

**A Youth Meet**  
**Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today**

**25-27 January 2023**  
**Darjeeling, India**

**A REPORT**

Organised by  
**Calcutta Research Group**  
in collaboration with  
**The Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna**





IWM  
Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen  
Institute for Human Sciences

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## Acknowledgement

The Calcutta Research Group (CRG) is thankful to the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, Austria, for their constant support and collaboration in the organisation and success of the Youth Meet on 'Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today.' We are grateful to both Katharina Hasewend and Evangelos Karagiannis, from the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, for travelling to India and participating in the event. Our gratitude goes out to Bincy Maria N., and Abhipsa Chakraborti for rapporteuring the programme and helping with the preparation of this report. This Youth Meet is part of the programme on 'Justice, Protection, and Government of the People: A Two-Year Research and Orientation Programme on Protection and Democracy in a Post-COVID World (2021-2023),' which is a part of the research programme of the Calcutta Research Group on migration and forced migration studies, conducted in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie, and several other organisations, institutions, and universities in India and abroad.

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## Preface

The world is going through a turbulent time, not just resource crisis, war, and violence, but also a crisis of ideology that has deeper impact on people's lives as war accompanies peace and crisis accompanies abundance in cyclic forms, over time; a change in the outlook of society towards crisis situation, rather the crisis of ideology is more venomous and sometimes irreversible. It is a ditch that nation-states make without a return path as it is easy to wedge a war, but it is difficult to alter the mindset of society that not even a war can change. And incidents across the world whether it is the women's right to suffrage, abortion, education, or LGBTQIA+ rights of equal citizenship, expendable lives of the outcasts and many more such hierarchisation of rights, the twenty-first century have slowly started to shed off its many legacies of planning democracy, republicanism that decolonisation of the twentieth century entailed. The unwritten clarions of separatism and exclusivism have led to a divided society. Such realisations entail the girder of who belongs and who does not. And it is this disjuncture or fault line that numerous individuals, civil society organisations, and to some extent certain state agencies try to cement, although they might not have been able to create a valley of equal status, but they attempt to create a staircase to achieve the vision of equal rights. As the world and the foundational ideas of modern society, that of liberty, equality, and fraternity are facing more challenges than ever, Calcutta Research Group in collaboration and with the support of the [Institute for Human Sciences \(IWM\), Vienna](#), under its programme 'Justice, Protection and Government of the People: A Two Years Research and Orientation Programme Protection and Democracy in a Post-Covid World (2021-2023),' organised the **Youth Meet on 'Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today'** from **25 to 27 January 2023**, in **Darjeeling**, West Bengal, India. It was an attempt to gather minds across disciplines and professions to share their own experiences of justice, injustice, peace, and violence, considered as a way of bringing a harmonious union of peace and justice, and discussing the social experiments of peace and politics of justice today. Selected from a pool of more than 120 applications that CRG received, a total of fifteen candidates selected from the applications, apart from researchers and senior colleagues from CRG and IWM, participated in the event. The major themes of care, justice, protection, and governance that encapsulate the research programme and the paths CRG has taken to put in efforts in building and strengthening networks and constituting the voices of people in precarity and crisis situations in varied ways, through dialogues, meets, camps, discourses, workshops, conferences, discussions, resolutions, declarations, publications, and dissemination over the years, was the inspiration behind the Youth Meet. The Youth Meet was designed as a winter camp in an attempt to bring activists and young scholars together to initiate discourses that would transcend borders and bindings and help bring social leaders to the foreground to disperse the barriers that divide society, belongingness, and individuality, along with the state as an agency of change and would provide the bridges of solidarity, preservation of rights and unity. The discussion over the three-day event aimed to question the basic philosophical concerns related to identity, justice, protection, and the intertwined politics; to acquire glimpses of how the varied exposures and experiences of innate differences open up dialogues to re-problematise the continued notions of what is considered as 'not a problem' and unsettling of the set beliefs, notions, faiths, and perceptions. The understanding of these issues, stem from the traditional notions of 'justice' and 'peace' which are historically generated and are concrete products of experience rather than abstract questions of deliberation. One of the key questions that constantly remained in focus, as pointed out by Ranabir Samaddar—why do societies need to link justice and peace, and whether these will be investigated as two independent categories of interaction or as constitutive categories? What does one desire in justice and what is derived through peace; in other words, justice that can be desirably achieved by peace and the trajectories that individuals/communities/state/nation choose, to achieve this justice. Peace as a reconciliation mechanism accommodates certain viewpoints and positions through the pre-conditioned notion and trajectory to follow or achieve justice. The link between the two notions of peace and justice is precisely when one thinks of justice as achievable, practical, and minimally possible. The meet was designed as a window to see and hear the voices that speak of differentials through not just ethical lens but to critically engage in discussions on the guarantee mechanisms of the State and its shortcomings in the recognition of the existent fissures in protection policies, in addition to the redressal mechanisms taken to compensate for the injustice caused or else still living in the limbo of an acknowledgment. The Youth Meet had a pan-India representation and tried to create an inclusive environment for everyone beyond the categories of gender, caste, religion, region, etc.

## Programme Schedule

### Day 1: 25 January 2023

5:00-5:30 PM	Tea & Registration
Introductory Session	Chair, <b>Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury</b> , <i>Rabindra Bharati University &amp; CRG, Kolkata</i>
5:30-5:50 PM	Welcome Address, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury. Introducing the Youth Meet, Shatabdi Das, <i>CRG, Kolkata</i>
5:50-6:10 PM	Introduction by Participants
6:10-6:30 PM	Calcutta Riots: Introductory Remarks, Ranabir Samaddar, <i>CRG Kolkata</i>
6:30-6:40 PM	Photo Display: Trail of Blood: Calcutta Killings of 1946 & Its Aftermath, Artist: Dipanwita Saha, <i>IBM, Kolkata</i>
6:40-6:55 PM	Discussion
6:55-7:00 PM	Vote of Thanks, Rituparna Datta, <i>CRG, Kolkata</i>
7:00 PM	Welcome Dinner

### Day 2: 26 January 2023

9:00-9:30 AM	Registration
9:30-11:00 AM	Gender Sketches Facilitator: <b>Sabir Ahamed</b> , <i>Pratichi (India) Trust &amp; CRG, Kolkata</i>  Speakers <b>Shahina Javed</b> , <i>Roshni, Kolkata</i> <b>Amina Khatoon</b> , <i>Howrah City Pilot Project, Kolkata</i> , Empowering Women in Howrah through Howrah City Pilot Project <b>Sangbida Lahiri</b> , <i>Department of South &amp; South-East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta, Kolkata</i> , Women, Solidarity & Social Leadership in Bengal during the Pandemic
11:00-11:30 AM	Tea Break
11:30AM-1:00 PM	Voices from Socialscape Facilitator: <b>Shatabdi Das</b>  Speakers <b>Sabir Ahamed</b> , Data for Social Justice: 'Infodemic' or 'Poverty of Information' <b>Anushka</b> , <i>National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi</i> , Higher Education Concerns for Young Afghan Refugees in Delhi <b>Martemjen Jamir</b> , <i>Centre for Indigenous Culture and Environmental Studies (CICES), Dimapur</i> , Fading Science: The Invaluable Naga Indigenous Knowledge
1:00-2:00 PM	Lunch Break

2:00-4:15 PM	<b>Film Screening: Calcutta, A Migrant City</b> <b>Facilitator: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury</b>
2:00-3:00 PM	<b>Calcutta: A Migrant City [Part I] &amp; Tale of a Migrant City [Part II]</b>
3:00-3:20 PM	<b>Tea Break</b>
3:20-3:40 PM	<b>City of Transit [Part III]</b>
3:40-4:15 PM	<b>Discussion</b>

### Day 3: 27 January 2023

9:00-9:30 AM	<b>Registration</b>
9:30-11:00 AM	<b>Congruence &amp; Consonance</b> <b>Facilitator: Rajat Kanti Sur, CRG, Kolkata</b>
	<b>Speakers</b> <b>Indira Tayeng, University of Delhi, New Delhi, Songs from Cracked Pavements</b> <b>Kajal Limbu Subba, Darjeeling, Everyday Gendered Gorkha Identity</b> <b>U. Thilagavathi, Madras High Court, Madras, Role of Law in Upholding Social Justice in the Contemporary Anti-Marginalised Environment with Caste, Class and Gender Perspectives by Enacting Progressive Laws</b>
11:00-11:30 AM	<b>Tea Break</b>
11:30AM-1:00 PM	<b>Unequal Worlds</b> <b>Facilitator: Francis Adaikalam, Loyola College, Chennai</b>
	<b>Speakers</b> <b>Bincy Maria N., Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal, Muted Voice, and Gendered Body: The Visible Invisibility of Dalit Christian Women in Kerala</b> <b>Biraja Nandan Mishra, Nirantar Gender Trust, New Delhi, Could Visibility Liberate Me? Doing Transness and Being Political</b> <b>Rajat Kanti Sur, Fight for Basic Rights: Working Women from Marginal Professions</b>
1:00-2:00 PM	<b>Lunch Break</b>



- 2:00-4:00 PM**      **Creative Cues**  
**Facilitator: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**
- 2:00-2:45 PM**      **One Act Plays**  
**U. Thilagavathi**, *Welcome to the World of Women*  
**Abhipsa Chakraborti**, *The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata, Migratories*
- 2:45-3:30 PM**      **Documentary Screening: Subhankar Sengupta**, *AAMRA: Ek Sachetan Prayas, Kolkata*, *Processed Frenzy*
- 3:30-4:00 PM**      **Tea Break**
- 4:00-5:00 PM**      **Media Renditions**  
**Facilitator: Ranabir Samaddar**
- Speakers**  
**Subhankar Sengupta**, *Empowering Women as an Approach to Peace Building and Conflict Resolution*  
**Francis Adaikalam**, *Child Protection: Issues and Concerns*
- 5:00-5:30 PM**      **Interactive Session: Poetry, Songs, Theatre, Readings**  
**Facilitator: Sangbida Lahiri**  
**Presenters: Rajat Kanti Sur, Shatabdi Das, Abhipsa, Indira Tayeng, Biraja Nandan Mishra, Bincy Maria N.**
- 5:30-5:45 PM**      **Valedictory Comments**  
**Katharina Hasewend**, *Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna*  
**Evangelos Karagiannis**, *Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna*
- 5:45-5:55 PM**      **Vote of Thanks, Shatabdi Das**

**Chief Rapporteurs: Bincy N. Maria and Abhipsa Chakraborti**

### List of Participants

Sl.	Name	Institution
1.	Abhipsa Chakraborti	Ichapur Aleya & The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata
2.	Amina Khatoon	Howrah City Pilot Project, Kolkata
3.	Anushka	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
4.	Bincy Maria N.	Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal
5.	Biraja Nandan Mishra	Nirantar Gender Trust, New Delhi
6.	Evangelos Karagiannis	Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna
7.	Francis Adaikalam	Loyola College, Chennai
8.	Indira Tayeng	University of Delhi, New Delhi
9.	Kajal Limbu Subba	Darjeeling
10.	Katharina Hasewend	Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna
11.	Martemjen Jamir	Centre for Indigenous Culture and Environmental Studies (CICEs), Dimapur
12.	Rajat Kanti Sur	CRG, Kolkata
13.	Ranabir Samaddar	CRG, Kolkata
14.	Sabir Ahamed	Pratichi (India) Trust & CRG, Kolkata
15.	Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury	Rabindra Bharati University & CRG, Kolkata
16.	Sangbida Lahiri	University of Calcutta, Kolkata
17.	Shahina Javed	Roshni (NGO), Kolkata
18.	Shatabdi Das	CRG, Kolkata
19.	Subhankar Sengupta	AAMRA: Ek Sachetan Prayas, Kolkata
20.	U. Thilagavathi	Madras High Court, Madras

## Participant Profile

### Abhipsa Chakraborti



Abhipsa Chakraborti is currently pursuing her Master's degree in English from The Sanskrit College and University in Kolkata, India. She is a theatre activist and is attached to the theatre group *Ichapur Aleya*. She has also directed short dramas such as *Raam-Rahim*, and *Macbeth*. She also wrote the dramas *Pannopunik* and *Je Bhabani ke dekechilo* and has directed several *giti-alekhyas*, collages of songs and proses. Apart from theatre, she also practices *Rabindra Sangeet* (Tagore Songs).

### Amina Khatoon



Amina Khatoon is the Secretary of Howrah City Pilot Project (HCPP) since 1998. She holds Master's degrees in Urdu, Sociology, and Mass Communication & Journalism. Her work with HCPP includes running the *Talimi Haq* school. She is the President of *Shibpur Idara Ittehad-ul-Khawateen* (SIIK), a women's organisation. She has also written various journalistic pieces for local newspapers.

### Bincy Maria N.



Bincy Maria N. is a doctoral research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal, working on caste, gender, and religious conversion of Dalits in Kerala. She has been conducting motivational sessions, discussions, and career-oriented classes for students and youngsters from marginalised communities since 2012. Currently, she is working on indigenous knowledge, alternative epistemology, and cultural representations of Dalit women in Kerala.

### Biraja N. Mishra



Biraja N. Mishra is a researcher and a gender trainer who happens to be a non-binary transgender person, with current research focus on working with men, boys, and masculinities. After completing Master's in Gender Studies, Biraja has been working on digital media, community media, queer rights, and sexual and reproductive rights with intersections of gender. Mishra actively engages with rights-based advocacy for the transgender community and the right to food and anti-mining movements in Odisha. His research interests include labour rights, gender justice, and universal public services.

### **Evangelos Karagiannis**



Evangelos Karagiannis is the research and publications coordinator with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna. He has his M.A. in Social Anthropology and Balkan Studies and Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Free University Berlin. Previously he has been Research Associate, University of Osnabrück, Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (2000-2002), Research Associate, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany (2002-2004), Assistant Professor and Project Leader, University of Zurich, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology (2004-12).

### **Indira Tayeng**



Indira Tayeng is enrolled in Ph.D. programme in the University of Delhi. She is working on how migrants in the borderlands navigate their sense of belonging overtime, in a region where they are situated, and in asserting their identity in those spaces, how they come to influence the policymaking of the state, or not. Her work majorly speaks about the borderland lives which often go unnoticed in major policy-making decisions of the state, due to which we observe a peculiar phenomenon of lifestyle in the borderland areas.

### **Kajal Limbu Subba**



Kajal Limbu Subba has research interest in the changing narratives of Gorkha community in Darjeeling and her Master's dissertation was focused on women's participation in 2007 Gorkhaland Movement. She worked as a development apprentice with Professional Assistance for Development Action, and primarily worked with the Juango Community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribe (PVT) in the Keonjhar district of Odisha. She was working with ATREE to understand the socio-political and economic gaps and constraints of nature climate solutions at policy as well as implementation levels.

### **Katharina Hasewend**



Katharina Hasewend is the Executive Director with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna. She has worked with others on the book *When Democracies Go Under Democratically* (2019).



### **Martemjen Jamir**



Martemjen Jamir is a founder member of Centre for Indigenous Culture and Environmental Studies (CICEs), Nagaland. He has authored the book, *Biodiversity Conservation, Indigenous Knowledge and Practices: A Naga Perspective* and *Apalener* (A biography of Chubainba in local Ao dialect). He did his Ph.D. at the Nagaland University, and political education studies from Brazil and has participated in various programmes under UNCBD, WIPO, etc. Jamir is interested in studying and documenting the myriad of indigenous knowledge and practices of Nagas and other indigenous communities all over the world.

### **Rajat Kanti Sur**



Rajat Kanti Sur is associated with CRG since 2020. He did his Ph.D. at the University of Calcutta. He has previously worked with TISS (Patna Centre), The National Library, Kolkata, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, and Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee. He is currently working on the role of cooperative formation as an alternative method to overcome the socio-economic crisis of marginal and migrant workers.

### **Ranabir Samaddar**



Ranabir Samaddar is Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, in the Calcutta Research Group, India. He belongs to the critical school of thinking and is considered as one of the foremost theorists in the field of migration and forced migration studies. A few among his recent works are *India's Migrant Workers and the Pandemic* (2021, co-edited), *Borders of an Epidemic* (2020), *The Postcolonial Age of Migration* (2020), *Neo-Liberal Strategies of Governing India* (2019), *Migrants and the Neoliberal City* (2018).

### **Sabir Ahamed**



Sabir Ahamed is the National Research Coordinator at Pratichi Institute, Pratichi (India) Trust. His research interests include digital disparity, the socio-economic status of Muslims in India, child protection, and education. He is adept at dealing with official statistics of India including NSS, Census, DISE, AISHS etc. He is trained in data analysis software like Stata and R. His role as National Research Coordinator entails participation in research planning, execution of research plans, and overseeing the fiscal management of the research and project activities.

**Sabyasachi Basu Ray  
Chaudhury**



Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury is Professor in the Department of Political Science at Rabindra Bharati University, and the Honorary Director of the Calcutta Research Group, India. His areas of research interests include global politics, South Asian politics, refugees, migration, democracy, and human rights in the Global South. Among his publications are *The Rohingya in South Asia: People without a State* (2018), *Sustainability of Rights after Globalisation* (2012), *Internal Displacement in South Asia: The Relevance of UN Guiding Principles* (2005).

**Shatabdi Das**



Shatabdi Das is Researcher at the Calcutta Research Group, India. She has a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Calcutta. She was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, in April 2022. Her research interests include migration studies, borderlands, displacement, environment, urban issues, and climate change. Shatabdi has also taught at UG and PG levels in colleges of University of Calcutta.

**Subhankar Sengupta**



Subhankar Sengupta is a freelance photographer and filmmaker. He grew up in the adjacent area of Telinipara of Bhadreswar Hooghly. He works independently and with different collectives in varied regions of West Bengal and India to explore the narratives of conflicts and resistance. He also documents the struggles and protests against land acquisition and atrocities, resistance against environmental crises, etc. His photographs and video reportages are exhibited in public spaces of West Bengal. Currently, he is pursuing a postgraduate certificate course on aesthetic, criticism and theory from Jnanapravaha, Mumbai.

**Sangbida Lahiri**



Sangbida Lahiri is a researcher in Social Science who did her Ph.D. (submitted) at the University of Calcutta. She worked on History students' politics during early Twentieth-Century Bengal. Her research interests include gender, labour, and migration. Formerly she was a journalist at Ananda Bazar Patrika and Ei Samay, TOI. Presently she writes op-eds and is involved with civil rights activism. She also writes pieces on the rights of women and children in Bengal in vernacular (Bengali).

### Shahina Javed



Shahina Javed is the founder member of NGO Roshni in Kolkata. Roshni Youth Group is a community-based organisation. It is led by young girls from the community. Apart from working on issues of gender and human rights, she also works on reproductive health rights, diversity, and recently on combating climate change impacts. She received the Thoughtshop Foundation Fellowship in 2008.

### U. Thilagavathi



Thilagavathi is an advocate with the Madras High Court. She is a writer, poet, human rights activist, intersectional feminist, orator and trainer for gender sensitisation, self-defence trainer, media speaker and social media influencer. She assists tribal communities in rural parts of Tamil Nadu to get their *pattas*, legal rights and schemes. She extensively works with marginalised groups including physically challenged, LGBTQIA+ community, sex workers, domestic workers, tribes, Dalit and with environmental groups.

### Anushka



Anushka is a Ph.D. candidate at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, working on the thesis titled 'A Study of Afghan Refugees Enrolled in Higher Education and their Statelessness.' The areas of her research interests are challenges and threats faced by Afghan students in higher education. She also engages with global migration, refugee studies, education, in addition to linguistic and financial problems, missing documents, and identity crises of Afghan students taking refuge in India.

### Francis Adaikalam



Francis Adaikalam is currently Assistant Professor in the department of Social Work, Loyola College, Chennai, India. Apart from teaching he is closely engaged with various grass root organisations, civil society groups and research studies related to migrants, particular Tamil emigrants working abroad. At the policy level, he has been involved with matters related to international labour migrants, child protection, Child Friendly Panchayat and health policy.

## **A Youth Meet Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today**

The three-day Youth Meet on ‘Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today’ organised by the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, from 25 to 27 January 2023, at Cedar Inn, Darjeeling, was an assemblage of young, dynamic individuals from various parts of the country. It aimed to strengthen and motivate the youth to become social leaders and active agents of social change. The Youth Meet actively encouraged young minds for striving towards an egalitarian society where everyone irrespective of their caste, class, gender, and religion can live freely and fearlessly. It was designed to incorporate a wide range of themes and activities for achieving a varied understanding of peace and justice beyond its common essence. Through active discussions on a wide array of subjects such as caste conflicts, communal violence, ethnic and cultural issues, gender discrimination, migration, traumatic memories of the past, environmental issues, child protection, the refugee crisis, and so on, the Youth Meet contributed to its larger goal of constructing an epistemology that is desirable for the cause of the depressed, deprived, and discriminated sections of the society.

### **Inaugural Session**

The inaugural session of the Youth Meet, on 25 January 2023, was chaired by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhary, emphasising the significance of forming a collective to deconstruct the boundaries that hinder society from achieving justice, and encouraged the participants to articulate their thoughts and actively voice their experiences in each of the sessions during the following days. He also affirmed the importance of collective efforts to actualise an egalitarian society. Shatabdi Das, introduced the Youth Meet to the participants by elaborating upon the aims and objectives, along with a detailed account of the themes and interactive sessions in the previous camps and meets, since 2021, in accordance with CRG’s initiatives and contributions in pioneering dialogues for social causes. A brief session with the introduction of participants followed, and despite the diverse experiences and distinct social locations, participants looked ahead to a common objective—a just society.

Ranabir Samaddar took the participants back to the 1940s in a discussion on Calcutta Riots, through the multi-layered histories and traumatic past of Calcutta. He began with the Calcutta Riot of 1946 and the related socio-cultural and political upheavals. His discussion unpacked the series of historical events that made scars on the socio-cultural, political, and religious life of people in Calcutta, the street mobilisation that occurred during the riot, and how people started claiming their freedom through riots and bloodshed. A Photo Display, *Trail of Blood: Calcutta Killings of 1946 and its Aftermath* by visual artist Dipanwita Saha was another highlight of the first day. The visual story succinctly captured the wounds and scars that Calcutta bore due to communal violence, class-caste rifts, and political conflicts. Each photo unravelled the untold stories of a turbulent history. The display of the collective memories of a city and its people through photos was an eye-opener for many, especially participants less familiar with the history of Calcutta and its people. The collective depicted how the intermeshing communal, class, and political conflicts made deep wounds and scars in the memory of Calcutta. The visual presentation was followed by a discussion in which the participants raised questions regarding the relevance of oral depositions in unravelling the gloom of the past. Ranabir Samaddar asked the participants to ponder on the idea that there is no single and authentic history. The discussion also shed light on the issues of prostitutes, women, children, and other vulnerable sections of society in Calcutta. The discussion on the first day of the Youth Meet concluded with the idea that there should be space for restorative justice.

### **Gender Sketches**

The second day of the Youth Meet commenced with the session titled ‘Gender Sketches,’ facilitated by Sabir Ahamed. Amina Khatoon, the Secretary of the Howrah City Pilot Project (HCPP) and the first speaker in the session, articulated her experiences and challenges working with women, adolescent girls, and children. Her experience as a social leader among girls and women of the vulnerable sections revealed the idea that the true emancipation of women can be actualised by making them involved in different constructive activities. Along with awareness programmes, the team working with Khatoon also emphasised on skill generation to make locals financially independent. The second speaker was Shahina Javed, the



founder member of Roshni, a community-based organisation for the integral development of young girls and women. Shahina began her presentation with a poem that affirmed the importance of breaking the shackles of gender and any other oppressive structure that make women silent and passive. Shahina’s lived experiences as a Muslim woman and a social leader in the formative stages of the organisation revealed the multiple oppressions that a woman must overcome in her journey as a social leader. According to Shahina, it was a journey from ‘self to society.’ She emphasised the need for breaking gender stereotypes and constructed societal norms to achieve true emancipation. Shahina elaborated on a wide range of activities that Roshni has been organising to encourage young girls and women to become decision-makers and financially independent individuals. She also asserted the importance of an inclusive approach to attain the progress of women. Shahina ended her presentation by emphasising the necessity of accepting diversity, inclusiveness, and dialogue. The final speaker of the session was Sangbida Lahiri, who spoke on ‘Women, Solidarity, and Social Leadership in Bengal,’ primarily focused on the plights of the migrant labours in West Bengal during the pandemic and the instrumental role of women leaders in ensuring solidarity in a time of crisis that the world had never before seen. Lahiri’s presentation also revealed the unacknowledged history that the female social leaders had created, despite their innumerable struggles and tribulations. In the discussion, while answering several questions, the panellists further explained the hurdles and discrimination they had faced from their community and the larger society, and underscored that the unspoken, uncounted, and unshared experiences of social leaders should be acknowledged while striving towards peace and justice.



**Inaugural Session of the Youth Meet 2023**

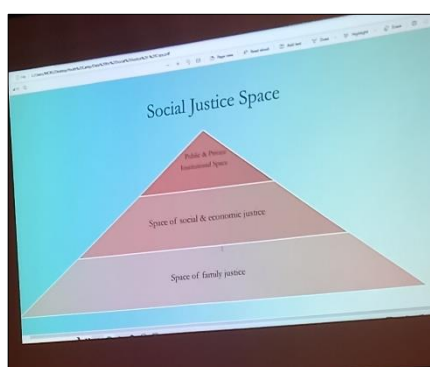


**Session on ‘Gender Sketches’**

### **Voices from Socialscape**

The second session of the day ‘Voices from Socialscape’ was facilitated by Shatabdi Das. It commenced with the presentation of Sabir Ahamed on ‘Data for Social Justice: “Infodemic” or “Poverty” of Information,’ delving deep into the hidden contours of data collection policies. The speaker raised concerns regarding the availability of reliable and accurate data in the realm where discussions and active engagements for social justice take place. Ahamed directed the attention of the participants towards issues such as data breaches, underreporting and misrepresentation of the cases related to the poor and vulnerable, unprecedented use of artificial intelligence, unnecessary interventions of the state, and so on. The speaker also emphasised the importance of data in formulating policies for the poor and despised groups. He argued that accurate and credible data should be available to ensure there is justice for all. The second speaker of

the session Anushka focused on the multiple issues of young Afghan refugees in the realm of higher education. She analysed the diverse challenges and threats that young Afghan students face in India such as linguistic problems, missing documents, identity crises, and the fee structure that they are subjected to, under the category of international students. The final speaker of the session was Martemjen Jamir, a founder member of the Center for Indigenous Culture and Environmental Studies, Nagaland. His presentation centered on the struggles and tribulations of the Naga people, highlighted through untold stories of the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland. To substantiate his views, he described the everyday experiences of indigenous Nagas under dominant authoritative structures that make them invisible and obedient. Through his own experiences as a social leader who has been standing firmly for the cause of his community, he tried to bring forth the intricacies of the Naga community. The speaker also highlighted the need for reviving the indigenous epistemology, culture, and oral tradition before it disappears completely and ended his presentation with a thought-provoking statement, ‘peace is not just the mere absence of war.’



Session on ‘Voices from Socialscape’

### Film Screening: Calcutta, A Migrant City

The three documentaries made by Calcutta Research Group illustrated the many contours of Calcutta as a city that has been home to migrants over centuries. The first film, *Calcutta: A Migrant City*, detailed the migrant histories of Calcutta. The aesthetically appealing film took the viewers on a historical journey introducing the viewers to the different shades of history that made diverse groups of population select Calcutta as their abode. The second film titled *Tale of a Migrant City*, portrayed the transitions of neighbourhoods in South Calcutta after partition and how some imprints of history were forgotten, while others still lurked in parts of the city. The second film focused its lens on the growth and development of migrant colonies in South Calcutta in post-independent India. The film showcased some of the complexities of reception and integration of partition refugees and acceptance of migrants in the city. The third film in the series was *City of Transit*, which centred on Calcutta Port and its role in the history of migration in the city. The film also looked at the unacknowledged lived experiences of indentured workers, East Bengali refugees, laskars, and so on. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury facilitated the discussion on the films and outlined the socio, cultural, and political attributes of Calcutta in its history.

### Congruence and Consonance

The final day of the Youth Meet commenced with the session ‘Congruence and Consonance’ facilitated by Rajat Kanti Sur. The first speaker of the day Kajal Limbu Subba centred her presentation on the Gorkha community in Darjeeling. A member of the Gorkha community herself, Kajal delved deep into the questions of belongingness and existence. According to her, the Gorkha identity is romanticised as brave, courageous Gorkha male, completely subsuming the women and their resistance. She argued that Gorkha women were not merely silent sufferers, but valiant leaders who actively participated in the Gorkhaland Movement. Kajal ended her presentation by highlighting the need for acknowledging women’s visibility in the resistance and she also affirmed the importance of accepting Gorkha women’s agency and identity.

U. Thilagavathy, an advocate in the Madras High Court, spoke on the role of law in upholding social justice in anti-marginalised environment with specific reference to caste, class and gender perspectives. Her presentation touched upon the multi-layered inequalities that the Dalits, women, domestic workers, and

several other vulnerable sections have been facing for years. She emphasised the fact that the Constitution assures equality to everyone irrespective of their religion, caste, class, gender, or any other differences, yet social justice has been served differently to different sections of society. Thilagavathy's presentation opened an array of flagrant violations that the marginalised sections of society face due to their social positioning and the lack of prompt legal interventions. The speaker emphasised the need for addressing the issues of the deprived promptly to ensure social justice.

Indira Tayeng's presentation titled, 'Songs from Cracked Pavements' brought a novel experience as she selected one of her short stories to communicate the ideas of peace and justice. Through her story, Indira contemplated the concept of 'belongingness' for stateless people. She further described the identity crisis, aspirations and dilemmas of people in the borderlands. Through the story, Tayeng intended to discuss the potential of humans to build a world of kindness and love. The speaker ended with questions on peace, and called on other participants to reflect on their contribution to peace-building initiatives. The speakers of the session received a wide array of questions and comments regarding the erasure of women's role in the reform movements, the migrant's idea of 'home' and the need for providing awareness and legal literacy to the marginalised to combat multiple discriminations.



**Speakers in the Session 'Congruence and Consonance'**

## **Unequal Worlds**

The second session of the day titled 'Unequal Worlds' was facilitated by Francis Adaikalam. The session started with the presentation of Rajat Kanti Sur titled 'Fight for Basic Rights: Working Women from Marginal Professions,' focusing on the condition of women labourers in jute mills. The speaker emphasised the need for gender justice in the workplace. He closely examined the discrimination that women workers face and how labour unions dominated by male labour union leaders nullify the struggles of women workers in deplorable conditions. Through the portrayal of women workers in the jute mills, the speaker brought forth a larger picture of India where many women suffer from gender discrimination due to prejudices, social practices and status. Sur ended his presentation by emphasising the need for organisational structure and women's collective for safeguarding the fundamental rights of women labourers. The second speaker of the session was Bincy Maria N., a doctoral research scholar at IISER Bhopal. Her presentation was on the vicissitude and victimisation of Dalit Christian women in Kerala. The speaker explained how intersectional inequalities operate differently and make Dalit Christian women invisible in the church and society. According to Bincy, it is imperative to consider Dalit Christian women as a distinct category. She also emphasised the need for acknowledging rights and political representation of Dalit Christian women. She stressed the necessity of an epistemological shift from a constructed historiography that belittles the agency of Dalit Christian women. Instead of limiting the cause of Dalit Christian women under narrow identity politics, they should be facilitated to engage in discourses freely and fearlessly. The speaker emphasised that such a standpoint would lead to the empowerment of Dalit Christian women, and would help to identify the alternate epistemology of the oppressed. The third speaker of the session was Biraja Nandan Mishra, a researcher and gender trainer who talked about 'Being Trans and Doing Politics, Doing Trans and Being Political.' Mishra began with the question of 'visibility' of transgender people in contemporary times when visibility is confused with equality, representation, existence and worth. The speaker also emphasised the multiple anxieties that society induces regarding transgender people and their courses to social mobility. The speaker was sceptical about the kind of 'visibility' that the state offers to



trans people. Biraja eloquently explained the multi-layered discrimination that the transgender community faces in contemporary India, ending the presentation in a hopeful note. According to Biraja, when visibility is at the centre of trans politics, one should also include the possibilities where invisibility or rejection of visibility can become the politics of resistance. The participants raised questions regarding the structural problems in the labour unions and how the organisations developed along with the sex workers' struggles for making ends meet. The existence of male domination in labour unions was elaborated, and the kinds of initiatives and interventions among sex workers for the growth of organisational structures that seek their development were further discussed. Biraja addressed questions on visibility problems in rural areas by referring to the Kothy community.

### **Creative Cues**

The final day of the programme was studded with creative cues. The highly impressive and at the same time thought provoking performances of U. Thilagavathy and Abhipsa Chakraborti were much appreciated. Thilagavathy's one-act play 'Welcome to the World of Women,' led the audience through the intricate layers of women's world, aiming to break the stereotypes and shackles that subjugate and belittle women. The play emphasised the importance of celebrating womanhood and asserting identity and agency. Abhipsa Chakraborti, a post-graduate student and theatre artist, performed the one-act play 'Migratories' centred on the trauma that the partition left behind. Chakraborti succinctly unravelled innumerable predicaments, especially the sense of belonging, existence, erasure of language and culture. The play reflected on the idea of 'homeland.'



**One-Act Play 'Migratories'**



**Literatures on community engagement**

### **Media Renditions**

Subhankar Sengupta, a freelance photographer and filmmaker talked about 'Empowering Women as an Approach to Peace Building and Conflict Resolution' with his portrayal of the multifarious issues of people, especially women in conflict zones. Sengupta outlined the lives in Bhatpara and Telinipara, unravelling the stark realities of people who inhabit conflict areas. He also spoke about AAMRA, an assemblage of scholars, professors and psychologists who have been documenting communal conflicts in West Bengal and other parts of India for many years. He further enumerated his initiatives and interventions in documenting the testimonies of victims and his associations with the 'Udaan' school. The discussion on issues and concerns of children's protection was facilitated by Ranabir Samaddar, while the speaker Francis Adaikalam touched upon the importance of ensuring protection for children, and addressed multiple aspects of welfare of children. Member of a child welfare committee himself, Francis described the various ways in which the welfare committees work, and talked about a few laws and rules that protect children from abuse. The speaker elaborated on the boarding school system and emphasised the need for providing children with a safe place for holistic development rather than confining them into institutionalised spaces.





A clip from a documentary film

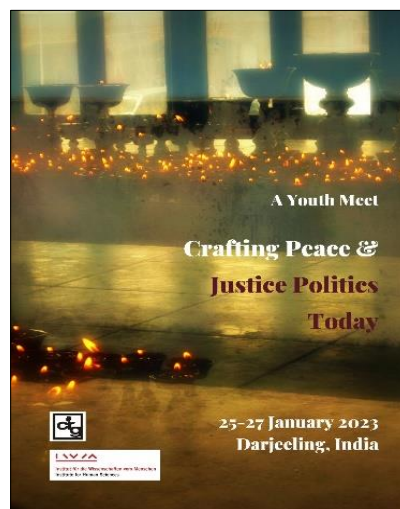


Session on 'Media Renditions'

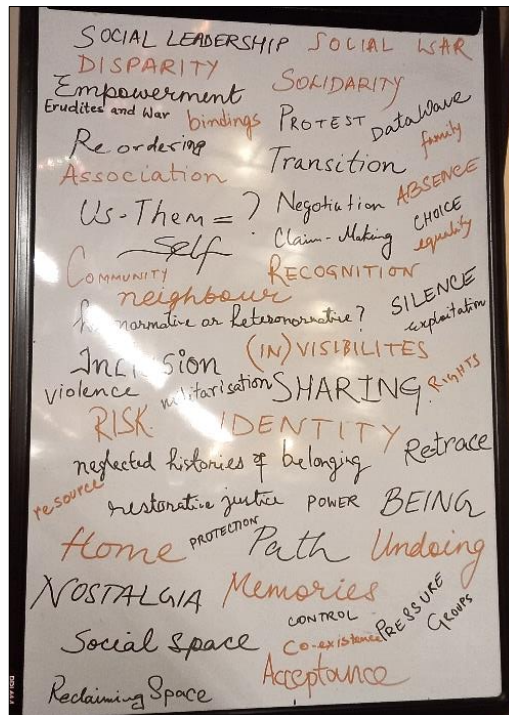
### Valedictory Session

In the valedictory session Evangelos Karagiannis underlined how the Youth Meet focused on deprived, marginalised, and vulnerable people, as well as on groups and individuals systemically exposed to exclusion and violence, and attempted to identify the core markers of migration through the relationship between place and social deprivations that come with it, instead of mere mobility as a way of categorising migrants. [Evangelos Karagiannis](#) recalled, 'Who is a migrant?', 'When is a person a migrant?'— questions that loomed over the themes represented by participants in the programme. The winter camp helped in understanding that when migrants are not considered 'mobile' but as people out of place, it makes possible to consider and compare diverse situations marked by precariousness and exclusion on discourses, and possibilities of meaningful comparisons with other positions marked by precariousness and exclusion that depict vulnerable and marginalised social groups in different light under the legal frameworks. He observed that the Youth Meet addressed the questions of migration in a constructive manner, evoking deep thinking for the participants to ideate about the core issues of migration. Evangelos pointed out a significant observation in conclusion in the empirical, rooted way that activists adopt in their efforts of fostering protection and rights, often leaving behind theories and concepts that scholars are inclined towards. It was flagged that social theory may indeed at times be useful for activism and advocacy, and activism can also crucially inform theoretical reflection.

Ranabir Samaddar summed up the session while asking participants to ponder on the need for integrating justice and peace and considering the issues in absolute ethical terms. The Youth Meet came to a close with the vote of thanks delivered by Shatabdi Das. Participants were encouraged to put down their thoughts in pen and share their ideas and the ways in which they emote, express and associate with the perceptions of justice and peace, in phrases that would build up a word cloud, and set the way for introspection and further deliberations.



Event Poster



The Word Cloud created by Participants of the Youth Meet



Group Photograph



## *Friendship*

*The tree standing firm with branches  
spread skyward,  
Bore fiery, coral flowers, as if inviting  
one and all,  
To come, sit on its branches and feast  
On fruit, flower and nectar and stay  
the day long!  
The finches, swifts and bulbuls,  
Perched atop the scaly branches,  
thick and thin,  
Either danced and hopped  
to each other's notes,  
Or flew by, even weaved themselves  
grassy forts!  
A wanderer walking the hills,  
looked up at the tree,  
Stopped a moment, and watched in glee:  
The unfettered wings taking flight,  
gone for a while,  
But returning to the sanctuary of the tree,  
even from a mile!*

*Shatabdi Das*

## **A Youth Meet**

**Crafting Peace and Justice Politics Today  
25-27 January 2023, Darjeeling, India  
CRG & Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna**

