



# Asia's Young Leadership for Peace

**India | Bhutan | Sri Lanka | Nepal**

Minutes of Meeting | 23 April 2022

Phuro Innovations hosted its third virtual discussion on Pursuit of Political Peace on 23 April 2022, as a series of year-long engagements/ innovative solutions and research-oriented approach. The virtual meet brought together the thought processes of leaders from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan on the subject of "Asia's Young Leadership for Peace".

The discussions were very fruitful and following solutions/ innovative ideas were presented by the young leaders.



## **Rachna Sharma | India**

*Founder of Phuro Innovations, Co-Chair of HAE India, and Alumnus of Harvard Business School*

Ms. Sharma began on a note by expressing the foundational idea behind Pursuit of Political Peace events as being organised with a view point of giving voice to the leaders across SAARC nations and further documenting the same to be presented to the heads of the states.

She mentioned that what our fathers or grandfathers knew was that political leadership was the only hope for their nation or region for any kind of reform; and now there is the present generation which believes in various types of leadership; they believe in leadership in education more than they believed in the political system of this region at the moment.

She further opined that the goal of the present generation is to create a movement in their respective countries for good, some kind of reform, for which they have adopted different routes. Some of them have taken education, some social leadership and social entrepreneurship and are now utilizing the political platforms to raise their voice.

She appreciated the efforts of young leaders on the panel and welcomed them to the event.



## **Tashi Chonjur | Bhutan**

*CEO & Founder, Institute for Excellence and Development | CEO, Edulink Bhutan*

Mr. Chonjur began by emphasising the need for education systems to respond to technological advancements by building capacities to upskill the entire system, teachers, students, youth at large. Referring to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Roadmap laid down by the government called Bhutan Baccalaureate System that takes into consideration 21st Century technologies, he said that our education system cannot and should not respond in piecemeal interventions but rather overhaul the very system, inculcating new technologies as blockchain, virtual reality, robotics, etc. in mainstream education and skill development.

In response to the query in the historical context of destabilization of society by destroying the



education structures by foreign invaders, he opined that we cannot change the past, but future is in our hands. And the future is global, and not regional or local. Because of advancement of new technologies that transcends national borders or cultural barriers, now we have a great opportunity to develop our education system that is “globally competent and locally rooted” as we said in Bhutan. He supported his argument by referring to example set by the adoption of culture infused curriculum called “Educating for Gross National Happiness”.

Mr. Chonjur underscored that none of the SAARC Countries amongst the 20 most peaceful countries in the world according to the Global Peace Index 2021. In continuation to this he said that amongst eight parameters of Positive Peace Index, is the level of human capital in a country which is defined as a country’s stock of skills, knowledge, and behaviours. He held that to start with it is time to reflect on the education system.

He concluded by saying that it is best if we can inculcate the values of peace and development in the young minds by having values education in the schools from early developmental stages. The best way to bring changes is through education.

Ending with a congratulatory note to Phuro Innovations for bringing together like-minded people from SAARC countries for propagating peace in the region and the world in general, he said, “his piece of advice to the world leaders is to be the example to the children, which will automatically help them take the wise decisions.”



### **Vraie Cally Balthazaar | Sri Lanka**

*Politician | Social Entrepreneur | Activist | former Media Professional | Founder, Cally Products*

Ms. Balthazaar began by describing the prevalent economic crisis in Sri Lanka which as per her is the first time in the country which has seen a 30 years of violence, that there’s engagement from the youth, trying to resolve a crisis in proactive way by thinking of different ways marking non-violent protests on the streets through, arts, music, dance, acting etc. In her words, it is an interesting time for the nation to find ways to recreating Sri Lanka.

Upon being asked about the role of women in politics, Ms. Balthazaar opined that women’s engagement in politics in Sri Lanka in specific and South Asia at large is very limited because of the stereotypes prevalent in the society limiting the role of women to households and politics being seen as a non-conducive space for women. She further emphasises that it’s very important for women to build coalitions and work with not just women but also men who understand the importance of having women who can naturally bring values such as empathy and compassion on the table which will add a different perspective to policy making.

When asked about three things she would like to do if given the role of peace builder, she asserted that firstly it is imperative to have at least one language taught commonly across the nation, secondly the role of women should be highlighted in the history, and lastly following an unlearning and relearning process to fully free ourselves from the ideology forced upon our societies during colonisation.

She concluded by saying that leaders should start listening to people rather than working for themselves, and she further appreciated Phuro Innovations for acting as a forum of dialogue



bringing together leaders from across the SAARC countries which creates a space for knowledge and value exchange.



## **Pradip Pariyar | Nepal**

*Executive Chairman, Samata Foundation | Young Global Leader, World Economic Forum | Founder President, Nepal Policy Centre | Founder President, Nepal Youth Forum*

Mr. Pariyar began by shedding light on the plight of youth in Nepal who are unemployed in large numbers, a situation similar to other SAARC nations. In his views, there are always two issues concerning youth, violence and security and mostly they are seen as recipients. Rather as per him it is high time that youth should be seen as partner in peace building; political, economic and social reforms. He further affirmed that given the cultural and historic similarities amongst SAARC countries, the regional countries should show more solidarity towards each other rather than finding temporary solutions in the west driven approach.

In response to the query on the root cause of marginalisation of people, he attributed the source in caste based ideology systems in South Asia. He further opined that it is only by making this issue as everyone's issue is how we can find solution to this problem and SAARC can play a leading role in solving this problem which is also slowly engulfing the western nations.

When asked about things he would like to do if given the role of peace builder, he emphasised on the need for SAARC nations to focus on finding commonalities rooted in culture and history rather than building differences. He moreover stressed on opening channels to connect and exchange youth and knowledge across the SAARC region which has the potential to heal differences amongst the nations. He also asserted the need for SAARC region to act like European Union with borders open for trade and tourism.

Appreciating the efforts of Phuro Innovations in bringing together the ideas and philosophies across the SAARC region, he concluded by saying that the future of humanity lies in the hands of today's younger generation which will pass the torch to the future generation. He further mentioned that leaders need to engage the youth and invest in them. And world leaders need to rethink how they are doing things so that we can create a peaceful world.