

MUKTASAMWAD- 5TH APRIL 2011 – KAUSHIK GOPAL’S PRESENTATION ON GROUP RELATIONS CONFERENCE

Mr. Kaushik Gopal, **Executive Director**, Chatur Knowledge Networking, was invited for a Management Development Programme conducted by IIM (A) on ‘**Group Relations Conference**’ at Vapi in March 2011. This is his presentation of the same.

Objective of the Conference:

To explore the experience of relatedness in the small or large group as it unfolds and how the individual impacts the group and vice versa.

The conference offered opportunities for **experiential learning** on various issues:

- Taking up membership roles, the giving and taking of authority and the exercise of or support to leadership; exploring questions such as "What happens to me when I am required to exercise authority or leadership, or, on the other hand, to accept authority or to be a follower?"
- Understanding overt and covert dynamic processes in organizations and in groups - processes linked to choosing or being chosen, competing for leadership, feelings aroused by inclusion or exclusion, the creation of mechanisms for delegating authority and responsibility, etc.
- Exploring reciprocal relations between formal layers and informal events in the organization and their consequences for the organization's culture and performance.

Although the conference does not focus on personal factors or interpersonal relationship, we know that personal, group and organizational elements are linked to one another, and these links determine the ability of individuals, groups and organizations to create, to change, to develop and to grow. During the conference, special attention is paid not only to **conscious and overt behavior**, thoughts and feelings, but also to **unconscious and covert processes** happening in the individual's internal reality, in various groups and in the whole conference as a system.

The group relations conference originates in experiential groups ‘taken’ by **Wilfred Bion** in the forties of the twentieth century. The experiences recorded in that group work are at the base of the theory leading to the development and design of the group relations conferences at **the Tavistock Institute** in London. The first conference of this kind took place in 50's, with the aim of investigating the behavior and development of people in groups, in organizations and in society. The "**Leicester conference**", as it is known, whose basic design has not changed significantly since then, takes place annually, and has served as a model for similar conferences in many other countries worldwide.

In general, the events in the conference are divided into two categories - events focused on the experience in the '**here and now**', and events dedicated to **review and application**. The '**here and now**' events include **large study groups, small study groups and systemic events**. These events are designed to enable exploration of the processes while they are occurring. The events focused on **review and application** - in **small groups** and in **plenary sessions** - offer opportunities to gather the experience in the '**here and now**' events into insights that can be conceptualized, connected and applied to the everyday life of the participants, both at **work and on the personal level**.