



UNPACKING HIERARCHY AND PRIVILEGE:

Leadership for Purpose and Potential

22 - 27 June, 2020 | Mumbai, India

12th Group Relations Conference offered by Group Relations India

We are all the
as long as you know

"There is no discrimination against
women in this organisation."

It's the system. I'm not like that.
How can I be an oppressor?
Oppression? That is a
Of course, we
Don't get so serious.

A green silhouette of an elephant is positioned on the left side of the image, facing right. It is partially cut off by the left edge of the frame. The elephant is drawn in a simple, stylized manner with a thick trunk and a small tusk.

Dear prospective member,

A Group Relations Conference (GRC) offers a unique opportunity 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.

Hierarchies and privilege shape our politics, our neighborhoods, our societies and our sense of self. They are often the elephant in the room, resulting in the activation of deep anxieties, sense of threat and reactive habitual responses. This makes it difficult to have conversations and explorations about these issues, let alone unpack them in order to shift hardened stances.

This GRC offers the theme **unpacking hierarchy and privilege** as an invitation to explore how these intertwined dynamics influence the possibility of the roles we take up, the choices we make, the stances we assume and the leadership we exercise. The implication of these are visible in how humane, just and compassionate our families, communities, organisations, and societies are and can be. The title, task and design of this GRC also offer the possibility of unpacking and exploring these dynamics from various perspectives and lenses – the individual, group, and system, recognising that these are interdependent and are constantly shaping and co-creating one another.

We invite members representing a range of work settings, roles, lived realities, and identities, to engage with these issues by making sense of one's direct experience. 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!

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.

Ganesh Anantharaman & Rosemary Viswanath
Conference Directors

What are Group Relations Conferences (GRC)?

GRCs are designed as temporary organisations for learning through **direct experience**, which may well be the only way of sustaining learning.

The focus is on the conscious and unconscious processes that we create, which impact us as members of groups and systems. The spotlight in a GRC is also on groups as systems, and how they develop a conscious and unconscious life. Designed as it is, a temporary institution, 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.

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 Freud, Klein, Bion, Lewin, Miller, Rice, Turquet, and Chattopadhyay, among others. Over time, the theme, design and structure of the conferences have undergone innovations and adaptations in the light of varying contexts and interpretations. However, the focus on unconscious processes in groups and systems, leadership and the exercise of authority, and learning through 'here & now' experience, has remained.

*“Of course, we are all equal
Don't get so serious, I was just joking.”*

The Theme as Context

*“All the happiness there is in this world comes from thinking about others,
and all the suffering comes from preoccupation with yourself.”*

Shantideva, an 8th-century Indian Buddhist monk at Nalanda

Embedded Social Narratives

We are living through deeply troubled times, marked by rising intolerance, injustice, and inequality. Globally, authoritarian, divisive, and polarizing leaders are gaining strength, heading organisations, societies, and governments. Amidst a feeling of dismay, those of us that desire a reversal of this trend look for institutional ways to stem this tide – laws, policies, court rulings and declarations. We are often times let down and disappointed with these institutional mechanisms when there is a breach, or a regressive turn.

Our Role as Individuals

The ways in which we individually and collectively deal with diversity and difference, and underlying this, the ways in which we construct hierarchies and protect privileges, play a significant part in these trends. Perhaps then, the pervasive sense of unease and helplessness comes from knowing that we cannot separate ourselves from all that is happening around us.

Social narratives about patriarchy, class, caste, and religion, often not articulated directly, but alluded to in stories, jokes, myths, etc., place communities, groups, and individuals within a hierarchy, impacting both reality and perceptions about who has rights, duties, power, and control over others. An unquestioned acceptance of existing hierarchies and attendant privileges leads to an unconscious identification with them, resulting in maintaining, and likely perpetuating, the position of those with privilege, even as those without it are ‘othered’. This dynamic extends itself to other manifestations of hierarchy such as colonization, racial discrimination, disability, gender, and sexuality; and to exclusions based on language, region, occupation etc.

We may hold a self-image as one who has transcended and deplores such hierarchies. We may also believe that such hierarchies exist in others, but not in ourselves. If we are victims of one or the other form of discrimination or exclusion, it may be even more difficult to see the hierarchies that we ourselves construct and operate from. Unconscious processes such as projection and shadow indicate that we often end up replicating the very dynamics that we believe we abhor.

Unpacking Power and Privilege

The process of hierarchy and discrimination is not simply about dealing with difference – there is the element of power involved, and it does produce victims and oppressors. However, we seem to hold on to the myth that one cannot be both victim and oppressor; without realizing that the context may shift our role from one to another. There is also the element of intersectionality – the idea that all aspects of our identities – whether those aspects are oppressed or privileged by society – interact with one another. We experience the aspects of our identities collectively and simultaneously, not individually. Being a poor Dalit woman is a different oppression from being a poor, upper caste woman, or being a Dalit man.

Privilege is a systemic concept as well. Aspects of our identity can grant some of us unearned privileges. The idea that one is privileged in any way often raises shame, guilt, or defensiveness. Having privilege doesn't mean that your life is easy or that you didn't work hard. It simply means that you don't have to face, and may not even see, the obstacles others who don't have that systemic privilege have to endure.

Is there Hope?

If we are willing to face the fact that the construction of hierarchies and the preservation of privilege is deep seated and pervasive, there may be the possibility, even the hope, that we can get a hold of, understand, and reshape this process. Getting stuck in shame, guilt, or defensiveness only prevents one from actions one can take – for instance to develop the courage, compassion and conviction to call out and challenge systemic oppression, to move from guarding our privilege to working towards equity and justice; and to move from intolerance to genuine acceptance of the other. In moving in that direction, we provide leadership to the systems that we're part of, in a way that aligns to the purpose and unleashes the potential of all.

The theme of the conference posits the idea that transformational change at individual and systemic levels requires work at psychological, ethical and spiritual levels. Without such work, the violence – physical, psychological, and structural - that maintains these hierarchies will continue unabated. Hence the invitation to unpack, reflect deeply and then act, as only such action can be termed as leadership.

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 nature of leadership that emerges and its impact on the culture and effectiveness of the conference as an organisation in its context.

This may be seen through how participants, both members and staff, focus on the task, exercise authority, and take up roles; and the consequent interpersonal, intergroup and institutional relationships that develop within the conference.

The theme - Unpacking hierarchy and privilege - provides the immediate context of this GRC. It furthers the invitation, whilst engaging on the primary task, to explore how the dynamics of hierarchy and privilege, in obvious and in subterranean ways, impact both the purpose and the potential of both individuals and the conference as a system.

Work on this primary task is also an invitation to explore these dynamics at various levels – the individual, group, organisation, and wider social systems, recognising that these circles of awareness are interdependent fractals, and are constantly shaping and co-creating each other.

*“I am a victim of discrimination.
How can I be an oppressor!”*

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, experimentation, 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 derive different kinds of learning.

We offer two sub-conferences within the conference

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

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

Directors: Rosemary Viswanath (also Director of the Entry sub-conference) and Ganesh Anantharaman (also Director of the Furthering Sub- Conference)

Pre- Conference Administrator: Swathi Seshadri

Conference Administrator: Chandan Shamnani

The Conference Directors and Administrators form the **Directorate** of the Conference.

Consultant staff will be drawn from:

Dipankar Banerjee | Ganesh Anantharaman | Gunjan Zutshi | Haritha Sarma | Kartikeyan V | Rosemary Viswanath | Swathi Seshadri | Uma Ravikumar | Veena Pinto | Yash Kaul

Staff Profiles

Chandan Shamnani, Masters in HR and OD from Delhi University, has worked with corporate organizations in the space of OD and learning for the past 14 years. Currently he leads Learning for APAC and Japan at Sophos. An associate member of GRI, he has attended GRCs in Mumbai and Leicester. He is keen to bring a Group Relations lens to the groups he works with.

Dipankar Banerjee, BME, PGDM- IIMC, Associate Member- GRI. A Management Consultant and Executive Coach. Has acted as a Consultant in many national and international GRCs. Was the head of HR of many large companies of India. Also acted as a resource person in Development programmes in India and abroad, organised by IIMs, ISB Hyderabad, LBSNAA, Mussourie, INSEAD, Singapore etc. and published articles in professional journals.

Ganesh Anantharaman, M. Phil. Political Science (Mumbai University); Associate Member, Group Relations India (GRI); Professional Member, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS). Ganesh consults primarily to the corporate sector on Leadership Development and Culture-Building. He has been on the staff of several Group Relations Conferences in various roles since 2003, including that of Co-Director in the 2019 Conference.

Gunjan Zutshi (MBA), organization development professional and co- founder of AgileSattva - a firm that uses humanistic and systems approach to Agile transformation. Associate member of Group Relations India (GRI) and involved with Group Relations Conferences since 2011. Accredited Organisation Development and Change Practitioner (ODCP) from Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS), certified coach (ACC) from International Coaching Federation (ICF) and practicing psychotherapist (Transactional Analysis).

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. He has worked extensively with groups, organisations and networks engaged with addressing issues related to structural poverty and marginalisation. Haritha has been on the staff of several Group Relation Conferences in India.

Kartikeyan V, B.Com. Madras University, P.G.D.PM & IR (XLRI). Has worked in leadership roles in corporates for twenty years and is an Organisation Consultant & Coach for thirteen years now. Has been actively involved in Group Relations work in several roles for the past six years. He is also the Chief Architect of the Transformative Alignment Map© and co-author of a book “Discover the Alchemist Within”.

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 developing leadership, organizational strategy and change processes primarily with social development, social justice, and human and environmental rights organisations and movements, but also in the development aid and corporate spaces.

Swathi Seshadri, M.Com. (Mumbai University), M.A. in Social Work (TISS), Striving for social justice, equity and equality through her work in rural and urban spaces, have been Swathi's primary work for the past 20 years. Since 2017 she has been exploring how systems are influenced by unconscious processes, through the group relations framework, which she hopes will aid her endeavour towards seeking social justice.

Uma Ravikumar, B. Com, MBA; Associate Member of GRI; Associate Certified Coach by ICF; Uma has over 20 years of experience in business and leadership roles including Oracle Consulting; currently an organisation and leadership development professional. She has been associated with Group Relations since 2013, including as director of workshop on Listening to the Unconscious in November 2019.

Veena Pinto, M.A. Clinical Psychology, PGDHRM. Over 3 decades of corporate experience including 15 years in the top leadership team of several organizations. Currently Coach and Organizational Consultant. She has been on the staff of several Group Relations Conferences. Member of Group Relations India, Member of AK Rice Institute, USA. Professional Member Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science.

Yash Kaul, B.Pharm (Hons) BITS Pilani, e-MEP (IIM Kozhikode) and DMM (NMIMS). Twenty-three years' experience in specialised pharmaceutical and medical device industry. Currently Vice President and General Manager at Smiths Medical managing the South APAC. Keenly interested in exploring and working with the unconscious processes as they occur in real life systems. Passionate about music, singing and of late, running.

“It's the system; I am not like that!”

Administrative Details

Conference Venue

GCC Hotel and Club
Off Mira Bhayander Road, Mira Road (E),
Thane, Maharashtra, India. 401107.

www.gcchotelandclub.com

The venue is on the outskirts of Mumbai. 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 22, 2020**

The conference will **open** with a **Plenary** at **1400 hours** on **June 22, 2020**.

The conference **ends** at **1630 hours** on **June 27, 2020**.

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 22 and check out of the rooms by June 27 mid-morning. You can leave at the close of the conference at 1630 hours. It would take around 90 minutes of travel time between the airport and venue, given the monsoon and traffic conditions.

Fee

- The conference fee is INR 72,000 plus 18%¹ GST (i.e. INR 84,960 is payable). For international participants it is USD 1,800 plus 18% GST (i.e. USD 2,124 is payable)
- The Early Bird Fee is INR 68,000 plus 18% GST (i.e. INR 80,240 is payable). The Early Bird Fee for International participants is USD 1,500 plus 18 % GST. (i.e. USD 1,770 is payable).
- Last date to avail the Early Bird Fee: Your fee should be received by us **by April 22, 2020 (end of business day)** for you to qualify for early bird rate, so kindly plan your application and fee transfer accordingly.

¹ Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates prevailing at the time of payment will be applicable

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 22, 2020 until June 27, 2020 midmorning.

Single occupancy accommodation on a first come first served basis is available at an additional cost of INR 9,000 plus 18% GST which amounts to INR 10,620 payable. For International participants this would be USD 125 plus 18% GST which amounts to USD 147.5 payable. You need to mention this requirement at the time of applying and payment, as it cannot be assumed that rooms on a single occupancy basis are available.

The conference fee covers accommodation from the time of registration until check out on the last day. For any early arrivals and late departures, you will need to make arrangements with the hotel directly and they will aim to give you their best rates. Let us know if there is a requirement at the time of your application and we will give you the contact information to organise this separately with the hotel, keeping the pre-conference administrator in the loop.

Bursaries

GRI is 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 and regions 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.

Our fee structure is based on cost as we operate in principle as a not for profit organisation. We are particularly committed to make group relations opportunities available to those in the social justice and development sectors, such as small, under resourced NGOs, 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. It would help us to decide on all bursary requests if those seeking a bursary write to us by **Wednesday, May 20, 2020**.

How to Apply

Applications in the required online format will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. You may fill the application and then check with us if there is place before you pay. The online form you filled can be accessed by you later to fill in the payment and statutory details. 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. Click [HERE](#) to apply online.

Payment Details

We prefer payments to be made by bank transfer. If you would like to pay by cheque, 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: 29AACTGo900H1Zo

State Registered in: Karnataka

Type of Service: SAC code: 998311

PAN: AACTGo900H

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.

Refund Policy: Refund after deducting 25% towards administrative expenses will be made to those who withdraw on or before June 3, 2020. For withdrawals after that, refunds will not be possible, but we do consider the option of holding a part of your fee towards participation in a future event of GRI.

*We are all the same
(as long as you know your place)*

Speak to us!

For further discussions and to assist your decision about the conference we would be happy to speak to you. Message Swathi (+919448474911), Ganesh (+919886406806) or Rosemary (+919845403773) to schedule a conversation. Or 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!



It's the system. I'm not like the

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

