

Meeting the Other, Meeting Oneself

fear and longing in
working with difference

June 25–June 30, 2018
Mumbai, India



The Tenth Group Relations Conference
offered by Group Relations India
and HID Forum

Dear prospective member,

Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced

This perceptive and compassionate quote from American writer, poet, and social critic James A Baldwin captured for us the essence of the theme of this group relations conference—an invitation to explore ‘the other’ both inside and outside of us, and alongside, the process of Othering.

‘Who am I?’ is a question that is an ongoing quest in every individual, every society, every culture, every age. Paradoxically, however, this quest to define one’s identity leads to a process of Othering, where differentiating between the self and the other sets up very quickly the dynamics of ‘us versus them’. This is something which social and political events across the globe are a grim testimony to. It is as if the differences between self and the other, unless converted into hierarchies of better, superior, more evolved etc., cannot provide direction to the deeper search for reality and a sense of identity.

The distinction between an ‘other’ and the process of Othering is often blurred, sometimes consciously as a political or social strategy for partisan ends, but largely unconsciously, through messages that are not explicitly stated yet imbibed, cultural prescriptions and proscriptions not mandated, yet enforced. Not all of these processes are about fear and distancing when we face difference. When we, while shaping

this brochure, paid attention to our own experience, we found that behind the fear there is also longing, and perhaps even more difficult to accept, the fear of longing! And thus, James Baldwin’s invitation -to face and to meet this imagined other!

Group Relations Conferences offer a unique way of learning from direct experience through being a member of a temporary organisation. The focus is on the conscious and unconscious processes that we create, which impact us as members of groups and systems. Designed as it is, away from the busy-ness (and business!) of day to day life, and with a minimum of predetermined structure, it offers a fresh and different space to see the same things, but with new eyes. Note that we use the word conference in the sense of ‘to confer’— to bring together—in conversations, dialogue and exploring together. The setting is not a series of lectures or speeches to a passive audience. Far from it!

We invite members representing a range of work settings, roles, and identities, to focus on these issues in an open atmosphere of thinking about and making sense of one’s experience. If learning from direct experience, and a methodology of learning based on one’s own authority is appealing to you, then this ‘conference’ is likely to be of immense value to you. We look forward to hearing from you, and welcoming you to the conference.

Rosemary Viswanath
Conference Director

What are Group Relations Conferences?

Group Relations Conferences (GRCs) are designed as temporary organisations for learning through direct experience, which may well be the only way of sustaining learning.

A GRC offers unique opportunities to explore how you take up roles in the various systems that you are part of, as well as the habitual patterns that influence individual and group identities and collective behaviour—both conscious and unconscious. The spotlight in the GRC is also on groups as systems, and how they develop a conscious and unconscious life.

Pioneered by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London, in 1957, and introduced in India in 1973, GRCs are based on the frameworks of systems psychodynamics developed by social scientists and psychoanalysts such as Lewin, Freud, Klein, Bion, Turquet, Miller and Chattopadhyay, among others. Over time, the design and structure of the conferences have undergone innovations and adaptations as they were offered the world over. However, the focus on unconscious processes in groups and

systems, leadership and the exercise of authority, and learning through 'here & now' experience, has remained intact.

The Theme as Context

The processes of creating the other are complex but ongoing. Language, cultural practices, food we eat or avoid, colour of our skin, what we consider art and beauty, what work is valued and what is devalued, political and ideological persuasions, religion and faith, gender, caste, class, sexual preferences, regional and national identities, physical or intellectual disability: each of these and more become the basis, or more accurately, the reason, to create a sense of me and other. The 'other' then becomes simply a 'not like me'.

To what extent are these processes a defense against our abilities to hold differences within ourselves, to manage the feelings of encountering the projected 'not like me'? To what extent are they a defense against 'not knowing' or perhaps 'knowing more deeply'? To add to the complexity of this dynamic dance between me and the other, I often need the other to define me, as who I am is also defined by who is 'not me'.

We can look to philosophy, psychology, literature, art, sociology, and spiritual traditions to understand this intersubjective process better.

Lithuanian born French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas who spoke from an ethical framework, maintains that we operate from a self-regarding position—i.e. we consider ourselves and our interests as most important. At the same time, we are perpetually concerned with how we appear to the other. These two concerns put us in a double bind—fear and longing; love and pain. Levinas posits that human interaction and growth is possible only when we are 'other-regarding', when we are able to see the person on their terms. Thus, in every encounter with another, the question arises: Do I meet the person on my prefigured terms, or do I allow a radical questioning of my terms?

From the psychoanalytic perspective, the work of Freud, Jung, and many others help us to see that the construction of the other comes out of unconscious processes such as splitting, projection and shadow. When we split-off from a part of our psyche the part that we are loathe to own, we project out this part either as an 'other' within our psyche, or as an 'other' in the outside world. If we can recognize the reflection of ourselves that is being revealed to us in this process, we can then begin re-owning this

split-off, unconscious part of ourselves into our conscious self-image. Unless we face up to this process creating an 'other' we end up replicating the very dynamics that we believe we abhor. This facing up requires courage and an acknowledgement of our vulnerability.

While the other has a very powerful presence and role at the individual level, the process of othering is also a virile and often virulent process at the level of groups and society. Human societies organize and collectively define themselves along dimensions of difference and sameness. We have the tendency to identify with those that we are grouped, no matter how arbitrary or facile the group boundaries may be. We then judge members of our own group as superior, very quickly creating the dynamics of in and out-inclusion and exclusion, prejudice and bias, discrimination and inequity. Thus, while human beings have a natural tendency to make categorical distinctions, the categories themselves and meanings associated with those categories are socially constructed rather than natural, and the process is mostly unconscious and untested against reality.

We cannot deny existential anxieties in the human condition. These anxieties can be moved into directions of fear and anger as in processes of demagoguing or demonising the other, or toward a

more spiritual direction—the recognition of empathy, interconnectedness, and solidarity. In our sub-continent the multiple spiritual traditions—be it Yoga, the philosophy of the Upanishads, the experiential truths discovered by the Buddha, the interiorizing call of Sufis, the poetry of Kabir, the songs of devotion of Meera—invite us to ponder on the fundamental reality that we are interconnected; that we can be different, and yet not separate.

This Group Relations Conference, through its theme, posits the idea that a more transformational change may require work at psychic, ethical and spiritual levels, as it calls for personal insight generation, as well as insights about group and systemic phenomena.

Conference Primary Task

The term **Primary Task** refers to the reason for the existence of any organisation or institution—its most important task—that which defines its nature and core purpose. If not worked at, the organisation would lose its meaning. This GRC will work to the following primary task:

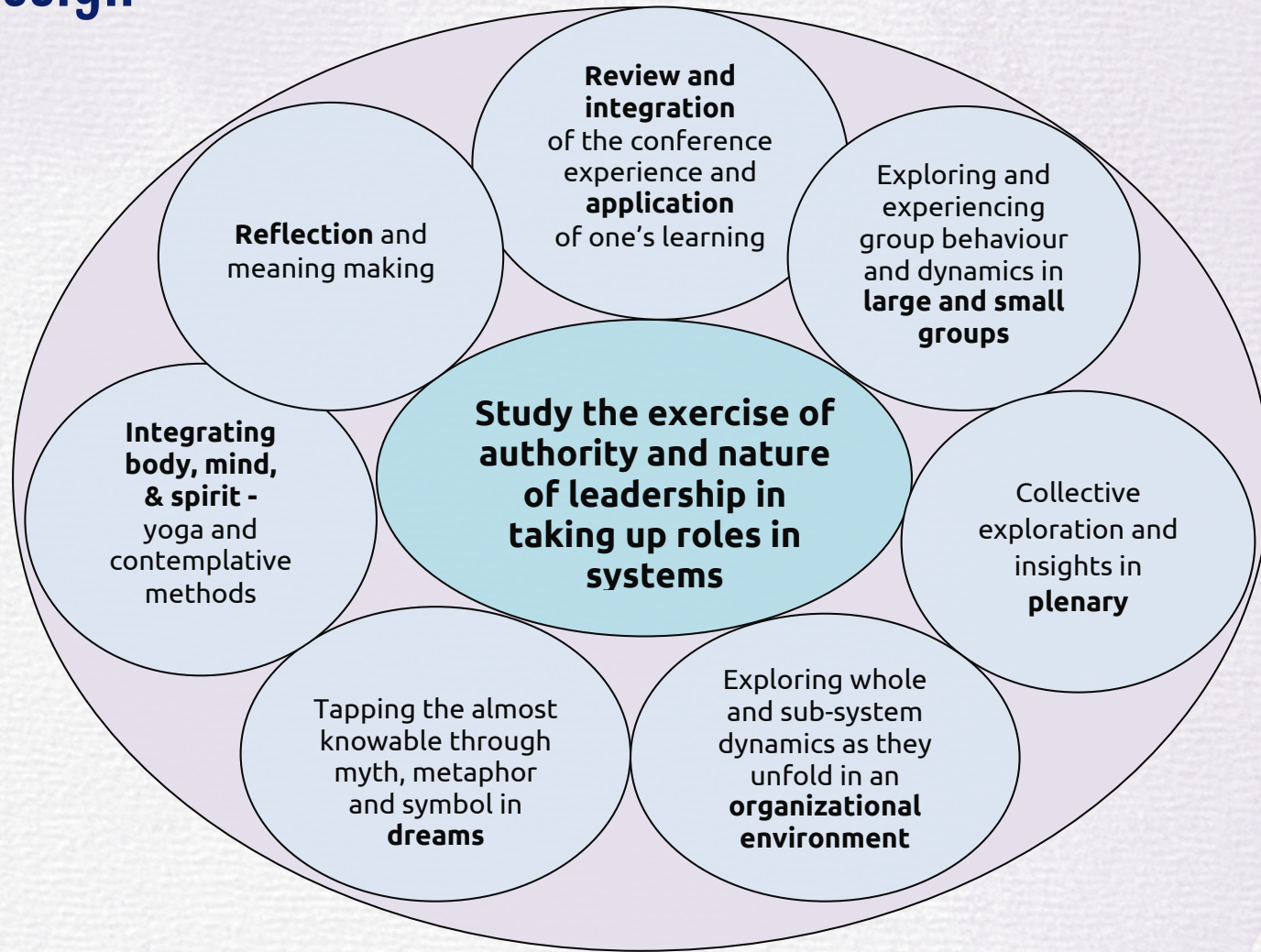
To study the exercise of authority and the nature of leadership that emerges in the taking up of roles through the interpersonal, intergroup and institutional relationships that develop within the conference as an organisation within its context.

The theme-**Meeting the Other, Meeting Oneself**-provides the immediate context of this GRC. It furthers the invitation, whilst engaging on the primary task, to explore if (and how) fear and longing come up in obvious and in subterranean ways when working with difference.

The GRC is also situated within its wider context, and therefore work on its task is also an invitation to explore these dynamics at various levels—the individual, group, organisation, and wider social systems, recognising that these levels of awareness are interdependent fractals, and are constantly shaping and co-creating each other.



Conference Design



The conference design provides a variety of opportunities to discover how much one's experience of the 'here and now' is influenced by phantasy (beliefs that are more linked to one's valences and untested assumptions), helping one to recognize and work with both individual and systemic unconscious processes.

Each event is designed to offer the possibilities of a varied view from which one perceives oneself and others. The multiple roles one takes up in different events in the GRC invariably reflect the assumptions and roles we deploy in our day to day life, and how these contribute to, or take us away, from the task.

The stance of the conference is one of developing a spirit of enquiry into one's experience through attention, exploration, reflection, and the capacity to wonder. There is no preset curriculum or evaluation of performance. Using the theme, task, structure, and framework as resource, members generate learning and insights based on their personal authority. They are therefore, likely to achieve different kinds of learning.

This year we offer two sub-conferences within the conference

Entry sub-conference: This is for those participating in a Group Relations Conference for the first time.

Furthering sub-conference: This is for those who have had prior experience of a Group Relations Conference and wish to further their learning this time.

Some of the events and plenaries will be common to members of the Entry and Furthering sub-conferences. The Furthering sub-conference will be offered subject to adequate number of members applying for it to be feasible as a learning experience.

The Role of Staff

While staff and members are both participants in the conference, they are in different roles. Staff are allocated to each of the events in the role of consultants, and in their role of collective management, to work to the primary task of each event, and thus to the task of the conference as a whole. As consultants they offer working hypotheses, which aim to interpret group or system level unconscious processes by making sense of their own and members' experiences, constantly linking this to the task and theme of the conference.

Conference Management and Staff

Director: Rosemary Viswanath (also Director of the Entry sub-conference)

Associate Director: Ganesh Anantharaman (also Director of the Furthering sub-conference)

Conference Administrators: Swathi Seshadri (also Pre-conference Administrator) and Sunitha Lal

The Conference Directors and Administrators form the **Directorate** of the conference. They would also be consultants in some events.

Consultant staff will be drawn from among:

Eliat Aram

Gagandeep Singh

Gunjan Zutshi

Haritha Sarma

Kartikeyan V

Patrick Jean-Pierre

Uma Ravikumar

Veena Pinto

Staff Profiles

Eliat Aram, PhD, CEO, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London, UK. Eliat has recently been awarded a companionship of the British Academy of Management (BAM), an award recognising leadership in management practice or thought, or development of the field and its diverse community. The Tavistock Institute also won two awards in 2017, representing its 70 years of excellence and rigour in the development and application of Group Relations conferences, organisational development and action research.

Gagandeep Singh, PGP IIM Ahmedabad; Consults with organizations on managing change, alignment, transformation, and organization development; anchors interventions on leadership and coaching; Executive Director and professional member for Sumedhas Academy for Process Work, and Principal Consultant with Flame TAO Knoware Private Limited; Visiting faculty for IIM Ahmedabad, ILPSE from INSEAD, and ISB; Co-author of SAGE Publication on Organization Development & Alignment–The Tensegrity Mandala Framework.

Ganesh Anantharaman, M. Phil. Political Science (Mumbai University); Professional Member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS); Member, NTL Institute of Applied Behavioural Science, USA; Associate Certified Coach (ACC), International Coaching Federation (ICF); Associate Member, Group Relations India (GRI). Consultant, Leadership Development and Culture Building, working primarily with the corporate sector. He has been on the staff of several Group Relations Conferences in India since 2003.

Gunjan Zutshi, Masters in Business Administration (MBA), organization development professional working with organisations and individuals as an enabler in their change journeys. Co founder of AgileSattva-a firm that uses humanistic and systems approach to Agile transformation. Accredited Organisation Development and Change Practitioner from Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS), coach (ACC) and practicing psychotherapist.

Haritha Sarma, M.Sc. Geology, worked as a hydro geologist and planner of Natural Resource Management projects. Haritha is a process facilitator, gender trainer and Organisational development Consultant. Over last two decades, Haritha has designed, facilitated and directed learning processes with a focus on empowering marginalised communities.

Kartikeyan V, B.Com. Madras University, P.G.D.PM & IR (XLRI, Jamshedpur). Has worked in Human Resources leadership roles in several corporates in India for twenty years. Has been an Organisation Development (OD) & Leadership Development (LD) Consultant and Executive Coach for over ten years now, and is currently the Chief Architect of the Transformative Alignment Map (c).

Patrick Jean-Pierre, B.A./M.P.S. (Stony Brook University) Psychology/Human Resources, M.A. (CUNY Brooklyn College) I/O Psychology, M.A. (NYU) Education, Psy.D (Rutgers University) Organizational Psychology. Teaching, counselling and leadership development, and organizational consulting that fosters systemic change in the field of Education. Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, University at Albany; Formerly, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University; Wharton School of Executive Education; University of Pennsylvania; Member, A.K. Rice Institute (AKRI) for the Study of Social Systems.

Rosemary Viswanath, B.Sc. (Hons) Mathematics (Delhi University), P.G.D.M. (IIM, Bengaluru), Founder & Managing Trustee, Group Relations India. Has consulted in and directed Group Relations Conferences in India and internationally since 1987. Consults on organizational strategy and change processes primarily with social development, social justice, and human and environmental rights organisations and movements. Professional member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS).

Sunitha Lal, Masters in Labor Management and Labor Laws; been in leadership roles with various organizations working in the space of transformation and Organization development. As Head of People Operations and Strategy at Ather Energy, she is set out to explore and curate the organization's culture. She is passionate about continuing to explore and learn around unconscious and group processes; She deeply introspects and blogs on subjects as diverse as politics and philosophy.

Swathi Seshadri, M.Com. (Mumbai University), M.A. in Social Work (Tata Institute of Social Sciences), is a researcher at EQUATIONS, focussing on land, labour, people's rights, control and access to forests and the coasts, in the context of tourism. She has lived and worked in Central India on health, water and energy issues. Swathi

has worked with young people at the National Youth Foundation and has also held teaching positions in Christ University and Bangalore University.

Uma Ravikumar, B.Com, MBA with 15 years' experience in technical and leadership roles in the IT industry. Consultant for organization change initiatives, leadership development and performance assessments. Coach for leaders in for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Gender diversity professional facilitating women's leadership in organizations.

Veena Pinto, M.A. Clinical Psychology, PGDHRM. Currently working as an independent Consultant, Coach & Trainer. Her work involves assisting individuals, groups, and large systems to learn and grow. She brings to this work more than 30 years of experience including 15 years as a Corporate HR Leader. Veena is a Professional Member and past Board Member of the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS), Member and Consultant in Training at the A K Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, USA.

Administrative Details

Conference Venue

The venue is on the outskirts of Mumbai.

GCC Hotel and Club

Off. Mira Bhayander Road, Mira Road (E),
Thane, Maharashtra, India. 401107.

<http://gcchotelandclub.com>

Participants will be accommodated at this venue as well as at the adjacent GCC Northside, which is a 2-minute walk away. Detailed information on how to reach the venue and other joining information will be sent to members on confirmation of their applications.

Timings & Registration

Registration of members to the conference is from **1200-1330** hours on June 25, 2018. The conference will open with a Plenary at **1400** hours on **June 25, 2018**. The conference **ends** at **1630** hours on **June 30, 2018**.

In order to plan your travel, you may like to know that members are expected to arrive at the venue and check in to their rooms at noon on June 25 and check out of the rooms by June 30 mid-morning. You can leave at the close of the conference at 1630 hours. It would be wise to assume at least 90 minutes of travel time between the airport and venue given monsoon and traffic conditions.

Fee

- The conference fee is INR 68,000 plus 18% GST* (i.e. INR 80,240 is payable). For international participants it is USD 1,500 plus 18% GST (i.e. USD 1,770 is payable)
- The Early Bird Fee is INR 65,000 plus 18% GST (i.e. INR 76,700 is payable). The Early Bird Fee for International participants is USD 1,300 plus 18 % GST. (i.e. USD 1,534 is payable)

Last date to avail the Early Bird Fee: April 6, 2018

The conference fee is the same for Entry and Furthering members. This is a residential programme and the fee includes accommodation and board on a twin-sharing basis which is booked from noon of June 25 until June 30 midmorning. Any extra stay needs to be negotiated separately with the preconference administrator and cannot be assumed as available.

Single room accommodation is available at an extra cost of INR 8,000 plus 18% GST which amounts to INR 9,440. You need to mention this requirement at the time of applying and payment. *Note: Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates prevailing at the time of payment will be applicable.

GRI and HIDF are organisations committed to ensuring that group relations work is accessible to a wide membership, which has enabled people from a range of economic and work sectors and representing many other important diversities to attend. The diversity of members is the hallmark of our conferences, contributing in no small measure to the depth and richness of the learning.

We are particularly committed to make group relations opportunities available to those in the social justice and development sectors. A few partial bursaries are available for participants from small under-resourced NGOs or community-based organisations and movements. Those seeking bursary are required to write to us at the time of applying giving the reason for, and the amount of bursary they seek. We will revert to you on the amount we can offer based on the total number of requests made, the relative merits of the case, and the number of full-paying applicants we get.

How to Apply

Applications in the required format will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. [Click here to apply.](#)

Applications are not automatically accepted. Places in the conference are limited, and your place will be confirmed by us on receipt of both the online application form and the conference fee. **Refund Policy:** Refund after deducting 25% towards administrative expenses will be made to those who withdraw before June 2, 2018. For withdrawals after that, refunds will not be possible.

Payment Details

We prefer payments to be made by bank transfer. If you would like to pay by cheque, this is also accepted, and we request that you drop the cheque in a branch of HDFC bank near you, mentioning our account number. For both options details are given below:

GRI Account Details

Account Name: Group Relations India

Account Number: 50200002769010 Type: TASC Current Account

Bank/Branch: HDFC Bank, Indira Nagar 100 feet Road
(Branch No 1755), Bengaluru, India

IFS Code: HDFC0001755 (applicable for domestic transfers)

SWIFT Code: HDFCINBB (applicable for international transfers)

GRI'S GST & PAN Details

Name: Group Relations India

GST Number: 29AACTG0900H1Z0

State Registered in: Karnataka

Type of Service: SAC code: 998311

PAN: AACTG0900H

Important: We request you to fill in the transfer details / cheque details as well as details linked to GST in the application form as these are required by us for statutory compliances.

Speak to us!

For further discussions and to assist your decision about the conference we would be happy to speak to you. Email or message Swathi (+91 9448474911) or Rosemary (+9198454 03773) to schedule a conversation. Email us at : grc@grouprelationsindia.org

If you are living through particular personal difficulties, we suggest you consider postponing your participation as the conference is designed as a learning environment and is not a substitute for personal psychotherapy or counselling.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to the conference!



About the Sponsoring Organisations



Group Relations India (GRI)

GRI promotes experiential learning of individual, group, and organisational processes. It uses systems psychodynamic and socio-analysis approaches, which pay particular attention to unconscious processes. GRI offers a variety of educational programs and workshops for the enhancement of skills and competencies in this area. It also networks with like-minded professional bodies and organizations to further this aim.

www.grouprelationsindia.org



Human and Institutional Development Forum (HIDF)

Founded in March 2000, HID Forum works towards developing and strengthening Human and Institutional Development capacities in individuals and organisations who work to empower disadvantaged communities. The key themes of intervention are leadership and organizational change; identity, dignity and diversity; and governance and accountability. HIDF employs the strategies of change facilitation, competence building, research, and knowledge building.

www.hidforum.org