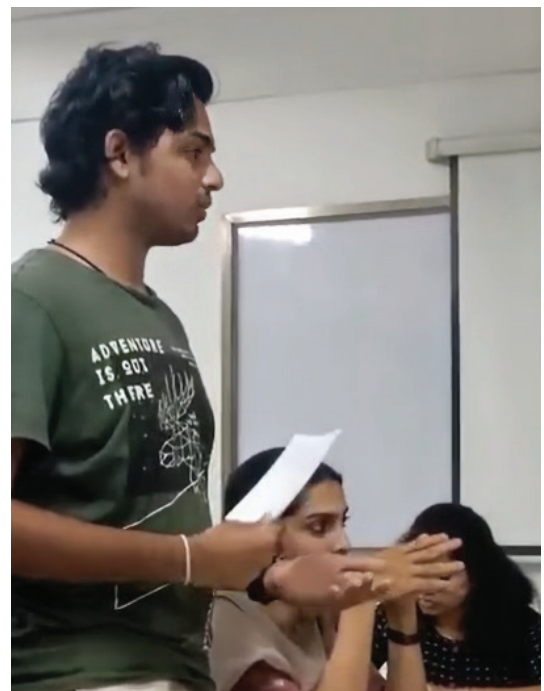
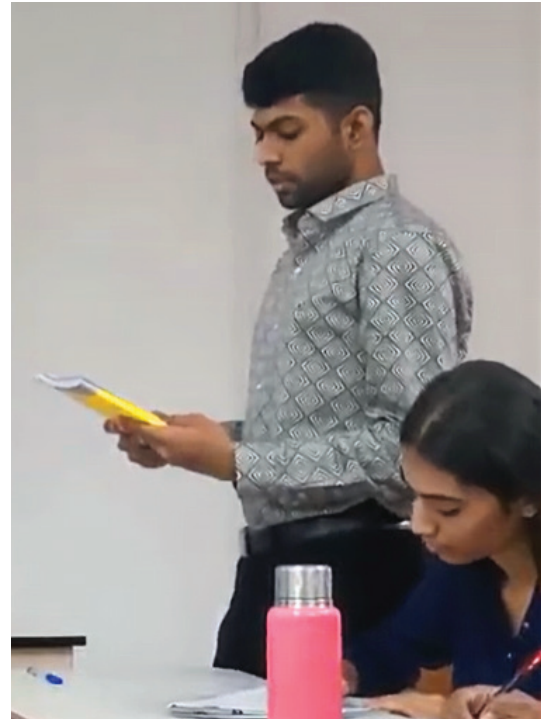
In the debates held on 31 January 2024, two significant motions were deliberated upon by the participants. The first debate on the motion **“This House Believes Western culture has had a negative effect on Indian society,”** had Lakshmi C (MTech I Year-Automotive Engineering), Srinidhi M (III Year-Computer Science and Engineering), and Deo Vaibhav (I Year-Electrical and Electronics Engineering) in the proposition. Ananya R (III Year-Computer Science and Engineering), Manasvi G. (III Year-Computer Science and Engineering), and Aadithya A (IV Year-Electrical and Electronics Engineering) formed the opposition. The judges for this debate were Pravinkumar G (III Year-Mechanical Engineering), M S Sree Mridhula (III Year-Artificial Intelligence), and Vaishnavi V (II Year-Artificial Intelligence). The proposition argued that western culture was the reason for increasing problems of loneliness and depression in Indian society. They emphasised that western culture reduced family time, which undermines the value of joint family systems in the Indian culture. The opposition countered this by asserting that Indian culture has evolved due to western influence, citing the transformation of education from Gurukul to modern schools. The opposition won the debate for their comprehensive outlook on the topic and convincing arguments.



THIS HOUSE BELIEVES RELIGION HAS MORE OF A NEGATIVE ROLE THAN A POSITIVE ONE IN SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The subsequent debate on the motion **“This House Believes religion has more of a negative role than a positive one in school or university education”**. Navami Govind (Faculty Member), Rohan Karthikeya (IV Year- Electrical and Computer Engineering), and Ananthasivan S (II Year- Artificial Intelligence) were the proposition, while Sundara Kamalam (Faculty Member), Hitika Ranparia (III Year- Aerospace Engineering), and Rego (MTech I Year- Automotive Engineering) formed the opposition. VSuresh (Faculty Member) and Megana Somalaraju (III Year- Aerospace Engineering) were the judges. The proposition argued that religion in education often led to proselytization or distortion of facts as lessons in faith schools were taught using religious filters. They cited research indicating that schools without religious affiliations were found to be performing better in terms of student development. The opposition, however, contended that religious education supplemented learning by enabling students to imbibe moral values and helping students to focus better. They also argued that religious education was vital for preserving cultural identity. The proposition was declared the winner for their clarity in arguments and copious evidence.

Both debates addressed important issues facing humankind, providing valuable insights and perspectives. While the first debate examined the influence of western culture on Indian society, the second debate scrutinised the role of religion in educational settings. Through robust arguments and deliberations, the participants contributed to a deeper understanding of various issues concerning the main subjects.





HAVE YOUR SAY!

Promoting Empathy and Emotional Intelligence in Debates



Sundara Kamalam M.

Faculty-in-charge

Amrita Students Debating Society

Debating is an organised contest marked by competitiveness and decorum. However, enthusiasm can sometimes blur the lines of propriety, leading to insensitivity towards fellow participants. Excessive competitiveness in debating should not lead to desensitisation, blinding us to the feelings of our fellow contestants. Aggressiveness during a debate often stems from an underlying insecurity or disbelief in our own arguments. Dramatic or aggressive behaviour can intimidate our opponents and lead to a misunderstanding of the essence of debate.

Confidence is a valuable trait in debating, as it lends credibility to our arguments. However, when confidence transforms into aggressiveness, it can undermine the logical basis of our arguments. Aggressiveness often relies on emotion rather than reasoned discourse, resulting in emotional intimidation rather than constructive dialogue. Intimidation can happen during exchanges and may spiral out of control.

The following behaviours can emotionally intimidate the opponents:

- Raised voices
- Aggressive body language
- Inappropriate gestures
- Angry scowls
- Constant staring
- Personal attacks
- Insults
- Being passively aggressive
- Not listening to the opponents

The art of debating entails mastery over the ego and the ability to maintain composure during disagreements. Gaslighting may occur when debaters dismiss the views or arguments of opponents by saying phrases like “You’re crazy for thinking that,” or “You’re making a big deal out of nothing.” This is a tactic used to add undue accountability for one’s words or actions and manipulate others into questioning their own sanity.

Mocking, bullying, and silencing opponents have become commonplace in discussions as the focus is only on winning. Individuals often behave as if their opinions hold the force of verdicts, rather than recognizing all participants as equal contributors. Differences of opinion fosters constructive discussion where both sides objectively state their positions leaving personal judgments aside. Active participation in debates gets our conversation more tamed and behaviour more controlled as we learn how to channelise our aggression constructively.

Normalising insensitivity towards fellow debaters and claiming it to be a tactical debating style is a subtle form of intimidation. Respect is not outdated but a timeless value. It is not optional but essential. Let us normalise debate that is laced with empathy, emotional intelligence, and poise and ensure respectful discourse remains a cornerstone of our interactions.

My First Debate



Varun Sankara Narayanan

III Year

Computer Science and Engineering

My first debate was the intra-school debate conducted annually by my school in sixth grade. Like most people, I hated public speaking. The nervousness, the scare of embarrassing myself in front of the whole school did not help. To be completely honest, I never wanted to take part, but my mother was persistent that I at least tried.

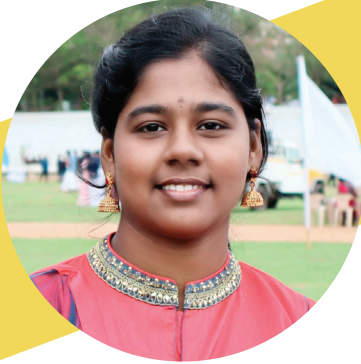
After weeks of thorough preparation, it was time to throw my hat into the ring. Every second on the stage felt like an hour, as I patiently awaited my turn to speak. The walk from my seat to the podium sent shivers down my spine. My throat felt heavy, and I did not know how to process it. I took a deep breath and because of my preparation I was able to perform my best. It makes me happy that I did not succumb to the pressure and all those late nights paid off.

My team was judged the last place, but I learnt valuable lessons which will stay with me throughout my life. Since that day I have never missed an opportunity to speak on stage. Every experience has taught me something new and I wish to continue this journey. Even today I feel just as nervous, but I have learnt to channel the negative energy. What you speak is far more important than how you speak. However, the biggest takeaway is to always listen to your MOM!



HAVE YOUR SAY!

ASDS- A Journey of Growth



Bhavana Naidu

III Year

Computer Science and Engineering

Everything commenced with my seeing some buzz about the debating society on WhatsApp. This triggered me to be a part of the Society. However, I failed to register before the deadline. Thanks to my optimistic attitude, I stepped up to ask Mr. Suresh, Faculty Advisor-ASDS, a little later. This was one of my best resolutions. I vividly remember his emphasising ASDS wasn't just another extracurricular activity. He said it required dedication and a commitment for continued improvement from my side.

The excitement didn't last long. Upon joining, I sensed a sense of nervousness, for all unfamiliar faces around me appeared quite professional. Recognizing the need to quickly acclimatise to the new environment and acquire the necessary skills, I dove into debating. My first debate took me on a roller coaster! The fact that it was held online made me all the more nervous! With little knowledge of my teammates, let alone my opponents, I had to prepare diligently. With the support of my fellow teammates, I was fortunate enough to learn and rediscover the essence of debating.

Something that proved invaluable to me was the follow-up meetings post-debate. The comprehensive analysis and feedback from the Chair and the Faculty Advisor helped me improve my debating skills. Moreover, transitioning to the role of judging and chairing debates piqued my interest. Understanding the criteria for evaluating debates, I resolved to enhance my skills to excel in future debates.

One significant lesson I learnt is that mastering the art of debate is an ongoing process, requiring continuous learning and adaptation. Besides enabling me to hone my debating skills, ASDS has had a profound effect on me; It has fostered a shift from reacting impulsively to responding thoughtfully. For the transformative journey the ASDS has offered me, I am and will be forever grateful to the Society.

The Transformative Power of Debate



Arya S. R.

III Year

Chemical Engineering

This house believes that abortion should be legalised or this house believes that prostitution should be legalised. Sounds challenging? Well, yes it is.

The first time I heard this sentence it tested the boundaries of my comfort zone and became the arena where I discovered the depth of my convictions and the capacity for critical thinking. Debating on such topics made me realise that my personal opinions are limited to certain stigmas that society had given. For example, while researching the topic of prostitution, I came across the challenges that sex workers had to face. I also learnt about how COVID affected them and the mental, emotional and physical abuse their children had to go through besides mistreatment they had to endure because of the law enforcement agencies.. All of this was an eye opener. I had not realised that I was living in a world where so much was happening and I was confined to just a few courses I had been offered.

ASDS gets the best out of me in terms of extensive research, critical analysis, and articulation. The regular interactions I had with my fellow ASDS members enabled me to delve into new perspectives, consider counter-arguments, and refine my own stance.

But was that enough?

No.

The real test that I faced was during the debate where I had to face my opponents who came up with arguments, reasoning and evidence. As soon as the previous speaker finished her/his speech, I had to begin, which meant I don't have time to organise the points. I must be quick in making decisions and deciding the sequence in which I am going to present my arguments. Each debate turned out to be an opportunity not only to defend my position but also to adapt and grow from the exchange of ideas.



HAVE YOUR SAY!

Debates ask you to be calm, composed and bold. These are your “armour”, if you let any one of them down, you are giving your opponent the opportunity to “feed on you”. Body language matters a lot. The hand gestures, the eye contact, the smirk, everything tells something about their preparation. Only a calm and composed observer can understand this.

And finally it's about teamwork. There will always be a strong speaker and a new speaker in your team and how you balance out things is what decides who is going to win. So dedicating time for planning, strategy, trust and a strong content of ARE (Argument, Reasoning and Evidence) is of paramount importance.

A debate not only enables you to learn about various subjects and issues but also makes you understand yourself and others.

So welcome to the journey of debating- where you debate with yourself first.

My experience with ASDS



Ananya R.

III Year

Computer Science and Engineering

It was just another day on the campus. I lost track of the time as I was occupied with a lot of academic work. I rushed to CIR only to be greeted by a pleasant face– Mr. Suresh, my verbal skills faculty. He welcomed me into the class though I was late. I had to deliver my speech on a newspaper article. Since I felt I was not adequately prepared, I asked him if I could postpone my speech. He advised me to complete it on the same day and told me that it would be a learning experience; which it indeed was. Although I made a few errors, I managed to deliver a satisfactory speech. Little did I know that this speech would open a beautiful world of debating to me. Sir saw potential in me and invited me for the discussion on starting a Debating Society in Amrita. A fellow student had approached him with this idea and we had the first meeting with only 3 students. Today we are a Society of 70+ members and the journey has been truly remarkable!

After our first few meetings we had an introductory session on QSDL debating format. This session was informative and made me think about how debating was not just an extra-curricular activity but something that we needed to navigate challenging life situations. Debating helps you reason and improve your logical skills. It gives you an opportunity to deliberate and think before you argue. It teaches you to use the format of Argument-Reasoning-Evidence in everyday conversations. This has a positive impact on your communication. It helps you avoid conflicts and enables others to understand you better.

I am sure there are instances where you failed to convince your mother about how you really needed that expensive pair of shoes, or how you longed to go on that trip with your friends. Believe it or not, debating helped me convince my mother to agree to my unreasonable demands too!

As time progressed, we had to expand the team and the need arose to establish a cabinet to ensure the seamless working of ASDS. I am grateful that I was appointed the first President of ASDS. It was a role that demanded dedication, responsibility, and selfless service. I am not sure if I was able to deliver my duties perfectly, but I am confident that I sincerely gave everything I could for the progression of the club. We started conducting regular debates and training sessions. We welcomed new members into ASDS. There were instances where as the President, I went through hard times but I always had my wonderful team and faculty to support and encourage me.

We had a grand induction and a very interesting debate marking Energy Week. It was a time we collaborated with the NSS team at Amrita. On the 6th of December we were presented with ASDS badges. We had a light-hearted event called Secret Santa for bonding and this helped me find supportive and talented friends. We also started publishing newsletters and Ms. Navami Govind, Verbal Skills Faculty, has been in-charge of this endeavour.

We have now reached the next phase wherein with a new cabinet we are exploring new debating league formats. Under the guidance of Mr. Rameshkumar G and all our faculty coordinators from CIR, who have been a source of support and strength, we hope to go from strength to strength.

ASDS has immense potential and its growth has been a testimony to this fact. The Society has taught me how to be a better individual. It has enabled me to learn from every experience in life.

Finally, ASDS is irreplaceable to me and will always hold a special place in my heart.

*Welcome to our
Beautiful Chaos !!!*



5 March 2024 onwards...

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by checking out our newsletter !!!**