



Report on Collaborative Activity

Workshop on Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Journalism

21-22 February 2018

- 1. Name of the Collaborative Activity:** Workshop on Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Journalism
- 2. Nature of Activity:** A Seminar and Workshop on “Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Journalism” was organized by Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, Assam in collaboration with Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi on the 21st and 22nd February 2018. The two day event saw a rich amalgamation of industry and academia where experts in the field of media and journalism shared their thoughts and experiences about Mahatma Gandhi and his pioneering work in advocating peace journalism. The invited speakers and the student participants reflected on the theme and brought forth their knowledge and opinions as to how journalism can be used as a powerful tool to spread peace in the world.
- 3. Name of the Collaborating Agency/ Individual with affiliation, and contact details:** Organized by Dept. of Mass Communication & Journalism, Tezpur University in collaboration with Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (Contact person – Vedabhyas Kundu vedabhyas@gmail.com)
- 4. Summary of collaboration:** Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS) was formed in September 1984 as an autonomous body. The basic aim and objective of the Samiti are to propagate the life, mission and thought of Mahatma Gandhi through various socio-educational and cultural programmes. A two-day workshop on peace journalism was organized by the Dept. of MCJ in collaboration with GSDS. The event saw a rich amalgamation of industry and academia where experts in the field of media and journalism shared their thoughts and experiences about Mahatma Gandhi and his pioneering work in advocating peace journalism. The invited speakers and the student participants reflected on the theme and brought forth their knowledge and opinions as to how journalism can be used as a powerful tool to spread peace in the world. The two-day programme on Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Journalism was aimed towards reflecting upon the need for peace Journalism in the present day context and to discuss about the relevance of Gandhiji’s philosophy of non-violence and peace communication in this context. The purpose was to mainly orient the MCJ students who are media professionals of the future towards using journalism for peace. The workshop was organized with the following objectives –



- To reflect upon the need for peace Journalism in the present day context;
- To discuss about the relevance of Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence and peace communication;
- To orient the MCJ students who are media professionals of the future towards using journalism for peace

5. List of detailed activities under the collaboration:

DAY 1
Inauguration
[10:30 am – 11:15 am]

The seminar began with a formal inauguration ceremony where the students presented a classical song "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram" in memory of *Father of the Nation*, whose hard work and determination has always been a source of inspiration. The same took us back to the perennial efforts of Mahatma Gandhi who tried to unite the citizens across all communities and identities by his communication skills, diction, writings and even songs.

Prof Abhijit Bora, Head of the Department, Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University welcomed all the distinguished guests and dignitaries who spared their time to share their knowledge with the students and other participants. He said that Mahatma Gandhi possessed an unimaginable vision that he visualized the use and potential of mass media much ahead of anyone else in the country. The same was evident in Gandhiji's speech when he used the phrase "Broadcasting is power" in his message on All India Radio, 1947 while addressing the refugees of partition in Kurukshetra. Prof Abhijit Bora also mentioned that it is extremely relevant to hold the seminar amidst budding media aspirants, i.e. the students as this is an opportunity for all of us to contribute towards the noble cause of peace journalism. He invited the distinguished guests to share their expertise and enlighten the audience, while he remembered the wonderful work of John Lennon, "Give Peace a Chance".

After the welcome address by Prof Abhijit Bora, a 'Felicitation Ceremony' followed, where the invited guests Mr. P J Baruah, Executive Editor, The Assam Tribune, Mr. Rajeev Bhattacharyya, Freelance Journalist and Author, Mr. Sushanta Talukdar, Editor, Neazine and Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Assam University were honored by the traditional Assamese 'Gamusa', flowers and small tokens of respect from Tezpur University.

Further, **Dr. Anjuman Borah**, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, introduced the theme of the event and why it is crucial to deliberate on the topic for the media fraternity.

She emphasized that there was a felt need to discuss the relevance of Peace Journalism as we witness that the whole world is conflict struck. Mass Media these days shapes social realities and



it can go miles in resolving warlike situations and spread peace across the globe. She further elaborated that the panel of the speakers were meaningfully selected in order to make the most of the deliberations that the entire audience would engage in and gave a brief introduction about each of the members.

Prof P K Das, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University delivered the inaugural address and declared the event open. He said that north east itself is a conflict sensitive region and prone to violence and other forms of distress. It is high time that media inclines itself to peaceful narratives and bring about the required change in its communication strategies for a larger social benefit. He recollected the fact that Mahatma Gandhi was a journalist all his life, who knew that journalism can be used for good and bad purposes alike. He envisaged that if Gandhiji was alive in the present world, he would also made use of social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook to spread peace and positivity, just as he electrified the nation using print media in a very effective way.

Dr. Biren Das, Registrar, Tezpur University was also present to grace the occasion and he conveyed sincere gratitude to all the guests and participants who assembled to hold such a significant discussion. He remembered the famous quote while addressing the audience, "There is no way to peace, but peace is the only way." Dr. Biren Das wished that the mandates of the event be fulfilled and it comes out in flying colors of success.

Mr. P J Baruah, Executive Editor, The Assam Tribune delivered his introductory remarks where he conceded that the theme selected for the seminar & workshop is quite different from usual ones and probably cardinal to the profession in the recent times. He said that the 20th century was a game changing century for entire human civilization as it saw the rise and fall of empires, wars, racial conflicts, bloodshed and subsequent attempts of proliferating peace amongst the affected. He mentioned that Gandhiji's concept of truth, non-violence (Ahinsa) and peace were capable to convince the opponents, i.e. the British rule, that they are wrong and must be fair in their conduct. He asked them to provide the Indian nation, justice, as they deserved to be free and independent in their own native land.

Giving a formal end to the inaugural ceremony, **Dr. Junali Deka**, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University conveyed the vote of thanks. She conveyed sincere gratitude to Gandhi Smriti and darshan Samiti, New Delhi for agreeing to collaborate with the Department of MCJ, TU to organize the seminar and workshop.

Poster Exhibition

The students also presented a "**Poster Exhibition**" that added vibrant colors to the cause. They created artistic pieces on topics like Gandhian Way of Life, Pulitzer Award Winners, Do's and Don'ts of Peace Journalism, Assassination of Journalists, Conflicts in North east and many more. All the invited guests and dignitaries took out time to walk through the poster exhibition to praise the hard work of the students and encourage them for future endeavours.



Academic Session 1 [11:30 am – 1 pm]

The first session of the seminar included two student presentations and a detailed lecture by Mr. Rajeev Bhattacharyya, Freelance Journalist and Author who spoke upon Peace Journalism in Theory and Practice: Observations in North East. The session brought forth important insights of the expert as well as the students who spoke about their views on the topic under scrutiny.

The first student presenter was **Mr. Amlan Jyoti Das**, Semester II, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University and his topic was *Gandhi and Peace Journalism*. He touched upon Gandhiji's way of life, his philosophy and his journalistic competencies that enriched the Indian society and paved the path of peace journalism that influenced the century.

Mr. Amlan gave a brief account of Gandhiji's early life and how he worked to transform the social structure of the nation. His ideas and practices of non-violence and truth can serve as the best content for the discipline of peace education.

The second student presenter was **Ms. Nidarshana Mahanta**, Semester II, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University and her topic was *Role of Media in Conflict*. She gave real time examples on how media can arouse or mitigate conflict and crisis situations.

After the two presentations by the students, next **Mr. Rajeev Bhattacharyya**, Freelance Journalist and Author enlightened the gathering on the theory and practice of peace journalism in north east India and the various conflict situations he has reported.

He began his speech by recalling his visit to rebel camps of Myanmar in 2011 where it was mandatory to move around in camouflage, else it could risk a journalist's life. Such situations makes one understand the importance of peace and futility of war and conflict.

Academic Session 2 [2:30pm – 3:30pm]

The post lunch second session saw one student presentation, by Mr. Tirtharaj Gohain, Semester II, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University and one expert lecture by Mr. Sushanta Talukdar, Editor, Neazine, Guwahati.

Mr. Tirtharaj Gohain elaborated on his topic Peace Journalism vs. War Journalism and what are the radical differences between the two. He began with the famous words of Jake Lynch "Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – about what to report, and how to report it – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict." He adds that when peace is combined with journalism, the motive clearly becomes conflict resolution. Peace journalism allows one to explore the background and context of conflict formation, on every side, not just 'both sides', gives voice to the views of all rival parties, offers ideas for conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacekeeping, exposes lies, reveals suffering inflicted on peoples, and pays attention to peace stories & post-war developments.



Next was the expert speech by **Mr. Sushanta Talukdar**, Editor, Nezine, who elaborated on the topic: Looking for Stories of Rebuilding Lives and untold stories of Rehabilitation Fault lines in conflict-hit areas. He began with a note of thanks to the earlier speakers who did a lot of context setting and expanded the theme of the seminar and forthcoming workshop.

Mr. Sushanta Talukdar further spoke about the role of social scientists in conflict and war like situations. He says that they play a major role in post conflict rehabilitation and rebuilding of lives; but the initial role of communication and information dissemination should be carried on by a professional communicator and not a social scientist. The content that is created for mass circulation at an early stage of any conflict impacts its course. Usually communities are not at war and prefer to remain in peace and interdependence. Hence while reporting on violence or any similar activity, one must use terms like "Miscreants among the community...." And should refrain from accusing any community directly or indirectly as it further aggravates the situation.

Academic Session 3 [3:45pm – 5:30pm]

The last session of the day one saw a student presentation by Mr. R K Yaibiren Sana, Semester IV, Department of Mass communication and Journalism, Tezpur University and expert talk by Mr. P J Baruah, Executive Editor, The Assam Tribune. Lastly, the concluding remarks were delivered by Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Assam University summing up the entire learnings of the day.

Mr. R K Yaibiren Sana, presented on his topic Peace Journalism in North East India with special reference to Naga Peace Accord. He ended his presentation by pointing out that much depends on the socialization of the journalist, esp. in context of communal reporting. There are always a few people who instigate violence and media should not be one of them or aid them in any way for the overall benefit of the communities in conflict.

Mr. P J Baruah, Executive Editor, The Assam Tribune initiated his lecture on Issues and Challenges of Covering Conflict: An Editor's Perspective by highlighting the fact that there is a proliferation in the media business with cut throat competition.

The last speech of the day was delivered by **Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain**, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Assam University in his concluding remarks.

He said that there can be no peace without conflict and vice-versa and there is a lot of sensitivity & maturity that goes in construction of peaceful journalistic messages. There can be different categories of conflict, with or without bloodshed and violence that require fruitful resolutions.

The first day ended with a '**pledge taking ceremony**' where the respected industry experts, guests, faculties, students and all other participants placed their thumb impressions in a silhouette outline of Mahatma Gandhi and vowed to stand for peace throughout their lives.



तेजपुरविश्वविद्यालय/ TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

(केंद्रीयविश्वविद्यालय/A Central University)

जनसंचार व पत्रकारिता विभाग/Department of Mass Communication & Journalism

TEZPUR-784028 :: ASSAM

DAY 2

Full Day workshop on “Peace Journalism”

By

Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain

[10am – 5pm]

Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Assam University, took an extensive workshop for the second and fourth semester students of Tezpur University on the theme of ‘Peace Journalism’. He has conducted in depth research on the same in the region of northeast and its conflict areas. During the day-long workshop he introduced the students to the various principles of peace journalism as well as the different international accords and treaties to support the cause of peace journalism.