

Guwahati Workshop

March 2021



Figure 1: At Cotton University: Before Presentation on stammering & communication

Introduction

Since 2008, TISA had limited -unintentionally -its operations to areas from where it received local support and participation. In the process, North East India remained neglected. Beginning 2019, we felt that some workshops should be done in this region to raise awareness and reach out to pws- people who stammer/ stutter. As a result a workshop was done in Siliguri in 2020- a tentative step *towards* the North East. In 2021, we explored and found more local collaborators / friends to help us in that direction.

Acknowledgment

TISA can not thank enough following individuals/ institutions for their support, logistics, advice and participation:

At Srimanta Shankardev Viswavidyalaya:

Dr Sarkar, Asst Vice Chancellor,

Dr Dipak Jyoti Baruah:, English Department,

Shri M K Gogoi, Dept of Social work,

Ms Deep Shikha, Asst Professor

At Cotton University:

Prof. Bhabesh Ch Goswami, Vice Chancellor

Dr Dimpy Mohanta, Asst Professor, Dept. of Psychology,

Dr Sushma Lama, Asst Professor, Dept. of Psychology

Sri Sanjib Talukdar is an old TISA friend but still must be thanked cordially for his excellent coordination, planning and logistics support through out the entire duration. Much thanks to Nishant Aggarwal also for all the practical help. Lastly, big thanks to Harish Usgaonkar, National Coordinator, TISA, for ongoing support to this initiative.

Communication Workshop with pws (20-21 March)

We conducted a two day workshop on 20 and 21st March at the study center of Srimanta Shankardev Viswavidyalaya. About ten participants joined. We discussed psychological nature of stammering and what can be done through self help: desensitization and some techniques to rise above fear and to be more focused while talking: Pitch, Smile, hand gestures, stance etc. We used participatory techniques, role plays etc. Video recordings were shared and analyzed. It was diverse group: one participants was from Arunachal Pradesh; another was a local businessman in early forties; another was a Chemistry teacher. After the indoor morning session, we took the participants to a local market for the real life practice of techniques. Many participants got to understand that they need to consistently work on these new skills for a long time, so that they can use it effectively in real life situations.

Workshop with Social work students (22nd March)

Dr Srivastava had an interaction and presentation with students of Social work of Srimanta Shankardev Viswavidyalaya. Bitopan Patowary also participated and answered questions from the students about his experiences, growing up as a pws. Besides stammering and class room communication, we also discussed the rich opportunities Social work provides for adding meaning to our work and lives. Students wanted to understand why the presenter left medical career, to become a social worker. We ended with a discussion on the stammering protocol: what should you do when talking to some one who stammers. Dr Sarkar summarized the session with a note of caution: people who stammer should never be bullied, even unintentionally.

Workshop with Graduate students of Psychology (23rd March)

This session at Cotton College (now University) was chaired by Dr Dimpy Mahanta. Students from other faculties were also there. Dr Srivastava and Bitopan Patowary offered their life experiences as a case study and encouraged students to ask questions about difficulties in education, employment, relationship etc. The following presentation covered the nature of stammering, issues caused by it and ways to recovery. We also discussed how various lenses can be applied to stammering: seen through social sciences, it is a diversity; On the other hand, considering that it affects only 1% population anywhere, which is dictated to by the remaining 99% (“speak slowly”, “Pay attention” etc.), it can be seen as a political/ empowerment issue as well. Finally, if we consider the rampant psychological issues of cognition and affect (thinking and emotions), it appears to be a psychological issue, not a simple speech disorder. We ended with the message: people who stammer are just like you; befriend them!

Regional exploration (24th -31st March)

Dr Srivastava traveled in Meghalaya, Dibrugarh and Roing (Arunachal Pradesh) to explore how more such awareness activities can be conducted in the region. Some local institutions and individuals have promised to collaborate and help.

Follow up of the workshop

A telegram self help group for the North East region has been floated, headed by some old TISA members from this region: Satyajit, Shubhraneel etc. It has twenty members at present. Some copies of *Apna Hath Jaganath* (both Hindi and English) have been left behind at Guwahati, for free distribution to the new members. Some of the members of this group have been admitted to TOPG session as well. We hope that this group will guide and counsel young pws from north east and promote the spread of awareness in the region, by helping TISA in similar future workshops/ events.

Accounts

Expenses

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Amt (INR)</i> | <i>Contributed by</i> |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Flight to Guwahati from Dehradun | 7755 | TISA |
| 2. Homestay exp from 16-21 March | 7748 | TISA |
| 3. Return Flight from Dibrugarh to Dehradun | 8264 | TISA |
| 4. Advert English Newspaper | 2500 | Sanjib Talukdar |
| 5. Hindi Advert about workshop | 2500 | Sachin |
| 6. Printing Hindi AHJ (10 copies) | 1350 | Sachin |
| 7. Local travel, Food etc.(16-23 March) | 9000 | Sachin |
| Total (INR) | 39117 | |

Collections

We received a total of Rs 5000 only as registration fee from following ten participants: Shubhraneel, Rontu, Abdul Aziz, Dipankar, Satyajit, Bitopan, Ajay Poddar, Tanuj, Anjan Ghosh, Nishant.

Lessons Learned

Besides addressing pws, we must engage general population through dialogue with regular students in colleges. Interaction with general students at the two colleges was very interactive and inspiring. North East offers both a challenge and an opportunity: TISA can conduct many workshops, raise awareness and make it a students campaign in the truest sense. Educational institutions should be approached for collaboration and help. Finally, human potential can be enriched and unfettered through such dialogues. It was evident, more so, by the response from the people who did not stammer!