

A wrap-up of the 26th Annual State Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society - Assam State Branch held at Silchar

Abstract

A galaxy of eminent names in the sphere of psychiatry illuminated the 26th Annual State Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society- Assam State Branch held at Silchar on the 23rd and 24th of September, 2016. "Women and Mental Health" was chosen as the theme of the summit. "Meet the Masters"- an innovative interactive session with stalwarts and a panel discussion featuring celebrated women from various walks of life were the highlights of the two-day academic fiesta. A one-day pre-Conference workshop on "Forensic Psychiatry" conducted by foremost experts from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru studied the scholastic extravaganza.

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On a Saturday evening of epic proportions, the curtains came down on the 26th Annual State Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society- Assam State Branch with a moving valedictory function that evoked soul-searching and transcendence and left the stirred audience tearful and inspired. The Organising President, Dr Kamal Nath delivered a parting speech that will remain etched in the minds of all in attendance for a long time to come. It was an eclectic mix of anecdotal reminiscences and philosophical inquiries interspersed with moments of radiance and splendour. The last three days had been like a rollercoaster for the organizers. It was all coming to an end and there was a palpable sense of gloom in the hall. Dr Nath elaborated the essence of the theme "Women and Mental Health" chosen for the conference citing instances from folklore and fiction. He spoke about the concept of Guru in the Indian context and expanded on the need for percolation of wisdom down the generations. He urged the upcoming psychiatrists to reflect upon the contributions of their seniors and teachers-aligning with Vivekananda's message of being proud of the glorious past and dreaming about the promising future. The Closing Ceremony is always as good as the event in question. And there was certainly a lot to be enthusiastic about throughout the three days of academic revelations. Dr Suresh and Dr Naveen batted like Greenidge and Haynes on the first day, endearing all aspirants at the splendid Alumni Guest House on a resplendent Thursday. The mock courtroom drama that enacted out with Dr Nath Sir as Magistrate and Dr Jayantada as the Expert Witness was scholarly ingenuity at its loftiest distillation. The jugalbandi of the Guru-shishya was evident in its compelling colours with the experts handling trickily

queries with elan. The forensic wizards would later join us in an evening of reverie and gaiety.

The nascent brushstrokes of Autumn coloured the SMC sky on the auspicious Equinox when Dr Soumitra Ghosh Sir, the gifted poet-psychiatrist synthesized the crux of Psychoanalysis in its present enigmatic form. Dr Nath Sir had all the fireworks in his presentation with nuggets from Freudian stories instilling nostalgia and curiosity in the audience. Dr Phookun Sir and Dr Zaman Sir, stalwarts in their own right, rounded off the session with their valuable remarks as Chairpersons. Fittingly the first round was dedicated to Anna Freud, the crafty psychoanalyst who introduced the concept of Defence Mechanisms.

The Inaugural Ceremony has by now become part of Psychiatric Mythology. The overwhelming and spontaneous outpouring directed towards Dr S Dhar, the pioneering figure in Mental Health delivery in the Barak Valley, was magical. Dr Anjuman aptly played Tagore's timeless "Bhalobashi bhalobashi" to immortalise the ceremony-a standing ovation to a most worthy pathfinder.

Post-lunch Dr Prothama Choudhuri illustrated the differences in the cognitive styles vis-à-vis gender in a session dedicated to the outstanding Melanie Klein. She was followed by the galaxial Dr E Mohandas who delighted with his deliberation on "Psychotropics in pregnancy" even as he dispelled concerns and misconceptions about this pressing clinical presentation.

Dr Shubh Mohan Singh Sir drew attention on the growing menace of "Addiction in women" by way of some interesting

case vignettes. The best was yet to come in the form of “Meet the Masters”, a one-of-its-kind interactive session which was a highlight of the session. Dr Phookan Sir was at times candid as was the adorable Dr Shubh Mohan Sir. But the magnificent oratory of Dr E Mohandas Sir stole the show by dint of his sheer brilliance. The stewardship of Dr Nath Sir ensured the yielding of pearls for eager aspirants in attendance.

The think-tank sat together to decide on the next venue of the State conference a while later. We are all excited about the academic fiesta set to play itself out in the romantic town of Jorhat next year.

The cultural programme in the evening was a highlight. Starting off with an invigorating invocation to “Naari”-a special rendition by the socio-cultural group Umeedd and followed up by a captivating ramp walk depicting NorthEastern diversity in terms of costume, to be rounded off by an exhibition of the richest heritage that Indian Classical music embodies, thanks to prolific exponents from around the valley.

The second day had the remarkable Dr H.K.Goswami open with his talk on somatic symptoms disorder and the current understanding of the entity. The towering Dr Phookun Sir spoke on the broad issue of reluctance towards psychiatry among the general population in his talk titled “Barriers in the treatment of Psychiatry”. In his characteristic finesse he expressed on the role of faith healers and traditional medicine in the context of psychiatry today. Dr Neelanjana Paul won over hearts with her simplicity and charming presence. She delivered a stellar presentation on “Perinatal Psychiatric Problems”. Dr Shyamanta Das Sir showcased why he is celebrated as one of the most promising psychiatrists of our times with his awe-inspiring presentation on “Endocrinopsychiatry” wherein he drew illustrations from

the advertising industry. He fondly reminisced his earlier stint at SMC and chronicled the incredible journey of Dysphrenia and its eventual blossoming into OJPAS. Dr Bhagabati Sir, who could not attend owing to personal compulsions, would have his syncretic work “Mental health and women: a perspective” read out to rave reviews.

Dr Kaveri, Dr Sandipan and Dr Robin brought laurels to their respective institutions with a memorable outing in the Dr Indreswar Dutta Memorial Award Presentation bagging the top honours.

A landmark panel discussion on the pertinent topic “Stress and depression among women in the current psychosocial scenario”, moderated by Dr Kamal Nath Sir, evoked insightful remarks from the eminent panelists. Four inspirational women from diverse walks of life spoke their hearts out in a delectable conversation amongst themselves, also involving the avid audience towards the end.

Heavy hearts added moisture to the Dr B.M.Goswami Memorial Auditorium once the National Anthem had been sung for the last time. The party that followed later in the evening would conjure images of grandeur and upliftment. On their way back, many of the delegates echoed the sentiments of Wordsworth:

“The music in my heart I bore,

Long after it was heard no more”!!!!!!!

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