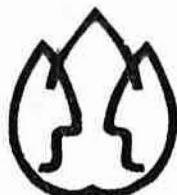


REFLECTIONS
ANECDOTES & MEMORIES
OF



ISABS

OVER *25* YEARS



We have pleasure in presenting to you a collection of reflections, anecdotes and memories of experiences, critical incidents shared by members and participants of various labs about their association with ISABS

- Organising Committee
25th Anniversary Celebrations of
ISABS

January 23, 1998

“.....I fondly recall a meeting that we five -- Abad Ahmed, Somnath Chattopadhyay, Ishwar Dayal, Francis Menezes and Suresh Srivastava had at the Conference Centre of NTL (1966) to discuss about the foundation of a society in India on the pattern of NTL. The dream that we envisioned came to fruition in the shape of Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS) in 1971.....”

- Somnath Chattopadhyay

“.....ISABS we established in 1971, almost 15 years after application of behavioural science in India (Lynton 1960).....During the course of Conference entitled “Developments in Experience Based Learning” held at Pune between December 05 to 06, 1971 lead to the emergence of ISABS. The Conference was attended by 20 professionals -- Dharni P. Sinha, Fred Massarik, KK Anand, K.J. Christopher, Margaret Roderick, E.H. McGarth, Jim Filella, Alan Batchelor, Donald Bilby, S.N.Pandey, Pulin Garg, S.C. Daftadar, Paul Siromoni, Francis A. Menezes and Dilip K. Lahiri. The members shared their experience of behavioural science experiments in educational and industrial systems in the country.....”

“.....The founder members present decided to include colleagues who were not present in the Conference but had made distinguished contribution in the field like Nitish R.De, Udai Pareek, Ishwar Dayal, Abad Ahmad and Somnath Chattopadhyay.....”

“.....The founder members of ISABS had one thing in common i.e. they all had gone through T-Group (“T” for Training) experience in the United States of America or in India.....”

“The establishment of ISABS was widely welcomed by those interested in the behavioural science movement in this country.”

- Dharni P. Sinha

REFLECTIONS, ANECDOTES & MEMORIES

Our Contributors

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- 15 R.Sankara Subramanayan
- 16 Kirpal Singh
- 17 V.S. Sisodia
- 18 Paul Siromoni
- 19 G.K. Valecha
- 20 M. Yawar Baig

Names arranged in alphabetical order

ONE

AHP EXPERIENCE - THE SECOND LAB

"Your room-mate has taken the keys." The words uttered by the receptionist at Holiday Inn came as a shock to me. During my BHP days, I had got single-room accommodation. With a heavy heart, I proceeded towards the room. I knocked at the door for ten minutes waiting for some response. There was none.

Ultimately the house-keeping staff helped me and opened my room. There was no one inside, nor was there any sign of anybody having been there, and on the top of that, the key of the room was not available at the reception. Suddenly I felt I was already in the lab.

It took a while to regain my composure and then I started looking for privacy, and out of the two beds, I selected the one which was away from the entrance and the toilet. I heaved a sigh of relief having positioned myself in a private corner near the balcony. I had some kind of privacy in the room. Having achieved that I dozed off.

A click at the door woke me up and I saw a well-built youngman of medium-height, fair-complexioned, with a smiling face, a look-alike of Sachin from Hindi films. He stepped inside the room holding a stylish suitcase in one hand and the missing keys in the other. Both of us were startled to see each other as none expected the other. Nervous greetings preceded uncomfortable silence. I started reading a book and he got busy unpacking.

His small stylish suitcase which unfolded in all possible ways looked twice the size of my standard, sturdy vip. He took out the contents and used hangers to hand his stuff. I had left my suitcase half-open with all its contents inside on a side-table to be able to operate at my convenience. Now I felt somewhat uneasy about it.

At around 4-o'clock he requested to change the music coming on SONY to MTV. The only option for me was to say 'yes'. Disagreement on the first day must be avoided. When he left for the beach in the evening, I immediately re-organized my things to make myself acceptable to my room-mate. I also hung up some of my clothes on hangers.

It was clear that this suave, fair and smiling youngman who worked for MNC was quite a contrast to me with my humble background and the PSU job. The only thing similar between us was that we both were going to attend AHP and were destined to be together for a week.

He expressed his confidence and eagerness for the lab and announced that it was possible that room-mates would not be put in the same labs. He also expressed his fear of 'water' and maintained that he would go to the beach every day. He did not like my watching cricket match.

Life seemed very dull; I cannot listen to Hindi songs for long, nor can I watch a cricket match, nor go to the balcony and enjoy viewing the swimming beauties in the pool because in the balcony he had spread his clothes for drying.

Things started going topsy-turvy from the second day onwards. After the first session in the lab, I came back to the room for a few minutes. To my utter surprise, my room-mate, who did most things immaculately was not so at all this time. He had all the time to get ready but probably he was in a hurry to leave the room. He had left a mess around—tea spilled on the centre-table, moisturiser bottle left open, his wet shirt spread on my half open suitcase, and his suitcase on his bed and some more similar nature of untidiness. During the lunch time, I met him when he seemed very quiet and alone and said, "Everything is going OK."

As I was walking towards the room after the completion of the day's lab, he joined me in the corridor coming from behind. As we came near the room, he suddenly snatched the room key from my hand and said, " I would open the door for you as you have been doing for me." I told him he was getting touchy to which he vehemently denied.

We both went to rest. I switched on the MTV in low tone. After about half an hour, he got up quietly and changed the MTV to SONY where tunes of Hindi songs were being telecast. He also mumbled something to the effect that there was no fun in watching a cricket match. He went to the balcony and picked up a vest which he had left for drying. It had gathered faint stains of varnish from a cane chair. He showed that to me and mumbled "something has happened. It has also grown touchy."

Things went on in a similar manner for some three more days. Getting along was easy, for we hardly met. He always wanted to go to the beach in the morning and asked me to wake him up but I never disturbed him. I came back early to sleep. He came back at midnight, never went to the beach in the morning but was always in deep waters during the evening. To my horror, I had to listen to same Hindi tunes on SONY everyday. But there were a few surprises.

He got extremely excited about the "Independence Cup" cricket match between India and Pakistan and admonished me twice for my lack of interest in cricket. Throughout the match he went on commenting how very good and cohesive his team was but after an excellent 'skit' presented by my group on the 5th day, he told me that his group was not as good as mine. He also expressed aversion to drinking but on the Party Day, he always had a bottle of beer in his hand. He boasted about his work-place, professionalism and experience and longed to get an MBA degree. But when he got to know that my experience was a decade more than his and that I was already an MBA, his tone changed to

reverence; once he even uttered 'Sir' referring to me. On the third day, he brought an eye-lotion and requested me to put a drop into his eyes. I had never done such a thing before, but to my surprise I enjoyed doing it. I had to do it for several days, which brought us together.

Once I overheard him, telling one of his friends that he wanted to keep away from girls. But I always found him with at least one girl and sometimes two. I was taken a back to see that a lovely girl from my lab was running after him. She seemed to do things in calculated proportion, taking care to maintain as much distance from me as possible, and to be as near my room-mate as she could manage.

At the end of the sixth day, he was his usual self again. He praised his group, himself and also let it be known that he had been cleared for PDP. That did not enlighten us of our performance, but he expressed his dissatisfaction at our lack of interest. He was again a picture of confidence and suave MNC executive. I felt uncomfortable and went for an early dinner. Before returning to our room, I completed the check-out formalities. I was presented with a long computerized bill. With some difficulty, I identified my portion of the bill and paid it. However, the bill gave a me deep understading of my room-mate's activities during the past six days. Contended, I went to sleep.

Early morning the next day I was ready to leave. I picked up my luggage and tip-toed towards the door, Suddenly, in the darkness a voice boomed "How could you leave without saying 'Hello!' to me!" I felt like a thief, dropped my suitcase slowly on the floor, moved towards him and sat down next to him .

He raised himself a bit and said, "You have always been with me." I was deeply touched by these words, and against my nature I hugged him and said, "We were always together. I have enjoyed my stay with you" After a few moments we said good-bye to each other.

I moved towards the door thinking how could I have given him a hug, something I could not bring myself to do even to one of my girl-friends which I have always desired to do from my very school days! I felt irritated and displeased with myself.

As I was about to leave, he said he would come to see me off. This time I did not believe him. I told him politely not to bother and left the room. After a couple of minutes, to my surprise, he was there at the reception. I wondered what could have prompted him to get up so early. The puzzle was soon solved, as he was joined by the lovely 'gal' of the lab. I could never talk to him again as he was busy hugging.

The lab answers hundreds of significant questions; it also raises that many. And I imagine, in this context, the experience I had with my room-mate has not been of any less significance. In fact, the lab is both real and artificial, but with my room-mate it was real-life lab experience. It has enriched me and confused me at the same time.

Presently, I am in a state of confusion. I am confronted with hundreds of questions. For example, whether there was privacy in the room or not, whether I required privacy; whether his suitcase was bigger than mine and if he had more clothes in it. Is it more convenient to keep one's clothes inside a suitcase rather than hang them outside on hangers?

Some of the questions are more intriguing than others, such as whether he liked cricket and drinking and who enjoyed Hindi songs more, he or me? Is it more healthy and pleasurable to walk on the beach in the morning or in the evening? Who was more organized, he or me? who was more affected by the lab, he or me? Was he more sensitive or I? Did he care and love more than I did; Or I was with him or he was with me or both were with each other.

I have grave doubts now. I am not even sure whether I was better-off in AHP with a room-mate or without one in BHP. As usual, I have neither given him my address nor have taken his. The only hope of meeting him again is at Phase A but I dread going through two labs simultaneously.

Hey! Where are you? With me, with him or within yourself. Be there, wherever you are .Bye!

- S. K. Aggarwal

TWO

ISABS - THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

The very first encounter was in the realm of idea. Fresh out of college, dazed with the first encounter with process work in Pulin's then called, "Sensitivity training labs", I began hanging around him, not for any formal transaction but for chatting with a man who, in my view, integrated action, thought and feeling and whose real world and the world of philosophy were in harmony with each other. During the evening teas in the verandah I would hang on to every word. That is when I heard of the formation of a society for "training the trainers".

While I was deeply moved and drawn towards process work I had no clue as to how that would shape into a calling. The only option, it seemed was to join an academic institution. However, the thought of further extending my studenthood after seven years of gruelling demands, did not seem at all attractive. Fascinated by the concept of "training the trainer" I bided my time, making a promise to myself that some day I too must go through it.

I was working in the Indian Space Research Organization in the experiment that became the precursor to today's satellite TV. My work was in mass communication for rural development in all its aspects planning, designing the communication and involvement in the research to evaluate. ISRO then had a good deal of the ethos of the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, and encouraged learning and development. Purely out of his indulgence for me Professor Yash Pal, the then Director of the centre in Ahmedabad, agreed to clear my nomination for the internship programme of ISABS. The then Education & Research Committee of ISABS in its own wisdom granted me entry into phase II of the three phases. To my delight I found two old friends, Ashok Malhotra and Zahid Gangjee, both alumni of the same institute (IIMA), in my group. I had by then worked with Pulin in some seven labs as a co-trainer

and two as a participant. In fact, working with Pulin and his absolutely high standards meant being a participant all the time!

The encounter in ISABS turned out to be totally unexpected. Professor Gouranga Chattopadhyay with his stunning good looks of a classical Bengali bhadrolok, briar pipe in mouth in, to my utter dismay, good pristine Tavistock style, announced in his opening statement that he would not interact with participants, but would only, from time to time, put forth hypotheses and third person process comments. I had nearly a convulsion and took issue with him without any delay. Disdainfully he emitted a few more puffs of aromatic tobacco and looked into the distance before making another process comment. That brought home to me clearly that there are many kinds of process work available. In the evenings of course we compared the faculty, abused our own, and merriment covered the painful truths gathered during the day. To boot, Gouranga's co-trainer was my old friend Indira Parikh (then a phase III Intern) who in her first lab had me as the co-trainer! I had never felt so bereft of my little personal group consisting of Pulin, Indira and myself. They were on the faculty, I was a participant. The unexpectedness became acute when Pulin announced the Marathon for the second week in which the entire community would participate and Indira and I would be co-trainers. It was one long turbulent experience, exhilarating, eye-opening and certainly a setting where no location seemed firm enough.

Sorrowfully, however, there were right then strong undercurrents of polarization in the faculty body. As I saw it then "something was amiss" and as I see it now, the problem festered due more to fear or neglect than to anything else. It needed to be addressed squarely as an institutional issue rather than as a conflict over territory or values. Well, that is the past. I cannot say that I relished the experience fully, I cherish some moments, and wonder what other paths could have opened for the unfolding that eventually took place.

A personal part of the story. On the night the Marathon ended at about 2 a.m. some of us stayed awake talking, and at 4 a.m. I received a call informing me of a major accident that my father had had. I had to cut short my stay and take a train, if I remember right, at 6 a.m., did not find a seat, stood at the door, a variety of emotions flooding through me only to be lulled into sleep. When the train took a sharp turn, some miraculous reflex helped me hold on to the bar at the last moment, or else the same fate would have overtaken me as it did my father. He never recovered and died ten months after the Khandala Summer Programme.

To summarize the experience, here are some words, not a constructed sentence—diversity, determination, faith, unsettlement, commitment, struggle, recognition, vision. Thank you ISABS 1975.

- Sushanta Banerjee

THREE

The NPA campus is lovely. It was nice to be welcomed at the airport. These ISABS guys are very organized. *But that was then !!!*

Community Session Few guys introduce themselves as 'Myself, Sunil Dalvi Asst Manager Pectrum Ltd. I am in BHP. A few others, especially those who wear kurta-pyjamas, say a cryptic, 'I am Rohit. I am still struggling to belong.' And eventually, all those who give cryptic crossword type clues turn out to be facilitators.

There are things which are politically incorrect to say : Eg. 'I think you are right' or even, 'I feel you should wear a tie.' But a royal mess would be if you said, 'I think I feel upset with your remark.' The facilitator is a creep.

I quote below some statements that are embedded in my first impressions: "If only I had slept early at least last night (say by 1:30 am) I would not have felt sleepy during the loooong stretches of silence" PS It is politically extremely incorrect to say, "This silence is killing me". That will invite Sudden Death. like in football ."

"I like the way everybody piles on to me when I say exactly what everyone said last evening at the dinner table. I hate this group. I hate ISABS. Someone please make me a facilitator quick so that I can settle my scores."

"When the facilitator says something inane like, 'What do you **FEEL**???' it is an Inter Ventio/ Shun? When anyone else says the same thing, it is frowned upon. By the way is intervention IS an "*In Terven Shun*"?

"Saturday we finish this Lab. Thank God !! I might miss one or two of these guys. But otherwise, I am glad. Hey, what is this possible party all about?"

"A lab should go on forever. I must take your address. Do keep in touch. Are you coming for the Summer Event?"

"Why do we have to go back to the office on Monday? My boss should attend this. See you in the next Event."

- Abhijit Bahaduri

FOUR

1974 was a fateful year in my life. I was introduced to the (then) new concept of OD. It was an exciting way to look at the Self in the Organization. It meant, amongst many other things, the responsibility of beginning many new journeys and acquiring new understanding, new knowledge and new skills, of confronting behaviour.

The very first step was to enter an internship with a society which would equip me, potentially, with the knowledge and understanding to be a resource to myself and others. I joined the first phase of internship in May/June 1975. It was, as Christopher Fry describes it (in terms of falling in love the first time), "like the first bright blow on my sleeping flesh"! Nothing had prepared me for the impact on my senses, my feelings, my mind -- indeed on all of me. Nothing had prepared me for the great possibilities and potentials which awaited me. Nothing I had experienced in my life hitherto had given me a paradigm, from the base of which I was now asking myself to confront the new reality. It was grand. It was beautiful and it held within itself a shining immanence which was going to manifest itself through me. A new *ME*. A growing *ME*. A constantly learning *ME*. The journey goes on. It will never stop. I know that. I know also that I can and will pick myself up when I stumble. I have. I know that I can never rest if I achieve -- I must just go on. I have.

It is wonderful and meet and right that the person who is inviting me now to contribute at the 25th Anniversary Celebrations, is the same person, Somnath Chattopadhyay, who was responsible, in some ways, for my initiation into these profound memories. He was the 'Trainer' in my Ist phase.

I have in the last three years moved away from ISABS. This both saddens me and (for the human reasons which prompted the distancing) angers me. I think it is important that soon I will confront both myself and those who have (tried

to) undignified themselves, me and ISABS. They are like me, humans. They are like me full of divinity and chaos. They are like me builders of a grand institution whose anniversary they, like me, are celebrating.

- Rajen Brij Nath

FIVE

My first impressions of ISABS are: *Emblems of allegiance* -- Kurta pyjama and other loose fitting clothes, the cloth folders, cigarettes and pan, crying and breaking down, long walks after dinner; *The language*-- feelings, here and now, process, getting in touch; *The territory* -- primary, lab room, secondary, the dinning hall; *The initiation ceremony* -- opening community; *The diet* -- curd rice (after the third day); *Sport and spectacle* -- various groups competing in the micro labs; *Celebration* -- closing community ; *Aggression and war* -- faculty meetings.

- Ganesh Chella

SIX

MY FIRST PLUNGE

Ever since I came to know about Sensitivity Training Labs conducted by ISABS I have been curious to know more about it. There has also been a deep desire to attend atleast one such lab and experience for myself what it is all about.

I had heard much about it from Mr. Kirpal Singh who felt that the exposure he got from attending sensitivity labs had given him the added strength to withstand many of lifes ups and downs.

All this has added to my taking a plunge into the "*world of sensitivity labs.*" I call it the 'world of sensitivity labs' because it is like a more authentic, more honest, more open world where people can aspire to be their *Real Selves* and still relate to others.

It is a world of 'Sensitivity' because it is here that one can SENSE ONESELF. This world creates an environment where one can learn to see and then Relate to oneself through the eyes of others. It is a most revealing experience - to understand the images people create of you and then based on those images relate to you. This is phenominal.

This exposure has created a '*Paradigm Shift*' within me. A shift which is more radical and profound than that I have ever experienced in such a short span of time. To see myself in this new light has made my interactions in everyday life more meaningful. Now I relate to people based on a better understanding of myself. And Aha! I see many changes around me.

The day I came back from the lab, my five year old daughter hugged me, then looked into my eyes and said "Mama, you have changed." I said "Come on, you must be joking" And prompt came the reply "No mama really. You are not what you were when you left Delhi for Agra". I was shocked and amazed. *Was there really that sort of a change that my 5 year old daughter could sense?*

I probed further and asked her what change did she see. She said, "I don't know, but something has changed." I sat down and thought for myself. What is it that I as an adult found so difficult to come to terms with but that my little daughter could experience and relate. Somewhere I began to see the futility of the struggle I have off and on experienced in life. *Amazing how I could have got myself locked!* To experience the unlocking of the various facades of my personality has given me an understanding of the basic purpose of this world.

This world of ISABS creates space, time and energy for experimentation of one's own behaviour. There is also ample scope to understand others. Hence the word "*lab*" fits in.

However, all the euphoria apart, there is fear too. Fear that this euphoria may not last forever - *then what ???* Will I still be able to hold on to my learnings and understanding of myself or will it with the passing of time wither away like a full blossomed flower in changed seasons. Or will I have to keep going back to a lab to keep the flower alive? Somewhere there is a fear of getting sucked in.

However, I am actually experiencing pleasure out of my present state of being-

- * a state of being constantly and consciously in touch with myself.
- * a state of coming to terms with my flaws and imperfections
- * a state of feeling the 'Real People' behind the masks
- * a state of appreciating the struggle other people also go through in life
- * a state of actually loving human nature and
- * a deep faith in every individual's sincerity of purpose.

If this is what this new world can do for me, I can only strive, strive harder to understand the purpose of life. It is only the beginning.....

There are **MILLES TO GO & PROMISES TO KEEP.....**

SEVEN

Somnath has given me an open invitation to write about my first impressions of ISABS what is after all ISABS?

Is it the facilitators who, in spite of being in various shapes and sizes and hues, seem to have a number of common genes:

- ◆ Self assurance and confidence
- ◆ A light glowing in their eyes
- ◆ A smile that is never too far away, and above all
- ◆ The joy in being alive

Or is it the participants? I have had the good fortune to have participated in two events. And I know what the clothes in the washing machine go through during the different wash cycles. The twisting and turning, the rinsing, the wringing and FINALLY the renewed emerging! I also see the process in the lab as applying tincture iodine to wounds--old and long forgotten and also those festering for years--It hurts and is painful and *YE--OO-W* it stings, but it is vital for the healing to take place.

Or is it the environment that gets created? The feeling was that of being set free--of being myself, of being able to dance down the lanes and up the paths as the band struck up without bothering about what others thought of me. The feeling of tossing off my self-image of being a "good" girl and doing what comes to me naturally, spontaneously and without inhibitions.

And I cannot leave out Raj kumar with his ear-to ear smile and ever readiness to do whatever needs to be done?

To me, ISABS is what I am when participating in an event and immediately thereafter--painfully and pulsatingly alive and at a state of heightened sensitivity.

- *Sonita Kataria*

EIGHT

I distinctly recall the idea to set up the Society was crystallized at the lunch table of State Bank Staff College, Hyderabad during one of the programmes which was conducted by Udai, Somnath, Nadkarni and myself. It is heartening to note that the idea has not only taken shape but is 25 years old.

- Goverdhan Kathuria

NINE

Somnath's request in the ISAB'S News letter "Here & Now" inspired me to write this. My first contact with ISABS was my first lab with Purnima Sinha as the facilitator in 1984. After that my journey with ISABS continues. What ISABS means to me is given in the form of poem which follows:

Under-One-Roof

Where is Empathy,
 Where is sympathy?
Where are feelings,
 Where are emotions?
Where is closeness,
 Where is oneness?
They all are here, I told her,
 She said 'impossible'-
I said, please join 'ISABS'
 And feel yourself.
She then asked is there no
Confrontation? offensive or
 defensive burst-outs?
Everything is here-
 join in yourself,
 Leave fear and tear
 hurt and sadness here.
And there will be something new-
Join and experience
 How impossible can be possible

- Manjit Kaur

TEN

Some memories from Indonesia about my first contact with ISABS

It was in 1984 I think that Michael and I went to Bandungan, Java in Indonesia to work with Rolf and that Rolf had invited Somnath and Udai also to come to Indonesia on that USAID project. My first connection with ISABS therefore was with Somnath, Rolf, and Udai. Right from the instant of our connection, I knew in my bones that we were all kindred spirits. When we went to do that long training together in the far reaches of central Java, I remember that we had a most extraordinary time of collegial solidarity. We were doing diversity work! We were really doing diversity work. I myself spoke Indonesian by then; others did not. We had a group of predominantly Islamic males with three females with us. We kept on offering new designs, reaching to find forms that would meet the necessities of the moment. . . and we kept on being delighted at the way we could work together. And I remember that pilgrimage we made with the whole group to the ninth-century Hindu shrine. . . I still hold the memory of those sacred moments.

Towards the end of that contract, Somnath was suggesting that perhaps some day I could come to India to work. But before that we all went one more time to Sumatra to work again together. This time we were seven of us Venji, Abad and Jack joined with four of us Michael, Rolf, Somnath and me. We worked at Lake Toba on group development skills training labs. Once again it was an excellent event. And at that time we agreed that it would be necessary for me to come with Somnath to work at ISABS. I did come. Michael and I worked with Somnath for a week and with Uma Jain for another week in an early lab for women. Later I began to build a team with Bhanu—and so by now, I feel quite familiar, appreciating the slow incremental richness of relationships built over decades.

And, that's how our relationships developed. When I came to Jaipur for the first time, I felt so thrilled to be able to collaborate with so many wonderful

people. It was then that I began to hope for membership in ISABS. At this point I still wonder how to be a more active and contributing member from so far away. But I accept that distance is a tolerable reason for infrequent visits and I accept that I really want to be able to offer more in the future. . .

-Alexandra Merrill

ELEVEN

BEING A PROCESS FACILITATOR

My journey as a process facilitator started with my yearning, as a student of Psychology, to deal with issues of change in people, systems and societies. Working in the field of education, and having read Corey's then famous book on action research, led me in action research with teachers and headmasters. When Max Corey came to India, this was like realisation of a dream. He and I collaborated in some areas. I was familiar with the emerging field of group dynamics. Max organised a T-Group in his house in 1960 and I became a regular attendant of such meetings. I heard the name of NTL for the first time (he was one of the early founder members of NTL). With TCM (now USAID) support I went to NTL, was taken as an intern, and made an Associate and later elected as a Fellow. During my six-month visit in 1961, I met most luminaries in the field.

Back in India I felt frustrated because of lack of scope of application of my facilitating skills in my work setting. I changed my field of work from education to health to agriculture. However, in one of the seminars by Erik Erikson I met Rolf and our collaboration started with my joining SIET Institute where Rolf was the Team Leader of Ford Foundation Consultants. We went ahead with full steam in holding L-Groups (we preferred the term Learning to Training). In the meantime, a few other Indian colleagues went to NTL and our small group started ISABS. Doug McGregor had come to IIM, Calcutta followed by Warren Bennis and Howard Baumgartel. They helped in moving process competence further. Fred Messarick's visit also helped. So several friends connected with NTL came to India.

The journey in process work was not smooth. There were problems in creating the culture of openness, authenticity and autonomy. There were conflicts with the establishment (Govt. of India and the Ford Foundation). Rather than compromising, Rolf preferred to resign his leadership role. I did the same.

I combined my facilitating competence and interest with my academic inclination. This has helped me to reflect on process issues more systematically. Similarly, instead of taking a partisan

stand, I tend to experiment with other modes of process work (e.g. instruments, behaviour simulation). I personally find these supplementing and enriching each other.

Earlier in the NTL and in SIET Institute as well as ISABS, there was enough emphasis on readings and conceptual discussions. I feel that is very important. Currently this has become weak.

I see process work as enriching my professional role as a trainer and a consultant as much as helping me as a person and in my personal world (friends, family). I have found several challenges which beckon me to new voyages : moving beyond intrapersonal processes to group processes and societal processes, searching the Indian heritage to learn the dynamics of process work in different settings, extensive use of process work in various aspects of the society, addressing urgent social issues (differences, marginalisation, harmony, collaboration, equity, empowering) through process work and so on. It is exciting to work with younger colleagues who are the torch bearers to usher us into the next century, which we hope will be brighter and more humane.

- Udai Pareek

TWELVE

TRACING THE COURSE OF MY MOVEMENT THROUGH INTERNSHIP

This is a short account of my movement towards professional development and membership. Doing this is in my view a necessary step, as I believe it is important for each one to assess their own growth and development and determine their readiness for professional membership, irrespective of what the system may do. I am doing this using as a model of trainer development proposed by David Bradford. What he proposes is summarized very simply in the following statement "The goal of Professional Development Program is to make the trainer's view of the world increasingly complex so that their interventions become increasingly simple."

He talks of the trainer going through three stages. The first is "trainer as role" in which the novice trainer is learning a theory of training and appropriate intervention skills. The emphasis is on cognitive learning. The second stage is "trainer as being" in which the trainer moves from operating out of her head to training from one's guts. This learning is more on affective issues. The final stage is "trainer as process" in which the trainer can be sufficiently in tune with what is occurring in the group and that the process largely determines how the trainer will act. Here there is not just an integration of the cognitive and affective aspects, but an internalization so that trainers can largely stop focusing less on their own thoughts and feelings and more on the group.

I can still remember the first few labs I did where my worry was about whether I would be adequate or what I would say if someone in the group asked me a question, what my position is in the group, what they think of me. My experience in the labs as a participant had never resulted in getting a list of interventions and sure-fire responses to the dilemmas I would face as a trainer. Thus my preoccupations consisted in "how should I act?", "what should I do

(and not do?)". It helped me tremendously to go through the reading materials provided and to sometimes discuss those with someone else. The theories and concepts provided the cognitive backdrop I needed to make sense of the data that emerged in the labs. This also helped me develop my own theory based on experience. However, somewhere along the line the theory I held contained the belief that to be effective I needed to be "tough" with the group; I need to be confrontative. It has taken me time but I have had the experience of being able to see the flaw of my conclusion in action, especially in the last few labs I did. I discovered that this approach can often make participants more defensive and less able to work on themselves. I also found that if I was able to be myself and reveal what I truly felt in the group, it had a chain effect, resulting in significant transformations in other members and a tremendous sense of personal power for each one.

Like many others for a fair period of time I thought that the degree of emotionality in the group was an indicator of success—"my group did a lot of work today; three people cried". Over time I learned that, while it may be difficult for significant learning without much feelings, it is certainly possible to have emotionality without much learning.

Moving into what would be the second stage of Bradford's model, quite early I realized the importance of being in touch with my own feelings in the lab and I learned to use them as interventions. This of course involved some risk for me, because I didn't always think through the possible implications, but was willing to make mistakes by raising an issue even though unsure of how it will turn out. This helped me towards greater trust of myself and it was in a way a freeing and exhilarating process. Through it, I learned to express anger without destroying participants, and express inadequacies without being devalued. I am able to express my doubts and concerns about my own performance with the group and not reserve it for clinicing sessions alone.

There are other pitfalls that I encountered in this stage. I believed that being authentic was all that was called for. Through the hard way I learn that I have parts that are destructive and this wanting to be authentic is often a rationalization that acts as a defence against dealing with these dysfunctional parts. I also learn that several paths and timetables for learning exist and not just the one that I as the facilitator has chosen; that it is the process which is significant in learning and not just an outcome.

There have been other learnings as well. If I tried to direct the flow and speed of the groups learning, I would soon have one or other participant telling me, often not directly but the message was always loud and clear, that this was not on! I learned that I am not the only facilitator of the group and that if I trusted in the group's process, other facilitators would emerge in those present. And this is true! Many a time I was humbled by the words of a participant, which were just those that had been needed at that moment.

To my advantage has been my ability to stay and survive the complexity of the group rather than view facilitating as a series of gimmicks—of interventions or exercises, thus adding complexity.

I would like to use an analogy to bring out the course of my movement through the internship period. In the first stage when I began my internship, I was like a conductor, standing away from the event and doing things to members to make things happen. After doing several labs, it felt like I was in the middle of the river—splashing around (experimenting) and urging others in, showing them that the water is not that deep, nor the current that fast. Today I feel that I as trainer am not central; the process is. The river will flow irrespective of what I do and my role is to assist and not produce the flow. I am at a stage where I would like to drift gently along with the group, at times moving slightly ahead to point out the way, at times helping participants to move aside a log that is slowing progress and pointing out the different beds that current can flow in, so

that members can decide the appropriate channel for themselves. I realize that I do not need to share everything that I am thinking and feeling. Sometimes I make interventions that are spontaneous and sometimes I think through the issue before speaking. I also realize that in all of this I am focusing on the process and on myself. I will be dishonest if I say that these realizations are reality for me at all times. I am far from having arrived (if ever that is possible). But most important is that I am able to be this, and much more.

I as a trainer think of the important challenges that lie ahead of me. One that is crucial is the ability to detach myself from being in control of the group's direction, to be able to forget about trying to predict the future and only to stay alive with the present. To continually remember that crucial learning arises from an examination of the journey and not just a quick move towards the destination. Because then this would cease to be a laboratory for learning and merely boil down to a skills training activity.

I would like to end by stating what I think is the type of person I need and would like to be if this is my chosen area of work. A necessary but not sufficient condition is intelligence. I need to be intelligent if I am to handle relevant knowledge about personal, interpersonal and group processes. I also need to be able to learn but more important is the potential for self awareness, the ability to use this awareness, and the willingness to look at myself and my motives. From experience I know I have this. And finally but most important of all, I need to be continually aware of my motivation to train? My answer: it is an opportunity for me to learn and to keep learning.

- *Veena Pinto*

THIRTEEN

The Inverted T-Group

The Training Group/Learning Group/Sensitivity Training Lab movement has come to stay. From Kurt Lewin and National Training Laboratories it has come a long way forward now.

I had heard so much about this that I could hardly wait for the time when I would get a chance to *actually* participate. Everybody said, "Well, I can't exactly tell what goes on in it. It has to be experienced, the amount of learning is tremendous but the process has to be felt. Whatever the theoretical framework you attach to it, you as a unique person, would gain from the actual experience much more than, say, simply testing the various theories".

So my participation began with a bit of queer feeling in my guts, I resolved that I would just be with it and try to be authentic, open etc., all the virtues the books recommended for getting the most out of it.

Seven of us, plus a professional trainer, made up the coterie which assembled in the small room. The stillness was broken by the person whose need to introduce structure into the situation was the strongest. The corollary was a round of introductions and then slowly the movement began.

The trainer summarized a member's narrative and intervened with, "Get in touch with yourself." This evoked a vigorous guffaw from me as I went back to my moral science books.

Then with the trainer asking us to get in touch with our feelings and not thoughts left us feeling very uncomfortable. Of course how long could our feelings move around like free birds while our thoughts immediately got captured in response to his interventions. It was with profound joy I

discovered my ability to get in touch with my feeling, identify them and also at times trace their origin. The descent from the head level to gut level was complete.

Another insight into group processes was the repeated emergence of back-home situations in the here-and-now of the group. If the trainer was seen on a pedestal that was how one saw authority. An elderly member of the group was seen as a father figure who reciprocated by repeatedly going out of his way to help and rescue the latest 'focal' person out of his tight corner. At the same time other members saw in him an element of control that created a bond of dependency. This understanding had to be expressed.

Thus it was like a war-field only at times one was not aware of who was fighting for whom and against whom? And the bright moments of awareness were precisely those when the kaleidoscope of the earlier events precipitated into a repetitive pattern. The 'Aha' feeling left me stunned especially the first few times—later on, I was more involved with my experience than carrying on with my mouth gape with astonishment and wonder.

These peak experiences were very exhilarating, more so as they followed moments of extreme anxiety where the work seemed to consist only of myself. The investment in making that precarious climb was totally voluntary, emotional--amidst a volley of shots fired from not only within me but also from the other group members. I was amazed at the amount of brutality, sadism, anger I had within me. I was also amazed at my capacity to be in the other person's shoes, to show sympathy, etc. It was like moving up with an electric storm around me—the positive and negative charges all diffused together made it an exotic adventure.

The amount of togetherness generated was tremendous. It was as if the world had stopped turning, all of us had stopped turning, all of us had been privy to

each other's innermost thoughts, feelings, desires—so the moment of goodbye was a sad one. In a short span of two weeks, seven strangers had come together and the melting pot had made a brew which made each of them feel a part of the other. But it was time to part. These two weeks would linger for a long, long time. And what awareness was generated about one's internal processes and about what makes one tick! The future would be a summation of the moments of here-and-now entreating us to live our lives more fully, as fully functioning persons. The building blocks had been identified and the methods of making the building mixture experienced. On internalization these would provide a base for a steady—and may be slow—start towards living a fuller life in all its various hues.

P.S.- An explanatory note for the title-

- a) The Lab experience inverted my concept of living that I thought I held.
- b) The experience was much more intense than what I had heard or read.
- c) I came out as a person when I was just myself and not while trying to play a certain "role".

- Harsh Rai Puri

FOURTEEN

My association with ISABS was more through the people. I heard about it in 1972 from Udai while it was being formed. We were both at Udaipur and Udai used to tell me of the attempts being made to form this body. Later in 1974 I was admitted directly to the second phase as I had these, T-group experiences and the sensitivity camp of Pulin at IIMA and was conducting Achievement Motivation Training using structured experiences. Indira, Aroon, Ivan Mathias, Oriol Pujol, Sastry were in this batch. Later I co-trained with Pulin, Indira, Udai and Somnath at IIMA. I was rather a passive co-trainer in a number of these. My first contact with T-group was through a programme conducted by Udai and Somnath and again another programme by Udai, Suresh Srivastava and Somnath and the third one by Somnath and Sujit - all at NIHAIE in 1970.

I used to watch at IIMA Somnath and Pulin spend a lot of time on ISABS. I do not think there is any one today who would spend even a fraction of the time these spent on ISABS. They were living and breathing ISABS. IIMA provided the institutional support. Every candidate was discussed, provided co-training opportunities and closely monitored like a family member.

I used to be very upset when the ISABS trainers we respected fought among themselves. I always held the view that ISABS should use T-group as a base and grow, and should not limit itself to this group. It should absorb all "Applied Behavioural Science" and should not exclude others who don't have T-group training. Most fights (or free expressions of feelings and emotions) in the early years were around this point and we lost a good number of "Applied Behavioural Scientists" due to this exclusion-inclusion problem.

People around us are quite sensitive to our behaviour and they expect more collaboration and teamwork from the facilitator. At IIMA where most of the practising ISABSIANS lived, they were known more as "fighters" and highly

individualistic than as team workers. This bothered me a lot. When ISABS started splitting it was the most agonizing thing for several of us. The issue was "Why are we not able to work together and why do we have such low tolerance for each other? Does sensitivity mean low tolerance? When I was called to be the President of ISABS I took it as an opportunity to continue rebuilding it. I had a lot of support from all members. I focused on networking with other bodies increasing the base through BHPs and offering low cost programmes. We networked with HRD Network; shifted the venue to NPA and got nearly a community of 200 to go through ISABS, and started programmes on creativity, and stepped up "Train the Trainer" and HRD Facilitators programme. We also initiated a dialogue with NTL and planned an Institute of Applied Behavioural Science. Those were the years of learning, excitement and carrying forward. Senior trainers began to become busy and less involved in ISABS but they were always with us emotionally.

My disappointment with ourselves is that we have not been able to set up our own institute and we should have grown in all directions at least a hundred times more than what we are today.

- T.V. Rao

FIFTEEN

My first ISABS lab was in December 1988 at Hyderabad NPA. The facilitator was Deepankar Roy . NPA remains as the best place that I have ever been to in ISABS. The long walks, the horse riding, the cute bar near the swimming pool and some of the friends I made there are still fresh in my mind. After the "euphoric" experience I went through a "slump" for the next two years. I was not sure whether that experience was "real". At end of 1989, I came to Bombay having got a job with Citicorp. It was there I met Sushma. Sushma was a consultant for my organization and I got involved in the OD work that we embarked upon. Our relationship grew from being a colleague to a student, to an equal and of course a very close friend from that point in time. I think the most important learning I had: The reason for that "euphoric" experience in NPA and the "slump" afterwards are not anything outside of me-but *MYSELF*.

Once this struck me, I haven't looked back. . . . I went back to ISABS in MAY 1990, became a Professional Member in June 1994. . . . And I still come back to ISABS when I can. The only difference now is this. I don't come to ISABS for that "euphoric" experience again. I know I can have that whenever, wherever I am.

- R. Sankara Subramaniyan

SIXTEEN

I first came in contact with ISABS through Deepankar who introduced me to Somnath at Management Development Institute, (MDI) Delhi. I remember some of us like Deepankar, Akhtar (presently in Hong Kong), and I used to meet Somnath often. I did not know much about ISABS then. ISABS was hardly functioning then: there were no programmes, no activity, no money. Akhtar on behalf of us, the young ones at that time, proposed to Somnath the idea of floating a new parallel organization. Somnath vehemently opposed the idea and declared that he was a true ISABSian, remained an ISABSian wherever he was and he thought that it was time we built ISABS again from the scratch. That was the turning point in the tiny discussion room at EIL, Parliament Street, New Delhi we -- Deepankar, Akhtar and myself agreed with Somnath and all four of us committed ourselves to rebuild it.

Prayag Mehta, M.M.P. Akhouri, Deepankar, Akhtar, Mahaveer, a few others and I met at National Labour Institute (NLI), New Delhi to broaden our base, to move forward with the decision we took. During that meeting we were assured especially by Somnath, that ISABS will be activated provided we mobilize our energy in a planned way and handle routine work. We all agreed and gave our word.

That was the beginning for me. My organization sponsored me to the first two-week lab held at Hotel Deccan Continental, Hyderabad in 1980. C.N. Kumar, Purnima Sinha, Alan Batchelor were my facilitators. I had thought it would perhaps be an one time experience and had never dreamt that I will continue my journey with ISABS, much less that I would occupy the position of the President. I really feel proud of myself and of ISABS.

During the second two-week lab which I attended, Uma Jain was my facilitator. Dharni P. Sinha used to be some kind of part-time facilitator. Parth

Sarathi, Mahaveer, Chandermohan, Anil Khandelwal were with me. For me the first week's experience was just so so. But one thing significant I learnt was that I would have to take my own initiative to make the best use of the opportunity available for learning.

In between, I had started taking a lot of interest in the organization of the Events, such as fixing up the hotel/venue, looking after the bank account as also the accounts of ISABS. I used to assist C.N. Kumar who then was the Treasurer and Somnath Chattopadhyay was the President. I finished my internship with Somnath and Dilip Lahiri in 1987. I was admitted as a Professional Member of ISABS in 1987 and was offered the Treasurership of ISABS. Perhaps I was then the youngest of Board Members.

After taking up this position, my main aim was to set the accounts right and obtain Income Tax Exemption. I knew this was not an easy task. We had to go up to the Income Tax Tribunal to get the necessary exemption. Meanwhile, we had deposited the Income Tax Amount demanded by the ITOs on the advise of my then President, T. V. Rao. After we got the Exemption, it was for Mahaveer, the then Secretary, and the Treasurer, to get refund of the Income Tax already paid, together with the interest. I had worked with various Presidents of ISABS, Somnath Chattopadhyay, T. V. Rao, M. M. P. Akhouri, Udai Pareek and Uma Jain, before I took over as President in 1996.

I have learnt many things from the Presidents, as persons, and from their roles as Presidents. I am happy that our present team is an excellent one and is delivering the goods.

Looking backover the period I spent with ISABS from the very first day till now I must say it has been a very exhilarating and most rewarding experience. Every year I come back from the Summer or Winter Events duly re-charged it helps me do my work more effectively round the year.

ISABS of my dream is an institution and not an organization which works throughout the year having programmes in many places all over India, even abroad. What I wish to see and hope is that all those professional members who are at present living abroad, would work hard to establish ISABS abroad and get it well known abroad.

ISABS has grown today. We have a regular office. We have a computer, a fax machine and two telephones. We have also installed facilities for e-mail. Financially, also it has performed reasonably well. We hope to buy our own office space or buy a piece of land and build our own campus. I have known ISABS from the days when we never thought of writing to our participants asking for a response. But we have travelled a long way together, we have fought together and we have lived together during the last 25 years and we are sure to live together for the years to come with some useful purpose.

- Kirpal Singh

SEVENTEEN

It was my first unstructured-group-experience at TMTC Pune, when ISABS was born. I was thrilled. A totally ethereal feeling of floating on a raft. Don Bilby was the facilitator. The fine balance of inter and intra work which was carried out by Don amazed me. So did Pulin's socio-drama and the marathons. We don't do all these in ISABS now—and I feel sad about it. Can we start using these once gain?

- Virendra S. Sisodia

EIGHTEEN

EXPERIENCES DURING THE EARLY YEARS

I remember how I described my first T-Group experience to other—as if a skin had been peeled off my eyes, and that I could now see people as persons. Even though, at that time I was working with people, I had (as I see with hind sight) seen them, unconsciously, more as mere participants of my programmes, rather than as persons with their own needs and self worth.

Some years later, a quote from a participant in BHP Lab. brought out this tendency clearly: "We love things and use people, instead of loving people and using things".

My first T-Group was in 1965, facilitated by Rolf Linton and held in SIET Institute, Hyderabad. Two of us from the Industrial Team Service, Bangalore attended it. During the T-Group, my colleague walked out because of hurt feelings. Immediately I suggested to the group that we fetch him back. There were no comments from the facilitators. I then went alone. After we both came back to the group, it was taken up for process observation, where I understood that my going out to call my friend back may not have been helpful for his growth. I was later appreciative of the facilitation at that time which allowed me to experience this.

In 1967 summer, I attended a Lab. in NTL, Bethel, Maine on "Consultation Skills" facilitated by Robert Tannenbaum. An incident that occurred there comes to mind; A fellow participant—a manager from U.S.A.—and I sat on the floor in the middle of the group to continue an interaction. He was sharing an experience of intense emotion, and in the interaction broke down sobbing. I was holding his hands in mine and our heads were touching. After some time, when we joined the group, the facilitator asked me, with a slight touch of

sarcasm as it then appeared to me, what had happened to my concern for people—I had probably talked about this earlier. I got angry, and told Bob to ask the participant whether he had experienced my concern - while he had been sobbing, my hands were tightly holding his and my head pressed against his, and I was sure that he had experienced my empathy and had felt strengthened. He said that he had. Today, probably I would more easily put my hand around his shoulder and hold his head. Even though I had expressed myself differently, I was happy that I was able to communicate my concern. I felt vindicated on what the facilitator had remarked!

In the early 70s IIM, Calcutta had organized a programme for Trade Union Leaders from all over India. I joined that as a co-facilitator in a group facilitated by Nitish De. There were many other groups facilitated by others in the Behavioural Science Group in IIM. An impression left in me was that one needs to be rigorous and tough while, at the same time, facilitating with sensitivity.

The Industrial Team Service, Bangalore, of which I was a member for many years, undertook a massive change effort in a large public sector industry with over 30,000 employees. The organization was going through bad times. The initial tool we used was the T-Group for the top managers, middle managers and trade union leaders. I remember at the end of the 7-day trade union leaders, lab in which the Presidents and Secretaries of six or seven trade unions participated, including those affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC, and DMK along with Independent Unions. At the end of the Lab, these men, who had been fighting with each other, were talking to each other with understanding, and were so excited about it that they wrote to PTI and UNI about their future course of action, and also presented both facilitators with a cup engraved, and a poem composed in Tamil on the facilitation.

In the same large public sector we had conducted a T-Group for a cross section representing different levels, from the Director to the Union representative. A

remark made by a participant at the close of the lab was, "When I came I thought I will experience what happens in a circus when wild animals are let loose, but instead I experienced human beings in interaction."

In the middle 70s, my colleague Alan Batchelor and I experimented with a Marathon T-Group which started in the morning one day, and continued throughout the night till the lunch time the next day. Participants were free to go out and come back as they wished. Food, hot tea and drinking water were made available outside the room. I remember during the night some dozed off, at least parts of the time, though interactions continued between those who were awake. At the end of the Lab, a young student from abroad remarked that he had come to realize that, while there were differences between him and others in respect of race, colour and culture, and he had been very conscious about this, he now saw that at bottom we were all the same: human beings.

I was about to break down on two occasions while facilitating groups. This was when I was at a loss to know how to cope with a situation where a section of the group members who had known each other earlier chose to deliberately play-act and make fun to avoid the stress of being their authentic vulnerable self. It took some time for me to control myself and continue to facilitate, and to get the group to look at what was happening. In both the Labs, it led to a breakthrough to important learning and growth.

For three or four years in the late 70s I kept away from engaging in process facilitation work and so did not come to any ISABS Events. This was because in 1974 I had come to a deeper awareness of the macro dynamics in the political, economic and socio-cultural organization of society leading to exploitation of large numbers of people. From this perspective, the focus on or preoccupation with facilitation of the intra- and inter-personal and group process seemed like running away from more urgent and fundamental issues in life. It was like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! But then gradually I

realized that the concern for the micro processes in human relationships need not lead to masking, avoiding, ignoring or emphasizing less the macro processes, and that both are necessary and important. I am sure that it is consciousness as this led ISABS to take up Labs on Community change and to decide on the Social Development Stream. It is in this vein that we took up both in the National Event and in the Calcutta Region an experiential exploration of the Communal issues and also Extension Motivation.

- Paul Siromoni

NINETEEN

It was the month of May 1976 in Khandala when I was undergoing the second phase of the internship programme designed for developing those who participated in it into a qualified professional member. Our facilitator and trainer were Professor Gouranga Chattopadhyay and Professor Indira Parikh.

One of the most important insights that I experienced into myself and also as an experiential understanding of human nature and personality was: " I had a vivid existential feeling that I am a 'cloud' as well as a 'mountain' at the same time" – this came in a flash.

Perhaps there is, in each human being a soft nature symbolized by everything that goes with the imagery of a cloud.

The cloud is amorphous, moving and soft. It has shape and substance in a manner which is unique and different from any hard, concrete object. It evokes certain feelings symbolized in an immortal way by Kalidas in his Meghdoot.

In Indian context (perhaps also in a universal context), the cloud has great mythical meaning related to being intimately connected with life (cloud-rain-water-nature-nurturance). The mountain symbolizes hardness, concreteness, strength, sense of stability and firmness. The mountain has its own allure and attraction.

For a richer development of the potential and the personality of an individual, one needs to cherish and at the same time balance and synthesize qualities of the "cloud" as of well as the "mountain".

For the past more than two decades, I have been attempting to nurture both the cloud and the mountain in me in a balanced manner. Also, in my professional work, I have been helping individuals, groups and organizations to synthesize "software" and the "hardware" in the organization.

- Gopal K. Valecha

TWENTY

JOURNEY IN PERSONAL GROWTH... IN THE ISABS-PDP CONTEXT

My history with ISABS started from 1983, when I did my first BHP.

What were the critical moments in that journey... I asked myself. And what did I encounter in this journey? I owe Ronnie Lynton a debt of gratitude for introducing me to ISABS in 1983. Ronnie and Rolf have been my mentors all my life and so it is only fitting that Ronnie should be the initiator of this journey of self development.

Some random memories : My first lab with Aroon Joshi, one of the Founder Members of ISABS as the facilitator. I am talking at great length about all the difficulties that I am having in my professional life and how that is the reason why my development is at a stand-still. "Yawar, who are you trying to fool?" asks Aroon. Total silence in the group. I spoke next, only on the following day. It took me that long to find the answer to his question. Learning : some answers are difficult to see when I want to see them with my eyes shut. A community session during the same event... Somnath facilitating an encounter with death. How do I describe the feelings and emotions that are still as alive for me as they were then? Then, over the years (during my PDP and after) : Udai Pareek...dealing with stages of group development, Manohar Nadkarni... issues of power and achievement motivation. Rolf Lynton...group dynamics and facilitation with a focus on group development, Alexandra (and Michael) Merrill...self differentiation and understanding the unconscious. Pulin Garg and Indira Pareek...on entrepreneurship and understanding my own existentiality. T.V. Rao..on delegation and developing others. Conversations on understanding issues of boundaries and responsibility...Gourango Chattopadhyay. Two years of work on ISABS Ethics Statement with Rosemary, Anne Litwin, Ganesh Chella and KK. Three years as a Board Member. Yes, I have been very lucky.

What did I encounter in my journey through PDP? I encountered support, friendship, questioning, self doubt, opposition, stone-walling, obstructionism..smelly practices, people standing up for what was right...at personal cost and people keeping up for what was right...at personal cost and people keeping silent...also at personal cost. I encountered politics, friendship, hurt, love and courage. Not very different from the life that I encounter everyday...and so not very surprising or unique.

So what did I learn? I learnt that the real and only question to ask myself first and foremost is, why do I want to enter PDP? If the answer is : to understand myself better and to help others to understand themselves better...and then all the negativeness that seems to be a part of the PDP experience becomes meaningless and powerless to stop my own progress. For with each experience I also learn how easy it is to forget all the positiveness that is also a part of PDP, in the morass of bad feeling that the negativity generates.

If the answer is : to “become” a trainer then the journey is far more difficult. And the chances of anger, frustration, aggression and despair taking over and forcing you to cop-out, become very real. What I did not know at that time but do know now, is that the ISABS Professional Membership is not a passport to success as a trainer in the corporate world. ISABS does not even give a certificate (which incidentally, I think it should).

The training helps you understand yourself and others and group dynamics and interpersonal relationships...but does not teach organisation diagnosis or training techniques. So those looking to become Training consultants...yes this is a good thing to have done as you need it for your own understanding...but you need to do a whole lot more and different...including acquiring lots of actual work experience in applying training, to make a dent in the highly competitive world of Consulting. Same is true for Human Resource managers who seem to be forming the bulk of people attending ISABS programs lately. The training helps but is not a “qualification” and it probably will not do wonders for your career.

But personally for my life, my understanding of myself, to avoid self deception, my ability to generate alternatives, my ability to recognise behavioural processes when they occur, my ability to take advantage of critical moments in groups to enhance the development of the group towards interdependence...for all these things, the PDP has contributed in ways that I continue to discover and marvel at, so many years after “becoming” as ISABS Professional.

Finally one of the greatest sources of satisfaction and joy is the wonderful friendships that I have had the good fortune to form, with people who were with me in the PDP...people who shared my struggle and who were partners in each other’s growth...Pratik Roy, Rosemary Vishwanath, G. Vish, Dara Hakim (where are you?), Madhukar Shukla and Ganesh Chella. And with people who were my mentors and facilitators, both in a formal and informal sense...who I have already mentioned above. The many Happy Hours and the Critiquing Sessions...rich areas for self learning and personal growth.

To address the last dilemma of PDP participants that Ganesh mentioned in his letter....to find meaning in the process and the motivation to invest in it...I can only share my own learning...look at it purely from the angle of self development...and believe me, we all need it. And often, we realise how much we do, rather late.

Possibilities, options, challenges and struggles that I encountered as a trainer...the joy of seeing that you can make a contribution to people's growth is my chief reason for continuing to do what I do. There is nothing, in my opinion, that can be more satisfying than to have someone come up to you and remind you of something that you said in a group where she/he was a participant, which made an impact and resulted in their making a positive, growth oriented choice. The chief challenge is in convincing people that it is possible, to make through experiential learning, the kind of impact which someone who has not had exposure to it, can find very difficult to accept. In a sense, the corporate client who you are selling to is buying a pig-in-a-poke..at least for the first time and so is acutely aware of the risk. To add to this burden is the fact that many people have some rather hairy episodes to relate about their own experiences in T-Groups, often the result of incompetent facilitation. So the baby gets thrown out with the bath water.

On the subject, I must say that I have personally never used pure T-Groups as in the ISABS context, in any of my work with corporate or other clients in the twelve years that I have been in the training field. I also don't know of any other consultant who does. They certainly have a role in personal development work but find me the client who is prepared to spend money purely on personal growth. However I use the skill of Process Facilitation all the time and that is a fantastic asset. Finally, I will conclude by saying that ISABS training and the PDP has contributed to my own development tremendously and I do hope that this will continue to be true for all the participants of the PDP who are currently in it.

- M. Yawar Baig