

MEDIA COMMUNIQUE

Art of puppetry linked to environment conservation in Assam's Kamrup

Guwahati, July 21: A captivating two-day puppetry workshop was held at the famed Hargila (Greater Adjutant Stork) colony at Pachariya of Kamrup district that was attended by over 60 community members, mostly women and students.

The unique event themed 'Telling Our Stories Through Puppetry' was conducted by Puppet for People, women-led Hargila Army, region's notable biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak and WiNN (Women In Nature Network) India in collaboration with Wilhelma Zoo, Women For Nature, Rewilding Academy, Rewild, Beauval Nature, Rotterdam Zoo, and Pachariya Kushal Konwar High School (PKKHS) at the Hargila Learning Center in the high school.

Puppetry is an art that is deep-rooted in the culture of Assam and the summer camp offered students and community women an opportunity to engage in practicing this age-old form of art. These women, mainly from Hargila Army, are renowned for protecting endangered Hargila colonies in their areas thereby setting an example of conservation around the globe.

The theme of the programme saw thirty children mesmerizing the audience with five captivating puppetry shows on diverse topics including conservation of wildlife and nature, while thirty women performed two remarkable puppetry shows, which highlighted the impact of single-use plastic on our planet's life, according to a press release from Aaranyak.

The women and children developed scripts on reducing wastes, rescuing wildlife, and empowering women, which were encouraging to create more awareness in remote areas towards a sustainable life in the future. Aaranyak's senior conservationist and UN Champion of the Earth, Dr Purnima Devi Barman, who was conceptualized the event, stressed that through such initiatives, 'we can spread awareness about conservation.'

As part of the workshop, Drishana Kalita and Manash Pratim Neog, founders of Naat and Puppetry for People, also taught handcrafts and puppetry skills, as well as scriptwriting for puppet shows.

"We extend heartfelt gratitude to all the participants and organising partners for making this summer camp a resounding success. The collaboration with esteemed organisations like Wilhelma Zoo, Whitley Fund for Nature, Rewilding Academy, Rewild, Beauval Nature, and Rotterdam Zoo played a pivotal role in making this event possible" told Dr Purnima

The kids came up with five narrative scripts, each with a life message, which Drishana Kalita and Mansha Neog appreciated and expressed their desire to continue the initiative. Pratima Kalita Rajonshi, an environmental enthusiast and active Hargila Army member, said, "We wrote the script on reducing plastic waste and its impact on our daily lives while we go to our paddy fields and get entangled with plastics. We learned a lot along with our children."

Karishma Das, who has been working with Hargila Army for the past two years, shared, "We youths can achieve so much if we are determined. This workshop was an eye-opening experience for me, and I learned a lot. I extend my gratitude Hargila Army for helping build my leadership through such initiatives."

"This awe-inspiring experience has left us eager to host more such events in the future. Together, through the power of Puppetry, we aim to inspire and educate, contributing to a sustainable and conscious world.", Dr Barman added

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
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