



January 5-10, 2025 | Mumbai, India

# Deploying Personal Authority in Exercising Leadership

The Fifteenth Group Relations Conference  
offered by Group Relations India

# Dear Prospective Member,

It is with pleasure and a sense of anticipation that Group Relations India is offering our 15th Group Relations Conference (GRC), on a theme we believe is of timely as well as timeless relevance for each of us: the question of deploying our personal authority towards the well-being of all systems that we are part of.

As a nation we are inheritors of an independence movement led largely by the use of personal authority. Currently we face a set of complex realities: increasing polarization in society, weakening belief in institutions large and small, and perhaps as a defense against the anxiety it produces for us, a turning 'inwards', with the consequence that the idea of collective well-being is on the retreat, be it in our public institutions or in the private ones, including in our families.

There are many pathways to reclaiming the idea of collective well-being, but there is no escaping the realization that our own individual stances and actions have a bearing on the collective. Here is where the powerful idea of personal authority, which holds a special place in the Group Relations framework, performs its function: of getting us out of a sense of feeling overwhelmed, to examining what can we, in our individual capacity, do for the well-being of the multiple systems we belong to: family, organization, community, and even society.

This GRC focuses on how we can deploy our personal authority in each of our multiple roles, and find our leadership in the process. Of particular interest would be the study of the conscious and unconscious processes that support or detract us from using our personal

authority, and thereby exercising our leadership.

Designed as a temporary institution, away from the clutter of daily life, with a minimum of predetermined structure, a GRC offers a fresh and different space to see familiar processes, but with new eyes. Note that we use the word 'conference' in the sense of to 'confer': to bring together – through exploration and making meaning of 'here and now' experience. Our conferences have a very diverse set of participants representing a range of roles, lived realities, and identities, which furthers the possibility of nuanced and unexpected insights for all.

Learning in a GRC is neither standardized, nor a guaranteed set of outcomes. It is a singular, individual process that each member undertakes, because it derives from one's own direct experience, and is also a question of deploying personal authority! If this is appealing to you, then this 'conference' is likely to be of immense value to you.

Along with my associate director Rosemary Viswanath and all my colleagues on the staff, I look forward to hearing from you, and welcoming you right at the start of the new year, into GRC 2025: Deploying Personal Authority in Exercising Leadership.

**Ganesh Anantharaman,  
Director**



# The idea of personal authority

The idea of personal authority undergirds the Group Relations framework and also finds some resonance in the literature on leadership. However, in popular discourse, it has been narrowly interpreted as a quest for 'finding the freedom to live my life the way I want to'. The role of personal authority in the context of leadership for systems (group, organization, or societal) has not been explicitly studied either theoretically or experientially, for probable unconscious reasons.

Simply put, personal authority is an internal source of authority that you have by virtue of being born human. In its broadest sense, it comprises of a certain inherent right to live, love, and work. Personal authority is not dependent on role or position, the two words normally associated with the idea of authority. It is derived from the intrinsic human dignity of every human being, which in turn emanates from the idea that we all have the desire, and the potential, to live purposeful lives.

Personal authority therefore is neither conferred nor granted by someone externally. It is an internal resource that is available in 'equal measure' to each of us, to be deployed towards accomplishing what we consider important, both for our personal well-being and for the health of the systems that we belong to: family, organization, community, and society. Operationally, it involves using one's knowledge, skills, experience, and values to make decisions in every sphere of one's life, in all the roles one takes up, and at every stage of one's life.



# Deploying personal authority

Like any dimension of leadership, deploying personal authority is a complex phenomenon. A set of conscious factors such as the family environment, access to different kinds of resources – physical, social, and financial, combined with unconscious dynamics of what is socio-culturally permissible or appropriate determine both one's idea of personal authority as well as the extent of freedom one allows oneself to deploy it. A further layer of complexity is that the imbibed hierarchies of caste, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and ability, have a big influence on how we perceive the extent of our own and others' personal authority; how much we allow for its deployment; and how our deployment of it is received by others.

But there is an important difference between having personal authority and deploying it. External factors such as the social, political and cultural environment may impinge on one's deployment of personal authority, but don't really truncate the personal authority that one inherently has. The real danger to the

idea of personal authority therefore, is from the cultural prescriptions and proscriptions we have internalized, in which the unexplored hierarchies mentioned above play a big role.

To comprehend personal authority as inextricably linked to the context of task and role in any system also invites us to think about when it is and when it is not appropriate to deploy it. Because personal authority is without limits, and yet not without boundaries!

The deployment of personal authority carries with it some possible risks no doubt: disapproval, exclusion, and in extreme cases, even punishment. On the other hand, it is also true that it has potential rewards: the sense of well-being that comes from acting on one's values and convictions; the new found autonomy one experiences through unpacking assumptions; the enrichment of roles that one takes up; and finally, the joy of contributing to making the systems that we are part of be more attuned to their true purpose.



## The conference opportunity and its invitation

Group Relations Conferences (GRC) are designed as temporary learning institutions in order to learn about the psychodynamics of groups and systems via one's direct experience. Therefore, they provide a unique opportunity to study how we work with our personal authority in the way we take up roles, and to what ends do we use our personal as well as role-based authority, consciously and at times unconsciously.

Therefore, paying close attention to how authority dynamics operate at the level of the self, group, and the conference as a system, and the impact of these dynamics on the members as well as on the task become the focus of the exploration, reflection and experimentation. The conference opportunity is to help us explore the reasons for our own preferences and experience the impact of these preferences on the systems we co-create, with the aim that this exploration and experience leads us to making different, more sustainable choices for ourselves, the groups we are part of, and for the conference system as a whole.

This conference is also an invitation to engage experientially with questions such as:

- How does one view one's personal authority, and its relationship with the stances or roles one takes up in different settings in the conference?
- What unconscious assumptions and notions of hierarchy has one subscribed to? What are its implications for the deployment of personal authority within the conference system?
- How does one's own deployment or non-deployment of personal authority, and similarly that of others, impact the kind of relationships we forge within the conference institution?
- How is one's own deployment of personal authority connected to the exercise of leadership towards the task of the conference?

### **The conference primary task**

The term Primary Task refers to the reason for the existence of any system, organization, or institution: its most important task, one that defines its nature and core purpose. If not worked at, the system or organization would lose its meaning. This GRC is oriented by the following primary task:

**To explore the processes and dynamics around the deployment of personal authority towards exercising leadership for task, within the conference as an institution.**

This would entail working with the following: the conscious processes and unconscious dynamics as they operate in the here & now, the nature of roles that emerge, and how together they shape the interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional relationships that develop in the conference institution.

### **The furthering sub-system within the conference**

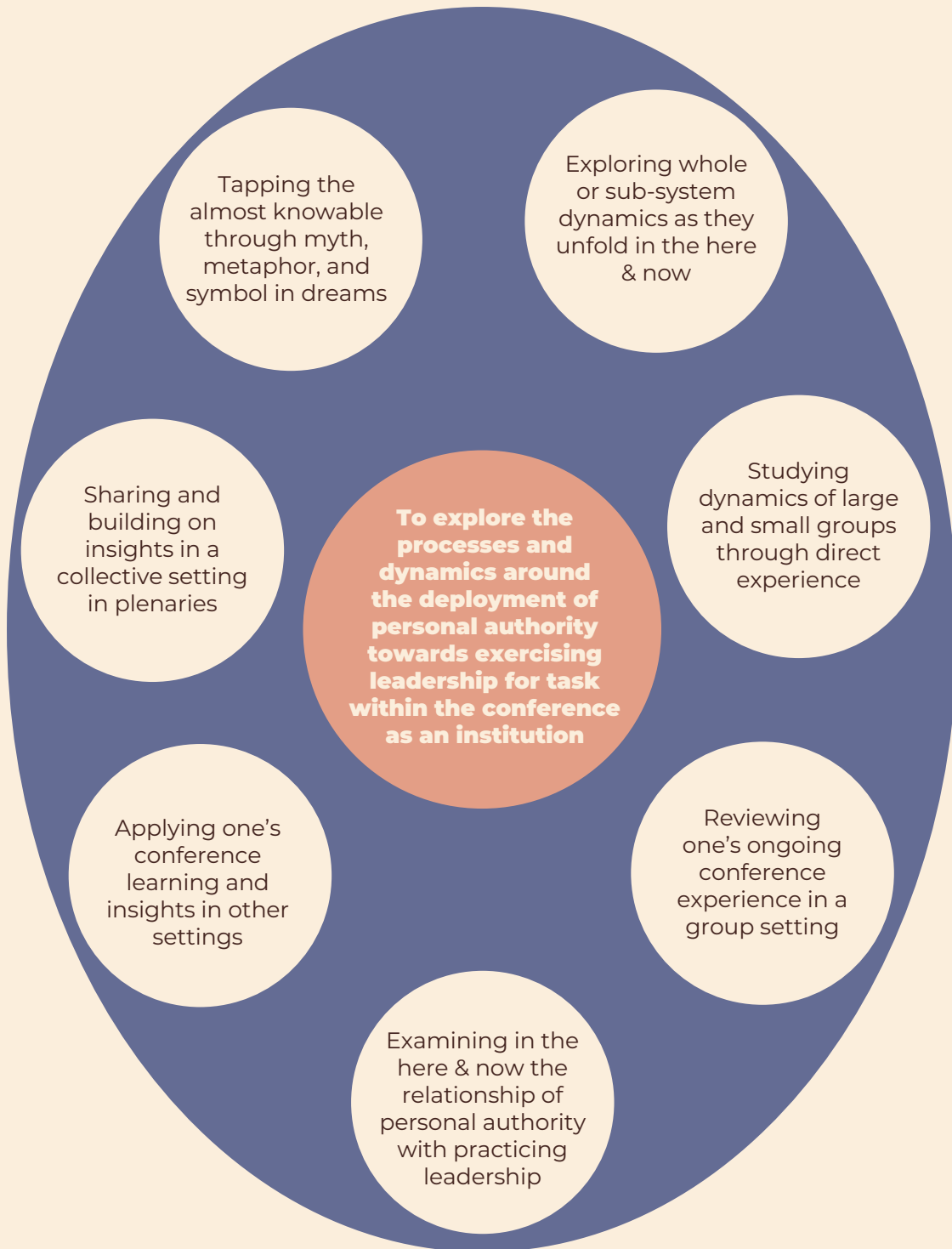
The furthering sub-system is an opportunity for those who have previously attended a group relations conference, and would like to further their learning. Having already attended a GRC, they have an idea about the possibilities of exploration in a GRC, and some experience of what it means to work in an experiential setting to explore unconscious processes in groups.

But it doesn't mean that their experience or learning will be the same again! Hence the furthering sub-system as a distinct part of the conference: to acknowledge a certain prior experience and how one may dip into that to some extent, while allowing for a fresh encounter with the dynamics in the conference institution as it emerges in the here and now. The furthering sub-system provides an opportunity to continue learning – about oneself, about one's use of personal authority towards leadership, and about conscious processes and unconscious dynamics operating in the system.

To support the learning possibilities of those with prior experience of a GRC, furthering sub-system members will attend some events (particularly the large group events) with all other conference members, and some events as a smaller sub-system just with other furthering members.

The furthering sub-system invites those with a desire to build on their interest and application possibilities of the group relations framework, and is an opportunity for a deeper dive into experiential learning, with particular reference to the theme of this conference.





## The conference design

The conference design is not a standardized design, but is specifically curated to serve the needs of the primary task of each conference. The design aims to provide a variety of opportunities to members to discover how much of one's individual and collective experience in the 'here and now' is influenced by phantasy (beliefs that are more linked to valences and untested assumptions in oneself, group, or the overall system) thereby enabling members to recognize and work with unconscious processes at multiple levels.

Each event is designed to offer the possibilities of a varied view from which one perceives oneself, others, the groups one is part of, and the system as a whole. The multiple roles one takes up in different events in the GRC and the assumptions underlying them may have resonances with the roles we end up taking in our everyday life. The opportunity in the GRC is to explore how these typically contribute to, or take us away, from the task, and where appropriate, make different choices.

The conference design seeks to promote a spirit of enquiry into one's experience in the conference through attention, reflection, capacity to wonder, exploration, and experimentation. Using the theme, task, structure, framework, the staff, and each other as resources, members generate learning and insights based on their personal authority. Each member's learning, therefore, is likely to be different and distinct.

# The conference management and staff

**Director:** Ganesh Anantharaman

**Associate Director:** Rosemary Viswanath

**Conference Administrator:** Vanya Joseph

The Conference Directors and Administrator form the **Directorate** of the Conference, and will also consult to the conference events.

**Consultant staff** will be drawn from among:

**Chandan Shamnani** is currently working with Asian Paints and his role focuses on leadership development and OD interventions. A post graduate in HR and OD from Delhi University, he has 18 years of experience in L&D and internal consulting, including a stint as an external consultant. It has been a decade since he attended his first Group Relations workshop, which evoked his curiosity and engagement with the GR lens, gradually seeping into how he views systems, groups, and self.

**Deepak Dhananjaya** is a psychotherapist and Agile-Leadership-Organisation Coach. He is the co-founder of AgileSattva Consulting, an organisation development and transformation organisation in Bangalore. With a private clinical, teaching and supervision practice in psychotherapy, he is also the founder of Prabhava Institute of Inclusive Mental health that focuses on inclusivity in mental health education and services

negotiating the boundaries of privileges and oppression of intersections of society (patriarchy, sexuality, class, caste, religion). He is an engineer and has a Masters in Sexuality and Sexual counselling. Engaging with the group relations framework since 2019, Deepak has been part of various group relations conferences and workshops in both member and staff roles. His work is informed by Transactional Analysis, Group Relations, and socio-cultural-political frame of reference which reflects in his writings and practice.

**Eliat Aram**, PhD, is the CEO of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, UK. Her GR career spans almost 30 years of conferences in the UK (The Tavistock Clinic, the Grubb Institute) and abroad (India, South Africa, France, The Netherlands, Israel), across cultural and geographical boundaries. She has been very fortunate to develop a capacity to understand the local context of where she works and to immerse in its vicissitudes. Eliat has shaped, influenced and often directed the Tavistock Institute's flagship Leicester conference since 2007; directed the AK Rice Institute annual residential 2016-2018, Teachers College Columbia University's Fall GRC since 2013, and directed conferences in Lithuania (2012), Argentina (2013), Tavistock Institute China GRC (2019), GR Russia (2022) and most recently in Kazakhstan (June 2023). Issues of leadership, authority and learning in a complex, nuanced, world are of daily concern, challenge and excitement for her.



**Ganesh Anantharaman**, M. Phil, works as a consultant to leadership dilemmas in organizations, relying on the Group Relations framework. He also practices as a psychoanalyst in the Lacanian orientation. Since his introduction to Group Relations in 2003 he has taken up the member role quite a few times, and has also staffed several conferences in India and abroad. He has directed conferences and other workshops offered by Group Relations India, and is a trustee as well as a member of its programmes committee. He remains curious about how the unconscious operates within and without us, and is on a quest to befriend it.

**Gunjan Zutshi**, MBA, is an organization development consultant and coach with over 27 years of experience. Co-founder of AgileSattva - a firm that uses humanistic and systems psychodynamics approach to change and leadership development in organizations, her work is guided by Group Relations (GR) methodology, helping teams explore how unconscious group dynamics come in the way of taking up roles and exercise of leadership towards task. Gunjan is an associate member of Group Relations India and has been part of Group Relations Conferences, both as member and staff, over last 13 years. She is also a Provisional Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst - Psychotherapy (PTSTA-P) having private psychotherapy practice in Bangalore. She is a certified member South Asian Association for Transactional Analysts (SAATA) and International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA). A Bihar School of Yoga practitioner for over 15 years, she works to integrate the ancient wisdom of yoga in her practice.

**Rosemary Viswanath**, B.Sc. (Hons) Mathematics (Delhi University), P.G.D.M. (Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru 1982-84). A desire to contribute to issues of wider society led her to shift out of corporate HR roles in the late 80s to work with the development sector. She has engaged with networks, federations and organisations that work on social justice, environmental sustainability, and accountable governance. Her engagement in group relations has also been over several decades, involving roles of staff and Director of Group Relations Conferences in India and internationally. It is the GR framework that has most informed the way she has taken up all roles and her understanding of leadership and institution building. She founded Group Relations India, and serves as its Managing Trustee and a member of its programmes committee. Her deepening commitment to Buddhist philosophy and practise is, of late, influencing many aspects of her work and choices.

**Swathi Seshadri**, M.Com. (Mumbai University), M.A. in Social Work (TISS). Striving for social justice, equity and equality through her work in civil society organisations, is her primary work. Systems thinking being a cornerstone for social change, the Group Relations framework has been one of the pillars of her world view. After attending a GRC in 2013, her consistent engagement with the approach began in 2017. Along with being a member in 3 GRCs offered by GRI, she has also been on staff in 3 GRCs both in the capacity of Administrator and Consultant. She has also consulted to 2 Listening to the Unconscious workshops, also offered by GRI. She currently works at the Centre for Financial Accountability and occasionally consults on organisation change processes.

**Uma Ravikumar**, B. Com, MBA, has 26 years of work experience, with 15 of those in full-time business and management roles, including in Oracle Consulting. She has led project delivery with international responsibility particularly in Australia, Eastern Europe and South East Asia, and has been head of leadership development and culture building. She is a practicing organisation and leadership development professional, working with individual and group learning methodologies. Uma consults largely in the corporate sector towards critical organisational challenges and decision-making, designing and facilitating leadership interventions through the group relations lens. She is on assessment panels for strategic leadership roles and also coaches senior leaders in transition. Uma has been associated with GRI in various roles since 2013 - as member and staff in GRI's offerings, member of programmes committee, and director of the workshop on Listening to the Unconscious in 2019 and 2024. She lives in Mumbai and enjoys cycling and reading.

**Vanya Joseph**, MSc. Anthropology, University of Mysore, MA Anthropology, University of Cincinnati, has worked in the development sector in the areas of OD, capacity building and training, primarily through her association with HID Forum, Bangalore. She has been involved in several Group Relations Conferences and GR-based workshops since 2007, both as a member and as a part of the directorate, holding roles of pre-conference and conference administrator. She also manages the GRI office. Wildlife conservation is an area

of keen interest to Vanya. Art and illustration are her passion. She has had the opportunity to merge the two and associates with several organisations and groups that work on wildlife conservation, including the Forest Department of Karnataka, offering her support and services as a wildlife illustrator and creator of educational material towards conservation of the natural world. Vanya is also an illustrator of children's story books.

**Yash Kaul** is the Co-Founder and CEO of Helmier Limited, a medical disposable and equipment company. Before Helmier, he held various management roles in the corporate world in medical devices and speciality pharmaceutical organizations with the most recent one with Smiths (ICU) Medical where he was VP South APAC Region. He has been instrumental in launching two successful MNCs in India. Yash is a BITS Pilani – Pilani and IIM-Kozhikode Alumni. He is a Group Relations India (GRI) associate and has been engaged in this methodology for more than a decade. He has been invited as a consultant to various Group Relations Conferences as well as workshops for the last 8 years. GR frameworks heavily inform and influence the way he has been managing and leading his own organizations and managing his teams. It also has strongly influenced his own ways of thinking, being and leadership. Yash has also authored and presented a paper on application of GR Frameworks titled “Rol(l)ed Into One”. He is passionate about music and marathons.

# Administrative details

**Conference Venue:** GCC Hotel and Club  
Off Mira Bhayander Road, Mira Road (E),  
Thane, Maharashtra, India, 401107.

<http://gcchotelandclub.com>

The venue is on the outskirts of Mumbai. Detailed information on travel logistics and venue facilities will be sent to members on confirmation of their applications.

## **Timings & Registration:**

Registration of members to the conference at the venue is from 1130-1230 hours on January 5, 2025. The conference opens at 1330 hours on January 5, 2025, and ends at 1630 hours on January 10, 2025.

Please note that the conference is residential. Members need to plan to arrive on 5th January in time for registration, and leave on 10th Jan after the conference closes.

## **Fee:**

The conference fee is INR 82,000 plus 18% Goods & Services Tax (GST), which makes it a total of INR 96,760 payable. For international members (and those residing outside India), it is USD 1400 plus 18% GST (USD 1652 payable). This fee includes accommodation and board on a twin-sharing basis which is booked from noon of January 5 until January 10 mid-morning.

A limited number of single occupancy accommodation is available at a higher cost, on a first-come-first-served basis. Members preferring single occupancy are

requested to write us at [grc@grouprelationsindia.org](mailto:grc@grouprelationsindia.org) for details.

## **Subsidy in fee**

Recognising that access to financial resources is varied, GRI is committed to making group relations work accessible to a wide membership, thus enabling people from a range of economic and work sectors, and also those representing many other important diversities to attend. We believe that this diversity in membership contributes to the opportunities for learning for all conference members.

We are particularly keen to make group relations opportunities available to those working in the social justice and development sectors such as small, under-resourced NGOs, community-based organisations, and movements.

Those seeking a reduction in fee are required to write to us at the time of applying, giving the reason for, and the amount of subsidy on the full fee they seek. We will revert to you on the subsidy we can offer based on the total number of requests we receive, the relative merits of each case, and the number of full-paying applicants we get.

It would help us to decide on requests for a subsidy in fee if those seeking it write to us latest by December 5, 2024.

We also offer the option of paying the fee in instalments, if that helps potential members to decide.

**How to apply:** To apply for membership of the conference, you would need to fill in the online application form available [HERE](#). Please note that invoicing and GST details in the application form are required by us to fulfil statutory compliances.

Once your application is accepted by us, we will separately initiate with you on email the process for your fee transfer.

Kindly note that the last date for receipt of applications is Tuesday, December 24. Your place in the conference will be confirmed when your fee payment is completed. This has the outer timeline of Friday, December 27.

**Refund policy**

Refund after deducting 25% towards administrative expenses will be made to those who withdraw on or before December 24. For withdrawals after that, refunds will not be possible.

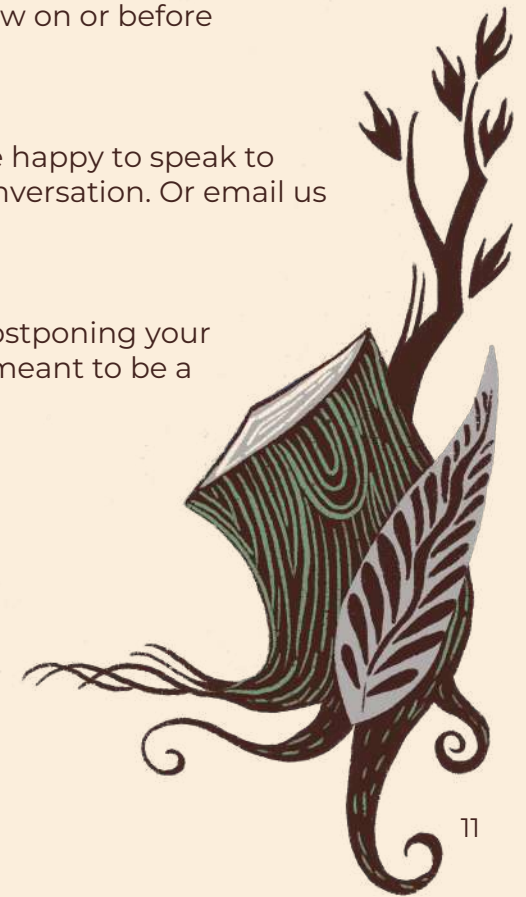
**Speak to us!**

For further discussions to assist your decision about participating in the conference, we would be happy to speak to you. Kindly message Ganesh (+91 98864 06806) or Rosemary (+91 98454 03773) to schedule a conversation. Or email us at [grc@grouprelationsindia.org](mailto:grc@grouprelationsindia.org)

If you are living through a time of particular personal difficulties, we suggest that you consider postponing your participation to a later time as the conference is designed as a learning environment, and is not meant to be a substitute for personal therapy.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to the conference!

The working language of the conference is English.



## Dates to note:

**December 5, 2024** - Preferred date by which applications that have requests for subsidy in the fee

**December 24, 2024** - Last date for receipt of applications

**December 27, 2024** - Last date for receipt of payment for confirmation of your place in the conference

## About Group Relations India

Group Relations India (GRI) was founded in 2013 with the vision of an institution that is committed exclusively to group relations methodology, and of making the potential of this methodology available to members from a wide section of Indian society, having different representations and interests. It is conceived of as a 'home for GR' in India.

Group Relations based interventions and institutions in India and internationally owe much to the pioneering work done in the 1950s onwards at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations UK and the many brilliant practitioners associated with it, who through their contributions to theory and practice shaped this work.

To know more about GRI and group relations please visit [www.grouprelationsindia.org](http://www.grouprelationsindia.org)

**Design by:** Bao (thebigfatbao@gmail.com or Instagram: @thebigfatbao)

