

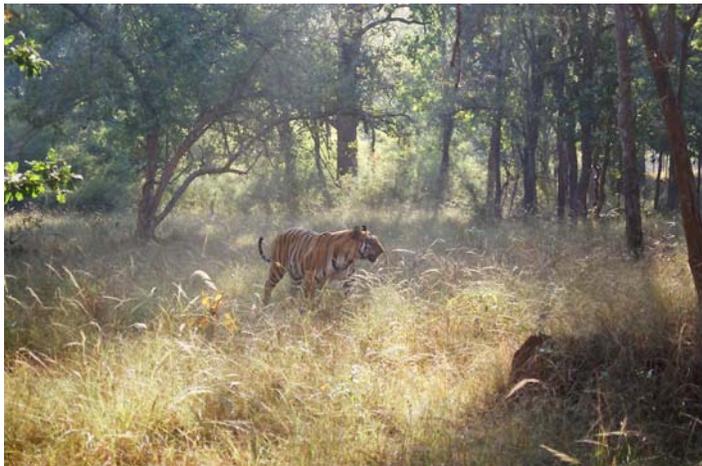
# Space

Shola Fellowship  
3-5 January, 2007

Bandhavgarh  
MP, India

Set in the backdrop of a wildlife sanctuary in the heart of the country, this meeting was to discuss the complex topic of 'space'.

The group meeting after an eventful year had a lot to share personally, besides meeting some new people. Shabnam and Aunty joined us for the first time in a fellowship meeting. Mathew, Pratim, Som, Rajiv, Rupa, Kukki, Simran, Reuel, Saju, Uncle, Pramod, Ranjan and Sneh were all there. The Shola Fellowship was meeting



the first time after losing one of its dear members, Shrikant to cancer. There were many said and unsaid feelings, unshed tears and memories of old times which surely flashed many minds through the days together. We all missed his quiet presence, humming and fine thoughts - a space left vacant, difficult to fill up with any other.

However, the forest overtook our agenda and the tracking of the famed tiger in an undisturbed forest was an adventure. Jeep rides (disturbing the peace of the jungle) were made almost everyday in pleasant evenings and cold mornings. Seeing B2, made one gasp at his sheer majestic ways. A tiger in a vast territory, needing 80 sq. kms of space for itself, was another definition of space.

Bandhavgarh, as told to us by Ambar Sharma, a local wild life enthusiast - was at 815 MSL, a hunting ground for the Rewa State, was surrounded by 32 hillocks and dense semi-evergreen forests. The Charanganga river and its tributaries flows through the area, which is the original land of the Baigas and Gonds. Like other parts in central India, this forest also has a mythological history of parts of the Ramayan being featured. Saints like Kabir and warriors and kings from the mughal time also had crossed the area sometime. The Baghel Dynasty ruled this area for 1000 years. However, primarily - this was the land of the tiger! A total area of 1165 sq kms harboured 64 tigers (Census 2004). The sanctuary was a managed space - core, buffer and tourism zones demarcated; people involved in its conservation as watchers, guides, jeep drivers, etc. However, there are many pressures to this wild area - 15 villages in the sanctuary with all their human needs and resource extraction! This

topic is dropped from the minds of many conservation oriented members in the fellowship to concentrate on `space' - though this was also a case of conflicting spaces....

The discussions incorporated all aspects of `space' and began with a round of introduction to the topic and our expectations from the meeting-



#### WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN WE SAY `SPACE'

- Space Vs Space - "my" space & "other" space
- Physical, mental, psychological, emotional space
- Own values and lifestyle - space in my life for others
- Commercially viable space
- Behavioral space
- Physical comfort/emotional space
- Management of space - readiness to give and take
- Aura
- Core and Buffer space - protective space
- "Furniture" as a metaphor - physical paraphernalia
- Own life space - Space for one self
- Mental turbulence
- Forget one self, equal, others given equal importance
- Selfless/humility
- Darkness
- Metaphysical
- Movement - 2 identities involved
- Light
- Vacuum/empty - what you fill it up with
- Blue
- Galaxy/Sky
- Freedom, Unbound, Clear

- Depth, huge, infinity, vast, limitless

These ideas were grouped and taken up for smaller group discussions:

1. Mind/Personal/Own Space (Som, Auntie, Mathew, Rajiv)
2. Physical Space (Ranjan, Pramod, Pratim, Rupa)
3. Relationship Space (Shabnam, Sneh, Kukki, Uncle)

*Saju kept out of the discussions, working on her physics book and the children played, while the group thought, talked and worked.*

The expectations of the group from the discussions were:

1. Mental Space for self and society
2. Relationships and adjustments according to time
3. Management of Space
4. Definition of Space
5. How to relate mind related space to external
6. How do you construct better spaces within oneself and society - something that works!
7. Practically balancing internal space
8. Create a `new' space
9. Fill up with practical examples to take back

## Group 1 Mind Space

The group explained the interrelationship between the internal and external mind space. They defined different types of people who managed this space in different ways:

Hierarchic  
Fatalist  
Capitalist  
Egalitarian  
Hermit

If the balance on internal mind space is not there - there maybe an ever-pareshan character, pain to others or one with a mask

There are different ways in which balance can be achieved



Control personal space - eg. through yoga  
 Create your environment - eg. Communities within "gates"  
 Other ideas: Johari Window - where one has to place oneself

		ME	
		Know	Do Not Know
YOU	Know		
	Do Not Know		

Group 2  
 Physical Space

- Evolution of use of Space
- Ownership and use of space - 50 sq.m to 5000 sq.m
- Value attached to space
- Space and sense of space
- Relationship with free space - how comfortable are you?
- Acquisitiveness and filling up space
- Quality of space
- Physical space management reflects condition of mental space

Some examples were also given through drawings:

Tiger - male - 80 sq kms; female 40 sq. kms (spatial landscape)

Primate - arboreal

Kurumba village - pond, rock, drying yard

Layout of a flat - use of space - open space?

Urban village (vasant kunj) - community/common space

Group 3  
 Relationship Space

The group discussed about Space in Relationships. The following points emerged:

- Individuality and mental make up determines the space requirement
- There is no perfect fixed definitions but the frequencies should match

- Time and building of a relationship governs the space one gives and takes
- The concept of a 'comfort zone' for each individual relationship needs to be determined and discussed
- Age further determines space - usually as age goes up, space for others shrinks

The group presented the last issue - with 3 songs,

Child- *Bachpan ke din bhi kya din the...*

Youth - *Jawaniyan ye mast mast bin piye...*

Old - *Jab hum honge sath sal ke aur tum hogi pachpan ki.....*

After a trip in the forest the group discussed together the 3 aspects/sections

1. Evolution of an individual and adaptations with time/relationships. Even in society how do we adjust - eg. to selfishness or lies
2. Relationships are governed by physical and mental aspects or space. The quantum of physical and mind will determine the relationship
3. Differentiating between animals and humans - the latter needing mental space, besides physical and having different parameters of relationships. The issue of 'survival' was highlighted amongst animals
4. Spaces are basically physical and mental - survival and relationships are things that fill them up, like outcomes
5. In a healthy ecosystem there is space for all, though there is competition and fight for survival



6. Relationship discussions related to being attached, being governed by societal influences. There was a difference between 'engagement' and relationship and some felt that it is not necessary to have relationships only with humans.
7. Unconsciously, we always try to manage space - a parallel being drawn to the management of the wildlife sanctuary
8. There was a discussion on how restrictive spaces are in all aspects of society and the factors that govern the opening up of spaces - eg were given of SHGs, PRI devolvement of power, India in the UN Security Council. These are intentionally designed
9. Society often does not tolerate dissent - so there maybe a lack of space in group behaviour due to conformity. Societal influences on people determine their values and the acceptance that helps nurture and accommodate different people. A good eg. Is the Shola Fellowship itself, which demonstrates 'groupness'. However, group behaviour is not the sum of individual behaviour.
10. There is increased aspiration amongst people leading to competitiveness in space, increasing territories and sometimes leading to violent conflicts. Usually the powerless comply, as they live in a narrow band width.

(This was also explained in a Johari window explanation)

The next session was on what we want to take back from the meeting. A better understanding was sought for...

1. Relationships and adjustment according to time
2. Mental space for oneself and for society
3. Scarcity of Space, management of space, physical and mental space, throw out the garbage
4. Definition of space, in vernacular philosophy space is limitless/the entire universe. But mental space?
5. How do you construct better spaces within oneself and society. Management of space needs to be explored - especially mental and take what works
6. Mental space and a personal balance
7. Practically balancing internal space
8. Trying to fin a new space area and determining what are the external factors that give those spaces. Be more magnanimous and create those new areas
9. Exploring personal spaces and relationships
10. Remove the blocks and come out into an open space
11. Relate personal space to the society, keeping everyday life and comfort in mind



12. There was a questioning whether there are more parameters of space than those discussed till now - which may include social, cultural, spiritual, cosmic, political, etc.

Next exercise was on HOW I WANT MY SPACE TO BE

1. Ranjan
  - More accommodative of consent and dissent at individual and society level
  - Organised space - social, financial, spiritual, political, free/independent
  - Space to be close to nature
2. Som
  - Space to generate/distill ideas about societal change
  - Space to implement and give completion to the above
  - Space for fulfillment in my relationship
3. Pratim
  - Free - cluttering, but unbound
  - Mix of solitude and companionship - open to people, new ideas yet not losing own niche
  - Space that inspires, uplifts, questions
  - Space of fun- music, drinks, company, good work and challenges
4. Pramod
  - Compromised space - make the best out of it
  - Learn to accommodate and not crib
  - Try to do what you enjoy and stay happy
  - A small private space - not to be shared
5. SKC- Uncle
  - Space to be available and filled with all the actions, including self action - better survival, upliftment of animate/inanimate things, irrespective of caste/status; keeping in mind not the immediate impact, but an everlasting impact in time to come
6. Mathew
  - Comfortable and Challenging (eg. Home and work)
  - Think of space practically - individual and how it relates to society
7. Kukki
  - Orderly, well planned, uncluttered, no surprises
  - Tolerant to accommodate new people, relationships
  - Live close to `open` spaces
8. Rajeev
  - Space for low physical needs
  - Space for new relationships/friends
  - Space to accommodate others' views without opposition
9. Rupa
  - Freedom to choose my mental, physical and relationships spaces

- Physical spaces: balance of colours, forms, things and emptiness that give me pleasure, soothe and inspire me
  - Mental: sharp memory of things lived and experienced
  - Accommodate new ideas, analyse, reach new insights
  - Be accommodative, while being critical
  - Social/Political: have energy and enthusiasm to engage
10. Sneha
- Free to discover new areas and avenues
  - More time to self
  - A space that can accommodate many interesting people and ideas
11. Saju
- Write a lot of books
  - Space to earn money

The meeting ended, with plans for the next one to be held in Jan, 2008 in the location of Rajgir, Gaya with a theme of Faith, Religion and Spirituality.