

*Second Group Relations Conference*

**Exercising Leadership in a Gendered World**  
**Exploring gender relations in groups and institutions**

**July 21 to 26, 2008**

Sponsored by



**Human and Institutional Development Forum, Bangalore, India**

*It is essential for all applicants to carefully read this brochure*

The universe we inhabit can be understood in terms of a living organism in which each cell works in balanced co-operation with every other cell to sustain the whole. If just one of those cells is harmed, as it is when disease strikes, that balance is harmed and there is danger to the whole. This in turn suggests that our individual well being is intimately connected both with that of others and with the environment in which we live. It also becomes apparent that our every action, our every deed, word and thought no matter how slight or inconsequential it may seem has an implication not only for ourselves but for all others too.

*His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama*

### **Traversing the landscape of gender, power and leadership:**

The world over, governments, organizations and individuals are realizing that the unbridled pursuit of economic growth and materialistic consumption will not work.

Humane and sustainable development demands a shift from using power over others to advance our selfish interest, to using power to facilitate the development of all. Transforming systems of power is the key to a sustainable future in which all people can live in dignity and fulfillment, but that is impossible unless we ourselves as individuals are also willing to be transformed. The need to understand and work more deeply at the exercise of leadership and accountability is recognized as a critical issue in the transformation of organisations. While the term leadership is more easily accepted and worked with, its connections with personal transformation and spirituality are often avoided in the mainstream discourse. These explorations often lead to the question of how equity and power operate, within the framework of gender.

Gender is constructed by a process of internalization of distinct qualities, attitudes, behaviour patterns and social roles, through which "biological categories" of male and female become "social categories" of men and women. Characteristics such as 'masculine' and 'feminine' get assigned to men and women respectively. Socialization - the process by which society trains its members to accept, and hence play, their socially determined roles - begins at birth. Family, social, religious, cultural and educational institutions become agents through which socialization is accomplished, and gender roles and relations constructed and sustained. There is a whole system of conscious and unconscious beliefs and behaviors that result in the perpetuation of gender status quo, in terms of both discrimination and stereotypes, leaving both men and women simultaneously victims and perpetrators. Stifled by this limiting process many of us yearn for a transformation that enables both women and men to be their whole selves, with courage, compassion, and assistance from each other. Why is work on gender critical to transform our organisations and our society? At the outset, the terms institution and organization are often used interchangeably and it is useful to distinguish between the two. We understand institutions at the first level as the frameworks of rules for achieving social or economic ends. These rules specify how resources are allocated, and how tasks, responsibilities and value are assigned. Rules determine who gets what, who does what and who decides. Although institutions vary within and across cultures and are constantly evolving and changing, they are embedded in hierarchies of gender, class, caste, values and ideologies that define identities and distribute

power both symbolically and materially. The state, market, community, and family, are examples of basic institutions.

Organisations are the social structures that operate within these frameworks of rules. The Weberian premise about organisations is of rational -mechanical constructs consisting of policies, structures and systems. In reality, organisations are far from neutral bodies - they enact and embody the very same principles of the institutional contexts from which they spring – replicating gender and other fault lines. This is a given, unless organisations consciously develop the competence to unearth, challenge and change these rules. This requires a focus on the architecture that is beneath the surface – the deeper structures, many of them unconscious, that define how men and women exercise authority in group and organizational settings, and how group processes, in turn, influence the way men and women relate and work in various roles. Thus, institution, or more precisely, institution in-the-mind, is an abstraction of one's experience as well as fantasies of the way organisations work based on rules, regulations and other inputs, including those brought in by the human beings who take up different roles.

## **Group Relations Conferences**

Group Relations Conferences (GRC) are temporary institutions for learning through direct experience. They are designed to provide a variety of opportunities for members to exercise leadership and authority in here and now situations, unravel and deal with the problems and resistances encountered in doing this, and manage oneself in role. The hope is that these explorations, experiences, and insights, will lead to transformed ways of being and relating in a range of interpersonal, institutional and societal spaces.

The focus is not only on one's conscious behavior, thoughts and feelings but also the unconscious processes - those that take place beyond ones normal awareness within one's self and in the groups that one works with. The GRC does not focus on individual/personality variables or interpersonal relations like other experiential learning opportunities do. It focuses on groups as systems and how they develop a conscious and unconscious life. The individual member has the opportunity to discover where he/she is in such a milieu. In a variety of events, members can exercise their authority and deal with the problems and resistances encountered in engaging with the primary task of the Conference. Since GRCs do not have any set curricula or evaluation of performance, members accept or reject learning and insights based on their personal authority. They are therefore, likely to achieve different kinds of learning.

The Group Relations Conferences (also known as Working Conferences) were started by The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London in 1957, based on the pioneering work of W. R. Bion. The design and structure of the Conferences have undergone many changes in various countries the world over. However, the focus on groups as systems and learning through experience has remained intact. Participating members have so far come from a very wide range of institutions, the corporate sector, civil services and other government organisations, the churches, academic institutions, consulting organisations, NGOs, networks and movements.

## **The Primary Task:**

Primary task is the one that defines the nature and core purpose of the institution. If not worked at, the institution would lose its meaning. This Group Relations Conference has the following primary task: To explore the problems and the potentiality encountered in one's role in the conference and the extent to which transforming oneself and the institution is circumscribed by gender-based authority. Each event in the conference also has a stated task which is defined in relation to the overall conference primary task.

## **Conference Design and Events:**

The Conference is a temporary learning institution that provides repeated opportunities through various events to differentiate between here and now reality and fantasy, i.e. unchecked assumptions based on both conscious past experience and experience stored in the unconscious. It is also possible to surface some of the rich experience based skills remaining in the unconscious and work with those. Further, it may also be possible to explore how individual spirituality manifests itself in organizations. In the absence of the hurly-burly of day to day life and the presence of a minimum number of structures in the Conference, it is possible to find the space to reflect, explore and connect one's outward behaviour with one's inner data of thoughts and feelings. Each event is planned to vary the view from which one perceives oneself and others, which may change as sessions proceed.

Members and Staff are both participants and the conference accords them different roles. While the hypotheses and interventions of the staff are aimed to highlight group process in relation to the primary task, it is for each member to scrutinise what it means for her or him. Staff are allocated to each of the events in the role of consultants or in the role of collective management to help keep the focus on the primary task.

**The Plenaries:** The Conference begins with an Opening Plenary (OP) that has the task of introducing the conference as well as of exploring one's joining experience. The Inter Group Event also begins in its own plenary (IGE OP). There will be an opening plenary of the Institutional Event (IE OP) to introduce the event and also a closing plenary to reflect on the experiences of the event (IE CP). The Closing Plenary (CP) on the last day is for reflecting on and exploring one's Conference experience as a whole, and in particular for focusing on one's learning in the Conference. Other Plenaries (P) have the task of reflecting on one's experience in the conference.

The Study System comprises of work groups of two sizes, the small and the large group.

**Small Study Event (SSE):** This event consists of groups of up to 12 members. The task of the SSE is to study the behaviour of the group as it occurs. It provides opportunities for exploring feelings and thoughts as they arise, and how this process is affected by the dynamics operating at the level of the group. Membership of each SSE group remains the same throughout. A consultant is allocated to each SSE group.

**Large Study Event (LSE):** This event comprises of all the members. The task of the LSE is the same as that of the SSE. However, unlike in the SSE, the size of the group implies that some may be heard but may be out of vision, paving the way for such phenomena as sub-group formation, myth making, identity crisis, anonymity etc. The number of consultants allocated varies with the size of membership and in this Conference the LSE is likely to have two consultants.

**Conference Sensing Matrix (CSM):** Group work on dreams has proved to be a fertile field for getting a purchase on the group's unconscious dynamics. The conference-sensing matrix is intended for members to share dreams that occur in the conference and, like in a matrix, (a place where things grow) to build or grow together from this a sensing of the conference experience. The task of the CSM is to share one's dreams, associate with (not analyse) one's own and others' dreams, reveries and physical sensations and connect these with one's experience of the Conference.

**Yoga Event:** This will provide an opportunity for members to practice breath and physical awareness exercises that attune one to the mind-body-spirit connection. The yoga event offers yet another way (and task) to experientially integrate the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects within the conference. (Loose fitting clothes will be appropriate for the yoga sessions.)

**The Role Analysis and Application Groups (RAAG):** The task of the RAAG will be to review experience in order to reflect on how one has been taking up one's member role in various events in the conference. This reflection is expected to lead to applying this learning back into the conference and to one's work and personal roles in the back-home situation.

The composition of these groups will remain the same throughout the RAAG. Each group will be provided with the services of a consultant, and the members of the group will be encouraged also to consult with one another.

### **The Institution as a System:**

**Inter Group Event (IGE):** The group is a basic unit of most organisations and institutional spaces. The task of this event is to work on and understand the relationship and dynamics between groups and within groups with particular reference to the dynamics of gender. Members self select into groups based on criteria that they believe are relevant to the task. A consultant is allocated to each territory

**Institutional Event (IE):** All of us carry in our minds pictures of institutions to which we belong or belonged. These pictures include those that we consciously believe to be true or those that we wish to be true. We also carry unconscious pictures of these institutions. In order to understand through actual experience the dynamics that take place in institutions based on these pictures-in-the-mind, the task recommended for this event is to study the picture of the Conference as an institution as it unfolds.

This event also provides opportunities to explore (a) the picture of management that one holds in the mind, (b) the relatedness and relationship between groups and (c) the nature of delegation and the problems encountered in giving and taking of authority to be exercised on behalf of others. Territories will be made available to members to deploy themselves in any way they choose for engaging with the task of the event. Staff will be present in the role of collective management and provide consultancy on request to members' territories for engaging with the event's task. The IE opens in a plenary to introduce the event and closes in another plenary in which the task will be to reflect on the experience of the IE as it has unfolded.

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## **Conference Management and Staff:**

**Conference Co-Directors:** Anuradha Prasad & Zahid Hoosein Gangjee

**Conference Administrator:** Vanya Joseph

**Consultants will be drawn from among:** Ganesh Anantharaman, Gouranga Chattopadhyay, Zahid Hoosein Gangjee, Anuradha Prasad, Gagandeep Singh & Rosemary Viswanath

The stance of the Conference is one of learning and developing a spirit of enquiry into the realities of one's experience in the here and now through attention, reflection and exploration. The staff of the Conference are neither in the role of teachers, nor are they what is commonly known as the "faculty". They participate in the Conference through taking responsibility for managing such Conference boundaries as those of task, time and territory. To that extent they constitute the Collective Management of the Conference. Individually they also take the roles of Co- Director, Administrator and Consultant to offer hypotheses and other forms of interventions relevant to the primary task, on the basis of their here and now experience.

## **Staff Profile:**

**Anantharaman, Ganesh** M. Phil (Political Science); Principal Consultant, Organisations & Alternatives Consulting, Bangalore; Professional and Governing Board Member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science.

**Chattopadhyay, Gouranga P.** M.Sc., D.Phil.Sc. Anthropology (Calcutta University), FRAI (London), FASc&T (W.Bengal), FCSA (Melbourne), Socio- Analyst; CEO, Chattopadhyay Associates, Kolkata; Professor Emeritus, Academy of HRD, India; Karma Sannyasin, Bihar School Of Yoga, First Director of Indian Conferences.

**Gangjee, Zahid Hoosein** B.Sc. Psych. Hons, M.Sc. Applied Psych. (Calcutta University), Fellow (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad), Chief Executive, Zahid Gangjee & Associates, Kolkata.

**Prasad, Anuradha** PhD (Agricultural Extension, IARI, New Delhi) Facilitator of group processes and change processes in a wide variety of development organizations. Professional member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science; Certificate course on depth psychology, Jung Center, India. Executive Director of Human and Institutional Development Forum, Bangalore

**Singh, Gagandeep** PGDM (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad), works with organizations in the realm of OD, Alignment and Transformation. Director, Sumedhas Academy for Human Context, Principal Consultant, FLAME TAO Knoware.

**Viswanath, Rosemary** B.Sc. (Hons) Mathematics (Delhi University), PGDM (Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore); Involved with Organizational strategy and change processes with social development and justice organisations. Professional member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science; Orientation Committee Member of International Forum for Social Innovation (Paris); Director, Learning Network, Bangalore and Chief Functionary, EQUATIONS.

### **About the Sponsor Organisation:**

Human and Institutional Development Forum (HIDF), Bangalore HIDF was set up in 2000 by a group of human resource development professionals to work on human and institutional development for the nonprofit sector. The services of HIDF focus on enhancing competencies and increasing effectiveness through: (a) intensive support in designing and guiding human and institutional development processes in organizations; (b) organisation development consulting to help organisations respond to their changing environment; and c) action research. The Forum has launched the Organisational Change Facilitation Programme (OCFP) in collaboration with ISABS to develop the capacity to facilitate planned change in social development organizations.

### **Administrative details:**

**Conference Venue:** SEARCH Training Centre

Koppa Village, Hulimangala Post Office, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore-562 106. Ph: 080 27825311

This is a residential programme and accommodation is on twin-sharing basis.

**Timings /registration and reaching the venue:** The conference is residential. Participants may arrive on the evening of 20<sup>th</sup>(between 5pm to 9pm) or the morning of 21<sup>st</sup>. Detailed information on how to reach will be sent to participants when they apply, but please be advised that you need to budget about three hours travel time by taxi from the station or airport in peak traffic (especially as the new airport is due to open). The conference registration begins by 1100 am and it will open punctually with the Opening Plenary at 1330 hours on July 21, 2008. The Conference ends at 1600 hours on July 26, 2008

## **Application details**

**Conference Fees** (inclusive of boarding and lodging) For Non Profit organisations /networks / individuals working with the development and social justice sectors:  
Rs 10,000

For Corporate Organisations/ International organisations / International NGOs/ Universities / Individuals working with these sectors / International participants: Rs 25,000 / Euro 600

A few bursaries are available and applicants need to clearly state their case for bursary along with the completed application.

Conference fees to be paid by June 30, 2008

Fees to be paid by demand draft or cheque payable at **Bangalore** in favour of **HID Forum**.

Applications will be accepted on a first come first served basis, provided they are accompanied by the member application form (enclosed) signed by the applicant and the conference fee in full.

Acceptance of applications will be confirmed in writing.

For cancellations up to the 11th of July the fees less 25% (for administrative charges) will be refunded. After the 11th of July conference fees will not be refunded in case of cancellations.

### **Send to**

Vanya Joseph

Conference Administrator: Exercising Leadership in a Gendered World

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## **Elaborating some concepts that are intrinsic to the conference:**

While concepts like systems, roles, leadership, authority, power and management and gender at the institutional level and those like identity, beliefs & values at the individual level are likely to be familiar to most participating members, these are also areas where transformation may take place by discovering new ways of interpreting one's actual experience of them during the GRC. Other concepts relevant to the Conference experience are "here and now experience", "primary task", "boundaries", "the unconscious", "working hypothesis", "relationship and relatedness". Some of the concepts mentioned above are briefly explained below in terms of how those who design and staff the Conference understand them:

**Here and now experience:** The experiences that are available to a group as data during an ongoing session.

**Primary task:** It is that task which must be performed for the system to survive and grow. In other words, it is the topmost priority task that gives meaning to the system. Other tasks of the system are expected to contribute towards proper engagement with the primary task of the system. The word task is used to encompass those at home, the workplace & social situations.

**Boundaries:** Boundaries are "limits" that are conceptualized by human beings to separate systems. These limits depend on what is to be delineated as the focus of attention. The key to the understanding of organisational dynamics lies in understanding the notion of boundaries; boundaries of systems that separate each system from others and from the environment, as also the boundaries that separate subsystems from one another, within a larger system. Four types of boundaries help delineate systems- space, time, task and sentient.

**The unconscious:** It is widely accepted on the bases of various experiments and clinical data that much of human experience is relegated to a part of the mind from where it is difficult to access it by the conscious part of the mind that stores memory and also interacts with the environment, i.e. the part with which people are normally in touch with. Experiences stored in the unconscious are mostly anxiety provoking or frightening in many ways. At the same time, the unconscious is a rich storehouse of resources for oneself if one can work through one's defences against accessing the data. Also, beyond one's awareness, one spends a good deal of energy all the time keeping the data from surfacing to the conscious part of the mind. The more one can access the unconscious data, the more one frees energy to be used consciously. Whenever these unconscious experiences resonate with here and now experiences, one acts out beyond one's awareness whatever is held in the unconscious that had resonated. This more often than not leads to unexpected and unplanned for consequences.

**The individual in the group:** Quite often individuals in any group unconsciously take in the group's wishes that for many reasons remain unexpressed. The reasons are mostly around the group members' general feeling of anxiety/fear/danger around the wish. These

feelings may not even be articulated by the members. However, unless the issues that create these feeling of danger are surfaced and worked with, they fester and create problems for the individual & the group.

**Hypotheses and interventions:** Working hypotheses and other forms of interventions are offered by the staff of the Conference based on their own experiences in the situation to highlight the unconscious processes as they take place in the group, particularly around the primary task of the conference or the task of the event. These are offered to the members to work with in order to gain fresh insights. It is expected that the members too will develop the skill to diagnose unconscious group dynamics and offer hypotheses and other interventions as the Conference progresses.

**Personal authority:** Information and knowledge become part of one's wisdom and insight only if these are explored and scrutinised on one's own experience-based authority, rather than through other people's authority based on their position or credibility in other ways. Personal authority based wisdom and insights allow one to apply those creatively in different situations.

**Relatedness and Relationship:** Relatedness is the picture of past relationships that one holds in one's mind, partly consciously and partly unconsciously. Relationship is the way in which people relate with one another in the present situation. However, the picture of relatedness held in the mind at times comes in the way of developing appropriate relationships in the present context. For example, one may hold a particular picture of relatedness with authority based on one's past relationship with one's parents and/or schoolteachers. If these remain unexplored, one may keep projecting this past picture of relatedness onto current authority figures in order to build one's relationships at the place of work or other places. This is likely to hinder building of an appropriate relationship for collaborating with others in engaging with tasks, and may cause misunderstanding and conflicts without one being aware of the reason.