

## **NAYI DISHAYEIN: PAHAR AUR HUM, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

Pahar aur hum was a time bound community of young people from the Himalayas. Youngsters from Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Nepal came together to create this nine day space at the Sambhaavnaa Institute. The program was designed to be an exploration of the continuum that links an individual, through society, to the larger ecology. Essentially, an exploration of the *Pahar*, the *Hum* and everything that connects the two. What follows is a brief description of what took place in those nine days.

Day I:

The first day was meant for creating a common ground on which the community would stand. Post breakfast we began with a series of games that tended towards getting introduced to each other and high energy no-brainers. This allowed everybody to set aside preconceived agendas and notions about themselves and the others. This session was followed by a low energy space where participants were asked to wander around the campus and beyond to look for any object that they felt was symbolic of them in the given time and space. Guidelines given for this act were based on the principle of 'Do no harm'. Participants returned with their totems for tea.

Post tea we had the circle of introductions wherein each person got three minutes to speak about themselves and what brought them to PAH, followed by any anecdote from their life which reminded them of the *pahar* or their *pahari* identity, and lastly by presenting their totem to the group along with the rationale for choosing the object. Several stories were shared within the circle along with the introductions. We disbanded for lunch, which was followed by a session by Kulbhushan Upmanyu. He laid out the larger picture in the context of the Himalayas with attention to its geology, history, notions of development and social movements. The second part of his session was a dialogue based on questions and observations from the participants. We concluded his session and took a break until dinner.

Post dinner we had a Himachali song sung followed by a game which represented the culture of the program through underlining elements of community and co-creation. This was followed by an overview of the entire program and its highlights over the next eight days.

Day II:

The morning circle started by learning Ladakhi greetings and counting along with a few name games. The first half of the day was with Tashi Morup, who heads LAMO in Leh. He spoke of the Ladakhi context and the trans-himalayan region with a focus on history and culture. He then explained climate change and its effects in the fragile trans-himalayan region. We then watched 'Himalayan Meltdown', a movie on climate change and its effects in the Himalayas.

Post lunch, we broke into three groups to discuss in three rounds of fifteen minutes each. Each round had an anchor:

- What did you think of the movie 'Himalayan meltdown' and what it spoke of?
- What effects of climate change have you observed in the regions you come from/ work in?
- What solutions do you foresee to this issue?

Then we had a sharing session in the commons. After which, Shail, a participant from Nepal, gave a small talk on Climate Change and how nations were approaching the issue.

After Dinner, we sang a Ladakhi song. Then Ravinder, a participant working in Uttarakhand, conducted games with the group. We then watched 'Ancient Futures', a movie on the changing culture in Ladakh, followed by 'The Story of Stuff' in Hindi.

Day III:

This day was with a focus on perspectives around development, through a frame of hydro projects. The first half was outdoors with the hydro Walk. Subba Ram, the village *Kohli* took the group along the traditional water distribution system and discussed issues regarding responsibilities and changes. We also visited the hydro project under construction on the Ava river. Amit Tandon and Sumit Mahar explained the workings of the project to the group by visiting the engineering structures built upstream such as the turbine room and reservoir built to divert and store the water. We walked back to Sambhaavnaa for lunch.

Post lunch, Manshi Asher assessed hydro projects with the group through groupwork and analytical tools such as the 'Tree model'. The discussion and sharing in the commons focused on the paradigms around development, stakeholders, causes and effects.

Post dinner we watched 'Megastructures: Karcham Wangtoo' and 'Flood Ravage and the Damn of Uttarakhand', two movies which explored in very different light the construction and effects of dams in the Himalayan region.

Day IV:

We learnt greetings and counting in Kumaoni during the morning circle. Since we were almost halfway into the program, it was time for the midway review and design session. Each of us wrote down a few aspects of the proceedings which we felt were positive and a few, negative. These were anonymous and put up in the commons. This was followed by a series of questions to be answered individually and indicatively with the thermometer method. We then had a circle of opinions voiced individually. One of the themes for which there was support from most of the group was the need to engage with solutions, hands on. We decided to change the design of the program accordingly.

The second part of the day was with a focus on forests and agriculture, and was conducted by Rahul Saxena, Prakash Bhandari and Nek Ram. After revisiting issues around development projects and their effects at a regional level, the discussion then focused on the symbiosis between forests and agriculture, especially in the mountains, the traditional ways which strengthened this relationship and the trends within the same. Nek Ram then shared his experiences from the Karsog region.

Post dinner we had a Uttarakhandi song and dance session.

#### Day V:

The focus for this day being Kashmir, in the morning circle, we learnt greetings and counting in Koshur. The morning was with Fayaz who explained the kashmiri context from the kashmiri perspective. He laid out different aspects of kashmiri society and the struggle for the right to self determination. The discussion that followed tried to understand this perspective through first, a slow process of unlearning followed by the willingness to accept other perspectives and to discuss matters further.

Post lunch, we had the first hands-on session that was planned based on the previous day's feedback. The community divided themselves into three groups based on personal interests. The three groups explored three themes each: Organic Farming, Earth Building and Waste Matters. Later in the afternoon we had a discussion on the gaddi community and their lifestyle and practices with two members of the community. They outlined the changes that are taking place in their community.

Post dinner, we learnt a kashmiri dance, which was followed by a screening of the movie 'Jashn-e-Azadi'. The discussion after the movie continued late into the night.

#### Day VI:

We started the day with a continuation of the hands-on session within the three groups as done earlier. The work went on until tea, after which the movie 'Economics of Happiness' was screened. We then had a session with Gaurav Shorey on understanding the fundamental facets of any culture, represented through the five D's: Dialects, Dresses, Dances, Dwellings and Diets. This was done through a series of exercises which allowed the group to explore the component in a fundamental manner.

Post dinner, we had the open space night wherein participants offered and attended sessions on topics of their choice and interest.

#### Day VII:

We started the morning by learning a Nepali song in the circle. The first half of the day was with Aniket Alam, who couldn't join us personally as planned earlier, who joined us on a skype call. He spoke about

the Himalayas from a historical perspective. Using maps and references from the colonial era, he described how the mountain society must have functioned in the distant past. He dwelt on several facets of the Himalayan people's lifestyle including the resource and cultural flows within the regions.

Post lunch, after another short discussion with Aniket ALam, we had a session on caste, with Vimla Vishwapremi. Through a dialogue with the participants, experiences and opinions regarding caste, its links with patriarchy and its current form were explored.

After dinner, Himanshu Kumar spoke of his experiences and work from Dantewada. He spoke of how the state or a powerful entity engulfs the minority within a context to serve its own needs. He encouraged the participants to understand how societal functions are interdependent and how the situation in Chattisgarh was integrally linked with society at large, including the people of the Himalayas.

#### Day VIII:

The morning circle began with a number of participants expressing their desire to go for a walk outdoors- as was the plan earlier- rather than sit indoors for more sessions, as was decided the previous evening. After a brief discussion wherein each person voiced their opinion, the participants were divided into two groups: one which went on a day long hike, while the other went for a shorter walk until lunch.

Post lunch, Manshi Asher and Persis Taraporevala conducted a session on gender which explored the stereotypical designation of roles in society, through a series of introspective questions, which was followed by a discussion. An early evening session for presentations by the participants was then organized wherein three talks- Education in Ladakh, Waste Management & Ecological Sanitation and Participatory Rural Appraisal- took place.

Dinner was followed by a party.

#### Day IX:

The last day started with a few games with Madhur Anand. Manshi Asher then took the group through an overview of the Pahar aur Hum proceedings from the previous week. A circle of individual reflections, observations and experiences then followed. The participants then were handed the written feedback forms. A circle of community support and collaboration took place after tea. Each person offered skills or resources that they wished to share and asked for help in their future projects by stating their needs.

## APPENDIX A:

Sample Daily Timetable:

0630- 0730: Optional exercise/ Yoga

0730-0830: Housekeeping for Dormitories + Cooking Breakfast

0830-0930: Breakfast

0930-1100: Session space

1100-1130: Tea Break

1130-1300: Session space

1300-1400: Lunch

1400-1530: Session space

1530-1600: Tea Break

1600-1730: Session space

1730-1900: Free time

1900-2000: Dinner

2000-2200: Post Dinner space

## APPENDIX B

Day IX Feedback Session:

Sample Feedback:

- The group feels like a family, the institute like home
- Didn't know what to expect from the program
- Saw the interconnectedness of problems as well as solutions
- The program helped balance my perspective

- Every day brought new questions in my mind
- Learnt a lot from all the participants
- I'm learning to speak in front of people
- Fundamentally we're all facing the same issues in our regions

Sample Questions:

- How can we create a network for future collaborations?
- How do I apply what I've learnt here, back where I come from in terms of specific steps?
- How can we understand the dynamics of politics in a better manner?
- How do we resolve violence of all kinds?
- When's the next workshop?
- How do we improve the state of the Himalayas by improving the state of our minds?
- How can we create spaces such as PAH in other places?
- How can I work on the root causes within me?

APPENDIX C:

Team PAH Debrief:

- Felt a lack of preparation and detailed planning
- Announcing the course and enrolling participants should begin much earlier
- Time table was packed with too much, lack of free time
- Homework and other information from the participants wasn't harnessed
- Need for better planning and communication within the PAH team
- We could not handle the dominating voices within the group
- More assertive facilitation needed to create a more inclusive space
- Can we have thematic PAH? (such as PAH Gender, PAH Agriculture etc.) So a nine day course followed by 'specialization'?

- Housekeeping + Kitchen responsibilities dwindled over the week

## APPENDIX D:

### List of Participants:

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