UNCONSCIOUS TRANSACTIONS ACROSS BOUNDARIES: TWO EXAMPLES[i].

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I

Introduction:

The catalyst for this paper was an invitation to contribute to a conference 'Homage to Gunnar Hjelholt: Working on Boundaries' organised to commemorate the life and work of Gunnar Hjelholt.

Gunnar Hjelholt had mentored a generation of social scientists with specialisation in the field of social psychology and psychoanalysis in Scandinavia. He was a teacher and a consultant who devoted much of his time for human welfare rather than for making money. His publications have been translated in several languages, including in English. Gunnar had joined the resistance movement under German occupation and survived his imprisonment in the concentration camp to emerge at the end of the war with damaged lungs. This did not stop him from working till lung cancer claimed him towards the close of 2002.

This paper responds to the challenge of the theme of the conference by offering some reflections on boundary phenomena. The first part of the paper develops an idea, or rather a prediction, offered by Gunnar in a letter to me not long after the dismantling of the Berlin wall. The second part is based on a recent experience of mine as Joint Director of a Group Relations Conference that involved representatives of the so-called untouchable community in India.

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Example 1:

The veteran Indian journalist K.P.Nayar wrote an article in *The Telegraph*, one of the Indian national dailies, on July 24, 2002 with a rather startling title, which reads, "It's worth thinking about whether the US is a communist country, but a successful one". *What he establishes in the article is that the United States of America today shows many of the features that the erstwhile Soviet Union was known for.*

For example, at the individual level if a Soviet citizen publicly raised one's voice against what the government would like its citizens to believe, such a citizen was hounded. Today in the US precisely the same phenomenon is at work, as evidenced by, for example, how "Navratilova is being pilloried from coast to coast in America for having spoken out her views on the values of American society ………..So far Navratilova has stood her ground, but safety for her has come only from numbers. By suggesting that she is being attacked because she is openly lesbian, the tennis star has sought the protection and the lobbying power of lesbians and gays, who are powerful forces in U.S." The CNN's star anchor of the time, Connie Chung, told Navratilova during an interview to either love U.S. or leave it, as though love for one's country does not include standing up against decadent values, even if those are espoused by the government.

The second instance cited by Nayar is of a different kind. "*The Economist*, the standard bearer for everything that Western free-market democracies stand for", had in an editorial in early 2002 compared the U.S. business leaders' being knocked off their pedestals as a process that is faster than Communist heroes being dragged down after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Nayar goes so far as to draw a parallel

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[i] An earlier draft of this paper was presented at a conference in Aarhus, Denmark, on August 27, 2003, organised to pay homage to the memory of Gunnar Hjelholt.

[ii] The author was fortunate in getting the opportunity to work with Gunnar Hjelholt in India twice. The first occasion was when the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta invited Gunnar Hjelholt in the late 1960s to work with groups of business executives in Kolkata and Jaipur. The second occasion was in the 1970s when on Gunnar Hjelholt's recommendation a senior manager of the Danida Project in India invited the author for a brief period along with Gunnar Hjelholt.

between toppling of many statues of Lenin in erstwhile Soviet Union and the eastern Europe with how "men of iron-clad reputation such as Jack Welch of GE have been discredited."

Nayar continues to dwell on the parallel and comes up with the fact that the current evidence of corporate dishonesty in USA has a close parallel with that in erstwhile German Democratic Republic while the Wall was up. In those days the powers that be in East Germany had boasted on the basis of their records that GDR ranked 12th globally as an industrial power.

After unification of East and West Germany, Treuhand was set up to privatise the erstwhile East German State enterprises. Their findings were that "Everything had been inflated. The books of state enterprises were cooked up, their inventories were maintained by sleight of hand, productivity had been exaggerated and many of the firms in GDR only deserved to be closed down. A close parallel to the above is the recent spate of bankruptcies of industrial giants in USA and the massive frauds perpetrated by falsifying records."

On the basis of such evidence as has been given above and much more a European diplomat posted in US with long experience of past Moscow posting had said to Nayar that, "America reminded him every single day of the former Soviet Union. America is a communist country, but a successful one….. The only difference with the Soviet Union and its east European satellites is that unlike in those societies, propaganda is very effective here. The people lap up all the propaganda in the US; in Russia they used to quietly put up with it and look for the truth elsewhere."

Unconscious process underlying political relationship across the Iron Curtain:

While thinking about my association with Gunnar Hjelholt after Jorgen Steen Christensen, also one of the organisers of this conference, rang me up in March this year to discuss the possibility of my participation in this memorial conference, I recalled these apparently tenuous parallels between the erstwhile USSR and the present day USA drawn by Nayar and their connection with a statement made by Gunnar Hjelholt in a letter to me shortly after the Berlin Wall was dismantled. He wrote, "I am concerned about our own institutions and 'democracy'. With the Wall we could export our dark sides. Now that escape has been taken from us."

What Gunnar Hjelholt was drawing our attention to was that the Berlin Wall had all those years come to stand as a metaphor for the Iron Curtain. Its dismantling signified the psychological collapse of the Iron Curtain. In his letter to me, Gunnar had further written "So long as the Iron Curtain existed, the West unconsciously kept exporting the evils in their midst to those countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Now that the curtain has been dismantled, those projections will begin to come home to roost. I wonder how prepared we are to deal with those (projections)!"

This brief statement actually draws our attention to several unconscious processes around boundaries. While all boundaries need to be permeable in order that the system within the boundary survives through appropriate transaction with its environment outside the boundary, the USSR had tried to ensure that the boundary around the Communist Block of countries in Europe had an almost non-permeable boundary. The result was that while unconscious transactions, which brook no man made or perceived boundaries, went on across the so-called Iron Curtain, due to lack of appropriate conscious socio-economic transactions the system within the Iron Curtain eventually collapsed. Among the unconscious transactions that took place, one of the major process was the so-called Free World of the West projecting the evil within it that it was unwilling to acknowledge and explore.

When the almost non-permeable boundary of the so-called Iron Curtain collapsed and its visible representative, the Berlin Wall, was dismantled, there being no two systems - the apparently free (democratic) and the apparently totalitarian systems - the projections boomeranged back into the societies from which those had sprung. As a result the media hyped differences between the two also vanished to show that perhaps Nayar and his diplomat friend were saying things which are in a sense true.

Evidence of Gunnar Hjelholt's prediction seems to be more than fulfilled by America's so-called anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan. If the primary task of waging war in Afghanistan was to kill all Al Quaida terrorists, it is clear from the result that the US had failed. It went for carpet bombing of Afghanistan, which resulted in killing and maiming thousands of peaceful Afghan citizens along with a handful of

terrorists. Since many terrorists fled across the border to Pakistan, logically USA should have followed this up with sending its army there to flush out all those terrorists who had slipped in to Pakistan. However, this never happened, and one wonders whether the covert task of American 'intervention' in Afghanistan has to do with ensuring its presence in a country that has as its neighbours some of the world's oil rich nations.

US war in Afghanistan has been followed by the Anglo-American war against Iraq (with Australia too participating in it in a sort of drummer boy role!). It was rather obvious to many people that the probability of Iraq being able to withstand the attack was near zero. First, Iraq was roundly punished in the Gulf War, with a tally of 35000 civilian casualty alone. Then sanctions were imposed on it 12 years ago, which broke its economic backbone and created near famine there. One of the horrifying evidence of it is 700% increase in child death rate per 1000 births between 1989 and 1999, with an estimated death due to sanctions at 1.5 million Iraqis, which include 750,000 children. Further, in 1998 the UN weapons inspectors claimed that they had already dismantled 90% of Iraq's capacity after 1991 to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Consequently, the USA must have been absolutely certain about the outcome of attacking a weakened Iraq. Therefore, as we all have learned from the media, almost as soon as it commenced the war, it also got organised the rebuilding of war torn Iraq along with imposing a new administrative infrastructure. Examination of that infrastructure reveals that in effect Iraq has been converted into a colony of the USA with the lion's share of the UN funds for rebuilding of Iraq allocated to powerful US business houses.

This is also the method that was followed by the erstwhile USSR when it went on its agenda of "liberating" one after another Eastern European countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania etc. and in effect converting those into its colonies, which were in polite political term described as the Satellites of USSR. In the Middle East, after Iraq already Syria believes that it is going to be the next target of USA, while Iran is busy trying to prove that it has no nuclear armament programme up its sleeve to avoid probable and possible US invasion.

It is also well known how the erstwhile USSR used to terrorise the population within the boundary of the Iron Curtain through "liquidating" any serious attempt at questioning the dictat of the powers that be.

It seems that the USA too has followed that policy, albeit in somewhat different form, for many decades. But this has been glossed over since the "Democratic West" and its allies had held on to the belief that the policy of shutting up questioning only existed within the countries bounded by the metaphorical Iron Curtain. Thus the supposed purging of communists in USA in the nineteen fifties led by Senator McCarthy, mass killing in Vietnam and Korea in the name of US intervention to stop the spread of communism, the death of an unknown number of Afghan civilians through carpet bombing and the killing of many Iraqi civilians in the recent war almost escaped negative publicity, not to speak of open criticism in the "Democratic West". However, with the last vestiges of the metaphor called the Iron Curtain vanishing with the dismantling of its visible representative, the Berlin Wall, the crack in the so-called Democratic West is showing up with countries like France and Germany openly condemning US action in Iraq. Such condemnation also highlights the fact that acts of terrorising and purging dissidents for the sake of monopolising economic resources, which was earlier thought of as the actions of the "evil communists", is also getting evidenced in the "Democratic West".

This was, as I understand it, the phenomena around boundary that Gunnar Hjelholt in his wisdom was warning us to look out for. His worry was how prepared the Western Democracies were to deal with such phenomena. That worry also seems to be quite justified.

I have given the above example to highlight how Gunnar Hjelholt could combine systems theory with psychoanalytic approach in order to hypothesise about the unconscious interrelationship between two such very large systems that were created by dividing the world between the so-called democratic half and the so-called communist half. And how years later evidence is surfacing in support of the hypothesis.

Example 2:

I would now switch over to another side of Gunnar Hjelholt's personality, which had immediately drawn me towards him as a human being. That side of his personality was his compassion – the rarest of human qualities. It is well known to many that this quality led him to helping groups that were poor in terms of their access to resources.

Unconscious process across various boundaries in a Group Relations Conference:

I would describe below my work, along with some of my Indian colleagues, with the so-called untouchable community of the Indian sub-continent. This community is also economically at the bottom of the heap. Like many liberal and thinking Indians I have fought against the caste system as an institution in my small way all through my adult life. However, recently opportunity came my way to utilise my professional skills in the service of this lowest sub-system in the Indian caste structure. I shall briefly describe below the work that my colleagues and I did. In fact this work continues.

We began our work with the untouchable community of south India by using the socio-analytic approach (Bain: 1998) in dealing with some of the major issues that emerged during a Group Relations Conference (GRC) held in Hyderabad, India in February 2003. The GRC was jointly sponsored by Learning Network, a Bangalore based consulting and training organisation, and Dappu, the umbrella organisation of a large number of NGOs (NGOs are not-for-profit private organisations that work for helping the needy) that fight for establishing human rights for the so-called untouchable castes (the *Dalits*). Some of those NGOs deal with as many as seven to nine thousand members. (*Dappu* is a drum with a leather surface used by some of the so-called untouchable castes. It has now become a metaphor for their struggle to achieve human existence.)

The Dalits and a Group Relations Conference (GRC) process:

The great leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (who had drawn up the draft Indian Constitution at the behest of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and that text was by and large adopted by the Indian Parliament) coined the word *Dalit*. Ambedkar belonged to the so-called untouchable community by virtue of his birth in the *Mahar* caste, famous for its military prowess (though unrecognised as such in history books, presumably because of their low position in the Hindu caste hierarchy). He coined that term after rejecting the term introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had used the term *Harijan*, meaning the "People of God". Elevating the so-called untouchables intellectually by associating them with the term "God" perhaps hid their problems from the general public more than it helped them. So Ambedkar chose a term that seeks to confront all other communities of India with a very unpalatable Indian reality. This lent a political voice to the issue of caste discrimination.

There are today about 160 million Dalits in India and about 80% of them live in villages. Although a community of 160 million is quite large, in India with its current population of 1 billion they form a minority community.

The word *dalit* has several meanings. These are, according to a standard Bengali to English dictionary (1989), "trampled underfoot, trodden, chastised, coerced, quelled". These meanings can also be found in most other Indian languages, including in Sanskrit. The socio-psychological conditions of those castes reflect most or all the meanings noted in the dictionary, in terms of the experience of those who belong to those castes[i] and in the perception of a minority of liberal and *thinking* Indians, whichever caste or religion or socio-political group they may belong to.

Dalits are at the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy based on the twin concepts of purity and pollution. This societal position also limits them in terms of choice of occupations and puts them outside the *varna* system. They have been oppressed throughout the recorded history of India, relegated to toiling and engaging in 'polluting' occupations like agricultural labour, disposing dead bodies, working with leather, cleaning toilets and sewage etc. Many Indians continue to believe that others would be polluted by their touch, or even by their shadow. To avoid such "pollution" Dalits were segregated and

denied access to many other community facilities like schools, temples, wells, water tanks, etc. To this day thousands of villages have a separate area for Dalit houses (including houses built for them by the government), separate wells for Dalits, class rooms where Dalit children sit separately, tea shops with separate cups and glasses for Dalits. Such discrimination occurs despite laws against those practices. Those fighting for human rights have thus consciously brought Dalit into development vocabulary.

One of the Indian sub-continental tragedies is the acceptance of the hierarchy of groups based on the principle of purity and pollution determined by birth. This highly ascriptive system has existed for several millennia and is indeed very hard to make a dent on. In fact many people belonging even to the so-called untouchable or other so-called impure castes of various degrees believe in this hierarchy. They do so not only because this social structure has been strongly associated with religious beliefs.

The caste system itself can be said to be based on a process in which every caste, from the superior most among the Brahmin *varna* downwards, have over many millennia *projected the unexplored emotionally felt badness and even evil within their community on the lower order of castes.* To that extent the caste system, like the Berlin Wall, provides intercaste boundaries that are rather impermeable. Because most upper castes wield more socio-political and economic power, these projections more often than not end up as the process of projective identification. Obviously, under various kinds of economic and psychological pressures the lower order castes have introjected the projections. This process has led to blinding logic with deep-seated anxieties based on unexplored feelings, like for example guilt, that have been driven into the unconscious.

Many years ago I had recorded in an article (1991a) my frustration arising out of the experience of my futile effort at trying to persuade a family belonging to a caste rather low in the local caste hierarchy (the *Bagdi* caste of West Bengal), to offer me a cooked meal that included boiled rice. They considered it a sinful act on *their part* because eating a meal consisting of boiled rice cooked in their home would "pollute" me! It was enough for the family that I have a Brahminical surname. That I am not a Brahmin but according to Manu's laws an outcaste since I have not gone through the thread ceremony and its associated rituals, or that I have renounced religion itself, made no difference in their perception of the ritual distance between us.[iii]

While a large number of Hindus belonging to the upper castes actively discriminate the lower castes, in India many Moslems (Ahmad: 1973) and Christians (Swarup: 1987) too practice some form of discrimination based on caste (where the caste prior to conversion is known) or caste-like hierarchy. As a result it has fallen on a minority to hold the fight on behalf of majority of low caste people who passively accept this degrading caste hierarchy based on the twin concepts of purity and pollution. This is an unconscious phenomenon. Lawrence (1979) has dealt with the impact of such passivity of the majority on society at some length in the context of studying urban guerrilla and such other phenomena. The hypothesis that Lawrence presents is that so long as the majority of any community remains passive in the face of felt injustice meted out by the establishment, a minority will unconsciously express the anger on behalf of the majority, some times in very violent forms.

Nearly two decades ago I had offered four hypotheses in an article (Chattopadhyay: 1986) by way of trying to understand how a number of people are treated as less than human beings by the majority of population even after achieving independence and creating an Indian Republic that boasts of democratically elected governments both at the Centre and in the States. Theories and evidence to back up the hypotheses were also recorded in that article. All four hypotheses were with reference to unconscious phenomena.

The first hypothesis offered was that in every country certain very threatening negative internal processes embedded in the society are projected on less privileged minority communities so that the majority need not confront the evil within. Further, in many situations the less privileged communities introject and internalise these negatives. The punishments that are then meted out to those who are

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[iii] Non-Indian readers who find it difficult to visualise the Dalits' experience of themselves in the Indian milieu may find some similarities in the life experience of Afro-Americans (also known as Black Americans), as described in such books by Langston Hughes as *The Ways of White Folks* (1933) and *Ask Your Mama* (1961).

perceived to hold the negative processes sometimes take terrible proportions. An example outside India is the Jew-Christian relationship in Europe prior to the formation of Israel.

The second hypothesis deals with my concept of "the invader in the mind in Indian metaculture" (Chattopadhyay: 1991b). I had offered evidence to suggest that as a defence against exploring the presence of an "invader" in the mind of every Indian community, all kinds of boundaries of a section of the underprivileged communities are invaded and violated by the majority.

The third hypothesis deals with the term "underprivileged" in the Indian context. Historical evidence suggests that this term is a defence against confronting the reality of denial of basic human rights of the less powerful by the privileged elite in this subcontinent.

The fourth hypothesis deals with the paradox created by a rich Indian subcontinental metaculture over the millennia. While enriching many aspects of the Indian personality, the diversity on offer has also resulted in people internalising many apparently conflicting culture traits and cultural realities. This process has resulted in creating an Indian personality, whichever part of the subcontinent one may belong to, that contains the inability to manage many internal differences. Instead of coming to terms with and dealing with uncomfortable internal realities, some of those parts of the personality are experienced as bad objects, and then split off and projected on some external objects in the environment. The age-old *varna* system provides a readily available container in the shape of the lowest order in the system for the worst of the internal bad objects.

The Dalits of India are thus loaded with unconscious burden that only comparatively recently they are trying to deal with in an organised way rather than remaining dependent on the elite to alleviate some of the miseries of their existence. Unfortunately for India, unlike the Berlin Wall, there is no concrete structure that serves the purpose of a metaphor to represent the dividing lines between the untouchable community and the rest. Therefore the struggle to provide human dignity for the untouchable community of India is an extremely tough one.

One of the bolder attempts in that direction was taken by Dappu when it nominated two of its powerful leaders to attend a GRC in 2002 directed by me in Kolkata in order to explore the unarticulated and unconscious assumptions present within their own community. That this hope was largely fulfilled can be seen from what followed.

Dappu was formed a few years ago in the wake of Globalisation (Viswanath & Chattopadhyay: 2004). Various foreign donor organisations of Indian NGOs working in South India informed over one hundred NGOs that they were required to form an umbrella organisation through which the foreign donors would funnel their fund. This was necessary to cut administrative cost of sending donations to different NGOs and monitoring how the funds were utilised. The initial problem that Dappu faced was that many Dalit NGOs were led by non-Dalits either as Directors or with the tag of consultant. When numerous NGOs came together to form Dappu, the suppressed anger towards non-Dalits as part of the passive majority came to the fore and they rejected the candidature of all non-Dalit NGO leaders for Dappu's executive roles. This resulted in forming Dappu with incompetent leadership. Recognising their problem the Dappu leadership approached the Director of a consulting organisation called the Learning Network. This person had been a consultant to several Bangalore based Dalit NGOs in the past and she agreed to assist Dappu for a token fee. It was at her recommendation that Dappu had nominated two members to the GRC. Today the executive council of Dappu consist mainly of Dalits and they continue to work on their authority and related issues with the help of Learning Network.

Soon after that GRC one of the Dalit members expressed the need for organising a GRC for those Dalits who were in leadership position in several NGOs connected to Dappu. He, on behalf of Dappu, agreed to sponsor the GRC jointly with Learning Network, a consulting organisation based in Bangalore, whose Director has considerable experience in India and abroad as staff in GRCs. She has also been a consultant to Dappu to assist it in working through some of its major problems. The Dalit executive of Dappu also accepted our logic that if the GRC recruited members from non-Dalit NGOs as well as from the corporate sector, the experience of the participants would in all likelihood be far richer than if it was left open only to Dalits.

The theme chosen for this GRC was *Identity, Authority, Leadership: Resistance, Self-Empowerment & Transformation in Organisational and Social Systems,* and it took place in Hyderabad from February

17 to 22, 2003. I was authorised by Dappu to co-direct the GRC with Rosemary Viswanath, Director of Learning Network. The three other persons on the staff were Paul Divakar (Convenor, Dappu), Zahid Hussain Gangjee (CEO, Zahid Gangjee Associates) and Rina Tagore, who, after resigning from her job as Programme Officer for Human and Institutional Development of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, had postponed her move as a permanent resident to New Zealand by a month in order to work as a staff.

Vignettes from the GRC:

A powerful Dalit leader, who is the head of a several thousand strong Dalit NGO, entered the Opening Plenary a quarter of an hour late although he had registered on arrival at the venue at least a couple of hours earlier on that day. When he spoke in the opening plenary towards its close, it was to make sure that all the participants (members and staff) understood that he came late on purpose to show his ambivalence at agreeing to join "a workshop based on 'Brahminical model and attended by corporate types'." His contempt for and anger towards the staff, which included two persons with Christian names (one of whom is a Dalit leader), another person with a Moslem name and two others with Brahminical surnames, and also towards managers attending the conference, almost dripped from his short speech. He gave all participants to understand that he had come with the prime motive of collecting evidence of why such GRCs should not be attended by Dalit 'Activists' like him and others present as members there.

Other Dalit members' emotional baggage consisted of mixed feelings with two younger women reflecting a great amount of excitement at the prospect of learning in a new way. However, as the GRC began to unfold, it seemed rather obvious to us that the angry Dalit leader was actually airing thoughts and feelings on behalf of most of the other Dalit leaders in the GRC.

As the GRC unfolded we began to understand one of the major problems of both Dappu and its connected Dalit NGOs that fought for establishing human rights and ending exploitation of Dalits.

What struck me from the very beginning of this GRC was the intensity with which the Dalit leaders, who described themselves as 'Activists', participated. As a group they appeared to me to apply themselves with far more vigour and attention than managers normally do in GRCs. While a few Dalit leaders had joined the GRC with the hope of learning something that would help them carry out their duties as 'Convenors' of various Dalit institutions and organisations, the majority had joined the GRC carrying in their mind a heavy dose of scepticism about the outcome of the GRC. Their vigour and attention remained alive right through the GRC despite the feeling of scepticism and associated anger that was expressed by a Dalit leader in the opening plenary on behalf of many others who talked of mixed feelings in guarded language.

Almost all the Dalit leaders, however, began to realise through their experience in the GRC the psychological process present behind the terms 'Activist' and 'Convenor' and how in many ways that process leads to wastage of energy and other scarce resources while the Activists act in all good faith and high motivation for helping brother Dalits to fight for their rights as human beings in the society.

As I understand the process, 'Activist' is a metaphor that stands for minority action against a discriminating and dehumanising establishment, which has the passive support of the majority. The term 'Convenor' is attributed to an activist who has a formal leadership role. To understand the kind of authority the Dalit activists and convenors mobilise, one has to first look at their experience over millennia.

Proto-historical evidence that can be garnered from such epics as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* show that the untouchables had next to no human rights in the sub-continent for ages and any attempt to raise their status met with violence. Further, killing untouchables for whatever reason carried no penalty or even moral censure in the past. All that they could do was to appeal to those in power to give them enough protection that would allow them to some how survive. In the historical period too there is little evidence that their lot had become significantly better. During two hundred years of British rule the same state of affairs had prevailed. It was only after India's independence that several schedules were added to the Indian Constitution that specifically referred to the socio-economic condition of the underprivileged communities of the country and constitutional guarantees were enshrined for their upliftment. However, these guarantees seem to have remained mostly in paper to

this day and the lowest amongst the underprivileged, the Dalits, seem to have internalised the aggressor to the extent that they find it very difficult to mobilise their authority to address the issues confronting them.

So instead of engaging with such activities that would effectively fight discrimination, their NGOs spend much time and other resources in activities that highlight the process of discrimination. For example they regularly organise poster exhibitions, stage skits and dramas in parks and fallow lands on open stage, compose and sing songs in groups about their plight. These activities are aimed at drawing public attention towards their situation. They also arrange for lodging complaints to the police and the local bureaucracy against acts of discrimination that undermine their rights as citizens under the Indian Constitution. They continue to actively pursue these activities despite the fact that their situation has remained almost the same as before even after more than half a century of independence. Barring isolated instances, neither the police nor the bureaucracy has paid serious attention to their complaints although practice of any form of discrimination is punishable under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution. These activities not only take away the focus from designing and managing tasks that relate to the objectives of restoring human dignity to Dalits and putting them in the path of economic well being. These activities also waste their energy and organisational resources that are certainly not available in abundance.

The term 'convenor' does not carry with it a focus on managing the organisational boundaries for the Dalit NGOs. In the absence of such a focus they have not paid attention on the links between objectives, strategies and tactics.

These back home realities began to surface in the dream associations in social sensing matrix event, in the small and large study group events and the institutional event. The fact also emerged that none of the activists and convenors has given thought to formulating and articulating primary task for their respective organisations. These processes emerged with greater clarity for the Dalit members as we in our consultant role assisted them to articulate the primary task of their respective organisations and work on specific problems in the role consultation event.

Many of them realised and acknowledged how a process that loses focus on managing objective-related tasks leads to wastage of resources. This process was further reinforced by using the term 'Convenor' through rejection of anything to do with the term associated with 'Manager' or "management", which to them represent the exploiting establishment and the passive majority. Almost inevitably this started a process that failed to establish role clarity within the organisations. Dalit members in the GRC began to create their insights once they saw how their anger and hatred, though very legitimate, towards establishment has resulted in their unconsciously rejecting some of the basic tenets of managing successful organisations.[iv]

Thus in the absence of having articulated primary task that directly contributes towards achieving the major objective of gaining full citizenship right, in effect they have been engaging with the phenomenal primary task of appealing to the fantasised omnipotent elite of the country by either staging shows that highlighted their plight or by lodging complaints to the police and to the local bureaucracy, though neither seriously paid attention to those.

The Dalit leader who had at the opening plenary almost spat out his rejection of a 'Brahminical model' and the presence of 'corporate types' pointed his forefinger towards his own head and said at the closing plenary six days later that he had come to realise that the 'Brahminical model' was earlier present in his head and that he was projecting it on the staff. He and several others also mentioned at the closing plenary how in their anger at being at the receiving end of denial of basic human rights in a free country had rejected the word 'manager' as something that belonged to the 'corporate world', representing exploitation of the worst kind. Another Dalit GRC member, who headed a nine thousand strong Dalit organisation of toilet cleaners, acknowledged his earlier problem around even exploring

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[iv] An evidence of how one of the Dalit leaders has been able to internalise and utilise his insights about the need for developing the managerial component of the activist roles has come to light recently. The Dalit leader of about 9000 strong NGO of scavengers has recently filed a suit in the Supreme Court against 13 State Governments under the Public Interest Litigation Act for not taking steps to force the municipalities to mechanise removal of certain types of waste product that still require manual scavenging

his leadership role in the organisation. Leadership for him was a bad word because of his experience of being betrayed by many of the country's (elected political) leaders. Therefore in his Convenor role he tried to keep his activities as much limited to convening meetings and disseminating information as was possible in the face of tremendous pressure from other activists to initiate various other kinds of activities.

These are only a few examples of the multitude of insights shared by the Dalit leaders at the closing plenary. In that process, they acknowledged that in rejecting the word 'manager' and describing the managerial roles in their organisations as those of 'Convenor', they had quite unconsciously set in organisational processes that had created mismanagement of various much needed resources which they would now work towards undoing.

It had been obvious to us how much pain the Dalit leaders went through during various events of the GRC whenever they developed insights about their way of running Dalit NGOs and other Dalit organisations that fought for human rights almost round the year. The pain was about realising the mistakes that they had been systematically making in terms of managing those NGOs and other organisations. It was the commitment to their chosen tasks and objectives and also their deep seated motivation that helped them acknowledge their insights in 'public', i.e. in the closing plenary.

"The six days of intensive working with a hands-on-approach, confronting the group with hypotheses substantiated by evidence, delving into the group psyche and its unconscious, threw up the pictures of authority, power and management — how these are deeply embedded in the psyche of the Dalit and non Dalit.

"The Dalit members struggled and fought with anger, projected on the figures of 'authority' as held in their minds, notional in the conscious and unconscious layers. Members expressed their insights on how this anger was often paralysing their role as leaders, how the resistance from within towards 'management' and 'managers' sabotages their own function and task. These were individuals leading membership groups of thousands of Dalits.

"The voices of some 'privileged intellectuals' i.e. members who were 'experts' - facilitators and resource persons - working 'for' Dalits, were confronted with their own notions and myths they tend to build perhaps to sustain their position of power. Faced with a competent Dalit subsystem there were feelings of threat stemming perhaps from the recognition of a reality that this subsystem was equally, if not more, powerful. Envy in learning could be witnessed on many occasions – how can Dalit persons, not as fluent as themselves in the English language – manage to express themselves, communicate and even learn! An interesting crusade to take up the 'cause' of the apparently less equipped was taken up by a non-Dalit member. Later he drew an insight from his attempts to sabotage, albeit not consciously, the conference itself in the guise of taking up a 'cause' related to learning in the GRC. And through it all the Tamil speaking member (who understood English but could not express himself clearly in that language), whose 'cause' was being taken up by the non-Dalit, managed his interest and learning fairly well — perhaps he did not even view himself as handicapped in anyway!

"The GRC membership struggled with the insights, painful as they were. The processes and dynamics during the different events challenged members to throw off the shackles of prejudice — the very same prejudices against which transformation was sought. They acknowledged their own manipulative behaviours, resistance to take on the "managerial role", responsibility and leadership. One member declared that he had decided to go away mid course and then worked further, discovered in him the need to influence the processes within the GRC more strategically, and stayed back!

"At another instance the debate in a small group on emotion and the need to take care of emotions, brought home to me (a new dimension of) the tendency to view emotion and thought in two compartments or separate continuums."[v]

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[v] This quotation is from a note prepared by one of the staff, Rina Tagore, for her former colleagues in Swiss Development Agency.

This phenomenon of splitting one's internal process takes place in many situations in which people feel – more often unconsciously than consciously - that their emotions are too dangerous to deal with. While for some people this tendency manifests to hide behind affective dimension in such a manner in order to avoid task needs, for Dalits, who have been at the wrong end of the stick in the Indian subcontinent for several millennia, this split is likely to happen almost as a part of one's behavioural repertoire for psychological survival. The power elite of the subcontinent have played god and pushed the Dalits to behave in the manner of the Biblical character called Job since the *varna* system got established in the subcontinent in its *present form* perhaps around 1000 BC.

Discussion:

To conclude this section of the article all that I can discuss is my own learning of yet another Indian reality.

In an attempt to alleviate the burden of poverty, numerous so-called lower and untouchable castes have been declared in more than one Schedule of the Indian Constitution as the beneficiaries of certain reservations of opportunities. It seems evident that after nearly sixty years of independence with reservation of opportunities for that many years, that strategy has not made any significant difference to the lot of those who are known as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, including the so-called untouchable castes, now also known as Dalits. It is true that with the help of these benefits many of the economically better off members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes have occupied a number of important positions in political parties, in government and in the public sector enterprises. However, all that has happened as a result is that they have formed some kind of an elite among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes with access to the cream of the benefits. The lot of the vast majority has remained little better than what it had been prior to India's independence.

Yet there has been no new thinking by different political parties that dominate the governments at the Centre or at the States to introduce such changes in the policy and practices as would provide realistic opportunities for the average member of Scheduled Castes and Tribes to rise above poverty level as well as be in a position to challenge the hierarchy of the caste system with its dehumanising value on purity and pollution attributed by birth. The two thrusts will require very different approaches and strategies, particularly in view of the fact that many, if not a great majority, of the so-called low caste people actually accept their caste status in terms of pollution by birth. This happens largely because of the religious sanction behind caste hierarchy and the fear of some kind of terrible punishment both here and hereafter if the caste related taboos are broken as a result of the twin processes of projective identification and introjection.

This fear is so deep seated that, as I have mentioned before, at a personal level I have failed to establish my bona fide as a person without religion and an outcaste by virtue of not going through the thread ceremony prescribed for those born in a *dwija* (Twice Born) family. Since the so-called second birth takes place after the thread ceremony, by not going through it I and my children and their progenies happily remain outcastes, but this is not accepted by almost anyone. Upper caste people feel threatened at this challenge and lower caste people do not seem to be able to accept that one can actually renounce one's religion and caste by birth.

Based on the evidence of the formation of an elite among the Schedule Castes and Tribes and the fear harboured by the so-called upper castes of losing their "superior" position through organised challenge by the majority of the so-called lower castes, I hypothesise that both these groups, by using their political and economic power, create a climate where new ideas for alleviation of poverty and exploitation are scotched at the beginning. It is also unfortunate that numerous groups of *Sannyasis* have joined hands with the Hindu upper castes and the *Hindutva* movement to fuel the fires of keeping alive the elitism of the upper castes (and also that of the rather small groups of lower caste elite). I mention this as unfortunate because in the Indian sub-continent ancient socio-spiritual conventions dictate that a *Sannyasin* has no business to uphold any religious belief. This is because unlike the Christian monks and nuns, people of either sex who resolve to become *Sannyasin* and are accepted as having the potential to do so, go through a series of rituals and training that include performing one's funeral. This signifies the death of all social and societal roles of the individual once one becomes a full

(*poorna*) *Sannyasin*[vi]. If one is "dead" to the society and has no traditional societal role, it is an anachronism then to support any particular religious view or religious philosophy.

The brand of Dalit leaders who came to attend the GRC as members seems to belong to a class by themselves. Defying the economic, political and religious guns aimed at Dalits in order to keep them as untouchables who must keep burning in the millennia old flames of the dehumanising fire of the caste (*jati*) and the v*arna* systems, like phoenix they have burned and risen from the ashes to organise their fellow down trodden to challenge the system. Hence they have the guts and the ability to accept the pain of transformation from within. There lie their motivation and intense engagement with task. Beyond the GRC they have to get organised for the really tough task of putting the projections from the upper castes back to where they belong.[ii]

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(Contd. from previous page) has introduced three categories of *sannyasins.* People who learn yoga at the BSY and devote their life to some task selected for them by the head (known as their *sadhana*) of the BSY belong to the first two categories, (*Jijnasu* & *Karma Sannyasin*). Those who embrace *sannyas* after divesting themselves of all social roles are the *poorna* (complete) *sannyasins.* Th author is a *Karma Sannyasin*, inducted by Paramahamsa Niranjanananda Saraswati.

[vi] Unlike the English term 'monk' to denote men who take a religious vow, in India both men and women are called *sannyasin* who take the vow to devote their life in pursuit of spirituality. The Bihar School of Yoga (BSY)