

EVENT REPORT
NORTH EAST YOUTH CONCLAVE
6-8 September 2019

The Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, Tezpur University in collaboration with Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi organized a three day North East Youth Conclave on the theme 'Role of Youth in Contributing to a Culture of Peace and Non-violence' during 6-8 September 2019. A total of 150 participants from 18 institutions across North East India participated in the Conclave. The conclave witnessed a most wonderful confluence of youthful energy, vibrancy and enthusiasm that demonstrated the power and potential of youth people to create change in the world.

DAY 1: INAUGURAL FUNCTION

The North East Youth Conclave began on the morning of 6th September 2019. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Senior Journalist Samudra Gupta Kashyap as the Chief Guest, prominent social activist Dibyajyoti Saikia as special invitee and Gulshan Gupta, the North East Coordinator of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti as part of the guest panel. The dais was also graced by Dr. Joya Chakraborty, Head, Department of MCJ-TU and Prof. Abhijit Borah, former Head and Professor in the Department.

The session began with the national anthem followed by a Borgeet presentation. The Head of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Dr. Joya Chakraborty delivered the welcome address where she greeted the 150 youth representatives from 18 different universities across northeast India that included Tripura University, Sikkim University, Manipur University of Culture, North East Hill University and many others.



Glimpses of the inaugural session: Dibyajyoti Saikia lighting the lamp (left) and borgeet presentation (right)

Thereafter, Gulshan Gupta shared his insights on Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti. Speaking on the occasion, he quoted, “By birth, we are all non-violent.” Following this, the inaugural address was delivered by Professor Abhijit Bora, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, where he highlighted an important aspect of the theme by saying, “You are the only community that can give peace a chance.” In line with the spirit of the occasion, Samudra Gupta Kashyap enlightened the gathering with his inspiring words. He talked about the freedom struggle in North East India, about it being the biodiversity hotspot of the country and the role of Mahatma Gandhi in peace building exercises among the youth. He said, “Once you put Gandhi in your heart, he will never go away. Anyone and everyone can become a Gandhi.”

The event concluded with the vote of thanks by Dr. Anjuman Borah, Assistant Professor of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism and the conclave coordinator. Recalling her mentor, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, she ended the session with the words, “Peace is a decision.”

DAY 1, SESSION I: UNDERSTANDING A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTH-EAST

Mr. Dibyajyoti Saikia conducted the first session of the day. A core member of the team of Anna Hazare, Mr. Saikia is the founder secretary general of the national level social organization, Brothers.

Keeping in sync with the theme of the conclave, he started off the first session by speaking about Mahatma Gandhi and how *satyagraha* has been a tool of non-violence and has always been effective. Talking mainly on non-violence, he said that only refraining from hitting or destroying is not non-violence but having a sense of positivity in mind and soul is the true essence of it. Interacting with the youth representatives, he asked them about the major conflict issues prevailing in the Northeastern region. He mentioned that humanity should be above any religion or caste. As he neared the end of his session, he emphasized the importance of youth towards the progress of the country. He said that there is no point of progress if violence is still being practiced. Thereafter, he concluded the session by highlighting the role of youth to take forward the virtue of non-violence.

DAY 1, SESSION II: TOWARDS A SCIENCE OF HUMAN STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES

Dr. Pranjal Buragohain, Associate Professor, Department of Education, Dibrugarh University conducted the second session of the North East Youth Conclave. The session was centered around the topic, towards a science of Human Strengths and Virtues, wherein he spoke to the representatives about positive psychology and the role it plays to promote and establish the conception of peace and non-violence, especially in the lives of youth.

Applauding the participants' enthusiasm to have a talk on peace in today's times, Dr. Pranjal Buragohain talked on how in modern times, religion and politics have given rise to conflicts, and has become a major contributor to violence in the society. He said, "Every human's intention is to want something better in life," emphasizing upon the five dimensions responsible for a positive and peaceful outlook on life, namely- positive emotions, positive engagement, positive purpose, positive relationships and positive accomplishment.



Glimpses from the first day session with Dr. Pranjal Buragohain

Towards the end of the session, he cited a few scientific real-life examples of how inculcating such positive practices have led to not only a higher standard of living, but have also significantly contributed to less aggression or violence, in people's personal lives. He concluded by mentioning his idea, that is, "Peace within one's own self contributes largely to peace in society."

DAY 1, SESSION III: EDUCATION FOR CULTIVATING PEACE, HARMONY AND SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The third technical session of the day was also conducted by Dr. Pranjal Buragohain, who made it an activity based session, and began by introducing a couple of group activities where unknown participants were asked to sit in groups and talk to each other in order to get to know their partners and find out a point of strength and weakness of each other. Similar activities went

on further, seeking to boost interaction between the participants and being productive and fun in the process.

At the end of the day, there was a cultural evening where the students of TU and participating universities showcased their skills and enthralled the audience, which was followed by dinner, marking the end of the day.



Glimpses from the final session of the first day of the conclave

DAY 2, SESSION IV: UNDERSTANDING THE CHEMISTRY OF A SOCIAL EMOTION

On the second day of the event, the first session was conducted by Dr. Pranjal Buragohain. He started off by making everybody understand the chemistry of a social emotion and how emotions are needed in youth for prevailing peace and harmony. Mr. Pranjal shared some of his personal life experiences and the emotional aspects in relation with the theme of the youth conclave. The speaker conducted various activities to increase the level of one's well being and the sense of gratitude towards someone. Sharing stories from his childhood and hostel life, he expressed how emotions have helped him grow, acknowledging the presence of largely two emotions- 'gratitude' and 'generosity'. These were certain values that he had imbibed from his teacher, to whom he shall remain ever grateful for having taught him the value of those. Talking about his teacher further, he mentioned about the practice of writing a letter of gratitude to him, thanking him for each and every help that he had received from his teacher, and how humbled he felt when he received a reply from his teacher, promising him that he shall continue helping others in

the future. Proceeding further, he mentioned the three mantras of a good sustainable life- firstly, acknowledge the gift, secondly, recognise the value of the gift and lastly, appreciate the intention of the donor. In his words, gratitude is a social reinforcer, gratitude is a social motivator, gratitude is a social barometer and gratitude is a social repenter.

DAY 2, SESSION V: BUILDING AN EMOTION THROUGH SKILLS FOR PEACE AND HARMONY

The second technical session of the day was continued by Dr. Pranjal Burhagohain, which focused on developing skills that builds up the feeling of gratitude within an individual. To do so, he conducted various activities and asked the participants to continue the same for not only their well-being but also for the greater good of the society. “Well-being of my life is my choice,” he said, to emphasize on which, he shared his own experiences with his students in the past wherein he found that students continuously writing journals had a higher level of gratitude and well-being.

Focusing on the emotion of gratitude, Dr. Burhagohain conducted a total of four exercises to foster the growth of the emotion- one, maintaining a gratitude journal that kept a record of all the good experiences of their life, for according to him, the mind is sensitive to bad experiences; two, writing gratitude letters; three, the WWW, i.e the ‘what, when, where’ exercise, to keep a record of all the good experiences which inevitably empower the positive emotions, and fourth, the “Hero-of-the-Day” exercise wherein he asked the participants to name a person who had changed their life somehow or added value to it, with the objective of realising the value of a person in one’s life.

He concluded the session with a practice called ‘gratitude prayer’, a cathartic experience where the participants were asked to imagine their mothers and offer heartfelt gratitude for each of her deeds, followed by a question answer session between the speaker and the participants.

DAY 2, SESSION VI: CONFLICT RESOLUTION- TOOLS AND STRATEGIES-I

The speakers at the event were Ms. Suravi Sarkar and Mr. Santu Guchait, Communication for Development specialists and Ms. Anokhi Parikh, an independent trainer, from Banglanatakdotcom. The session began with an activity of self-introspection followed by an analysis of the concept of conflict and peace-making. Thereafter, the entire mass of participants was divided into three groups, headed by each of the three speakers.

As the teams dispersed to their respective locations, the sessions began. The one headed by Ms. Suravi Sarkar approximately consisted of around 20 participants. The participants were shown how conflict ensues in social media and is miscommunicated in the virtual world, through a group activity where all the participants had to make a perfect square without verbally communicating. The exercise entailed a lot of related issues like gender-based violence, leadership qualities, push factors of violence, the essence of global peace, the core of violence etc. The discussions were punctuated by real-life situations where the participants had to apply their reason on issues such as mob mentality etc. and try to understand the whats and whys of conflict. Moving along the lines of understanding the concept of conflict, certain conflict resolution strategies were devised, namely- competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating.



Glimpses from one of the afternoon sessions with Mr Santu Guchait

With another group, the session had Mr. Santu Guchait who got the participants involved in an activity that asked the questions, “What are the main causes of conflict and non violence?” and “What are the three things that describes you?”. He also made the participants perform an

exercise where he asked them to hold a rope and make a perfect square of it without using verbal communication. He then made a human loop and tangled it. Then he asked the participants to untangle without letting go off their hands.

Through the exercises he showed the complex nature of conflict and how it can only be resolved through united effort.

DAY 2, SESSION VII: CONFLICT RESOLUTION - TOOLS AND STRATEGIES-II

The post tea session with Ms. Suravi Sarkar began with the discussion of conflict resolution strategies where the efficiency of each of them based on the degree of assertiveness or cooperativeness they allowed for, was evaluated by the speaker and the audience. In the course of the discussion, the speaker mentioned, “every problem has a solution; no matter however critical the problem may be, it is born with a solution.” As a part of conflict controlling measures, she discussed the importance of preventing future conflicts and not letting prevailing conflicts spread. Majorly an interactive activity based session, participants were explained how conflicts ensued through miscommunication through a game of Chinese whispers, followed by a brief discussion on the skills for conflict resolution namely- leadership, interpersonal relationship, listening, empathy, mediation, kindness, negotiation, assertiveness and cooperation. In the process of explaining the importance of these skills, the speaker divided the audience into groups of two and gave them a chance to interact, in an attempt to get to know each other. Further, they were asked to write thank you letters to their partners. Thereafter, the participants were asked to recollect a conflict situation of their respective lives and write about it in brief, anonymously for future sessions. Finally, the session ended with a feedback session where the participants put forth their comments on the session they just attended.



Students being divided into groups in the first afternoon session of the second day

In Mr. Santu Guchait's group, the last session of the second day saw the participants come together in groups of seven where each student discussed the various conflicts they faced and how they resolved them. Taking cues from the exercise, he said that there are 5 ways to resolve a conflict, namely- Competing, Avoiding, Collaborating, Accommodating and Compromising.

Ms. Anokhi Parikh began with an exercise of making a square with a rope. This was a non-verbal exercise where the group members could not communicate with each other verbally and rather use hand signals and body language. Chart papers and ribbons were assigned to note the skills involved while making the square. Skills such as coordination, leadership, teamwork, etc. were mentioned by several participants. The motive behind this exercise was to explain how peace and non-violence cannot be attained single handedly. Push factors detailing why violence occurs in the society was the second phase of the activity. Participants were handed small chits to jot down the factors they perceived as leading the society towards violence.

As the technical sessions of the day ended, all the participants assembled in the screening hall of the host department, to enjoy a rich cultural evening packed with an array of spellbinding performances by the students of Tezpur University and other participating universities.



A glimpse of the cultural evening on Day 2

DAY 3, SESSION VIII: TOOLS AND SKILL PRACTICE PREPARATION OF PRESENTATION FOR ‘APPRECIATING DIVERSITY’

The final day of the event started with a technical session conducted by Ms. Suravi Sarkar and Mr. Santu Guchait, Communication for Development specialists from banglanatakdotcom. The session was in continuation of the previous day’s activity of understanding self identity. In this session, the students were asked to describe their social identities, that is, how they portray themselves in the social media. The activity threw some light on the contrast between our real self and virtual self, and how the virtual self is a projection of what we would like to see our real selves as being. The participants were then asked to find similarities between the qualities of their virtual self within their real self. They also mentioned that it is our duty to react or comment to a post responsibly since social media is a volatile space.

Thereafter, all the youth representatives were categorized into group as story writers, instruments players, vocalists, actors, and so on. This activity was done to form a team which would later perform a drama.

Following this, a drama was performed by the team as a part of the valedictory session with the assistance of Ms. Suravi Sarkar and Mr. Santu Guchait. Racism, gender based violence (witch hunting), and cyber bullying were the underlying themes of the drama.



Picture from the final day session: the drama being rehearsed

VALEDICTORY SESSION

The valedictory session of the North East Youth Conclave began on the afternoon of the third day of the conclave, that is, August 8th, 2019. The session was hosted by Abhilash Bapanasha and Sangita Kalita, students of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University.

At the very beginning of the session, Dr. Anjuman Borah, the conclave coordinator, shared her remarks and experiences of the three-day conclave. She mentioned how in a very small period of time everything was arranged. The conclave got an overwhelming response at the very beginning itself when 18 institutions responded by sending their youth representatives. She also acknowledged the contribution of Samudra Gupta Kashyap as he successfully set the tone for the entire conclave. She thanked the research panel who did their best to keep the sessions informative and engaging and ensured that each participant took home an experience. Appreciating the bond between all the participants, she said the conclave was a “beautiful confluence of youthful minds”. She also expressed her gratitude to all the teams who worked backstage to make the event a success. The teams were categorised as Reporting, Video documentation, Registration and Reception, Poster, Photography, Social media and Cultural.

This was followed by a drama presentation that was prepared under the guidance of the resource persons from banglanatakdotcom, Ms. Suravi Sarkar and Mr. Santu Guchait. It involved a video

telecast of the previous day's (Session VI and VII) exercises. The theme of the performance was surrounded around Racism (racial conflict faced by people belonging to the Mongoloid race in India), Social evils and superstitions, and Cyber bullying. It dealt with different kinds of conflicts, how one deals with them in real life and how one can resolve differences by means of peace and justice. It showed that addressing small issues and working towards resolving the underlying factors of conflict, one can restore peace and harmony in the world. The message that the act sent across was that *"we are one, we are human, we come with nothing and we will go back with nothing, so don't discriminate"*.



Stills from the cyberbullying skit of the final day.

After the drama, Ms. Chinmoyee Deka and Mr. Abdul Wadood from the reporting team presented a brief session-wise report on the three-day conclave where all the various activities that were carried out throughout the Conclave were re-lived and appreciated.

The resource persons then shared their experiences. Ms. Suravi Sarkar called it just the beginning and promised further and continued association with the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University. She said that in order to live a peaceful life, one must stay positive and spread positivity. Mr. Santu Guchait asked the participants to pat themselves on their backs and say "you did well". One of the visiting participants ensured the creation of an instagram account which will connect all the participants in the conclave so that they can stay connected among themselves and also with banglanatakdotcom.

This was followed by a participatory puppetry video presentation of about six minutes. Students of the nearby Panchmole HS School were the puppeteers. It was titled “The Lesson” and addressed two important themes for creating peace – ‘Respect’ and ‘Love’.

Following this, representative from Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, Mr. Gulshan Gupta expressed his gratitude towards everyone and said, “We are about to begin the journey towards peace”. He also shared a story about Guru Nanak that went like this: *Guru Nanak was once travelling with his disciple “Mardana” when he came across a village that was filled with hypocrites. He was disappointed but he still blessed the village on his farewell, saying, “May you always stay and flourish in this same place.” Mardana was shocked but could not ask anything. Then he reached the next village where people were waiting to receive them. He spent three days there and received a lot of love and warmth. On the last day he blessed them too, by saying, “May you get displaced from here.” Mardana could not stop himself and asked, “Why such contrasting blessings?” Guru ji replied, “People of the first village have their eyes closed with ego so wherever they go they will spread their ego but people from the second village will spread peace and love wherever they go”.* Mr. Gupta equated Nanak’s lesson to the message of the Conclave and said that all the participants must now spread the message of peace and the importance of the role that youth can play in peace building, wherever they go.

The session then welcomed the Chief Guest for the evening, Professor Dilip Kumar Saikia, Pro Vice Chancellor of Tezpur University and felicitated him by presenting him a *gamusa* and a sapling. He congratulated the department for hosting a successful conclave and said, “Peace is the need of the hour and you (youth) are the main source of peace”.

The feedback session saw many students coming up to share their experiences. A student from Sikkim University said, “Thanks everyone. I learnt a lot and hope for a continued brotherhood”. Another student praised the accommodation and well planned conveyance facilities provided by the department and said that the Conclave gave him an opportunity to see and present their own as well as others’ skills. A participant from the Manipur University of Culture said, “Hope to come again. We are the youth so we should plan and come together to work for peace”. A Tripura University participant said that the Conclave was a great platform to make friends and that whatever they learnt from it they can apply in real life as well. A student of North East Hill

University expressed his satisfaction with the department and called it one of the most advanced Mass Communication departments.

Later, the certificates were distributed to all the visiting participants by the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Head of the Department, Mass Communication and Journalism.



The pro-vice chancellor handing out certificates to participants

Then there was a special gesture by the students of Manipur University of Culture where they gifted a traditional Manipuri memento, *Lengyan Phee* to the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Head, Department of MCJ.

This was followed by the Vote of Thanks proposed by Mr. Joy Chakraborty, a student of the third semester, M.A. in Mass Communication and Journalism.

The session came to a close with the singing of the National Anthem, followed by a photo session.



Group photo of the event
