

Here and Now

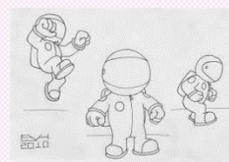
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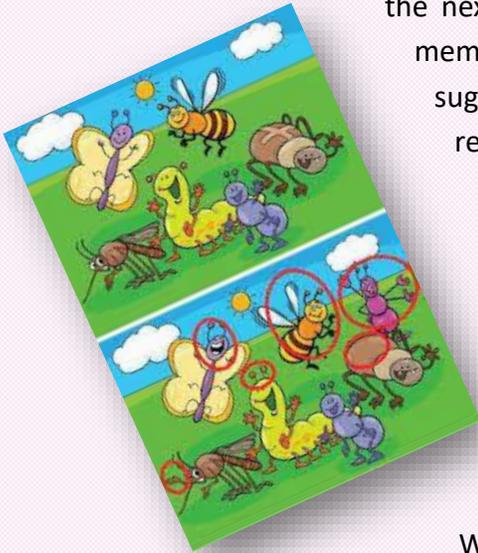
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Of this and that...

Note from the editors.

The Here and Now team get together every few months to brainstorm as to what the theme of the next issue could be. And then we send out a mail to professional members, interns, associates and others announcing the theme and suggesting sub-themes they could use to write and send in an article or review or poem. This time, we suggested **'Dealing with Differences'**.



But every once in a while, this does not work out as planned. Remember how the Beatles' song goes "... Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans"? So, many people did contribute, but it was on various topics and so we got a medley of contributions - all interesting, a few decidedly serious and relevant, but nowhere near the theme that we had so happily announced.

Well, then we thought that if we got a bit of this and a bit of that and it was all good, why not bow gracefully and accept the theme that emerged for us? And so, the theme of this issue of Here and Now is "Of this and that..."



Editorial - April 2024

By the time this issue of Here & Now comes to your email on desktop or laptop – or perhaps mobile phone – you would be still talking to others about the sudden sharp summer that seems to have hit all of us. This is the situation across India and people we talk to are sharing how they cope with the heat which persists long into the night. El Nino effect, climate change, the effect of the Anthropocene – or maybe all three?



This being said, summer is also a time to look forward to mangoes, watermelons and cooling drinks to beat the heat. It can also be the time when you open the pages of this issue of Here & Now to look at our new offerings. Here & Now was dormant for a whole year because of many internal changes in ISABS. But we are nothing, if not resilient.

And so, dear readers, enjoy Here & Now and the new perspectives, ideas and experiences it brings. Our contributors to this issue have sent in articles on a range of experiences and thoughts.

Amit Saraf's brief poem highlights the mirror's dilemma. Mukta's tiny haiku-like poems delicately explore the dynamics between *her* and *him* and a woman finding herself in life. Indrani muses on what she would do if she had only today – perhaps experience all the thoughts, feelings and sensations that she usually given short shrift to otherwise in the busyness of existence?

Other treats that await you inside this issue of Here & Now are some movie reviews. The word 'movie' once North American slang for 'cinema' is now part of our vocabulary and we don't blanch at the usage. Well, dive into the review of Laapataa Ladies by Rajeshwari Lakshmanan, which combines humor along with some insights into the shifts in gendering in Indian society.

Saurabh Ghosh offers a new take on the movie Three Idiots which is 15 years old but continues to be popular. His review offers insights into fundamental life lessons of integrity, the spirit of inquiry, the pursuit of excellence (not success), and living every moment in the flow, the *here and now*, which has always been the message of ISABS and this newsletter. Mukta Kamplikar has reviewed a more recent English film, Perfect Strangers which highlights the social '*shoulds*' and '*should nots*' under which we generally operate and the role played by our mobile phones (yes, these have a place in the movie) in issues of love and trust in relationships.

Some of Here & Now offerings this time are articles on various themes. Ila Sharma bats for a coherent leadership approach in the changing world of today. In their article on pigmentocracy

– a word that has come into usage just in the past couple of decades, Jimmy Dabhi and Ruchi Tiwari explore how peoples’ various skin tones have carried and labelled them as having more or less hierarchical value, cultural desirability and power. N.P. Singh writes on power matters that influence or even drive facilitators and trainers in the context of group work; and how co-training and working with peers is health towards ongoing growth of facilitators not only as professionals but also as individuals.

Satyakki Bhattacharjee goes into the dilemmas of navigating disputes and contretemps in the non-profit sector, the misalignment between espoused and practiced values in the sector, and how navigating differences is a crucial part of governance. Uma Jain brings the lens closer to examining how authority is played out in groups and organizations based on her long experience as a trainer in human process laboratories both in India and other countries.

And as always, we invited and welcomed articles from those who attended ISABS labs to speak of their experience. So you will also find ‘slice of life’ narratives within these pages. Rajiv Bandhopadhyay takes us into his first experience of attending an ISABS lab with hints of humor and feeling woven through the narrative; and how he has become a person who is ‘fun to work with’ thanks to his change of behaviour since the lab. Monika Sukhtel writes in Hindi of *her* lab experience in which, she says, *kuch toot raha hai, kuch ban raha hai* (some things are breaking, and some are being made). Do read her story to learn more about how she looked back on her lab experience.

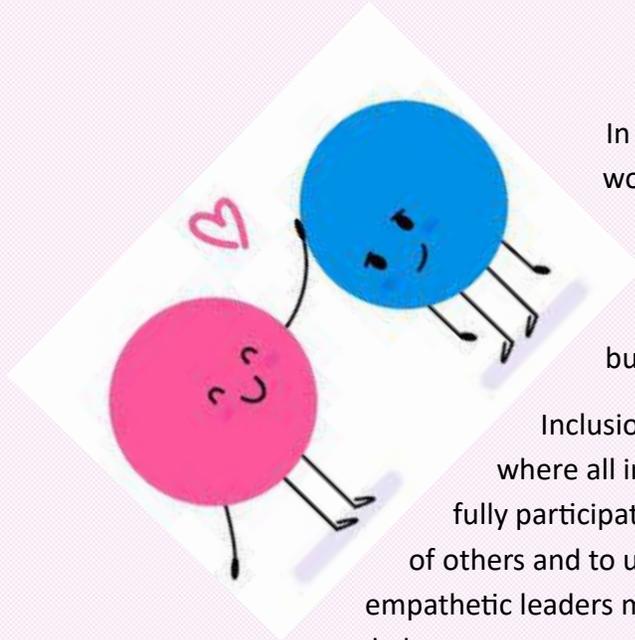
The above is just a glimpse of what you will find immensely engaging, thought provoking and enjoyable in this issue of Here & Now. Read on...

As the editorial team of Here & Now, we play our part in ensuring that each issue is well thought out and well brought out! We do our best. Thanks to each member of the team whose efforts have led to bringing out this issue. Thank you also, dear contributors, for your efforts and your patience in modifying/editing your offerings so we have yet another issue of Here & Now for our readers. This said, we invite suggestions from our you, our reader, so we can improve each successive issue. Please also do send in your contributions for the next issue of Here & Now which we propose to bring out in mid-2024.



Somali Gupta (Dean-Research & Publications) along with Here & Now Editorial team of Lakshmi Raman, Mukta Kamplikar, VLK Sarma and Bhanumurthy Kota. With support from Manoranjan Dhal and Abhishek Chatterjee

The Power of Inclusive Empathy in Leadership



In the face of unexpected and rapid changes in the workplace, leaders have experienced a strong need to adapt. Inclusion and empathy are two fundamental concepts that play pivotal roles in fostering harmonious relationships, promoting diversity, and building supportive communities and organizations.

Inclusion refers to the practice of creating environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to fully participate. Empathy is our ability to put ourselves in the shoes of others and to understand what another person is experiencing. More empathetic leaders may be more effective at fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces.

"Inclusive-empathy" is a term coined by Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura, Julia Milner, and Trenton Milner in their research examining the intersection between inclusion and empathy in organizational leadership contexts.

Nakamura, Milner, and Milner's research underscores the significance of inclusive-empathy in building more equitable and inclusive workplaces. In this article, we delve into when and how to actively cultivate the practice of inclusive-empathy, especially by those who are unaccustomed to this approach, so they can intentionally initiate and sustain the practice of inclusive empathy in everything they do.

Understanding and Reflecting on Patterns

One of the first steps in the process is to recognize, comprehend, and reflect upon the subtle patterns and routines that may have developed in the workplace. Identifying these nuances through self-reflection can be a challenging task, yet it is essential for the process of fostering a more empathetic leadership style.



A practical tool emerges from leadership consulting to guide leaders on this transformative journey: the inclusive-empathy visual mapping approach. This technique incorporates

reflections and opportunities for behaviour change, acting as a compass for leaders navigating the complexities of empathetic leadership.

The Inclusive-Empathy Visual Mapping Process

This approach encourages leaders to flex their "inclusive-empathy muscle" by visually representing their team's dynamics. Leaders draw a map identifying each team member's physical distance and their interpersonal relationship closeness. This multi-sensory exercise prompts leaders to reflect on their emotional reactions to each team member.

Guided by questions about the placement of team members on the map, leaders thoughtfully delve into the nuances of their relationships: "How far do you see between yourself and the individual? Is the representation too distant or too closed off? What colour can best represent your thinking about the relationship? Do you feel warm or cold?" This tactile exploration shifts leaders' focus from the rational to the empathetic, uncovering unspoken sentiments. This exercise can potentially shift the focus from rational thinking to empathetic understanding.



Uncovering Subtle Emotions through the Inner Image

The primary outcome of the mapping exercise is an in-depth examination of the "inner image"— the leader, the team, and the organizational perspective. Leaders gain a visual representation of the emotions brought into interactions, fostering conscientiousness, presence, and curiosity in their regular engagements.

Reflective conversations help unpack emotional obstacles, enabling leaders to address issues related to anxiety and stress. This heightened awareness not only aids in immediate problem-solving but also serves as a long-term tool for leaders to revisit and refine their maps and relationships over time.

Connecting to Society by Extending to the Outer Image

The visual mapping process extends reflection to the 'outer image,' wherein leaders are prompted to draw an image of society at large and connect it with the 'inner image' on the map. This exercise encourages leaders to emotionally engage with global events such as pandemics or social movements, solidifying their connection to society beyond the confines of the organization. By aligning with societal emotions, leaders clarify their values and beliefs,

enhancing their overall sense of purpose. This, in turn, fosters a willingness to reach a diverse group of people, thus building inclusive social capital.

Preventing "Out of Sight" Leadership

The visual mapping exercise prevents leaders from inadvertently overlooking individuals who may be 'out of sight' within the organization. By revealing potential disparities in emotional reactions across groups, leaders have a choice to address areas where attention might be lacking. This ensures that leaders recognize certain team members or projects, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic leadership style.

Tools for a Coherent Leadership Approach

In addition to the visual mapping approach, other tools supporting an inclusive leadership style paired with empathy have emerged in Behavioural Science. These tools enable leaders to reflect on the ramifications of organizational actions, paving the way for a more coherent leadership approach. A tailored strategy that balances empathy with action can be employed across diverse populations, ensuring that leaders bridge gaps and connect effectively.



To conclude, in a rapidly changing workplace, leaders must embrace inclusive empathy to navigate complexities and build resilient, empathetic teams. It emerges as a powerful catalyst for navigating change and fostering harmonious relationships within and beyond the organization. By embracing practical tools such as the inclusive-empathy visual mapping approach, leaders can enhance their understanding of team dynamics and societal connections. They can also unlock the full potential of their teams and build a workplace culture grounded in empathy, understanding, and resilience. By integrating such tools into leadership practices, a more coherent and empathetic approach can be employed, promoting inclusivity, and understanding in diverse work environments.

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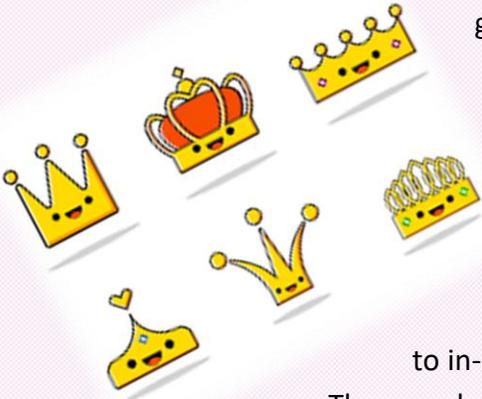
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Ila Sharma is a passionate HR professional who believes in creating a culture of working with heart, leadership with empathy, and inclusion with purpose. For Ila, many accomplishments, and failures later, it still seems like Day One, with a lot to be learned and achieved.



Authority is in our minds: Played out in Groups and Organisations

Authority relationships in society seem to be changing. There is also an intention to bring about this change to build more participative groups and organizations. To support this desired change, have our basic orientations and attitudes towards authority really changed?



As a trainer in human process laboratories of ISABS, NTL, USA, OEGGO, Austria as well as many Indian organisations and other process work settings for the last over 35 years, I have had a rich opportunity to be a part of as well as be a witness to in-depth explorations about authority relationships in people's lives.

These explorations have made me deeply reflect and learn about the authority dynamics and how it plays out in action. I have come to believe that much of the change in this regard has been at an intellectual, idea or intention level but the deep-rooted expectations and emotional preferences in relation to authority are still not well understood, often unconscious and hence have not gone through the transformation intended or imagined.

Based on some emerging hypotheses, I designed and conducted short seminars also for the last two decades in India and abroad in which thousands of people have participated. My tentative hypotheses were also shared in these short seminars after generating each group data about images, expectations, relationship with authority and identifying the patterns in the group data. Invariably, each group data and discussions validated the hypotheses as well as gave an opportunity to refine them and build some new ones. In this paper, I present briefly some hypotheses about how authority is still perceived, what is expected from authority figures, the relationship patterns with authority figures, how they interact with each other, and their impact for reflection:



Some Prevailing Assumptions/myths about Authority Figures

The images, expectations and feelings in relation to authority, demonstrate the following assumptions repeatedly voiced in multiple ways:

- Person in authority knows what is right/wrong and should have answers to our problems at least better than peers.
- S/he needs to be a perfect/ideal/model of good/right behaviour (as per our standards) as a human being.
- S/he should demonstrate concern, warmth and care irrespective of what I do or how s/he feels.
- S/he should not get angry particularly women authority figures.
- S/he takes actions with a design e.g., s/he may show anger to provoke a response from us or to motivate us without actually being angry.

These assumptions are not necessarily articulated in interaction or even to self but operate in action and come to surface in the deeper explorations. As we reflect deeper, these prevailing operating assumptions tantamount to having an image of authority figures as Godlike beings with the following qualities:

- **Omniscience:** The person in authority knows all or should know all. This myth leads to both expectations, disappointments and misinterpretations of their actions.
- **Omnipotence:** Authority figures can or should be able to make anything happen if they want resulting in high expectations and giving unrealistic meanings to their actions.
- **Perennial Benevolence** - There is an expectation that good authority figures are and must always be warm, affectionate and nurturing towards us irrespective of how they are feeling and how I am towards them.
- **Sainthood/Selflessness:** They must have our interest at heart and have no needs or interests of their own. Even if they have them, if they are a model of good authority, they will sacrifice them for us.

All the above qualities on the one hand exemplify the myth of Godhood but at another level result in *dehumanisation* of the people in authority and not seeing them as human beings with their feelings, needs, and limitations.

I came to understand that the images, expectations, feelings and relationships of people with authority figures voiced by people seem to be rooted in childhood experiences or a child state even today. Having been provided for unconditionally as a birth right, may be sets up an unconscious expectation in relation to authority and gets transferred to people in authority in adult life too. Another dimension of the data was that even people who shared fairly negative

images of parents wanted the authority figure to be nurturing and supportive always. Hence the rational/intellectual learning of the adult life does not get implemented and the expectations from authority are set up through the unconscious filter of the fulfillments/deprivations of the early authority experiences and/or perhaps some deep-seated needs as human beings.

Search for unconditional love and being understood

As I reflected further, I have come to a deeper level hypothesis underlying this widely prevalent (almost universal) phenomenon which has also been validated by the data from my sessions in India, USA as well as Austria.

Human beings have a conscious/unconscious search for unconditional love and being understood (even without expressing) and be accepted, translated into a need for approval/appreciation from authority figures in relationship with them. This need seems to be almost universal in human beings but not always owned and conscious.



Impact on the Authority and group Relationships

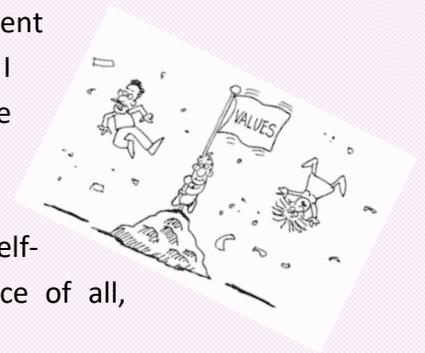
This often largely unconscious unclarified and unowned search along with the supporting myths significantly impacts experiences and relationship with authority figures. Some of the impacts are:

1. **Operating in Judgment/prescription paradigm:** There is a tendency to experience communications from authority in terms of right/wrong, like/dislike, acceptance/rejection rather than as their/views ideas or opinions or an observation to consider. This paradigm also leads to the generalisation of an incident/experience to the whole person as well as personalizing the issue - If I felt disapproved at a time, that person in authority is disapproving. Also, what comes from authority is received through a filter of a high need for approval and high propensity for experiencing no matter what is given except validation and approval as a rejection.
2. **Intermixing between Authority Figures:** Operating from the myths and may be some more assumptions/myths and needs, there is an intermixing in our psyche between authority figures e.g., parents, teachers, facilitators, and spiritual leaders (Guru) or (God) leading to some of the following:
 - a) The experiences and consequent expectations from one are transferred to other authority figures whether or not they are in a position, personal capacity or role to fulfill them.

- b) Some unrealistic standards of conduct from all authority figures of being ideals and not human.
- 3) **Denial of self-authority:** In the process of expecting all expertise, guidance and support to come from authority, there is a denial of one's own resources and personal power. This leads to a dependency mode and distance with the authority figures as well as setting up a competent person as authority in groups and looking up to him/her.
- 4) **Blindness to or disinterest in peers' resources:** This paradigm often leads to low interest in listening to peers and not utilising the peer resources for learning and support.
- 5) **Dependent and counter dependent mode of relationship:** One aspect of these myths is that they are imposed as shoulds, do's and don'ts on authority figures and make people oblivious of their own behaviour towards them. The behaviour towards authority figures is often rebellious as well as demanding validation and affirmation of self-leading to such unrealistic as well as contradictory conditions which are often unfulfilled, giving reasons to counter or feel let down. It keeps people in dependent and counter dependent mode of relationship as opposed to interdependence and sabotages the overall leadership potential of self, group and organisations.
- 6) **Dehumanisation of people in Authority:** These processes also put pressure on people in authority in turn to manipulate self and be inauthentic to gain acceptance. Whosoever (whether person in authority) or the person seeing him/ her as authority holds the assumptions and myths, does not give permission to self and others to use their human authentic self and hence limits the overall potential and diminishes the group's power to perform.

These phenomena have significant impact on empowerment of people, people development, leadership processes & effectiveness, collaboration and partnership in organisations across levels.

Human process laboratories and other experiential development programmes can play a role to help people work through these issues. I believe that one of the basic agenda of laboratories is to facilitate people in dealing with authority issues, and work through them for personal development. This kind of development work should ideally result in a new set of beliefs and actions leading to greater use of self-authority, peer resources, taking responsibility, utilizing competence of all, learning, partnership and growth.



However, this can happen if both participants and facilitators focus on the real agenda of learning. Due to the pressure from participants, and/or some unresolved authority issues of their own viz. need for power and acceptance etc. it is not unlikely that facilitators can also slide into the trap of fulfilling the expectations and try to meet image/expectations and in the process not live up to the values of the human process laboratories or other development programmes. This has to be consciously resisted and the focus on purpose and values maintained irrespective of the price in terms of comfort and acceptability.



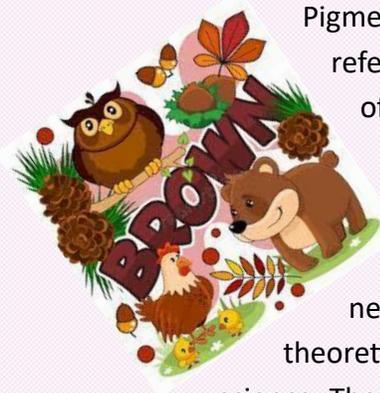
Uma Jain, a fellow of IIM, Ahmedabad, has made significant contributions in the field of applied behavioral science in India for the last four decades in her roles at ISABS including President, Director ODCP and currently the Coordinator, Western region and at NTL, USA including Vice-chair of the board. Using self as an instrument of change, she has done pioneering work as a practitioner as well as writer. She conceptualises from data generated in action research making her writings easily applicable, meaningful, and transformational. Her passion for building a world more sensitive to diversity and gender issues has

*led to her recent book **Demystifying & Dignifying Singlehood: Life Journeys of Single Women Across the Globe**, published by **Libri Publishing, UK with NTL Imprint.***



Pigmentocracy – What is the Colour of your Skin?

Introduction



Pigmentocracy, a term coined by Chilean sociologist Alejandro Lipshütz, refers to the system of social stratification based on skin colour, which is often used to discriminate against people in groups, organizations, and society. While, in India, we may be more or less aware of the term pigmentocracy, we are no stranger to colour discrimination.

For an inclusive and human society, pigmentocracy and colourism need to be understood, examined, and challenged by both theoreticians and practitioners of social sciences and applied behavioural science. The problem needs to be explored at a systemic level rather than at an individual level by people engaged in process work like those of us in ISABS. A longer version of this article was presented to the professional members community of ISABS in one of the learning sessions. This abridged version provides a perspective on pigmentocracy, its manifestation, implications for organisations, and the process of freedom from such a practice.

Pigmentocracy – A Perspective

This ideology, like that of caste and gender, puts many people at a disadvantage in a system. Desmond Tutu, who won the Nobel Prize in 1984, recalled South Africa of the apartheid days, saying it had been a "pigmentocracy" filled with resentment, hate and rage. Studies (Mishra, 2015) show that lighter-skinned people of colour enjoy substantial privileges and power (implicit and explicit) that are still unattainable to their darker-skinned counterparts (Hunter, 2005). Such an ideology in practice puts many people at a disadvantage in an iniquitous system (Walter, Telles, & Hunter, 2000), Mason 2004).

In South Asia, this phenomenon is interlinked with factors such as colonialism, the varna-caste system, media, cultural practices, gender, and patriarchy. Each of these factors influences the other, creating a complex nexus of oppressive practices. In India, Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, while Article 16 provides equality of opportunity for all citizens in employment matters. These factors need to be explored independently and in conjunction to understand the multifaceted aspects of social organization and its impacts on society. While colour preference is not inherently pernicious, when viewed as a thread in cultural, political, and economic life, its meaning is complex and consequential.

Colour and erroneous rationale

Pigmentocracy and other discriminatory practices, based on race, gender, religion, language, class, varna-caste, region, and sexual orientation, share commonalities in their underlying ideology and beliefs. These beliefs are maintained and perpetuated through a 'structure', which includes social systems such as caste, and patriarchy, institutions, political structure, and the state. Marx argued that the superstructure reflects the interests of the ruling class such as the varna-caste ideology and gender discrimination.

In everyday life, people make theoretical frames, beliefs, and assumptions about 'human beings' and 'lesser human beings'. They believe that some are human beings and others are lesser human beings to a certain degree. These beliefs are supported by religion and mythology, which are interpreted, modified, and distorted to avoid resistance from the 'lesser humans.'

For example, creating iconography of villains and dubious characters who are dark skinned; and fair/lighter skinned protagonists having a glow, radiance around them. The 'lesser human beings' are to be tolerated by those who consider themselves superior, and those who become subservient must be given rewards or fringe benefits when they are obedient and comply. For example, in a village ceremony, *Valmikis* (dark-skinned, erstwhile untouchable) can eat only after the so-called higher castes. Just like 'coloured' children allowed to play soccer only when 'fair skinned' children have finished playing in one Western country.

The smell of Pigmentocracy in Thought-Feeling-Behaviour

Pigmentocracy is a complex process that involves internalization, where individuals and organizations contribute to shaping individuals and teams. This internalization occurs in various aspects of society, such as governing boards, managerial teams, work teams, cafeterias, washrooms, and recreation areas. The process begins with the 'epidermalization of inferiority', where individuals are made to feel or become convinced of their unfitness and feel inferior in their skin. This leads to the desire to become lighter-skinned, which represents anxiety and the desire to become the privileged 'other'.



The oppressor becomes blind to the ways and means by which they discriminate against others, while the oppressed 'victims' internalize the oppressor so much that the oppressor begins to live within them. The 'lesser human' with internalized discriminatory ideology, such as pigmentocracy, racism, or varna-caste behaves in a way that promotes the power of the oppressor and reinforces the oppressive structure. A few of the oppressed who are coopted by the powerful begin to act like the oppressor themselves, perpetuating discrimination, and inflicting 'horizontal violence' towards others of their kind. This results in blaming the victim.

The process of internalisation instills in the minds of 'lesser humans' that they cannot become 'human beings', and they cannot imitate the so-called 'human beings' (white, male, exploitive castes, etc). This leads to the use of phrases like 'A horse is a horse and a donkey is a donkey' and 'a crow is a crow and a swan is a swan.' Human-made discrimination is often disguised as 'God-given' systems and religion, further perpetuating the oppression of human beings.

Manifestation of Pigmentocracy

Cosmetic companies cash in on this internalisation of the 'white ideal' and rejection of the 'dark other,' leading to a lucrative market for skin lighteners and fairness creams. However, colour discrimination was prevalent in societies before these creams and lotions surfaced. Manufacturers of fairness creams (glow, whitening, brightness, radiance, snowy, silvery etc.) offloaded a cancel culture under the guise of conscience keepers and thus kept their customers safely strapped, and stayed on course (Gupta, 2020).

Hannah Daniel argues that poverty and colourism in India go hand-in-hand, as people with darker skin tend to be lower in socioeconomic status (Daniel, 2006). Colourism makes social mobility harder for Indians in general, and there is systemic discrimination against dark-skinned people in education systems, the labour market, match-making and advertising companies.

Hierarchical systems and structures are operationalized through various means, such as safeguarding power and privilege by minimal use of violence through co-opting a few of the 'lesser humans' but keeping their lot at a distance. These lesser humans will, in turn, control the other 'lesser humans' on behalf of the 'humans'. These may be 'middle wo/men', and in common parlance '*chamchas*' or informers, '*bhakts*' or agents, who will guard the powerful, 'manufactured consent' (Naom Chomsky) and manage the media.

Consumer capitalism creates a new line of "epidermal psychotherapists" where darkness is constructed as a broken undesirable condition that needs repair. Language is constructed as a means of discrimination and control. Often words reinforce the polarities of the prevalent mindset, carrying out hegemonic and ideological manipulations. Examples being fair, unfair, blacklist, blackhearted, blackmail etc. Thus, the 'humans', (privileged powerful) corner power (hegemony), resources, and decision-making processes, and offering advantageous employment, education opportunities, development avenues, marriage, and other relationships to some.



The process of freedom

Pigmentocracy is a construct of collective mind that perpetuates harm to ourselves and society by promoting social and economic dominance. It is a game where some are considered inferior and others superior, making it difficult for both oppressors and oppressed to engage in healthy relationships, family, organization, society, and country.

Is there a way out? We believe unlearning and deconstruction are possible ways to raise awareness about it, interrupt the process, and challenge pigmentocracy.

Pigmentocracy, the belief and practice dehumanize both the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1970). Healthy relationships, healthy family, organisation, society, and country are not possible with dehumanised members, communities, and citizens. Both the oppressors and the oppressed have to engage in the process of humanization desalination and claim their sense of agency.

Awareness of one's socio-cultural, economic, political, and religious context, and one's colour, gender, varna-caste, and sexuality play a crucial role in shaping one's reality. Engaging in conscientization, which involves becoming critically conscious of our agency to choose and create our reality, maybe a counter to the oppressive reality fostered by pigmentocracy.

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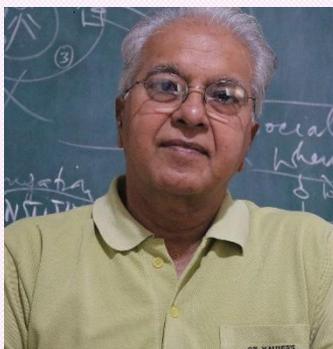
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Ruchi Tiwari

Ruchi is passionate about co-creating unstructured learning spaces for small group work. She has been associated with ISABS since 2003.



Jimmy Dabhi

Jimmy says – "I have a long affiliation with isabs facilitated by Udai Parekh who happened to be with my guide in NTL. Then on I have always valued process work in personal, professional and public life. it has helped me be more human, inclusive, and democratic."

Movie review – “3 Idiots”



The Hindi movie, "3 Idiots" came out in 2009 and took viewers by storm. The themes it touches upon continue to be relevant to this day.

“3 Idiots” is the story of a little boy, Rancho (Phunksukh Wangdu), born in the foothills of a mountain who pursues education for knowledge and not for the certificate or the degree associated with it. Ever since childhood, he has known only one thing in life, and that is how to pursue his love for the discovery of 'how machines work' to simplify and ease the lot of human beings. His passion to understand the principles behind the working of machines spurs him to get on to an eternal process of searching to invent simpler means to achieve the same end. His passion compels him to demonstrate to his friends that the process of solving the biggest problems in life is in the application of the fundamental principles of nature.

The movie begins with him demonstrating the same by recalling an example of how remembering the fundamental lessons in life, like salt water being a good conductor of electricity saved him from being ragged by his seniors on the very first day of college. His strong belief in his life's goal makes him question the mundane and all the stereotypes being followed that he sees around him, He grows up to become one the greatest inventors the world has ever known.

“3 Idiots” is also the story of this boy's belief-turned-perseverance towards helping his two good friends search and find their purpose, their *ikigai*, of greatest fulfilment in their lives and discover the beauty of living every moment to the fullest by always being inside the flow. His life's lessons were never taken seriously by his friends in spite of his sincere efforts till the time he demonstrates to each of them with real life examples. A flashback shows that during one such incident, while he is trying to explain the short lived success of learning things by rote without understanding the meaning of the same, it makes him pick up a personal vendetta with another classmate of his. It turns out to be worth his life's bet because through that demonstration, he is able to prove his point to his beloved friends, 10 years later. that success in the long term is only justified by the means and every other method is just a stopgap.

Improvisation is the other name of invention when it comes to meet any unforeseen challenge in human lives. The protagonist demonstrates this beautifully in real life by using an unconventional method of transporting the ailing father of his friend on a two wheeler to hospital rather than waiting for an ambulance. This life-saving improvisation is seen to produce multiple ripples in his friend's life and encourages the friend to challenge the conventional belief system which arises from fear of failing and not from the dream of a possible success.

This movie also touches upon the vital role that can be played by parents in helping their children to discover their inherent talents and pursue their way through the obstacles of social and peer pressures. In doing so, they actually help their children to get on to the path in pursuit of happiness. It gives the children a big boost of self-confidence to walk on, even if it means to go against the social and peer definition of success in life.



The boy Rancho, as the protagonist of the movie, has brought into our awareness the fact that fear might appear as a motivation towards getting good grades, but in reality, fear does not beget knowledge or wisdom. In one of the flashback scenes, he makes an attempt to demonstrate the above fact to his professors by replacing the fear of passing tests with the zeal to know something new during the class instead. He also challenges his dean's definition of the success of the engineering college by making him ponder about the absence of any new ideas or patents germinating in the minds of the students.

The single message which emerges from the chain of the events shown in the movie can be captured as follows: Success always chases those who are in pursuit of excellence. On the other hand, if *success* is being chased, the pursuer always falls behind and never gets to achieve it. My learning from this movie, yet again, is that success is a process, a journey, and not the destination.



Saurabh Ghosh - BLHP, 2011, ex-secretary of ISABS, East

Navigating Disputes and Contretemps in Non-profits

Introduction



Organizations mirror the tapestry of the broader societal fabric, bringing together individuals with varied backgrounds, viewpoints, and aspirations. This holds true for non-profits as well, where the added dimension of volunteerism injects a unique vigour and purpose into the mix. However, this rich diversity, despite being a pillar of strength, has the potential to spark disputes and misunderstandings, thereby straining the cohesion and efficiency of the organization. Such conflicts become particularly pronounced in contexts where accountability intersects with voluntarism, magnifying the importance of discerning the subtle and often complex interplay of overt and covert dynamics, alongside recognizing the needs being met through these interactions. This essay seeks to delve into the frictional elements within non-profit voluntary organizations, uncovering their roots and proposing methods to adeptly manage and mitigate these challenges, with a focus on sustaining organizational harmony and continued effectiveness.

Voluntarism

The ideology of voluntarism (Tönnies,1909) was born out of the doctrine that “will is the basic factor, both in the universe and in human conduct.” Perhaps, this makes non-profits the fertile ground that attracts a small yet diverse section of society. Whether theological or other, people flow in to non-profits from diverse fields before they adapt to the order of the organization. Nonetheless, despite the origins of voluntarism in the belief that willpower is a fundamental element, it is crucial to recognize that this freedom of will does not extend to the point of undermining accountability.

The Misalignment

Accountability stands as a foundational value within the organizational culture of non-profits, embodying the principle that actions and decisions must be overseen and individuals held responsible for the outcomes of these actions and decisions. This core value is paramount for maintaining trust, transparency, and integrity across all levels of the organization. However, a significant discrepancy often emerges between the values that non-profits claim to uphold (espoused values) and the values they actually embody in practice (practiced values). This

misalignment is not just a superficial flaw; it strikes at the heart of an organization's overall effectiveness and mission.

The discord between espoused and practiced values erodes the foundational trust and morale within the organization. It breeds a culture of scepticism and disillusionment among the workforce, particularly volunteers, who are typically driven by a strong sense of mission and personal commitment to the cause. When volunteers perceive a gap between the organization's proclaimed values of accountability and its actions, it can lead to deep-seated emotional frictions. These frictions often manifest as feelings of betrayal, frustration, and disillusionment. The consequence is a weakening of the very fabric of voluntarism, characterized by a decline in proactive engagement, innovation, and the collaborative spirit necessary for addressing complex social challenges that the organization faces.

Needs

Differences also occur due to the another fundamental unit of difference - our needs. Differences in individual needs significantly influence the dynamics of conflict within organizations. These needs, ranging from basic physiological necessities to complex psychological desires for recognition and self-actualization, serve as another area of difference among individuals. The extent to which these needs are met or unmet plays a crucial role in determining the likelihood of differences arising, particularly in organizational contexts where individuals may unconsciously seek fulfilment of these needs through their roles and interactions. This is more so in non-profits, where the tendency to focus upon and adhere to the policies, procedures, structural and systemic infrastructure is far less than in state or corporate organizations. Need fulfilment often becomes unconsciously competitive and the unconscious pursuit of these needs through organizational channels adds another layer of complexity to the dynamics of differences.

Dealing with differences

- 1) *Arresting Virtue Signalling* : Voluntarism being a progeny of Will, often it is seen that a lot of ideological exhibitionism happens at the deeper and unseen levels. On the surface it manifest as 'virtue signalling' - the public expression of opinions or view-points at the drop of hat with intention to demonstrate one's high character or lofty social conscience or moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue.

The poisonous effect of virtue signalling lies in its capacity to polarize and segment members. By emphasizing a performative display of morality or social consciousness, it can inadvertently set unrealistic standards of thought and behaviour. This not only alienates those who might not express their virtues as loudly or publicly, but also fosters an environment where the

authenticity of one's beliefs and actions is constantly under scrutiny. The outcome is a landscape of the organization marked by suspicion, judgment, and a 'competitive morality' that values appearance over genuine understanding and empathy. This needs to be arrested.



2) *Being Authentic Vs Being Genuine* : This is indeed the holy cow being questioned. In the exploration of behaviour and the hierarchical structure of transparency, the concept of 'being genuine' is positioned at the pinnacle, surpassing even 'being authentic' in its significance. While authenticity refers to the honesty and accuracy of an individual's external expressions and reactions as an element of congruence, it often captures a person's feelings or attitudes towards a situation at a specific moment. This immediacy of expression, although valuable, may not always delve into the deeper, foundational motives guiding an individual's actions or beliefs.

On the other hand, 'being genuine' encompasses a more profound layer of sincerity and integrity. It is not merely about the accuracy of one's momentary expressions or reactions but involves a consistent alignment between one's actions, words, and deep-seated intention. This alignment signifies a person's commitment to truthfulness not only in their interaction with others but also in their self-reflection and self-understanding.

Being genuine, therefore, implies a deeper engagement with one's values and principles, ensuring that these core beliefs consistently inform one's behaviour and interactions. It represents a level of self-awareness and authenticity that is not fleeting or superficial but is rooted in the fundamental aspects of an individual's character. This distinction between being authentic and being genuine is crucial in understanding the dynamics of differences. It highlights the importance of not just presenting oneself truthfully in the moment but doing so in a way that reflects a deep and enduring commitment to one's inherent values and motives.

Conclusion

Navigating disputes and contretemps in non-profit voluntary organizational settings is a complex but essential aspect of governance. By acknowledging and not feeling attacked by the underlying causes of conflicts and employing collective strategic approaches to resolution, non-profits can foster a more harmonious and productive work environment. This essay has explored the dynamics of dealing with differences and attempted to outline adoptable personal explorations that could help navigate the disputes and contretemps in a non-profit.

To conclude, let's revisit **the doctrine that "will is the basic factor, both in the universe and in human conduct"** and that 'will' transcends boundary of authenticity to genuineness.



Satyakki Bhattacharjee is a certified OD practitioner from Tavistock, London, and a professional member of ISABS working as Managing Partner of Growthsqapes Consulting.



My journey with ISABS thus far

The Preamble



I was doing fine at work.... or so I thought! Busy schedules, meeting deadlines, intense interactions with colleagues; happy with pats on the back. Occasional and probably inevitable frowns as well from boss...

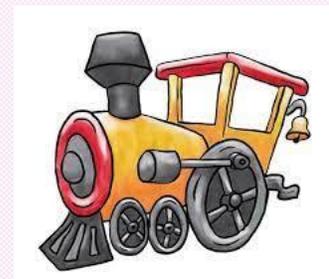
Time was flowing in a rhythmic stream...yes... so I thought!!

And so, it was a bit of a surprise when I was nominated for a residential 'Human Process Lab' that was to be conducted at Agra under the aegis of ISABS. What's that? I was told ISABS was a renowned Applied Behavior Science & Lab Institute in India.

Truth be told...I was immensely skeptic about this proposition. Till then I had harbored the idea that I was affable, easily acceptable and had the ability of getting along with people - even the 'difficult' ones. That I had recently become a father then and had to stay away from the newborn for a week was also making me feel insecure, restless. I conveyed these things to my boss in no uncertain terms. He heard me patiently but implored me to attend this programme. 'You would immensely benefit by attending this as you would discover many things about yourself that you don't know now'...was his firm message.

So, on a slightly wintry afternoon I reached Agra...not expecting much, but curious to know what it was all about and what could be in store for me. That evening was spent among completely unknown faces with bits of fun and 'play.'

I came to know later that ten of us were assigned a group, selected with care to accommodate complete strangers of diverse ages, cultures and both genders.



The journey begins

The start was bizarre, to say the least. There was one senior man present. Later, we learnt that he was the 'facilitator' of our group.

Curiously, he preferred to stay completely mum for most of the initial period. In fact, was this not the time when we needed him most? So we ignored him and started chatting among ourselves. We got to know something about each other. It was then that our facilitator very slowly started speaking. To our surprise, we found that, by then, he had memorized each of our names, gave a very brief overview about what to expect ("the unexpected" of course), to

resolutely stay in the 'Here and Now' and to come out with *feeling* statements - messages that have had a profound, still-unraveling impact on me even nineteen years later.

I started to get a hang of the situation...With no official agenda to follow and no lecture to concentrate on and assiduously make notes, my job was only to interact with the others in the group. Slowly and surely, I began to realize that there were many walls among us, various biases, prejudices. In this process, the facilitator's interventions and insights were of immense help.

From the state of initial shy bonhomie, we 'groupies' began to relate intensely with each other. There were the heated exchanges, even bordering on name-calling! We were being slowly unmasked. All of us knew, with varying degrees of understanding, that since we had been strangers to each other earlier, we hardly had any vested interest in pulling each other down. The facilitator insisted only that we make 'feeling' statements and that feedback to others, good or bad, be backed by raw data. He also suggested that we express upfront, rather than being held back with feelings of unexpressed dismay, rejection and hatred. He pointed out that we were in a 'lab', a laboratory. The idea here was to experiment with different behaviors and see for ourselves what actually worked and what didn't.

After a shaky, tentative start, those five days of the lab passed like a breeze! A bunch of disparate individuals became a group by the end of it with a strong sense of bonding. No surprise then, that we parted with tight hugs and the promise to stay connected. At the end of the lab, we were told that this was only the basic level and that we were welcome to attend the next level of 'Advanced Lab' if we wished to! So enchanted was I with this experience that I was determined to attend the Advanced Lab. Happily enough, my Boss agreed...this time with a smile!

To the next level

And so, one year later, I came for ISABS' Advanced Lab in Human Process, full of expectations... and literally couldn't wait for the 'fun' to resume. Here we were, a group of strangers again, but I knew the ropes.

Did I say fun? Hah...!!

The first two days this time were a nightmare that seemed to go on and on. The start this time was at a furious pace without any iffy hesitation - after all, all of us had gone through the Basic Lab before. Everyone was articulate, every soul unshackled and ready to unleash. I had a torrid time coping, being fed up with waves of nasty feedback after a couple of my (probably) over-zealous initial sorties. I felt so vulnerable, I withdrew into myself.



But, from the third day onwards, I became a different person. Defiant and yet calm, not ready to take anything lying down. It didn't go unnoticed by the group. I praised a group member who was being attacked by the group. I gave firm, constructive, emotional feedback to someone else. All supported by data, as my Basic lab facilitator had suggested. This caught everyone by surprise.

I felt free, unchained, as if retooled for life ahead. The journey was so intense this time that there were not only hugs, but raw tears when we parted. Some associations, no, meaningful relationships, even eighteen years later, are still going strong!

My takeaways

Honestly, many! *To mention a few...*

I am no longer shy to pick up a conversation with an unknown individual. And the much-dreaded barrier of talking to a woman is also gone! In organizational life, I had earlier operated from logic and rationale, rarely, if ever, from feelings. But I found that after my lab experiences, I began to get comfortable to express my feelings and even be spontaneous – an uncharted territory for me until the labs.

Most importantly, my colleagues find me fun to work with! What else do I need? I can't thank those behavior labs enough for who I have become today.

Afterthoughts!

After saying all this, I must add that attending these labs is not a one-way route, it's not all fun and excitement and learning.

The facilitators were extremely supportive to the obvious high-fliers of the lab, the energetic, articulate ones. They praised them, cheered them and seemed to adore them with incisive analysis. Quite rightly.

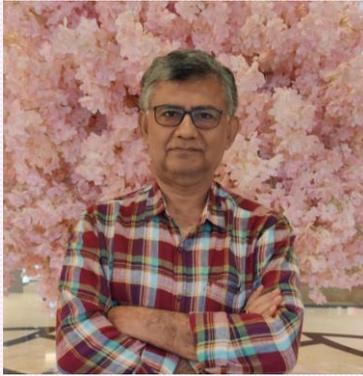
But, alas, all the lab participants weren't all high-fliers. Those who were not 'up there' needed support and kindly, compassionate guidance. However, I saw that what they generally got in the labs was stern 'wake-up' calls, criticism, and at times even worse - mocking! This can be damaging to an individual's sense of self-confidence and leave some of those participant(s) with a scar or two for quite a long time.

ISABS would do well to look at this aspect of the Labs – to do no harm, even if no good is done.

However, considering all the pros & cons, I have found it still worthwhile plunging into a lab or two. The potential benefit of learning from the experience of intense interaction with others

just cannot be brushed aside. Dealing with knocks could be a learning experience of patient resilience as well!

Rajiv Bandyopadhyay



Recently retired as a General Manager from an Oil PSU after more than three and half decades of service having worked in different verticals like Operations, Supplies, Planning, Pricing, Safety, HR, etc. The author is an enthusiastic and learning traveler in the ISABS-journey, having attended one BLHP, 2 ALHPs & PDP Phase A.



Lost & forgotten behind the veil – review of movie ‘Laapataa Ladies’

“Being happy on your own is the toughest thing but when you master it, there is nothing like it.”



Simplicity has always intrigued me. How it is possible to deliver a powerful message in a seamlessly beautiful yet ‘simple manner’!

I happened to watch a movie by name “Laapataa Ladies” (Lost Ladies) in the theatre last week. It was such a joy to watch and experience a movie which kept me and my family members entertained and engrossed at the same time.

The movie did not boast of big stars or known actors but the characters were real, authentic and simple. The storyline is about two brides who get lost, and no outsider can identify them because they have not seen them because of their long ghunghat or veils. The veil a symbol of women’s identity (or non-expression) in this case. So much so, that when one of the women is left (unattended), she is not aware of what she needs to do.

One of the values that this woman lives is what her mother taught her - not to utter her husband’s name. Is that surprising? Not really. (I recall many married women addressing their spouses as ‘Sunie, zara idhar aayiyae’ (Listen, can you please come here?). Or after she gives birth, she calls out to her husband ‘Bablu ke papa thoda suniye!’ (Bablu’s dad please listen to me!). All of these are some of her ways to attract attention. Sadly, these are not yet available to the newly wed just out her parent’s home. She is unaware of the address of her marital home or its whereabouts; why, even the name of the village. The only thing she remembers is that it’s the name of a flower. What is touching is the innocence with which she shares all this.

What angered me while I watched the film was that the so-called norms exist only for girls, not boys.

The other woman also gets ‘lost’ or exchanged but seems to be aware that someone is asking her to get up and quickly. She is the one who is more aware of her needs, wants and desires. She also questions the ills in the social system, although she has to use manipulative ways to fulfill some of her needs. She lands up in the place where the first, more innocent and naiver one is supposed to be!

The story is beautifully woven and one gets to see both the women getting familiar with the unknown and the unfamiliar. This is so much like our ISABS labs where we start conversations and start getting to know and understand each other though we are strangers. When I reflected on the film later on, I was struck by the similarities of the journey of these women to selfhood and that of participants in our labs.

The contrast between the two women is shown in the way the railway catering woman asks this young girl about what her mother taught her and what she ought to have known, versus the mother-in-law of the home-bound woman who says a girl should not be calling out her husband's name. The movie also has scenes showing how a woman curbs her small desires like a dish she used to like earlier, but after marriage gives up, focusing only on what the men in her marital family want or desire. Patriarchal norms are normalized and even romanticized subtly during their conversations.

How to or who breaks these norms or stereotypes unfolds in the movie just as processes do in a lab. Listening, being with the others, understanding, empathizing, at times confronting like the railway stall woman does but with care. Self-awareness, sensitivity to self and need to take risks are other elements which are so wonderfully knit in this film.

Another woman in the family who is naturally talented hides her talent since the woman is only supposed to know household chores and childcare and not be proud of her other accomplishments.

As I watched the movie all the human elements came to the fore. My own stories unspooled as past memories – of what unfolded in a lab about my being eclipsed in my roles and not being aware of my needs. How I became aware of some my behaviors in the lab and was able to break the shackles and work on them. Just like Phool and Jaya were able to do it in the film. In very contrasting ways, that's what is so true of our process work: each one carves their own ways to awareness and find beauty in life. The little moments that mean so much to a woman, are so refreshing and liberating are shown as well.

The time the two women spend in their respective lab - like environments for me were the highlights of the movie. For the two 'laapata ladies', it was a time to experience, experiment and learn from.

The young lost bride in the railway platform makes a choice to move from fear to trust to self-belief. To create conducive conditions from the available resources.

The second woman, who makes a conscious yet an intelligent decision, forges her own way of making the best use of her resources and creating awareness among the family members - the women in particular.

The facilitator of this process - from not knowing to awareness and self-belief - is the woman who has a stall in the railway platform. I loved her character. She brings in sensitivity, she challenges the young woman Phool, she brings in humor, seriousness. She is a strong woman who has a clear sense of herself. She says that she is not dependent on a man since she can take care of herself. What I also saw in in this self-assured woman is quite refreshing. She doesn't preach to the woman. Rather, she confronts her in a way that instills hope and confidence.

The second woman uses her resources intelligently. She is aware of her surroundings and takes calculated risks. This is what we have observed in our process work. One who take risks is more likely to reap rewards. She is the one who uses head and heart in a very nuanced manner and I felt like applauding her for it. She is authentic and assertive, is projected as a woman who is not willing to cow down to conventional norms of marrying at a certain age. She questions the dowry system and is willing to work for the family. She is one of the main resources of the entire process. She thinks about and is sensitive to her own needs, while also making her marital family aware of many aspects that hitherto they have been unaware of or not wanted to see, blinded by a patriarchal mindset.

Gender roles in this film are portrayed in a very subtle-manner. Like the woman not wanting to spell out her man's name since it is a norm (which is broken by the other woman); what a woman should be wearing, the expectation that a woman curtails her own thinking and brilliance versus role expectations as a woman.

I must mention the role of the man in *khakhi* who romanticizes corruption and does it in an intelligent manner; but stalks an intelligent woman and thinks she is cunning and fooling others. This is also stereotyping a woman. Our assumption about this man's role also undergoes a deep shift just like his behaviour and his attitude. This is fun and is beautiful to watch. He becomes more sensitive. The process reminded me once again of a lab where each person who undergoes an experience and willing to learn, be open, experiment, take risks changes. In this case it is a transformation!

In the end the first woman (the bride) embarks a journey on her own – she was earlier afraid of the unknown and always veiled. Later, she doesn't see the need to cover her head and face. Her face is radiant with smiles as the fresh breeze kisses her cheeks. And at the end, she does call her husband by name, breaking a tradition of taboos for women! It reminded me of how I felt

in a long-ago lab when I told a male participant to stop talking to me as if he was my husband.



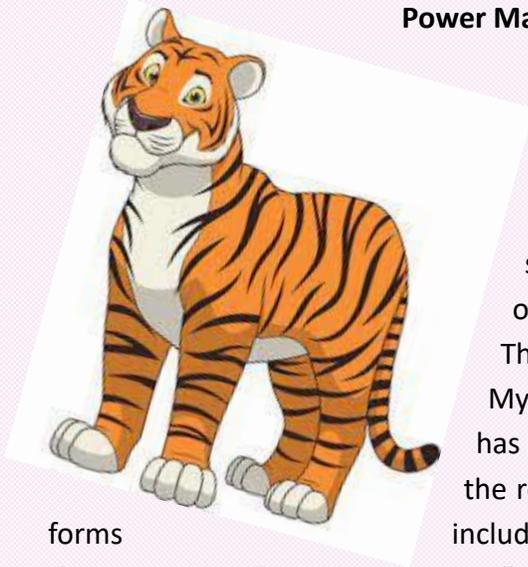
The manner in which the social messages are conveyed in this film makes it stand out for me - about the dowry system that is unquestioned, the patriarchal norms, the veil a symbol of women's chastity, which also renders her and her expression invisible. While the themes touched upon were anything but light-hearted, the humorous and witty presentation of these were admirable.



Rajeshwari Lakshmanan is a Professional Member of ISABS since 2004. She has varied interests - like Travelling, listening to music and cooking. Raji sings with a passion and also follows and tries new fashion trends



Power Matters in Quest of 'Being' - Dealing with Power and Differences in Group work



Power Matters in Quest of Being

This paper is based on my reflections with regard to human process laboratories held by the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Sciences (ISABS) where I have been a professional member for over 40 years. I also held several roles in its governance over the years. The paper offers a glimpse of my cumulative insights on the above. The need for power comes from a desire to feel important. My research into 'power need' in human process facilitation has led to interesting hypotheses. Power dynamics come from the roles one is expected to fulfil and can manifest in various forms including resentment, aggression, submission, and avoidance of those in authority. Handling of 'power play and its chemistry' in group work requires skills of diagnosis, debate, and self-discovery. This paper dwells on related issues presenting hypotheses below.

Triggers of 'PowerPoint' in Group Behaviour: Hypotheses

I believe everyone has inner 'power points' that get triggered during group work, manifesting in various forms. A central trigger point is ego-centrism of the role holder, the group facilitator. When confronted with a contrary view in the group, many facilitators make repeated attempts to reiterate their own viewpoint. This may lead to conflicts arising due to undiagnosed undercurrents of power, resulting in unresolved differences, climate disorientation, blocks, pairing and sub-groups. The following may explain the trigger points of 'power play' in group.

Hypothesis One: The greater the frequency and multiplicity of demands placed by a facilitator with invisible shades of power, the greater the group breeds ambivalence of the task and its purpose, of building unstated resentment and reluctance to unfolding.

Trainers share their expectations and assumptions about the group. This tends to put demands on the group, which then evolves through trial and error. When those in a position of power and authority correct or question the group, it can propel new power dynamics and feelings. A facilitator's role is to uncover the feelings and transform defensiveness into expression. If members feel their needs are not being met in the group, and that the facilitator is using authority, it can lead to frustration, discord, and withdrawal. If role holders feel they are not

getting through to the learners, it can result in confrontation, apathy or submitting to “knowledge power.”

Hypothesis Two: *Facilitators with varying ranges of experiences and exposure display predictable games of pairing and supremacy over one another with a calculated appreciation of their colleagues and teammates.*

Facilitators occupy positions of ‘knowledge power’ in the group. In a hierarchical society like India, accreditation reaffirms a dormant power need. Many new professionals seek inclusion and admiration of seniors and respond to seniors’ needs. Some value authenticity and take responsibility for their faults, leading to higher self-esteem and openness. During faculty meetings, it is not uncommon for role holders to become defensive when confronted from positions of authority. Mutual admiration, pairing and cliques are some power plays seen. Unclear and arbitrary criteria create power struggles even in process work organizations like ISABS.

Hypothesis Three: *Power being an intoxicating force, capable of captivating individuals and driving them to seek positions of authority, fails to let people grow and introspect towards handling interpersonal differences unless we choose to distribute our power to others.*

Power can be categorised into two major types. Possessive or ‘taking’ power is inclined towards personal goals, and used for self-centric objectives such as desire for control, achievement and status. Distributive or ‘giving’ power is inclined towards social objectives and ‘humanness’, and demands higher competencies like empathetic listening. Understanding the drivers can help understand why some are driven towards attaining power and influence.

Hypothesis four: *Different contours of possessive power produce higher emotional insecurity of a person with greater resentment to unfold and open in the group*

Emotional security is essential for building stable relationships, trust, and intimacy. Those holding power and/or authority should use it to encourage a group to establish its norms and interactive patterns rather than control or dominate. Why are some people drawn to positions of power? I offer insights based on my research over the years. Intrinsic needs coexist in a person. One may hold multiple goals due to limited skills of priority setting. The challenge lies in quest of being. How do we proceed to inner clarity that connects to our needs and purpose of life? The ‘*having*’ goal defines holding and hiding of power that protects from unlearning. The ‘*doing*’ goal drives a person to continuous engagement that covers fear of insecurity, prohibiting quest of being, The ‘*being*’ goal offers clarity on a substantive part of life.

Degree of Compatibility Between Needs and Goal of Life¹



Process Facilitation: Exploring Identity, Power, and Authority

Many process facilitators struggle to find their own identity, and deal with power and authority issues in group or peer relationships. Process facilitation requires conceptual insight and cognitive coherence. Facilitators must loosen rigid mindsets and be open to continuous learning, dealing with differences with members or peers, and being receptive to critical feedback. Learning new skills such as handling gender and diversity along with diagnostic competencies allows persons to evolve with new confidence.

Clarity of Need and Purpose- Inclusion Process

Testing Power

Entry behaviour of the facilitator as well as group members is an intriguing process. Facilitators have different styles for different levels. Participants in a basic human process laboratory may have no clear idea of the design and find the entry behaviour of the facilitator strange, or even hurtful. Some set themselves up through their entry process, testing invisible power of

¹ Conceptual frame extracted from the book of the author: "Why do I need to Matter", Evince Publishing 2023, Revised Second Edition.

acceptance versus denial, inclusion versus exclusion, and feeling powerful versus feeling powerless..

Task-Centric Power

Task orientation is of critical significance for role holders or facilitators who handle group work. They need to understand why and how a task needs to be performed, design interventions, know how their interventions may impact the group and outcomes, and ensure task completion. In times of confrontation, they demarcate their role with the authority embedded. These aspects unveil unseen power dynamics: was the group-work trainer self-centric and directive, or were they group-centric with autonomy and participation of members?

Power dynamics also involve the psychology of followership - why some individuals submit to authority. Understanding these dynamics is crucial in comprehending complexities of power relationships in group work.

Significance of Co-training and working with Peers

Peers bring shades of power into a professional learning community. This can be seen in any work group or meeting. The need for control is a part of human nature, and power provides this control. Task achievement and competitiveness as well as interpersonal needs such as inclusion and affiliation satisfy invisible power needs.

Power and status go hand in hand. Professional membership in ISABS is also seen as new status carrying a legitimate power role. Seniors play a crucial role in developing new trainers. Those in positions of power may tend to expect respect and admiration. The experience of co-training with other professionals helps the professional growth in dealing with such undercurrents of power.

Ego centrism and collusion

The pursuit of power is influenced by a need for validation and affirmation i.e., recognition of one's abilities and accomplishments. Power can bring visibility and fulfil one's need for significance, autonomy, and control over life.

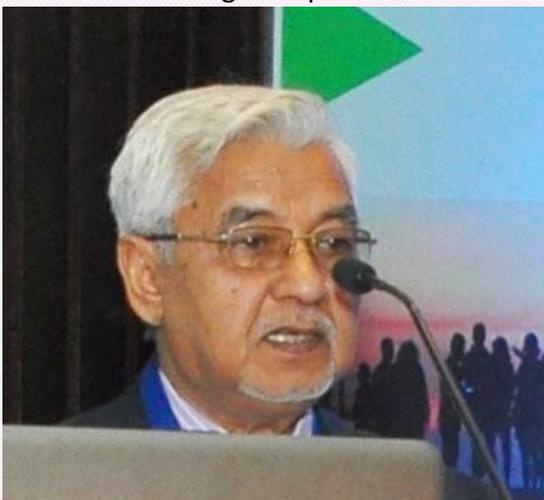
There is also a dark side. It can lead to mutual admiration and collusion among individuals wanting to protect themselves from external threat to their power. Also prevalent are misuse and abuse of power, corruption, manipulation, unethical behaviour and distancing oneself from consequences of one's actions. This is why organizations such as ISABS have well-articulated professional ethics and value statements, refined from experience over the years. Research would show which of these statements have stood the test of time.

Conclusion

Power is an important need for individuals as it gives them a sense of significance and purpose. However, we all differ from one another; and our ability to co-exist with power differences comes from acceptance rather than resentment, questioning or confrontation. We learn to conform to societal expectations, including our agreements and disagreements with peers or authority figures. Sometimes, we submit to power figures or retreat and accommodate denials and differences while being aware of our inner discomfort. Ignoring or denying this discomfort adds toxicity, causing an imbalance that can lead to interpersonal conflict.

As group facilitators or trainers, being fully aware of our inner discomfort and unease allows us to live with differences of opinion in group processes and helps us develop functional coping abilities. We can understand this analogy through our physical being - our body parts come together to carry out the tasks that our mind and brain command. If we facilitate group dynamics and act like the invisible mind and soul of the group, where each member is like an autonomous body part, respecting differences and sensing the merit of one another, the group will experience togetherness and the power of mutuality.

Power is significant as long as we strive to find our inner worth. Otherwise, we feel powerless. It does not work well when we are unaware of our inner power to confront our discomfort through acceptance. Process research has proved that the journey of self-discovery is to locate self-worth while coming to terms with visible and invisible processes of denial. Power matters, and empowers our ability to act if we understand the conceptual underpinnings and insights into group behaviour. Of course, our inner and outer sensitivity assumes critical importance in our dealing with power. As we move forward, we navigate the complexities of group facilitation processes and become clearer about our role, our needs, our purpose in what we do and why we do it.



Nagendra P Singh is President, AIDMAT Leadership Academy, former President of ISABS and currently Dean-External Linkage of ISABS naqenidmat@gmail.com

Kuch toot raha hai, kuch ban raha hai - My lab experience



बात शुरू होती है 2019 में जब मुझे प्रिय शिक्षिका से isabs की ट्रेनिंग में जाने का प्रस्ताव मिला, मुझे लखनऊ जाना था और जाने से पहले मुझे नहीं मालूम था कि वहां क्या होगा, मुझे लगा कि कुछ नया सीखने मिलेगा और कुछ दोस्त मिलेंगे, जो मेरी जिंदगी से वर्षों से कहीं गुम हो गए थे और जिनकी कमी मैं बहुत ज्यादा महसूस किया करती थी, मैं खुशी खुशी वहां तक पहुंची, और वो दिन भी आ गया जब ट्रेनिंग शुरू हो गई

[शुरुआत के बिल्कुल पहले पहले परिचय के सत्र तक तो ये वैसा ही कुछ लगा जैसे अन्य प्रशिक्षण हुआ करते हैं, पर 1 घंटे के भीतर अहसास हुआ कि कुछ गड़बड़ है, और यहां के प्रशिक्षकों को कोई रुचि नहीं है प्रशिक्षण देने में, हम शायद 11 लोग थे एक कमरे में और उसे लैब का नाम दिया गया था, हम सब हैरान थे कि न कोई कुछ बोल रहा है न कोई कुछ बता रहा है, हैरानी ये कि ऐसा भी कोई प्रशिक्षण होता है क्या, न ही प्रशिक्षकों की ओर से कोई प्रतिक्रिया आ रही थी, वो कभी कभी बीच बीच में बोल देते थे कि करिए आप लोगों को जो भी करना है, हमारे प्रशिक्षक गण में एक महिला और एक पुरुष शामिल थे, बाद में पता चला कि उनको फैसिलिटेटर कहते हैं

हमारे लैब के अलावा वहां 4 और लैब थे, चाय या दोपहर के भोजन पर मिलते तो आपस में यही पूछते कि क्या चल रहा है, पर बात तो ये थी कि कहीं कुछ चल ही नहीं रहा था, सब सस्पेंस की तरह था, किसी की समझ में कुछ नहीं आ रहा था

हमारा परिचय हुआ एक दूसरे से, फिर कुछ हंसी मजाक भी, पहले एक दूसरे पर भरोसा नहीं था फिर हम अजनबी से एक ग्रुप में बदल गए, पर फिर भी ये समझ नहीं थी कि हो क्या रहा है, फैसिलिटेटर तो निश्चित थे, वो ग्रुप के क्रियाकलाप या वार्तालाप के बीच में कभी कभी एक दो लाइनें बोल दिया करते थे कि ग्रुप में हम कहां हैं और ग्रुप क्या कर रहा है, ना कोई दिशा थी न कोई फॉर्मूला, समय बीत रहा था और एक दिन गुजर जाने के बाद थोड़ा डर भी लगने लगा था, जैसे कोई साइकोलॉजिकल एक्सपेरिमेंट चल रहा हो और जिसके बारे में हमें कुछ नहीं मालूम हो, किसी को नहीं पता था कि आगे क्या होगा

हम सब बिल्कुल अनजान लोग एक समूह में चुपचाप बैठे रहते, कभी कभी कोई कुछ बोलने की पहल करते तो फैसिलिटेटर कहते कि पहले ये बताओ कि तुम कहां हो, तुम्हारी भावना क्या है, क्या तुम सच में वही कह रहे हो जो तुम कहना चाह रहे हो, तुमने ऐसा बोला उसका क्या कारण है, यहां और अभी क्या हुआ, कुछ अपने बारे में बताओ, जब कोई सदस्य कुछ बोलता तो बोलते कि वो तो बाहर की बात है, here एंड now,

अब ये नया शब्द आ गया था here and now, जो किसी मुसीबत से कम नहीं लग रहा था, क्योंकि ढेर सारी शांति के बीच here and now कुछ बताने को समझ ही नहीं आता था

हममें से प्रत्येक कुछ बताना चाहते वो अपने गुजरे समय या बाहर की घटनाओं पर आधारित होता था, जो here एंड now पर आकर, शून्य में चला जाता था, ग्रुप पर जबरदस्त दबाव आ गया था कि करें तो क्या करें

इस बीच मेरी जो स्थिति थी वो ये भांपने की थी कि कोई कुछ कर रहा है तो क्या कर रहा है, कोई दबाव में आकर फूट तो नहीं पड़ेगा, कोई जबरदस्त झगड़ा तो नहीं हो जायेगा, मैं कुछ बोलना चाहती तो रोक दी जाती कि क्या मैं चुप नहीं बैठ सकती, और चुप रहने के सुझाव को ये बोलकर खारिज कर देती कि हम यहां चुप बैठने नहीं आए हैं, पर फैसिलिटेटर कुछ और ही दुनिया में लगते थे, वो मेरी बातों को खारिज कर देते थे और कहते कि ये बताओ कि भीतर क्या चल रहा है, क्या महसूस हो रहा है और मैं इस बात को समझ पाने में समर्थ कि मेरे भीतर क्या चल रहा है, सब कुछ समझ से बाहर लगता था, मन उलझ गया था कि here एंड now क्या है, और बीती बातों में जो गुजरी जिंदगी में या लैब के बाहर घटित हुई हैं उनमें नहीं जाना है तो जाना कहां है

इसी बीच हममें से एक सदस्य ने पहल की क्यों न हम एक दूसरे के परिचय और लैब में गुजरे समय को लेकर एक दूसरे से कुछ शेयर करें, और फैसिलिटेटर इस बात पर सहमत हुए, और हम सबने एक दूसरे के बारे में अपनी राय रखी, अब हम एक दूसरे के साथ कुछ सहज होने का प्रयास कर रहे थे, पर उसके बाद भी शांति में चले जाते कि इसके बाद क्या, एक ही प्रश्न होता मुझसे कि तुम कहां हो और तुम्हारे भीतर क्या चल रहा है, मेरे पास कोई जवाब नहीं था क्योंकि मेरी प्रतिक्रिया किसी कारण को बताकर समाप्त होती और उन्हें कारण नहीं चाहिए था और ये प्रश्न मुझे जैसे खाने लगा कि क्या चल रहा है जो मुझे समझ नहीं आ रहा है

मुझे लग रहा था कि मैं ही शायद इस स्थिति में हूं या सब ऐसी स्थिति में हैं, ग्रुप में कोई सदस्य किसी पर भरोसा करने को तैयार न था, इस बीच जो मुझे फीड बैक मिला था वो ये था कि जो मैं दिखती हूं वो मैं वास्तविक में नहीं सोच रही हूं, मेरी आंखें कुछ और बोलती हैं और मैं कुछ और ही बोलती हूं, इनका कोई मेल नहीं है, और अपने बारे में ये बात मेरे लिए बहुत आश्चर्यजनक थी, मैंने ऐसा कुछ सोचा ही न था, क्या ऐसा सचमुच था? और यदि ऐसा कुछ था तो क्या था जो भीतर था

मैं समझ नहीं पा रही थी कि ऐसी कौन सी बात थी, here एंड now मेरी समझ से परे हो गया, मेरे भीतर तो गुजरी हुई जिंदगी चलने लगी, लगने लगा कि क्या बीती परिस्थितियों ने मुझे ऐसा बना दिया है कि मैं जो होती हूं वो बोलती नहीं हूं और जो बोलती हूं वो होती नहीं हूं, अब तक ग्रुप इस स्थिति में था कि आपस में विश्वास न था कि एक दूसरे को बेझिझक कुछ बोल दिया जाए,

फिर मैंने here एंड now को भूलकर कारण ढूंढा और अपने गुजरे समय को बताना शुरू किया, ग्रुप भी इसको चुपचाप सुनने लगा, मैंने अपनी जिंदगी के उन दुखद पलों को बांटा जो मैं किसी से शेयर नहीं किया करती थी, मेरे जीवन के दो पहलू थे एक जो दिखता था और एक जो छिपा रहता था, मेरे लिए ये बता पाना बहुत कठिन था, ये मालूम न था कि किसकी क्या प्रतिक्रिया होगी, जो भीतर था वो सब निकाल दिया मैंने

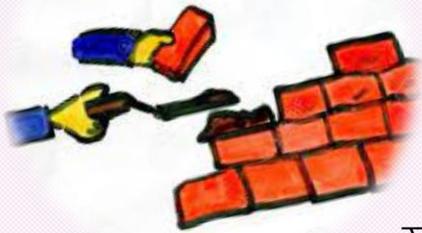
अपने जीवन की सारी सफलताओं और असफलताओं को बांटा, इसमें मैं बिलकुल सहज न थी, लेकिन ग्रुप मेरी सारी पीड़ा और दुःख में साथ खड़ा नजर आया, आश्चर्यजनक रूप से ये अनजान लोग मेरे सुख दुःख के सहभागी बन गए थे, ये लोग मेरी हौसला अफजाई कर रहे थे और अब सदस्य से मेरे साथी बन गए थे, मैंने देखा कि पूरा ग्रुप मेरे साथ खड़ा है

मेरे बाद ग्रुप के अन्य सदस्यों ने भी अपने गुजरे जीवन के बारे में बताया जो उन्हें परेशान किया करती थी, उस ग्रुप में फैसिलिटेटर भी सबके साथ हो गए थे, सब एक दूसरे को पूरी सहानुभूति के साथ सुन और समझ रहे थे, बस वो बीच बीच में बताते रहते थे कि ग्रुप कहां है, और आगे बढ़ने का चुनाव आपका है

मैंने पाया कि ग्रुप पूरी ईमानदारी से आपके बारे में अपनी प्रतिक्रिया देता था, आप चाहे उसे स्वीकार करें या अस्वीकार, ये प्रतिक्रिया इतनी आसान भी न होती थी कि सरलता से मान ली जाए या नकार दी जाएं, कुछ जगहों पर ये पीड़ादाई भी होती थी, और कुछ जगहों पर आनंदित करने वाली और राहत देने वाली, समय के साथ ये समझ आने लगा कि आप जो बोलते हैं उस हर बात का लोगों पर प्रभाव होता है, और किस बात का क्या प्रभाव होता है, इसे समझना जरूरी है, मैंने इसे अपने लिए बहुत जरूरी सीख के रूप में लिया, जो समूह में काम करते समय मुझे ध्यान में रखना चाहिए कि लोगों की प्रतिक्रिया हमारे व्यवहार से ही उपजती है, जिसका ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए, किसी बात पर राय बनाने से पहले लोगों को सुनना चाहिए, उनके अपने अनुभव होते हैं, उनका सम्मान करना चाहिए, मैंने सीखा कि लोग आपके बारे में जो राय बताते हैं वो उ...

मैंने ग्रुप के सदस्यों की सहायता से पाया कि हमने व्यर्थ की जटिलताएं अपने व्यवहार में ओढ़ रखी हैं और जो आनंद सरलता में है, सहजता में है वो, व्यवहार की जटिलताओं में नहीं है। मैंने पाया कि साधारण से दिखने वाले लोगों के जीवन में साहस और संघर्ष की गाथा छुपी हुई है, किसी के भी जीवन के अनुभव साधारण नहीं हैं, मैंने पाया कि जब आप मुसीबत में होंगे लोग आपके साथ खड़े होंगे बिना किसी

लंबी जान पहचान के,



लैब ने यह बात भी समझा दी कि जब हम कठिनता अनुभव करते हैं तब हम पलायन का रास्ता चुनते हैं, और मनोरंजन भी उनमें से एक रास्ता है

लैब की इस यात्रा में बहुत कुछ मिला, उतार चढ़ाव, स्वीकृति अस्वीकृति, सुख और दुःख, समझ आने लगा कि जो कुछ भी घटित हो रहा है वो हमारा चुनाव है, सब कुछ अनायास नहीं है और हमें अपने चुनाव

की जिम्मेदारी लेनी चाहिए

इस बीच एक प्रश्न मुझे भारी लगने लगा कि तुम कहां हो? तुम क्या महसूस कर रही हो? और मैं इस प्रश्न का उत्तर न ढूंढ पाई, कि मेरे भीतर क्या चल रहा है, अपनी ही भावनाओं को व्यक्त कर पाने की असमर्थता को मैंने पाया, दिमाग में चल रही बहुत सारी झंझावातों से मुझे समझ आया कि मैंने खुद को कहीं खो दिया है, मुझे खुद की खुशियों के बारे में तक पता नहीं था, मैंने खुद की तलाश करने का फैसला लिया, मैंने कुछ

अनसुलझी बातों पर बात करने का फैसला किया, मैंने पाया कि जीवन से भागते भागते मैंने बहुत कुछ खो दिया है, और व्यर्थ की भागदौड़ में जो सबसे कीमती चीज नष्ट हो रही है वो है समय, जिसे हम जीवन कहते हैं वो दोबारा नहीं आएगा, और इसे समझना बहुत जरूरी है, दोराहों पर साहसिक फैसले लेने की जरूरत है, अपने आपको दबाकर जीने से कहीं बेहतर है खुलकर जीना

लैब तो बस तटस्थ था वो यात्रा में और चुनाव में सबको जगाए हुए था, और लैब 5 दिन गुजरते ही जैसे अचानक समाप्त हो गया, जैसे पड़ाव के बीच ही सब खत्म हो गया और यात्रा अचानक समाप्त हो गई हो, समाप्ति के पहले ही भीतर सब बदल गया, अब हम वो न रहे जो लैब में आने से पहले थे,,,,,बदलाव में बहुत कुछ हैं जो एक ही आलेख में शब्दों में नहीं पिरोए जा सकते, मैंने लैब से आते ही अपने दिल की आवाज को सुनना शुरू किया, मैंने जैसे कोई नई यात्रा प्रारंभ की हो, ये यात्रा धीरे धीरे चल रही है, पर लगता है जैसे लैब जैसे मेरे साथ चल रहा हो, मेरे इन फैसलों में से एक है कि मैंने बच्चे को गोद लेने के लिए एप्लाई किया और अपने इस फैसले का स्वागत किया, इसके लिए मैंने किसी पर निर्भरता नहीं दिखाई, कभी किसी परिस्थिति में कमजोर पड़ती हूं तो लगता है कि लैब मेरे साथ खड़ा है, और मेरी खुशी का इंतजार कर रहा है, ये आभासी सी लगने वाली यादें मुझे साहस देती हैं, 2024 में मुझे अपनी बेटी मिलने वाली है, शायद बहुत कुछ बदलने वाला है, पर मेरे भीतर मेरी खोज जारी है, और ये जारी रहने वाली खोज मुझे खुद को तलाशने में मेरी मदद कर रही है, मैंने अपनी कमजोरियों को भी समझा है, उन पर भी कुछ करना है, सब एक साथ संभव नहीं पर बदलाव जारी है, कुछ टूट रहा है, कुछ बन रहा है, भीतर ही भीतर। थैंक यू लैब, मुझे मुझसे मिलवाने के लिए ❤️



Monika Sukhtel

मेरा नाम मोनिका सुकतेल है, मैं महिला एवम बाल विकास में पर्यवेक्षक के पद पर काम करती हूं, हमेशा कुछ नया सीखते रहना मेरा पैशन है, मैं खुद को एक बेहतर इंसान बना सकूं यही मेरा और मेरे जीवन का उद्देश्य है, मेरी लाइफ की जर्नी में isabs मेरे लिए एक साथी की तरह है जो मुझे खुद को जानने और खुद के करीब रहने में मेरी मदद करता है



“Perfect strangers” – Movie review



“Because we are breakable - all of us - some of us more than others”

It is a simple enough story. A group of friends get together for dinner to watch an eclipse, and then play a game in which everyone shares every call and message they received during the day from each other. This causes secrets to come out and turns the situation complex. Through a barrage of cognitive-emotive twists, “Perfect Strangers” raises numerous questions around the meaning of love and trust in man-made systems called institutions/institution look-alikes.

It highlights the pressure human instinct feels under social ‘shoulds’ and ‘should nots’ Irrespective of gender, social expectations around every human relationship that we give a name to (and define) spawn secrets, and secrets in relationships makes perfect strangers.

Some would see the film’s message as the perils of addictive temptations that our phones offer us, or the secrets we hide in our phones, closets and hearts. I saw the film as posing a much deeper question on social systems and relationships that we make for our conveniences and so-called social ‘order.’ Funnily and ironically enough though, this very pushy intention for ‘order’ causes chaos in system!

Struggles of trusting those we love, the role of a useless emotion called guilt that one burdens oneself with, the fear of shame and the cortisol we generate every day in our relationships - and then the therapies we actually need, but deny...

I would applaud the maker of this film for their understanding of human compulsions, deep-seated guilt and many related feelings that possibly keep many couples together - even when they’ve drifted far apart emotionally. Maybe, given the right dinner party, we would want to read what our friends say behind our backs, or find out about an affair we’d rather never know about.

But, as it happens in “Perfect Strangers,” all we are left with is the unintended consequences of secrets thrown open - secrets that wouldn’t be secrets in the first place if we did not shame

each other. Or if we cared enough to sense each other's real feelings and have the courage to talk about them.



Mukta Kamplika, Ph.D. is a professional member at ISABS. She is the founder and chief consultant at MUKTA – Liberating Human Potential (a Human Capital Development and OD Consulting firm). She is also associated with Heidrick and Struggles and KPMG . Mukta paints and writes with passion and has published 4 poetry books – her original art merchandise combines her poems and paintings. Mukta also dabbles in theatre and uses many art forms in her work.



Today

If I have only today,
What will I do?
Like a soft flowing stream,
time floating so
See the sunrise still,
Feel the light breeze
on my face
Touch the soft petals
Slowing my pace
Read my loving books
Laugh heartily
Kind thoughts of my friends
Cheers instantly
Love the soft light
Circling me
Sweet smells engulf
Under the big tree
Love the life
My existence
Just today
I can still be me.



Indrani Bose



Indrani says "My association with ISABS goes back to 1993 November. One of the best decisions of my life to join this cluster of people on this journey of self discovery. Whatever I was before...I know I have changed. Every moment of this journey with all of you made my life more complete and meaningful. Just here and now I thank everyone 🙏🙏."

Mirror's dilemma

She reflects emotional rainbows of cascading shades,
She is a comrade from toned cheeks to wrinkled skin,
She is a silent witness to promises once made and
then broken,
She represents the chaotic passages of time,
She feels deeply but cannot even sigh.
A comrade who can never take your side...
Her integrity is her identity.

Amit Saraf



Amit says "A lifelong learner and an incurable romantic, I revel in the abundance of life and its colorful play. As a chess coach I am moved by the curious spark in a young learner's eyes with whom I relate with a territorial lens which enables me to learn too."

Paintings and Musings



He said to her

It is okay when you remember unexpected moments

It is okay to cringe and well up when your favorite song is played, even at a public place

I know you are always searching for, finding yourself

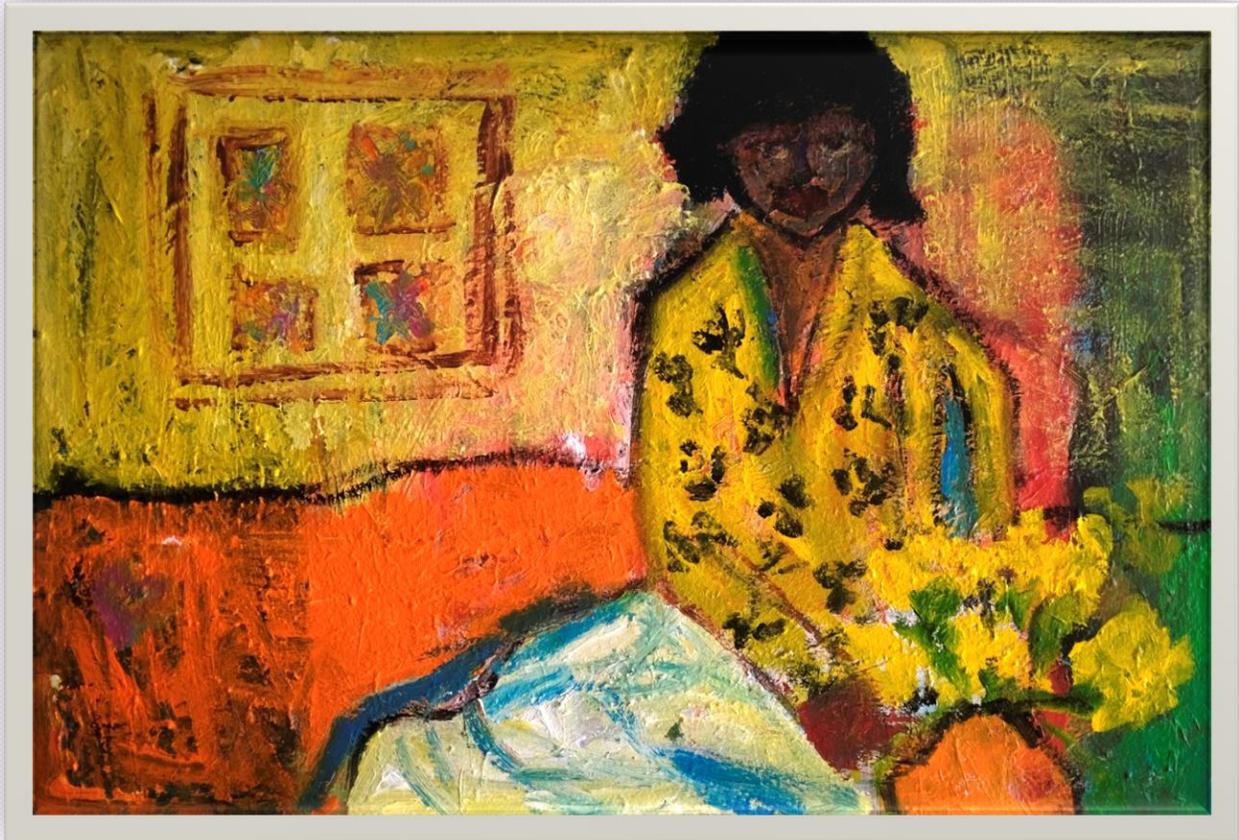
and trying your best to prove your worth as a human being

I hope you become the fairy tale princess who will never lose faith

and trust in the beauty of uncertainty of it all...

Well, stumble if you will, but next time, just stumble better !

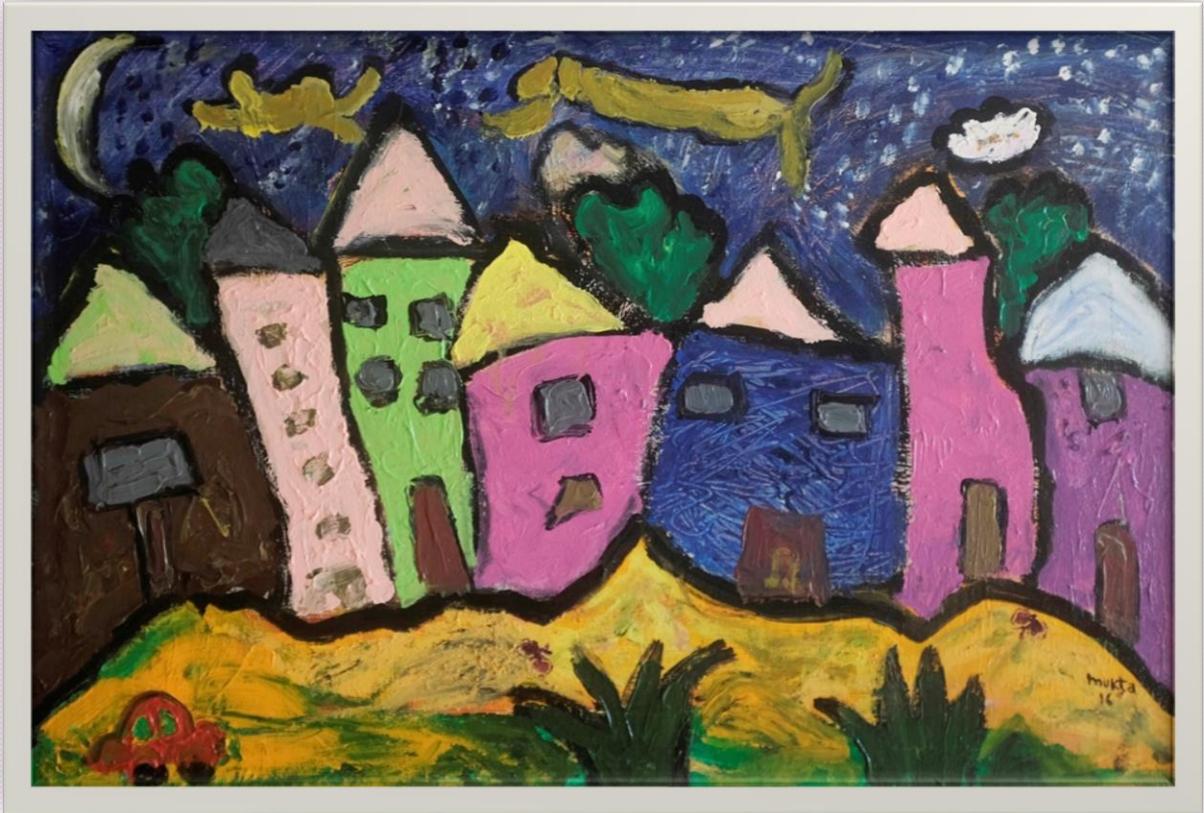
Soliloquy | Mukta | 2023



She said to him -

I know! This story isn't very worldly. In this one, every night I just keep you quietly on the ledge a little box of moonlight and feathers. You can leave anytime or return if you like . And what I give, I give freely. You owe me nothing - not love, not friendship, not even obligation.

Soliloquy | Mukta | 2023



She travels...

“She travels . And so she will need someone that questions her - not too little, and not too much. You know what am saying ?

She’ll need someone to understand but more so to really lovingly listen to her. Because she’ll want to do the same. Not to drown in narcissism but in fascination and in love for life and being ...”

She | Mukta | 2022



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Letters to the Editor and Feedback on the Issue:

Please send your feedback and suggestions to isabs.hnn@gmail.com



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