

The Seventh Shola Fellowship

2003

<Full page Collage of photos from Jaisalmer Shola Fellowship>

Fear: the key?

Jaisalmer, January 02-05

<INSIDE COVER PAGE WITH A NOTE IN A BOX ABOUT JAISALMER AND PICTURES OF THE FORT, LAKE ETC.>

Ah, Jaisalmer

Rising from the heart of the Thar Desert like a golden mirage is the city of Jaisalmer with an area of about 5.1 sq km and an altitude of 793m amsl. The name Jaisalmer evokes a vivid picture of sheer magic and brilliance of the desert. A commanding fort etched in yellow sandstone stands, with all its awe-inspiring splendour, dominating the amber-hued city. This frontier town of Rajasthan is considered a favourite tourist destination. Local color and warmth prevail over the inhospitable and forbidding terrain, imbuing the medieval town with a special magic. Jaisalmer is 290-km from Jodhpur via Pokhran, Dechu and Balesar or 330-km from Bikaner via Pokhran and Phalodi, Ajmer 500 km, Jodhpur 275 km, Delhi 897 km and Udaipur 663 km. It is well connected by train with Jodhpur and other major cities of the country by a meter gauge line (when the trains are not cancelled that is!). October- February is the best time.

Jaisalmer is famous for its Fort and *havelis*. **The Fort:** From a distance, the Jaisalmer fort seemed to be rising from the heart of the Thar Desert. Antique, clothes, fabric, leather, quilt and puppet shops lots of guides and throngs people of multi-cultural/ nations dot the stone path to the courtyard of the fort. Rest of the fort is as a tranquil town obsessed with its own beauty. Atop the fort, stand two cannons, least intimidating, more of antique attires with an enchanting view of the entire toy-like golden town at sunset! **Havelis** are the mansions built by the wealthy merchants to flaunt their ever-growing status in society. Some of the famous are Patwon ki Haveli, Salim Singh ki Haveli and Nathmal ki Haveli. **Jain Temples**, within the palace there were three exquisitely carved Jain temples dedicated to the Jain Tirthankaras- Rishabhdev, Sambhavnath and Parshwamnath. There was also a library with a huge collection of some extremely old manuscripts. **Gadsisar Sagar Lake**, there were many beautiful temples, shrines and a museum around the lake. But nothing to beat the sight of he countless birds flocking over water. **Sand Dunes (Sam, Kuhuri etc.** about 42 km from Jaisalmer), these are the closest point to witness the total sandy desert. A truly magnificent stretch of sweeping dunes, with little or no vegetation but have in recent years become obscene centers of commercial tourism- full of poly bags, coke, etc. The best way to see this and other sights around Jaisalmer is to take a came safari.

[SJ: You might put the source for the above write-up in the style of “Adapted from:...”]

The Seventh Shola Fellowship

Fear

**January 02 – 05, 2003
Dhola Maru, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan**

The Journey to the golden city

All participants of SF 2003 grouped in Delhi on January 01 to journey together (except for Chau, Rinky, Rustam and Ruben, who decided to drive up in their car) to explore and unravel the FEAR in the golden land of dunes- the land of constraints, limits, extremities and harshness, scarcity. Every one including the junior members of the group enjoyed the Indian country side experience of the meter gauge journey, though seemingly a bit long at times, and the richness of the diverse group from intellect – humour- social – natural – natural domain- industry – philosophy – marketing and the above all the taste of lots of station food, specially the giant chilly ‘*pakor*s’ of the nuclear town – the Pokharan! With lots of halts and jolts of the meter gauge, we finally manage to land just five hours, (around 05.00 pm) late to our abode for the next three days- the Hotel Dhola Maru.- a nice family managed place, almost for ourselves.

What’s the Shola Fellowship?

The Shola Fellowship is a network (that means that they talk to each other fairly regularly) group of concerned (about each other and the world around) people (not professionals nor organisations) who are primarily friends (rather than adversaries or competitors) and come together annually to spend some time with one another. They come from different backgrounds and fields of endeavour and hence the variety to thinking and talking about life, systems, development.....The Fellowship is not a formal entity, just a powerful binding spirit, with a core at its center, and regular and irregular invitees who join in each meeting. The strength of the group is in its will to be part of an adventure, to think, experience and create - and then transport bits and sparks into our lives.

The fellowship was born in the Sholas (pristine natural rainforests of South India) in 1996 when it met in Northern Hay, Kotagiri. It met there again in 1997 (and as the organisers were sick and tired of fending for guests); the third time in no-member’s land by the banks of the Chand Paata Lake at Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh in 1999. By this time, the meetings were organized around themes and we took a stab at thinking about Lifestyles in Shivpuri. Bamboo Banks, Masinagudi was the host to the fourth meeting amidst the deep forests and horses (theme: Livelihoods) in 2000. A freezing Almora in 2001 January depended on Spirituality to warm us up. The Kali Resort in Dandeli, Karnataka brought us back in 2002 to reflect on Wealth.

<SJ: MAY BE SOME SELECT PHOTOS HERE OF THE OLD SHOLA MEETINGS?>

Day I: Warming up without fear

Day 01: 02 Jan 03, 1930 hours – late night, with dinner

Session-1 Getting to know each other more, responsibilities and agenda

After freshening up, the group got together in the large basement hall of Dhola Maru about 1930 hours, to begin our meet. After a round of introductions, it was time for the customary introduction of the Shola Fellowship (its genesis, vision and plan with a brief recap of the past Shola destinations) and the topics covered, especially for the benefit for our invitees Rinky, Pramod, Ram, Geetha, Nikhil and Nandini, and Chau (who had been with us to Almora). The group also talked about the programme for the coming three years. This was followed by a round on the broad agenda, allocation of various management responsibilities – accounts, cash handling, logistics – food menus, excursions and explorations, entertainments, schedule and time management, documentation and report writing etc, etc.

<PHOTO>

Session-2 Fear- Personal experiences and stories of the participants:

We began our exploration of the fear with a round of each one's real personal stories/ experience associated or expressing the underlying notion of fear in some way or other. This was an exercise to pick up some of the key factors which invoked/ evoked fear. Thoughts for the night and of course, a little bit of spirit to warm up!

Day II: Gripping fear

03 Jan 03

Session 1: Fear- Key factors and words:

Fear key factors/ words that emerged out of our narrated experiences and discussions were:

- Fear of the Supernatural
- Fear of dog, or personal safety and fear of unknown
- Fear of haunted houses
- Childhood fear, phobia of water, etc.
- Fear of fear itself
- Fear of being stranded, helplessness
- Terrified being alone with an unknown hostile host group in an unknown place
- Fear of unknown imagination
- Fear of own or other's death
- Fear of being a woman, being alone, lonely, being scared of emptiness
- Nature's furry- fear and helplessness that it brings
- Fear of the dark and fear of future, fear of uncertainty
- Fear of isolation e.g. in an empty train and night
- Fear of death, lack of control of the situation, fear of unknown

- Fear of calamity and nature

Other fears that were listed were:

- Fear of starting
- Fear of completion
- Fear of losing
- Fear of domination and dominance
- Fear of height
- Fear of abuse
- Fear of society/ societal pressure
- Fear of physical injury
- Fear of insecurity
- Fear of age
- Fear of dependence
- Fear of globalisation
- Fear of take over (industry)

These were grouped and summarised as:

→ **Event related:** In night, in journey, Other life, Mysterious presence, Nature's dominance, globalisation, Societal set up, with unknown people and places, dead or death, bad experience

→ **Reaction based:** i.e. terrified, shocked, fear of dark, uncertainty, lack of control, lack of unknown, societal norms, dominance, insecurity, phobia, etc.

Session 2: Understanding Fear - Fear and Socialisation: Home and School Situation

Sajju traced fear and socialization in the context of upbringing at home and in the school environment. She dealt the above around the experiences of herself and her friends and other peers, to bring forward underlying salient points.

At the home situation, there are different time periods in the lifecycle. As small children, fear is used to help the child avoid dangers, and give it proper nutrition etc. During pre-teen stages, imposition of values begins viz. be good, nice to all, not to fight, obey the elders and do not argue with them, avoid bad company, beatings, peer pressure of siblings and teenagers, times for scolding, sermons on good –bad and avoidance of bad company, restrictions – mixing with boys, returning home before dark, do not drink, do not smoke, not to reads this or that, and increasing peer and sibling pressure to do well and behave well etc.

In the next stage, during and after teenage, how a family member or parent's strong views on how life should be led imbues fear of certain ideas, e.g. poor views on married life may strongly influence the parents and elders to cultivate in a girl fear so that she runs away from or escapes from the thought or idea of marriage. These and other fears can be overcome by a variety of methods e.g. through positive reading, positive support of others in the family and the most important the prayers and faith in the spiritual path. Since most people are influenced heavily by

parental nurturing and transmitted fears, these range of fears are difficult to fight unless conscious or when there is a juncture to address these.

The second aspect deals with upbringing in the school situation. The current school system is so very rigid that it might not allow a child to open up and act/ work on its own. An average conventional school system comprises a) punishments- in pretext of the child's betterment, b) humiliating the child, c) current ranking system (categorisation) creates a "parent-teacher" fear syndrome in the child, to perform- must come first- in class, section, school, board etc. otherwise what will teachers, parents, friends, sibling will say...the criticism, expectation, perform therefore, the fear of future, and d) the examination system has nothing to do with the knowledge of the subject, get marks/ ranks by any hook and crook, future line of career decided by the percentage of marks rather than interest or knowledge, infuses aggressive attitude amongst children and often with the parents. These pressures have been increasingly leading to situations beyond control for the teachers-parents and the students. In most situations, schooling is money oriented and the element of how to enjoy life, develop the attitude, antiquates, personality and humanistic touch of life – without fear - has been lost from the system!

Session 3: Fear in Society at large- theories and concepts

Som briefly took the group along the theories and texts that help understanding and putting fear in context of the human make-up:

Basic emotions: There are supposed to be four basic emotional constituents of human being- Mad, Sad, Glad and Scared. And it is the Scared that get translated in to fear.

Visible basic elements of our personality make-up i.e.

- Parent within us – that could be nurturing or critical
- Adult within us that is the rational, thinking and judging self, and
- Child that primarily feels (mad, glad, sad and scared) or that inspires or creates (Free Child)

Each one of us has amongst us the above emotions in some forms or others and they get prominent at some time or other. At another level, what the basic human needs are, have been summarized well in the Maslow's need hierarchy - the basic need pyramid (from base to the tip- Physical needs, Emotional needs, Socialisation needs and finally, Self actualization needs) and how does this determine individual and group behaviour, and what factors/ circumstances would be responsible to creating, defending, diffusing fear, and for creating conditions of fearlessness. Some key fears in society at large are manifested in:

- Traditional structures and fear
- State legitimacy i.e. legitimate violence
- International relations
- Inter state relations
- Inter-religions
- Fear of chaos and disorder
- Fear of changes
- Counters of fear

Use of fear within-group and across-group formations. The fear appears to be the organizing tool behind group formation. Cultural Theory was also used to reflect and talk about fear and its manifestations:

- a. Any moment any thing will happen e.g.- Government/ Staff- physical control, situation and state uses force to organize people
- b. Nothing will happen e.g. upper and rich, Bush Phenomena, militarisation
- c. Will be fine should not tamper too much e.g.- Village level situation, a traditional society
- d. Fatalist, e.g. fear of chaos/disorder
- e. Hermit- patterns take the shape, kind of fearlessness

Some situations arising/ leading to fear are:

- a. Interpersonal interactions and relations and role of fear
- b. Group and formations- fear may be the organizing element at intra and inter group level. The main objective is to acquire power and use it to generate fear and allegiance and obeisance.
- c. Use of fear by weak- e.g.- gossip

Session 4: Group Work: Talking about Fear

This session involved group activity to look into three questions in three groups:

- Where and how do we acquire fear?
- What does perfect fearlessness mean?
- Fear as an organizing principle in societies?

The three groups presented their findings using charts and physical exhibits:

[SJ: PHOTOS OF THE GROUP'S EXHIBITS OR PEOPLE PRESENTING?]

1. Where and how do we acquire fear?

Upbringing (home, school, college, work place), society, religion, survival, others, uncertainty, unknown, sensory organs, Natural calamities, environment, institutions, failure, bad experience, lack of confidence, lack of skills, genetics, exposure- media, communication, absorption through our sensory organs, reading, astrology

2. What does perfect fearlessness mean?

A state of confidence and 'freedom of mind', innocence, equanimity, lack of necessity of hoarding, unruffled by adverse situations, self belief, detached, an exchange or interaction that is based on voluntarism and recognition of individuals, objective thinking, openness or no prejudices, sharing, no greed or accumulation for the future, no pressure, positive thinking, God not I, love, no need of weapons to protect, creativity

3. Fear an organizing principle in societies

To maintain law and order, maintain and acquire power over people/ Nations (under world, Osama), uncertainty, lack of common values, weakness, rule, protection, dominance, to reduce non conformity- confirm to the interests of strong, uniformity, reducing variance, ability to harm the disadvantaged and marginalized.

The basic fear is the survival of self. Fear is directly proportional to learning- more aware and informed have more fear! Learning also reduces spontaneity.

Session 5: Excursion to Kuhuri Sand Dunes: Camels, culture, cuisine

The group left by jeeps to Kuhuri, to spend an evening with Sand dunes at the edge of the desert. It was warm when we started and after a drive of about two hours, we were at the Kuhuri village Camel parking (!) where the daring amongst us got onto the Camel-backs for a three km ride. Some of the scared (No names to be mentioned here!) chose to take the jeep to the sand dunes. Then it was fun and frolic time at the Sand Dunes for all the children while the adults searched for moments of joy amongst Bengali tourists, tourism sales boys, tea-wallahs while waiting for the marvelous sunset that had started. After the sunset and chill in the air, it was time to return to the village on camels, jeeps and some even footed it back. Having passed through the Kuhuri and adjoining villages with children asking alms of tourists (politically correct plea of money to buy books and notebooks!), our group as well as a few other groups, settled in the open and by-now cool courtyard for an evening of songs, dances, spirits around the fire in the centre. The evening culminated in delicious traditional Rajasthani vegetarian dinner with mouth-watering dishes and dessert. The ride back to Jaisalmer was chilly but put all to get ready for sleep and rest.

<SJ: Photos from Kuhuri, the camels, sunset, drive, etc.]

Day III: Living with fear

04 Jan 03

Session 1: Presentations by Group Members on Fear

1. Fears in Nature and Societies

Pratim and Bhat began the day with an interesting presentation of fear with reference to nature and societies, while Pratim explored with the world of flora and fauna whereas Bhat took us through the natural history.

Part-A: Fear in Plants and Animals (Pratim) - the silent points were:

Surprisingly, there is no mention of fear in literature amongst flora and fauna but one observes the following phenomena:

- Animals aggression and other behavioural patterns, mainly with relation territory, food, selection of pairs, dominance
- Prey – predator aspect where weak ‘succumbs’ (food/ territory- aggressive behaviour)
- Primates, e.g. dolphins, show ‘altruism’

- Plants colonise, mimic, show dominance, mutualism and also aggression
- Man started as hunter gatherer- colonized – adapted to various conditions- moved to nature-controlling desires- Rivers by dams, oceans by thermal energy, space applications, hybridisation in agriculture/ animal husbandry- urban settlements and over population, over production. And a so called a settled and ‘advanced’ life style.

Fear is *different in* nature and not very relevant in the context of human societies although physical and behavioural manifestations may be comparable.

Thereafter, Bhat provided an excellent exposition about the changing environment and adaptive style of mankind through the evolutionary time line of the natural history:

- 4.5 billion years of earth (700 m plants; man youngest in the chain)
- Gone through major climatic changes and cycles
- Man was initially hunter gatherers
- All cultured societies lived closer to water, closer to equator, near flood plains (lake-edged societies)
- With changing environ and living conditions the people moved to more temperate areas
- Same lateral band movement have the same conditions
- N-S movement required new tools, skills and methods to adapts- new weather, flora, fauna, water sources, less abundant food, seasonal life style
- As people moved to such areas the need to organize in various group sizes arose to gather, hunt, grow, store food...survival and coping in different areas induce the sense of ‘fear’ or how to respond? e.g.- desert environment have scant population, scarce resources and deadly predators.
- Change brought survival strategies: larger population, larger organized society varied techniques to buffer the vagaries of the cycles
- Colder areas have ‘Eskimos’- the hunters.
- Different ‘fear’ evolved amongst and between different societies and cultures, therefore various ‘fear’ geographical belts or differing cultures and events (like epidemic- fear of illness) hence, different types of fears
- Accordingly evolved differing dispersal mode for fear,
- Role of fear in natural calamities- the cycles and return, the periodicity of the natural disasters- the earthquakes, floods, cyclones the diseases- malaria, plague, small-pox

Therefore, in brief:

- (i) Fear is different in flora and fauna - a reflex or an emotional response
- (ii) Mankind has adapted to variety of fear by migration across and setting in different environments
- (iii) Projection of mature - fear coping mechanisms for creation of new environment, but
- (iv) Control of the nature remained very limited to a few societies (despite technologies and management capacities).

2. Fears as a tool: Rituals and Norms

Sneh and Geetha broadly dealt with the two most common aspects a) Religious Rituals- mainly the experiencing aspects and b) the physical or cosmetic attributes and c) Social norms i.e. the

practices and the traditions e.g. women, norms in the west and country, setting of social standards etc.

Other related points emerged during discussions were:

- Mayan priests evoked fear by killing people in the society
- Many religion use fear to discriminate between men and women
- Fear of menstruation
- Women's perpetual exploitation/ fearfulness
- In population, conception of religion and ritual attributes
- Norms: are self propelled fears, assisted by stimuli but a grand design and conspiracy- an expression of fear
- Become a part of the group and become a leader
- Culture and fear
- Preservation of forest as livelihoods
- Old vs. new (modern) values- can one judge?

3. Fears in organized religion

Ram and Shrikant took the group through their ideas and concerns about fear and religion. At an individual level- a way to answer need for meaning, self-knowledge and find a place. There are two paths:

- a. To look for an umbrella- or a safe abode, i.e. the shelter in an organised religion this is how the majority of the individuals move in the society – the general approach.
 - Truth exploration is codified, interpreted by the middle men or the “spiritual guides”
 - Use of ‘God’ but/ away from ‘Godliness’
 - Spiritual guides use religion to ‘organise’ people to follow, conform and condition
 - They codify value base as sin, morality, renunciation, penance, celibacy, caste etc
 - This lead to CRUSADE/ CONVERSION/ JEHAD.... the “extremes”, where as it also infuses ‘missionary zeal’ in positive sense
 - Induces.... FEAR and the originator of religious politics!
- b. The second path is
 - Individual Exploration for knowledge,
 - Wisdom, meaning of life, the pure spirituality- the self knowledge
 - Full of risks
 - A hermit- Buddha
 - The God with ‘Godliness’

The Conditioning of the human mind is the most important aspect of the religion.... seat of fear. If religion goes away the human mind will be less conditioned and there will be less fear.

The above lead to discussion on the probable root of as why or what causes people to move to region and the fear factor. Some of the conditions and factors brought forwards were:

- a. What happens when one happened to be Closer to Nature

- Real situation
- Needs action
- Use of focused energy
- Solution with in one self and holistic

b. Away from Nature

- Imaginary conditions – induced fears
- Abstract and unreal- unable to get the handle
- Diverts energy
- Solutions Out Side – here the need/ necessity/ role of religion comes to play and hence the fear

4. Competitiveness and fear in Sports

A. In Football, Chau described from the footballers point of view:

- If one plays more, there is more chance of defeat, and therefore such condition helps develop no fear mindset to a defeat mindset!
- A real player learns in coping with losing at an early stage
- The condition of losing mentally, e.g., loosing streaks.... loosing mentality sets in, demoralization
- Fear is situational aspect of the instantaneous reflection

B. Kukki talked about the changing face of cricket

Earlier, there was

- Loss of prestige/ pride
- Fear of injury
- Fear of losing place

Now, there is

- Less of prestige/ pride
- Losing place and more with reference to various commercial gains
- Become more of mind, psychological warfare

The mindset of the current Indian team has:

- Loosing streak
- Losing mind
- Become more individualistic playing for the team- nation

Australians play with the positive mindset, are aggressive and are not afraid of losing the game, where as India/ England are defensive.

Session 2: Depicting Fear

Three groups set out to create logos and signs capturing the groups' understanding of fear. These were then presented to the other groups.

Group-1 Fear of current way to unsustainable livelihood

Group-1 The key- it's varied meanings in context to varied people situations, e.g. To an NGO/ politician/ govt. departments- fear of rural prosperity, to weapon industry- the world peace, to a teenager- an artificial limb, to an American- Osama, a middle aged man- a torn pink slip, to a mother afraid of her child getting hurt, to hippy- a scissor, to an alcoholic – a transfer to Gujarat....

Group-3 a dot in the universe

[SJ: PLEASE INCLUDE VISUALS NEXT TO EACH GROUP'S LOGO – ANY NOTES ON WHAT GROUP 1 AND 3 MEANT?]

5. Fear of uncertainties in livelihood patterns

Pramod talked to the group his ideas on fear. These included:

- Uncertainty implies fear/ basis of fear- it happens in our all actions and works
- Imagination magnifies fear
- Simpler lifestyles/ livelihoods make for lesser uncertainty and complexity and also guards against related risks e.g. affluent families becoming dependent on lifestyles and unable to reduce levels in face of adversity
- Organisations/ societies/ individuals that have realized the above and are less afraid will survive the adverse impact on the life and livelihood and the depression

By the end of the day's sunshine in the Dhola Maru lawns, it was time for the group to go for a stroll to the famous Jaisalmer fort. It was a time to walk, talk, listen and learn – and of course, see the magnificent sights from the fort. The group had tea and snacks at the fort and a few strolled back whereas others took auto-rickshaw rides back. To freshen up and get ready for the evening bonfire session.

[SJ: PHOTOS OF THE GROUP GOING TO, IN AND RETURNING FROM THE FORT]

6. Fear in culture

It was evening by the time the group gathered around the fire gently being stoked. The chill of the evening, fought with the fire and warm drinks and special (hot!) snacks, provided the perfect setting to explore the depiction of fear in the media. Rupa and Rinky took the group through this. The following key points were highlighted:

- The earliest fiction horror films revolved around themes of reincarnation and rebirths. A typical ghost story. Attempt was not to scare but give the lone story a new dimension, e.g. *Mahal*.
- Supernatural because a popular theme – the early spook stories were around the '*Bhatki Hui Atma*'.
- Then there were straight horror films like *Nagin* – where the female snake took revenge from the killer of her mate. *Jaani Dushman* where a woman bit Sanjeev Kumar and he became a cursed creature and preyed on young women.

- Then came a series of horror films based on Exorcist – (1) child who is possessed by evil spirits; (2) Serial Killer – Naseeruddin in his early days
- The Ramsay Brothers created their own horror stories – *Do Gaz Zameen Ke Neeche* and *Dak Bunglow*. Most themes revolved around the evil spirit and deformed creatures terrorizing villages and the targets were women and children.
- Then there were the Alfred Hitchcock movies, which had a stylish mix of suspense, terror and a dash of romance, which had a certain fascination:
 - a. Rear Window
 - b. Vertigo
 - c. Psycho – murderous psychos are scary

These movies had great entertainment value and in all these the objective was to plant fear in the audience and the audience paid “to be terrorized”. Psychologically, humans seem to feel a vicarious pressure in seeing the weak terrorized – why else then would he pay to be scared!

The group talked about some popular fear themes:

a. in fiction including:

- Human becoming, speaking like animals
- Forest and forests spirits
- Mysteries of dark spaces
- Wandering spirits
- Unknown species
- Furniture’s and belongings e.g., piano, old furniture

b. In folk tales

- Around houses
 - Rural/ urban settings
 - Haunted houses, streets, trees etc
 - Violent deaths
- Reincarnations- love stories, revenge, psycho, strange people
- Ghosts and their hierarchy – class and caste and there were knotty ghosts

The aim of the stories used should be to teach positive values some thought and not instill fear or acquire related behaviour. A round of sharing of ghost and other fear stories from each in the group, built the tension and guarded entertainment in the night with the fire now fully cackling. But soon we were to overcome fear with the sumptuous bonfire dinner followed by a session of most memorable and delightful melodies led by Geetha, Nandini, Nikhil and Ram, and joined by others. Some retired unwillingly whereas others were left with little choice to since the Gadisar Lake awaited us in the morning.

[VISUALS FROM THE BONFIRE]

Day IV: Going away without fear

04 Jan 03

A trip to Gadisar Lake

The day began with an early breakfast and the group headed towards the Gadisar Lake for water and bird gazing and of course, boating! A small museum near the lake was educative for some but the lines of curio salesmen could not make much of dent in these tourists' wallets – a different kind! For many, it was the boating trips that were grrreat fun while cowards looked on and gossiped from the side; and ah, a couple turned philosophical too finding places and stances to be quiet and thoughtful. After an hour, we headed back to wind up the meeting.

[SJ: VISUALS FROM THE LAKE TRIP]

Session 1: Fear in business and industry today

Something we might have missed, Pramod took us through the fear that pervaded the business environment in the country. His key concerns were:

- Fear in Organisations
 - Environment of depression in the economy and industry in the company
 - Major demand and supply mismatches and anxieties created thereby
 - Lack of preparedness of Indian industry for globalisation/ competition e.g. no investments for R&D, the costs that are being paid as a result
 - No new investments being made because of fear of uncertainty
- Individuals
 - At the lower levels, there is the fear of retrenchments and lay-offs
 - Manager level stagnation - stay where you are and pray or you will lose this too!
 - Entrepreneur Class - no new opportunity, market low and slow uptake
- How individuals created further problems leading to fears and uncertainties:
 - Credit cards plastic money culture
 - Easy loans
 - EMI culture
- Near-future Scenario
 - Societal tensions leading to unrest, are likely to increase because of economic depression
 - Corrective action will begin to correct the alignment between demand and supply conditions but the timing and process are unclear at the present juncture
 - Fears will be wide-spread and will have to do with the transitions and change that will come about; and is likely to affect a large cross-section of society and their livelihoods

Session 2: Feedback

This session was to elicit reactions and responses from participants about what they liked and disliked about the Seventh Shola Fellowship. The feedback was:

What I liked and enjoyed:

- Great Company
- New dimensions of fear revealed
- Informal interactions
- Subject developed well
- Eye-opener – family in diverse company
- The Place

- Interesting sessions
- First visit to Rajasthan
- Exposed to new dimensions of fear
- Something different – like all Shola Fellowship meetings
- The Topic was good
- The train travel in a group was great
- Enjoyed talking about fear
- Being with children
- Meeting and getting to know people
- Idea of a holiday to ‘think’ is unique

What could perhaps be improved up and what I did not like:

- Too much of good food!
- Noisy kids – they too will require planning in future!
- Kuhuri visit – anti-climax, especially the crass commercialization of “culture”
- Too ‘organised’
- Long travel time
- Train delay
- Too sedentary – need more action
- More time to see region/ place
- Session information was provided too late
- Missed discussing fearlessness
- Lack of session preparation and supportive material
- Lack of logistical preparation
- Lack of group work- need more

Apart from other administrative matters, the Eighth Shola Fellowship Meeting was planned:

Topic: Creativity

Venue: Somewhere in Eastern India

Organisation Responsibility: Chau and GKB.

In the middle of the above session, the announcement of cancellation of train back to Delhi, pushed a panic button with the fear of uncertainty of mode of travel to all those traveling back to Delhi - except Ram and family who were taking a bus to Bikaner; and Rinky, Chau and children who were driving back to Delhi.

An immediate emergency meeting was convened to arrange for alternative transport and what action – the rush to cancel train tickets, refunds and an alternate bus journey organized by helpful Dhola Maru owners - helped us to get the tickets in the Jaisalmer- Jaipur bus. It was an adventurous bus journey to Jaipur (vvvery cold in the early morning!) where some got off whereas others continued by another bus to an equally cold and misty Delhi by mid-day. Finally all managed to reach in time and could able to get to their scheduled commitments, assignments and onward forward journeys etc....with a promise to meet again in the next Shola Fellowship.

Participants at the Seventh Shola Fellowship

[Photos: single thumbnails or in groups will be good]

1. Pratim, Kotagiri, Nilgiris, TN
2. Sneh, Kotagiri, Nilgiris, TN
3. Mathew, Kotagiri, Nilgiris, TN
4. Sajju, Kotagiri, Nilgiris, TN
5. Ruel, Kotagiri, Nilgiris, TN, Junior SF
6. Rupa, Hyderabad
7. R. Kukkila (Kukki), Hyderabad
8. Simran, Hyderabad
9. Chau (Ajit), New Delhi
10. Rinky, New Delhi
11. Rustam, New Delhi, Junior SF
12. Ruben, New Delhi, Junior SF
13. Ram, Bangalore
14. Geetha, Bangalore
15. Nandini (Ram & Geetha's daughter), Falodi, Urmul, Rajasthan
16. Nikhil (Ram & Geetha's son), Bangalore
17. Som, New Delhi
18. Pramod, New Delhi
19. Shrikant, New Delhi

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Some more photos?

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**The Eighth Shola Fellowship
December 27-30, 2003
at Sundarbans, West Bengal**

Theme: Creativity

Reach: sjoshi@taru.org for participation requests