



CENTRE FOR  
ESCALATION  
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Pallavan  
Learning  
Systems

# India-Bhutan Youth Summit

21<sup>st</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> September, 2018  
The Kingdom of Bhutan



**India-Bhutan  
Youth Summit**

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Centre for Escalation of Peace (CEP) and Pallavan Learning Systems (PLS), in collaboration with Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS), organized the inaugural India-Bhutan Youth Summit from September 21 to 29, 2018 in the Kingdom of Bhutan. The launch of the India-Bhutan Youth Summit came at an opportune time to celebrate the 50 years of friendship and partnership between India and Bhutan.

Ten participants from Bhutan and ten participants from India came together for the nine-day summit that was aimed at enhancing the understanding and appreciation of the youth regarding the importance of building India-Bhutan friendship through meaningful conversations on various aspects of India-Bhutan collaboration. Concurrently, the summit sought to create a pool of potential ambassadors of this special relationship in both the countries who would carry forward the collaboration for the next 50 years.

At the end of the summit, the candidates shared their experiences and reflected on the entire programme. They submitted a programme report detailing their individual journey during the summit; the individual reports were compiled to generate this comprehensive document.

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# Aakanksha Jadhav

## India



The Indo Bhutan Youth Summit was a unique experience in many ways - not the least of which was that it was the inaugural one. Due to the pedigree of the people backing the programme I had fairly high expectations of how it would pan out and I was not disappointed. Right from the welcome dinner, the places we stayed in to the people we met and the trek we did, it was clear that an immense amount of precise planning had gone into making this summit happen. I can very happily say that despite having been on a number of treks, I have never seen the kind of opulent service and food we got, in my life. The respect, grace and humility I saw displayed by the organizers, trekking staff and general Bhutanese delegation has left a lasting impression about the country.

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I also really appreciated the freedom— each delegate got to explore the city we were in, after the day's programme was over. There was a lot I learnt about my fellow participants and the subculture of Bhutan through these experiences, which undoubtedly were among the most fun moments of the trip.

Among the events that were the most fascinating and will be treasured by me are: the Gangtey Festival, the hike to Tiger's Nest in Paro, the conversations with the renowned Dasho in Thimphu and the visit to Punakha Dzong. It has been my great privilege to learn about Bhutan and Buddhism through not only the experts but my fellow delegates as well. They never failed to amaze me with the amount they knew about the places we were visiting; the art on the walls, the gold plated sculptures, the bowls filled with holy water and the mammoth statues, resplendent with beautifully patterned clothes. Each had an explanation for everything we saw, and were always so eager to share the best part of their country with their innocuously unaware guests.

Some of my most cherished memories include entering the cave in Taktsang — wondering how this marvel was built and has stood the test of time, drives through the country — admiring the magnificent scenery, the post-trek conversations, dancing and singing around the campfire as well as the closing ceremony and finally, wearing a *kira*. While the last one may seem irrelevant, it was the story behind it that has made it special. After mentioning to my excitable roommate that I would like to wear a *kira* one night, she made it her mission to borrow different parts of the national dress from other girls to make sure I could. A *kira* from one, *wonju* from the other and her own *toego* and brooch. Knowing I didn't know how to wear it, I soon found myself amidst a group of lovely Bhutanese girls, cooing excitedly as they helped me put it on. And in that moment, I felt they had encapsulated Bhutan perfectly. Efficient, humble, happy, benevolent and proud.

As I left, I did realize that while these nine days had been fantastic, it was just the beginning. It is my earnest hope that I will find myself back in this country soon, so I can walk among the clouds once more.

# Aakash Goel

India



I honestly believe that IBYS 2018 was one of the most fulfilling and productive experiences of my life. This audacious journey was probably the most spectacular and inspiring accomplishment of my life. The wisdom I have gained from this expedition is simply incomparable to any I have had so far. I have had the most profound conversations with fellow participants during this journey. The contestation of ideas on diverse topics like religion, culture, development, finance and foreign policy was an eye-opener for me. Experiencing and appreciating the enormous diversity in culture, costume, cuisine, traditions, festivals and language was the best part in this entire journey. When I entered the Bhutan Gate from Jaigaon to Phuentsholing, I was immediately embraced by Bhutanese culture.

The extreme warmth of the people and their sense of contentment in their lives is something I would truly like to emulate. Reliving the experiences of this summit is very emotional for me. Our country has so much to learn from this beautiful land situated in the heavenly abode of the Himalayas. Their lifestyle, knowledge systems, experiences, perspectives, thought processes and moreover their cultural and environmental sensitiveness is something that we must inculcate. Their sense of contentment, happiness and motivation for preserving the environment and helping mankind is a part of their religion and culture. One of the major sources for extracting wisdom is their ancient literature which is primarily the idea of Buddhism. The youth of our country with its growing obsession with materialism is slowly forgetting the vast heritage of literature that our country hosts. Hence, we need to understand the importance of ancient Indian literature in framing our modern lives. Keeping this in mind I gifted one of the most prominent literature of my country i.e. Bhagavad Gita to my Bhutanese counterpart to help him enhance his wisdom.

The trekking experience of three days in a land where traditions are honoured and happiness is not measured was something completely out of this world for me. It was so serene, awe-inspiring and beautiful and I was able to admire the little and peculiar creations of nature. If one day I am fortunate enough I would always love to spend time in this delightful and alluring land of people in the midst of nature. The evening sessions around the bonfire which led to some really insightful conversations and discussions was particularly memorable for me.

The leadership and guidance of Mr. Gaurav Saklani, Mr. Sarabjit Walia (from INME) and Mr. Vishnu and team (Trekking team) was one of the most phenomenal aspect which had made our trekking experience so divine and aesthetic. We experienced sheer luxury during our trek. The benchmark set by the Bhutanese in hospitality is pretty high and I will always try to reciprocate the same with the best of my capabilities when my Bhutanese friends visit my country next year. I would like to be a part of the upcoming summits to contribute in making the experience enjoyable for

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my Bhutanese and Indian friends.

Exploring the cities of Thimphu and Paro with our Bhutanese counterparts and having some really exceptional momos and thup on our way and also indulging in some really exciting tete-a-tete at Mojo Park was I believe a significant part of the cultural exchange. It was an interesting opportunity for all of us to understand each others' personalities. The immense respect for my nation among the Bhutanese counterpart made me really proud. Various aspects of their culture – eating food on the floor, the patriarchal but matrilineal societies, having different costumes for personalities with different stature, the entire idea of GNH, the spiciness in their chilies which are a considerable part of their agriculture, their environmental preservation techniques, their agility and dexterity in coping with daily life events – is truly commendable which we always procrastinating Indians must learn from. The whole concept of Universal Brotherhood is much more consciously understood and imbibed by the people of Bhutan. I feel more inspired, socially aware, and environmentally conscious; I am a more patient listener and speaker, and more content with life after being a part of such a beautifully crafted summit.

There were no significant shortcomings for me apart for the ones which I have already mentioned in my feedback form. Hence, I would love to conclude by saying that I am always willing to contribute my time, energy and my resources to strengthen this ever-growing relationship between these two countries. I will always try to reciprocate the wisdom that I have acquired from this beautiful Kingdom of Dragons and contribute towards making the future Bhutan-India: summits really successful and a cherished experience for my counterparts. I will always remain indebted to this country and its people for enlightening and transforming the inner me by imparting their enormous wisdom to me.

Finally, to conclude I would like to thank a number of people who were involved in making this journey extremely blissful and historic for all of us.

Firstly, I would like to thank The Centre for Escalation of Peace, The Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies and Pallavan Learning Systems for their guidance, vision and beautifully crafted schedule for the summit.

I would also love to thank certain people who were deeply and passionately committed in making this entire initiative successful, and with whom I shared a great personal and emotional bond during this journey and will continue to do so.

- Mr. Choki Wangchuk (An amazing Human Being; Hatsoff Brother :) Cheers.)
- Mr. Tshering Wangdi and Ms. Tshering Wangmo (such inspiring people.)
- Mr. Vishnu & his team (Thank you so much for enshrining me with the wisdom regarding the tourism of your country and for all you did for us.)
- Mr. Hari (For making the entire travel experience so splendid.)
- Mr. Vidur Vij (Bro, please stay the way you are and I share an inherent connection with you. I have found an elder brother in you. Thank You for being there. )

And, lastly, to Mr. Arun Kapur and Mr. Chewang Rinzin for their visionary and prescience thought for having such a summit and for giving an opportunity to individuals like us to have such amazing experiences in the formative years of our lives. Thank You so much Sir for blessing all of us with this opportunity. Cheers to this relationship.





# Afeefa Fazli

India



The India Bhutan Youth Summit was an amazing experience for each of the participants of the programme. I believe it taught us some important things like stepping out of our comfort zone if we want to learn, and also to believe in ourselves, and that we are more capable than we think we are. There are certain values and teachings that I am going to remember throughout my life. The first few days were all about travelling around the country, and I believe there is no better way to learn about the country than experiencing it. Travelling teaches us a lot of things that our daily life does not. Visiting monasteries and the sacred places, I felt so calm and composed; the vibrations were like food for the soul. It makes me spiritually connected to God. Learning about Buddha and the different religious figures was a great experience and I couldn't be more inspired. I believe that I now know the country and its people really closely. The people of Bhutan are so down to earth and happy. I believe what makes people mean is the human race for materialism — cars, houses, business, we don't think beyond it — but I found the people of Bhutan to be living beyond this materialism and that was so good to see. People in Bhutan have found their peace even when they are not that developed. I believe that their happiness and sense of contentment is beyond material possessions. I strongly agree with one of the taglines affiliated with Bhutan that says 'BHUTAN: HAPPINESS IS NOW A PLACE'. This place was full of peace, joy, calm and love and I loved every bit of it, especially the love that they hold for the royal family in their heart.

The trek was the most challenging aspect of the trip. I have talked a lot about it in my other feedbacks but still the trek was my favourite part, and all the things that I learnt on the trek will stay forever with me. The way I overcame my fears, enhanced my capabilities, were truly the greatest moments. The facilitators were so great that I could never have imagined more perfect people for this trek. The moments we shared will remain forever with me. I have realized that after attending such summits and programmes we sometimes, actually most of the times, forget what it taught us, and eventually forget the whole thing in a month but the band we made of beads given to us by people always reminds me of all that I learnt and of all the lovely people I met. This summit will always be of a great significance to me and I would love to provide the future participants with the same experience. I loved every part of the summit and will cherish it my entire life.

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# Chirag Gupta

India



Visiting Bhutan was my first international cultural exchange. I was totally overwhelmed with the warm welcome by the Bhutanese diplomats, government officials, young delegates and individuals I met with during the nine-day summit. Within two kms of entering Bhutan from Jalpaiguri, I found myself in a dream land amidst nature where every single thing seemed magnificent. It felt like I was far away from India – there was no chaos around, less traffic, it was a picturesque road throughout the journey.

After meeting several distinguished personalities and leaders from the Bhutan government, I was surprised to see that they were very humble and generous, constructively open to new ideas and discussions around every topic related to development. This nine day summit provided me with rich diverse experiences, memories, friendships, and introduced me to a new culture. The experience was mind-blowing on so many different levels that it can't even be expressed.

Day 1: We met seven Indian delegates, CEP team at the Delhi airport and three other delegates at Bagdogra, from here all together we embarked on an exciting bus journey to Pheuntsholing, talking all the way and getting to know each other. I was overwhelmed with the warm welcome by Chewang sir and the Bhutanese counterparts at RIGGS, followed by an exquisite dinner and a fantastic band performance.

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Day 2: It was so enthralling to see the vast decade old Chukha Hydropower plant and the engineered work carried out there by Indian engineers with support of Bhutan. More inspirational was to observe the operations carried out by the Bhutanese team and their vision of developing more hydropower plants to produce green energy. The night spent at Thimpu and exploring the city with co-fellows was a memorable one. This was the time where we got a chance to understand more about each other.

Day 3, 4, 5, 6: The rich cultural diversity, monumental architecture, breath-taking view from Punakha Dzong was eye-opening. The Bhutanese religious faith was evident in the way they offer prayers. The journey to the base camp was a thrilling since it was the first time I went camping. I was expecting packaged food and it was unexpected to see varieties of dishes being offered on reaching the camp site. Then started introductory sessions by well-known personalities from Inme, making us feel more comfortable and free for the coming trek and leadership training. Those camp side evening sessions led by Sarabjeet and Gaurav sir made me realize the importance of taking people together in a journey away from the bustle of daily life.

I got to know my weaknesses post sessions while doing some introspection. I shared my views saying it was essential for each individual to first bring change at the grassroots starting with their families. If this was successful change would happen on a larger scale.

We discussed various aspects of religious practices, entrepreneurial opportunities in both countries, trade across borders, economy around hydropower plant, waste management techniques, Gross National Happiness policy implementation and possibilities to implement it first for rural India. I'm amazed with the Bhutanese attachment towards their religion, culture, national dressing etiquettes even after so much western influence from across the world. This is something the youth of India should learn from Bhutan.

Day 7: The visit to India House was a remarkable one, where we received more detailed information from the ambassador who laid importance on strengthening the relationship across all India-Bhutan borders as maximum interactions and transactions happen across borders.

Day 8: A journey to one's destination maybe hard, there may be failures but once hardships are conquered it is all worthwhile. That happened during the trek to Tiger Monastery. The atmosphere was filled with positive vibes and enthusiastic people all climbing with one goal -- to reach monastery.

Key takeaways from the summit-

- 1.) The Bhutanese people are very good in nature and I found them to be very supportive, calm and peaceful.
- 2.) Every nation's government should adopt the GNH policy and first invest in the people of their country.
- 3.) Considering the size of Bhutan, the Indian government should first try to adopt and implement development models state wise with focus on rural India.
- 3.) Making citizens part of decision making— That's one thing that not only India but the world could learn from Bhutan. Despite being a monarch state, the rulers themselves went for democracy abolishing monarchy.
- 4.) Bhutan's, respect for the ecosystem, environment, animals and even small birds is a great concern and a matter of respect. They have even given special focus in laying down electric wires across the country so that the birds flying across shouldn't be harmed.
- 5.) Bhutan is the world's only carbon negative country with no pollution. There is an appropriate forest covers and pure breathable air. If we at our individual level maintain greenery around, we can keep our ecosystem well maintained and preserved.
- 6.) There's one quote I remember by Sarabjit Sir; 'With power comes many responsibilities'.
- 7.) Happiness is more important than being wealthy and rather using the GDP as an economic index for measuring a nation's growth, the concept of focusing on individual health around four major parameters – sustainable development, environmental protection, cultural preservation and good governance – is something the world can learn from Bhutan.
- 8.) As Bhutan policy doesn't promote much industrialization and there is a young generation looking for employment we have to focus on creating an entrepreneurial culture. Setting up of an IT sector would be beneficial, starting from BPO as college students are interested in technology development.
- 9.) I loved Bhutan food and even learned to cook *Ema datshi*, *Suja* and momos.

I never realized that even within a week we could become like a family and we were all nostalgic while saying goodbye I felt sad that the summit came to an end. But even the end was so beautiful, it only made me believe it's a way to new beginnings, a beginning which will strengthen the India-Bhutan relationship for generations to come.

## Dorji Yuden Bhutan



The India-Bhutan Youth Summit was one event where we were given the full opportunity to put our knowledge into practice. Before attending the summit I really didn't know about RIGSS and the three organizers. After the summit, I came to know a lot about RIGSS and its significance as a leadership training institute, and also as a think tank for the country, and was able to acknowledge all the works done by the three institutes.

The nine-day summit was rich with learning and experiences. The programmes and the events were planned in such a way that every event gave us a sense of the relationship between the two countries. The first event of visiting Chukka Hydro Plant itself gave us a sense of the friendship

between the two countries as we came to know that Chukka Hydro Power project was the first project established in Bhutan in collaboration with India. We were also taken to Nehru Wangchuk Cultural Center, India House, and many more places which constantly reminded us of the strong bond of friendship between the two countries. For the first time we had the chance to reflect on how much India has contributed to us as a friend.

A few days into the summit we were taken on a three-day trek where we got ample opportunities to communicate with our Indian friends. In those three days we were able to know more about India and its issues as well as given many new ideas on what we can do together in order to face the challenges and issues. Not only were we able to gain knowledge but also we came to know the people of our neighbouring country better. We were really glad to know that our Indian friends were so appreciative of our natural environment as well as our rich culture. And the thing that I appreciated most was the way they acknowledged each and every thing which Bhutanese people really lacked. They were very keen observers and also very fast learners, unlike me, so I was really inspired by them.

I was really inspired by the lesson that Gaurav sir gave us on the usage of the word, 'I have to' and 'I want to'. Psychologically analyzing the differences between the two words had a lot of impact on me and my attitude. When I said to myself that 'I have to do it' then I felt compelled and forced to do it but then when I thought to myself that 'I want to do it' then I got really motivated and was really interested to do it. And this lesson I would like to pass it on to my children in the future and would like to follow it throughout my life.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the India-Bhutan youth summit team for giving me this wonderful opportunity to attend the summit.

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# Drukpa Wangdi

## Bhutan



“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”  
~ Gandhi

The India-Bhutan Youth Summit was initiated to engage youth from India and Bhutan. The programme lasted for 9 days fostering cultural exchanges, discussions, leadership talks and a three-day trek. The programme was set to celebrate the special milestone – 50 years of friendship between the two countries.



The nine-day day long programme included many events in different places in Bhutan. I would like to highlight some of the events. On the evening of 21st September all the participants from both the countries gathered at RIGSS office at Phuntsholing, where a very elaborate welcome was prepared for us. We were treated to an evening of music, a grand dinner and an inspiring welcome note by Dasho Chewang and the team.

The next day we started on our voyage with a visit to the historical Chukkha Hydro Power Project which was inaugurated on 21st October, 1988 and supported by Indian government. It was an informative visit which illustrates the true spirit of a long lasting friendship between the two countries and it made me realize its importance. Furthermore, I learnt about the functioning of the hydropower system which I didn't know much about previously.



The following day we went on a three-day trek. Despite being Bhutanese I haven't visited many attractive places within our country which was made possible through the summit. We spent the night at our first base camp. Mr. Gaurav and Mr. Sarabjit were the facilitators. There were frequent sharing of ideas with the participants with their guidance. Our visit to the valley coincided with the historical Gantey Tshechu festival. Our next

base camp was at Gogona. Discussions at base camps was informative and thought-provoking. Our next trek was to Khothakha base camp, on the way we were asked to

discuss and come up with a few relevant and realistic questions about the world. After reaching there, we had informal chats, brainstorming sessions, games and even sang some traditional songs and danced bringing a sense of camaraderie among us. We had fun and bonded as a group. I am thankful to both the facilitators for their willingness and energy in helping us hone our thoughts with special activities.

During those 9 memorable days, I have learnt so much from my Indian and Bhutanese friends, important figures like Dasho Karma Ura, Dasho Tashi and was inspired with the



leadership of Dasho Chewang, who has been with us throughout the summit and taught us so many valuable lessons. I have to thank each one of them for inspiring us; not to forget our fatherly figure Arun Kapur sir who took care of each participant. Additionally, we have learnt and were inspired by all the dignitaries who shared their valuable time in offering us information and in highlighting the important friendship the two countries cherish.

Through this summit my knowledge of the world is enhanced, and my understanding of the friendship between Bhutan and India has increased. I have also been introduced to different entrepreneurship ideas,



and what it takes to be a leader. My limited views are now broader and I am inspired by Mahatma Gandhi words of being 'the change I wish to see in the world.' I hope the friendship between India and Bhutan stay strong for centuries to come.

**During those 9 memorable days, I have learnt so much from my Indian and Bhutanese friends, important figures like Dasho Karma Ura, Dasho Tashi and was inspired with the leadership of Dasho Chewang, who has been with us throughout the summit and taught us so many valuable lessons.**

I am thankful to RIGSS and CEP for making this historical event possible for us. Furthermore, I am thankful to Lop Chimi Rinzin and Paro College of Education for letting me be a part of this memorable and charismatic voyage.

# Gautam Pratap Singh

## India



The India-Bhutan Youth Summit (IBYS) is a bilateral platform for bringing together the future leaders from the neighbouring countries of Bhutan and India in South Asia. It is a joint effort of Centre for Escalation of Peace (CEP) and Pallavan Learning Systems (PLS) from India, and Royal Institute of Governance & Strategic Studies (RIGSS) from Bhutan. The inaugural edition of IBYS was organized in the country of Bhutan between 21<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2018. A 20-member contingent with 10 participants each from India and Bhutan was chosen through competitive selection processes in both the countries. The contingent was also joined by organizing team members from PLS and RIGSS, activity facilitators from *InMe* and a documentary maker. During the 9-day summit the contingent spent much of the time in learning about each other, their countries, the India-Bhutan relationship, and life in general. At the end of the summit the participants left with an enhanced understanding about the India-Bhutan relationship and vowed to act as its special ambassadors.

### Participants

The selection process of IBYS 2018 was such that it brought together a diverse group of individuals, all with their unique qualities and quirks. This presented immense opportunities to learn about and from each other.



Standing (L to R): Yenten, Afifa, Shourya, Gautam, Vidur (Documentary Maker), Aakanksha, Pema, Yeshey, Chirag, Dorji, Aakash, Sawan, Shashank; Sitting (L to R): Jai, Yeshi, Tashi, Drukpa, Sonam, Sonam, Isha, Shruthi

### Peace

The extended contingent included Shreyas Shende (CEP), Choki Wangchuk (PLS), Tshering Wangdi (RIGSS), Tshering Wangmo (RIGSS) etc. We were also accompanied by two activity facilitators from InME, Mr. Gaurav Saklani and Mr. Sarabjit Walia. We were all under the guidance of Dasho Chewang Rinzin (RIGSS) and Mr. Arun Kapur (RIGSS).

IBYS was an enriching 9-day excursion into Bhutan. The itinerary was such that participants were intensively involved in experiential learning seven out of the nine days, with the first and last day mostly reserved for travelling.

### **Route Map**

On 21<sup>st</sup>, the people coming from India all collected at Bagdogra airport where they were received by officials from RIGSS. They were then taken by road to the Bhutanese border town of Phuentsholing, where RIGSS is headquartered. The Bhutanese side of the contingent had already collected at RIGSS. After a warm welcome and an introductory session with Dasho Chewang (RIGSS Director), the contingent was treated to a lively musical performance by a Bhutanese band followed by a sumptuous dinner.

On 22<sup>nd</sup>, the contingent travelled to Chukha Hydropower Plant for its first lesson on India-Bhutan partnership, and it was an important one. This was an example of inter-dependence of Bhutan and India. The importance of hydropower in the relations between Bhutan and India was highlighted and a sight survey was allowed to let it sink in the young minds. The contingent then left to spend the night at the capital city, Thimphu. The contingent was introduced to Mr. Gaurav Saklani and Mr. Sarabjit Walia. The contingent also had the opportunity to interact with Mr. Arun Kapur (Chairman, CEP) and Dasho Tashi (MP, Upper House, Bhutan Parliament). After dinner the contingent had the opportunity to bond over roaming around Thimphu.

On 23<sup>rd</sup>, the contingent had to move to Gangtey campsite from where a 3-day trek was to begin. However, the convoy stopped on the way to visit Punakha Dzong monastery. Dasho Chewang, dressed in full traditional attire, himself led us on this tour. This was the first contact of the Indian side of the contingent with the Bhutanese religion. The calm residing in the Dzong, and reflected in its monks, told the story of a peaceful civilization which was still connected to its spiritual roots. The contingent stayed in tents overnight shared by Indian and Bhutanese participants.



Punakha Dzong

## **Punakha Dzong**

Then started the adventurous leg of the excursion.

On 24<sup>th</sup>, the day started with a peaceful morning in nature, followed by a visit to a festival at Gangtey. Due to this there was less trekking involved on this day, and most of it was downhill. The evening was utilized in a discussion-based activity facilitated by Gaurav sir and Sarabjit sir.

On 25<sup>th</sup>, the trek had to start early as it was cloudy. The contingent also had the pleasant opportunity of visiting a cheese factory (milk processing unit) on the way. After braving a slight drizzle and an uphill trek, the contingent reached the Khotakha campsite. Another round of activities was facilitated by Gaurav sir and Sarabjit sir.

On 26<sup>th</sup>, the trek was steep downhill and took the contingent back to the road to Thimphu. Once there the contingent had a round of closing discussions facilitated by Gaurav sir and Sarabjit sir. At this point the facilitators weaved the discussions from the last three days into a single thread. There was a final call-back to the trek – appreciations were flying around and commitments were being made. After dinner, the contingent went out, feasting on the beautiful city again.

On 27<sup>th</sup>, the contingent went for some sight-sighting in the morning, followed by a lot of informative sessions. The first meeting took the contingent to India House, the Embassy of India in Bhutan, for an open interaction with India's Ambassador to Bhutan followed by an Indian meal for lunch. We then visited the Nehru-Wangchuk Centre where the contingent learned about the cultural exchanges between the two countries through the activities of Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Lastly, the contingent had a fruitful meeting with Dasho Karma, a man with profound knowledge about life, especially his country. Finally, we left for Paro.

On 28<sup>th</sup>, we hiked to Taktsang Dzong (monastery), the sight of which is the most iconic image attached to Bhutan for outsiders. Afterwards, the contingent went around the streets of Paro for picking up souvenirs. Later in the evening, IBYS finally came to an official end with a lavish closing dinner. Mr. Arun Kapur and Dasho Chewang graced the event. There was a stimulating interaction with Mr. Pawan Verma, former Ambassador of India to Bhutan. The night was made lively by the participants exchanging memorabilia. To top it off there was a traditional Bhutanese dance performance by professionals in which all the participants were included.

On 29<sup>th</sup>, the contingent gloomily dissolved as the Indian participants had to leave for Bagdogra. The limitless craving for the beauty of Bhutan made the final parting harder to bear. Although it was only a 9-day excursion, it had already left a lasting impact.

**In general, IBYS proved to be a very profound experience with a lot of learning interspersed with fun.**

The act of learning is very abstract in itself. It is only occasionally that one ponders upon one's experiences enough to describe concrete lessons. Looking back at IBYS was one such occasion. In general, IBYS proved to be a very profound experience with a lot of learning interspersed with fun. The lessons may be divided into three main categories for clearer restating:

### Curricular Lessons

The lessons which came as a direct result of the planned activities. These may also be called *intentional lessons*. The majority of these were related to the evolution of the relationship between Bhutan and India, the current state of the relationship and the scenarios for the future. These also included the lessons about Bhutan's own history, its culture, its economy, its needs and its vision. Finally, these included the lessons about the role of an individual in this scheme of things. Various sessions helped in converting much of the textbook knowledge of the contingent into real understanding.

Takeaway: China need not always be a part of India-Bhutan discussions.

### Co-curricular Lessons

The lessons which came as an indirect result of the planned activities. These may also be called *unintentional lessons*. These relate to understanding the participants. There were lessons in civil discourse, lessons about keeping the environment safe, lessons about the continuity of civilizations etc. Various unplanned moments allowed the participants to widen their perspectives.

Takeaway: Interplay between development and happiness.

### Extra-curricular Lessons

The lessons which came through self-realization by the participants. These may also be called *reflective lessons*. These lessons do not have a set pattern and vary individually.

Takeaway: a determined stand towards saving the environment; a mild shift in manners imbibing the best of the other culture; a better understanding of one's own fault-lines.

One has to be detached from the forces of the present to highlight shortcomings of an event without being biased. It is very difficult to present too many shortcomings without risking one's own prejudices creeping in. Still, when it is one's duty to assist in the improvement of something, one has to take an educated risk. There is scope for diversity among the participants. In this edition, all the Bhutanese participants were students from the senior year of college nominated by the college administration. In contrast, Indian participants were at various stages of their career, ranging from sophomore year in college to a work-experience of two years after college. The lack of diversity on the Bhutanese side restricted the dimensions of conversation. It is advisable to ensure that both the sides are an assortment of different kind of people at different stages of their professional life.

A beautiful excursion, a learning experience, a spiritual journey, IBYS proved to be all of these things and more. May it shine brighter in the coming years and become a strength of India-Bhutan association.

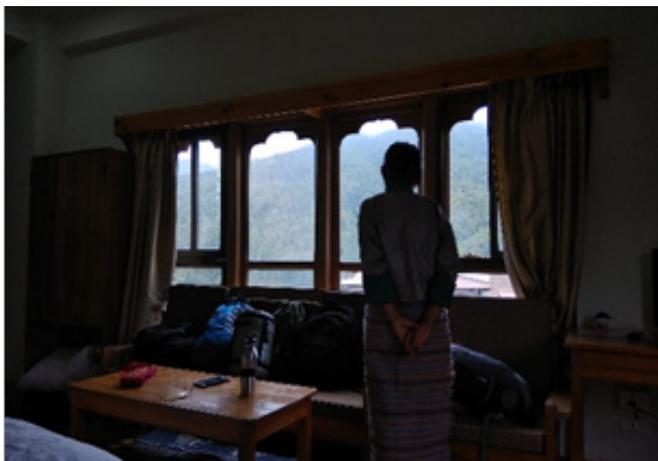
# Isha Vajpeyi

India



Winding through the pristine forests of Bhutan, I attempted to put down all that had passed in the last 24 hours, lest I forget. The night before, after more than 12 hours of travel, we were greeted by our Bhutanese friends at RIGSS, followed by dinner and an exquisite cultural programme. Twelve hours later, we were speeding through the mountains towards the first ever hydropower plant of Bhutan, Chukha. But the beauty of the scenery passing through my window

and the compelling discussions happening beside me, were luring me away from pen and paper. The winding turns were not letting me make sense of my own handwriting anyway. I had an internal dialogue with my brain where I begged it to not forget any of the important details of the summit in exchange of more Vitamin E rich foods and less junk food.



The journey of nine days through the beautiful Himalayan country with our welcoming hosts and talented participants was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. I

**The journey of nine days through the beautiful Himalayan country with our welcoming hosts and talented participants was one of the most humbling experiences of my life.**



shared my room with Sonam, a sweet Bhutanese girl of few but powerful words. My first encounter with her was during dinner when every Bhutanese participant was fawning over watching Bhutan's most famous band's private performance

while every Indian participant remained clueless. I loved her outfit, the ensemble of *kira*, *wonju* and *tegu*, as I was educated later. I complimented her and Yeshey for their vibrant outfits to which they replied by complimenting my travel staple basic t-shirt and blue jeans. “Bhutanese people really are the sweetest people on earth”, I thought as they insisted that I get a picture with the celebrities. Their sweetness and politeness very touching. Something that needs to be preserved and taught to us, loud Indians, as I realised during



the course of the summit. Back to Sonam, after sharing my room and tent with her for so many days, on our last day together, she casually mentioned about her trip to Japan for a cultural exchange programme when I noticed her habit of making the bed before checking out. Humility is the least popular yet the most important virtue, I thought to myself.

During the length of our journey through a small country like Bhutan

I learned that the world is bigger than I could have ever imagined. I wondered if one lifetime was enough to make myself a better person. But the winding roads lined with trees and frequent sightings of waterfalls, brooks and rivers, challenged that idea with another clichéd philosophical thought, ‘the journey teaches you more than the destination’. It was true, the journey on the bus, somewhere along the way laughing, singing, discussing, listening and sleeping on each other’s shoulders, I learnt more about Bhutanese culture, international politics and that Bhutanese know more Hindi songs than I ever can as a native Hindi speaker.

During the treks, it was easier to challenge my body to keep up with the pace of other people when they also slowed down to encourage me. Overwhelmed by constant social interaction, taking a moment or two of quiet solitude beneath the stars, staring at the clouds passing through the valley, I learnt that it is okay to pause. Reluctant to broach sensitive issues, a push is sometimes needed to address the elephant in the room – “conflicts are good, they lead to conversations and disagreements, that’s how we get over those issues”. That push led me to have some of the best conversations during the summit and forge an

honest friendship with Saavan.



Meeting renowned personalities of Bhutan and experiencing their humility, set a benchmark for the kind of leader I want to be. A leader is humble and sets an example by his/her actions. Sitting on the grass with the Director of Gross National Happiness and the Director of RIGSS, I wondered how the world would be if all leaders were down to earth, quite literally in this case.

Talking with people as we progressed through the summit and observing locals in their daily routines, especially during the Gangtey Festival, I wondered about the potential of

the exquisite art, crafts and textiles of Bhutan. It was a pity that cheap textiles imported from Nepal and India were threatening the indigenous craft. There are a lot of unexplored opportunities in that field. I would have loved to spend more time around the village, observing people and watching the day go by but the tight schedule only allowed us to quickly gobble down a plate or two of fresh momos from the market. The overcrowded agenda did not even allow me to reflect on the day before I went to sleep. I clicked enough pictures, hoping to be able to go back and recall my memories — technology saves the day yet again!

Towards the end of the summit, none of us wanted to part ways. So, we embraced each moment to the fullest by sharing a few laughs, going out to explore Thimphu, and dancing



and singing together around the fire. Back to the daily grind in Delhi, I have forgotten the smaller details like the number of watts produced by Chukha every month, but I remember spotting Bhutan's only wind mills from the bus and the places atop the mountains from which criminals were thrown down the valley; I remember talking about Bhutan's start-ups while stopping to catch my breath on the trek, and I remember the beautiful sound of Bhutan's rivers.

It could be God's own country or paradise on earth, but this tiny Himalayan nation bid me goodbye with the first solar halo I ever witnessed, a sign from the heavens!

# Jai Srivastava

## India



*“A mind stretched by new experiences can never go back to its original dimensions”*

The above quote very much summarizes my IBYS 2018 experience, where through a multitude of events, interactions and activities, my mind has indeed expanded greatly. Though the 9 days were packed with multiple events in multiple places, the highlight of the summit for me was the 3-day trek.

Through the journey in these three days, I had the good fortune of having some very meaningful conversations with my peers from both nations, as well as highly insightful learnings from the facilitators. I had the opportunity to understand realities I didn't earlier know of, and listen to and understand other world views which were alien to me. Be it learning from the life experiences of Sarabjit sir and Gaurav sir, or discussing ideas of entrepreneurship and philosophies of national development with my Bhutanese peers, I was lucky to learn in great amounts.

The trek during the day was followed by the highly enjoyable yet thought-provoking exercises in the evening, where we were encouraged to go deep into our ideas, and re-examine our existing beliefs and thought patterns. Not only did this end up making me more self-aware and conscious of how my brain works, but also forced me to get to the depths and roots of many ideas and concepts I had previously thought of only superficially. I found this extremely empowering. This was followed by informal chats, brainstorming, games and even traditional songs and dances, which brought great cheer to all of us present, and I believe helped strengthen friendships between the 20 of us.

Another thing I'm really grateful for are the close interactions I got to have with very accomplished and distinguished people from both sides of the border. Be it Dasho Chewang, Dasho Karma or Dasho Tashi, or Mr Arun Kapur, Mr Gaurav and Mr Sarabjit, it was truly amazing to closely learn from people who have achieved greatly in their own domains, and yet had a sense of enthusiasm and energy that was inspirational for us youngsters. In addition, the sessions with other dignitaries, like the former and present Indian ambassador to Bhutan, the director of the Nehru-Wangchuk Centre and Dasho Tashi were truly informative and enlightening.

However, the best things I take away from IBYS 2018 are the friends and memories I made in these 9 days. I am glad to have met a bunch of great people on this summit who I can now proudly call my friends. The peer-to-peer interaction has been a great source of learning, and of immense fun and enjoyment. I have learnt here that there is nothing more valuable than an inspired and enthusiastic group of people to be around.

**Not only did this end up making me more self-aware and conscious of how my brain works, but also forced me to get to the depths and roots of many ideas and concepts I had previously thought of only superficially.**

My takeaways from this experience include a much deeper knowledge of the India-Bhutan relationship, and the related cross border coordination in hydropower and trade, along with the history and significance of this 50 year old strong bilateral friendship for both nations.

I also have learnt about the Bhutanese way of life, which I find significantly different from the Indian way. Diving deeper, I understood the foundations for their beliefs and the impact – some positive, some negative – have in the nation. I further realized shortcomings in the Indian way, and my way, of life. And the one valuable thing I've learnt here which I am trying to apply to my life currently, is appreciating the present and being more grateful and happy in it, while still working hard for a better future.

I also really liked the fact that people here do seem happier, without possessing or desiring too much material wealth. The heavy competition and widespread rat-race prevalent in India, especially amongst youngsters, seemed to be absent in our more peaceful neighbouring nation. All this has perhaps got something to do with GNH, the unique indicator of national growth Bhutan measures itself by. While I did learn through multiple discussions that the indicator still needs some work and nuancing, the nation's prioritization of happiness and wellbeing seemed very evident through the multiple Bhutanese people I came across in these 9 days.

All in all, this small nation with its own ideology of growth and national success, did end up teaching me some valuable lessons about what makes a good life, and what I can do to have one.

# Pema Chuki

## Bhutan



The Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS) in collaboration with the Center for Escalation of Peace (CEP) in India held the first India-Bhutan Youth Summit (IBYS) from 21st – 29th September, 2018 in Bhutan. The main purpose for this summit was to connect the people from both country, enhance the understanding and appreciation of the cultural, environment and relationship between the two countries. The summit was also dedicated to the golden jubilee celebration of diplomatic relation between Bhutan and India. The summit was for nine days where a total of 20 youth participated, 10 were from India and 10 from Bhutan. They believed that the youth of each nation are trustees of posterity.

The summit took place in different places, which made it possible for us to learn about the importance and significance of each place and also how that place are of significance in relation to the relationship between India and Bhutan. The relation of these two countries will be long lasting and what makes me believe this is because of those friends that I met during the summit and their desire for unity.

The most important lesson I have learned through this summit is to change yourself before changing others. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

During the summit we went trekking with Gaurav sir and Saranbjit sir who made us take part in activities which boosted our mind and made us think about making changes at the grass root level. The three-day trek was most active and encouraging. We had many discussions where most were about our country Bhutan being self-reliant and the necessity for India to be environmentally conscious.

Some ideas – like having Indian companies in Bhutan, doing socially useful productive work (SUPW) and using social media to increase friendship between the countries – were discussed. But to do that the first and foremost thing is to change yourself. Let us change ourselves, our family, our community and eventually our country will change which is what one of my Indian friends taught me.

And I also learned about the importance of being self-reliant. One of our Bhutanese friends spoke about the importance of waste management. He picked the waste that was thrown on the wayside when were walking, and after sometime all our friends were doing the same which made me realize that one can lead by example.

Through this youth summit I learnt a lot about the importance of India and Bhutan relationship. “Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.” I would like to learn more about the countries’ situation and being ourselves and being the change that I want to see in this world. I believe that world is beautiful and small so I wish to meet my beautiful friends again in this life and thank you RIGSS and CEP for this opportunity.

**The most important lesson I have learned through this summit is to change yourself before changing others.**

# Sawan Nepal

## Bhutan



It started out as a break from academic pressure and high expectations of my college. It was an opportunity to visit places in my country I hadn't had a chance to before and to get to feel the nervousness and excitement that comes with getting to know new people — something that I hadn't felt for quite some time. However, by the first day of the trek what I was learning and experiencing from the trip was far beyond my expectations. Walking through the beautiful valleys of Wangdue, talking with my new friends from India about almost everything under the sun, getting to learn so much from a country as magnificent as India through my friends, and simply reflecting and appreciating the beauty and culture of my own country was a thrill of a lifetime.

The second day in Thimphu was where all of us really bonded and established a mutual respect and appreciation for each other which more or less decided the level and amount of collaboration and teamwork we could bring about, both for and outside of the objectives of the summit.

The best part of the summit was the three-day Gangtey trek. The short sessions with our facilitators gave me a lot to think about and what we, both our countries, could mutually benefit out of the summit. These in turn led to deep conversations and a greater understanding of each other. The highlight of the first night before the trek at the base camp was the conversation I had with two of my Indian friends where we discussed Bhutan's economy and the difficulties we as a nation, as well as individuals face in becoming economically self-reliant.

What caught my interest was entrepreneurship through financial markets where I promised my friends that I would read more on the topic to see what we could effectively practice in order not to entirely depend on our government for financial support in order to work towards realizing self-sustainability.

I also had a deeper understanding of the concept of GNH how it has been helping our country remain culturally vibrant and environmentally rich. Through my friends, I understood that India has been facing a challenge of conservation of environment and culture and this became one of the major topics of discussion on the final night of the trek.

Based on the interactions during the three-day trek, I came to realize that it is simply humans who could motivate each other and learn from each other. This summit gave me an opportunity to be with a group of highly enthusiastic people from India and within Bhutan who were all concerned about matters not only as individuals living in two great nations with a strong history that binds and brings people together, but also concern about sustainability issues the countries face at a global level.

**The short sessions with our facilitators gave me a lot to think about and what we, both our countries, could mutually benefit out of the summit.**

On another level, I also realized that Bhutanese way of life seems to be much more carefree compared to the better planned and competitive lifestyle of our neighbours. This never bothered me before I have always believed that worrying less and taking life lightly leads to a healthy mind and a sense of contentment . However, what bothered me afterwards is when a question was asked by one of my friends. How far can Bhutanese as individuals help themselves if a disaster of a large scale was to occur? How effectively can our people recover and start leading a normal life again without depending entirely on the government? Although it may be a matter of remote chance for a disaster of such magnitude to occur, it is something to think about and be prepared for.

All in all, it was an experience that I can never forget. I am sure that I have taken plenty from the programme and the experience can help a lot as individuals, as well as groups to work together and make changes in whatever small ways we can.

# Shashank Mattoo

## India



In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, young European aristocrats were sent on cultural tours of neighbouring countries. The idea was to facilitate exchange of ideas, cultural values and engender mutual respect in an effort to contain war and conflict. For 10 days, this October I got to experience much of the same things in Bhutan. From my first night in Bhutan where I tried to unsuccessfully chew *chugo* to haggling for *ghos* Thimphu's ABC street, it was a constant learning experience. While our first days were full of polite conversation with each other as we toured Chukha Power Plant and rode towards our trekking spot, it was clear that there was some distance between us. Coming from India, where people are naturally outspoken, it was initially difficult to have a tough conversation with the Bhutanese who tended to be far more reserved. That disappeared on the second day of the trek where the mutual hardship we faced (or at least the Indians did) allowed us to finally talk about a little history, some politics and a lot of Bollywood. Helping the process along were Gaurav and Sarabjeet sir who taught us that sometime inciting a little conflict is the only way to have honest conversations and learn something you never had before.

The leadership sessions that took place in the mountains of Bhutan taught me more about leadership and teamwork than any course ever could. By the last day of the trek, the Indians and the Bhutanese were getting along like we'd known each other for years. Getting through a trek like the one we experienced was one of those things you can't go through without getting to know each other. Between Tashi and Sawan's jokes, Sonam quietly going about clearing waste from the mountain and Yeshey singing songs and teaching us Dzonghka, we understood a little of what it meant to be Bhutanese. On the cultural side, we got to see how a uniform the Bhutanese culture really is with the delegates singing one folk song after another while we Indians could barely string two lines of the same song together. The impact of Buddhism was clear in everyday life especially in a growth metric like the much-debated Gross National Happiness. The Indian side couldn't fathom how happiness could be a metric for growth and it took us a session with the great Karma Ura to finally piece it together.

**The leadership sessions that took place in the mountains of Bhutan taught me more about leadership and teamwork than any course ever could.**

While we shook our heads at the Bhutanese development model, I can't deny that we all walked away from the summit thinking that the Bhutanese had eschewed the traditional growth game to do something that was uniquely their own creation. We couldn't help but admire it. Finally, getting to see India through another prism — that of a government that had helped and changed Bhutan — made me feel proud of my country. It's something we don't often sense among our regular complaints about our governments and our people but to see India in a good light was something rare and valuable to me. All in all, I'd recommend this summit for those with even a modicum of interest in learning about other countries and maybe even a little about their own.

# Shourya Mehta

## India



It is no surprise that India and Bhutan have had strong diplomatic ties for decades. In fact, the relations between the two have been termed as a “special relationship,” a phrase used to describe countries which have exceptionally strong diplomatic ties. The aim of the India-Bhutan Youth Summit from 21-29 September, 2018 was to celebrate 50 years of India-Bhutan friendship and at the same time develop trust and understanding among youth across the border. The objective was to create future ambassadors of this special relationship in both countries who will carry forward the collaboration for the next 50 years. The summit was a 9-day programme including a 3-day trek and provided an opportunity to exchange culture, ideas, knowledge and experiences. Nestled in the folds of the Himalayan range is Bhutan, a nation best known for valuing GNH, Gross National Happiness, above GDP. Bhutan displays a rich heritage and vibrant culture. Traditions, beliefs and care for the environment are a dynamic part of their culture. As Bhutan accelerates its development, its government and people have engaged in a new fight to preserve its culture and keep its unique identity alive.

### DAY 1

Catching the early morning flight from Mumbai to Bagdogra, we started our journey to Bhutan by road. It was a six hour drive to Phuentsholing including a one hour halt for lunch. Upon entering the coolest border in the world, we went for immigration. Upon reaching the RIGSS, we were welcomed by our Bhutanese counterparts and Dasho Chewang Rinzin, who gave a brief introduction about India-Bhutan relationship and history of RIGSS. A brief session on Bhutanese etiquette was delivered by Mr. Tshering Penjor. Then we all gathered for dinner which was accompanied by some wonderful musical performances. Alongside, we started to break the ice with our Bhutanese friends. After the dinner, we then headed to the RIGSS hostel where we were allotted rooms, every Indian with one Bhutanese friend.

### DAY 2

The day began with the visit to the Chhukha Hydropower plant where we were first briefed about the project and then given the tour of the inside of the power plant, followed by lunch. From there we departed for Thimphu and reached hotel Amodhara where we were briefed about the trek over dinner. Mr. Gaurav and Mr. Sarabjit joined us as they were going to lead the group in the trek. The Chhukha Hydropower project is Bhutan’s oldest mega power project. An agreement for the implementation of the project was signed between the two governments of Bhutan and India on March 23, 1974.

### DAY 3

After having breakfast at the hotel, we went to Dochula Pass in Thimphu which was created in honour of 108 Bhutanese soldiers who died in a 2003 military operation. It is one of the most beautiful passes in the world which is a concentration of 108 memorial *stupas* known as “Druk Wangyal Chortens.” From there, we went to Punakha Dzong which is the administrative centre of Punakha District. Constructed by Ngawang Namgyal, 1st

Zhabdrung Rinpoche, in 1637–38, it is the second oldest and largest *dzong* in Bhutan and one of its most beautiful majestic structures in the country, especially in spring when the lilac-coloured jacaranda trees bring a lush sensuality to the *dzong's* characteristically towering whitewashed walls. Both of these places tell an interesting story of spirituality, bravery, and Bhutanese culture. After lunch at a restaurant in Punakha, we departed for Gangtey and reached the base camp by evening. The temperature dropped suddenly and we were surrounded by lush greenery. After having some snacks, we all gathered in a tent for the orientation of the trek. Mr. Gaurav explained the importance of trust, belief and teamwork through some brain storming activities involving critical thinking and left us with some questions to ponder over. After this session, we all had dinner — a joyful time over the bonfire and some meaningful conversations with our mentors.

#### DAY 4

We woke up at 7 in the morning, dismantled our tents, had our breakfast and packed our lunch. First thing I learned that morning was 'Leave No Trace' that is leave the place better than how you found it. Hence, we swept the place and collected every trace of garbage visible. We then went to witness a local festival nearby. It was an amazing experience as people from all nearby villages gathered at the festival to enjoy various dance and musical performances each of which had symbolic meanings. Also, Sarabjit sir shared with me some of his inspiring life stories. After experiencing the festival, we started off with the trek. This time it was more like a walk. During the trek, we had some amazing time singing songs along with our Bhutanese friends, learning Bhutanese songs, learning about each other's culture and tried to view the world through their perspective. Along the trek, one of our friend started collecting all the trash which was coming in his way and this really inspired everyone, and everybody joined his initiative. After reaching Gogona camp site, we all had some snacks and had some fun. Then we were given a task to assemble a tent but only 4 people were chosen to do so and the rest were allowed to guide and this was a lesson in teamwork. Then we all assembled in a tent and were given four questions to put our views on. 1) How do I see the world today? 2) What makes me happy? 3) What concerns me? 4) How will I make a difference in the world? This session was really enlightening and awakening. It made my thinking open to a bigger universe. And what I learned most importantly was first try to change yourself, become a better person, invest your life in something meaningful, then the world will automatically change. After dinner, we had some conversations with Dasho Chewang understanding GNH as a criteria of development.

#### DAY 5

The day started with breakfast and warm-up exercises. This time we had to leave early because the distance that we had to cover was greater than the previous day and this time it was an ascent. After packing our lunch, we started the trek and we had to come up with 5 questions for the group discussion. Along the journey we made groups and started to discuss relevant topics and shared each other's opinions. By the halfway mark everyone was panting but still trying best to keep up with everyone's pace. After hours of trekking, we reached the camp site where snacks were already ready for us. After finalizing the topics for discussion: 1) Foreign policy - Should Bhutan shake hands with China? 2) Economy - Can Bhutan be less independent on India? 3) Opening up doors for Leadership and Entrepreneurship in Bhutan 4) How can Indians develop a sense to preserve their diminishing culture? 5) How can India learn from Bhutan's GNH policy in relation to environment? Five hosts were chosen for each question and groups were made of three people who would circulate with each host and discuss the topics individually. Everybody

gave their opinions and there were rigorous discussions at every panel. This activity was carried out for about 40 minutes after which all assembled inside the tent and the hosts summarized the discussions and conclusions. This was really a productive session as it gave a lot of insight about India-Bhutan relations – consequences if Bhutan open its trade gates for China; how can Indians learn from Bhutanese on how to live happily and develop a sense of conservation of environment and preservation of culture and traditions; how can Bhutanese develop leadership skills and open its way for entrepreneurship to grow. After the end of this session Mr. Gaurav said, “When everybody knows that somebody will do it, nobody does it,” and left on us to ponder upon this and work on this. We then wrapped up the session and headed for dinner. After the meal, everyone joined in for some fun. To celebrate the last day of camping, Bhutanese counterparts introduced us to their folk songs and dances in which all Indians also participated. The air was filled with joy and harmony and everyone forgot their physical pains and stress and dived into the river of happiness.

#### DAY 6

It was the last day of trek and was all descent. After the morning tea and packing of lunch, we all headed to a cheese factory where we were introduced to their model of functioning. After spending about an hour there, we again started the descent. By afternoon, we reached the lunch site. This was the end of the trek. It was a moment of relief but at the same time, a moment of sigh too. From there we drove to Thimphu in a bus. As we reached the hotel, we had a bath and came down for the closing ceremony of the trek. Our instructors were leaving. Before dinner, they enlightened us with lot of things so that we can navigate our lives in a better way. They explained to us that the best way to know our potential is through sharing and asking for feedback. They explained to me that growth means making correct decisions. At the end, they gave each one 5 beads and a thread and asked us to give one bead to the person you would want to thank in this summit, two beads to people you want to appreciate, remaining beads to yourself for acknowledging what you learnt in this summit till now, and for making a commitment towards all 19 participants. This session was really overwhelming and motivating. This session displayed how much we all bonded with each other in such a small amount of time and how much each one of us had learned from people from same or different cultures. After this, we all had dinner and were left to explore the city.

#### DAY 7

It was now time for some sightseeing. We started by visiting the Great Buddha Dordenma statue which houses over one hundred thousand smaller Buddha statues, each of which, like the Great Buddha Dordenma itself, are made of bronze and gilded. Then we visited the bird-eye view point from where whole of the city can be viewed. After this, we went to meet the Indian ambassador to Bhutan, Mr. Jaideep Sarkar at the Indian Embassy where we had an interactive session, and got a deeper understanding of the diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan. This session was followed by lunch at the India House itself. Then we headed to Nehru-Wangchuck Cultural Centre that proposes to reach out to the people of Bhutan, to schools, colleges and universities to collaborate with various cultural bodies in Bhutan. The Centre organizes seminars, guest lectures, book launches, various therapies, scholarship for studies in Indian art and culture, cross-cultural exchange of art and artists.

Finally, we went to meet Dasho Karma Ura, President, Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies who enlightened us through his immense knowledge on GNH and explained the

components of GNH to us and why one should focus more on non-materialistic growth rather than materialistic growth. We then drove off to Paro.

#### DAY 8

This day was dedicated to the hike to Paro Taktsang. Nine hundred meters off of the ground, it was stunning in its beauty and location. Without a doubt, the trip to Bhutan would not be complete without seeing the Tiger's Nest. It took around 6 hours to return to the base. Once back at the hotel it was time for dinner. We all dressed up and gathered for the closing dinner where wonderful arrangements were made to make our last day special. Mr. Arun Kapur, Director, Pallavan Learning Systems and Mr. Pavan Varma, Former Indian Ambassador to Bhutan gave the closing words of the summit. Bhutanese presented us with a token of respect and Indian counterparts presented our Bhutanese roommates with the gifts we got for them from our hometowns which reflected our tradition and culture. Some incredible performances were organised and after that we all joined for one last Bhutanese folk song and dance. Choki left during dinner and Dasho Chewang said the final goodbye as he left post dinner. It was an emotional night since it was the last day of the summit.

#### DAY 9

Everything was over and Indian participants left for India early morning.

#### OUTCOME

This youth summit was a very unique get together meant for raising awareness about emerging global trends, sustainable development and understanding the socio economic cultural values. It provided a platform for the youth to express ideas and opinions fostering their role as future leaders while at the same time to share stories of diverse cultures they come from. It involved students, educators, and mentors in experiences that advances knowledge of history, culture, and historic preservation, thus inspiring them to take action. It provided participants with the opportunity to stay actively involved in learning, apply what they have learned in their own communities and recommend changes that will make a difference to the nation. Also, we pledged to disseminate what we have learned and share the outcomes of the summit with the community at large. The youth summit participants bring fresh, unfiltered new ideas, as well as enthusiasm to invigorate community efforts and inspire stakeholders. These activities build friendships and minimize differences. Chances of learning from experienced professionals' first-hand experience and industry best practices would go a long way in helping me achieve my goals. This summit also helped me to develop a global peer network that I would be able to reach out to for advice and suggestions every step along the way.

**It provided a platform for the youth to express ideas and opinions fostering their role as future leaders while at the same time to share stories of diverse cultures they come from.**

# Shruthi Raghavendra

## India



When I came back home after the Bhutan-India Youth Summit, a friend asked me what was the first thing I noticed when I entered Bhutan. I didn't have to think about it much. In fact, I didn't have to think about it at all. It came to me immediately, and this is what I wrote to my friend, along with a picture.



"The first thing you will notice about Bhutan: It makes you feel like you belong :) To yourself, To the wind, to the sunrays, To the clouds, to peace, to the universe. And that you belong all the time, little by little. Then all at once, and then some more."

So yes, the summit began with a huge sense of belonging, with new people, new places and new

memories to create. The trip began with Shourya, one of the participants from India, with whom I travelled to Bagdogra before meeting the entire team. We reached Phuentsholing few hours late, tired and hungry but the moment I saw my Bhutanese friends, all the exhaustion left and excitement crept in.



**So yes, the summit began with a huge sense of belonging, with new people, new places and new memories to create.**

We had an amazing welcome ceremony where Mr. Chewang Dasho spoke beautifully about the objective of the summit and

the importance of all of us coming together. That night, my friend Dorji came running to me saying, "Shruthi, we're roommates! Room 6. Come let's go." And then followed a long conversation with Dorji late into the night, bringing my day 1 to a beautiful end.

The following days, we went to visit many places of historical, cultural, technological and environmental importance. The most beautiful and intimidating days for me were during the three-day trek to Gangtey as I had never trekked to such a staggering height let alone in

a high altitude range. I was super excited and ready to learn! The group met three amazing people, Mr. Arun Kapur who spoke of his karmic connection to the country, Sarabjit sir, who kept all of us warm with his serious and yet jovial personality, and Gaurav sir, who told



us, "A conversation cannot happen if there is no common objective." We started with a descent and reached our first base camp. It was breathtakingly beautiful.

The first night, in our very first session, Gaurav said, "Wow! We have 20 of the brilliant minds from 2 countries and yet we don't have an answer to a 7th grade math question! Maturity is to be comfortable with different objectives, contradictory opinions

and be non-judgmental about it."

The next wonderful conversation we all had was while sharing our answers to the four questions given to us. Here are some of the answers to the question, 'What's my view of the world today?' that remains my favourite.

"My view of the world is that everyone is infinite." -Jai Srivastava

"The world is moving so that we are deviating from humanity."- Yeshey Choden

"The world is at a better place today. We have come a long way and it is now at a better place."- Shashank Mattoo

The next important thing that we did was signing a full value contract to be adhered to, during the time of the summit and some of the things that we promised ourselves were being open to talking about new ideas, taking initiatives, moderating the conversations, discussing ideas of development and be open to conflict. On the last night of the trek, we talked about the five questions that we, as one family, will try to find and create answers to, for the betterment and development of our relationship, and honour it.

We ended the night with a beautiful cake made by our chef, in the warmth of the back



tents, especially for us, with so much love and care. The following morning, we thanked them for taking care of us so well and began our descent to reach our beloved RIGSS white bus. I was so overwhelmed by the whole journey that I went and hugged the bus!

After coming back to Thimphu, we had sessions with our sirs. The Johari graph and then the beads activity. Major takeaways from these sessions are, "Only when you share, ask for feedback, you uncover your potential. Our potential is only limited by the amount of time we have on the planet," Sarabjit sir told us.

That night, some of us went to explore the night life of Thimphu with dance clubs and karaoke bars with our Bhutanese friends while the rest went to bed early with a smile on their faces.



The next day, we visited the Indian Embassy office, the Cultural Embassy Centre and then met with an eminent speaker. We sat with him down on the cold grass, eating *pakor*s and sipping coffee while the cold breeze carried his wise words to us. He told us about how economic growth is JUST a component of well-being and well-being is subjective. While he kept talking, I was trying to doodle all of us in my diary as I thought that evening was too peaceful and calming to be missed and my diary should capture it.

My biggest learnings from the whole summit are:

1. Relationships need effort to sustain. When these relationships sustain and grow only then change can happen and real change will only come when there is trust and love in the relationship.
2. Never get intimidated by your own fears. Surrender momentarily and think. Breathe and then walk right

into the face of the fear.

3. Don't think about respect. Think about getting results, respect will follow automatically.

4. "With power comes responsibility." – Sarabjit Sir

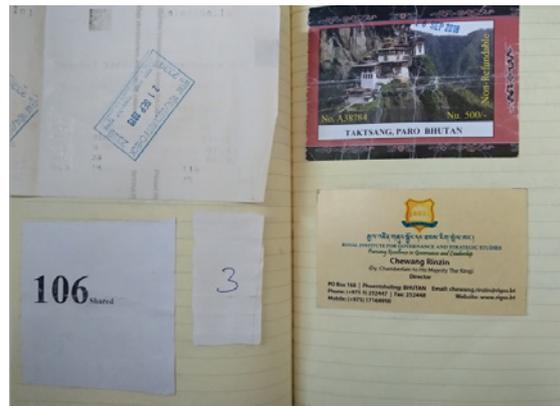
5. Always do the warm-up exercises before and after a trek.

6. Bhutan is such a simple yet elegant country that taught me there is beauty in simplicity and simplicity in beauty.

7. If you believe, anything is possible and I want to believe and work for a beautiful Bhutan-India relationship and future.

The summit ended on 28th September night ,with us thanking everyone and us Indian girls wearing a kirato embrace the Bhutanese culture, exchanging gifts from our respective cultures, dancing around the bonfire in our hotel in Paro, and with heavy hearts and with hopes and dreams on the horizon that we will all conquer together.

(Some memories like the tent number, room number, my boarding pass, a souvenir)



## Sonam Deki Bhutan



An ordinary man with his visionary thoughts has the capacity to shape the future. To create a visionary, learning through exploring and exchanging ideas is very important and it's the basic key to delete the ethnocentric perspective of a man. What makes us place 'I' in the center is because we view our self, our culture as superior and others as inferior. To avoid this thinking we must enlighten ourselves with positive thoughts and this is the only way to know and understand each other. The India Bhutan Youth Submit which was organized by RIGSS (Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies) from September 21 to 29, 2018. It was a great opportunity to open ourselves to real learning. The India Bhutan Youth Submit mainly launched to celebrate the 50 years of friendship lasted nine days with various programmes -- discussions, sharing of views and concerns and a three-day trek.

On 21st September, 2018 ten participants from Bhutan and ten participants from India gathered at the RIGSS office at Phuntsholing. First we were welcomed by Dasho Chewang Rinzin and the team and then the 20 participants were introduced to each other after which there was a welcome dinner with beautiful songs sung by a famous Bhutanese singer.

The very next day we visited the Chukha Hydropower project which is Bhutan's oldest power project. This project offers the best scope for Bhutan to earn the country's revenue and it is historically one of the largest single investments undertaken in Bhutan. The project was signed between Bhutan and India. This trip made us aware of the everlasting friendship between the two countries and also it was a great opportunity for us to learn more about the hydro power project.

On 23rd September we went a three-day Gangtey trek and this was the most adventurous journey which brought lots of self-leadership and learning skills and. It is a short and relatively easy trek with several beautiful villages and monasteries. And also the valley of Phobjikha is the most attractive one which is beautifully surrounded by mountains small streams in the middle of villages. It was a very peaceful place like heaven on earth. By evening we gathered at the tents and had lots of discussions on various topics among the participants and this activity was facilitated by Mr. Gaurav and Mr. Sarabjit.

In the following day the trail began from Phobjikha valley towards Gogona. The journey brought 18th century to life and we enjoyed singing Bhutanese traditional songs along with Dasho Chewang. During that time we came across many beautiful plants and flowers which we have never noticed before. After crossing meadows we reached a valley and we spent the night there and nearby there was a small village and a school. Next day we visited a dairy farm

**Though Bhutan is a very peaceful nation till today under the leadership of our beloved king, there is still a platform where we Bhutanese, especially the youth, can work hard and set the direction of the future Bhutan and be true sons and daughters of Pelden Drukpa.**

at Sha Gonana and continued our journey towards Khothakha. The journey was a more difficult one compared to the day before because we climbed gently uphill. The overnight camp was just below the village and it was near the forest. We had a very meaningful time because after our daily gathering and discussions we had around three to four hours talks with Dasho Chewang about our country. Though Bhutan is a very peaceful nation till today under the leadership of our beloved king, there is still a platform where we Bhutanese, especially the youth, can work hard and set the direction of the future Bhutan and be true sons and daughters of Pelden Drukpa. Dasho inspires and now it's my turn to work with lots of dedication towards my king, country and the people. The last day of our trekking was from Khothakha to Tika Zampa and then we went directly to Thimphu. The next day we visited various places at Thimphu including Buddha Point and in the evening we went to Paro.

On the final day we visited a prominent Himalayan Buddhist sacred site that is known as Taktshang Monastery, the Tiger Nest. It is located at the rocky hill just above the Paro valley and the monastery reflects a refined Buddhist architecture. The summit was very meaningful. Firstly, I would like to thank RIGSS and CEP for such a great opportunity, and, secondly, to all the great people who inspired us with words of wisdom, and, thirdly, to all the participants for being a source of knowledge for us to learn and explore more. I understood that the friendship is key to personal growth and that of the nation. And true leadership works with integrity not with power.

# Sonam Loday

## Bhutan



The nine day India-Bhutan Youth Summit, 2018 in the Kingdom of Bhutan, organized by Centre of Escalation of peace (CEP) and Pallavan Learning System (PLS) in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS) celebrated 50 years of bi-lateral relationship between two countries, India and Bhutan. The summit created the opportunity for cooperation by the youth of both countries.

The objective of the nine day programme was to gather together potential youth from two countries to enhance the understanding and appreciate importance of India-Bhutan friendship and, to become ambassadors to promote the relationship of both countries in the future. The programme was designed to enhance the meaningful conversation among the youth, where learning experiences were incorporated in with academics and adventure.

The summit took place in the environs of modern Bhutan where the participants better understood the importance of culture, environment in the road to modernization. There were several scheduled enriching activities which involved cooperation, visiting cultural heritage sites, treks through pristine environment and meeting with eminent persons.

Participants were from various colleges with different academic backgrounds and exposure from India and Bhutan. The very first day (21st, September, 2018) the introduction by Dasho Chewang Rinzin at RIGSS complex at Phuentsholing Bhutan was very insightful and heart warmingly arranged by the management of RIGSS. The evening welcome programme was a lively introductory session among organizers and participants.

The second day (22nd, September, 2018), visiting of Chukha Hydro Power Plant under Druk Green Power Cooperation encompassed the understanding of collaborative projects. It was a source of inspiration realizing that both countries can achieve greater heights together through various collaborations. In the evening we were hosted dinner with Mr. Arun Kapur, Chairman of CEP and Dasho Tashi Wangyel, members of National Council and Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director of RIGSS and Dy. Chamberlain of His Majesty.

The third day (23rd, September, 2018) we visited beautiful architectural sites --Druk Wangyel Chorten, Dochula and Pungthang Dewa Choenpoi Phodrang. Punakha is a source of pride of the Bhutanese to showcase such wonders that make up the Kingdom of Bhutan. Visiting these beautiful sites helped us better understand the richness of Bhutan's heritage. In the evening we camped at the beautiful village of Phojikha where we discussed several issues.

The fourth day (24th, September, 2018), we started trekking from Sha-Phojikha to Sha-Gogona. Before commencing the trek towards Sha-Gogona, we visited Gangtey Goempa annual tsechu. It was opportunity for the Indian participants to understand how the culture and festivals are important to the people of Bhutan. Besides witnessing traditional Buddhist mask dances, it was also an opportunity for us to understand how modern mode of business is embedded during tsechu in Bhutanese society. Around 11am, we trekked towards Sha-Gogona during which the participants and, facilitators had meaningful conversations covering various topics of common interest. After settling at the camp with tea and snacks,

we began pitching tents and as a group exercise and shared our thoughts on various topics: How do you view the world? What concerns you? What can you do to change the world?

The fifth day, (25th, September, 2018) we trekked towards Sha-Kotakha. This was the longest journey but we discussed the most pertinent topic using the anchor method. All the participants were provided an opportunity to discuss and contribute ideas to the issues of common interest and conclude the discussions with presenting those ideas to the mass.

The sixth day (26th, September, 2018), we made for Thimphu via Tekki Zampa. In the evening we used the Johari Window technique to better understand ourselves and those around us. We were appreciative of the friends we'd made during the summit. We also bid adieu to our facilitator Mr. Guarab and Mr. Sarab.

The seventh day (27th, September, 2018), we visited most beautiful places like Buddha Point at Kuensel Phodrang and Sanagy Gang, which gave us a bird's eye view of Thimphu city. We met the Indian Ambassador His Excellency Jaideep Sarkar at India House in Thimphu, and later towards the evening we met Dasho Karma Ura, President of Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies. We were delighted to listen to their talks and interact with them. In the evening we left to Paro.

The eighth day (28th, September, 2018), we hiked to Paro Taksang. We received blessings and later in the evening was closing programme. It was a very touching moment. We exchanged gifts amongst the participants and organizers. The last day (29th, September, 2018), we departed to our respective destination with heart full of emotions.

#### Conclusion

The India-Bhutan Youth Submit, 2018 was very educative, adventurous and insightful. We would like to thank whole heartedly RIGSS, Dasho Chewang Rinzin and his team as well as team from CEP and PLS, facilitators and all the people who made this first ever youth summit wonderful. Thank You!

**The India-Bhutan  
Youth Submit, 2018  
was very educative,  
adventurous and  
insightful.**

# Tashi Dorji

## Bhutan



I took the bus to Phuentsholing. That was the place where all of us were supposed to report. I was not very keen at first. "It's just nine days, there's not much you can do in that span of time." I reached my destination, and met the Bhutanese participants. I realized that they were all very friendly, not to mention that most of them were college leaders and captains. I was not. We talked non-stop as though we knew one another and were meeting again after a long time. We met with the authorities at RIGGS, and they were most hospitable and helpful. Later that night we met all the Indian participants and befriended them although they were tired after their long journey. What a night it was, we had a performance by a famous Bhutanese band and they rocked our first night.

The next day we went to Chukha to see the hydro project, and it was inspiring to see a tangible significance of the strong relationship Bhutan and India shared.



(picture: Chukha Hydro project)

The bus rides were epic! We would sing and play games, using every hour of a day and not letting it go to waste. We reached Thimphu that night and met with two more facilitators from India, Mr Gauruv and Mr Sarabjit. They were to accompany us on the three-day trek and facilitate our time at the campsites. We also met DashoTashiWangyal and Mr Arun Kapur. They talked about enjoying the learning experience.

The following day we headed towards Punakha and visited the Punakha dzong and then went straight towards Phobjikha where our campsite was located. When we reached the

campsite, all the camps were set and there was a big bonfire that lit up the night.



(picture- campsite at Phobjikha)

We talked amongst ourselves, tried to learn about new things, spoke about our countries and how similar or different they were. We got to know more about each other around the fire over tea, and dinner.

Early next morning, we saw the serene beauty of the surrounding nature around us. We went to Gangtey Tshechu, and the bus dropped us at a point where we had to walk to our second campsite at Gogona. The walk was most engaging and fun. We sang songs along the path and played games too. We reached the campsite and this was also a beautiful and isolated area. We had an interesting session with the two facilitators from India that provoked many questions in all our heads.



(pictures (left to right) on the way to Gogona campsite; campsite 2 at Gogona)

The following day, we left our third campsite early in the morning as we had a long trek to Khotokha. On the way, we talked, sang, treasuring every moment that we had together. We reached the campsite at Khotokha. This was our last day of camping. That night we had a very interesting and insightful five question group discussion activity. We discussed ways in which India and Bhutan could strengthen their relationship via trade, the job market. We also spoke about issues that the countries faced and how they could be solved. We came up with possible solutions and it was a healthy exchange of opinions. Since it was our last night camping we danced around the fire to Bhutanese folk songs and some Indian songs too.



(pictures (left to right)- on the way to Khotokha; campsite 3 at Khotokh)



(picture- talk by Dasho Karma Ura)

The next morning, we hiked to the final point where the bus was to pick us up and take us back to Thimphu. That night, since the two facilitators were leaving the next day, we said our goodbyes and had a heart to heart activity where we gave small beads to our friends from India and Bhutan.

The following morning, we did some sightseeing around Thimphu, met with the Indian ambassador who talked about the relationship between Bhutan and India which was very interesting. The evening, we visited the Nehru Wangchuck centre in Thimphu and the head of the centre talked to us about the importance of cultural relationship between the two countries. Then we met Dasho Karma Ura. He talked about Bhutanese history, its current status, and also touched on the importance of exercising.



(picture on the way to Taktsang)

That night we went to Paro. We were to hike to Taktsang the next day, so we had a good rest. The hike to Taktsang was physically challenging but sharing our thoughts was enjoyable. The week had passed so quickly. The next day we were to say our final goodbyes.

The hike was beautiful, and emotional. We were to depart the next day. That was all that was in my mind. That night, being the last and final night together, we had a special closing dinner around a fire. We gifted each other small gifts of appreciation and friendship.

It was very emotional, and we danced around the fire again as a sign of good luck, well-being and thank-you for the wonderful nine days.

I look back thinking that all we needed was just nine days to make new friends, laugh together, travel, help each other, and connect. We are closer than a family now.

And so it was. The next day at 6 a.m., they all left in a bus. I personally, was sad. All of us were going our separate ways, going back to whatever life we had left behind. We waved at the leaving bus filled with emotions ready to burst and just grateful for made these wonderful new friends.

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# Yenten Phuntsho

## Bhutan



We started our journey towards Phuntsholing. All the participants of the India Bhutan Youth Summit arrived at RIGGS and the Director General of RIGGS brief us about the purpose of conducting such a programme between two neighbouring nations and we were also briefed about Bhutanese etiquette. We then had dinner and were entertained by the famous artist Mistey on the terrace. Next day, we begin our day moving towards Chhukha to see the Chhukha Hydro Power Project. We came to know that a huge part of our revenue is contributed by this project. Then we moved to Thimphu and we spent a night at Hotel Ammondara.

On 23rd of September we went to Punakha to visit our historic Punkha Dzong which has played a vital role in unifying our nation. Later around one p.m., we moved to Phobjakha base camp. Once there we had discussions to enhance creative thinking.

We visited Gangtey tsechu and after that we trekked 10 km towards Gogona base camp. The trek was really enjoyable as we got an opportunity to explore our beautiful natural surroundings untouched by man. Later in the evening we shared our views on how we feel about the world. Participants had diverse views but one point we all agreed on was that in order to change the world first we need to change ourselves. The evening programmes were really engaging as all the participants got equal opportunity to share their views.

**The trek was really enjoyable as we got an opportunity to explore our beautiful natural surroundings untouched by man.**

On 25th of September we started our second day of trekking which I found tougher compared to the first day and our base camp was at Khothaka. Despite the fact that the trek was physically challenging I learn a lot about mother nature as we crossed the mountains. Discussions took place in the evening where we spoke about five different questions related to India and Bhutan.

On 26th we were on the final trek where we were supposed to reach Tikizampa but were unable to make it due to time constraint. Instead we went back to Thimphu and stayed at hotel Jomolhari and had a discussion on self-awareness. This concluded the trek.

On 27th we met with the Indian ambassador at Indian house and discussed relations between two neighbouring countries and their challenges. After this we visited Neru Wangchuk Cultural Centre and we got spoke to its Director. Next we had an open discussion on GNH with Dasho Karma Ura. At the end of the day we set off towards Paro and had a great night at Hotel Olathang.

Two more days to go: We visited Paro Taktsang and in the evening we had a closing dinner with ex-Indian ambassador, Pavan Varma, and Dasho Tashi Wangyel and Dasho Karma. And on 29th we all went back to our college.

#### Learning

- Importance of keeping relation with neighbouring country
- Difference in culture
- Need for more exchange programmes

#### Shortcoming

- Language barriers
- Difference of opinions
- Time management

# Yeshey Choden

## Bhutan



Dasho Chewang mentioned in one of the conversations, “Do not focus on what you want to be, instead, focus on what you have to do.” This is the most important lesson I take back from the summit.

I knew about RIGSS (Royal institute of Governance and Strategic Studies) before the summit actually began. I felt a sense of responsibility when I was told that I was to attend the summit. Nevertheless, I did not expect this extent of self- reflection about my view on the relationship between India and Bhutan and also on my views about myself and the world.

Every single event of the summit has proved to be nothing but a learning experience for me. During the visits to sacred places such as the Punakha Dzong, the Tiger’s Nest and some other places, I was very touched by the appreciation that our friends from India had for all these places. Yes, I do take pride in my country, but more often we forget to value what we have, and probably that had been the case for me too. So, during these visits (and throughout the summit), a very strong feeling of patriotism was rekindled in me.

**Every single event of the summit has proved to be nothing but a learning experience for me.**

Moreover, during the tour to these places I also learned some facts about the history of my country which I did not know before.

The major portion of my learning was from the three-day trek. During the day, the brainstorming sessions with my new friends were very interesting, especially the part where we shared details about each others’ cultural beliefs. I really enjoyed teaching our Indian friends our folk songs and also singing Bollywood songs along with them. Then the brainstorming involved some issues faced by both nations. Through these conversations, I have learned that though our country is really blessed to have such a visionary king because of which our country is all smiles and happiness, there is still room for betterment. I also realized that I, as an individual, can contribute in many small ways in serving my country. The evening sessions of the trek were conducted by Sarabjit and Gaurav sir, every moment of it was an eye opening experience for me. Everything that I learned through those sessions were something that will help me in the decision making processes of my life.

During the first evening session, the twenty of us were given two questions to be discussed. From this discussion, I realized that most of the times we fail to come into a decision though the answer is very unique and simple due to the fact that we are so attached to what is called “my answer.” Also, through the discussion on the next question I came to a realization that an answer to a discussion is not unique. There may be multiple answers based on our own level of understanding and an individual beliefs and cultural backgrounds. And I have learned that it is necessary to put ourselves into others’ shoes and accept the variation in answers. On the same evening, we also shared our views of the world and the hopes that we have. Personally, I enjoyed this activity because it was a platform to speak out. Moreover, it was also fun to listen to other views and to know that if there are so many different views of the world just from the twenty of us, how many more different and

interesting views there may be from the rest of humanity.

On the second evening, we were told to come up with five important issues on topics related to friendship between the two nations., In this session we were forced to challenge our own depth of knowledge about the nations. We had a very rigorous discussion on these topics and at the end came up with our action of plan to achieve those goals. We came to know that though a significant action could only be taken at the Governmental level, there were also so much scope for the youth of the nations to work in effective ways.

At the last day of the trek, on the third evening, we had a session on Johari Window (from what I remember). But before that Gaurav Sir taught us one very important lesson. The difference between 'I have to' and 'I want to'. No matter whatever task is vested upon us, if we treat them as a 'I want to' task life would be much simpler and easier. Furthermore, from the session on the Johari Window I got an opportunity to reflect upon myself. Reflect upon how I was and some of the things I can work upon to better myself.

Finally, to conclude throughout the summit I have given my best in not leaving a single opportunity to learn. And through this process I have found a huge room for myself to improve in so many ways. Whether it was the meetings with very eminent figures from the two countries, or the games we played during our bus journeys, I have found a platform for me to grasp some knowledge. Through the summit, I got to interact with very learned and experienced figures, from whom, today I carry with me an enhanced knowledge of whatever life has to offer. Then from the games and the interactions that I had with our friends from India, I came to realize and appreciate the depth of knowledge that our friends had in a very diverse area. And that, I learned, was due to the sense of competition back in their country. I realized that compared to them, we (the youth of our nation) are very relaxed and in some ways we lack the aspiration to grow, despite His Majesty the king repeatedly mentioning about the nation's pillar being the youth.

However, my whole experience of the summit was a prestigious opportunity me. I began a journey with a nervous heart of meeting nineteen strangers and at the end of the journey I did not even realize when those supposed strangers felt like friends I have known my entire life.

So, I am grateful to all those individuals of the two nations who made the programme possible and gave us the platform to be motivated and inspired through songs, smiles, arguments (discussions), games, pulling each other's legs and all in all, gave me immense happiness..

# Yeshi Lhamo

## Bhutan



### 21-September 2018: Arrival of Participants and Officials

A total of 20 youths, 10 from Bhutan and 10 from India, were welcomed at Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies by Director Chewang Rinzin, Chamberlain to His Majesty the King and his team. Welcome remarks were given by the director and a brief session on Bhutanese etiquette was given by Mr. Tshering Penjor, Registrar of RIGSS. We had ice breaking session among the 20 participants. Later Dasho Chewang gave us a brief background on the establishment of RIGSS, what it does, and the objectives of the summit -- to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the youth on the importance of building India- Bhutan friendship, and to create a pool of potential ambassadors of this special relationship in both the countries.

### 22-September 2018: Drive to Chhukha Hydropower Plant

We started our journey to Chhukha Hydropower Plant at around 9:30 A.M. The officers and engineers of the Hydropower Plant gave us a presentation on CHP and its importance. We visited the plant and settled for lunch. Then we continued our journey to Thimphu. We were welcomed by Gaurav Saklani sir, the facilitator for IBYS 2018. Towards the evening we planned for the trek. Later, Dasho Tashi Wangyel and Arun Kapur, Chairman of Centre for Escalation of Peace joined us for dinner and we retired for the day. On this day I learnt about the importance of CHP in the Bhutanese Economy and how it impacts the friendship of the two nations.

### 23-September 2018: Visit to Punakha Dzong

We visited Punakha Dzong on the way to Gangtey. After reaching the Gangtey base camp, we were given orientation on the trek. Later the facilitator used one mathematical problem and one story to stimulate discussion. The idea of having such sessions was basically to keep the conversation going among the participants. We came up with one common answer which was also one of the aims of the session. The day ended well with the discussion session.

### 24-September 2018: First Day of Trek from Gangtey to Gogona

We had a briefing and warm-up session in the morning. Before starting the trek, we visited Gangtey Monastery and witnessed Gangtey Festival for an hour. Then we drove to Tsele La Pass. After walking for about 8 km we reached Gogona camp site. Before retiring the day, we had discussions on the following theme:

1. How do I see the world today?
2. What are the issues and things that concern me and are relevant for one's future?
3. As a world citizen, what are some of my desires, hopes and expectations?

It was a fruitful day which left me with a satisfaction of having contributed to some ideas to change the world. Besides that, it was great that we had conversations on different aspects like economy, culture, and social issues.

### 25-September 2018: Second Day of Trek from Gogona to Khotakha Camp Site

Same as the earlier day, briefing and warm up exercises were done. Then we started the trek and reached Khotakha after walking about 10 km. In the evening we discussed the

following themes:

1. Foreign Policy- Bhutan's relationship with China
2. Leadership and Entrepreneurship
3. Preservation and Promotion of Culture
4. Gross National Happiness
5. Environmental Conservation

During the group work session, the participants expressed their views on above mentioned themes. The facilitator provided us with a Reflection Sheet to fill up based on the three-day trek. The day's proceedings closed with the dinner and conversations.

26- September 2018: Last Day of Trek from Khotakha to Tekki Zampa Exit Point

At around 9 A.M. we started our journey from Khotakha. After completing the three-day trek, we made our way back to Thimphu. After reaching Thimphu, we had a thanks giving session. Each participant thanked each other for teaching something new to them, appreciated them for doing something good, and shared what knowledge we acquired. I was very delighted for having completed the three days of trekking successfully.

27-September 2018: Sight Seeing

In the morning we went to Buddha Point and Sangay Gang. In the afternoon, we visited India House where the Indian Ambassador to Bhutan, J.B. Sarkar, welcomed us and talked about Indo-Bhutan relationship. After having lunch, we visited Nehru Wangchuck Culture Centre. Director of NWCC Shri Malkit Chand gave us a talk on the importance of knowing one's culture, and exchanging culture of both the countries, and promoting of culture. In the evening we attended a session with Dasho Karma Ura, Director of Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies. Then we travelled to Paro. It was my privilege to have sessions with such eminent persons.

28-September 2018: Hike to Taktsang

All the participants and officials walked up to Taktsang Monastery. Knowing the historical background of Taktsang (Tiger Nest) held a great pleasure for me and it was adventurous. We drove back to the hotel and prepared for the closing dinner. Thank you RIGSS and other organizations working in collaboration for India Bhutan Youth Summit 2018 for giving us an opportunity to take part in this summit which was planned in such a way that we learned through fun. Former Indian Ambassador Gautam Bambawale, Dasho Karma Thinley, Dasho Tashi Wangyel, Arun Kapur sir, and Director of RIGSS, Dasho Chewang Rinzin joined us for dinner.

**Knowing the historical background of Taktsang (Tiger Nest) held a great pleasure for me and it was an adventure.**

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