

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE IN INDIA

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**Observing six decades
of Moral Re-Armament**

AN ASSESSMENT BY DAVID YOUNG

GROSVENOR BOOKS – CAUX BOOKS

Revised Indian Edition : June 2004
Reprinted : Dec 2014

Published by Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India)
Asia Plateau, Panchgani 412805,
Maharashtra.

First Published 2003 by
David Young
15 Value Avenue
Brighton
E Sussex BN1 8UB

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Book Design by Blair Cummock
Cover design for Re-print : Parag Shah

Print by M.B.printer, 270 New Raviwar Peth,
Near Jain Mandir, Pune - 411002.

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Foreword

In December 1952 a remarkable event took place in the Indian Parliament. A joint meeting of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha was called to hear an address from Dr Frank Buchman, the initiator of Moral Re-Armament. The vision expressed in this address caught the imagination of many politicians present on this occasion.

‘Men are hungry for bread, for peace, and for the hope of a new world order.

Before a God-led unity every last problem will be solved. Hands will be filled with work, stomachs with food, and empty hearts with an ideology that really satisfies.’

Later at an All-Asian Assembly in January 1953, also in New Delhi, Dr Buchman elaborated on his message with these words:

‘That vision is what Moral Re-Armament is out for. It gives faith to the faithless, but also helps men of faith to live so compellingly that cities and nations change.

A nation where everyone cares enough and everyone shares enough, so that everyone has enough, will pattern a new social and economic order for this and all future generations.

A nation at peace within itself will bring peace to the world.

A nation which makes What is Right regnant in personal, industrial, political and national life will pioneer the next historic step of progress and destiny for all mankind.’

The aim of this assessment is to consider how far people in India have accepted this vision and how seriously it has been applied. Was it a pipe dream, which was beyond the reach of any ordinary human being, or is it a target which will help people of any and every nation to reach a new level of achievement?

One response to Buchman’s vision was by one of Mahatma Gandhi’s grandsons, Rajmohan Gandhi, who in 1957 said, ‘Hearts and minds of Asians and Africans have been gripped by Moral Re-Armament. This is the

one ideology in which Eastern and Western countries can unite. MRA challenged me to apply to my own life the standards which my grandfather applied to his. I have decided to give all I have with this force which is turning the tide of history.'

This visit of Frank Buchman's to Delhi in 1952/53 was not his first visit to India, though his bringing a team of 180 people from 25 countries with him on this visit was something he had not done before. In 1915 he paid his first visit to India and other countries of Asia and began to understand the culture and the way of thinking of people in the Orient. On that visit he met Mahatma Gandhi and described walking and talking with him as they paced the Marina at Chennai (then named Madras) as 'like a walk with Aristotle'. In 1925 he returned to India again, accompanied by a few friends, and was able to hold meetings with groups of people large and small (in those days before loudspeakers, some people in the audience repeated Buchman's words so that those further back could hear them). It was the beginning of his spreading central idea that while the world needed economic, political and social change, it had to start with change in people. And to change people the best place to start is with yourself.

His visit to India in 1952 was the result of a number of invitations from Asian leaders to visit their countries. As well as India these included Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar (then Burma) and Thailand. 18 leaders of India from politics, industry, education and the trade unions described Moral Re-Armament as the need of the hour and the hope of the future and they asked Dr Buchman to come to India with an international team 'so we may profit by your experience'. (See full text of the invitation to Dr Buchman in the Appendix.)

I had the privilege of being in India with Frank Buchman during his six month visit in 1952/53. I went for six months – and stayed for 22 years at the invitation of those whose imagination and enthusiasm had been caught by Moral Re-Armament. Incidentally, for me as a young man to stay on was a great period of learning. I was not new to India. My father had taught in Delhi University, so I had been brought up as a child until I was 10 years old, watching the building of New Delhi. Later I spent five years serving in the Indian Army which included time in the Burma campaign against the Japanese Imperial Army. Having worked with a large team in Moral Re-Armament, suddenly to find myself on my own in Mumbai, knowing hardly anyone, without much in the way of money and depending day by day on what the Almighty showed me in my time of listening each morning, that was a wonderful training, even though often pretty tough.

In the pages that follow we will look at some of the results of these visits of Buchman and how far the country profited from them. But a word

first about the man himself – what motivated him and what gave him the passion to seek to achieve his goal. To say the least, it was unusual for Asians to take seriously the things a Westerner proposed and more so to develop and make them their own.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1878, Buchman came from parents of Swiss origin. Always a social person when young, he decided to study theology and was ordained a church minister. An accusation by a fellow student that he was ambitious, resulted in Buchman deciding to take a humble job in an orphanage to show his real nature. Unfortunately, although he did very well looking after the young boys in this home, he became at odds with the Committee running the home, who were the ones who provided the money. So to Buchman's demand that they provide more money for food and their refusal, his response was to resign. It left him bitter and unable to overcome his deep feelings. It also resulted in his becoming ill. Travel and other efforts to become free failed, until in 1908 he had an experience of seeing himself clearly for the first time, as a result of a woman's talk about what the Cross really means if you consider yourself a Christian. It led to Buchman facing his deep self-will, crossing it out and apologising to the six members of the Committee of the orphanage for his bitterness and ill-will against them. He became a free man. He also realised that it was only through sharing one's own experiences could one help anyone else.

After that experience he decided to use his life to bring change to every person he met. He also decided to build a team of people to do the same thing round the world. The two hundred people who went with him to India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in 1952/53 were some of the fruit of that work.

David Young
June 2003

1

An Imperialist finds a New Role

In 1933 a senior member of the Indian Civil Service called Lionel Jardine came to Britain on leave. He was the fourth generation of his family to have served in India in one capacity or another. His wife, Marjorie, also had a long connection with India through her family. It was not an easy time for Lionel. Because many changes were taking place in India at that time, he wondered how long it would be before India became independent and whether he would have a future. Would it be better, he wondered, to retire and start something else before he got too old? He also recognised that despite his experience, and some success as an administrator, he had been unable to help his brother at a time of bereavement and was increasingly at odds with his wife. It was at this point he encountered the Oxford Group, as Moral Re-Armament was known at that time. He was honest about recognising his own need and he decided to try to apply the idea of listening to his inner voice for wisdom. He also met Frank Buchman while he was in England. Pondering his future, he asked Buchman for advice as to whether he should perhaps extend his leave to gain more experience in the way MRA worked. Buchman's reply to him, after some consideration, was that he should return to India, when his leave ended, and 'live differently'.

This not only helped him to recognise that he was putting off making a needed decision by thinking of extending his leave, but it also sealed his resolve to open a fresh chapter in the way that he went about things.

After a short stay in one of the Princely States in Central India where he was Political Agent, he was posted to Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province (now part of Pakistan) where he had earlier been District Magistrate and had many friends. His new posting there was as Deputy Commissioner, where he was not only responsible for Peshawar District, but also of a surrounding tribal area. 'I began telling some of the people that I was working with about my new standard of absolute honesty,' he later recounted. 'One of them, whom I had worked with previously,

responded to this by telling me how he had consistently taken bribes in his younger days. But he resolved never to take a bribe again. My servants noticed the change in me at once and I apologised to my cook for rough ways I had spoken to him in the past. I found that, instead of dreading the mornings I had to spend listening to people with petitions, I was taking an interest in each person and his problems.'

The Government of India Act was brought into operation about this time and Jardine found himself subordinate to a Congress politician, who was now Minister of Local Self-Government and made no secret of his desire to get rid of the British from India. 'His demand, in a somewhat offensive manner, for an explanation of complaints made against me, assuming I was in the wrong without taking the trouble to question me first, made me very angry. In a quiet-time pondering this matter, I realised what a difficult position the Minister was in, plunged between political supporters on the one hand and me on the other.' So having faced himself honestly, Jardine wrote a conciliatory reply to the Minister. They became friends and worked together happily for four or five years.

At the end of 1938 through the visit of a friend from Calcutta, Jardine met the leader of the breakaway wing of the Congress party known as the 'Forward Block'. Dr Chandra Ghosh believed in winning independence for India by violence if necessary. Hearing that a British officer claimed he was living by standards of love and unselfishness, he accused Lionel of instigating Muslim tribesmen to murder and rob his Hindu co-religionists. Jardine felt his temper rising at this, but remembered in time something that Buchman had warned him, 'You may win the argument, but you lose the man'. So he replied that he could understand there must be lots of things about the British that were likely to offend Indians and he asked Dr Ghosh to visit him again when there was more time to talk at leisure. Rather to Jardine's surprise, Dr Ghosh accepted this invitation and began visiting Jardine regularly, even reading to Marjorie Jardine sometimes the speeches he intended to make in the Assembly. He thought she would help him introduce a more positive note into his speech!

Win the argument – or the man

One day Dr Ghosh told Jardine that he used occasionally to issue false medical certificates to his patients because it brought him good fees to pay for his children's education. But after reflection he told Lionel that he saw it was wrong and harmful for the country, so he would never do so again. Soon after this decision, Dr Ghosh had a visit from a Pathan who needed medicine. After dispensing it and giving the patient a receipt, the patient asked if he could enter double the amount on the receipt! When Ghosh

refused to do so and explained that he was now living by absolute honesty, the patient returned the medicine and walked out to find another doctor. After a while, however, he returned and said to Dr Ghosh, 'I am ill. An honest doctor will give good medicine.' So that was why he came back.

When Mahatma Gandhi visited Peshawar in June 1939, some Hindu friends took Jardine to meet him. Lionel found it a difficult meeting, as he realised afterwards that although the meeting was quite informal, he had treated Gandhiji as a public figure and probably Gandhiji regarded him as an official. So they were at cross purposes. Jardine was a little encouraged by Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's Secretary, telling him that he was 'refreshingly frank' and had made concessions which did him credit.

Lionel was further encouraged when a British friend of his, Roger Hicks, met Gandhiji in his Ashram at Sevagram. During their talk Gandhi said to Hicks, 'You remember those stories you were telling me last time about the Revenue Commissioner in the Frontier Province? Well, I had the Chief Minister, Dr Khan Sahib, investigate them and they are all true.' The Mahatma went on to say that this was the most important thing happening today. 'Politics,' he said, 'has become like a great game of chess. We know the value of the pieces and we know the possible moves and we play chess against each other. But if men's motives and values change, like those of the Revenue Commissioner, then the whole board is upset. We can begin again and anything can happen.' Gandhi went on, 'Go tell the Viceroy from me that if we have this spirit, remembering all his difficulties, we will find agreement'. Hicks carried out Gandhi's wish, but sadly the Viceroy's views of the Mahatma were too set at that point for him to accept them.

The encounters Lionel Jardine had with so many and such varied people make fascinating reading. He wrote them in some detail in a short book, *They called me an Impeccable Imperialist*, published by Himmat Publications (ISBN 0 901269 41 7). But I will end this chapter with a rather different experience which Jardine had just as the Second World War ended. He was waiting, in Mumbai, his turn for a passage back to Britain. An ICS friend of his, Krishna Prasada, was Postmaster General of Bombay Presidency at the time. He was in dispute with the postmen who were threatening a strike, which might have spread to the railway and dock employees. He asked Jardine's help and although Jardine had no official position he agreed to meet the representatives of the postmen. On doing so, one of them asked Lionel if he was related to the former Advocate General who was also called Jardine. When Lionel said he was his uncle, the trade unionist smiled and said he had received much kindness from him. Perhaps this association helped in the Union responding to Lionel's suggestion that the proceedings should be on the basis of 'Not Who is right, but What is

right' and to put 'People before things'. Although Krishna Prasada did not look very pleased at this idea, when he met some 2000 postmen and sorters a few days later, he told them that he realised he had not made himself sufficiently acquainted with their conditions of service, for which he was sorry. He said he would make immediate recommendations to the Government to put things right. The strike was off.

Rethinking my opinions

However the Government of India decided to wait for the recommendations of a commission which had been appointed to consider the pay of postal workers. Krishna Prasada decided to meet the Chairman of the Commission, a Communist called Ragonath Nimbkar, and make friends with him if possible. He asked Jardine to join him over an informal cup of tea with Nimbkar at the Taj Mahal Hotel. Nimbkar was not very pleased to see Jardine there. However at the end of the tea, Prasada asked Nimbkar to join a party he was giving and Nimbkar agreed. Jardine had already been invited along with a number of Prasada friends and during the course of the party, was invited to speak. He did so, telling of his change as a result of meeting MRA. At the end of the evening, Nimbkar said, 'I cannot leave this house without saying that what I have heard in the last two hours will cause me to rethink opinions I have held all my life.' This had far-reaching effects on management and labour relations throughout India, especially in the important textile industry.

Before his death in 1948 Nimbkar attended an MRA conference at the World Centre for MRA at Caux, Switzerland. This was a turning point in his life. He told Peter Howard, who met him there, he had hated everyone except the workers of the world, but most particularly the British imperialists. But at Caux, he said, he met British people who admitted their mistakes. 'I want to say that when India and England work together, it will be a great force for remaking the world.'

Many of those who invited Frank Buchman to India in 1952 (see Appendix 1) were people who had been impressed with Lionel Jardine's change and as a result wanted to find out more about MRA and, having done so, wanted to bring the experience of MRA to the people of India.

Jardine was not the only person whose change had impressed people and led to a chain reaction of change. Many others pioneered the way of the humble heart at a time when humility was not British people's strongest point. People like Walter Biscoe, the railway executive in Lahore who stood for honest dealings at a time when much could be earned on the side, especially during wartime shortages when railway wagons were hard to book; or John Tyndale-Biscoe, the nephew of the illustrious pioneer educator in

Kashmir, who had been assistant to Bishop George West of Rangoon and found himself stranded with his wife and family in India when the Japanese occupied Burma (now Myanmar); or Roger Hicks, already briefly mentioned earlier, who worked tirelessly with Dr David Watson to build a core team in India for others to develop later; or C T Venugopal, a member of the Railway Board, whose honesty was a beacon light to many people who knew him; or Miriam Young, who gave more than 50 years of her life to India, first as a missionary teacher, but after her retirement as a friend, supporter and stimulator of those courageously taking the first steps towards building a network of changed people across India.

Those who took up the cause later owe much to these and many other unnamed people. Their unselfish and determined trail-making is something that we today are privileged to follow. And the stories of some who took up this task is given in the pages which follow.

2

Frank Buchman Visits India

When the Committee of Invitation which invited Frank Buchman to come to India issued their invitation they probably envisaged that he would bring a party of his trusted colleagues, perhaps numbering a dozen or a score at the most. So it was something of a surprise when he proposed bringing a party of some 180 people from 25 countries ranging from teenagers to octogenarians. Perhaps they thought in terms of small meetings, discussions, interviews with the press and others as well as meetings with politicians, academics, industrialists and the like. Of course all these things in fact happened, but much more.

Frank Buchman, in preparing for the visit, said to himself that everyone likes to witness a big tamasha, so why not take some dramas in the party? And so it was that three stage plays were included in the troupe. Two of these plays were based on real happenings to real people. The first was an industrial drama entitled *The Forgotten Factor*. This stirring and deeply moving play shows the encounters between the head of an industrial company and the union boss, as well as their families. It indicates what can happen when the son of the industrialist decides to put an end to his self-centred and indulgent way of life at college and begins to take seriously the world around him, not least the strike and disruption his father is facing in his company. It also shows that the union boss can find a better way of dealing with tough management than the classic method of the class war.

The second drama was a musical play called *Jotham Valley*, the story of two brothers in Nevada in the States, who quarrelled over the water running through the ranch of which they each owned a part. When the brothers find ways of dealing with the destructive power of alcohol and of pride, as well as learning about forgiveness, they begin neighbouring and they find it is possible for 'a new world to begin from tonight'. Strangely, though the play was written some time before the partition of India and Pakistan, many who saw it in both countries of the subcontinent thought that it had been written specially for them because of the confrontation in Kashmir!

The third play was a moving Christmas story of two cowboys and this was performed in New Delhi in December 1952 at the Regal Cinema. Each evening after the play, the audience was invited to Jaipur House, a former Maharaja's house near to India Gate, New Delhi, which had been lent to Frank Buchman and his team during their six-week stay in the capital that winter. There, round the open fire, music and stories would thrill those who came and result in changes in their lives. These were occasions which those present never forgot.

This illustrated the way that Frank Buchman worked. It was through the sharing of real life experiences, through reaching and melting the hearts of people that new decisions for the future personally and nationally were made. Prisoners of hate and bitterness were freed, people divided were united and families became power houses for change. As the party moved through Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Calcutta and Srinagar the story was repeated. In Delhi a Canadian industrialist who was one of Buchman's party was put to stay with an Indian banker. When, on the first evening, the whisky he was offered in his room was refused, the servant went to the banker and said that there was something unusual about his guest. Some weeks later, after the banker had had long talks with his guest, he took an honest look at his life. He decided to apply honesty and justice in his work. It resulted in a new way of dealing with the employees as well as with his board of directors. Honesty can be uncomfortable to live with and it was uncomfortable for the Directors. So uncomfortable, in fact, that the directors refused to accept some of the banker's proposals in the face of which he decided to resign rather than do dishonest things which, up to that time, had never worried him.

In one State capital the party visited the son of the Chief Minister was leading a strike against his father, who happened to be Education Minister also. When the son changed and spoke to his father, the Chief Minister asked Frank Buchman to tea to find out what was the secret of the change in his son. After giving a tea party to Buchman and some 20 of his party, the Chief Minister said that he saw a way in which problems he faced could be solved.

Reality on stage and screen

In Hyderabad the Nizam took the whole theatre one afternoon for his whole family. The upstairs balcony was reserved for the ladies to preserve their privacy. It was a fascinating sight to see the fleet of the Nizam's cars drive up to the theatre and watch the young and old members stream into the auditorium. Even more fascinating was to see them come out, eagerly discussing the play they had seen and the implications of it for them.

In Chennai the Vauhini Studios built a special stage within their studio complex to put on the shows. Such was the demand to see the plays that they were repeated twice, even three times in one day to accommodate everyone wanting to come. They came hungry and wanted to talk, as the next chapter shows. Buchman always said that if you have what people want, they will beat a path to your door. Another film magnate wanted to meet Buchman. His name was S S Vasan, owner of the Gemini Studios. These men saw the value and significance of reality portrayed on stage and celluloid.

In Calcutta leftist students recognised a threat to their hold on the student body and decided to demonstrate outside the theatre where the MRA plays were being shown. When some of them were invited in to see the show, they were not sure whether to accept or not. Those that did venture in came out convinced that they had seen a better way for the future. In a later chapter you will read about some from the Trade Union world who were equally convinced.

In Mumbai the dining room of the Taj Mahal Hotel was the venue for follow-up meetings each morning after the shows were given. Here people could ask questions and discuss with anyone in the party the things on their minds. The Hotel has never seen the kind of cross section of people coming in for these meetings before or since. From the docks, from the textile mills, from the university and the schools they kept coming. And in every city visited during those six months, newspaper articles were printed about the visit, and many papers carrying supplements about the work.

Tested answer for all

Among several national newspapers who carried supplements in their papers about the work of Moral Re-Armament was *The Hindu* of Chennai. Their 10 page supplement had the front page headlines 'INDIAN LEADERS HAIL ADVENT OF M.R.A.' and 'TESTED ANSWER FOR MEN AND NATIONS', together with a picture of Frank Buchman addressing the joint meetings of the Raj Sabha and the Lok Sabha in New Delhi. One page was devoted to results of MRA through change in capitalists. Another page covered interviews by seven leading trade unionists, four of them former communists, each telling of the changes in their lives since meeting MRA. A full page was devoted to pictures of the tour of the MRA team showing the wide variety of people and places they visited.

3

Putting Things Right, Challenging Society

One result of Buchman's visit to India in 1952/53 was the enlistment of many young people who saw in the idea of Moral Re-Armament something they would like to follow for the sake of their country. Among them were people like R D Mathur from Delhi, who fought in the Independence struggle while still a student. Later he decided to give his full time to the work of MRA and has been one of the Trustees of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India) for many years. He co-ordinated much of the setting up of Asia Plateau, the MRA Centre at Panchgani (see Chapter 6) and became its first Director.

Another dynamic young person was V C Viswanathan. In 1953 when Buchman and his large team visited Madras, Viswanathan was the student president of the law college as well as all the university students of Madras. He had been a nationalist youth leader in India's freedom struggle from his school days. He was invited to the MRA play, *The Forgotten Factor* which dramatized the battle between labour and management in industry and its resolution. The powerfully enacted play captured his imagination. Is it possible to solve conflict in industry through change in people based on the principle, 'It's not who is right, but what is right.' If so, it will be the answer to class war and industrial strife which was hampering India's economic development. He met and had long discussions with some of the younger members of Buchman's team, people like Brian Boobyer, a rugby football international and cricket player from Oxford University, Mike Henderson from England, Pauli Snellman, great grandson of the founder of modern Finland, Hideo Nakajima, the human torpedo from Japan. He saw the relevance of the idea, 'As I am, so is my nation.' He recalled Gandhiji's words, 'Be the change you want to see.' He experimented with the idea of listening to the inner voice and took courage to put things right in his own life. The MRA plays attracted thousands of students, workers and others who flocked in day after day. On some days the cast performed thrice a day to accommodate the large crowds who waited patiently.

That summer, Viswanathan was among a number of Indians invited to join a special charter plane that was taking a group from India to participate in the Moral Re-Armament World Assembly at Caux, the international centre for MRA in Switzerland. He was due to write the examination for the Indian Administrative Service scheduled to take place a few days after the departure of the delegation. Accepting the invitation would mean foregoing the opportunity of getting into IAS, a coveted career in government. He prayed for God's guidance. The thought he had was 'to go in faith and trust God for the outcome'. It was to be a turning point in his life. 'My experience at Caux was beyond all my expectation,' he wrote. 'I saw the dawn of a new civilization – a world free of hate, prejudice, greed and exploitation. Men and women of every faith, race, class and colour from over fifty nations from every continent had assembled there. Meeting real people who had experienced change in their own lives and helped to bring about vast social, economic and political transformation convinced me that MRA was the way to build a new world of equity and justice.' He decided to be part of this global revolution.

A vow to fight corruption

On his return he set about finding a job and because of his academic achievements and qualities of leadership, he was recruited by Caltex, an international oil company who was then expanding operations in India. His first major assignment apart from promoting sales covering a large territory in South India, was to get permission from the Railways to establish a Caltex oil storage depot in Mysore, which he finally got. After obtaining the hard-won permission, as he emerged from the Chief Engineer's room, a junior railway official approached and asked him for money, which the official alleged Viswanathan's predecessor had promised. Viswanathan replied, 'I am sorry we have never talked about money and I cannot give any bribe. I have taken a vow to fight corruption which is a cancer eating away and destroying our nation.' The railway official was furious. 'Are you a naïve fool? If you don't pay there's going to be trouble,' he threatened.

Viswanathan didn't take the threat seriously. After all he was only a junior official. In less than a week however, Viswanathan was summoned to the chief engineer's office and summarily told that the oil depot project was off. When asked why, the Chief Engineer said, 'the whole matter is being reviewed at the highest level and I can't tell you the reason. Go and immediately inform your bosses that the depot project is off.'

Dumfounded by what had happened and fearful of losing his job, Viswanathan did not know what to do. He prayed in silence for God's guid-

ance. The thought he had was, 'go back to the Chief Engineer and talk to him man to man from your heart, not as a Caltex representative.' He went to the Chief's office and this time found him alone. Viswanathan said, 'I think I am going to lose my job.' The chief engineer asked why. Viswanathan said, 'Sir, I cannot pay a bribe.' 'What bribe?', demanded the Chief. 'Someone in your office told me that unless I paid a bribe this order we had got would be cancelled and now this has happened and you are not telling me why,' said Viswanathan. The chief engineer, angry and livid, said, 'How dare you accuse me of being corrupt. It has nothing to do with bribes. It is the railway union that has objected to the project and there's nothing you can do about it.'

Viswanathan went to see the local railway union leader and asked why the union was indulging in a corrupt practice. The union leader asked who had demanded the bribe. Viswanathan declined to say. The leader said the union's objection had nothing to do with corruption. Viswanathan requested him to speak to the president of the railways union, T V Anandam, whom Viswanathan knew as he was on the same delegation that went to Caux to participate in the MRA conference.

A danger to their homes

Viswanathan soon made a mark in the company and was recognized as one of the best salesmen in Caltex. The first two American managers under whom he worked were supportive of his association with MRA. But a young American, Ben Maygor who had become his boss, told him bluntly that he didn't like anyone working for him to be associated with MRA. When asked why, Maygor replied he wouldn't like to discuss it. That year, in May 1959, Viswanathan and his wife, Thankam, were invited to participate in the Asian assembly for Moral Re-Armament at Kyoto, Japan. He took earned leave and they went to Japan. On their return he was confronted with an ultimatum. He was told that he was one of the few men identified for rapid executive development in the organization but he must discontinue his association with MRA. 'You must choose MRA or Caltex,' he was told and given three months to decide. Viswanathan talked it over with Thankam. It meant giving up the security of a lucrative career and launching out in faith and prayer without salary. A mother of three small children then, and a woman of strong conviction, she supported his belief that the Moral Re-Armament of India was more important than his career. He decided to quit Caltex and give his full time to the work of MRA. This took him to Kerala, his home state and the launching of a massive action for Moral Re-Armament there. His family based themselves in Trivandrum, the capital of the State.

Kerala, lying on the south western coast of India, is unique in many ways. It had maritime trade links with Europe, the middle East and China from ancient times, long before Christ. It was in search of a new sea route to Kerala known for its much sought after spices that Christopher Columbus chanced to discover America. Vasco Da Gama, the great world explorer of the fifteenth century, first set foot on the subcontinent at Calicut on the Malabar Coast in 1498.

One of the first disciples of Jesus, St Thomas, came and established a church here in 52 AD. The Mar Thoma Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church have a large following in Kerala since early times. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Christians too have a significant presence and a large number of churches, seminaries, schools, colleges and hospitals. The Jews, persecuted and driven out of their homeland were given refuge by the Hindu ruler of Cochin and they were allowed to build a synagogue in 69 AD. Islam came to Kerala during prophet Mohammed's time. According to legend, a Hindu ruler, Cheraman Perumal converted to Islam and sailed to Mecca to meet the Prophet. A mosque built in his name called the Cheraman Perumal Palli Mosque, exists at Kodungallur. It was the first mosque to be built outside Mecca in the year 629 AD, three years before the death of the Prophet. Many Arab traders had married locals and maintained families here.

The great scholar Saint Adi Sankara Acharya who reformed and revitalized Hindu society and brought about a great renaissance in India was born in Kalady around 700 AD and there are several famous Hindu temples of great antiquity and sanctity in this state. In more recent times, Sri Narayana Guru spearheaded a great social awakening and reformation. As a result of all this and the intermingling of cultures, Kerala has the distinction of being the most literate state with high political and social awareness and religious harmony. Unlike the rest of India, Christians and Muslims constitute a majority in some parts of the state. On various parameters like literacy, education, health, women's empowerment and population growth, Kerala leads the way. With all this Kerala made history in 1957 when for the first time in the world a communist government was elected to power through a free, democratic process. The communists had polled only 32% of the votes, but they won because the other 68% were deeply divided. Kerala again made history two years later when a massive uprising of the people against the communists forced the central Government of India to dismiss the state government and impose President's rule in August 1959 to be followed by fresh elections six months later.

It was one thing to get President's rule imposed, but the task of building

unity among the divided groups and creating a really stable democratic government was a formidable challenge. Viswanathan and the friends with whom he was working invited Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of the powerful Nair community (Viswanathan himself was a Nair), who had led the vimochana samaram (the liberation struggle) against the communists along with some of the Christian leaders from whom he had been divided, including P T Chacko, a catholic and leader of the Congress Legislature Party, to go as a Kerala delegation to the MRA Conference at Caux in September 1959. It was a bold move and it paid off! During their stay at Caux, a leading Christian member of the delegation apologized to Mannath Padmanabhan for his bitterness against him.

Getting rid of selfishness

Delegates from 47 nations, who had assembled at Caux, gave the 82-year-old Mannath Padmanabhan a standing ovation as he spoke these words – ‘Communism has grown in the world because we have not heeded the teachings of Lord Krishna, Buddha and Jesus Christ. We have had religions, moral principles, lofty ideals. Prophets and sages have talked about them for thousands of years, but we have not lived them. As we stand united to get rid of selfishness, living purity and dedicated to God, our efforts will be crowned with success. Frank Buchman is a guru. He has rediscovered the fundamental and noble principles that will lead mankind to a better life and prosperity. The key is to change men. It is the only way in the atomic age. It is the duty of all who believe in morality and the omnipotence of God to work with this force.’

The Kerala delegation visited Germany, France and Britain and saw the impact of MRA in post war Europe before returning to India. They met coal miners from the Ruhr in Germany, many of whom had been hardened communists before meeting MRA. Padmanabhan wrote to the then Chancellor of Germany, Dr Konrad Adenauer requesting that the Ruhr miners bring their play *Hoffnung* (Hope), written by them about their experiences, to Kerala.

Eight days before Kerala's election the Soviet President was on a visit to India. Twelve daily Malayalam newspapers with an estimated readership of over three million featured in their news columns the text of an MRA booklet, *Ideology and Co-existence*, for which Padmanabhan wrote a foreword saying, ‘In this book are given the great ideas of MRA which is building a new world on the foundations of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. I hope these ideas, which are capable of saving us, will create a profound transformation in Kerala and give the people here the moral force to give leadership to India and the whole world.’

Malayala Manorama, the largest circulation daily, had a magnificently displayed front page article, 'MRA's Great Message' with six pictures spotlighting the world scope of MRA's action. The main editorial stated, 'due to its great importance at this juncture in Kerala, we are publishing in this issue a manifesto by MRA explaining what international communism is aiming at, and how it can be met.'

The Malayalam edition of the booklet was sent to the entire leadership of the state including members of the legislative assembly, government officials, all members of over a thousand village councils, the lecturers and principals of 73 university colleges, teachers of 1000 high schools and 2500 libraries.

After the landmark victory at the polls, Mannath Padmanabhan cabled to Buchman. 'We thank God for democratic victory ... grateful ideas of Caux which gave inspiration. MRA needed now more than ever to answer communism completely by demonstrating superior ideology available to all and winning men to God-inspired democracy. We are with you in this global fight'.

Special planes with a drama

On 29th February 1960, just seven days after the formation of the new democratic government, four special planes carrying the cast and equipment of the German miner's play *Hoffnung* and an 80-strong MRA force from 14 nations landed in Trivandrum. Led by Rajmohan Gandhi and a group of Indians committed to make MRA their nation's policy, the visitors, including Peter Howard, were welcomed by the State Governor, Dr B Ramakrishna Rao, at Raj Bhavan to meet one hundred and fifty leaders of Kerala. The Governor said, 'All our issues, political, economic, cultural, domestic, individual must be solved in the spirit of MRA.' The newly elected Chief Minister, Pattom Thanu Pillai, at a reception given by him to the MRA force said, 'I am wholly with you in giving this answer to communism.' Mannath Padmanabhan, at a dinner in honour of the visitors attended by cabinet ministers of the newly elected government, declared, 'Kerala and MRA are going to stand together and fight for the betterment of the world. We will pattern for East and West a unity that bridges all differences of race, class and nationality.'

Over 15,000 including members of the cabinet, legislators, government officials, educationists, trade unionists, workers and students saw *Hoffnung*. Archbishop Mar Gregorious of Trivandrum said, 'History will record our permanent gratitude to Mannath Padmanabhan not only for having ousted the Communists from Kerala, but for creating unity in all the communities following his return from Caux.'

MRA's mass action continued, supported by various organizations, trade unions and the people of the state. The MRA films, *Freedom* created by the Africans about their struggle, and *Men of Brazil*, written and acted by the dock workers of Rio, dubbed into Malayalam, were shown in theatres and the open air to large appreciative audiences throughout the state. The colourful MRA pictorials and Peter Howard's book, *Frank Buchman's Secret* translated into Malayalam were sold out so fast that they had to be reprinted.

A major event was the five day world assembly for Moral Re-Armament held in Trivandram in January 1962. Distinguished delegates from 37 nations participated. Among them were General Bethlem of Brazil; Saburo Chiba, Chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the Japanese Parliament; Conrad Hunte, West Indies opening batsman; Brian Boobbyer, double blue from Oxford; Masahide Shibusawa whose great grandfather was the founder of industrial Japan and had hosted Netaji Subhaschandra Bose; Josef Gasser, Swiss Member of Parliament; Rusty Wailes, U.S. Olympic rowing champion; Jose Veras, leader of the Rio tramway workers and former communist for 23 years; General Hosa Inoue of Japan, war time commander-in-chief of the Andaman Islands; Jim Beggs, Australian dock-workers leader; Peter Howard, distinguished British author and playwright, and Rajmohan Gandhi.

The World Assembly ended in a massive public demonstration in which over 200,000 people participated. Five gold-caparisoned elephants, an orchestra unique to Kerala and a hundred girls with lighted lamps preceded the international delegates who marched with flags of 37 nations for one and a half hours through the streets of the capital to an open air stadium, where a crowd of over 90,000 stood for two hours and heard international speakers and the evidence of the worldwide advance of MRA. They saw the premiere of *The Final Revolution*, a play in Malayalam written and enacted by students showing how communists and non-communists are captured by a superior ideology. Mannath Padmanabhan, who had led the procession on foot, addressing the ocean of humanity said, 'Today I have seen what I wished to see in my own dear Kerala before I died. We are grateful for the strength, unity and clarity which has come as a result of the work of MRA. I want to see what happened here repeated in every part of India.'

Following this the MRA force criss-crossed the entire length and breadth of the state touching all the leading towns, addressing over a quarter of a million people. *The Sunday Standard*, then India's largest circulation newspaper, carried the news to all India in a thirteen hundred word four column story, 'MRA scores big Success in Kerala' with a prominent picture of the procession in Trivandrum.

A compassionate society

These experiences strengthened Viswanathan's conviction that this was the idea for India and that he should give his all to help bring it to all parts of the country. When Moral Re-Armament was formally established as a Trust in India, he was made one of the founding Trustees and has served on the Trust for many years. He later applied his convictions in industry, where he served in senior positions and became head of sales and marketing in two of India's largest tyre companies, and advisor to a large group. Recently, speaking of the situation in India he said, 'Internal strife and corruption are the greatest impediments to our progress. We must purge ourselves of these dreadful diseases. We can and we must build a just and compassionate society, where no one will be without food and shelter and everyone will have an opportunity to work and develop to their full potential. I believe it is possible to achieve this in our life time, say in 10 to 15 years, if enough of us say "we will" and work unitedly to make it happen.' He is currently a corporate trainer.

4

Communist Finds a Bigger Aim

Another young man enlisted during Frank Buchman's visit to India in 1952/53 was from Hyderabad. A brilliant academic, he had a great passion for the ordinary man. This had resulted in his being recruited by the Communists and for this he spent two and a half years in prison during the Telangana uprising. Out of prison and back in the University, an international group of young people visited the college to invite students to see the MRA play showing at the time there. Vaitheswaran came to the play and stayed some time afterwards arguing with members of the cast about the message of the play. Despite some cynicism, he could not deny that he was intrigued by the things he had heard, but also by the passion of those with whom he spoke. He said to himself that these people really believed what they talked about and lived it out. For the first time he admitted to an idea that might provide him with answers which, despite his belief in communism, he had not found there. He too went to the Caux conference to find out more.

A few years later in 1960 he found himself one of a delegation of five people taken by the then Ambassador of the Philippines to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama had not been long in India since fleeing Tibet and the Philippines' government had tried, without success it turned out, to have the United Nations examine the case against China for their intrusion into Tibet which led to the Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India. Because of this fact, the Ambassador had got to know the Dalai Lama quite well and felt he would like him to be informed about Moral Re-Armament. As my wife and I were friends of the Ambassador, he approached us to arrange this. Five of us, including Vaitheswaran, set off from Delhi with the Ambassador on the overnight train journey and then motored up into the hills to Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama had been provided accommodation by the Indian government. His Holiness asked us one by one to tell him about ourselves. When Vaitheswaran's turn to speak

came round, the Dalai Lama was immediately interested in why he had become a communist.

Human nature can be changed

Vaitheswaran explained his poor background and the fact that he thought the only people really trying to help the poor were the communists, so he joined them. 'And what made you leave the Communist Party and throw your lot in with Moral Re-Armament?' asked the Dalai Lama. Vaitheswaran explained that seeing the changes in people whom he had regarded as capitalists or upper class – and therefore selfish and only worthy of elimination – had convinced him that if human nature could be changed, the class war was out of date.

The Dalai Lama's interest was clearly caught. He explained to the delegation, 'I made a very serious mistake and that is why I am now exiled in India.' He went on to tell how he had wanted from a young age to ensure that Tibetan culture and religious beliefs were maintained and safe-guarded in his country. He thought the best way of ensuring this was to isolate Tibet from any foreign influences which might dilute their own beliefs. So that was why, he explained, it was very hard for foreigners to get into or stay in Tibet. However when the Chinese army invaded Tibet, he realised that he had made a great mistake. At that crucial moment, there were no friends to whom he could turn to for help because of the way he had isolated his country.

Creating a climate for reconciliation

In the years since that meeting, the Dalai Lama has regularly visited the MRA Centres at Panchgani in Western India and at Caux in Switzerland. He has also made a point of arranging for some of the key people in his administration in India to join MRA conferences at Panchgani, as well as young Tibetans to join student training programmes of MRA. His reputation worldwide for creating the climate for reconciliation is well known. In 1996 while visiting Caux during the Golden Jubilee meetings of the MRA Centre in July 1996, the Dalai Lama said, 'The 20th century will be known as a century of conflict. Can we make the 21st century the century of dialogue?'

If young people could use their experiences to influence the way the world goes, it would be one of the most important things of the 20th century. Vaitheswaran has a marvellous way with young people and is a natural teacher. His mind, and his experiences, give him the ability to influence students in a profound way. I have seen him in conversation with young people, where he is able to explain things clearly and can put propositions to them with force and persuasion. With the surrender of his hatred, he became a force for good and an asset to any community or country. It is a talent to be cherished in anyone who has it.

5

A Clean, Strong and United India - The March across India

Rajmohan Gandhi met MRA while he was in Britain for training in journalism. Later he worked with Frank Buchman and Moral Re-Armament before returning to India in 1957 at the time of his father, Devadas Gandhi's death. His maternal grandfather, C Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor General and elder statesman advised Rajmohan Gandhi that he should now take up a job and take care of his widowed mother. India's leading industrialist, G D Birla who also owned the *Hindustan Times* invited Gandhi (Rajmohan) to join as an assistant editor of the newspaper of which his father had been Chief Editor till he died. It was a position which carried considerable prestige and power apart from being a comfortable and secure job. Despite much pressure brought on him to accept the offer, Rajmohan Gandhi turned it down and decided to give his all to bring Moral Re-Armament to his country and the world. Years later, C Rajagopalachari spoke approvingly of his grandson's work saying, 'This struggle to build a new national character is more important than our struggle for freedom and it will be more difficult.'

It was in Kerala that Rajmohan Gandhi had his first mass encounter with the common people of the land and the way they responded was unprecedented. Together with his dedicated team he marched through the streets of practically every town in Kerala in January 1962, spoke to thousands of students in many schools and colleges and addressed huge mass meetings and rallies. Everywhere he called on the people to 'clean up India from bottom to top and fight on a world scale the exploitation of man by man'.

Bitter factional fights between groups within the party caused by personal jealousy and rivalry among leaders was a disease that afflicted the Congress Party in Kerala and in many other states of India. An answer to this was found through MRA, resulting in change and reconciliation among

some key leaders. A delegation including seven members of the Legislative Assembly and three other prominent leaders produced and enacted a play, *The New Chapter*, dramatizing the unity they found and presented it at the MRA international conferences at Caux, Switzerland and Odawara, Japan. On their return, they presented their play in Kottayam to a packed audience including many prominent leaders. The Kerala Chief Minister inaugurating the premiere said, 'This isn't merely a drama. These men are reliving their experiences realizing that many things they have done in the past were wrong. Their purpose is not to entertain but to pass on their experiences to our country. Whenever moral decadence becomes acute and widespread in the world, great men have arisen to help the forces of good triumph over the forces of evil. MRA is restoring men to the right road to bring about a moral renaissance. This is the most urgent need.'

The Kerala Congress leaders were in Japan when the Chinese attack on India in October 1962 occurred. It came as a rude shock to the leaders and people of India. India found herself totally unprepared and was dismayed that neither the Soviet Union nor the non-aligned group of countries raised their voice against the Chinese aggression. In response to Prime Minister Nehru's request it was the USA that came to India's help and rushed much needed arms and equipment by air. The Chinese army hastily retreated and a dispute over what constitutes the border between India and China has continued.

On their return, the Kerala MLAs went to Delhi and met the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and other leaders and shared their experiences and conviction. P C Cherman who led the delegation said, 'At a time when India is facing the greatest threat to its freedom and security our most urgent need is for an ideology that ends division and apathy, cures corruption and immorality and answers subversion from within and without. I believe that ideology is Moral Re-Armament. A morally re-armed India, clean, united and strong will win the respect and gratitude of her neighbours.... Our country has been drifting away from the father of the nation, Gandhiji, but with God as our Captain and Guide, we can forge ahead and become the greatest of nations and an example to the whole world.' Rajmohan Gandhi challenged the Kerala leaders 'to supply New Delhi with a concept for Asia which is more daring and revolutionary than Peking is offering'. 'We in Britain have made our mistakes, but at this time of India's trial every man and woman in my country will stand firmly by your nation's side,' said Peter Howard at a reception in Trivandrum.

At a press conference held in the Kerala House, New Delhi in August 1963 Rajmohan Gandhi together with leaders from Kerala spoke of a bold plan to rouse India's millions to fight for Moral Re-Armament with the

same passion with which they sought political liberation. The statement declared: 'As deadly as the danger from China is India's internal disease. It lies in jealousy, impurity, hate and fear. These have produced division, bribery, drift and frustration. Unchecked, they will lead inevitably to anarchy and dictatorship.'

'A force of Indians is determined to strike at the root of our national disease. These men and women are pledged, under God, to change the character of our nation. Their aim is to make Moral Re-Armament the dominant force in all spheres of our national life – politics, administration, business, education and defence.'

'Our aim is a new social order where man no longer cheats, insults, worships, corrupts or exploits his fellow man. Where a nation is united because families stay united. Where men and women live as sons and daughters of God. To create this new order across the world must become the united aim of our nation. This fight for a clean, strong and united India will need more dedication and sacrifice than the struggle for freedom required.'

March-on-Wheels

They announced that a World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament would take place in New Delhi from November 24 – December 15. And that a vigorous nation-wide campaign, a March-on-Wheels to alert and enlist India's millions in the battle for Moral Re-Armament, would start on October 2 from Kanyakumari for Delhi. 'Our aim is to make India a nation of one heart, one mind and one goal. Conscious of our shortcomings, but trusting in the power of God, we are pledged to fight for this revolution, whatever the cost may be.... We urge every patriotic man and woman to join with us in the battle.'

The marchers consisted of a core of committed Indians and included a number of foreigners – my wife and myself among them. Over a period of seven weeks, the team of 75 people travelled in buses from Kanyakumari to New Delhi stopping at towns and villages through the states of Kerala, Mysore, Madras, Hyderabad, Orissa, Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, speaking at meetings to every kind of person – students and workers, industrialists and trade unionists, peasants and tradesmen, citizens and leaders, men and women. To everyone the message was the same. The creation of a strong, clean and united India required people to be different. Rajmohan Gandhi's challenge to all was simple, 'Accept absolute moral standards in your own life and allow yourself to be used to give a lead for the country. The ordinary man who listens to the inner voice can do extraordinary things. An India clean, just, strong, united and honest at home, proclaiming boldly and fearlessly a revolution beyond Communism and anti-Communism

for the entire world, is the India we shall fight under God to create.³

The climax of the March was the Moral Re-Armament Assembly of Nations which opened at the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on November 24.

Fulfilling their highest expectations

People responded to the challenge by putting things right, by offering help in work, time and money to carry the idea forward. And most of all the young people responded, asking how they could get further training in these ideas. As a result during the summer vacation of 1964, and for many vacations thereafter, hundreds of university and high School students joined *camps* held in western, southern and northern India. It was the beginning of building a force of people across the country.

The first camp was held in the Maharashtra Hill Station of Panchgani, where a boarding school offered their premises during the summer vacation. Over 300 students aged 14 years upwards spent a fortnight together in a packed programme of meetings, discussions, quizzes, sports and entertainment, all geared to understanding the world we live in and the forces that drive people and countries, including ourselves and our own country. Every day started with a time of quiet to listen for direction from the inner voice which comprised both correction and direction. It was a creative time, when many wrote skits and songs to illustrate the effect and impact of change on situations and people.

At the end of the two week camp, the leaders of Panchgani, including Municipal Councillors, teachers and retired citizens, were invited to spend the evening hearing some of the results of the camp. The audience were thrilled to see in front of them young people with a purpose and a vision for India, which more than fulfilled their highest expectations. Even before they left some were excited about possible further programmes in their town. Next morning some of them returned to talk with Rajmohan Gandhi, Russi Lala and others who had been responsible for the camp. They told how impressed they had been and proposed that Panchgani should be chosen as the site for a permanent centre for training young people in the way they had witnessed the night before. If this was agreed, they said, they would give every help in its creation.

One of those who helped organise these camps was Paul Williams from Wales, who had come to India with the international musical show *Space is so Startling* and stayed on to help with the camps. In fact he helped at two camps, the one just described at Panchgani and another in the northern hill state of Nahan, not far from Simla. 'I vividly remember this second camp because of 12 young Tibetans who had been sent there for training by the Dalai Lama from his exile in Dharmasala. On a make-

do football pitch, set against the stunning backdrop of the distant Himalayas, we staged a match with the rather grand title 'Tibet versus the rest of the World.'

'Perhaps a year after these initial camps,' he continued, 'there was a youth conference in the capital. Many of the young people there had stories to tell of recent changes they had made in their life-styles, including refreshing ways to make restitution for things stolen, bribes taken or exams cheated in. Rajmohan Gandhi ensured that there were opportunities for these stories to be told also to leading figures of the New Delhi establishment, including the Vice-President of India. I remember, too, Rajmohan's maternal grandfather, Rajagopalachari, hosting a meal for some of these young people in Madras, nodding in approval at their stories and afterwards giving them his energetic blessing and encouragement. Another person who gave his support, I remember, was the retired Chief of the Army Staff, General K M Cariappa.'

Building of a Centre

Thus the concept of a conference and training centre, later named Asia Plateau, flowed from these camps. And true to their word, many in Panchgani did help with finding a suitable site for the building of a centre, as well as bringing people to make use of it once completed.

1965 saw the first steps in purchasing the land. Building started in January 1967 with the first phase being opened in January 1968. The second phase was ready in January 1969, when the third and more complicated phase of meeting rooms, theatre, dining and catering facilities was begun. This took a little longer, but early in 1972 Mr Frederik Philips, then chairman of the Philips Electrical Industries of Holland, came specially for the opening of this third phase, his own company having given generously to equipping the electric and electronic equipment which had been installed. 400 people crowded the theatre for this inauguration of this centre of which India could be justifiably proud.

The building of the Centre was full of remarkable incidents from the word go. Some wise heads shook when the idea was launched, with the warning that it was not possible to construct a centre of the kind envisaged without paying bribes. And how could bribes be paid, if the centre was to be used by Moral Re-Armament, which stood for absolute honesty. Late in 1966, when planning permission for the buildings had been granted (without any bribes) tenders were submitted from three contractors for the first phase. The work for the first two phases was given to the New Trio Builders. Kotnis, one of the three directors of the firm who lived in Karad (the nearest big town to the site), came to discuss the details of the work before starting. He also asked

what the buildings were going to be used for. When told of MRA and its aims to build a clean, strong and united India, he was thoughtful. 'I suppose that means,' he said, 'that the construction of the buildings ought also be in line with these standards.' 'Certainly,' was the reply he got.

Everyone benefited

In 1968 after the opening of the first phase of the construction a man from the Panchgani Municipality came to Asia Plateau wishing to meet Rajmohan Gandhi. When asked what was the reason for his visit, he replied that he was in charge of collecting the *octroi* (local taxes) on all goods brought to Panchgani from outside the locality. Normally, he continued, if someone set out to construct buildings like Asia Plateau, someone would come to the Municipal Office to meet him (either the owner or the building contractor) and between them an arrangement would be made so that those making the building paid a little less octroi, a commission would be given to the octroi staff and everyone benefited – except, of course, the municipal bank balance! 'But,' he said, 'so far no one has come to meet me, all the taxes have been fully paid, so naturally I wanted to find out what lay behind this?'

Many articles have been written about the construction of the buildings and what lay behind them. Money was, of course, an essential ingredient. There was no big bank account behind it and all the money came from sacrifice. The first contribution was from a widow in Pune, who donated Rs.10,000 because of the change she had seen in her daughter and her niece. Some gave small sums regularly, others like manufacturers gave supplies at a discount. The Associated Cement Companies, for instance, who supplied all the cement for the construction gave 10% discount on every bag of cement. The architect of Asia Plateau was Gordon Brown, an Australian who gave the services of himself and his staff without charge. This included a number of visits to Panchgani, at his own expense, to monitor progress of the construction. A firm of consulting engineers in Mumbai gave their services also without charge for their advice during the first two phases of construction.

A group of young Indians who had put together a musical show *India Arise* (see chapter 14) took it on tour through India and later to Europe. Wherever they performed they told of the setting up of Asia Plateau and appealed for help for it. Asia Plateau is a monument to the truth that 'Where God guides, He provides'. But already when the first phase was completed, the premises were being used and began to show what the outreach was likely to be, as we shall find out in the next chapter.

From the very beginning those setting up the centre wanted it to demonstrate a new India, as well as holding conferences on the subject. So the way

the centre is kept, the quality of the buildings, the cleanliness, etc, were intended to be an example for everyone to see. And this is often the first thing that people visiting Asia Plateau comment on. But there was also a conviction that the centre should contribute something to the area as a whole and one idea was that the land in the area round the town of Panchgani should show that even unpromising hilly land can produce food. Even before the first construction work started, work started on the environment. Trees were planted, often through volunteer labour, or shramdan, to provide shade and windbreaks. The dry slopes had once been formed into terraces, but long back the retaining walls had been crumbling and soil erosion was clearly ravishing the slopes. The result was a loss of monsoon water rushing down the hillside instead of soaking into the ground and refilling wells. So the terraces were renewed, the places where deep gullies had formed were filled with stones and quick-growing long grass to hold the water. During the first monsoon, when the construction work had just started some of the terraces were planted with rice and other crops to show that the land could be made fertile.

Resuscitating barren soil

A New Zealand farmer and his wife, John and Annette Porteous, were invited by Rajmohan Gandhi to come and help this process forward. 'Nothing could look less like a New Zealand farm,' they recalled. However they saw that, 'Gardens were beginning to produce flowers and fruit, and compost was being created, which was to be vital for resuscitating barren soil. A small poultry farm was operating and people were hard at work. One particular need was to acclimatise and care for some pedigree Jersey cattle gifted by Australian farmers.'

Their visits to local farmers and their families in the nearby villages was always an adventure, they found. They had to deal with scepticism. 'How do young graduates coming from university know what will work,' the farmers commented about young government advisers who came to tell them about new seeds and fertilisers to improve the crops. 'They have clean hands and clean shirts. How do they know I can feed my family if I do as they say?' John Porteous got his hands dirty – and his shirts. The Agricultural Department and the veterinary officers helped, as well as the local village women employed for weeding and harvesting or the men who cared for the animals and poultry. Equally the pedigree cattle helped the government in their cross-breeding programme of improving the milk supply – what has been called the White Revolution. 'What had seemed impossible in those earlier famine years, has continued to grow through the vision, commitment and hard work of those employed,' was the comment of John Porteous.

Returning to New Zealand after nearly four years, the Porteous' son, Alan, carried on what they had started. 'His vision was to grow trees,' said his parents, 'raising seedlings to encourage planting not only on Asia Plateau land, but in the surrounding villages also. The villagers are proud of the trees they are growing. What has happened on these barren acres has brought hope and inspiration to the whole area. But most important is the change in people and attitudes. For us it was life-changing, educating, adventurous, often frustrating, but the most rewarding experience of our lives.'

Gift of water divining

Among others who came to help were two women from Europe. One was Francoise, a horticultural engineer from France; the other was Stephanie, a nurse from Britain who could be said have 'green fingers' as she had a wonderful ability for coaxing flowers and plants to grow under the most unlikely conditions. While Francoise planned the landscaping of the garden area round the buildings, Stephanie made friends with all kinds of people in the schools and institutions in the area who were most generous in giving plants, cuttings, seeds and bulbs for Asia Plateau. The Forest Department provided seedlings for growing trees. Within one year, by the time of the opening of the first building, there was a green and shady area for people to walk or sit in during leisure times, as well as flowers to enjoy.

Water, as in most parts of India, needed to be conserved and well utilised, but Stephanie discovered that she had the great gift of water divining. Not only did she pinpoint two places for extra wells on the Asia Plateau property, but she was in demand from villages around Panchgani to find water sources for them! In addition, thought was given how to save more fully the 180 cm of rain that would fall in an average monsoon. One idea for this was to create under each building storage tanks into which the monsoon water from the roofs of each building was collected. By allowing the first rain to wash off the roof and flush through the tanks at the start of each monsoon the water thus stored provided pure drinking water for use in the kitchens through the year. This not only ensured hygiene, but saved the trouble and expense of boiling all water for drinking purposes.

6

Helping Deserts Bloom, and Politicians Change

On 20 January 1968 the gates of Asia Plateau, the new MRA Centre were opened to the world for the first time. At the inauguration conference many from round the world were present as well as hundreds who streamed in from the locality to see what it was that was being started in their area. As the President of the Panchgani Municipal Council said in welcoming those present, 'You have put Panchgani on the world map'. And it was no idle boast as over the years more and more people came to see what was happening on the bare hillside, which year by year became greener as the thousands of trees came to full stature.

In India's capital during the month before the opening conference at Asia Plateau, politicians had been meeting to wrestle with a problem in India's North East border area. In the hills bordering Bangladesh, lying at that time within the state of Assam, live the Khasi people. Increasingly there had been agitation in the area because people felt that the state government in Gawhati did not treat them fairly. Their representations to the Home Ministry in Delhi seemed to fall on deaf ears. As frustration grew violence seemed a tempting option to draw the attention of India's leadership to what they felt. The newspapers wrote of the situation as a 'potential Vietnam'.

During December 1967 in Delhi a very significant dinner party took place in a home used by MRA at which some of the leaders of the Khasi people were present, including Mr Stanley Nichols Roy, a politician from Shillong. He and his friends heard that evening of the forthcoming programme of the conference to open the Centre at Asia Plateau. They were intrigued and Nichols Roy was especially interested to hear that music would be one of the features of the programme. 'Can I bring my choir from Shillong?' he asked. Perhaps his hosts in replying, 'Of course you can', may not have been fully expecting that he would do so. But he did.

Uncomfortable meditation

Stanley Nichols Roy was sharing a room with a Naga called Niketu Iralu, who was to become one of his closest friends (see chapter 16). As the opening conference proceeded Stanley was not only interested but also became increasingly uncomfortable. Seeing his friend Niketu rising early every morning taking time to meditate and write in a notebook, Stanley asked him what he was doing. He realised that the reply from Niketu, 'I am trying to find out what God's will for me is for the day,' should not have been anything out of the usual. So he decided to try it himself. He had two thoughts which he recognised as being very difficult to carry out. The first was to be honest with his wife, Helen, about some of the things that he had been up to while away from home on political trips. The second was to be honest with the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B P Chaliha, of the bitter feelings he held against him on account of the frustration of the Khasi people for the way they felt they had been treated.

He told Niketu his thoughts and his decision to carry them out. He also took the opportunity to talk with a British Member of Parliament, who was also attending the conference, about the political question facing the Khasi people. Patrick Wolrige Gordon, the British MP, understood his problem because he had found in his own political work in Britain that human wisdom often failed to answer political problems but God helped him to find a plan when he was willing to listen.

Armed with this support from these friends in Panchgani, Nichols Roy returned to Shillong with his choir. He immediately talked with his wife and asked her forgiveness for what he had been doing. She was overjoyed, though truth to tell she had known what was going on. Such was her happiness that when she drove into town, she waved at people she had never met before! So it was with her full support that Stanley went on to carry out the second thought to see the Chief Minister. His apology to Chaliha brought an immediate response. Chaliha not only accepted his apology fully but suggested to Nichols Roy that he outline his plan for a settlement of the Khasis' complaints, so that together they might go to the Home Minister in Delhi to try and get it accepted.

Agreement in Delhi

To cut a long story short, this is, in fact, what happened and Y B Chavan, then the Home Minister, responded by saying that if they were agreed, how could he stand in the way of the solution. In addition in Assam to help the other politicians to understand what was going on, Chaliha and Nichols Roy arranged a joint showing of the film *Freedom*, which Stanley had seen in Panchgani. This film, written and acted by Africans from all over the

continent and filmed in Nigeria – the first of its kind – contained the basis of a democratic way in which differences can be surmounted, given in a visual and dramatic way. This helped the Assam Assembly Members to understand what it was that was being arranged for the future of their state.

Of course, many details and much administration had to be worked through before the plan of Chaliha and Stanley Nichols Roy became reality. But step by step, through the convincing of the unconvinced and the disarming of those critical of the concept, the idea of the separate state of Meghalaya was brought to birth. In 1970, when the new state was inaugurated, a musical show of MRA written and produced by young people from Europe and Australasia was touring India. They were invited to join the inauguration in Shillong to celebrate the start of the new state.

From years back Frank Buchman had said that ‘MRA has nothing to do with politics, but it has everything to do with politics. For it is a revolution in all politics, because God directs not only the platforms but the politicians.’ Nichols Roy proved how practical a philosophy it is.

White money, not black

As the use of Asia Plateau developed and grew, the numbers of people passing through Mumbai to reach Panchgani also grew. In addition MRA was thriving in the city itself, in industry and the trade unions, and in education. In 1977 R D Mathur, then Director of Asia Plateau, and Rajmohan Gandhi wrote to a couple from Britain, working at that time with MRA in Mumbai, asking them to try to find a suitable permanent centre for MRA in the city, for use as an office, for holding seminars and for residential accommodation, as needed. ‘This proved a very difficult task,’ John and Jeanne Faber recall. ‘To our amazement we were told there were only two blocks of flats in the city to be bought with white money. Most people expected to pay 60/40, which meant sixty per cent in white money (which was declared for tax purpose) and forty per cent in black money which went straight into the hands of the seller. This was not acceptable.’

A friend saw a building going up on Worli Sea Face, which seemed very suitable. John went to see the owner and was told that payment would have to be made on the 60/40 basis. John explained that, ‘MRA stands for absolute moral standards, so there is no way we could agree to this arrangement.’ However a luncheon was set up for the owner to meet two industrialists with wide experience of MRA, who told him of the work MRA was doing in the country. John continues the story, ‘No more was heard until one day, while we were on holiday on a little island outside Mumbai, two good friends came over to tell us that the owner had said we could have space in the building and he was willing to be paid in white money!’

When John met the owner he asked him what made him change his mind. The reply was that as he had members of his family living in the building he wanted people he could trust. Although he had had bigger offers from other people, including films stars, he had finally decided to let MRA have it on their terms. 'We bought two floors,' said John and Jeanne, 'and as the building was in the process of being completed we were able to ask for a staircase to join the two flats, and to have whatever arrangements of rooms we wished. So *Kumaram* made a perfect centre for our work.'

7

Labour led by God can lead the World

In the team which Frank Buchman took with him to India for his six-month tour in 1952/53 there were some men and women with an involvement with the labour movement. So at every stop on the journey through India these men and women made it a point to visit the headquarters of the different unions and meet those taking responsibility. They would invite them to come to see the MRA plays which were being put on and to meet members of the travelling team, including Frank Buchman himself. With a very few exceptions this initiative was met with a warm response.

One of those taking part was an Australian called Gordon Wise. He had served in the Royal Australian Air Force during the second World War, mainly in the flying boats which patrolled the seas around Britain searching to destroy the German submarines which were doing so much damage to the supplies coming into Britain by sea.

Of his stay in Calcutta, Gordon writes, 'One of the most interesting people I met in India was Sibnath Banerjee. In fact, as I look back on my life, he is one of the most interesting men I ever met. As a young man he made his way overland from Calcutta to Lenin's funeral in Moscow in 1924. He was not captured by Communism as such. But he was a true champion of his people, president of the 800,000 workers in the Socialist Labour Movement – the Hind Mazdoor Sabha. In addition he was president of quite a few small unions in Calcutta. He was drawn to MRA, when he saw their plays, by the size of its idea and quickly became convinced that he should attend a conference for MRA in Caux, in Switzerland, and find out more. When he got back from Caux, where he had met people and practices he came to accept, he started to apply these ideas at home.

'He was greatly impressed by "The Happy Baker" – a Canadian by the name of Cecil Morrison – who told of the transformation at his bakery when he, the boss, began to put thought for his employees before thought for his profit.'

In 1953/54 Wise was working in Calcutta with others who had been with Buchman's team in India earlier, like Geoffrey Daukes and Peter Hintzen, and included another Australian, Aileen Brown, the sister of the architect Gordon Brown (see chapter 5). They had been lent an office in the headquarters of the St John's Ambulance Service, the local secretary of which was a good friend. Wise writes, 'Our work was wide-ranging and was built on the friends we had made earlier through the visit of the international party with stage plays.'

'Sibnath Banerjee and his wife, Prabhashini, had become firm friends when we were in Caux together in the summer of 1953. It so happened that the Secretariat of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), headquartered in Brussels, had that summer issued a critical report of MRA, following a genuine enquiry for guidance from Dinkar Desai, the General Secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha. Sibnath had not been aware of the enquiry and was therefore very annoyed by the report, especially as he had been favourably impressed by MRA.

'He looked in profile like a Roman Emperor, had a good command of English and all his working life had served the workers as an advocate and negotiator. At Caux some of us decided that we should ask Sibnath if he would be willing to visit a number of European trade union centres, in order to clarify the MRA-ICFTU issue. I accompanied him. We went to see the Swiss leadership in Berne, some of whom I knew from a campaign with a play in 1947.

'We travelled to France, Holland, Belgium, Britain, Italy and Scandinavia. We were in Germany also. In Britain we attended the annual conference of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC). Sibnath made his points powerfully to all he met. In Rome we went to St Peter's in the Vatican, my first inspiring experience of the mighty Roman Catholic faith. We had seen many of Europe's elected trade union leaders. I farewelled Sibnath from Rome and returned to Caux, and thereafter continued to Calcutta myself as keeping touch with Sibnath was of prime importance.'

In Calcutta Reginald Holme joined them. He was an experienced journalist and got to know Tarun Kanti Ghosh, the publisher of the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* (Calcutta's leading daily newspaper) at the time. As a result Ghosh issued a special supplement on MRA in his paper. This included a feature by Sibnath Banerjee, telling his best experiences and the support he had received from Labour worldwide in his meetings with them about MRA. The supplement was sent with a covering letter, signed personally by Banerjee, to the main office-bearers of all the union centres worldwide affiliated to the ICFTU. It was a major task in which Aileen Brown, herself a secretary, worked especially hard.

After 13 years work to counter the effect of the earlier edict, in 1966, when Gordon and his colleague, Bill Jaeger, went to Brussels and saw the Assistant General Secretary of the ICFTU, a man called Brauntal, he informed them that there would be a statement by the ICFTU in their bulletin making the point that their earlier critical advice regarding MRA was no longer valid.

This statement was duly published as follows: *In a letter to an official of the Moral Re-Armament, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has confirmed its attitude of strict neutrality towards that movement as towards any other religious movement. 'You will certainly be aware', Omer Becu, ICFTU General Secretary, wrote, 'that the ICFTU counts among its members persons adhering to a very great number of religious denominations. Any other position of the ICFTU than that of neutrality towards religious issues is therefore entirely excluded provided, of course, that any of these communities refrain from interfering in matters which are properly within the domain of the trade union movement.'*

Calcutta was, and still is, a tough city with heart-rending poverty alongside great wealth. While there, Gordon tells of his visit to Jyoti Basu who was Chief Minister of the Communist-led government of West Bengal, in power in the State.

'Just at that time,' Wise recalls, 'a union led by Sibnath went on strike in a factory called Patterson's Soap Works, owned by a Hindu family from Rajasthan called Khaitan. We knew them and in fact stayed with one of the family, G N Khaitan. He had a nice home, with servants and sent us to eat at a restaurant he owned as he felt his vegetarian regime would not nourish us sufficiently.

'Geoffrey Daukes and I used to visit Sibnath and Prabhashini in Howrah, the twin city of Calcutta across the Howrah Bridge over the Hoogley River. Sibnath's home was up a small lane in a very modest locality. We would go with him to meet with the Patterson factory workers in an attempt to settle the dispute. The workers had been locked out because one of them, under provocation, had hit a foreman.

'Sibnath persuaded this foreman to join our workers' meeting and we had a time of quiet. The worker who had made the assault apologised to the foreman for hitting him with his sandal. The apology was accepted. The Khaitans reinstated all the workers. Sibnath was convinced that the ideas of MRA worked. We saw Sibnath most days. Prabhashini used to cook us onion omelettes. MRA had a profound effect on the family, as did Sibnath on the Indian trade union and socialist movement.'

At the end of 1953 the annual conference of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha was held at Kanpur, some 20 hours by train from Calcutta, and Banerjee

invited Gordon Wise and his Norwegian friend, Leif Hovelsen, to attend the meetings. Following the union conference, they went on to Allahabad, some 100 miles away, where the Praja Socialist Party had their annual conference. Gordon writes, 'We travelled Indian-style, third class on the train, with Sibnath, with no sleeping accommodation. I had a tinned Christmas pudding, so on Christmas Day we opened it and ate it with peanuts bought from the railway station vendors.

'It was rare for Indians to have Westerners travel third class with them. It was very cheap and how Sibnath always travelled. I suppose these experiences, including staying in modest Indian-style hotels, bonded us with him. We became very fond of each other.'

An indication of Banerjee's conviction about MRA was his desire to introduce MRA people to his friends. One such occasion was when he took Gordon and others to meet Jayaprakash Narayan, the outstanding socialist figure of India at the time and one of the leaders of India's fight for independence from Britain. Jayaprakash at that time was working to win land for the landless by persuading landowners to share their land with those less fortunate than themselves. The programme, known as Bhoodan, was headed nationally by a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi called Vinobha Bharve. At their meeting Sibnath selflessly translated everything being said for Gordon and his friends.

Early in 1954 Sibnath flew with Gordon from Delhi to Bangkok and Rangoon. The occasion in Bangkok was an Asian conference for MRA with the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Pibul Songgran, providing many facilities and giving a reception at his official residence for the Thai leadership and visitors to the conference to meet each other. At that time the Ministry of Culture had given a budget for MRA and their representatives went to Caux and other MRA conferences. In addition the Government paid for an annual gift to Caux of five tons of rice over three years while a ship owner, Phya Mahai, transported it free to the Italian port of Genoa. This support of MRA, even sponsorship, by the Prime Minister, had an interesting origin, which Gordon Wise explained.

'In 1949 two of my colleagues, David Hind and Bill Porter, attended the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference in Geneva. They invited a number of the delegates to go to Caux at the weekends. One who went was Sang Pathonothai, then the General Secretary of the Thai trade unions and the editor of a newspaper. Sang took to MRA and the ideas affected his life and work back at home. He was the son of a poor fisherman who had advanced his situation in life by considerable native ability. He had become a friend of the Prime Minister. One story was that whereas Sang used to bring young Thai women for the PM, he stopped doing so

after he met MRA. He played golf with the Prime Minister who, before becoming a soldier, was also from a simple background. Sang's new convictions impressed the Prime Minister and influenced him. We introduced Sang to a British diplomat who was posted as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Bangkok, and this was the beginning of a long friendship for Archie Mackenzie with Sang.

'Another of Sang's friends who was impressed by his change was Phra Bimaladhamma, the Lord Abbot of the Wat Mahadate Buddhist Monastery, later to become deputy Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. The Lord Abbot offered hospitality in his monastery for us visitors, so Sibnath Banerjee and I were his guests for two days. We shared the same Spartan accommodation as the monks. This included sleeping, or at least lying, on a solid teakwood bed with a block of fashioned teakwood for a pillow. Sibnath was more used to such basic conditions than I was. The Lord Abbot was pleased to have us and became a lifelong friend of mine, leading to a remarkable journey together in 1958, when I accompanied him and another monk to the USA and to Europe.

'On our way back to Calcutta we stopped off in Rangoon, where our special friend and host was the Anglican Bishop of Rangoon, the Very Revd George West. His residence, the Bishop's Palace, was next door to the Buddhist Aleyatala Monastery where the Abbot, Sayadaw U Narada, became his friend. Later Sayadaw U Narada became my friend when I accompanied him and a businessman to Europe and to Brazil and to New York. After we left the Bishop for the airport, Sibnath said to me, "That Bishop is a real Christian."

In 1958 Frank Buchman invited Sibnath and Prabhashini to the conference being held that summer on Mackinac Island, USA, where MRA had a centre. It is a holiday island and a very peaceful location. The purpose built centre accommodated some 400 people and the meetings were held in a timbered hall built in the form of an American Indian tepee. With a capacity to seat all those at the centre, it provided a wonderful auditorium for people from many nations attending the conference. The supports for the roof were made from the trunks of fir trees which came together at the top, just like a circular tent. In this setting Sibnath was able to share his convictions with so many people, including North American trade union leaders. Meanwhile Prabhashini, the housewife that she was and a skilled cook, was often called on by Buchman to cook chicken curry and other Indian delicacies for those he wanted specially to entertain. He was not very well at the time and his doctor worried that he did not eat enough. But he never missed the chicken curry whatever he did or didn't feel like!

8

Opening the Hearts - and Pockets of Capitalists

The change in Stanley Nichols Roy and the settlement of the dispute between the Khasis and the Assam government led to much publicity and many articles about the work of Moral Re-Armament. People wanted to know more, to have a part and to understand how the programme of 'New Men, New Nations and a New World' could possibly work. Many meetings and other initiatives took place to inform and clarify these things.

One initiative in 1972 was a 16 member team who went on a 'March on Wheels' through Assam. It was the initiative of Dr Nirmala Chaliha, sister of the then Chief Minister of the state. One of the places they stopped at was Tinsukia where local citizens invited them to hold meetings. Some members of the team stayed with D P Agarwal, the Managing Director of Steelsworth Private Ltd, and his nephew Om Prakash Bagaria, then the chief engineer of the firm. Over dinner the evening on which the team arrived, Bagaria said, 'I hope you can have an effect on Kar. He is an opportunist and a mischief-monger.'

Effect on a mischief-monger

Steelsworth has had a chequered history. Starting as a tiny repair shop 23 years earlier, now it manufactures tea machinery. It is one of the foremost in exporting machinery to the tea producing countries of the world. It was employing over a thousand men. Eight years earlier J. C. Kar, a worker in the Tinsukia plant, was dismissed by the company for a long absence from work. Kar took the matter to court. He lost in a lower court, won in the High Court and lost again in the Supreme Court. He became President of the All Engineering Workers' Union, affiliated to the INTUC, as well as leader of the Steelsworth Workers' Union. The personal animosity between him and the management showed no sign of abating. In fact Kar called off

his marriage, already arranged, because of losing his job and the case.

On 16 March 1972, when effigies were burnt of the managing staff at Tinsukia, the Managing Director was upset. 'In a company, if men burn the effigies of those they work with, there must be something wrong somewhere', he commented. He was greatly agitated and soon afterwards had a heart attack. He was rushed to Calcutta and hospitalised there. His condition became serious. Even on his way to Calcutta he kept insisting that the management must work for a settlement. Negotiations were attempted again on March 31 in Gawhati, the state capital. Deadlock resulted. The next round of talks was postponed to May 6. But both sides were sceptical. The management felt that the union was in no mood for settlement. The union sensed an adamant attitude in the management. So Bagaria's remark about Kar over dinner on April 7 was understandable.

Starting with yourself

The next day a public meeting had been arranged for the MRA team to speak to Tinsukia citizens. To Bagaria's surprise Kar, whom he had invited, showed up. On April 9 the MRA team were invited to a lunch meeting at Steelsworth to meet the management and the workers. Mr Kar was again there.

In a conversation Kar said to a member of the visiting group, 'What you advocate – starting with yourself – is good. But it's like giving *Kaviraj Aushadhi* when what is required is penicillin for instant relief.' Then he went on to say, 'Even if we admit our mistakes, how can we be sure that management will admit theirs?'

Earlier that morning a prayer meeting was arranged in the nearby company temple for the speedy recovery of Mr Agarwal. 'I wasn't in favour of it, but I had to go,' recalled Om Prakash. 'The only time I had visited the temple since its construction was when repair work was needed.' Sitting in the temple, Om Prakash had a clear thought. It concerned a worker in his factory. Kedar Mistri had suffered a bone injury eight months earlier while playing a game. He had not recovered. It had frequently crossed Bagaria's mind that perhaps the company should do more to get Mistri treated by a specialist. But he had not taken any action because it was inconvenient and would cost a lot of money. While the prayers were still in progress, at 8.00 in the morning, Bagaria came out of the temple and made his way to Mistri's home. He offered the man Rs. 500, and more if required, for the treatment. He asked Mistri to proceed to Patna, 800 miles away, the next day with his wife and child. Bagaria knew that the best bone specialist in the area was in Patna.

During the rest of that day, Bagaria began to feel that somehow an honest effort should be made to start a fresh dialogue with the trade union. On the

afternoon of the 11th, a meeting was being held between the union officials and Dilip Chaliha, the assistant personnel officer, to correct certain anomalies in a previous agreement. Om Prakash walked into this meeting. Up till then, he had kept away from union-management deliberations. B P Bakshi, a senior executive at Steelsworth, had looked after them.

Talking frankly

As the meeting was coming to an end Bagaria turned to Kar and said, 'Can't we talk frankly about the dispute and come to an agreement?' He said later, 'At that moment I saw a spark in Kar's eyes which gave me hope that he might respond.' Kar, too, recalled, 'In the past Bagaria had been fearful that the union might take undue advantage of him. But that afternoon when he walked into the meeting I could see that he genuinely wanted to move forward. It was then that I saw a glimmer of a solution.'

One of the major points of dispute centred around the question of house allowance for the workers. The workers were demanding 20 per cent of their salary as house allowance. The management felt that legally they were under no obligation to pay for workers' house rents. They also thought that it would be a bad precedent for their neighbouring companies. So they had put their foot down.'

'Tell me honestly, Mr Kar,' asked Bagaria, as they stood around informally after the meeting, 'Did you really expect the company to pay 20 per cent?' Replied Kar, 'No, we thought you might settle for 10 per cent.'

Bagaria summoned the model of a house in the housing colony they had been planning to build for their workers. The plans had been submitted to the Assam government a year earlier for approval. In schemes like this, the government gives a loan of 50 per cent and an outright grant of 25 per cent of the total cost. The remaining 25 per cent is paid by the company. But there had been no response from the government.'

'We can give you the 10 per cent house allowance, if you want, which would come to only Rs. 20 if the salary of the worker is Rs. 200,' offered Bagaria. 'But would you not prefer to have the houses?' Kar and all the workers present opted for the housing scheme. Bagaria requested the union's help to get the plans speedily passed by the government. While standing around in the office lobby, Kar and he came to agreement on many points of the dispute.

Om Prakash turned to Kar and said, 'Why don't you come to my home this evening for a chat?' Kar assented. He arrived with a few colleagues and requested that the talks be off the record, not to be referred to later if unsuccessful. The talks went on till 10 that evening, with 'a mental agenda'. An understanding emerged on most points of the dispute. Bagaria said to Kar,

'Why don't you draft the agreement and we can meet again tomorrow?' Kar promised to do so.

Next day, however, he did not put in an appearance. He was searching for the senior INTUC leader in town to consult him about the new turn of events. 'I couldn't find him anywhere. Now it was my turn to be fearful,' said Kar later.

Also on April 12, B P Bakshi, who had been negotiating with the workers on behalf of the management, returned to Tinsukia after being away. Bagaria told him about what had transpired. Bakshi flew off the handle. 'I tried to convince him that Kar was changing,' remarked Bagaria, 'but he was thoroughly suspicious.' He felt that perhaps, on a generous impulse, unrealistic terms had been promised. 'If the whole thing goes wrong, it's your responsibility,' Bakshi told Bagaria.

Having waited all day for Kar to turn up, Bagaria visited Kar's home that evening. Kar was struck to see him. 'It was the first time he had come to my home,' said Kar. His worker colleagues present in his house later commented. 'Normally we go to him. Today he has come to us.' They talked. Kar asked Bagaria, 'What about the pending complaints in the court?' This referred to complaints by the management for violation of agreements by the union and vice versa. 'It would be good to withdraw all of them,' replied Bagaria. Kar agreed. He told Bagaria he had been unable to do anything on the draft that day. 'Can we meet tomorrow?' he asked Bagaria. 'That night I thought, he has offered me his hand. I must extend my hand with similar courage,' said Kar.

It was the early morning of 13 April. The factory was closed for Bohag Bihu, the big Assamese festival. Mr Bagaria had an idea: 'Invite Kar, Bakshi and other colleagues for breakfast this morning.' He said later, 'This was what I learnt from MRA – seeking ideas from God.' Breakfast started at nine and continued till lunchtime. It was at this meeting that Bakshi was convinced of Kar's changed attitude. Every difficulty was ironed out. At the end of the session a skeleton agreement was ready.

After the meeting, Kar again went to look for his senior leader. The man was nowhere to be found. He returned home, wondering what to do. 'It was then that I had a clear thought flash through my mind: 'Decide yourself. Don't ask anyone else. Do what your heart says is right,' said Kar: 'From that moment, peace came to my heart and my fear went.' By late that night he had typed out the draft agreement.

***Shaitan* turned friend**

On the afternoon of the 14th, the Assamese New Year day, this agreement was read out to all the employees of Steelsworth. For the first time in the

history of the company, the management was also invited to a union meeting. Kar spoke. He invited Mr Bagaria, Mr Bakshi and others also to speak. 'Till three days ago I considered that man a *shaitan*,' said Bagaria, pointing to Kar. 'Today he is my friend. In future if I am in trouble, he is the man I will go to.'

Referring to the change of heart that had taken place in Bagaria, Kar said, 'More important than the settlement and fulfilment of our demands is the way it has come about with change on both sides. It is in the interest of the workers, of the management and the whole industry. It has brought peace of mind to both sides.' He went on to say that all his life he believed in using force as a means of achieving results. 'But I've seen that change of heart is a quicker process. It has succeeded in three days when force and strong measures did not succeed in eight years.'

The next day, in front of some of the MRA team, the agreement was signed. A copy of it was given to them. On it was written, 'To MRA friends whose visit to us helped us in arriving at this historic settlement paving the way for lasting industrial peace.' Turning to Dr Nirmala Chaliha, Bagaria said, 'Now I know why you brought this team to Assam.' Later at a conference at Asia Plateau, to which the company sent five workers and one management representative, one of the workers said, 'Our employers' brains have been turned right side up. There was a time when, if we entered Mr Bagaria's office, his first reaction would be to see whether the floor was being dirtied. Now the day has come when he visits our homes. If a worker is sick, he calls on him.'

No better than a Calcutta capitalist

Mumbai is well known as the business capital of India. It has also had more than its share of industrial conflict. Polydor of India Private Ltd has also felt the effects of confrontation. Shashi Patel was managing director of the company and a tycoon. Go-ahead and American-trained, he typified the young industrialists of modern India. 'As far as I was concerned he was no better than the capitalists of Calcutta, but he totally and completely changed,' so said the trade union leader in Patel's factory. 'It is hard to believe,' C M A Rodrigues continued, 'that a man like him could ever be different. I get emotionally agitated whenever I think about it.' Rodrigues was the store-keeper and head of the National Union of Commercial Employees in the company.

In December 1969, soon after it had opened, Shashi Patel went to Asia Plateau, where he met people from all over the world. 'The thing that impressed me at Panchgani was what others present there – Canadians, English, French and from many other nations – felt India could do for the

world,' he said later. 'I, as an Indian, had never felt it.' He found a new way of life there which he decided to try out in his family, in his social and business relations. 'I decided to make an experiment and see if it would work,' he said.

At Asia Plateau Patel had a sense he ought to give up drink. He did not tell anyone else because he did not know if he would be able to stick to such a decision. But he decided to do so after a friend rang him up to tell him about the remarkable change in his son, who had also gone to Panchgani and given up drink. 'I wish you too would give it up,' the friend had told him. Also at Asia Plateau Shashi had met a trade unionist from Bengal who told him that he believed that if Indian capitalists could be unselfish, the Communists and Naxalites of Bengal would review their whole philosophy. Back in Mumbai, Patel decided to make an honest experiment in his factory.

In 1969 Polydor was manufacturing cinema projectors, meters, testing instruments and had just launched the production of gramophone records. Polydor had a history of bad management and bad industrial relations. In 1966 when Shashi Patel arrived on the scene industrial relations worsened! He ignored the existence of the union; retrenchment began to take place, older workers with long service records were thrown out. When Patel took over the company was suffering losses which amounted to more than the subscribed capital. Go-slows were the order of the day.

A different approach

'The union is a hopeless case,' the management said. 'The management is unreachable,' thought the workers. Both went their separate ways. Any time Patel asked the men to do something, they would turn away their faces and remark sullenly, 'It's not our job.' Patel stopped coming to the factory, conducting the business from his city office through his works manager, Mr M L Jain. Things could hardly have got worse, particularly after a court award in the workers' favour.

Suddenly things changed. Something had happened to Patel. After his return from Panchgani he summoned Mr Jain to his office. 'We have got to resolve this labour problem,' he told him. 'Would you make a move towards the union and see what their reaction is.' Jain was dumbfounded. When he did meet Rodrigues, the response was not encouraging. 'It's your problem,' he told Jain. 'If I have anything to do with you, the workmen will think I have been bribed.' When Jain persisted, Rodrigues eventually said, 'If you really mean business, you had better see the General Secretary of our union, Mr R S Thonsekar.'

Meanwhile Jain's management colleagues were becoming suspicious. 'The union people are brainwashing him,' his colleagues started to say - it

had become so normal for the management to keep the union at arm's length! 'If they can brainwash me,' Jain thought to himself, 'they are more capable of running the company than any of us.'

When Shashi Patel got wind of the disapproval of some of the managers, he called together the heads of departments and said to them, 'So far the management of this company has been following a wrong policy in dealing with the labour problem. Now I have realised the correct method. From now on the philosophy of the management will be to work with labour in equal partnership.'

Mr Jain went to see Thonsekar in the office of the National Union of Commercial Employees. He told him that Mr Patel desired to settle the long-standing dispute. For an hour Thonsekar fumed against Patel outlining all his grievances against him, while Jain listened in silence without any retaliation. Finally Jain said, 'Mr Patel would like to meet you.' In that office, on Mr Thonsekar's telephone, an appointment was fixed.

Opening the books to the Union

Shashi Patel held out his hand when they met the next day. 'It's been a long journey from your demonstrations against me to this. It has taken so long because I have taken so long to realise that I must pay the workers a fair wage. I'm as concerned about the workers as you.' The union secretary could hardly believe his ears. He replied, 'All I'm asking is, if the company makes a profit you should share it with the men.' Patel agreed. Then he commented, 'I never thought a unionist would be concerned about the company's profit. I thought you were only interested in waving red flags. Whatever you and Mr Jain agree on will be acceptable to me.' Turning to Jain, he added, 'Nothing in this company is confidential for Mr Thonsekar. Give him any information he would like, let him see every corner of the factory and all the company's books.'

Eight days of intensive work followed. The balance sheets and the correspondence of the previous five years were laid bare before the unionists. They inspected everything. Patel took them into his confidence about the true financial state of affairs. Finally a settlement was brought about to the satisfaction of all – the workers, the union and the management.

In the midst of these developments another startling event took place. Shashi and his wife, Kunji, invited Jain and Rodrigues, along with their wives, to accompany them to Panchgani for a weekend conference of Moral Re-Armament. During the conference in front of all present, Patel turned to Rodrigues and said, 'For years I did not like unions, and I did not like you. I wanted to get rid of you, waiting for you to make a mistake. But you were too efficient for me. I want to ask your forgiveness –

and I want to ask the forgiveness of Mrs Rodrigues,' turning to her. Visibly moved, Rodrigues said, 'I want to say that Mr Patel is a big man.'

Kunji Patel is a lively and vivacious lady, who says exactly what she thinks. 'My husband often told me not to buy rice and sugar on the black market, to set new standards for the country. But he insisted on having imported whisky for himself, which is smuggled,' she said, eyes twinkling. 'Since he has stopped drinking we have lost some of our friends. But, as my husband says, for whose sake do these people come – for imported whisky or for our company?'

Worthwhile investment

'Shashi does not care for jewellery, but I do. He feels it is the Indian woman's passion for jewellery that drives the menfolk to underhand dealings. If Indian women change, India would change, he often told me. I had been saving up for a long time to buy a diamond, but I gave the money for the expansion of the Centre at Asia Plateau. A new husband is a far better gift than any diamond!'

When Kunji asked the forgiveness of her mother-in-law for her resentment, her mother-in-law replied, 'You know, Shashi was my favourite son. Then you came along, and he didn't need me any more. I became so jealous of you.'

In assessing the results of the agreement in the company, Mr Thonsekar had this to say. 'You can give a man an excellent wage and yet put him in a cage. But the real battle is to give men the status due to them as human beings.' He and Mr Patel were working out a genuine partnership built on trust.

'Is it possible to be honest in business and survive, it could be asked. Shashi Patel's answer was emphatically, 'Yes, it is. And we tried to do that. I questioned my motives for wanting to make the story of my factory a success,' he continued. 'Am I doing it as a showman? For profit? Or because it is right? In the context of the needs of the nation, I honestly believed it was for the third reason.'

9

A New Culture for Industry

At the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the obstacles the British sometimes put in the way of industrial development (looking after their own industrial outlets came first!), industry in India was growing steadily, if much slower than many would have liked. One of the pioneer industrial entrepreneurs at that time was Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy Tata. He recognised that industry meant thinking for people as well as production. When he founded the steel plant at Tatanagar in Bihar and planned the layout of a new city, he was thinking of the welfare of the workers as much as the efficiency of steel making. Even now, nearly a hundred years later, the steel plant and the adjacent township of Jamshedpur are considered models of how things should be done. The housing facilities, the schools and hospitals, the sporting facilities all bear tribute to the vision of the founder of the Steel Plant.

By the year 1970, in addition to the Steel Plant, there were many other industrial plants in Jamshedpur. Perhaps one of the best of these was the automobile factory known as TELCO (Tata Engineering & Locomotive Company). Started in the first place with collaboration with Mercedes Daimler Benz of Germany, after 25 years partnership Telco now is independent of their German partner, designing, manufacturing and improving their own vehicles. At its height employing some 25,000 workers, they contributed a great deal to India's economic wealth. It stood out as a plant to be proud of.

Then trouble struck. The long record of good industrial relations deteriorated, despite the ideal conditions and good facilities. At about that time a young metallurgist joined the company and was posted to the foundry division. His name was Kiran Gandhi. He was a product of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) from Mumbai. He had done well in his studies. The fact that his father was the General Manager of a sister company of the Tata organisation in Jamshedpur made some think it helped

him to get his job, but no one denied that he was well qualified.

Something important happened to him during his time at the IIT, which was also important later on for TELCO. Following the inauguration of the Asia Plateau Centre, a number of student conferences were held there. Many of the students came from colleges in Mumbai and follow-up programmes were initiated in Mumbai itself. Kiran Gandhi took part in some of these. He accepted the practice of taking time each morning to listen to the inner voice. It was suggested to him that a radio gets clearer reception if the set is kept in good order with the electrical connections clean. In the same way to receive the best results from listening to the inner voice, measuring your life against absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love would help.

Honesty pays off

When Kiran began doing this, his conscience began to trouble him. During his studies he had made use of a microscope for his work. He had conveniently kept the microscope at home, where it still remained. He decided that even though it might endanger his position in the Institute he must make a clean breast of it and tell the authorities. He recognised that he could be expelled or in other ways punished for what he had done, but he took the risk. His honesty paid off, as the authorities applauded his telling them. It also left him lighter in his spirit and he realised that he had benefited greatly from his honesty.

Looking back to that time, it is interesting to note that while it takes real conviction to face up to change and make the first decisions, it is even harder to stick at it and maintain a commitment through thick and thin. This is where the frank and open friendship of others can make a real difference. At the same time as Kiran was at the IIT, there was a Kenya Indian studying in Mumbai. His name was Ashwin Patel. He had come to study in Mumbai and then stayed on for a few years to work with MRA before returning to Nairobi to work with his father in the family firm of Chartered Accountants. His arrival in Mumbai led to his being enlisted with other students who had been inspired by Rajmohan Gandhi's call for young Indians to join a moral revolution. 'I was making great speeches about corruption,' Aswin said, 'but realised that if I wanted to see a corrupt-free nation I had to deal with my own life.'

Smuggling!

He was thinking of his own smuggling activities. He reckoned up what he had brought into the country in addition to the bribes he had paid: Rs.1,100 in notes, Rs.500 in gold, suiting material to sell to students at five

times the price he had paid for it, cloves which could make anything up to 1000% profit. He sent the list to the Chief Collector of Customs in Mumbai. The customs officials were furious with him. It was not the fact that he had cheated that seemed to worry them most, but how to deal with the fact that he had owned up to doing so, as there were no procedures for this. Eventually he was penalised Rs.500 and given time to get the money together. While doing this he got a letter from the Customs, saying that they were reducing the fine to Rs.250 on account of his honesty.

Ashwin's father, who had been watching to see if his son's change lasted, offered to pay this sum. After this experience, he was in a position to help other students clean up their lives as well. And Kiran Gandhi was one of those whom he stood by at that time and became one of his best friends.

When Kiran arrived at Jamshedpur in 1973, he found that the foundry had had five strikes in the previous 11 months. One result of this series of disputes was that TELCO decided that in order to ensure production in the other divisions of the factory it would open another foundry at Pune, so that there would be an alternative source for obtaining castings. In December 1973 the MRA musical show called *Song of Asia* visited Jamshedpur. Many people saw the show, including a number from the TELCO factory. They were struck by the idea that difficult people could change and that when people change they can solve problems in families and between nations.

As Kiran got to know the men employed in the Foundry, he began to learn what lay behind the strikes. It was not really a matter of wages and conditions, which often lie behind strikes. It was really the result of competition between two union leaders, each wanting to run the union branch in the Foundry. Kiran wondered what would be the way to resolve this friction. He thought of people like Shashi Patel he had met at Asia Plateau and the stories he had heard of disputes being solved on the basis of trying to find 'What is right', rather than 'Who is right'.

Difficult people can change

Kiran went to see the Resident Director and told him about his experiences at Asia Plateau and the sessions he had attended there. He proposed that a few people, including V N Prasad and C P Singh, who were the two union rivals, be sent to Asia Plateau for one of their sessions. Perhaps, suggested Kiran, they might find something new. The Director agreed and unknown to the organisers of the session in Panchgani, the TELCO group arrived. After some four days, C P Singh spoke of his competitiveness and desire to run the Union and apologised there and then to his rival, V N Prasad. The apology, however, was not immediately accepted, as Prasad thought that this was a trick to get the better of him!

Nevertheless in the next couple of days, Prasad realised the apology was genuine and he accepted it and admitted that he too had been competitive, so was equally at fault. Before leaving Asia Plateau and returning to Jamshedpur, the two union leaders decided on a plan for their return home. They agreed that they would jointly call a meeting of the union members and tell them publicly what had happened at Panchgani. Everyone was intrigued that the two had called the meeting jointly, so the membership turned up in force to hear what they had to say. They were quite wonderstruck to hear the story of the apologies. And they appreciated their apology to the membership for the disruption of work which had resulted in the workers losing pay.

It was the start of something new, not only in the Foundry, but in the whole factory. The company decided to send more employees to Asia Plateau and to include senior management in the delegations they sent. There was a great impact on the spirit of the works as a result.

Among those affected by Kiran's actions was another employee called Chandreshwar Khan. Later when Kiran Gandhi was transferred to the TELCO Management Training Centre, in due course Chandreshwar Khan also joined the staff of this centre. In fact quite a team developed there, which resulted in a whole new series of training courses for the workers, as well as the setting up of Quality Circles in the company which led to many issues being resolved long before they became disputes.

Many senior managers also responded to the new industrial culture, which began to develop through these changes in people at all levels in industry. The various companies in the Jamshedpur area joined in a series of Industrial Seminars, where the results of change were pooled and new ideas were shared.

Some time before Kiran Gandhi had joined TELCO, something quite remarkable drew the attention of Tata management to the potential of Moral Re-Armament in tackling difficult situations. It was at the height of the Naxalite movement in Eastern India that Gopeshwar, the General Secretary of the Metalworkers Union, wrote to Asia Plateau in 1971 with a heartfelt plea. He told how arriving at the union office one morning he found blood trickling under the door. When he opened it he found three members of the office staff lying murdered.

Dealing with fanatical groups

In his letter he pleaded for help, knowing that there were people in Moral Re-Armament who had had experience in dealing with extreme and fanatical groups. He knew first hand of the kind of changes that had taken place in the Ruhr in Germany after the Second World War when the communists

had taken control of the mineworkers in the German coalfields. He knew also that when Moral Re-Armament had come into the Ruhr, the communists lost their control. Hence his request for help, as he realised that it was the Naxalites who were responsible for the death of his colleagues in the office. He recognised that the record of good industrial relations in Jamshedpur did not fit in with the Naxalite aim of overthrowing capitalism everywhere.

Those at Asia Plateau who received the request were in a quandary. How to respond to this plea when there did not seem to be anyone present who was specially qualified for the task in hand? When the request was shared with those present, two people volunteered to go to Jamshedpur to explore what the situation was and whether anything could be done. Some unexpected things happened when A S Ravindra Rao from Bangalore and Anthony Craig from Scotland went to make their enquiries. They met a number of people without seeming to find any clues as to how to proceed. Then they had a request from the headmaster of one of the High Schools in Jamshedpur to come and speak to his students about their work with MRA. Not expecting this to be in anyway connected with the matter in hand, they nevertheless accepted the invitation and spoke to the students. They outlined the fact that MRA stood for revolutionary change, giving examples of the kind of changes needed, including the concept of facing the challenge oneself first. The students gave them a good hearing. After their talk, a few students stayed behind and asked them if it would be possible to meet again and talk further. Ravi and Anthony agreed to this and a date was arranged.

When their meeting took place, the students were very careful to ensure that the door of the room was closed and that no one would come in while they were meeting. They asked Ravi further questions about the revolution and what was entailed. Ravi responded to their questions and then asked them what they were living for. They said they were also revolutionaries and they had taken a vow to be prepared to go to any lengths, including murder, to forward their revolution! They then admitted that they were all Naxalites. So quite unexpectedly by accepting the headmaster's invitation to speak in his school, they had found themselves in the midst of the Jamshedpur Naxalites.

The students responded to the challenge that Ravi and his friend gave them. They began to face up to their own quality of life – or lack of it – and to put things right. Some of them came to the next youth conference in Panchgani and decided to become part of MRA with as much passion as they had had for the Naxalite movement. Their change, and their rejection of the violence they had been part of, resulted in the collapse of the Naxalite cell in Jamshedpur. No longer need those going to work in the morning fear

the possibility of not returning to their families in the evening. Naturally people began to recognise that Moral Re-Armament had something special to offer to Jamshedpur – and India.

On the track

Jamshedpur was not the only place where evidence of this new kind of industrial culture was in operation. Another striking example was found in Calcutta. For most of his working life Satya Banerjee had been employed on Martin's Light Railway. This railway provided an important form of transport for the thousands of people who were commuters to Calcutta for their daily work. Although as the years went by it was somewhat starved of new equipment and rolling stock, it nevertheless provided a reliable form of conveyance for getting to and from work if one lived in the outlying areas of Calcutta. In addition to his working for the Company, Banerjee also organised, most unselfishly and with dedication, the workers on this railway.

Finally, this private railway could no longer make a go of the operation, as more investment was needed and they found themselves more and more old-fashioned. In 1971 they entered into discussions with the Indian Railway Board for their light railway to be amalgamated with the national rail network. Then came the question as to what would happen to the many employees of Martin's Light Railway if the amalgamation took place. Satya Banerjee, supported by a small but united band of the employees fought that all employees should either be offered a place in the national railways or be offered some suitable redundancy payment. They decided to appeal to the hearts of men in authority and try to win them over. 'Not a word of hate, not a cry of anger but compassion and co-operation' was their motto. It was not easy to keep to that motto all the time. They failed at times, but tried to return to the track they had chosen.

They went to Delhi and met with the Railway Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda, as well as with B S D Baliga, Chairman of the Railway Board and Sunderajan, the Finance Commissioner. Both the latter went out of their way when they saw the approach was different from expected. It was not an easy negotiation and there was much frustration, but one by one the doors were opened. In the long corridors of the Railway Headquarters in Delhi they spent many hours. Patiently Satya persisted in his conviction that all employees should be looked after until by the end of 1972 everyone was suitably settled. The last person to be placed was Banerjee himself. A remarkable tribute to his determination.

Sometimes answers to knotty problems come from unexpected sources, because anyone can be used as an instrument of cure. *The Economic Times* of Mumbai reported on 19 February 1971, 'This is perhaps the first time

that a major industrial dispute in this country has been solved by student persuasion.' This was reference to an earlier report in the paper on 15 February which read, 'The Standard Motor factory (of Madras), which has remained closed for over eight months, will reopen within the next ten days, following the signing of an agreement between management and workers today.'

The report referred to a 'classic' kind of dispute between two unions which had brought the factory to a close. The settlement was finally achieved through the efforts of the chairman and independent members of the wage board for engineering industries who recommended the basis of an agreement. But the final sentences of the report in *The Economic Times* are interesting. They read, 'The accord is a triumph for a dedicated band of college students belonging to MRA. The students, under the leadership of Prof Rangarajan, professor of psychology in a government college, had with patience and skill brought the management and the workers back to the negotiating table and supplied a compromise formula which formed the basis of the settlement. The Labour Minister and spokesmen of both management and workers had a word of praise for the significant contribution made by the students.'

Thinking beyond themselves

One might ask, what gave the students the idea of tackling the Standard Motors dispute? This indicates one aspect of MRA's work. During the period 1969 to 1971 the international musical show *Anything to Declare* visited Asia and Australia. There were two visits to India; one at the beginning of their tour and one at the end. On the second visit they spent some time in Chennai. The show caught the attention of many young people in the university colleges. Some of them were challenged to think beyond themselves and their own careers. This led to giving thought to the biggest industrial problem in the city at that time, namely the dispute at Standard Motors.

It should be added that as well as the students there was a lot of support from other parts of the city. One of these was from the Roman Catholic Archbishop. At the time he had an Australian nun working as his secretary, Sister Theodore by name. She was greatly captivated by *Anything to Declare* – perhaps some of the content of the show being Australian may have been an added draw. After it had moved on from Chennai, she was asked by the Archbishop to introduce those from Moral Re-Armament, who stayed on in the city, to the Catholic schools there. She did this with enthusiasm and it led to the schools asking for help in presenting to their students the choices that lay ahead in life. What are you living for? What

motivates you? were the kind of themes for the school assemblies which the MRA force were invited to present in the schools. This they did, not only with personal experiences and discussions, but also through songs and skits, which reached the students very effectively. It also led many of the principals and teachers of the schools to study new ways of carrying on this kind of training on their own. A former teacher who came to help with this programme, Ann Rignall from England, spent a year in Chennai meeting with teachers of one school. This resulted in a training manual for teachers, produced by Ann and her friend Joy Weeks under the title *The Way Ahead*.

God's plan for the world is many-faceted and all inclusive. In it the basic need for a change in people and a redirection of their lives reaches out to all areas of society without distinction.

No bribes for healthy business

Suresh Vazirani met MRA while studying engineering on a scholarship at Nagpur University. After graduation, he worked with MRA without salary for nine years. He helped conduct leadership training programmes for industry. In 1979, he along with a friend decided to go into business. They made the company Transasia, 'a reminder of Asia Plateau', according to Vazirani. At that time he was just 29 and Rs 250 was all he had. From that small beginning, the company he founded has become the market leader in the manufacture of high-tech blood diagnostic machines in India and a global player exporting to over 30 countries.

The company won two prestigious national awards for exports and quality in 2001. What is even more remarkable is that Suresh and his wife, Mala, achieved all this with total commitment to the values of MRA and uncompromising fight against corruption. On one occasion, Vazirani risked losing a DM20 million sale contract to Germany as a customs officer wanted a bribe to release vital imported components. Vazirani refused to pay the bribe and let the components lie in the warehouse for three months while he fought and won the case, just in time to secure the German contract.

When Transparency International launched the Business Principle for combating bribery in Mumbai, Vazirani was invited as the keynote speaker. He says, 'Corruption is a big roadblock to progress. Because of it everything goes wrong. Transasia can be an example. But many more companies need to be.' Talking about his own experience in building a business ethically, he says, 'It has been a wonderful learning, and at times tough, experience. But I know it is part of God's plan. So I never get worried about the problems. God gives the power and I am sure he gives the solutions too. Whenever I come to a junction, I find someone taking my hand and making sure I take the right turn.'

10

Delhi Harijans Demonstrate Gandhi's Vision

In the late 1960s the Harijan community in India numbered between eight and 10 crores. As everyone knows, Gandhiji tried to change the attitude of the whole country towards the so-called untouchables. Soon after independence, legislation was enacted to outlaw caste discrimination. Legislation is one thing. Living it out in society is another.

On the other side of the road from the MRA home in New Delhi at that time there was a Harijan colony with a population of about 15,000. The colony was called the Bhangi Basti (sweepers quarter) and had been made famous by Mahatma Gandhi because he held prayer meetings there and actually often stayed there when he was in Delhi.

Most of those who lived in the Basti were employed by the Delhi Municipality in various ways. A third of the population lived in small two room flats erected by the Municipality in the early 60s and these were supplied with electricity but no running water. Common bathrooms were shared by 20 to 30 families. The other two thirds lived in mud shacks or 'juggies' which were crammed together on a hill behind the flats. Among these there was one tap between about 200 families and no electricity. The area was lit by a few dim street lamps. Through it ran an open drain, fetid and stinking during the dry months and flooding the surrounding homes during the monsoon.

Meeting President Zakir Hussain

In the year 1967 the colony was notorious for having the worst crime record of any area in and around Delhi. Police had to patrol the area day and night. The distilling and drinking of illicit liquor was rampant, as was gambling, domestic violence and feuding. The colony was a mess.

Then suddenly it won a prize for being the best kept colony in the state.

Before that a national crime prevention week had been held and a group of young men from the colony were invited by the local police inspector, who had himself been beaten up on several occasions in the colony, to address a campaign meeting and tell the public about changes that had come to the community.

At about that time the same young men had been summoned to Rashtrapati Bhavan to meet the then President of India, Dr Zakir Hussain. They had been granted a ten-minute audience, but the President had kept them for three quarters of an hour! 'There are moments in a man's life he knows he'll never forget. This has been such a moment for me,' he said at the end of the interview.

So what lay behind these events?

Towards the end of August 1967 Rajmohan Gandhi had been asked by a social worker to meet a group of young men from the colony and tell them about MRA. The musical show *India Arise* had recently returned to India from a European tour and a few of the young people who had been in the show were in Delhi with Rajmohan, so he took them along with him to the community hall where the meeting took place. Philip, a young man from Britain, had just arrived in the city and went along too. Here is his account of what happened.

'It was a Saturday evening and the room was packed with young men and Rajmohan spoke to them and then others of us shared experiences of change from our own lives and we sang some songs to them. At the end they asked Rajmohan to come back again the following Saturday.

'Out of this group of young men emerged one high school student who was eager to discover more about MRA and he began to take steps of change in his life. His name was Ranjit Singh and he was the son of a municipal sweeper.

Singing songs to help people change

'Six months later, sitting in an armchair in the grandest drawing room in the land, Ranjit told the amazed President, "Sir, we are just ordinary Harijans but we want you to know that we feel as responsible as you do for our nation and her future and that our lives are given to seeing she finds her true destiny in the world." He then went on to tell the President how he had been to a meeting where he had heard people speak about building a new nation and a new world through building new men who accepted absolute moral standards for their lives and guidance from God. He had decided to apply this in his life and from there it had spread throughout the colony. He had been honest with his father about the way he had been spending his money - he earned extra money by singing at weddings and other

occasions. He had decided to stop singing songs that aroused the wrong kind of instincts in people but to sing songs that would help them to change instead.

'One of the first to catch on to Ranjit's new-found ideas was Babu Lal, a peon at a local school. Babu Lal told the President his story. Since his boyhood he had felt deeply the historical suppression of his people. Even by Harijan standards his had been a tough childhood, with little to eat at home and many of his family dying for lack of food or medical attention. When he was nine or 10 years old his friends had had to teach him how to laugh, he said. He was full of anger and bitterness and had few friends. He also had a fanatical hatred of higher caste Hindus and he could hardly open his mouth without spewing out this hatred.

'One day he was with some others from the colony in the sitting room of the MRA house. There was a time of quiet and then Sydney Cook from Britain turned to Babu Lal and asked what thoughts he had had. "He had already made a long bitter diatribe against the caste Hindus and I thought we would now get another one," said Cook. But he paused for a second or two and then said, "I thought of four men in the colony whom I hate and who I know hate me. I have been plotting to kill them. My inner voice told me to apologise to them for my hatred and ask them to be friends."

'Babu Lal described to the President how he had heard that when you point your finger at your neighbour there are three more pointing back at you and that if you wanted others to change the best place to begin is with yourself. He had resisted these ideas for a long time. But gradually he had come to see that his hatred of those whom he believed responsible for the suppression and exploitation of his people was as wrong as the treatment itself. He then told the President about the thought he had had to apologise to the four men, how he had resisted the thought for several days but had finally let all his friends in the colony know what he intended to do and sent messages to the men asking them to meet him at the colony tea shop at a certain time. When he got there he found them already waiting for him and he went up to them and said, "Brothers, please forgive me. I have hated you and wanted to kill you. I'm sorry. Can we work together as friends to change our colony and country?" To his great surprise they had accepted his apology warmly, had said sorry for their part in the feud and had pledged themselves to work with Babu Lal in the cleaning up of the community.

'I can witness that after this all bitterness melted from Babu Lal's life - and face,' Philip continued. 'Having become free of this bitterness he began immediately to think about the education of the children in the colony. He stopped shaving, saying that he wouldn't shave again until every child was

getting a proper education. But he did much more than just that. He started his own school in the colony.'

The fact was that most parents sent their children out to work during the day because the families needed the money, although there were places set aside for them in the local schools. Babu Lal couldn't change that, but he could provide lessons at the time when the children could attend – after work in the evenings. In an open space in the middle of the colony Babu Lal started teaching as soon as he got home from his ordinary job. It began with a small handful of children but rapidly grew to two or three hundred, so Babu Lal enlisted the help of friends. They taught them what they could of reading, writing and arithmetic. The syllabus also included 'listening to the inner voice'.

Money was collected for books and slates. Quickly the ideas about listening that Babu Lal and his friends taught the children began to percolate through the homes in the colony.

God can make you into a new man

Vajinder Singh was another of those who visited the President that day. He said, 'When I was a young boy some bigger fellows bullied me into taking some liquor. To begin with I resisted, but after a time I began taking it on my own and soon I was slave to it. I drank and gambled and was a bane on my family and community. One night, a few weeks ago, I was walking home after drinking a lot and knocked into someone on the way. I swore and threw him into the gutter. When I reached my house I heard someone walk in behind me. It was Mange Ram,' he said, pointing at another of the men sitting in the room. 'He said he had seen me knock the man down in the street and told me that I could become a new man if I applied absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, etc. and obeyed the inner voice. I was too drunk to understand what this was all about and went to sleep. In the morning I woke up very early and everything he had said to me came back very clearly and then I heard a voice which seemed to be saying to me, "I can make you into a new man if you give your life to me!" I realised it must have been God who had spoken to me. I got up and went to Mange Ram's house and told him I wanted to apologise to the man I had knocked down the night before. I asked him to come along with me as a witness. We went together to the man's house and I touched his feet saying that I was sorry for what I had done to him and vowed that I would never touch liquor again. And I never have.'

Strangling stray dogs

Chiman Lal was another who told his story to the President. He was a tall, fearsome looking man in his mid-thirties and when he told you that his job had been strangling stray dogs with his bare hands – for which he was paid fifty paise a tail by the Municipality – you could believe him.

‘I used to live in the centre of Delhi,’ he told the President. ‘During the day I gambled and at night I would beat up those who had won money off me and take it back, along with any other money they had on them. I would then spend it all on liquor.’ He was the most feared man in the colony and with good reason. Four of his children had died for lack of food and care. His remaining children and his wife had fled from the colony and returned to their village, where they lived in misery. For two years he had not bothered to see them.

Ranjit and his friends decided to try and change him. He said that when the drink was on him, people appeared like flies in front of him, but Ranjit and his friends appeared as even less. He scoffed at them, but in spite of himself he was very intrigued by their new way of life and by the fact that they were not going back to their old lives. Eventually he decided to give it a try. He wrote to his wife apologising for the way he had treated her and telling her of his decision to live differently. He asked her to come back to live with him. He then got himself a job working on the city dumping ground and worked hard. He stopped gambling and drinking and his family became reunited with him. Their little two-roomed flat radiated warmth and happiness.

What does God tell you, Mr President?

Towards the end of the interview with the President, Ranjit Singh asked permission to ask the President a question. He said, ‘Mr President, sir, do you ever listen to God?’ ‘Sometimes,’ replied the President. ‘Can I ask you another question, sir?’ asked the sweeper’s son. ‘What does God tell you when you listen to him?’ The President found it difficult to answer that one, so Ranjit said, ‘I have learned to listen to my inner voice, the voice of God, for an hour every morning of my life and to write down all the thoughts that God puts into my mind. These thoughts show me how to change myself and how I can help my family and friends to change. They take me out of myself to the whole colony where I live, so I begin to care for every last individual who lives there. They take me out of my colony to the whole of India and out of India to the farthest corners of the world which I never dreamed about, so I begin to think and care for them.’ The President of India did not know what to say!

11

Enriching Rural Poverty

Asia Plateau has a wonderful setting overlooking, as it does, the Valley of the Krishna River before it sets out on its long journey across India to go into the sea in the Bay of Bengal. But over the other side of the Tableland, which lies behind Asia Plateau, there is an equally fine view looking down the Kudal Valley. It was in this valley in 1968 that *Himmat Weekly* found and interviewed the 'Farmer of the Year'. His name was Maruthi Jadhav.

The Kudal Valley has some very fine farming land, some of which is very fully exploited to produce abundant crops. But other fields seem to be almost neglected or only partially farmed. Maruthi Jadhav was one of the thousand or so people who streamed through the gates of Asia Plateau for the inauguration of the Centre on 20 January 1968. But he was not the only one from the Kudal Valley who came that day. Phyllis Bockock is a Canadian who had come to India to help develop the kitchen and catering at Asia Plateau at the very start. Her recollections of that opening day are worth recording. 'An unforgettable occasion for me as a farmer's daughter and now a farmer's wife was seeing and receiving hundreds of village school children walking 20 km or more, each carrying a cloth bag with a kilo of rice as a gift to the Centre. It brought to mind then, and still does today, the fact that 'there is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed'. Surely the economy of an unselfish spirit.' Most of the children who brought the rice that day came from rural families, whose life is often insecure and dependant on the quality of the monsoon rains.

Green revolution

In the days following the opening of the Centre, a number of the conference participants visited the Kudal Valley to see things for themselves and to try to understand better rural India. They began to recognise the 'green revolution' which had resulted in India's food production keeping pace with India's pop-

ulation growth. Did that mean that everything went smoothly in rural India? The visitors began to understand not only some of the agricultural and technical problems, but also the human problems in the villages of India.

Maruthi Jadhav himself illustrated one typical problem – family life. Visiting Asia Plateau and learning about MRA resulted in his beginning the practice of listening to the inner voice. One day he turned up at a meeting at the Centre accompanied by his elder brother. In the course of the meeting there was a time of quiet, after which the floor was open for anyone to express their thoughts. Maruthi stood up and pointing to his brother made a heartfelt apology to him for his attitude to him in the past. After some hesitation to ascertain whether Maruthi was sincere, his brother responded and they became reconciled. Later a similar reconciliation took place between Maruthi and his younger brother, who did not enjoy village life and had enlisted in the Police Service.

The successful outcome of his apology to his brother perhaps gave Maruthi confidence in the fact that this 'inner voice' seemed to bring results. He thought about how he farmed his land and recognised that he was lazy and did not make the most of what he had. In fact the family had divided the land between the brothers because they could not work together. At about that time a young man from the Agricultural Department had visited Maruthi's village to offer expertise, new crops and new ways of farming. Maruthi's response to this young man was to question whether he knew anything, as he had hardly had time to experience farming. Was it right, Maruthi wondered, to take the risk of trying new ideas proposed by such a person?

This was where he decided that perhaps the inner voice might give him some guidance. When he listened, he had the reassurance to go ahead and to follow the advice given. He tried the new seeds and the new ideas and they proved successful. As a result it encouraged other people in his village to do the same the following year, so everyone got the benefit. So he recognised that the inner voice helped with technical problems as well as human relations.

A heart dried up with selfishness

One of the places visited by Frank Buchman and the international team in 1953 was Bangalore. The headmistress of a missionary school came to see the play and to meet Frank Buchman. Her name was Mary and the reason she wanted to meet him was because some thirty years earlier she had met him at a conference and he had helped her over a difficult decision in her life. In the district where Mary's school was, there had been a famine for seven years running. The government had asked for volunteers to run gruel centres in their village of Madanapalle to feed the people. Among those

who responded were the communist leader, Ananda Reddi, who came day after day, and Mary.

Every day she greeted Ananda. No response. But slowly she made a friend of him and eventually invited him to come to Bangalore to see the play *Jotham Valley*. It is about a farmer who shared his water with a neighbour at a time of drought. It made a deep impression on Ananda. John Faber, one of those who had been with Buchman's party in India and had stayed on, met Ananda. With others they suggested that Ananda should join the Indian delegation going to the MRA Conference in Caux that summer. The Conference did not seem to make much impression on him. But after the conference the Indian group went on to Britain, where Ananda was taken on a visit to Peter Howard's farm. Later he told John what happened. 'I was up early one morning walking around the farm when I saw a man washing his pigs. I was astonished and asked the man why he did it. Because I love my pigs, was the reply.'

That made Ananda think. He owned a few acres of land outside Madanapalle, but had not bothered to work it as he had been too busy with his communist work. On his return to India he began to cultivate this land. He had a spring well, and could water his paddy even during the continuing drought. He got the loan of a pump, and his wife created a shelter where he could live by the well. He somehow kept the pump going and was able to water his crop. His neighbours asked him to channel them some of his water. He asked John, 'What should I do? Should I share my water, or not? Then I had the clear thought, 'Unless your heart dries up with selfishness, the water in the well will not dry up.' A simple thought.

On the basis of how much land each neighbour had, he gave them their share of water each 24 hours, keeping only the proportion due to his acreage for himself. The water in the well went down and down, but never dried up. 'Later John Sadler from Australia and I were invited to a harvest festival in the village,' said John Faber. 'While on our way home we went through another area where there was one brilliant patch of green, surrounded by dry, dead paddy fields, where a farmer had failed to share his water, unlike Ananda Reddi.'

Village of joy

Across in Eastern India something similar was happening. Mike Smith of the international magazine *For A Change* went to find out what was happening. Below I quote from what he wrote:

Some 20 kilometres east of the steel city of Jamshedpur in Bihar stands the village of Dorkasai. It is not so many years ago the entire area was a forest where tigers stalked their prey. Among unwary villagers death was not

uncommon. The forest has long since been cut down for firewood. Past the fields, heavy electric locomotives trundle their trains slowly along their way to Calcutta, four hours to the east.

Dorkasai, population 1,245, with its 143 dwellings scattered among copses of trees over several hectares, is an Indian village of joy. Its vivid green paddy fields, small lakes, canals and crops are a sharp contrast to the sun-baked fields around. The villagers of Dorkasai are pioneering a farming development that is transforming the local economy and lifting them out of poverty. It is not unique, of course. The green revolution in Indian agriculture has benefited thousands of other villages. But Dorkasai has not depended on the expertise of agricultural scientists with hybrid cash crops. Rather, it has blossomed thanks almost entirely to the determination of the villagers themselves.

And thanks to a plentiful supply of that most precious commodity: water. Today the village boasts 35 small reservoirs, or ponds, and 150 in the surrounding area. They support fish farming and irrigation: Crops are plentiful throughout the year. The income they provide makes it possible for the villagers to stay on the land rather than join the mass migration to the big cities in search of work and bread.

The water that has made Dorkasai's development possible has not always been so abundant. Ten years ago there was no development to be seen. The monsoon would come in the summer, soaking the parched land, so that the year's one good crop could grow. But for the rest of the year the earth would dry rock solid and unyielding. And if the monsoons failed in those days, people were threatened with starvation. In Dorkasai the villagers found the solutions for themselves by digging out large ponds that retain the monsoon rains.

It all began with one man. Shailendra Kumar Mahato is an adivasi, a tribal. He is a gentle, quiet man, whose large brown eyes and weather-beaten face reflect both wisdom and suffering. When he smiles it is as if the sun has come out from behind the monsoon clouds. 20 years ago, his dream was to escape village life and become an 'officer', a bank clerk in the city. Fresh out of school in 1972, Shailendra had secured a place at the Jamshedpur Workers' College to study commerce at evening classes. It would be his first visit to a city and he pinned his hopes on it. He had great faith that the people there would want to help and encourage him.

His dream was soon shattered. Far from welcoming him, the Bihari students ragged him. Outside the campus one evening, 15 to 20 of them surrounded him and pulled off his dhoti, leaving him standing on the pavement in his underwear. 'Run to the truck,' they teased him. He had been in the city for only six weeks and the experience broke his heart.

Dreaming of revenge

Humiliated, he returned to his village and immediately joined a militant adivasi political party. Hatred burned in him and at night he lay awake dreaming of revenge. He led the agitation against the Biharis who were encroaching onto adivasi land and burnt down two Bihari homes. He organised meetings to express a policy of hate towards these people. He became a member of the Jharkhand Party and became secretary of the party for one district.

With his ambition to succeed in the city dashed, his political activity became all-consuming. He gave little time to his wife, Sushila. Nor, he admits, did he give any importance to her opinions. There was perpetual tension in the family. In 1982 he was sent to Jamshedpur to attend a seminar in place of a cousin, who had refused to attend. The seminar dealt with the Gandhian philosophy of listening to the inner voice of one's conscience. At first Shailendra found nothing new in what was being said. He felt he was a praying man and did not think he needed any change. After all, wasn't he already giving unselfish leadership to an exploited class? But after four days listening to the speakers he began to understand something new – the idea that there were objective moral absolutes by which one could measure one's life.

Shailendra felt his inner voice speaking to him. He thought of his wife, and how much he needed to apologise to her. He thought of the Biharis for whom he held so much hatred. Now his inner voice was asking him to forgive. And he thought of the manager who had refused him a job in community services even though the company boss had promised it.

Change yourself first

Shailendra left the seminar determined to make amends. At first Sushila would hardly trust him. 'Go and change yourself before you try to change me,' she retorted. With time and patience his wife relented. And as Shailendra devoted more time to his family the atmosphere at home improved. But they were in financial straits and Shailendra urgently needed a job. At the seminar he had made friends with a development officer, S N Singh, and his wife, Pummy. Singh, from a village background himself, had risen to become Chief Metallurgist at Tata Engineering & Locomotive Company (TELCO) and was now seconded to their rural development arm. As the two men talked, they came up with the idea of digging village ponds for fish and irrigation.

But there was still another hurdle to overcome. It was one thing to apologise to his wife. But it was another to apologise to his political opponent. Thakurdas Mahato led a rival adivasi party and the two men were at

loggerheads. When one tried to do something for the development of the village, the other would mock it. Their rivalry was blocking any progress. Shailendra was in a dilemma. How could he befriend a man to whom he had only spoken with abuse. Plucking up his courage he visited Thakurdas at his home, accompanied by three friends, 'for moral support'. He needn't have worried. Thakurdas welcomed him with open arms and as they talked Shailendra asked forgiveness for his rivalry.

The other villagers were sceptical when Shailendra started digging out the first pond in 1984, just before the monsoon arrived. S N Singh advanced him a loan of Rs.1000 to stock the pond with fish. By that December, Shailendra had earned Rs.1300 from fish sales. From then on there was no looking back. Others followed Shailendra's lead. The project could not have come at a more opportune moment. Near Dorkasai, a big canal was under construction. The building contractors needed soil for its banks. The villagers agreed to give them the soil in return for help in digging out the ponds. 'This is the way that God intervened,' commented S N Singh.

Ultimately India's rural development will depend on the villagers themselves, believes S N Singh. 'Throwing money at development is not the whole answer. We Development Officers cannot do the development. The people themselves will do it around them. Crucial to understanding the process of development is the development of people.' That, he says, is the significance of Shailendra's story.

Transforming society through agriculture

Arun Chavan was brought up by a communist uncle, who was a militant atheist. He absorbed many of his uncle's Marxist principles, particularly in regard to concern for the underdog and the down trodden. But he was not satisfied by the atheism, and became an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, espousing Gandhi's ideals.

He came from Kolhapur in Maharashtra state, and took a master's degree in English Literature at the University of Bombay. He taught English in colleges for five years, and later served as a Controller of Examinations and Assistant Registrar in Marathawada University, Aurangabad and Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He gave up his academic career in 1969 and founded a charitable trust called Verala Irrigation and Development Project Society based in Sangli, where he lived. It was run by a committee of farmers in the District, and he became its Chief Executive and Honorary Secretary. His wife also lectured and they have two daughters.

In March 1978, Dr M S Pawar, former vice chancellor of Rahuri Agricultural University, organised an agricultural conference at Panchgani. Arun attended the Conference and asked Pat Evans and other farmers

participating from Britain to come and see the work he was doing in Sangli, south of Panchgani. So some went there a few days later. They were duly impressed with the work being done on water conservation, tree planting, land reclamation etc. But the striking thing was that Chavan and his friends were aiming at a complete transformation of society through agriculture, medicine and education.

When the British farmers returned to Britain, they formed a farm group in north Herefordshire to pursue development questions. They called themselves the British Farmers for International Development and it was natural to make the link with Arun Chavan's work in Sangli their starting point. Since then there has been the closest liaison, with visits to Sangli at least every two years, while Arun Chavan has been to Herefordshire and also to attend Lord Plumb's World Food Conference in Brussels in 1988. The Verala Society has espoused a vast number of initiatives, some of which have fallen by the wayside, but many have prospered.

Arun Chavan has always been strongly concerned with motivation, and has endeavoured to build teamwork in his varied undertakings, while keeping out of the limelight himself. In the speech he made to one Farmers' Dialogue, he said, 'With ample justification MRA aspires to be a world movement. Its emphasis on morality is, or should be, the very essence of being. Its ambit gathers unto itself humanity as a whole, and indeed its relativity to all creation. Moral rectitude is a principle which has universal validity, transcending all space and time.'

A sense of harmony with nature

In February 2001 Chavan attended an *International Farmers' Dialogue* at Asia Plateau, one of a series of such dialogues held in different countries over the last few years. These dialogues set out, through farmer to farmer links, a common purpose for agriculture world wide. In Panchgani it brought together the cultivator and the agricultural scientist, the tenant farmer and the wholesaler. Perhaps among the 11 nations represented in this dialogue the most distinguished person present was the father of India's Green Revolution, Dr M S Swaminathan. In inaugurating the dialogue he said, 'The beauty of this place instils in you a sense of harmony with nature and with each other. I think this is the purpose of this particular dialogue. There can be no better place to hold such a discussion than this one. What I would like to see from Asia Plateau is a Sarvodaya farming. Sarvodaya was a term coined by Gandhiji and it means a win-win situation for all. We are meeting in a place which confers upon us a moral authority as it is a place known for its ethical considerations in life. If we marry ethics with technology and economics, we can make great progress.'

12

Hope In The Cities

One of the great headaches for cities round the world, including for India's cities, is the question of how to manage their growing urban population. How to restrict them from growing too big is one problem? How to provide sufficient services is another? And how to ensure peace among the urban population, which may be from different faiths, different regions and different language groups. No doubt the city authorities ought to do much more. But can individuals and groups take more initiative in anticipating problems and settling them peacefully?

Moral Re-Armament has taken a number of initiatives of change in this area and in this chapter we will enumerate some of the actions taken. There is no one blueprint which provides a common way forward and this is perhaps where MRA is well equipped, because nothing is set in concrete and each situation needs fresh inspiration. And where human wisdom has failed, God provides ideas to those who are open and ready to listen.

Early in its life as a training and conference centre a letter was received at Asia Plateau from Mr Dharamsey Khatau, the then chairman of the Khatau Mills, at that time one of Mumbai's premier textile mills. In his letter the chairman asked whether, now that the Centre was established, arrangements could be made for all his employees to receive training in Moral Re-Armament? It was quite an undertaking, considering that there were some 5000 employees!

No discredit for failure

At Asia Plateau this request was considered by those in charge and they were very doubtful about the feasibility of responding positively. At that time there was no experience among those at the Centre to provide industrial training. How could it be handled and who would do it? And anyway the Centre was hardly sufficiently running to look after such a big proposition. However some were keen at least to have a trial run. One person put forward the sug-

gestion that perhaps this was a door for future operations which God was opening. It would not be good to reject such an opportunity. Eventually Niketu Iralu, then at the Centre, proposed that those who were for having a go should be given the go-ahead to try. And if the experiment was a failure, it would be no discredit.

So on that basis a positive answer was given to the Khatau Mills with the following suggestions. Firstly that as this was a new venture for the Centre, it had been decided to hold three industrial seminars in successive months and if they were beneficial, more could be fixed. Secondly it was asked whether the Khatau Mills would have any objection if other industrial companies were given the chance to take part also, as having more than one company provided some cross fertilisation of ideas. The Company agreed and the figure of 75 participants was set as a suitable number for each Seminar. It was also requested that the Company send participants from different levels of the organisation from senior management to shop floor worker.

As a result of the way these three experimental seminars were received by the participants, some further dates for seminars were fixed. This was in the year 1973. With some alterations in the structure of the programme and with a suitable change of name to encompass participants from a field wider than merely industry, the courses have been renamed *Courses for Effective Leadership and Living* and continue to this day.

The newest of the Khatau Mills was situated at Borivli. It was very modern and considered an example of the best technology. The manager of the mill, who came to Asia Plateau in one of the first groups from the mill, was Mr P T Shashtri. Following his attendance along with some of the employees in the mill, a team began to develop taking responsibility for all that went on in the mill. One of the workers who went to Panchgani was Gajanan Sawant. He is a self-starter and was one who took initiative to bring change in his locality. In this way industrial training spilled over to provide hope in a city.

Unexpected solutions

Sawant lived in an area named Devipada near to the Western Express Highway north of Mumbai Airport. There are 50 chawls in the area, some with up to 25 families living in each of them. Amenities such as light, regular water supply, sanitation or even approach roads are very limited. There are two wells which supply water from the end of the monsoon till about January. After that time the people have to walk long distances to get water. Some living in that area work, as Gajanan does, in the Khatau Mills or in nearby factories while others are adhivasis who earn a living cutting and selling firewood.

It was during his attendance at the seminar at Asia Plateau that Gajanan

discovered that unexpected solutions to problems can spring from the whispers of the still small voice that speaks in every heart. He learnt to listen to this voice. Plans began to take shape in his mind.

Every December the well nearest to Sawant's chawl gets silted up. The villagers talked about cleaning it but nobody did anything because they felt it was the job of the landlord. Sawant had the thought to act, so he bought a bucket and rope. He took a day off work and lowered himself into the well. He began to dig. Friends watched. But next day many joined him and the work continued for a month. Every evening after work they would be seen digging. They realised that they needed more help. Sawant collected money from the chawl dwellers. With the Rs. 500 collected they employed some labourers. The walls of the well were broken, so they obtained materials, which the municipality provided free of charge and the labourers repaired the walls and cemented them.

Devipada is owned by five men, who had given Gajanan permission to work on the well. When they saw the work completed and the well giving water for a longer period, one of the owners came to see him and said, 'I've been thinking about the water supply in the village and how you have been cleaning up the well. I was very impressed by the discipline and honesty with which you all worked. I would like to help you.'

So Sawant and his friends decided to collect Rs. 2 from every family and raise Rs.1500. Then they asked the owners to give Rs. 3,500 so that both wells could be deepened by another four feet. Their next plan was to approach the municipality for permission for an extension of the water pipe, which is the other side of the highway. In this way their dream of having four or five taps installed in the area with ensured water supply became a reality.

The next thought Sawant had in his morning quiet was, 'Why not start a school here in my chawls?' Families were not keen on their children going to school because the municipal school is situated on the other side of the highway, crossing which is hazardous for small children and there have been many accidents. The result is that children hang around during the day and get into bad habits like gambling. He called a meeting of the chawl elders to explain his idea and by the end of the meeting he had been promised Rs.190. With help from others they erected a 12 ft by 8 ft structure from wood and tarpaulin. The Bal Mandir had calendars with pictures and alphabets hanging on either side of the blackboard. The walls were mud and dung plaster and there was a bench and a few chairs in the room.

Sawant next went to the nearby Jain temple, whose managing trustees also ran a school. He asked for their help in providing a teacher. At first reluctant, when they heard what the villagers had already done for themselves, the trustees offered a teacher for six months. Fifty children started attending the school.

Developing a community spirit

In addition to all this they decided to construct a path from the highway to the chawls, which the villagers did with their own labour. Then they applied for permission to construct a proper 10 foot wide road. They cleared the ground so that in the monsoon there were no pools of stagnant water and they cleared away the rubbish. In front of Sawant's house they spread the surplus soil excavated from the well to make a volleyball court which is used in the evenings, thus developing a community spirit. Another constructive thing that was done was the purchase of a sewing machine by Gajanan's wife, thus providing some extra income through doing tailoring jobs.

One might ask how Gajanan manages to collect money from people who do not have a lot to spare. One reason is that he has accounted for every paisa that has been collected, so people trust him. Another is that he himself gives money every month towards the cost of running the school, as well as towards Asia Plateau. When asked how he managed this he replied, 'I used to spend Rs. 45 a month in smoking. My inner voice told me to cut it out. So that sum is a saving.' As a result he has also been able to help others with similar habits that have gripped them. One who worked in the mill with him was in debt on account of heavy drinking. He was paying 60% interest to the moneylenders on the sum borrowed. Sawant helped him give up drinking and then suggested he ask the company to give him a loan at a much lower rate of interest, for paying off the debt to the moneylender, which he did. 'We are not going to continue to live in the ditch of poverty,' says Sawant. 'We are going to do something ourselves to better the lot of our people.'

There is an awakening in ordinary people. They are no longer prepared to tolerate the intolerable. Impatience is bursting forth. Either it will take the form of violence, or it will explode in initiatives such as those taken by Gajanan Sawant.

Answer communal divide

Dr S K Ramachandran Nair, a devout Hindu and an eminent neurosurgeon from Kerala, met MRA while he was a student in Trivandrum. Later he became superintendent of the large Government Hospital in Trivandrum. He writes how he felt and what he did when he saw the demolition of Babri Masjid live on TV. 'I could not sleep that night. I prayed and hoped the Muslim community will forgive us Hindus for this atrocity. I wrote a letter to the editor of *Kerala Kaumudi*, the leading local newspaper saying, "Wrongs done in the past do not get corrected by repeating them in the present." I quoted some beautiful verses from *Adhyatma Ramayanam* where sage Valmiki says Rama does not require any earthly dwelling. Rama dwells in the hearts of those who are happy, contented, free of hatred, who love all the crea-

tures in the world, who love and serve God with peace and equanimity, devoid of pride, lust, laziness, attachments or aversions, who will diligently perform their duties without being attached to selfish rewards, who live in total surrender and submission to the will of God. Only the heart of such a person is a fit place for Rama to reside.

‘It was past midnight when I finished the letter. I went on my scooter to the newspaper office and handed over my letter to the desk. It was published in the next morning’s paper which carried on the front page details of the mosque demolition. That whole night I sat up unable to sleep. I had the thought that I should meet Haji Abdul Gaffar Maulavi the Chief Imam of the most important mosque in Trivandrum. So at five o’clock in the morning I went to see him and told him I had come solely to ask for his forgiveness and gave him a copy of my letter to the editor of the newspaper. He read it twice. Visibly moved, he embraced me and asked me to sit by his side. Then he took out the Holy Qurân and read some verses, which proclaimed that the purpose of religion and faith in God is to have peace among men. He thanked me and said he will remain my lifelong friend. That morning in the mosque he made a passionate plea for maintaining restraint and peace and fortunately there were no violent outbursts among the Muslims in the city of Trivandrum. He now conducts a regular programme in one of popular TV channels explaining the universal truths in Islam stressing on the Universal Brotherhood of all mankind.’

Facing pelting stones and fire

One striking example of violence in Mumbai took place in 1992. It was in December of that year that the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya – a historic site of conflicting Muslim and Hindu interests – was demolished by Hindu militants. It had repercussions in communities all over India, including in Asia’s biggest slum at Dharavi, just outside Mumbai, where many atrocities were committed and it looked as if the violence would spread. One of those who tried to intervene in Dharavi was a middle-aged Hindu lady called Sushobha Barve. She confronted an older man in Dharavi, who told her he could not control the young men, with the words, ‘I accept that you feel you cannot control them, but I will not accept that you can say to them, “go and do what you like”.’ There was a stunned silence. He took his words back, and Barve telephoned the local police station and suggested an army ‘white flag march’ through the area, which they agreed to. It was the beginning of establishing an informal citizens’ committee and the involvement of the Police and the state government in positive action.

When a second wave of riots erupted in January 1993, hundreds of families fled in panic from Dharavi. One evening as Sushobha tried to stop a

family leaving, a woman said to her, 'You don't have to face the pelting stones and the fire.' Sushobha, who had been returning each night to the relative security of her own home each night, felt chastened. 'I had no moral right to urge people to stay if I was not prepared to do so myself.' So she moved in with a Muslim family for six nights. Hardly anyone left that neighbourhood. On another occasion she stayed with a Hindu family where fear and tension had run high.

For Sushobha Barve this was not a spur of the moment action. It was the result of many years experience of communal reconciliation and healing. It had started when she faced up to her prejudice and suspicion of a Muslim classmate at college. When she apologised to her she found a new sensitivity to the scars carried by the Muslim minority since the partition of India in 1947.

In 1984 the issues were traumatically focused for her when she was travelling on a train with a friend. It was the day that Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. Angry people stopped the train and came through looking for Sikhs. They dragged out two from Sushobha's compartment, assaulting her in the process. Outside on the side of the track, they set the two Sikhs on fire as the train left.

Three months after this event, Sushobha traced the men and found they had survived the fire. She visited them and expressed her sorrow at not being able to protect them. It established contacts with Sikhs across the country. She expressed her real regret and pain, as well as her alienation. One of them said to her, 'I hope you will always be open to the suffering of others, no matter whose suffering it is.'

Since then she has made a trip to Bihar after devastating Hindu-Muslim riots, and several trips to Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, taking others with her. 'Ordinary people need the chance to experience one another's warmth and hospitality,' she says. 'It is so much harder than whipping up feelings of hostility.'

More recently she helped initiate the establishment of the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation with the express purpose of helping to resolve and heal conflicts whether within the country or with other countries. She believes this is the task for every citizen wherever they may be. Kashmir has been one of the first focuses of the Centre's attention.

She has written a book, *Healing Streams – bringing back hope in the aftermath of violence*, giving her experiences. This was published in 2003 by Penguin Books India (P) Ltd.

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Creating Harmony Worldwide

‘Asia Plateau may lie in India,’ said an Indonesian youth leader who visited it, ‘but it belongs to the world.’ Certainly people from all over the world have come to conferences and meetings at Panchgani. Perhaps none more significant than a delegation who came in 1970 from Malaysia.

13 May 1969 was a black day for Malaysia. It was the day when racial riots between the Muslims and Chinese broke out after the Federal general elections. The communal climate was so bad that by the end of the year a book was on sale in the bookstalls describing the riots and predicting that by 1971, when the British forces would have been pulled out of Southeast Asia, Malaysia could be in the grip of a second communist insurrection. He referred to leaders of UMNO extremists (UMNO was the party in government at the time) as being behind the scenes and indicated that unless the influence of such ‘ultras’ was checked, Malaysia would have little chance of recovery. He mentioned specially two by name – Syed Ja’afar Albar and Syed Nasir. Let the story be taken up in the words of the late Theo Chan Bee of Singapore.

Courageous fighters

‘During the long curfew after the riots, I had wondered about my friends, Tan Sri Syed Ja’afar Albar and Tun Syed Nasir. If they had been actively involved, then the riots would soon spread to other parts of the country. From what I had known of them they were courageous, open political fighters, but they sincerely believed in promoting inter-racial goodwill and co-operation. I discovered in fact that far from inciting others, Albar actually tried to dissuade the Selangor UMNO leaders from staging their counter demonstration which had triggered off the riots. He had warned them on the phone that things could get out of control.

‘When order had been restored,’ Theo continued, ‘I called on Albar at

his home. We discussed the riots and the steps which should be taken to prevent a similar tragedy. At that time, I received an invitation from Rajmohan Gandhi for some delegates from Malaysia and Singapore to attend a conference at Asia Plateau, Panchgani. The theme of the conference was, "For People Who Care". That struck me as being relevant to the needs of Malaysia.

I suggested to Albar that he could take advantage of the lull in politics to go to Panchgani. He agreed to go. The Secretary General of the Malaysian Chinese Association, Kam Woon-Wah, went too. The Federal Auditor General of Malaysia, Mohammed Zain bin Ahmad, joined us a few days later. There were four of us from Malaysia and Singapore, with about 150 other delegates from India, Ceylon, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Africa and America.

After the first meeting, I could see that my colleagues from Malaysia were heartily enjoying themselves, listening to the witty songs, the melodious music, and the talks given by some of the delegates. All met and mixed together freely. There were Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, as well as atheists. In the evening there were films, depicting problems of race and class, in factories and home, with the solutions dramatically and realistically brought to a climax.

Removing grievances

One day it was decided that there should be a full morning session devoted to talks on Malaysia. Kam Woon-Wah spoke from the non-Malay point of view. He described the problems in a spirit of goodwill. Then Tan Sri Albar presented the Malay point of view without any sign of anger, bitterness or hatred. They both agreed that a constructive solution must be found to remove the grievances on both sides. I described the new approach in 1946-48 which enabled both the Malay and Chinese leaders to co-operate with sincere goodwill to solve their common problems as between friends who cared for each other.

Later Albar told me that as a Muslim he had learned many things from the conference. His stay at Panchgani had been like a whip to awaken him from his deep sleep. In his farewell address he suggested that more politicians be invited to Asia Plateau, so that they could learn to solve the problems of their country.

Soon after their return to Kuala Lumpur, Tan Sri Albar, Kam Woon-Wah and Theo Chan Bee called on the Finance Minister and leader of the Malaysian Chinese Association, Tun Siew-Sin, to report on what they had seen and heard at Panchgani. Albar came into Siew-Sin's office like a refreshing breeze. He began laughingly by saying, 'Tun, you too must go to

Panchgani. It is a wonderful place, and I learned many things from the conference. The most important is this – you cannot heal the deep wounds and bitterness on both sides by economic means alone. The more you give, the more they want, both sides. Soon they ask for too much, and you cannot give them what they want. And then they both attack you. We are all selfish. We must find the cure to our selfishness. And this we found at Panchgani.’

A philosophy of healing

It was a wonderfully concise statement of the root cause of conflicts in the world and of the new philosophy of healing which Albar had found at Panchgani. And Tun Tan Siew-Sin welcomed it at once.

Albar and other colleagues had invited the MRA musical revue *Anything to Declare*, with its timely message of goodwill and reconciliation, to visit Malaysia in May on their way to Australia. They wanted the Finance Minister to help with this. He promised to play his part, provided Albar cleared it also with Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister, with the Home Minister and other government leaders. They formed a committee of hosts which included Tun Syed Nasir, who had also been to Panchgani. He in turn approached the Prime Minister, who agreed to be Patron and attend the premiere at the Town Hall on 15 May 1970.

The welcome of members of *Anything to Declare* to Kuala Lumpur was given encouraging press coverage, particularly that at the airport they presented a song in Bahasa Malaysia, the national language. The press reports coming as they did the day before the anniversary of the riots a year before gave a very positive focus of attention to the public. Somebody commented that the visit could not be more timely because of the rumours circulating of possible further acts of violence.

The writer of the gloomy prospects for the future of Malaysia admitted that if ultras like Albar and Syed Nasir could change, then the premises on which he had built his pessimistic prophecies were no longer valid. Later developments confirmed this assessment. Despite attempts to cause division and disruption, Albar and his friends held firm to the unity they had found. In 1976, for instance, Albar received a threat that unless he kept quiet his enemies were going to kill him. His response was, ‘If it is recorded in Allah’s book that I must die at the hands of my enemies, so be it. But I am not prepared to be silent, because of fear of anybody.’ At the time of his death the following year, the Singapore *Straits Times* printed across the editorial page, ‘No other UMNO leader was more outspoken. No one else has got his style, nor his status to do what he did so successfully. He called a spade a spade, yet he was never revengeful. In matters of race and religion he was tolerant. He was active in the Moral Re-Armament movement.’

Theo Chan Bee visited many countries and spoke of what has been described as 'The Malaysian Miracle'. In America he met one person shortly to become President of the United States. After listening intently to the story of reconciliation of Albar and the others, this person commented, 'Certainly, this is a new approach.' Perhaps not enough credit has been given to Theo Chan Bee for his part as 'a bridge builder'. For himself, Theo always said that he would wish to be remembered as such a bridge-builder. Certainly for those who were at Asia Plateau when the Malaysian delegation came that crucial year, that is the way that he is remembered.

Taking stock and seeking guidance

Here surely is one of the key elements about MRA. First we must take stock of the situation we are in and then seek guidance from the Almighty about anything we can do to bring an answer. There are many instances which could be given of people taking action in similar ways. One that springs to mind is the story of Professor Omkar Nath and Mrs Khem Lata Wakhlu. On 4 September 1991 the Wakhlus were abducted by Kashmiri extremists. Omkar Nath Wakhlu was at the time Principal of the Regional Engineering College, Srinagar, while his wife was a former Minister of Tourism for Jammu and Kashmir. They were held captive for 45 days, until they were rescued by the Indian Army.

This is what they have to say about their experience. 'During those most agonising days sometimes we were gripped by acute fear. At other times, love poured out of our hearts when our captors got ill or wounded. We shed tears and wept together. We saw fear, anxiety and hurt feelings tormenting our people. But these interactions have reinforced our faith in the people of Kashmir.' Particularly interesting is the thought Mrs Wakhlu had when they were abducted – to treat the young men who took them as she would treat her sons. A bridge was built despite their desperate situation.

A postscript to this little story. In 1953 when Frank Buchman took his international team to Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, then Chief Minister of the state, received them and told Buchman, 'It will take patience, but you have the answer to India and Pakistan.'

Asia Plateau benefits Africa

As in the case of Malaysia recounted above, Africa has also benefited from the influence of Asia Plateau. A British mining engineer, Derric Hanvey, who had served during the 2nd World War with a West African division in India and Burma, visited Panchgani in the mid 1980s to attend a conference. Subsequent to that he visited other parts of India to see first hand what MRA was involved with, particularly in industry where he had

worked all his life. On his return to Britain, he was asked if he would take over managing the Sierra Rutile mine in Sierra Leone, where he had previously been a director. At that point, which was before the recent civil war which has divided and destroyed so much of the country, the mine had been having difficulties and Hanvey was asked to take charge because of his wide experience in mining. He said that he would not decide until he had been given the chance to see the situation at the mine first hand, to which suggestion the company agreed.

At the time it should be pointed out, Sierra Rutile was earning for Sierra Leone 25% of its national income, so it represented a very important factor in the country's economy. Hanvey agreed after his visit to take up the job on certain conditions, the principal of which was that he should be given a free hand in tackling not only the working of the mine, but also the development of the area where the conditions for the workers and the community as a whole seemed to him to be appalling. Some of the things he had learnt through his recent visit to India contributed to his conviction on this latter point.

Let the story be taken up in Hanvey's own words. 'Most striking (of the problems) was my finding upon arrival at the mine that the Personnel Manager, the late Mohammed Bakaar, whom I had known well, was held in the top security prison of Sierra Leone, without charge but accused by the local Paramount Chief of abducting a child for ritual murder and cannibalism. He was later released, still without charge, and on return to the mine given leave which he spent at his home thirty miles away. Meanwhile I interviewed the Paramount Chief who said she was willing to make a reconciliation and at my request she went to Bakaar's home to do that.

Made peace with the Paramount Chief

'To my dismay Bakaar refused to see her. After some time in a quandary as to what to do, I wrote to an English friend in MRA, asking that he arrange for Bakaar to go to a conference at Panchgani. In discussion about the proposed visit with Bakaar, he was heartened to know that the Emir of Kano (Nigeria), a fellow Muslim of note, was travelling to that same conference. The trip was at a time of extra tension between India and Pakistan and obtaining a flight and a visa in London were difficult. However my friend took Bakaar to the Indian High Commission and they seem to have taken him to be some sort of important diplomat and the visa was granted on the spot.

'As a happy start Bakaar was asked by the Emir to lead the Islamic prayers at the conference at Asia Plateau and joined, doubtlessly the more readily, in all the activities. I do not know what else transpired then, but

upon his return to Sierra Leone I found Bakaar transformed and he volunteered to visit and make peace with the Paramount Chief. This he did in the presence of all the Chieftom Elders and others, and their relationship thereafter was conducive to many arrangements necessary to the company's operations and relationships with the local communities within that and other Paramount Chieftaincies.

'I am sure that his time at Panchgani assisted Bakaar to recover his self-esteem and perspective after the trauma of the false accusation and his imprisonment. After the conference in Panchgani Bakaar made useful contacts in India and went to visit some mining areas where environmental work of mutual interest was being carried out.'

This was a prelude to Hanvey being able to carry out his main concern, namely the improvement in the social environment connected with the mine. The Board of the company, being a multi-national, was in New York and Hanvey persuaded them to invest money in a major development plan for the whole area. The object was not only to establish better housing and other facilities, but also to ensure a regular food supply through assisting the development of the growing of crops and regular harvests. Up to that time, even though the workers might receive higher than average wages, the supplies of food were not available, so the money was not much use. The scheme was so successful that later the World Bank said they would agree to give loans to Sierra Rutile, even though they had never before given such a loan to a private company anywhere.

It is only sad that the recent civil war in Sierra Leone has destroyed the mine and the equipment and left the industry totally desolate.

Playing to win

Visitors to India are often struck by the fact that wherever they go there are games of cricket going on. If there is any good legacy from Britain in India, this perhaps is one. And sport can be a great uniting factor, even if at times emotions are roused to such a fever pitch that harmony is spoilt. Sportsmen committed to MRA have often been pioneers in bringing reconciliation. One such person was H W. (Bunny) Austin, the British tennis player of the 1930s. He accompanied Frank Buchman to India in 1952 with his actress wife, Phyllis Konstam. He played a number of exhibition matches during that tour of India with MRA and knew all the eminent Indian players. The personal reconciliation between Bunny and his wife at a difficult time in their marriage was something they often recounted as an illustration that even the most difficult people can change and find unity.

Another sportsman who made a contribution to Moral Re-Armament in India was T C (Dickie) Dodds, the Essex county cricketer. He recounts that

in 1942 he was posted during the Second World War to India. 'On Delhi railway station I bought something to read. The book, called *Innocent Men* by Peter Howard, was all about MRA; I was fascinated and reaching the end of the journey in Bangalore I had finished it.' Hospitalised soon after arrival, his doctor was David Watson, another MRA man. They remained in the same unit for three years during the Burma campaign.

'While on leave,' he continued, 'I was chosen to play cricket for a Services Eleven in a four day match in the magnificent Brabourne stadium in Mumbai. Our team was led by D R Jardine, a legendary former England captain. The Jardine family had a long association with India, including Lionel Jardine, whose life had been transformed by MRA (see Chapter 1). One Indian cricket touring side was managed by HH the Maharaja of Baroda. He remained a friend until he died and wrote a splendid review of my book *Hit Hard and Enjoy It*, which was my experiences of working out in cricket all I had learnt through MRA.'

'When cricketers (in England) near the end of their playing career they are given a benefit year,' Dodds continued. 'All the money they raise is meant to help ensure a player's future security. I believed that my, and all our security, lay in the spirit of MRA spreading to the world. So my thought was to give my benefit money to MRA, and it was used to help the work in India. *The Hindu*, in its review of my book, said, "Dodds gave a large part of his benefit fund to MRA work in India, appropriately enough. This gesture received round commendation." I was glad to repay something of all India had given me,' commented Dodds. 'One of my friends, V M Merchant, whose first class batting average is only bettered by Sir Donald Bradman in world cricket, when he heard of my working with MRA, gave a generous donation to help with the work.'

Another great cricketer involved with MRA was Conrad Hunte, who had been vice-captain of the West Indies cricket team. He often played with the West Indies side in India. During one memorable tour the team was in Calcutta in 1967, playing at the Eden Gardens ground. The tickets had been oversold and when people could not get into the stadium there was a riot, as people leapt over the fences and poured onto the ground. The police used lathis, some stones were thrown and petrol was used to set the pavilion on fire. The players were fearful and shaken. Conrad at that moment had the thought to try and save all the team's gear, which he did and later tried to save the national flags from being burnt. This made headlines in the papers. The MRA musical, *India Arise*, was in Calcutta at the time, so the cast decided to put on a wonderful West Indian meal for the team, decorating the tables in the national colours. Their songs encouraged the cricketers, who were very relieved when it

was decided to finish the game without further incident.

In Britain after his retirement and wherever he was, Hunte used his underprivileged past to demonstrate that God can take any one of us and use us in his plan to bring change in people and between nations. Often he said, 'Those who have suffered most, have the most to give.' Coming as he did from a very deprived family, this conviction was born out of very real experiences.

14

Leadership in an Emergency

The work of Moral Re-Armament advances through the initiatives of people. There is no one in a back room somewhere planning detailed programmes round the world. Not even the Trustees of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India) try to decide all that goes on in India. The plans develop as people feel inspired to take their own initiatives and make their own moves.

Some years ago an army officer called in at Asia Plateau, having noticed the buildings as he passed there after a visit to Mahabaleshwar. He was received and shown round and he asked many questions about the things that take place at the Centre. He was posted at that time in Pune at the Institute of National Integration (INI), of which he was the Director. The Institute was founded in 1985 by Lt-General Dr M L Chibber Padmavibhushan, and runs courses for religious leaders from Army units all over the country. General Chibber described a visit to Asia Plateau as 'an absolutely unique and exhilarating experience for me and my wife'. The participants come to Pune for a month-long course. During that time they have the chance to live and meet with religious teachers from other units representing all faiths. The Institute was set up to provide, as its name implies, a means of integrating all those enlisting in the Army. In addition it propagates brotherhood by developing a spirit of mutual harmony and solidarity amongst troops and the country at large.

India of the 21st century

This officer, having paid his visit to the Centre, then asked if it would be possible for him to bring up to Asia Plateau those attending each course for a day to experience and understand MRA, in the same way as he himself had done during his brief visit. Thus began the association between the INI and Asia Plateau. Every two months each new course comes to the Centre. In the first place it was just for the one day. But as they began to value the

very practical nature of the things they learnt at Asia Plateau, the Institute asked if they could stay overnight and have two days at the Centre. This was agreed. Although the original Director of the Institute has been posted elsewhere, each of his successors has continued this arrangement, as they find it complements so well the theoretical training that they offer in the Institute.

Lt-General Niranjan Singh Cheema (Retd.) has assisted with the training at Panchgani for a decade. 'I firmly believe the standards of excellence, care, self-discipline and national integration at Asia Plateau are essential values on which India of the 21st century can be built,' he says. Another retired Army officer, who has regularly been part of the faculty at Asia Plateau since 1980, is Major-General Amarendra Kaul. He is a natural and brilliant trainer of people and his wife complements this with her warm-hearted and caring spirit.

Here is leadership being developed in a very practical way.

'In October 1964 a new star rose among the media's many constellations,' wrote a British journalist about the establishment of the weekly paper *Himmat* in Mumbai. The aim? To create, under God, a society on Indian soil more just, more dynamic and more satisfying than anything attempted in China, America or Russia. Its subtitle was 'Asia's new voice'. When asked to help with the paper this same journalist felt 'here was a paper that could fulfil Frank Buchman's vision of the press as *heralds of a new world order*.'

Founded by Rajmohan Gandhi and Russi Lala, it sought to be a weapon in the hands of 'every citizen who wants somebody to speak out and clean up the country'. Throughout its 17-year life, the editors gave a primacy to the ethical factor in their reporting and evaluation of affairs. Truth was the criterion for the news coverage; a nation and world reconstructed to the creator's plan was their goal. Sadly, soaring costs achieved what harassment and censorship during India's 1975-76 Emergency failed to do: they forced *Himmat* to close. In a sense *Himmat* cannot die so long as men and women of courage continue resolutely to take up its challenge. Like the eastern star, it will prove a precursor, not a passing comet.

In its final edition, Russi Lala, who edited the paper for 10 years, wrote, 'In a strange way, though many of us gave ourselves to *Himmat*, we, in turn, are the richer for it.'

Influence in the media

In addition to producing a paper week by week, *Himmat* did another remarkable thing. It provided a practical training for young, often inexperienced, men and women, not only in how to write and produce a paper but

also in understanding and evaluating the world we live in. Since those days these young people have gone on to take up mature and responsible jobs of influence in the media. So their early training has spread to millions of people. To mention but a few: David Davidar now manages the Penguin Publishing House in India. Kalpana Sharma is a leader writer on *The Hindu*. Neerja Choudhury has won awards for her writing in *The Times of India*, while Rupa Chinai is a leading investigative journalist in Mumbai, and Sanjoy Hazarika has been Delhi correspondent for *The New York Times*. Many journals reckon to train their staff as they employ them, but not all journals think unselfishly of giving their journalists openings which result in losing their services.

There were a great many challenges to *Himmat* during its lifetime, but perhaps none greater than the imposition in 1975 of the Emergency in India by Mrs Indira Gandhi. Much has been written about the Emergency (and some of its consequences) but this is not the place to do that. But for all papers at that time there was the imposition of censorship, which at times proved quite arbitrary. There was a strong element of fear, which itself imposed another kind of censorship. For instance, for a paper that felt a duty to speak the truth and make honest comment there was always the difficulty of getting a printer to print it. And for advertisers there was a choice of perhaps incurring the wrath of the authorities for giving advertising to papers whose policy did not always find favour with the government. Every step of the way it was a battle.

This is where Rajmohan Gandhi was ready and willing to give leadership. At the same time, he did not want his actions as Chief Editor of *Himmat* to embarrass or cause difficulties to the work of Moral Re-Armament, so he resigned from being a member of the Board of Trustees of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India). It was a controversial and sometimes misunderstood action. Did it mean he no longer believed in what MRA was doing? Certainly not. Did it mean he was taking up a more political role? In his view he was continuing his commitment in a new role under very different circumstances. It is true to say, though, that he did at a later stage feel that to go into politics was the best way to tackle the moral needs of the country.

These are some of the dilemmas of leadership. Ultimately only the voice deep inside each person can make that decision. But as Frank Buchman might have said, there are ways of testing our decisions and our actions. One is the test of moral standards; another is the test of teamwork: what do those with whom I work most closely think? Am I giving due attention to their convictions also? Lastly the test of ideology: does what I am intending make sense in terms of the ideological commitment to which I have

given my life? Each person has to decide these questions in their own conscience.

Corruption is anti-poor

In June 2000 the government of India's Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC), Mr N Vittal, visited Asia Plateau. He spent some time explaining the work he was doing and the challenge of corruption for the country. 'Today, even after 50 years of our independence we have placed our people under the yoke of corruption,' he said. 'We are 73 out of 99 in the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. This corruption is anti-poor. 31% of food grains and 36% of sugar in the public distribution system, designed to provide food for the poor, gets diverted to the black market. Corruption-free service should be a new fundamental right of every citizen. For this to happen we will have to change from a 'me-first' culture to a more co-operative one,' he added.

For his strategy to empower the public to fight corruption he suggested a three-point plan. Simplification of rules and procedure; the CVC is putting on the Internet the names of charged officers as a deterrent; and effective and speedy punishment through departmental action. To combine vision with action and to assist in implementing this strategy, Mr Vittal has circulated government departments and nationalised industries with a recommendation that they send representatives to Asia Plateau for the Effective Living and Leadership courses. These courses can train the people to implement his strategies. Already people have started attending.

15

The Play's The Thing

It has been said that 'Moral Re-Armament is an idea whose time has come'. But to be any use an idea has to take legs, or sprout wings, to reach people and be an influence. Frank Buchman was always searching for new ways of conveying ideas to people. For a man of his times he was extremely modern in keeping up with the times. When electronics was in its very early stages and before most people had any idea what it meant or how it could be used, Buchman saw the potential of it after meeting and talking with Lee de Forest in Los Angeles. Forest was a pioneer of the (then) new science of electronics. He saw it at that time (1955) as leading us beyond the atomic age.

Many years earlier at the beginning of the Second World War, Buchman began seeing the possibility of using drama as a means of passing on the ideas of MRA. There was, of course, nothing new in using drama for this purpose, but he developed its use in many new ways. Later films and television programmes were similarly utilised. And now video tapes and CDs. Among the early plays that were developed in this way were the two already mentioned in chapter 2 which Frank Buchman brought with him to India in 1952, namely *The Forgotten Factor* and *Jotham Valley*. These made it possible for the real experiences of real people to reach a far wider audience. And it was not just the stories which captured people's attention, it was also the quality of the acting and the technical stagecraft which made a deep impression. One Hollywood actor spoke of these plays, knowing that the actors were amateurs, as being 'super-professional'. Prithviraj Kapoor, pioneer actor and producer of India's stage and screen, was so impressed with these plays that he came to discuss with the producers and actors of *Jotham Valley* and *The Forgotten Factor* how they created these plays. And all over India audiences would clap at the end of a five-minute silence in *Jotham Valley* during which time on the stage the only things happening were a portrayal of sunset and sunrise. Such was the quality of the stagecraft.

Contributing something positive

Perhaps one of the qualities of these plays was that they not only portrayed real life which the audience really felt was real, but they portrayed the longing deep in every heart to be able to contribute something positive in their lifetime. And they left the theatres with a sense that they could do that.

During the years between Buchman's visit in 1952/53 and 1975 there was a succession of plays shown in India each conveying a different aspect of what change in people could do to change things in their countries and in the world. In 1960 it was a group of German miners and their play *Hope (Hoffnung)* which came to India after an extensive tour in Europe. This play was written by a German miner from the Ruhr who worked at the coalface. He had never written a play before, but he wanted to express the answer he had found to division in his home and in his nation.

When Chancellor Adenauer of Germany heard of the play, he wanted to meet the miners. He asked them to go to Britain and France, where he himself was shortly to visit – the first visit by a German Chancellor after the Second World War. 'Many of us Germans,' he said, 'do not realise how deep are the wounds in other countries which were caused by what we Germans did through having the wrong ideology.' In an article in the *New York Journal-American* the Chancellor wrote, 'A nation with an ideology is always on the offensive. A nation without an ideology is self-satisfied and dead.' He visited Britain after the German miners had taken their play to England, Scotland and Wales. On his return home the Chancellor spoke to a meeting of the Christian Democrat Party about the mistrust between Britain and Germany which had been swept aside through his visit and said, 'We have to thank Moral Re-Armament for that.' In Paris, French audiences, who had no reason to want to welcome Germans so soon after their country had been occupied by the German Army for four years, stood and cheered the miners after seeing their play. Some were in tears as the German miners sang the French national anthem, the *Marseillaise*, in French.

An essential appeal to everyone

The miners brought their play to Kerala just seven days after the formation of the new government after the communists were voted out. Night after night large crowds flocked to see *Hoffnung* and to hear the evidence of Moral Re-Armament and news of an answer. The international force of MRA and the cast of the mineworkers' play was welcomed by a Committee of Hosts which included Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of the Liberation Movement; Pattom Thanu Pillai, the Chief Minister; R Sankar, the Deputy Chief Minister; Syed Abdul Rehman Bafakyh Thangal, President of the Muslim League and many other prominent leaders of

Kerala (see chapter 3). Archbishop Mar Gregorius of Trivandrum spoke of the part MRA had played in bringing unity to Kerala.

When the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-Lai, was in New Delhi to confer with Prime Minister Nehru *The Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times* carried in all their editions a full page headed, 'Moral Re-Armament – The Next Step for Communists and Non-Communists Alike.' It said, 'At this crucial time India needs unity and strength. Unity comes by change not by chance. In a family, in an industry and in a nation unity is the product of moral change in people. India's greatest need is for an ideology that can unite people above class, caste, religion and state. MRA is this ideology.'

Soon after the German miners had left India to go on to Japan, another MRA drama arrived in India, this time in the form of a film called *The Crowning Experience*. This film is based on the life of Mary Macleod Bethune, the black educator in the United States who had been the daughter of slave parents and rose to become an adviser to the President. The moving story, described by one of Britain's great journalists as being of 'indescribable beauty', played a part in healing the division and hatred between black and white Americans in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The leading role of the film was played by Muriel Smith, the great black American singer. For those seeing it, it showed a road to freedom from hate.

And it was not only plays from outside the country which made their mark in India. Within the country people whose lives had been affected by MRA were also producing new and stirring dramas. At the end of 1963 a musical show *Space is so Startling* came to Delhi and in the beginning of 1964 toured through Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad. It was a prophetic play by Peter Howard depicting the race to conquer space, but also depicting the struggle between the free enterprise world and the state-controlled world of communism. It caught the imagination of young people, inspiring them with the idea that they can take initiatives to do something about the world they live in.

The visit of this musical show and the training camps which followed (see chapter 5) represented a very big stride forward for the work of MRA in India. It inspired young people with a vision not only for the relevance of change in their individual lives, but it also gave them a picture of what a dedicated force of young people could do for India and the world. This concept of a big aim which made personal sacrifice worthwhile had something of the quality of inspiration which the freedom struggle had given to Indians, young and old, in the 1920s; 1930s, and 1940s when Mahatma Gandhi led his country to independence.

One outcome of these camps was great creativity by the students, whose imagination was fired by the ideas of MRA. Paul Williams takes up the

story of what happened in Pune. 'I was staying with a Scottish couple, who had also been with *Space is so Startling*, and had rented a flat in Pune. Matt Manson, with his ready sense of humour, was a born raconteur. His wife, Margie, who was to die in Pune and is buried there, had a talent for drama. Two cousins who were then still at school, with Margie's encouragement, wrote a play to dramatise their new-found beliefs and their convictions for their country. It was called *You Can't Buy Us* and Margie decided to help them produce it, with me organising the "backstage" It was shown, not only in Pune, but in Delhi and other parts of India.

Water for a thirsty land

'One important part of the camps and conferences,' continues Paul, 'was the new songs that were written, some by ex-members of the *Space is so Startling* cast, particularly Kathleen Johnson, then by the young Indians themselves. One memorable one, which touched many hearts in meetings and school assemblies all over India was 'Water for a Thirsty Land'. Later these songs came to form the first basis of a musical production.'

This musical review was titled *India Arise*. The cast of nearly 70 young people was drawn from backgrounds of wealth and poverty, Brahmin and Harijan, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi and Christian. The aim, they said, was to 'build a decent future for the millions of our country and the billions of Asia. We need food for our people, houses of brick and concrete, but also homes where there is love and honesty. If God can bring about a change in our lives, He can do it very swiftly for the millions of India.'

They travelled over 8,500 kilometres through India performing to some 87,000 people in towns and cities. It was while they were in Calcutta that word reached them of an invitation to Europe. In 1968 Dr Zakir Hussain, then Vice-President of India, received them on the eve of their departure. 'I am so glad that *India Arise* is going on this important journey abroad,' he said. 'I know the work you are doing putting right what is wrong in the world. Getting independence was a difficult job, but what you have taken on is equally difficult.'

Over the next six months they gave their show in 31 cities in Europe and reached millions of people from the stage as well as on radio and TV. On their way to Europe they were guests of the Ministry of Education in Lebanon, and of President Makarios and Vice President Kutchuk in Cyprus. The Minister of Education on the island commented, 'This will have a permanent effect in Cyprus.' In Europe they travelled widely in Holland, France, Belgium and Switzerland, staying in people's homes and being received by cabinet ministers, civic dignitaries, as well as management and the unions from industry. And in Britain also they travelled widely in

England, Scotland and Wales. Among others they met many of Indian origin living in Britain, some disillusioned with India, some disillusioned with Britain. *India Arise* helped many to regain pride in their own country, but also to find a satisfying role in their adopted country.

Some of those whom they met came later to help them on their return to India. Sushil Anand, a Bristol restaurant owner whose life was dramatically changed through meeting the cast, came to help with the catering at Asia Plateau when the centre was first opened in 1968. A man skilled in many trades, Sushil was challenged by *India Arise* to put his life straight. He was honest with the tax authorities about his unpaid taxes and paid them; he sold the strip club and gambling casino he owned; he was honest with his wife about things he had kept from her and he paid out of his own pocket the bills for the catering he had arranged in his restaurant for the cast of the show. Workers and managers from European industry came out to India as a result of seeing *India Arise* to meet their opposite numbers in Indian industry and share the steps they had taken in their companies to build unity and productivity.

Apology the golden key

In London they put on their show in the Westminster Theatre. One night the Pakistan cricket team was in the theatre, their presence being acknowledged by the cast. At the end of the show, they led the standing ovation given to the show. It was in this very theatre that 20 years earlier Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, had come to see *The Forgotten Factor* and met Frank Buchman. He invited Buchman to come to Pakistan, which he did in 1953, with the words, 'You have the answer to the hates of the world. Honest apology, that is the golden key.'

But *India Arise* was not the only drama to be created in India. In 1974 while Vietnam was still much in the headlines as an area of unresolved conflict, a revue called *Song of Asia* was born at Asia Plateau. At a time when Asia was resounding with the blast of bombs and cries of hatred, the show proclaimed that there was something more important to listen to and follow. That was the still, small voice, which speaks in every heart. This revue was doing something that was the true destiny of the media in every form, namely to announce a new world order. In song, dance and skit *Song of Asia* opened the hearts of people in India, in Laos and Vietnam, and in many countries of Europe as well as in Canada to the simple truth that there was a way forward for everyone when they decided to swallow their pride, put things right and follow the promptings of the inner voice.

Launched in South India, *Song of Asia* was shown in Delhi before venturing out to other countries. One person whose heart was touched by the

show was the Laotian ambassador at the time. His Excellency Tianthone Chantharasy came with his whole family to see the show, one of his daughters being a member of the cast. Afterwards he commented, 'In two and a half hours we saw Asia with its joys, pleasures, suffering, sadness and hope. I long to find men with the courage to put an end to bitterness and to refuse to join in the spilling of blood. You have given beams of hope of a resurrection of humanity, free of hate and fear.' *The Hindu* newspaper wrote of *Song of Asia*, 'It unfolds the destiny of a rising continent and portrays the gift of Asia to the world.'

One could go on and mention so many other stage productions that brought new thinking to India (and the world) over the years, like *The Vanishing Island*, *He was not there*, *The Real News*, *Anything To Declare?* and others, each having a distinctive message featuring some area of society that could benefit from changes in people. Suffice it to say, that drama with a purpose has played a big part in the development throughout India of a network of people dedicated to the changing of society.

People coming to Asia Plateau sometimes ask what is the need of a well-equipped theatre at the Centre. The reason is simple. Music, song, drama can say things to people that cannot be said in a speech or will not be accepted through a lecture. It is a form of communication that stays in the memory and moves the will most powerfully. The Asia Plateau theatre has another interesting feature. On the back of every seat in the auditorium will be found the name of a person, or persons, in whose memory Rs.5000 was given for each seat towards the construction of the building. So that also commemorates many varied and fascinating stories, some of which have been told but many are still left to be told.

16

Frank Buchman's Vision: New Men, New Nations

I am writing this chapter a month after the terrorist attack on the United States on 11 September 2001. I have in front of me an article from a British newspaper, written by their Middle East correspondent. The headline reads 'Why America is hated so much'.

There is no short answer to that question. In one of his poems the Scottish poet, Robert Burns, has the couplet (translated from the Scots to plainer English),

*Oh would that God the gift would give us
To see ourselves as others see us.*

There is nothing harder than to see ourselves as others see us, unless it is to see our nation as other nations see ours.

In 1941 a young Englishman arrived in India having been seconded to the then Indian Army. In due course the unit to which he was attached was sent to Burma for the campaign against the Imperial Japanese Army. But in 1942 before that happened the unit was sent to Baluchistan, to the very area near Quetta, where today as I write thousands of Afghan refugees are streaming in to find food and some safety. The unit was on training exercises when something went badly wrong. Trying to deal with who was to blame, the British officer gave a helling to an Indian officer, junior to him, whom he thought was at fault. Later he discovered that this officer was not to blame. So then he faced the challenge that he ought to apologise to his junior for blaming him wrongly.

As he struggled with this matter two questions came into his mind. The first was that in the army you do not apologise to your juniors, as you would lose respect. The second question was more embarrassing. Should an Englishman apologise to an Indian and lose even more face? Afterwards he was glad that he had apologised – and incidentally did not lose respect. But

he was glad for another reason. It helped him to recognise the superior attitude that is inborn in so many British people and is the cause of many hurts and slights. He was glad to recognise the value of Robert Burns' poem.

Suicide is a major sin

It took a passionate commitment for the pilots who hijacked the four planes in America on 11 September to aim the planes at buildings and destroy themselves along with all the passengers. The pilots of the planes appear to have been Muslims, and the Koran declares that killing one innocent human being is like killing the entire human race (5.32). Killing one's own self (suicide) is a major sin in Islam as it is an abuse of the Divine gift of life. Other faith traditions take the same view.

But writing in these terms is not to investigate an appalling tragedy. It is to consider what makes people go to the extreme, not only of killing others, but killing themselves at the same time. It can only be explained through an understanding of ideology. Those pilots had given their lives to an all-consuming purpose, an all-out mission. They had trained for it, they had nerved themselves for it. But more than that they had committed themselves to an idea and a cause. They were prepared to give their whole lives for it. That sort of commitment cannot be answered by military force, by economic sanctions or by legal means alone. A passion can only be answered by a greater passion. Ideology is something that needs to be understood by everyone. If it is understood, and positively practised, we need never again ask 'Why America is hated so much' and such a terrorist attack may become for ever a thing of the past.

Frank Buchman spoke of Moral Re-Armament as being democracy's inspired ideology. He spoke about this at a time when the Nazis in Germany still seemed set to try and conquer the world, when Moscow was planning to make the whole world communist. Both were armed with a philosophy, a passion and a plan. For the Nazis the plan was that their race would rule. For the communists it was that one class shall rule. For Moral Re-Armament it is for God's plan to rule the world through people changing and committing themselves to live by absolute moral standards. As Buchman put it, 'new men, new nations, a new world'. And in saying men he included women also—in fact he had the highest of expectations from women. He really put his finger on it when he said in the 1950s, 'America needs an ideology'. As an American himself, he also said, not long before he died, 'My deep personal wish is to have every American free under the direction of God to fight for America; so to fight that America really be free, free from the tyranny of sin. I wish this no less deeply for everyone in

every nation. Men must learn to have a faith that will create the right revolution. If we can spread this revolution fast enough we can save the world.'

The battle of good against evil

Ideology may no longer be a word in fashion. But, as 11 September showed, the results of ideology are still there for us to see. If we live selfishly, only for ourselves and our own people, we will be unaware of what impression we are creating in the world around us. But if we have an ideology, we will live differently. We will recognise the battle of good against evil in our midst.

A friend of mine who knows the Middle East well, and has worked there over many years, tells of a time he and his wife were in Iran. They were invited to Abadan by someone in the National Iranian Oil Company, who asked them one day to talk with the senior Islamic cleric of the region. After a few tense courtesies the cleric attacked the morality of the west at some length. My friend admitted the downside of our culture, and said that he and his wife were in Iran to represent something different and to learn. They urged the cleric to believe that the Almighty was powerful enough to change the British! He relaxed and started to be honest about how his own people's behaviour fell far short of Muslim ideals.

In a later talk when they had become good friends, the cleric gave them a verse from the Koran which he felt best described the work of moral and spiritual rearmament. 'If those who are believers practise what is pure and honest, God who is merciful will give them an affection for one another.' My friend had an ideology, so he understood what was needed to win the heart of that cleric.

Working through people God prepares

At Asia Plateau one of the features of the main building is a circular room built to the memory of Daw Nyein Tha of Myanmar. One of the pioneers of Moral Re-Armament in Asia, she was affectionately known as Ma Mi. Mahatma Gandhi, who met her during the Independence struggle, said of her, 'I fell in love with her.' In March 1969 she died at Asia Plateau of cancer and is buried in the local cemetery. She was an entrancing character, but much more. She had a marvellous way of expressing deep truths simply. Like many Burmese she used her hands also in expressing things vividly. 'When I insist, you resist.' she used to say. Clenching her fists she would say, 'In that posture we are ready for a fight. But if we open our hands, then we can say 'Namaste' or we can shake hands. But you can't shake hands with clenched fists.' She described MRA as God's continuing strategy for Asia.

Her life had been given to it and she used everything she had to achieve it, right up to her dying breath. She was a person who lived out her ideology to the end.

‘Answering the needs of nations with men.’ What did Frank Buchman mean by this in describing MRA’s role in these terms? I had the privilege of seeing Buchman at work in different situations and I noticed that there was nothing theoretical about the way he operated. In a big meeting, in an informal meal or in individual conversation, he was always concentrating on people – and usually one person at a time. So when he encountered a crisis or a problem in a country or an organisation, he was looking for the person who could provide an answer. He used to tell us to work through the people God has prepared. And he was confident that there was always someone God had prepared.

Touching a Prime Minister’s heart

One result of this approach is that every last person in the world, if he or she so chooses, can do something about the situation in which he or she finds himself or herself. This approach removes the helplessness that it is easy to feel when confronted with difficulties. Many years ago my wife and I were requested to go to Chennai to follow up an initiative there. We were not very keen on going, we did not know people there and anyway it is not a comfortable climate to work in. However, we went South and while doing so we had the thought ‘to go through the doors that God opens without trying to figure out if they are important or knowing where they will lead.’ As a result those five years we spent in South India were deeply satisfying, enjoyable and most rewarding. And some of the doors that opened did not look at all promising. It was a great lesson for life.

In 1952 Frank Buchman was in Delhi with a big international team. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, was coming to Jaipur House to pay his respects to Buchman. Before his arrival, Buchman prepared meticulously with his team for the occasion, what refreshments to serve, what stories to tell the Prime Minister which would lift his spirits and what songs could touch his heart. It was many years since Buchman’s last meeting with him – perhaps not since Pandit Nehru lost his wife nearly 20 years earlier.

Watching Buchman after Nehru’s arrival one sensed that he regarded the Prime Minister as an old friend and he was trying all the time to judge what would mean most to him at that moment, almost regardless of the careful preparations which had been made. The feeling that he was all the time waiting for what the Almighty might prompt him to do was uppermost in his mind, while for most of the rest of us there was the temptation to try

and impress or at least to carry out the programme we had made ready in advance. It was a great lesson in life changing, where it is the person that matters, not the results. It illustrated for me Buchman's philosophy that, 'To rule well, cabinet ministers must learn the art of changing people.'

17

Daring to Tackle the Needs of the World by Niketu Iralu of Nagaland

In the summer of 2000, one of those attending the World Conference of Moral Re-Armament at Caux, Switzerland, was Niketu Iralu from Nagaland. He is a trustee of Friends of Moral Re-Armament India, but also comes from one of the leading families of Nagaland. In that troubled region of the country, lying so close to India's north east border, he has become a person trusted by people from all sections of society.

In Caux, he was asked to give one of the keynote addresses for the session entitled 'Life, Love and Fellowship'. He was eminently suitable for this task. His speech gave all the 450 people present plenty to think about. It also described his journey and his commitment so well, that it seemed a suitable item with which to fill the last chapter of this manuscript.

In trying to think out what to say on the subject given to me, I concluded I have tried to be what God wants me to be, and to do what he wants me to do, as he has made me to understand his guidance for me. And I like to think that I have tried to tackle the needs of the world around me. But I feel 'daring' is not the word for me. Because in my case it has so frequently been stubborn unwillingness to do what needs to be done because of fear, selfishness and ignorance. Along the way my 'yeses' to God have been so controlled by many 'buts' and reluctantly deciding to co-operate with God only after I am forced to the conclusion that there is no other way, and to do anything else is sheer waste of life. So 'daring' is not the right word to describe my kind of co-operation with God. It is God who dares to have faith in us. He takes us as we are, breaks us, remakes us and uses us.

I started work with Moral Re-Armament from 1957, straight from University. How grateful I am that the things I have learned from the work and fellowship of MRA are the things most needed by my people in a very

difficult region inside Asia. Our region is where India, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar meet. I am deeply grateful for many friends who have helped me to stay true to the path God showed me. I pay heartfelt tributes to their unyielding patience, forbearance and faithfulness.

Coming to the highly developed West, or Japan or Australia we are overwhelmed by the progress and standard of living you have achieved. It is true you have serious moral, spiritual, social problems. But real moral and spiritual qualities in your people for generations have enabled you to come where you have come. I often ask myself, if I were from a developed society would my faithfulness to God be as true as what I see in my view of you here. I do think the more developed your society, the higher the moral and spiritual price you are required to pay to keep your society growing. That is why we do feel deepest gratitude for those of you from developed societies of the world who simply accept to care for the world. Because of your commitment and obedience a place like this conference centre, for instance, functions, where people from all situations can come to learn together to solve our common problems. We owe a lot to many of you here.

Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Nobel-laureate poet, compared Indian society to a two-storied building where the staircase between the two floors is missing. On the ground floor are the poor, ever-failing people. On the upper floor are the successful, rich and powerful people. The same thing can be said of the world. When we from both sides accept to do what needs to be done, for ourselves and the world, we start to build the staircase needed by both sides to find fullest growth. The staircase gives equal importance to both sides, it helps both sides to understand each other.

At the beginning of the book of Genesis, God put Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, telling them how they were to look after it. Soon after, one day God came and found that Adam and Eve were not on duty. His voice must have boomed across the garden when he called out, 'Adam, where are you?' The next time we hear God's voice again is when he asks Cain, Adam's first son, 'Cain, why are you angry?'

Where are you going?

I find it to be so fascinating that the story of God and the human race started with God calling Adam and Cain by their names, holding them to the highest degree of responsibility. There is also the story of Simon Peter running away from the city of Rome because he found the city too challenging for him, a mere fisherman, to tackle. Christ appeared to him as he was going out through the city gates, and asked him, 'Peter, where are you going?', meaning 'Why are you going away from the task I have given you?' For many of us, I think, it is not really our daring and courage that makes

us tackle the needs of the world around us. It is the persistent sense within, which we cannot ignore, that God has said to us at some stage, 'Where are you going? I want you to look after my garden', or 'Why are you so obsessed with your own success and hunger for praise that you are so destructive and unhappy? I want you to want nothing for yourself so that I may use you for my plans.' Or 'Why are you running away from the task I have given you?' The needs of the world around us are not superficial things. To tackle them we have to be free from the things that make us ineffective for the sensitive task.

I want to talk about the times when I believe I, too, experienced the equivalent of God calling my name and started the process of changing me and teaching me to follow him.

At the first meeting of MRA I attended in my college in South India I heard someone telling how obedience to what God showed him changed his life. I was truly struck by his simple transparency, his freedom and joyousness. As usual at such MRA meetings, all present were invited to listen to what God might be telling them. Praying to God was very familiar to me as a Baptist Christian. But the idea of trying actually to listen to God and of expecting him to say something to me, then to write down that message on a piece of paper I was given was something I hesitated to do. But I reflected and examined what was going on in my mind and heart. The first thought I wrote down was, 'You are a very selfish man, you hate others, and you are full of jealousy because of your selfish nature.' I became very fascinated by what I had written down. I shared the thought at the meeting and felt I was taking an important step in my life.

I misused my father's money

I took the piece of paper to my room and reflected on what had happened. In the next days I started to deal with my selfishness. I told my hostel warden I had stolen the brighter bulb from the common bathroom in our hostel and replaced it with the weak bulb from my room. I had returned it but also said sorry for what I did. I was the shyest, lowest ranking student in my class of brilliant students. What I feared most was that he, the most popular lecturer, would laugh at me. Instead of laughing at me he shook my hand, congratulated me for my courage and said, 'Well done, keep it up.' I walked out feeling deeply happy that I had done what was right. It was my first experiment with truth.

Next I wrote to my father telling him honestly how I had misused the money he was sending me at real sacrifice and apologising for a few other things I had done and lied to him about them. My father was in jail as a political prisoner. He was feeling very humiliated at the time. He wrote back

thanking me for being so honest with him. He added that he too had decided to treat my mother differently. I wept. This was the most wonderful thing to come from him because he had hurt mother repeatedly by his sharp cutting words. I was amazed that my simple obedience was used to touch my father's heart so deeply. He returned from jail and treated my mother differently. This, our whole family noticed. I knew I had found the most important thing for my life, and it pointed to what I would give my life for.

Hating with racist hatred

I also apologised to a Nepali family in my hometown, Kohima, and an Indian Trade Union leader in Mumbai for hating them with racist hatred. I knew in my head that this apology was right. But I deeply reacted against what I had done because I felt I was weakening, if not betraying, my people's political position. This inner turmoil continued for a number of years. Although I prayed repeatedly to love them, I did not feel any love forming in my heart for these 'outsiders', as we call them. Then one day a most helpful clarity came. I had these thoughts. 'You cannot really love anyone because your human love is not clean enough. But you are meant to love others with God's love. Pray for this love with which to care for others. You want to be the light in the electric lamp and the water in the water pipe for thirsty people to drink. You want human praise for the light and the water. But all you can be, and are required to be, is to be the electric cable and the water pipe that are always in good condition. The light comes from God and so does the water.' This was a turning point in my life because I prayed for God's love to replace my hate and He gave it.

I have narrated these things because I believe these seemingly insignificant steps prepared me for the situation in Nagaland to which I have returned. My wife and I with our son lived in Asia Plateau, Panchgani, for a number of years helping to look after the Centre and the seminar programmes. A few years back we felt the time had come for us to return to North East India to do something to help our people. We did not know where to stay. My mother's home where we were invited to come was too small. Just at that time, a family shifting to the US asked us to use their home in Shillong as a home and base of work for a few years. For the beautiful five-bedroom house situated in a small pine forest we do not pay any rent. We were inspired and moved by the way the first miracle was given to us. The home has become a highly useful asset for drawing people together and creating teamwork among them.

In no time I became deeply involved in dealing with the terrible menace of drugs and alcohol addiction which has started to destroy a frightening number of young people. An increasing number of them are HIV positive.

Initially, most of my time was spent in trying to help the 13 nephews and a niece in my family who are addicts. Thank God some of them have started to recover. They certainly brought our family down to our knees. And we are learning truths about ourselves which we would not have accepted from anyone.

The 12 steps of recovery used by Alcoholics Anonymous originated in the work of MRA in the 1930s. So I was able to train myself as a counsellor without too much difficulty. The Naga Mothers' Association, the most respected NGO in Nagaland, asked me to help them in starting their rehabilitation centre. It became the first professionally run rehabilitation home in our region. Our centre and the other centres run by other NGOs that have sprung up are able to help only a tiny fraction of the addicts who have started to recover. But they have given hope to our people that something can be done.

Some of the richest experiences of my life have come from working with the addicts and their families. Our centre has produced some professional counsellors who have served in Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand. It can be said that the centres are steadily teaching transparency, humility and discipline to our society through the weakest and most damaged citizens of society. I believe God is using the recovering addicts of Nagaland to bring change and healing in our violent situation.

A genuine peoples' movement

The Nagas are known for their 53-year struggle for independence. The struggle started as a courageous, genuine peoples' movement for freedom. But today the Naga struggle has fragmented into 4 factions and the inter-faction fight for control of the movement has resulted in continuous violence and bloodshed. The violence in Nagaland has spread to our neighbouring states causing serious harm to the people who are not Nagas.

Some of us decided to search for options to bring about a settlement of the conflict. Our aim is to get the Naga public actively involved in the search. Two ideas have emerged. They seem to be making a considerable impact in Nagaland and even on the thinking of the Indian people. One is to remove the barriers of distrust among the different tribes. The Angamis, the tribe to which my friend Zakieo Metha who is with me here and I belong, took the initiative to declare to ourselves and the other tribes the points where we Angamis recognise we have weakened our society because of our selfishness and desire to control the Naga movement. We called upon the other tribes to tell us what we do not see about ourselves. This attempt for transparency has introduced a totally new element into our politics in so far as talks among the different tribes to renew traditional relations have

started. Zakieo is an elected public leader of my tribe. He and I are here in Caux to learn lessons from others, which will enable us to take the positive process forward in Nagaland.

A solution eschewing violence

The other positive development is the decision by the main human-rights movement in Nagaland to start a new relationship between the Nagas and Indian civil society. Last January 67 Nagas travelled to Delhi on a 'Journey of Conscience' and people-to-people conversation for understanding, friendship and peace. They made the symbolic beginning of the journey to India by holding a prayer meeting on the memorial grounds of Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi on January 30th – the day he was assassinated. They prayed for all Nagas and non-Nagas, Indian Army officers and soldiers, government servants and others who have died because of the conflict in Nagaland; They prayed for their families and pledged themselves to converse with the people of India to find a solution by eschewing violence. Facing Gandhiji's memorial stone, they sang 'Lead Kindly Light', 'Abide With Me' and 'When I survey the Wondrous Cross', some of Gandhi's favourite hymns. There were tears in many eyes.

The response from the people in Nagaland has been highly encouraging. They want the journey to go to different parts of India. The response from the people of India also has moved our people deeply. So far three important dialogues have taken place in different parts of India. Over the birthday of Gandhiji, that is in the first week of October, a group of Indian businessmen, writers, lawyers and others are coming to Nagaland as the guests of our people.

These interactions, where we listen to one another without any judgement, are bringing a spiritual element into our joint search for a workable political solution. I believe it is a thought God has given to us, and He will lead us to what He wants for both sides.

Afterword

In a small document it is not possible to recount everything that has happened in a few decades. But the examples given and the stories told are evidence that when these ideas are applied fully, answers are available and change can take place. The future will depend on more and more people deciding to act. But what can be said is that there is a very sustained and definite plan to multiply the number of committed people as well as the number of situations where answers are being given. A look at the programme at Asia Plateau over a few months is enough to see the seriousness with which efforts are being made. Here is a sample taken from the Annual Report 2000 – 2001 of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India):

Date	Event
April 5 & 6	INI Programme for the Army (50 delegates)
April 8 & 9	Youth Camp for students of the Pune Catering College (64 students)
April 12-16	Youth Camp for St John's School, Mumbai (102 students)
April 27-30	<i>Creative Leadership Programme</i> (84 delegates from 17 companies)
May 15- June 8	Study Programme by University of Illinois, USA (23 students)
June 1-5	<i>India, I Care!</i> (180 delegates)
June 6 & 7	Orientation Programme for Management Trainees of Transasia Biomedicals (10 delegates)
June 8-11	<i>Creative Leadership Programme</i> (117 delegates from 16 companies)
June 14-18	Refresher Course for MRA Youth Camp participants (20 participants)
June 22-24	INI Programme for Army (60 delegates)
August 19-23	Youth Workshop (11 participants)

August 25 & 26	INI Programme for the Army (43 delegates)
September 20 & 21	<i>International Farmers' Dialogue</i> Preparatory meeting (76 delegates)
September 28-Oct 4	<i>Creative Leadership Programme</i> (53 delegates from 12 companies)

In September 2001 a new programme was launched at Asia Plateau. It was named *Action for Life*. It was the initiative of Ren-Jou Liu from Taiwan, who has already organised training programmes for young people in his own land, but felt the need today for many young people to experience and understand more about the world we live in and how to play a part in bringing change where needed. *Action for Life* is a 10-month international programme. The course started in Asia Plateau, where after some weeks the 30 participants spent time in different Indian cities in field work to put into practice the things they had learned at Asia Plateau. From there they went to other countries of Asia for further experience. The participants taking part came from 16 nations from Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Australasia. It is a bold concept and has now been repeated with a second programme in 2004 which is now in progress.

During 2001 Asia Plateau had been facing up to the change in industry and manufacturing brought about by globalisation. The environment of conflict and confrontation has been replaced by competitiveness and global success. This questions what the motivations and values of the business and industrial leaders of tomorrow should be. Management education has become a serious business as graduates from Indian business schools find top jobs in Indian and multinational corporations. Asia Plateau has responded to this situation through embarking on the training of 1000 business graduates a year to provide business and the economy with leaders with purpose, direction and sound values. It can result in the globalised economy having men and women with something deeper in their hearts than merely efficiency and success, and sourcing change agents for the future. Directors of business schools have valued the results they have seen in their students so far.

Two new initiatives of great significance are the creation of the IC Centre for Governance and the Centre for Training in Ethical Leadership. Prabhat Kumar, former Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India, and Sarosh J Ghandy, former Director of TELCO, are among the senior men from government and industry who are behind these undertakings. Good

governance and ethical leadership are critical not only for developing countries like India but also for all nations in the new era of globalization

A United Core Team

Another programme was a world gathering called Global Hoho, a Naga word meaning a gathering of the tribes in a meaningful dialogue, at Asia Plateau over three weeks in January 2002. It brought together 240 people from all continents who have experience with Moral Re-Armament and are committed to have a part in deciding the future course of Initiatives of Change in the world. It was an opportunity for honest dialogue and for creating a core team of people for future worldwide action.

Every movement in history has its ups and downs. In India, Moral Re-Armament also has sometimes had its own internal difficulties. However, what can be said is that when these occur they represent an opportunity for learning from mistakes and understanding more about human nature. In 1964 one effect of the big advances in the previous months was to give a false sense of achieving more than was perhaps the reality. It also resulted in some people feeling themselves more important than they should have done. It led to some considering themselves almost infallible. It also led to others giving way to doing what they were told, without due thought – in fact putting some people on a pedestal and allowing them to act in dictatorial ways.

Again we are reminded of what Robert Burns said – that we need to see ourselves as others see us. It took time and it took grace on the part of many and apology on the part of some to put right this aberration. But it was a great lesson for seeing how easily we can all be brainwashed. Really holding to obeying that still small voice is the insurance against that form of trouble. It is also the key to creative actions for change.

Appendix

Invitation to Dr Buchman to India

Printed below is the invitation from a national committee to Dr Frank Buchman to come to India in 1952. This led, as has already been mentioned, to his taking an international team of 180 people from 25 countries with him for a visit of nearly six months. But the invitation resulted from actions of many people in the years preceding 1952, which led to the committee recognising the value of such a visit to India. Already in chapter 1 the story of one of these people, Mr Lionel Jardine, CIE, ICS, has been told. But he was not the only British person whose change made a mark in India. Finlay Stewart who first went to Gujerat in 1936 as a church minister tells of some. This was soon after he encountered Moral Re-Armament [MRA] then known as the Oxford Group) and when the words of a banner theme, from meetings he had just attended before sailing, were still ringing in his ears; *God has a plan; you have a part*. He was led to meet many people, British and Indian, who became part of this plan.

There was Walter Biscoe and his wife, Elsie. His own honesty and change as a railway superintendent in Lahore resulted in a team in the railways practising absolute honesty in their area, which later had helpful repercussions at the time of the great famine in Bengal in 1944. Trainloads of food reached the famine area at the right time and the right price! Another railway couple, Bert Whitby and his wife in Calcutta, were part of this team. A tea planter, Theo Williams, and his wife from Assam opened their home to servicemen who were on their way to Burma during the Second World War. Another was the Right Reverend Archbishop Foss Westcott, Metropolitan of India, Burma and Ceylon during the war. Deeply disturbed at the tensions between Indians and British, at the time of the Stafford Cripps mission to India for discussions about Indian Independence, Foss Westcott wrote a letter published in *The Statesman* of Calcutta in which he humbly apologised for British faults and said, 'Perhaps our greatest fault (as British) has been our calm assumption of an inherent superiority.'

Stewart's learning the discipline of daily listening to the inner voice led him to meet people, who, at that time, the British did not normally meet.

The first was the editor of the local Gujerati newspaper. He in turn introduced Stewart to many other newspapermen. Another such person was Shri Krishna Prasada, a brilliant tennis player in his day, and later Director General of Posts and Telegraphs for India. It was this kind of team which prepared the way for the invitation to Dr Frank Buchman. The common feature among the very varied group of Britishers involved with MRA at that time was that they stood out as being different from what the Indians expected the British to be like. At a time when society in India was divided between British and Indian these British provided a bridge because they were ready to serve rather than to rule; they were ready to listen rather than always telling; they were humble rather than arrogant. And the Indians who worked with them were equally trend-setters in their day also.

* * * * *

INVITATION TO INDIA

We are convinced that the true hope for bringing lasting change in social and economic conditions to bring peace to the world lies in multiplying such practical results as we believe to have been achieved by Moral Re-Armament – the giving of a new incentive to industry, the change of heart of capitalist and communist alike, the replacing of mistrust, bitterness and hate between individuals and groups with understanding and co-operation.

We consider, therefore, that such moral re-armament of the nations is the need of the hour and the hope of the future.

We agree with you that no one group, no one class, no one nation or race is adequate to solve the problems we are facing today or to change the course of the world away from unemployment, poverty and war towards an age of security and prosperity and that this will take the combined efforts of all, plus wisdom greater than that of the most brilliant individuals.

The Father of our country, Mahatma Gandhi, has bequeathed us an unquenchable inspiration to live by the highest ideals, and we are eager for India to play her full part in this noble task.

We would like you to know how glad we would all be to see you in India this winter along with an international team so that we may profit by your experience. Together we must succeed in turning the world from crisis to cure, demonstrating an overarching ideology for Management & Labour, for Left & Right, for East & West.

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Sarvodaya Commission, Samaj, Wardha

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Former Member of the Viceroy's
Executive Council

SIR GURUNATH BEWOOR
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SHRI KHANDUBHAI DESAI
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SHRI RAMNATH PODAR
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SHRI KRISHNA PRASADA
Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs

SIR SHRI RAM
Former Chairman,
Indian Chamber of Commerce

THE HON. Dr B.C. ROY
Chief Minister, West Bengal

THE HON. Dr SAMPURANAND
Minister of Education,
United Provinces

THE HON. A.N. SINHA
Minister of Labour, Bihar

SHRI J.R.D. TATA
Chairman, Tata Industries

Glossary of Indian Terms

adhivasi	Aboriginal person, a tribal
Bahasa	Language, e.g. Bahasa Malaysia is the Malaysian language
bal mandir	Children's (Bal) temple (Mandir), i.e. school for children
bhanga basti	A housing colony for sweepers or untouchables
Bhavan	House, e.g. Rashtrapati Bhavan is the President's House
Bihari	Belonging to the state of Bihar in Eastern India
Bohag Bihu chawl	A religious festival in Assam Housing colony, particularly for workers, usually small apartments in a multi-storey building
Chennai	Present name of the old Madras City
crore	A Crore is a unit of measurement. 1 crore equals 10 million.
Gandhiji	Polite way of referring to Mahatma Gandhi
Harijan	Untouchable – Literally child of God
Hoho	A word for a gathering for a consultation and discussion used by the Naga people in North East India
ICS	Indian Civil Service – they were the senior administrators in pre-Independence India.
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
kaviraj aushadhi	An Indian herbal medicine
lathi(s)	A long cane used by Indian police to control crowds
Lok Sabha	Assembly (Sabha) of the People (Lok) – equivalent of the House of Commons (see Rajya Sabha below)
Mumbai	Present name for the old Bombay City
Naga	People living in North East India who now have their own state
Jharkhand	A new state recently set up when Bihar state was divided into two
namaste	The Hindu form of greeting, said with folded hands
Naxalite	An extreme Marxist group – the name taken from the town called Naxal Bari in West Bengal where the party started
octroi	Taxes levied by local authorities on goods imported into their area
Padma Vibushan	A national honour awarded for service to the country
paise (plural paise)	A one hundredth part of one Rupee (Rs)
Pathan	Someone belonging to the N W Frontier bordering Afghanistan
peon	Office orderly or messenger
Pradesh	State or Province
Rajya Sabha	Assembly of the Rulers, or Upper House of Parliament
Rashtrapati	President of a country
sarvodaya	Voluntary service to the community
Sevagram	A place in Central India where Mahatma Gandhi set up an ashram or holy meeting place
Shaitan	Devil or Satan
shramdan	Voluntary labour – usually on local development projects
tamasha	A form of entertainment or party, usually with music
Telengana	A district near Hyderabad

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