



Building trust across the world's divides

Initiatives of Change

AP Newsletter - May 2015



Greetings from

Asia Plateau !

Editorial

Spring was into bloom; the sun was shining down upon this magical space called Asia Plateau. The amount of love, faith, and trust that brought birth to this place in the 1960's, still radiates today. The same amount of care still exists today. Indeed, the Asia Plateau family makes this place what it is: a place to practice love, gratitude, story sharing and bring inspiration to a world in dire need.

This month had an important highlight: the Annual General Meeting. The retreat had the basic objective to strengthen fellowship and deepen friendships between the members of Asia Plateau. The dialogue consisted of understanding how the community was doing and how extended family can support those who live on site. Other dialogues embodied a reflection on our relationship to the land we live on. Are we like the eucalyptus tree, taking more than our share? Or like the self-regenerating and giving forest? Asia Plateau achieved a record growth of harvesting 30 quintiles of wheat this year. Our land gives us so much; we must ensure that we care for it and give back.

The IfL team returned home, taking time for rejuvenation. The IfL team shared their journey with the family. To see their journey [click here](#). Interns spent time with Suresh Khatri for renewed direction and inspiration.

Many programs were offered during the month. Asia Plateau worked with Indian forest officers and teachers from various schools. At Grampari, a grassroots farmer's dialogue occurred with 50 participants from nearby villages to discuss the significance of indigenous and organic seeds – and strategies for transformation to sustainable food systems. Anandi, Melanie and Sagar initiated this idea. Many people have been touched by the environment co-created at Asia Plateau. It is not quite certain how to measure touching lives and hearts; but through story sharing and experience, there is a deep sense of knowing that this work is immensely profound. And, as always... the incredible work of lofC continues....

- *Melanie Klein*

Programs

The month started with an encouraging group of 56 educators from over 20 Schools who attended the Annual ETST (Education Today Society Tomorrow) program. This program was followed by the Effective Living and Leadership for families. A 3-day program for the 3rd batch of officers from Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation was also held.

A program for Symbiosis Institute of Computer Studies and Research was held, a new college to introduce IOFC to its students through this pilot program. From 2016 this will be an annual feature. HEL (Heart of Effective Leadership) for various industries which brought out some sentiments of being more ethical, more caring and responsible. It also brought out commitments by people to save electricity and water, reduce plastic usage and be a more loving person.

During the latter part of the month a program for the IFS (Indian Forest Service Officers) was held, where the decisions taken by some officers were to set an example by being a changed person, to develop a sense of punctuality and discipline.

Another a day's program was held for teachers of St. Peters School, Panchgani this program was conducted after almost 4 years. Many interactive sessions took place with this enthusiastic group of teachers.

News from Jamshedpur

Responding to the sudden spurt of negativity against schools and education in Jamshedpur, the local team thought of organizing a 2 day `Educators Conclave` to find out the causes and answers. Mr. Anand Sen, President, Tata Steel, said that communication between all the stakeholders was the key to solve all problems.

44 Principals, Vice Principals of the most prominent schools participated. The conclusions drawn were that, though the challenges were many, the answers lay in the Educators becoming `role models`, sincere, good listeners, technology updated, and responsive to the inner needs of their students. The idea of having a `quiet time` to seek solutions as a daily routine was talked about by most of them. School Groups decided to take this ideology to their individual schools.



Asia Plateau Volunteer Intern Program (APVIP)



Interns, as always, supported programs at Asia Plateau through song and skit. This month was particularly exciting as interns were invited to facilitate various sessions; an opportunity to share all that they have learned. Interns conducted an Inner Development session during an ELL conference. Anup and Noah facilitated a session for industry leaders through HEL. Jitesh and Stephania facilitated an Inner development session for the Indian forest officers and Melanie and Gaurav conducted a session on role play and empathy for teachers. It is clear that the interns are now blossoming as they reach the end of their 5 month journey at AP.

In this month IFL people arrived and the Interns had a great time with them and Uncle Suresh especially. "We were mentored to think of the five things that we will take back home with us" said Jitesh, and "we also discussed how we can explain what lofC is to others when we go home", said Melanie. Interns also did a lot of shramdan in clearing a field to provide space for growing more food. The interns also talked about how this space could potentially be used to grow food, using sustainable approaches.

Alex was a weekly leader for one of the weeks. Interns came to better understand environmental issues and how each individual is contributing to that issue consciously and unconsciously. Interns had dialogues on how we as individuals can improve the situation and can contribute in making this world a better place.

Grampari

Apart from the ongoing work at Grampari of building the spring boxes, looking forward for the monsoons. The major highlight of the month was the seed festival that was initiated by Anandi Gandhi, Melanie Klein and Sagar Bhilare.

The main purpose was to promote a dialogue about indigenous seed saving and cultivation. Many near-by farmers and some far off visited to have an interesting conversation on organic farming practises and re-claiming traditional crops.

Agatrao Gaikwad, who looks after the gardens and landscapes of Asia Plateau, participated in this event and made a remark that in his childhood many of the crops were grown by saving the seeds on own; very less was purchased from outside. He was overwhelmed with the program and had a great insight and learning experience.

Shubhangi from Gampari, had a chance to visit Philippines for the program entitled "Life Matters". It was her very first experience to participate in an international lofC event abroad.

Jared and Sowmya, with little Sita visited Asia Plateau after a long time to spend some time with the Grampari team.



Initiatives of Change for Life (IFL)



The IFL team worked with government officers from 8 different departments in Meghalaya near the beginning of the month. It had marked the end of a month long training program. They also had follow up programs with Gram Sevaks – Rural Development Officers - who were previously connected to IofC.

On the way back to Asia Plateau, the IFL team went to SIRD – State Institute of Rural Development in the state of Assam. There, they had a meeting with director AMM Zakkir who invited the team for a program in June.

The highlight for the IFL team was the warm welcome back to Asia Plateau. After a long journey, being back at Asia Plateau offered some time for personal nourishment and a reigniting of energy. After sharing the journey with AP family, the team was busy planning for the forthcoming programs in the North East of India. They are set to depart once again in mid-June.

Sharings



A Lost Species ~ By Anandi

Emerging from my shell
I find this empty space
Where have you gone?
Lost in this chase...

I look around at this
Uninspiring landscape
Imbalanced landscape
Exclusive landscape

Surrounded by loss
Rape and desertification
Excess and overconsumption
Greed and self-absorption

Who can tell me who I am?
Who will show me where to go?
What will lead me ahead?
What will take away my dread?

Where have you gone?
Am I just a lost species?
In this forest I was lost
And now I am found

Spiritual Respiration
~ By Alex

The English word 'spirit' comes from the Latin word spiritus, which means 'breath,' as well as meaning what we mean by 'spirit': our soul or animating life force. This double meaning isn't unique to Latin. The ancient Greek word for spirit, psyche, (from which we get the word 'psychology') also meant 'breath.' Even the Sanskrit word for our individual spirit, atman, also means breath or vapour, as can be seen by looking at our word 'atmosphere.' English, after all, is an Indo-European language, just like Sanskrit.

Recognizing this insight embedded in not just one, but several, languages gave me a new perspective on the role of inspiration in my personal change, my inner development. Being inspired is like our spiritual in-breath. It's essential. But can we do anything if we take a deep breath and hold it? We'll run out of air! And yet, this is most often how I approach my spiritual breath, focusing only on the inspiration. So often I feel inspired and am motivated to act, to change, but I notice the motivation weakening over time, as if my strength is leaving my body, as if I am losing my breath by holding on to it too tightly.

So where does the strength for action come from? I think the answer lies in something we'd rather not think about - our spiritual out-breath. What is the complement of inspiration? Expiration - a



word that technically means both exhalation and death. Our full spiritual respiration is a cycle that includes both the in-breath and the out-breath, inspiration and expiration: the letting-go of who I am right now, a kind of spiritual death. While I struggle with trusting the process of letting-go, trusting that air to breathe in will be there for me after I exhale, I know that developing this trust is necessary.

Only full spiritual respiration can give me the strength I need to be the change I want to see in the world.



