

Secular Ethics A Youth Dialogue



Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
an initiative of

Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama



**SECULAR ETHICS
A YOUTH DIALOGUE**

Held as a part of the

22nd Annual Gurukul Program

Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama

July 24, 2016

Dharamsala, India

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
an initiative of

Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Copyright © WISCOMP, New Delhi, India, 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by
WISCOMP
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
UGF, Core 4 A, India Habitat Centre
Lodi Road
New Delhi – 110003
India

Cover Credits: Tina Toons

Acknowledgements

This report documents the proceedings of *Secular Ethics: A Youth Dialogue*. The workshop was organized as part of the Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace (WISCOMP) project *The Medium is the Message: Together Against the Violence of Gendered Exclusion*. WISCOMP is grateful to Students Stand #with Malala, a partnership between the Malala Fund and Participant Media, which made the workshop possible. We especially appreciate the support extended to the WISCOMP team during the project by Ms. Charity Tooze, Consultant, The Malala Fund and Ms. Cathy Maher, Senior Partner Services Associate at Global Giving- the grant administrators. Thanks also to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala for hosting the workshop on their campus.

WISCOMP is grateful to Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra and the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for their constant guidance and encouragement.

WISCOMP acknowledges the contribution of Manjri Sewak, Senior Fellow, WISCOMP for facilitating the workshop and preparing this report. Her inputs were decisive in making this dialogue conceptually rich.

We are grateful to the WISCOMP team of Harish C. Bhatt, Seema Kakran, Nidhi Bhatnagar, Devender Kumar and WISCOMP Intern, Diksha Poddar for the support they provided to the project..

Meenakshi Gopinath

Director
WISCOMP

Dialogue Proceedings

WISCOMP conducted a nine-hour workshop (24 July 2016) on *Secular Ethics* which provided an invigorating context for a dialogue on the film *He Named Me Malala*. Held at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala (the seat of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in India), the workshop brought together 35 university students pursuing diverse disciplines from across India. The students spent three weeks in Dharamsala as part of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 22nd Annual Gurukul Immersion Program.

What united them was an abiding interest in Tibetan Buddhism, especially its emphasis on the cultivation of compassion and the Dalai Lama's vision of Secular Ethics to build empathy between people of different religions, socioeconomic classes, and nationalities. The discussions were premised on those human values which resonated across religious and spiritual traditions and which, based on scientific research and empirical observation, have proved beneficial to the physical and psychological well-being of individuals.

The film provided a rich context for discussion on a wide range of issues such as gender stereotypes, girls' education, the freedom of girls within homes, and the relationship between education, financial independence, land ownership,



Participants with His Holiness The Dalai Lama

and women's empowerment. Even though the participants had heard of Malala Yousafzai, none of them were aware of her personal struggles and only few had read about the extent of her work as an advocate for the rights of girls across the world.

Raj Shah, a graduate student of Commerce, Ahmedabad University, Gujarat, shared:

'The film on Malala Yousafzai is a great story of courage...It is a story that takes us beyond our nationalism. Nobody thought...in fact I didn't think that I am an Indian, Pakistani, American or British citizen...It takes us far beyond the spheres of nationality and religion. I think that Malala Yousafzai is a great inspiration to fight against the wrongdoings in society, not just in the spheres of education or any particular dimension, but it is in itself a great journey...and as she mentioned during her Nobel speech...*I am not afraid of the Taliban, I am not alone, the world is with me*...I think this is a great learning for all of us...As an Indian, I feel very motivated that we have people who actually stand against what is wrong. And I think this is the greatest learning.'

The important role of parents was also flagged. Even if girls are living in a society which is very conservative and where gender equality is not an important value, but if they have a parent who thinks differently, who looks beyond 'tradition', this can make all



Participants discussing their perspectives during presentation

the difference to a girl's life. Even though Malala's father risked his family's security by taking on the Taliban and opposing their distorted interpretation of Islam, by doing so, he influenced the lives of so many individuals in a positive way.

Participants were also able to connect the relevance of the film to similar challenges that India confronts with respect to giving importance to girl's education. Mr. Anmolam, an L.LM student at the South Asian University, New Delhi, who also runs an NGO providing free legal aid to the poor, shared the example of the former Chief Justice of India, Palanisamy Sathasivam, who, in an interview, had talked about how when he was a teenager, both he and his older sister had wished to pursue careers in law. But his sister was unable to do so because if she had done law, their parents could not have afforded to pay for their son's L.LB course. They chose to provide financial support for their son's career at the cost of their daughter's career aspirations. As Anmolam put it:

'Although today in society, most of us would say that boys and girls are equal, this is not a true reflection of whether there is discrimination or not, particularly within the home. True equality will be when if there is only one opportunity, the girl is given that opportunity and not the boy.'



Profile of Resource Person

Manjri Sewak is pursuing a PhD on Education for Peace at the Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. A writer and trainer in the field of peacebuilding, she holds expertise in conflict transformation and curriculum development. She is the author of *Multi-Track Diplomacy between India and Pakistan: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Security* and has published articles on peace education, civil society peacebuilding, and reconciliation. She is a recipient of the RCSS-NTI Research Award and the Fulbright Conflict Resolution Scholarship. As a member of the visiting faculty for the Conflict Transformation Diploma Program at Lady Shri Ram College, Manjri has led the foundation course on Conflict Analysis and Conflict Transformation as well as co-taught courses on Dialogue, Mediation, Gandhi, Justice, and Reconciliation. She holds a Masters' degree in Conflict Transformation from the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia, and a Bachelors' degree in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi.

List of Participants

1. **Abhinav Tyagi** is currently pursuing B. Sc. (PCM) from DAV PG College, Muzaffarnagar
2. **Adit Mehta** is currently pursuing B. Tech. (Mechanical) from Rajasthan Technical University
3. **Amurutha R S** is currently pursuing M.Sc. (Economics) from Pondicherry University
4. **Anmolam** is currently pursuing LLM from South Asian University, Delhi
5. **Arpita Roy** is currently pursuing MA (English) from Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi
6. **Avi Chudasama** is currently pursuing Master in Design from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad
7. **Avi Jain** is currently pursuing B.B.A. from B. K. Majumdar Institute of Business Administration, Ahmedabad
8. **Ayushman Mathur** is currently pursuing M. Tech. from Indian School of Mines Dhanbad, Jharkhand
9. **Deepak Kumar Gupta** is currently pursuing BA (Russian) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
10. **Diki Sherpa** is currently pursuing Mphil (History) from Department of History, University of Delhi
11. **Disha .D. Shetty** is currently pursuing LLM from SNDT Women's University, Mumbai
12. **Gunalan Pooven** is currently pursuing BA. (Economics) from Ramjas College, University of Delhi
13. **Heer Brahmhatt** is currently pursuing B.B.A. from B. K. Majumdar Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
14. **Janhavi Pangtey** is currently pursuing Bcom (Hons) from Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi
15. **Jyoti yadav** is currently pursuing M. A. (Development Studies) from Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai
16. **Kalpita Gupta** is currently pursuing Gupta from PGDAV College, University of Delhi
17. **M.M. Naveen Rajan** is currently in 12th Standard at International Centre for Applied Science, Manipal

18. **Nimisha Garbyal** is currently pursuing B. Com (Hons) from Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi
19. **Norbu Lhagyal** is currently pursuing B.A. (Chinese) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
20. **Pooja Vasu** is currently pursuing M.Des. (Graphic Design) from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad
21. **Raj Shah** is currently pursuing B.Com from HL Institute of Commerce, Ahmedabad
22. **Roopkatha Sarkar** is currently pursuing B.A. Liberal Arts from Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Ahmedabad
23. **Sanjana Sridhar** is currently pursuing B.A. Philosophy from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi
24. **Sanyam Goyal** is currently pursuing B.Des. from India Institute of Technology, Guwahati
25. **Sarita Lavania** is currently pursuing M.Des. (Toy & Game) from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad
26. **Shaesta Arman Mallick** is currently pursuing B. A. History (Hons) from Ashoka University, Haryana
27. **Shivani Mishra** is currently pursuing Intergrated MBA from B. K. Majumdar Institute of Business Administration, Ahmedabad
28. **Shridhar Sudhir** is currently pursuing M.Des. from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad
29. **Shristi Lama** is currently pursuing B.Com (Hons) from Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi
30. **Siddharth Banerjee** is currently pursuing M.Sc. (Forestry) from Forest Research Institute, Dehradun
31. **Snehal** is currently pursuing B.A. (Elementary Education) from Miranda House, University of Delhi
32. **Sunny Goswani** is currently pursuing B.Sc. (Botany) from Hans Raj College, University of Delhi
33. **Tenzin Chomphel** is currently pursuing M.Com from IGNOU, Delhi
34. **Tsetan** is currently pursuing B.B.A. (Finanace & Investment) from Shadeed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, University of Delhi
35. **Tsewang Nurbu** is currently pursuing B.Sc. {(Hons) [Agriculture]} from Sher-E-Kashmir University

GLIMPSES

