

Executive Board meets in Bhilai to set direction

Executive Board members met on the 1st and 2nd of October at Bhilai and reached a consensus on the direction for ISABS in the Board's current term: To take ISABS into areas where it can make an impact and be seen as a resource to address the social realities through diverse forms and in different settings and to institutionalise actions towards implementation.

Based on this direction, a brainstorming exercise was conducted to establish focus areas, that emerged as follows:

- Specific 'process work' to be initiated for diverse social groups. Priority to be given to:
 - Education - Teachers & students
 - Government - IAS, PSC, offices engaged in public distribution systems
 - Media
- Documentation and publication of work done in above areas
- Training of professional members to provide them the competence for working with diverse issues

It was agreed that taking ISABS in the above direction is not the responsibility of Dean - Social Development only, but all Deans would try to integrate the above overall direction and priority areas while performing their respective roles.

Further deliberation was done on each role based on the Deans' own proposals as well as expectations expressed by others in the Board, resulting in the following focus areas:

Deans - PDP

- Deans - PDP to establish an open and transparent system for staffing of PDP labs
- To create a panel of PDP facilitators by following due process
- Creating a development programme for other professional members aspiring to facilitate PDP labs (supporting role of Dean Prof Ex & Dean Programmes)
- Developing a support system of having PDP coordinators at the Regional level (broadly one each from North, South, East and West)

Dean - Consulting

- Dean - Consulting to set up a system, procedure and guidelines for initiating and converging a consultancy assignment
- To be the nodal person in designing the working relationship between central Dean and assignments being handled by Regional coordinators
- To focus on areas identified in the priority listing
- To take up a special project of getting an annual contract with IAS academy and with IIMA

Dean - Programmes

- To receive and formalise the standard operating procedure on programme management from past Dean - Programmes
- To stipulate professional members' role and responsibilities during community sessions
- To guide and support Regions in following a similar procedure
- To arrange National event venues for the remaining period of the entire term

Dean - Research

- To follow up on the research assignment for which money was sanctioned in the previous term (Past Dean - Research and Altaf)
- To activate the research committee and carry out impact/effectiveness study in one organization
- To ensure publication of research already done (coordinate with Uma Jain)
- To present detailed action plan in the next board meeting

Dean - Professional Excellence

- To develop mechanism for institutionalising this role
- Suggesting methods of creating larger ownership and commitment to this process
- Supporting PDP
- Introducing a mechanism for bringing about a culture of boundary management within the ISABS community

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Editorial

Greetings from the Editorial Team!

We shared last time about the dynamics and thrills of performing editorial work when the team is spread all over the country. It feels gratifying to share that the thrills are turning into joy especially with our connections and tuning into each other ,happening with such ease and warm contact even though mostly through the internet. The most interesting part of collective editorial work is the word from our desk that you are reading. Yes like the rest of our work, this communiqué with you is also through our collaborative thinking and writing. We are amazed at how much we are discovering about human minds' collective creativity as we go one with this work. We look forward to doing a lot better with your responses, inputs and feedback, further strengthening our efforts. Please write in at isabs.publications@gmail.com.

We are soaking in a mixed flavour of emotions with having achieved what seemed daunting at one time; needing time and lot of logistic intelligence. It was projected to happen sometime in 2009. However thanks to your best wishes and lot of enduring efforts by us (thanks DP in particular) we are able to achieve this as a New Year gift for 2009. Yes!! Your much loved "Here & Now" has gone online. We feel proud of this achievement especially because this success is thanks to a lot of internal consulting and experimentation by DP. We are also humbled with the overwhelming appreciation and support that flowed in from all corners. We are now even more confident of supporting the Board's pursuit of achieving better economy what with so many people writing in to switch over to soft copy.

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Dean - Publications

- To be supported financially for continuing to bring out an attractive and impactful issue of 'Here & Now'
- To explore possibilities of asking organisations to sponsor an issue
- Raising the associate membership fee
- Exploring the possibility of issuing e-copies and asking preferences from the readers sending hard copy to those who opt for it

Dean - External Linkages

- To move further with the affiliation with Academy of HRD to work out details of collaboration and to put up before the board. To examine possibilities of sharing ODCP programme with AHRD
- To make a presentation on deliverables from the role of external linkages

Dean - Social Development

- No discussion was held in absence of Zeb and any base paper from him

This issue overflows with so much originality and creativity of our contributors. There seems to be a common thread-while Harish, Sankar & Wasundhara take us on a journey from Generative Questions to Generating Possibilities, Tom captures our collective sentiments in "Can you Imagine". Bhavita holds us in awe with her heart-warming play with words. Pavnesh shares his practical wisdom for finding solutions to life's troubling questions and Amitabh and TT gift us with the discoveries from their voluminous reading. Not to forget Jimmy, whose extensive research has accrued us all the benefit of deepening our understanding of Human Process Laboratory Training. Updates from regions this time bring in a whiff of fresh air what with PDPians taking on the mantle.

As this issue reaches you, the Winter Event would be on. With such a large community of committed human process learners collecting precious experience and wisdom, we look forward to more of you sending in your creations and contributions at isabs.publications@gmail.com.

We also request you to enter your email address on the ISABS Publication page (<http://www.isabs.org/publica.shtml>), in order to receive a free electronic copy of the newsletter in your mailbox.

Wishing us all a Happy, Meaningful and Glorious 2009.

**Anuradha, Arati,
DP, Neena, Sanjib
and Sridhar**

Regional Coordinators

- To suggest a mechanism for proper handing over and taking over of roles so that the same can be institutionalized across ISABS
- To include Dean - Consulting in all stages of consultancy assignments
- To attempt to develop systems so that Regional events are able to follow the same rigour as National events in terms of two facilitators norm, clinicing schedules, community design etc

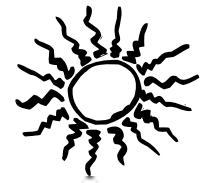
President

- To keep communication open, active and pro-active on an on-going basis and to respond to initiatives from others
- To appoint Secretary
- To reinvigorate the ODCP programme

The following members of the Executive Board were in attendance: Manas Shukla, President, Jimmy C. Dhahi, Dean (PDP), Ganesh Anantharaman, Dean (PDP), Snigdha Patnaik, Dean (Research), Archana Shrivastav, Dean (Programmes), Uma Jain, Dean (Professional Excellence), Jasmeet Kaur, Dean (Consulting), Joy Srinivasan, Reg. Coordinator, Bangalore, Rajeshwari L., Reg. Coordinator, Chennai, Somali Gupta, Reg. Coordinator, Chhattisgarh, and R. Sankarasubramanian, Past President. ■

The Human Process

Laboratory Training



- *A Perspective* Part 2



Jimmy Dabhi

Conditions for laboratory learning

The following conditions if met in various ways help participants to reach goals of personal development and change in insights, understanding, sensitivities, and skills.

Presentation of Self

Until the individual has an opportunity to reveal the way s/he sees and does things, s/he has little basis for improvement and change. Therefore articulation of what happens in one's head and what one feels is important in Human Process Laboratory (HPL). Presentation of self is not story-telling or talking of one's past but articulating and placing in the group what is happening to me here and now. It is not only what I think but how I feel right now. For example, stating, "We have been sitting here quietly for the last 20 minutes and are feeling restless". Forcing, manipulating some one/group to say something may not be appropriate in a HPL however it is not uncommon that such behaviour is exhibited in the HPL groups by members and even facilitators.

Presentation of self, in brief, is to let the group know what I am thinking and how I am feeling in this group here and now.

Feedback, collaboration and confrontation

Individuals and group do not learn from their experience alone. They learn from bringing out the essential patterns of purposes, motives, and behaviour in situations where they can receive clear and accurate information about the relevance and effectiveness of their behaviour in reference to others in the group. They need a feedback system which continuously operates so that they can change and correct what is ineffective and dysfunctional. For example "What you just said seems to be very offensive and I do not like it. I do not appreciate the words you have used and I feel accused". This response in a group is one kind of feedback to the one who has responded. Mirroring other's behaviour and how it comes across to me and how it is effective or not effective provides room for learning and impetus for exploration and experiment for other behaviours.

Confronting the other can be done with aggression and/or as matter of fact. Both have their consequences. Aggression and anger obviously are an indication that the person who is confronting or providing feedback is not happy with what is being done and has a preference for something else.

Collaboration in the group begins when the group is performing without much of performance anxiety. It implies building blocks – both linear and vertical in realising individual and group goals, creating knowledge for self and others.

Group climate

An atmosphere of trust and non-defensiveness is necessary for people both to be willing to expose their behaviour and purposes and to accept feedback. However a group often takes time to create and promote such an atmosphere or group climate. The group may have to address the issue of fear in the group. The facilitator's style, approach to group and behaviour as well as participants willingness to learn, take group responsibility and create learning climate influences the space and pace of group climate creation.

The higher the dependency of the group on the facilitator, the greater the unchallenged influence and greater the interdependency, the better the democratically arrived climate based on the process of consensus. The group, and the facilitator as part of the group and as a role holder are responsible in promoting the group climate of freedom, risk taking, learning and empowerment or otherwise.

The 'Norming' stage of a group formation has a lot to do with the atmosphere/climate creation. The values stated or assumed influence the group atmosphere and interactions in the group. The democratic value in HPL contributes to equal right and responsibility to contribute to group processes and learning, and dominated by the facilitators or a few members. It is observed "The greater the authority behind a particular drive or initiative, the more likely it is that it will be accepted. This is true whatever the form of authority, whether rational, legal, expert or charismatic" (Pettinger, 2000:167). Sometimes facilitators push for certain kind of climate, behaviour and modus operandi in the group and if issues of authority are not addressed, the group may simply accept what is 'suggested' by the facilitator/s or dominant members.

The issue of interventions being individual - focused (as in group therapy) and group focused becomes a concern for group atmosphere. People see individuals with problems and they interact to resolve the problem of the individual. Facilitator colludes or encourages it at the cost of the rest of the group members. In their minds, the 'interactions between two people have to be over/complete' and until it happens the group or the facilitator will not allow others to intervene or do something else. There is a tendency among some in HPL including the facilitators to assume that interactions between people and the processes have to be completed only than the group can move forward. Therefore they would try to stop other processes and interaction and thus ignoring the democracy of the group.

Cognitive Map

Knowledge from research, theory, and experience is needed and important to enable the individual both to understand her experiences and to generalize from them. But generally information is most effective when it follows experience and feedback. Providing conceptual and theoretical clarity based on experience and feedback in the group therefore seems to be more effective than mere inputs.

In HPL, in the advanced stages, facilitators sometimes choose to invite cognitive map of the participants (their perception and analysis of what happens in the group and why) and provide some theoretical frame to understand the processes better for effective learning.

Learning derived from experimentation and practice

HPL is basically experiential learning and therefore greatly depends on what one experiences and experiments in the group. Contrary to class room learning there are no topics to discuss, debate and lecture about. The matter for learning is yourself and the group and therefore experiencing yourself and others in interaction – how we come across to others as we interact here and generate data for learning. Trying out alternatives and checking out new experiences and their effectiveness in the group is the modus operandi of learning new behaviours, new ways of relating, communicating and functioning in the HPL. Unless there is opportunity to try out new patterns of thought and behaviour, they do not become a part of the individual. Without experimental efforts relevant change is difficult to make.

Like other learning, experiential learning leads to empowerment of a person and group. In the context of Community Development (see Parmar and Franco, 1996) it is argued, "Empowerment is realisation of power within an individual/s, group, organisations/communities, in a concrete reality of life (psychosocial, economic, religious, cultural, political etc.) which makes the subject and her/his environment more humane and just" (Dabhi, 1999:26).

HPL in some way is geared towards empowerment of the group and members within the group. A person who exhibits greater self-awareness of thoughts, feelings and behaviour may be said to be empowered. For example an individual becomes aware of feelings of anger and the thought pattern within her which goes along with that feeling. Sometimes the feelings and behaviour do not match (incongruency between feeling and behaviour), like, one sounds angry but there is a smile on the face. An empowered person would become aware of such contradictions between feeling and behaviour and make an effort to be more congruent (Dabhi, 1999).

Practice of what one wants to learn is equally important. Like in soccer, one has to practise what one has learned so that the s/he gains confidence and security in being different.

Back home Application

Well, learning is for life and to be applied in real life situation. Unless learning and change that has occurred and realised in HPL can be applied to back home situations, they are not likely to be effective and lasting. Attention needs to be given to helping groups and individuals plan application and translating the learning to reality beyond the HPL.

Relearning how to learn

Since much of our academic experience leads us to believe that we learn out of listening to authorities, there is frequently the need to learn how to learn from presentation-feedback-experimentation.

The initial HPL experience provides opportunities to explore traditional patterns of behaviour. In the HPL a vacuum is experience in absence of the facilitator's refusal to carry out the traditional expectations of her role: leadership, agenda, and procedure setting. Into this vacuum of lack of formal/positional leadership and lack of clarity about goals and procedures, members rush in with the purpose of filling in the missing ingredients (Bradford, Gibb and Benne, 1964; Hanson, 1981).

Each HPL has as its goal the enhancing of the learning of each member of the group collaboratively. For feedback to follow presentation of self, an appropriate climate needs to be developed. Adequate and legitimate opportunities for individuals to try out new ways of behaving need to be present. The HPL Training is designed to meet these conditions and the facilitators are to facilitate the group in creating these conditions.

Conclusion

Human Process Laboratory training is one of the several ways of learning methods which may suit some and not others. It posits greater responsibility for the learner and assumes that individuals can create their own learning in a group setting.

Differently put, HPL training is a way of enhancing the process of empowerment of people. It facilitates action, processes and I would like to suggest that these processes have a three dimensional effect - it is a process which goes on within the individual, it happens between two or more individuals i.e. interpersonal (group), and

organisational/communitarian in which the individual/s live and function.

Hierarchies are unavoidable in a group setting and so is the case in the HPL. However the facilitators help address the issue of authority and help create a climate where people work towards self and group learning, practise in the group and get prepared to carry back home. It hopefully creates greater faith in oneself and enhances confidence to journey through life more humanely and be fully alive to self and others.

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GENERATING POSSIBILITIES

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An Appreciative Inquiry way for Personal Growth



One of our friends came home the other day. She sounded like she was at a crossroad in her life. Her marriage is not working, her only son has turned 18 and ready to go on with his life and she has not really built a career for herself.

She was asking us “What should I do now?” Both of us tried in many ways to tell her about the possibilities that lie ahead of her. We tried to help her to look at her strengths and how she can amplify and use them as anchors for her career. After some time, I found that we were hitting a wall. She had an explanation why every possibility was a problem that she cannot surmount.

We realized that our friend tells her story as a problem. Her story is that she is in a “bad marriage”, her son is “going to

R Sankarasubramanyan and Wasundhara Joshi

leave her” and she “has not really built a career”. Since she is “framing” the story in this manner, she is unable to see the unfolding future possibilities in the here and now.

How can we help our friend to look at her reality with new eyes and then generate possibilities for the future?

Most people are like our friend. They see change as a problem to be solved, an issue to be surmounted and dealt with. Hence change still evokes fear, anxiety, helplessness and panic.

Can we look at change differently? The moments of greatest change are moments of greatest possibilities. Can we look at change as a process of generating possibilities for the future? The Appreciative Inquiry¹ approach to change helps us to do exactly that.

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the theory of social construction of reality. Simply stated, “what we believe is what we see”. So, if we believe that change is painful, we will experience pain during change process, and if we believe that change is celebration, we will experience that too. Reality is also a dynamic entity, our perception of reality changes from time to time based on what is happening to us! Hence we are an active participant in creating the reality around us.

This concept is a powerful tool for personal change. How can people believe that change opens new possibilities for them? How can people get out of anxiety, helplessness and fear and become excited, joyful and be in anticipation of the future that is unfolding in front of them?

We can help individuals see change as an opportunity for celebration. Change is seen as a possibility for many new beginnings. In order to do that, we have to start rewriting our stories – from stories of problems to stories of possibilities. We don’t mean to say that you cook up stories. Just look at the same stories with new eyes and they will open new perspectives and new possibilities.

Tojo Thatchenkery in his book ‘Appreciative Intelligence’² speaks about the need for people to develop this inherent

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¹Please visit www.appreciativeinquiry.org for more details.

²Appreciative Intelligence – Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn by Tojo Thatchenkery and Carol Metzker, published by Berrett-Kohler Publishers 2006

Poetry

❖ Dr. Bhavita Saxena ❖

Life has just begun

the sky unpredictable, at its best
with conspiring weather
splashing furious waves
my drenching encounters
roared the surf with powerful sway...

rebellious wind
revengeful thunders
ever changing directions,
upside down my vessel was
uprooted faith thrown away...

behind the horizon I see
the diminishing shoreline
altering my consciousness,
there sink the emptiness
where those haunting dreams lay...

I inhale the freedom & think to dare
navigating through stars
encompassing directions...
rocking in the tide of hopes
my journey of life has just began...

in the discovery of self !!!

today I leave you behind
on the streets where I lived
and sowed all my dreams...

today I leave me behind
with the courage to break free
from the false sense of rootedness...

today I leave my world behind
to stand on a volatile reality
in the search of contentment...

today I spread my wings
to fly up in the horizon
free in the world of possibilities...

today I sail in the clouds
humble yet vulnerable ground
to find where I stand...

standing for self...

my wounds all bare
and heart burns
its so lonely out there...
all of them know
but pretend unaware...

time is a big healer they all say
and wants me to stay calm
but they never pray...
scratching continues
and scars do stay...

known path many had gone
and many would go
crawling, walking all alone...
but I want to break free
don't want to be a clone...

war is against the shadow
versus my own identity
at this cross section...
God let me have the courage
to change the direction...

I am alive...

my power lies
in looking for possibilities...
keeping all the options open
welcoming opportunities...
as with met and upset expectations
luck is always relative...

I envision to see,
pursue to get,
choose to experience...
and all the great things
started happening around me...



WHEN THE SHOE FITS

Commentaries on the stories of the Taoist mystic Chuang Tzu by Osho

(Rebel Book Publishers)



Book Appreciation by
Amitabh Jha

There are some books, which are in my all time favourite lists and this book is certainly one of those few books! I have read it number of times and each time I find it refreshing, interesting, relevant, meaningful and, of course, worth reading again! Each time it gives a new insight, new strength. Each time it forces me to ask myself some tough questions, but also comes up with equally powerful answers. I have read it, loved it, and enjoyed it not out of intellectual pleasure but essentially because it gives me a sense of serenity, a sense of direction and a sense of spirituality.

Yes, it has that unique taste of a T-group process – care/concern and confrontation, both at the same time, and in a state of balance! One constant refrain of this book is ‘accept yourself and be natural’, which has also been one of the buzz phrases, since I started learning about ISABS and T-group training!

I was also like many of those people who hold a certain kind of opinion about somebody, without even trying to know another person or without giving any opportunity to another person to present his/her stand. Yes, I am talking about the author of this book – Osho. Till few years ago, I had an opinion about Osho, which was based on the comments of some people here, some people there, and largely it was a distorted, half-truthful, inverted picture. Based on all this hearsay, I was sure that I am never going to read/study anything even remotely related to Osho. Then one day I came across one of his audio-cassettes on ‘Creativity’, and it completely changed my perception of him. Today, I am not an ‘Osho-bhakta’, nor planning to join that brigade, but have found many of his talks, writings, discourses quite practical and meaningful.

Chuang Tzu was a famous Chinese philosopher. The book is a collection of Osho’s commentaries – spread over 311 pages -- on ten Taoist stories related to Chuang Tzu. Each story takes us through problems or situations that we all face at some time in our lives and shows us the simple Tao way of living with the maxim: easy is right; begin right and you are easy. On the flap-cover of the book we find these words “So the first thing to understand about Chuang Tzu, before we enter his sutras, is – be natural. Everything unnatural has to be avoided. Don’t do anything that is unnatural. Nature is enough – you cannot improve upon it.....so when the shoe fits, the foot is forgotten; when the belt fits, the belly is forgotten; and when the heart is right, ‘for’ and ‘against’ are forgotten. Remember, this is one of the greatest mantras – when the shoe fits, the foot is forgotten.”

Talking about this Chinese mystic, the author says that he is rarer than a Buddha or a Jesus. Why so? Because Buddha and Jesus emphasise effort and Chuang Tzu emphasises effortlessness...how can one make effort to lose oneself? All effort is born out of ego, and through effort ego is strengthened. This Chinese mystic says ‘easy is right’ but what we do in reality? We always choose the difficult. Its easy to accept mistake and say “Sorry” but we deny, defend and do all sorts of drama. Its easy to hug, appreciate, acknowledge somebody but again what do we do? Avoid, neglect, condemn, criticize ! Yes, we choose the difficult. The book uses beautiful metaphors to drive home its penetrating points. For example on this aspect of easy-and-difficult it says – we want to climb Everest, not the local hill, because the challenge is food for the ego. Success gives us a feeling of self-worth in a world where we are told that we have no intrinsic value, where we have learnt that our worth is dependent upon the approbation of others.

The book comes with beautiful parables, metaphors, examples and jokes of Mulla Nasreuddin. The flavor of the book is more of an interaction than just ‘gyan’. The author is not searching for dependent shishyas. He is not waiting for a blind follower but rather a believer in self, somebody who can

question self, who can question everything and arrive at life's meaning on their own. And for that, the very first step is – Accepting Ourselves. Interestingly this is what we discuss in our ISABS process. The author says “Accept yourself – and then a miracle happens. The miracle is when you accept yourself; you don't run away from yourself. Right now, each one of you is running away from yourself. Even if you come to me, you come to me as part of your escape from yourself. . . . You want something better!”

Talking about Tao, Osho says, “Just be in a let-go. Acceptance, accepting whatsoever is, is the basis of Tao.” This being in a state of free-flowing, simple, natural, is what he says is the Tao way of life. At different places he questions various religious gurus, traditions etc. He is presenting a perspective where the sense of direction must come from within, must emerge out of our questioning, our understanding and not out of blind belief. He says it is not movement that leads us somewhere, it is direction. It is not just by running that we reach our destiny, we may be running in a circle.

In the same spirit of accepting ourselves, comes the sutra of accepting others. A couplet from another Chuang Tzu parable says, “How should you treat a bird? As yourself, or as a bird?” Osho explains, “A wise man receives you not according to him, he receives you according to you. Always give the opportunity to the other to be himself – that is what understanding is, that is what love is. Don't force yourself on others. Your wishes may be good, but the result will be bad. The real point is to give freedom to the other to be himself or herself.”

This book is not a self-help book. It's rather a companion, a reflection, an introspection-kit. I have observed that whenever I am disturbed, unhappy, sad and picked up this book from my shelf, it has not offered me much. The book has gone inside me when I am calm, quiet and happy within. That's so peculiar! This amazing aspect has just stuck me now, when I am reviewing it! I am sure if I put this question before Chuang Tzu, he will say, being in a state of equilibrium, silence, calm is natural and easy.

Before I put my pen down, I would like to present four lines from a parable which can be a learning path for many of us, particularly for those of us who are in the field of facilitation.

Water is for fish, and air for men

Natures differ, and needs with them.

Hence the wise men of old did not lay down

One measure for all.

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competency in them. He defines Appreciative Intelligence as an ability to perceive the positive inherent generative potential within the present moment.

There are three components of appreciative intelligence that change leaders need to develop:

1. Reframing: Framing is the psychological process whereby a person intentionally views or puts into certain perspective any object, person, context or scenario. One of the most common examples of framing is that of calling a glass half-empty or half-full. A leader with appreciative intelligence reframes what is in the present, thereby shifting to a new view of reality and a new outcome.
2. Appreciating the positive: This is the ability to view everyday reality – events, situations, obstacles, problems – with appreciation. This is the process of selectivity and judgment of something's positive value or worth.
3. Seeing how the future unfolds into the present: This is the ability to see the generative possibilities of the present moment – how the future can unfold from the present. Tojo Thatchenkery calls this the ability to see the “Mighty Oak in the Acorn”.

Appreciative intelligence can be developed by all of us provided we are willing to look at our inner reality, “to seek our internal edges” as Dewitt Jones³ says. Seeking our internal edges requires high level of self-acceptance of ourselves – the whole package!

Another friend of ours was dealing with a difficult decision to adopt a baby girl. She is single with a good career in a multinational NGO. Her struggle was to envision how she will nurture and grow a baby girl on her own, how her career will be affected and how this will affect the possibility of her getting married to someone in the future?

We asked her to write a book about her story ten years into the future, looking at her life journey from the future. She had to only design the cover of the book as the pages will be written when her life begins to unfold as envisioned by her. She spent a whole night designing the cover. This helped her to see the future as it unfolded into her present. She went ahead and adopted a beautiful two-year old girl. She celebrated this change.

When we learn to reframe our inner reality, appreciate the positive in whatever is happening to us in our life-context and see how the future unfolds for us in the present, we become more tuned to seeing that in others and in every situation that we are in.

When you believe it, you will see it. Change unfolds generating possibilities for us.

³Celebrate what is right with the World – Video by Dewitt Jones, published by Star Thrower Inc.

FINDING REMEDIES

Dr. Pavnesh Kumar*



As I sat down to write this article, my mind drifted back in time. My emotional states as a student used to be very exhausting ride at times. For example, one small setback in my studies and my internal dialogue would pick up an overwhelming journey that went from “I did not do well today to “I failed again” to “I never do anything right” to “I am hopeless”.

Surprisingly, this pattern was not limited to studies only. It was equally common in many areas of my life. As I grew up, I saw this pattern running in families, in organizations, in one form or other. We generalize problems at times and thus, magnify them. I was desperately looking for some model that could be of help. Obviously, if a remedy was there, it would impact a large number of people.

To my relief, my answers soon followed. Understanding of **‘Neurological Levels’** (from ‘Coach to Awakener’, Robert Dilts, 2003). This fascinating model fits all pieces together. For the purpose of simplicity, we will consider two ‘Neurological Levels’...Behaviour and Identity.

- ▶ Behaviour is what we do, actions we take, etc.
- ▶ Identity is a sense of self, purpose and vision. It is a more pervasive concept. Having a negative or positive identity impacts larger areas of our life. What we identify with will determine our life, the action we will take, decision we will make, eg. which one of the following will have a more negative impact on a person's life?

- "I did not do well in Maths paper today" (Behaviour Level)
- "I am a failure" (Identity Level)

This may sound oversimplified, but usually that is how we take a behaviour or action or event and generalize it to the level of identity. The results are catastrophic usually. Let us take a look at the identity level remarks you have used or have heard being used:

- These kids are a pain in neck.
- You are a bad student.
- My subordinates are dumb.

One pattern is common in all of them....a behavior is generalized and labeled with identity. This pattern has two consequences:

1. It magnifies a problem
2. It makes change difficult.

HOW TO SOLVE THIS GENERALISATION?

The solution at times is simple. Reverse the process that created it and you have the solution. So when you encounter such negative identity level generalization, you take two steps;

1. Bring focus from identity to behaviour level.
2. Specify actions, if required.

Following example will make the steps more clear. It is a telephone conversation with a friend. XYZ, an entrepreneur, was in a very bad state of mind when the conversation started:

XYZ : *I am feeling inadequate.*

Author : *What made you think so?*

XYZ : *Every time I speak in a panel, and when I discover that other panel members have more degrees than me, I get anxious and the presentation falls flat.*

Author : *How would you like your presentation to go?*

XYZ : *I want it to go smooth and great as it happens otherwise.*

Author : *What do you require for that?*

XYZ : *Well, I need to be able to relax...and being confident of my ability ... and work a little more on preparation ..*

Author : *What actions (or training or skill) do you require to learn to relax?*

Gradually, we began to focus on actions required to achieve relaxation and confidence and so on.... The point is, before shifting the problem to behaviour or action level, she could not even think of solution. Needless to say, after the conversation was over she was more in control of herself. All she needed were certain actions (and also a little training in this case). The problem was a piece of cake now. As she started to take those actions, in the next few days, her sense of inadequacy was soon replaced by a strong sense of adequacy and heightened self-esteem.

Let us come back to describe our communication tool. This was just one of the ways of communicating. Your questions may vary, which is fine as long as we keep our objective in mind: to bring identity level issues to the level of behaviour and possibly to actions. Interesting thing to notice was that no content or solution was provided by the author. He simply asked the questions, and that shifted the focus and eventually the state of the problem, which made it seem more interesting..

This, of course, is just one of the ways. At times, answers may take more time. At times, you may require more sophisticated tools of communication. Still this is a simple and powerful mean of intervention at personal and organizational level.

Before we close, let us explore a few more real-life situations and make a guess how would you proceed to solve these issues;

- *How do you give feedback to your subordinates ("You are incompetent" or "You need a little more training/ action")?*
- *How do you talk about your children ("They are undisciplined" or "They need to spend more time on studies regularly")?*
- *How do you label your problems (I am Lazy or I need to spend some more time on exercise/ morning walk)?*
- *And so on and so forth.....*

There is a fine distinction between them and that is crucial. You will encounter many more as you practice them. If you continue to listen, you will find these patterns repetitively in many places and the change that intervention can make can be powerful enough .. and gratifying .. at the same time.

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Generative Questions

Part 2

continued from the *Here & Now*
January-June issue

Harish Raichandani

“Ask the right questions. The fastest way to change the answers you receive – from yourself and others – is to change the questions you ask.” - Lee J Colan

My apologies to fellow members and other readers for the delay in bringing out the part-2 of this article; I would also like to share that this article was originally envisaged to pool in experiences, views & thoughts of others but in absence of any contributions the experiences shared herein may not represent as wide a spectrum as originally envisaged.

Let us recall that in part-1 we shared examples of situations generating the negative emotions (e.g. despair, frustration, anger, sadness, disgust, concern, anxiety,) drain our energy and conversely, the situations generating positive emotions (characterized by Joy, Interest, Contentment, Love, Pride, Awe, Hope, Amusement, Compassion, Gratitude, Sexual desire etc.) create a spirit uplifting spiral.

With the help of four examples we realized that this holds good for the situations at intra-personal, inter-personal, group and systemic level. Further, we saw that in each of the situations the outcome of the positive spiral got triggered by the questions raised by herself/himself.

An examination of the consequences and impact in different situations enumerated earlier (part-1) would reveal that for a given situation the consequences were shaped by the type of inquiry one carried out. In this part-2 of the article we will examine the anatomy of questions which provide us the positive spiral in life.

Why do I refer to these questions as the “Generative Questions”?

gen'er a'tive (jɛn'ər-ə-tīv, -ə-rā'-) adj. Having the ability to originate, produce/ procreate

As the dictionary meaning connotes, these questions have the ability to lift us up; lift our spirit, lift our hope, lift our chances of accomplishment, lift our inner self through positive residual emotions.

More often than not, these questions (or the nature inquiry) are characterised by the following:

A Generative Question

- Is Open-ended rather than a leading or Closed one
- Addresses the Collective (or others) rather than Individual (or Self)
- Separates out the System vis-à-vis an Individual
- Focuses on Future (or the present moment) rather than the Past
- Inquires into a Paradigm (or thought process) rather than an Activity
- Has Hope as opposed to Cynicism

Last but not the least, a Generative Question leaves the

- Residue of Positive Emotions and not the Negative ones

Let us understand these characteristics (perhaps not a comprehensive list) in a greater detail

Open-ended

An Open-ended question throws up the possibility to honour multiple realities as opposed to a closed ended question; it provides a sense of freedom, it honours the recipient and it conveys openness.

At *intra-personal* level an open-ended question generates options to look beyond constraints, to break free from prejudices and biases leading to personal growth. E.g.

- What can I do to generate new business during these times of recession?

Vs

- Do I double up the efforts on ‘business development’ to tide-over during these times of recession?

At *inter-personal* level such an inquiry makes it easy to develop rapport and leads to higher trust. E.g. a marriage counsellor asking a client

- Tell me about your relationship with your wife?

Vs

- Do you have a good relationship with your wife?

At *group level* when one raises such a question, it involves & engages all the members and perhaps leads to the best answer. E.g. a class prefect asking fellow students

- How should we decorate the class for the annual day, any suggestions?

Vs

- Should we put crafts material in different corners or paste colour paintings?

When one’s inquiry is focused at *systemic level*, it facilitates to preserve the best of what exists and build on it to create a more promising future. E.g. the executive body of an NGO deliberating

- What can be done to generate more funds for our next year plans?

Vs

- Should we arrange a charity musical concert or bring out a souvenir?

One needs to bear in mind that an open question has to be genuinely ‘open’; mere words appearing ‘open’ with an ulterior motive do not make it an ‘open question’. The recipient(s) is bound to recognize the true motive. With a little practice and consciousness one can make this a habit.

The other characteristics mentioned above also apply at all the four levels. Let’s examine consequences associated with the inquiry choices we make and some examples

Addressing the collective

An inquiry which is focused on the collective generates oneness in contrast with the ‘self’ or ‘narrow’ centred inquiry

System vs Individual

Similar to the above is an inquiry which is focused on the ‘systems’ aspect as opposed to individual(s)

The recently concluded American presidential election provides us plenty of examples. For instance

Obama statements

“...with major financial institutions on the verge of collapse and global markets on the brink, **we** took unprecedented action and passed a \$700 billion rescue plan... I have no doubt this was the right thing to do to address the immediate crisis and put **our** economy on firmer footing...” [on financial crisis – pl see the choice of **we** from the democrat presidential nominee; also the focus on system]

Vs

McCain statements

“...Two years ago, **I** called for reform of this corruption at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Congress did nothing. The Administration did nothing. Senator Obama did nothing, and actually profited from this system of abuse and scandal... somehow its former CEO had managed to gain my opponent’s trust to the point that Senator Obama actually put him in charge of his vice presidential search” [on financial crisis – pl see the choice of **I** from the ruling republican presidential nominee; also the focus on individual]

Activity vs Paradigm

Another characteristic of generative questions is that these questions attempt to examine deeper aspects rather than those on the surface. Just as in Mahabharat Krishna chooses to keep a focus on future and super-ordinate to influence Arjuna:

Arjuna contention

“I no longer desire victory, Krishna, or kingship, or the delights that come from it. What good will kingship do to me, Krishna, or pleasures, or life? They for whom I desired kingship, pleasures, and delights stand here in battle-array, offering up their lives and substance—teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and also kinsmen...”

Vs

Krishna’s reason

“...Considering your own code of honor as a warrior, you should not hesitate. For a warrior there is no greater good than a lawful war. Happy are the warriors, Arunja, who find such a war coming to them unsought, like an open door to Paradise. But if you will not wage this lawful battle, then you will fail your personal law and code of honor, and will sin...”

We all know the generative consequence of this captivating dialogue from the Bhagwat Gita;

Future vs Past

One of the most impactful characteristics which makes an inquiry (or a question) generative is when the focus of inquiry is on the future as opposed to the past. The future focused inquiry often looks for possibilities, searches for solutions as opposed to the probability of searching for the problems from the past.

Hope vs Cynicism

The hope is forward looking and cynicism often looks at past. Therefore, this becomes the most important characteristic we need to nurture to be the inquirers with generative mindset.

'Hope & Future' vs 'Past & Cynicism' is the most lethal mindset to have one way or the other.

Let's look at how American president elect Barack Obama exemplified this vis-à-vis Hillary Clinton before he was declared the democrat nominee; on Thursday the 31st Jan'08 the very first debate between Obama & Hillary (after John Edwards had retreated and only two candidates remained in the race) these were the first set of words spoken by the two in the CNN debate

Obama

*".. and I also want to note that I was friends with Hillary Clinton before we started this campaign; I will be friends with Hillary Clinton after this campaign is over... I believe we're at a defining moment... Our nation is at war; our planet is in peril. Families all across the country are struggling... And at this moment, the question is: **How do we take the country in a new direction?** How do we get past the divisions that have prevented us from solving these problems year after year after year? ... I think what is at stake right now is whether we are looking backwards or we are looking forwards. I think it is the past versus the future... We want change from George Bush. But we also have to have change that brings the country together, pushes back against the special interests in Washington, and levels with the American people about the difficult changes that we make. If we do that, I am confident that we can solve any problem and we can fulfill the destiny that America wants to see, not just next year, but in many years to come..."*

Obama

"Well, on January 20, 2009, the next president of the United States will be sworn in on the steps of the Capitol... And then, when the celebrations are over, the next president will walk into the Oval Office, and waiting there will be a stack of problems, problems inherited from a failed administration: a war to end in Iraq and a war to resolve in Afghanistan; an economy that is not working for the vast majority of Americans, but well for the wealthy and the well-connected; tens of millions of people either without health insurance at all or with insurance that doesn't amount to much, because it won't pay what your doctor or your hospital need.... an energy crisis that we fail to act on at our peril; global warming, which the United States must lead in trying to contend with and reverse; and then all of the problems that we know about and the ones we can't yet predict..."

It is a known history now which voice turned out to be the generative one for the Democratic Party. However, if one were to keep aside the results and read the above paragraphs again one can easily experience the greater residue of Positive Emotions with the former argument than with the later one.

When one examines the Obama vs McCain speeches one can see the difference. Obama's questions to himself, to Hillary Clinton, to American masses were mostly generative as opposed to those of McCain. Also a good perspective can be found at . <http://www.newsweek.com/id/167582>

The characteristics of Obama's speeches indeed generate positive emotions in the listeners/readers through Openness, Collective Ownership, Systems focus (rather than targeting an individual), Future focus, Big-picture view and Hope.

The several examples from the history, my personal experience and reflection (particularly) over past few months have strengthened and reinforced author's own belief about the 'generative questions' and their anatomy; the results of American Presidential election'08 and my interaction with several friends from the other side of globe, particularly during the recent weeks have further supported my belief. To me, the emotional & intellectual connect which, Obama has been able to establish with the masses in the USA and beyond is testimony to the anatomy of 'Generative Questions'. Amen!

Harish Raichandani, Professional Member ISABS, comments and feedback welcome – please share your views/experience by writing to harish@potentia.in

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In the last twenty years, supervision/facilitation has increasingly been seen as a vital part of the repertoire of most of the helping professions-be they Doctors, Counsellors, Social Workers, Psychotherapists or related fields.

This book encompasses a spirit of enquiry, excites the need for the love of learning, encourages openness to others and urges that we nourish a difference which is free from preconceptions and fixed opinions and demonstrate magnanimity where we can share experiences without judging whose is better.

Passionate supervision is the essential ingredient required to break through intellectual and emotional resistance. Passion

is not a feeling; it is a force capable of deeply affecting others in a subtle and profound way. Any action, any thought or feeling when fed by passion has a hugely transformative power. Passion is not fanatical. Passion is not noisy. Passion is gentle and patient while at the same time fierce and determined. Passion arises when the essence of one's life has been touched and one starts dealing with the world from that place.

In 'Passionate Supervision,' an atmosphere is created, in which the facilitator and those being facilitated together deepen their presence and look and watch without being distracted by preconceived ideas, expectations and stories. The facilitator-group relationship is one that can be educative, supportive, growthful, challenging and collegial.

A passionate facilitator will really listen to the language and life experience of the persons in front of him/her and adapt one's own style and language accordingly. This is a mark of true humility. In the soul of facilitation we need to be potent and speak our truth and listen to the truth of others, to be responsive without compromising our integrity, to be vulnerable without losing sight for our ability to change, to be a witness and not a bystander. This is not always easy, as sometimes we may have to take a stand and risk being persecuted for it. The soul of facilitation is to respect differences and look for shared understanding; to acknowledge weakness and power and not to exploit either. When we facilitate from this perspective we are open to learn from those who seek our support thus opening our heart through generosity and empathy. Facilitation thus acknowledges the humanness of making mistakes and learning from them, being open-hearted and forgiving both of ourselves and others. Such facilitation from the heart is also about healing. In so doing we establish a context for supervision which requires awareness of the greater picture and helps us to consider passionately where we are focusing our energies, to what end and for whose benefit. This may require us to attend closely to our core values, to motivate us, to operate from a place of total integrity and thus make a difference.

Change and challenge are an inevitable part of such facilitation. We have a choice to embrace or resist. By responding courageously to challenges that present themselves and welcome the opportunity for transformation, we grow and develop in our awareness of our self and our ability to function usefully and with insight into our life's work. Passionate facilitation offers both the receiver and giver opportunities to develop new understandings about themselves and move towards deeper and clearer insights of their world. The most dramatic transformations happen when long assumptions so challenged no longer make sense in the light of current awakening. The deepest changes in relationships between the facilitator and the group need to be based on a high level of trust and confidence. There is a need to face and work through things that at first can appear as most threatening.

When a facilitator begins to apprehend a deeper truth in the stories of the group, it is not a passive process, but leads to a deeper contact with reality, with unforeseeable consequences. The potential to change and reframe how group members see something is a necessary requirement to recognise new truth;

thus the pursuit of truth is a creative journey. Whenever a new truth is glimpsed it has unforeseen consequences - new insights, opportunities, discoveries and departures. These shifts are mirrored between members of the group and frequently it is the openness of the facilitator to transformative change that determines transformative possibilities for the rest of the group.

Mindfulness is thus a quality that facilitation demands; the ability of responding without fear or favour. One of the primary tasks of facilitation is the containment of anxiety, our own and that of the group. The need is for the facilitator to establish his / her presence rather than focus on ingenuity of intervention. The Harvard Negotiation Project (1999)¹ encapsulated the sentiment succinctly when it said "In making an intervention the facilitator can only know intent and the receiver alone knows its impact". Sometimes these are one and the same, but when they are not this seeming mismatch can offer an opportunity for new learning if one allows curiosity rather than hurt to explore this mismatch. Spontaneity, i.e. meeting the moment with openness and energy provides for meaningful change through awareness of how things are in the present and not through attempting to turn them into how we would like them to be in the future. We have very deep needs to connect and fear gets in our way. It is the biggest block to intimacy and communication. Fear is born in the mind; it lives in the body and keeps us separated from ourselves. A Sufi maxim says 'Fear knocked at the door, love answered and there was no one there'. Fear also makes us believe that we are responsible for the welfare of the group. Thus we choose safe certainty, 'of seeking solutions and answers'. Passionate facilitation on the contrary urges that we enter the sacred space, without memory, desire or understanding. Being present, not holding on to the past, not wanting a particular outcome and not trying to make premature sense. Bion (2001)² urges us to dare to leap into the unknown.

Passionate facilitation is thus synonymous with passion for life. Our task is to make the participants aware of their competence and see ourselves as persons who shake the carpet. In other words, help participants change by assisting them in questioning their belief systems, checking tacit assumptions, expectations and points of interest. Our role is to set conceptual boundaries rather than being intelligent. Finally passionate facilitation is about spontaneously living with love, humour and paradox; good ingredients for powerful facilitation.

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Can You Imagine?

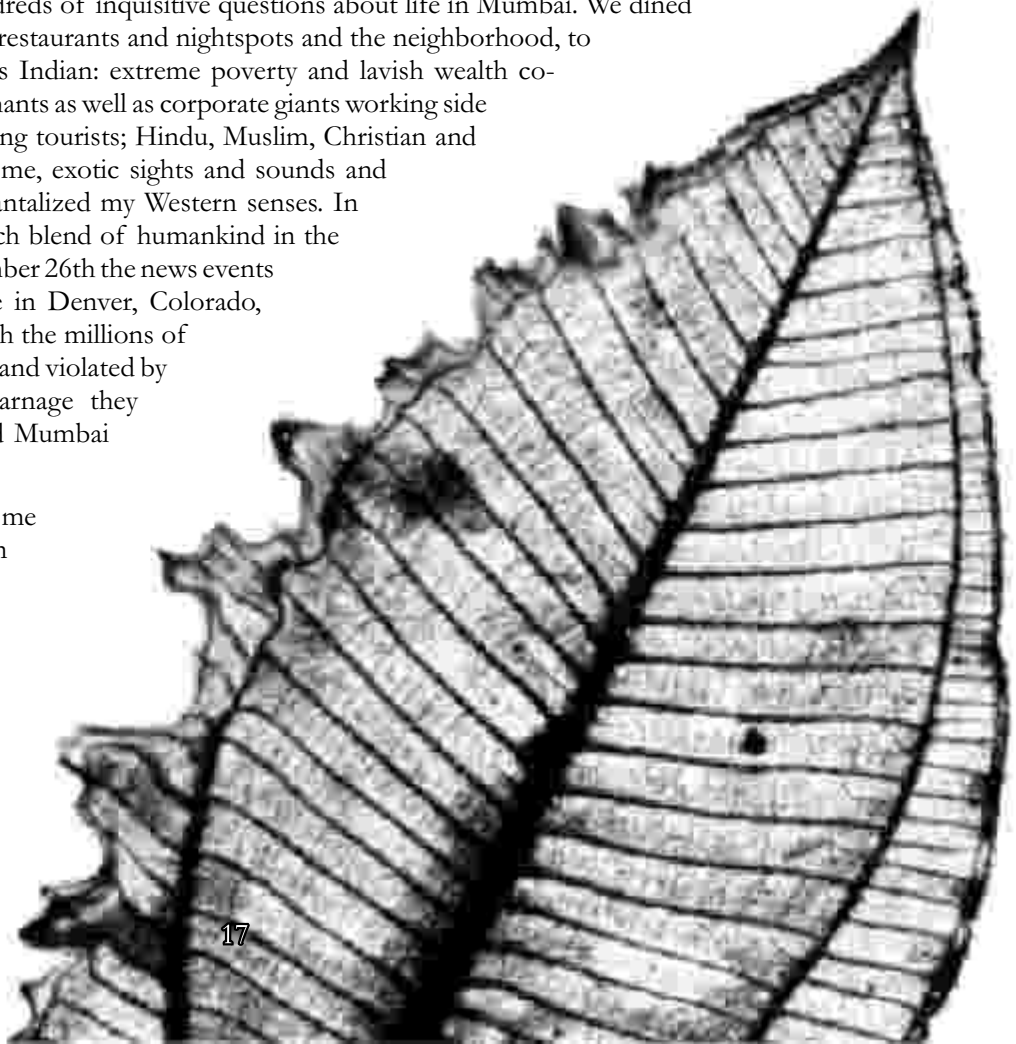
Tom Osborn

I have been asked to write an article for “Here & Now” for the last year. I have found every possible excuse to put off writing the article. I was busy with client work; I was chair of the planning committee for the annual NTL meeting; I was the Dean of an upcoming lab for NTL; I was traveling on business to South Africa for a month; I was having major surgery after the South Africa trip and would need time to recuperate. In the midst of my list of activities, I rationalized my many excuses and

put off writing. The events of November 26, 27 and 28, 2008, have slapped me in the face, given me a “wake-up” call and forced me to try to make my own personal sense out of a world that has gone awry. Indulge me, then, as I use this article selfishly to work through my personal reactions and challenge our collective response.

Over the last several years, I have become very familiar with the Mumbai neighborhoods between Sasson Dock and the Taj Continental Hotel. On my first trip to the city, I was proudly given a tour of downtown Mumbai by Raji Sharma, Sushma’s husband. Sushma had invited me to facilitate a Human Interactions Lab for ISABS in Agra and in route I was honored to be their houseguest in the northern part of Mumbai. On my downtown tour, Raji found the perfect booth near the window of the second floor bar of the Taj Hotel and with the pride of every native Indian, shared with me the splendor of the palatial hotel with the view of the Gateway to India. Over the next months and year, I was to revisit that place and that neighborhood many, many times. I returned on several trips with Sushma and Raji to sip a cool drink, indulge ourselves on appetizers and enjoy the richness of camaraderie between colleagues and great friends. Harish Raichandani and I worked with corporate clients headquartered in the area and we stayed at both a corporate guest house above the Sasson Dock and a smaller hotel next door to the Taj. We walked the neighborhood almost every evening as Harish shared his perceptions of India and patiently answered my hundreds of inquisitive questions about life in Mumbai. We dined together at many of the neighborhood’s restaurants and nightspots and the neighborhood, to me, became a juxtaposition of all things Indian: extreme poverty and lavish wealth co-existing; small business owners and merchants as well as corporate giants working side by side; vibrant local life and intermingling tourists; Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Jew, living together in harmony; and to me, exotic sights and sounds and smells that stimulated, challenged and tantalized my Western senses. In short, the neighborhood symbolizes a rich blend of humankind in the entire splendor of its diversity. On November 26th the news events from Mumbai shocked the world. Here in Denver, Colorado, USA, thousands of miles away, along with the millions of people of India, I felt personally attacked and violated by the terrorists and the violence and carnage they created in the streets of my much-loved Mumbai neighborhood.

Now, what some of you may know about me is that my professional work is grounded in the practice of Appreciative Inquiry. Many of my ISABS colleagues in India are AI practitioners: Sushma Sharma; Harish Raichandani; R (Sankar) Sankarasubramanyan and here in the US, Tojo Thatchenkery (there are more and for those that I have left out, I beg your forgiveness). Developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh



Srivastva at Case Western Reserve Weatherhead School of Management, Appreciative Inquiry has become a powerful process in transforming communities, programs and large organizations around the globe. Appreciative Inquiry has been successfully used in a broad range of cross-cultural applications. I have seen its impact on developing micro-banking systems to promote small business development among village women in Nepal. I have seen it work in developing high performing teams with a common vision across separatist tribal loyalties in South Africa. I have watched it work in the corporate sector to create transformational change in industry. And, I am familiar with its recent use in Nepal in an initiative for creating and nurturing a positive future and vision of Nepal in their challenge to transform their society in response to the nationwide Maoist insurgency.

Facing difficult challenges, most people feel helpless and hopeless in their ability to influence others. Mounting feelings of despair about the prospects for positive change and peace occur. “We/they” divisions develop. People look for solutions by analyzing problems and their causes. Fault-finding becomes the norm. It becomes difficult to raise energy above the negativity of dealing with endless problems. With Appreciative Inquiry there is choice. We can dwell in the images of the carnage of the terrorists in Mumbai or liberate the images of a vibrant, eclectic, thriving and diverse neighborhood. In liberating those positive images, people can discover “best practice” success stories...what happened, when and how...and develop higher level visions along with designing and implementing strategies for reaching those visions.

I am not suggesting that Appreciative Inquiry is the ultimate answer to all of our world’s complex societal issues. In this short article, I am limited in describing the extent of possible applications of Appreciative Inquiry. What I am willing to suggest is that it a well proven process that is strength based, vision driven, action oriented, and engages whole systems in transformational change. The events of our times are calling for new ways of dealing with complex dynamics. They are calling for engaging whole systems in transformational change. As Einstein is reported to have said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”.

While I weep at the loss of life and destruction in the wake of the November attacks, in my heart and mind, I know that building a peaceful and prosperous India free from the threats of terrorism requires new ways of thinking and acting in India and the larger world order. The seeds of that type of transformational change might very well be in Appreciative Inquiry...and what better place to nurture those seeds than ISABS. What possibilities can you imagine for our organization? What are the events of the day calling us to do? How can ISABS’ mission and values engage the broader culture? How can we use the principles of Appreciative Inquiry for transformational change? Can you imagine the possibilities?

Tom integrates strength-based appreciative approaches to traditional organisation development interventions. He is a professional member of both the NTL Institute and ISABS. Tom can be contacted at tomosborn@mindspring.com ■





Kolkata Region

October Event

ISABS Kolkata Region has been active during the past two months, preparing for the October Event which was held from the 18th to the 26th of October 2008.

We had Basic and Advanced Labs and a 3-day programme on Appreciative Inquiry. A total of 26 participants took part in the Event. Weather was in our favour and so was the venue: YMCA, right in the heart of the city. Khirod, Ramalingam and Paul were the facilitators.

A first time in Kolkata for Appreciative Inquiry (AI) programme. Ram and Paul took members through the concept of AI from Define and Discovery through Dream and Design, helping the participants to draw out their own delivery/destinies through an intensive, interesting and highly participative engagement with AI. Use of imagery, colour, pictures, wonderment through story-telling set in the themes and tone for the groups to work on.

Ram continued in Kolkata after AI to facilitate ALHP, foregoing Diwali celebrations at home. The gain was ours!

Monthly meetings

ISABS continues to meet on the scheduled third Wednesday of every month with a wish list for higher attendance.

June monthly session was addressed by Mrs. Indrani Bose and Mr. Shyamal Bose on 'Visualisation and its effects on human behavior'. Connecting members through experiences of the past, present and future, the power of imagination and making dreams a reality – a visual treat.

July meeting was with Prof. Gouranga Chattopadhyay, who enlightened us on the topic 'Managing oneself in Role in the Indian context'. Touching on the major socio-psychological processes present in India, he spoke on the challenges of managing oneself first and foremost in various roles to manage systems and boundaries in the larger context. Mismanaging oneself by not dealing with primary emotions of anger and guilt, and not being allowed to work publicly on one's incompetence aggravates to create universal problems, which become bigger than the individual to create societal culture of Invasion and Power.

September meeting was with Dr Udai Pareek, speaking on 'ISABS – Looking Ahead'. Focusing on opportunities, reinforcing positive aspects is the basis of Indian culture. Going far back into Ayurveda which promotes health as against getting rid of disease, he touched upon the aspect of treating societies as critical to create communities. Accelerated movement towards group processes and social processes will ensure preparedness to match competition,

capabilities in the right perspective. The meeting was followed with Chinese dinner with Committee members in an authentic Chinese restaurant next door.

October meeting was moderated by K. K. Jha, and Ramlingam was our honored guest. Theme of 'Letting Go' as a challenge. Members of ISABS Anjan, Subhashree and Ila shared the process involved in 'giving up and letting go' when life is apparently at its peak. All for a deeper purpose – an inner calling in its own right. Owing the decision-making to ISABS in many ways, they shared the freedom and challenge of venturing into the unknown. "The most secure place in the world is in the Unknown" – Robin Sharma. Their talk evoked other members to share their own experiences of moments of risks taken and benefits reaped.

Subhashree Chander

Bangalore Region

This was my first experience being a part of the faculty as I was observing a lab. The MEC campus was beautifully green with vast open spaces which made it convenient for our learning. Starting off early in the morning with my co-volunteers in the communication team was a great experience! Being a part of organizing this event for a diverse community required that we think differently right from how we communicate; make the participants at home as they had minimal understanding of English. All events related communications were rolled out at the same time and in English and Kannada. The reading material also was translated into Kannada thanks to Joy's hard work. The opening, mid and closing community sessions were held in the two languages and a few of us who knew to converse in Kannada facilitated these sessions.

At the end of the session the participants from the Kannada lab specially appreciated our efforts in making this a rich experience for them, shared how they felt included in the community including attending the party which was very different for them. The fact that they could easily understand the proceeding of the events, reading materials made them feel an integral part of the community. This was the first experiment in the region which was a great success! It further deepens my belief and other professional members who share of making the T group learning available in other vernacular languages to benefit the larger community.

This entire experience has been very enriching, playing multiple roles : an observer, attending faculty meetings, and being a part of the volunteering/organizing team which has set a new precedent.

The second week with its two labs was an intimate community of 22 members. For me, being part of an all women faculty was interesting and the whole sorority concept unravelled itself. Home Truths, closeness, feeling-these were the festive gifts we took back with us.

Neela and Arati

ISABS Mumbai Region PDP Group

It all began when more than 50% of the participants for the Phase A in The December National Event last year came from Mumbai. There were one or two more in Phase B. The somewhat natural process of staying in touch and meeting together of lab-mates initially began with emails and a meeting in café coffee day type places, or Jyotsna's house, etc.

New in a world that wanted us to read up on behavioural science related subjects, and unsure that we were really capable of doing it, conversations often centered around "What have you read?" "Book Review" "Can I borrow this book once you are done reading it?" and the like.

Gauri (Nigudkar) came up with the idea of formalizing it and creating a space where we could find support for our learning journeys. At that time, the idea was more about books and book reviews. The idea had appeal considering how difficult it could get to find books to read. Some of us had online books and documents that we could email each other, and the plan grew to expanding the existing ISABS Mumbai blog to include a private, login only area for "PDP Study Group" (I don't think anyone knows how this name really happened. We kind of grew into it.) This area had space for discussion, sharing of reading material, online books for download, etc. Its not heavily used, but most PDP Study group have logins there, and can access it to download or read stuff. I manage this area, with my partner in glory and gore (Gauri) as an additional administrator.

From there, the flurry of emails grew, as did ideas for what we could do together. Facilitators joined in and unhesitatingly contributed their time and effort to help our learning. From simple discussion meetings, we moved to sessions to learn about different things. To date, we have had sessions on Learning Styles (Sankar), MBTI (Sharad), Your Temperament (Vikram), etc. We had a work shop with Sushma last month on "Sexuality, Sensuality and Creativity" which was a whole new journey of discovery and insights. Participants volunteered to do sessions too and Rachna did one on facilitation styles. I have offered to do one on experiential learning in the outdoors.....

Sometimes, it was difficult for some members to be able to afford whatever was currently happening, if it involved fees, and we didn't want to lose out on participants for that reason. Vikram and Shridhar noticed our enthusiasm and thirst for learning, and allocated us a fund to help support our learning. The idea was to use them to sponsor/subsidize as needed, or to gain resources, etc. with an understanding that eventually if things worked well, the PDP Study Group itself would manage the PDP funds in terms of scholarships and things for all members in the region once they completed their ALHP.

Asha and Jaya have volunteered to manage this fund. At the moment, we use it infrequently and only for the Study Group activities.

We are in the process of creating a library of books that people can borrow, headed by Anisha, and there are some plans of creating

some audio-visuals as well. This is probably going to take time, but will be awesome and well worth it when it happens.

There is amazing of closeness, acceptance, trust, support, affection, caring.... That has evolved among us in this journey, and it feels like family. We enjoy being together, doing stuff together, sharing learning..... to the extent that the ones among us attending the National Event this year actually booked train tickets together so that we could travel together in fun rather than endure. What a long way we have come in the past one year.

This thing was like opening a tap for a drink of water and being caught in a flash flood. It had a life of its own, and it gains momentum each time we meet still. More and more people join the stream. What started as a group of strictly PDP members, expanded to include interns, facilitators, people who have cleared ALHP..... what binds us together is a shared desire to learn.

There are other things too, that we need to work on, to extend our reach and help new members. At the moment, the status of our group is more like a participant initiative and it has no real standing in the PDP scheme of things, though the Mumbai Chapter's support is unhesitating. It thus gets difficult to merge "official PDP learning resources" with those of our group, but Jimmy and Ganesh are slowly beginning to trust that we are not a flash in the pan and we are really committed (I think). Soon, we may be able to put up the official document that outlines the PDP journey for access by the members of our group. This will help us understand the objectives of each phase, interphase work, log submissions needed before applying for next phase, etc. and help remove a lot of that grey area and differences in understanding. Jimmy has already shared some articles with us, and we are hoping to have a more fluid sharing of resources in the near future.

PDP participants from other regions call or email to ask what they can do in their region. They can get online access to the study area site straightaway, as that is not limited by location and it makes sense to have a shared library and resources where possible. For the rest, I share what we do and how.... And hope that is enough.... What they really need is one Gauri. She is the glue that holds us together, plans stuff, makes it happen, invests so much of herself to help keep us on the same page.... Oh all of us have ideas, all of us are willing to contribute, but its Gauri's awesome planning and management skills that made it seem so effortless.

Perhaps, looking at our success, we can create a model that can be implemented in other places.

Delhi Region

Delhi Region had two Regional programmes, one at Faridabad, and another at Lucknow exclusively for the NGO sector at highly subsidised rates. We are also holding our regular monthly meetings which are being coordinated by Manjit Kaur. Delhi Region is planning to have its annual family get-together of professional members and PDP candidates on December 28, 2008, continuing the tradition started last year.

Pradeep Prakash

For more information on all the events, please refer to the brochures available at <http://www.isabs.org>

Please send your feedback and contribution to future issues to isabs.publications@gmail.com

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