

## **Annual Guest Lecture and Interdepartmental Monologue Competition 2019-20**

On 16th October 2019, the English Literary Forum **Parnassus** hosted two special events at the MSSW Auditorium: the annual guest lecture organized by the Department of English and an interdepartmental monologue competition conducted by Proscenium, Theatre Society of MSSW. The guest lecture on “Theatre for Social Change” was to be delivered by the chief guest Dr. A. Mangai, Former Associate Professor of English, Stella Maris College. Ms. V. Iswarya, Head of the Department of English and staff co-ordinator of Proscenium, welcomed the gathering.

The Dean Dr. R. Subashini honoured the chief guest with a memento and Shenbaga Nithila of II B.Sc. presented the speaker’s profile. She highlighted that in the past three decades Dr. Mangai had donned many hats: besides being an academic, she is a translator, activist and well-renowned theatre person in Tamil, having directed over 15 stage plays and authored critical volumes on the intersection of theatre and gender. The Principal Dr. S. Raja Samuel fondly recalled his long association with her, having worked closely with her in rural outreach through street plays.

Dr. Mangai began her lecture by drawing attention to the role of art in eliciting truths where direct questions often fail. By its subliminal power, theatre can form an emotional connection with its audience and help them expand their range of empathy, ultimately causing real change in the society. She illustrated her speech with several video clips: *Paccha Mannu (New Born)* of her own theatre group Mouna Kural against female foeticide, *Uraiyatha Ninaivugal* that dealt with the violence and discrimination faced by the transgender community, and a spoken word performance in the aftermath of the Nirbhaya case. She also spoke of a life in activism, where one needs to actively guard oneself against turning cynical and embittered by the prevalence of social evils, a piece of practical wisdom which resonated with the audience.

After the lecture ended, Srisha S. from II B.S.W introduced the guest of honour Ms. Amrutha Karayil, Head of the Department of Criminology, DG Vaishnav College, Chennai. Mr. John Zachariah, the Finance Director of MSSW, presented her with a memento. Another multifaceted achiever, Ms. Amrutha had directed and acted in several plays all over the country right from her student days under the training and mentorship of Prof. Rajani. Given her long involvement in student theatre, she was invited to judge the monologue competition. Students from the UG departments took the stage and vied with one another to prove their acting mettle.

Auditions had been conducted at class level and ten participants were selected as finalists. Each participant had to deliver two monologues, a comedy and a tragedy, from classical as well as contemporary plays. So, the students’ ability to depict the two extremes of emotions was being tested. Other categories taken into consideration were the expressions, tone, modulation, usage of stage space and body language. Participants brought alive characters as diverse as Puck, Jimmy Porter, Lord Macbeth or Blanche DuBois.

At the end of the performances, the results were announced and the prizes were awarded to the top three performances. Aishwarya V R from I B.S.W won the first prize, followed by Jannani M. of III BSc and Sujanandhini of I BSc. Ms. Amrutha shared her personal feedback on each performance, listing what impressed her and suggesting ways to improve for each participant. All the ten finalists were given certificates and participation prizes. Krishna V of III B.Sc. gave an emotional vote of thanks exhorting the students to make the best use of the platform provided by the theatre club to discover their talents.