

EXPERIENCES
IN LIFE & STRIFE

Reflections at 90 on Listening and Leadership

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*David's father and mother, after retirement to Edinburgh (above)
David's childhood home in Delhi, taken about 1927 (below)*



MY parents were working in India so the first ten years of my life were spent mainly in Delhi. We lived in an old part of Delhi and New Delhi was built as we grew up. In the 1920s New Delhi was not a very big town then and even by the start of World War II it had only about half a million inhabitants. The war created a lot of new development and after Independence in 1947 it grew to many millions of people.

I can still remember moonlight picnics as a child when we went out to the scrub jungle surrounding the old ruins of previous capitals which had been there. It was exciting as a child to feel you were in the wilds and so different from all those same places now with new developments surrounding and mushrooming the old ruins.

My older sister, my younger brother and I had a very happy childhood. My father was teaching in St Stephen's College, part of Delhi University, where he was head of the English Literature Faculty and later Vice Principal of the College. Shakespeare was his favourite subject and every year he produced a Shakespeare play by the college students. After returning to Britain to retire, he helped a Shakespeare scholar to produce a series of books on all the Shakespeare plays. What better than to retire doing the work you most loved! My mother was a doctor at a time when women doctors were comparatively few. She went to India with the Church of Scotland Medical Mission in 1909, first in the Punjab and then joined the staff of Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, a college set up to provide women doctors in a country where women did not want to be seen by men doctors. Later she felt that the great need, with which she might help, was Maternity and Child Welfare. As a result she helped set up a Directorate for Maternity and Child Welfare for India and became the National Director of it.

When I was ten years old my sister, brother and I were sent back to England to start in boarding school. This was the practice in those days as there were not so many good English language schools in India at that time.

This meant that we only saw our parents every two years during the summer holidays. I found this quite interesting, even if I missed my parents, as I had the chance to stay with school friends during the holidays, and to see different parts of Britain as a result. My sister, being the oldest, felt very responsible and this was a bit of a burden for her. And my brother being younger found it much harder not to have our parents with us and decided never to send his own children to boarding school as a result.

In September 1939 the start of World War II changed everything for us, as well as the whole country. My sister started university and then training as a nurse. I started an engineering apprenticeship and then in October 1940 joined the Army Engineers. My brother was in his final year of school and then joined the Navy. This also coincided with my parents retiring from India and settling in Edinburgh. So for us this became home.

Soon after I joined the Army, my mother was summoned to Buckingham Palace to be awarded the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) by King George VI. Today these investitures are fairly grand affairs. In wartime they were more austere and simple. But it was with great pride that I was able to accompany my mother for her award in November 1940. As we came out into the Palace forecourt after the ceremony, there were reporters keen to hear what awards people had been given. Seeing me in uniform, they asked me what I had received. I said that they had better to speak to my mother, which came as a surprise to them as she showed them the CBE and told them of it having been awarded for medical services in India.

The Army is a great training ground for young people, even if it is not always comfortable. In wartime that is all the more so as one gets more experiences in a shorter time than in peacetime. For me after initial training in England for some nine months, I was posted to India to become an officer in the then Indian Army. During the British rule in India, many of the officers for the Indian soldiers were British. In 1941 when I arrived in India, things seemed peaceful compared with Britain and our main task was to support the Eighth Army in North Africa where they were fighting the Italians and the Germans – a battle that went on for two years with the battle flowing East and West in turn across North Africa. But in December 1941 everything changed, on account of the entry of Japan into the war and the resultant conquest of so much of Asia, right up to the Indian border with Burma.



*David when promoted to Captain
in 1944 in Burma*

It also changed for me personally that Christmas 1941 when I received the gift of a book called *Innocent Men* by a journalist called Peter Howard. He had been Britain's highest paid journalist working for Britain's largest circulation newspaper, The Daily Express at that time. He had been assigned to write about something called Moral Re-Armament, initiated by a man called Frank Buchman. The Communists were accusing Buchman of helping Hitler and the paper thought they could make a sensational story out of it. Peter Howard would today be called an investigative journalist and he was very thorough in his investigations.

However the story he had to tell was not the story the newspaper wanted, so they turned it down. Instead he decided to write a book about it, and as a result had to leave the paper – a big and costly step to take.

For me that book was a real inspiration. It seemed to outline something I longed for in my heart of hearts – a plan for the world and also a practical plan for me. In simple terms Moral Re-Armament (MRA for short) put forward the view that God had a plan for the world and each of us had a part if we were prepared to listen for what He might show us. This gave me a very practical way of running my own life, but also how to be part of something much bigger to help the world. Although I did not immediately meet anyone connected with it, I decided to try and apply what I had read as best I could.

This led to some important experiences for me. The first was when the unit I was in was posted to Baluchistan on the frontier between India (as it was then, what is now Pakistan) and Iran. At that time there was the possibility that Germany might break through Iran and try to reach the Indian Ocean through Pakistan. At the time something went badly wrong in our unit and on investigation I found that the fault was with someone junior to me, so I told him off rather harshly. A couple of days later I discovered that

it was not actually his fault, but someone else. What should I do? It was not considered appropriate in the Army to apologise to someone junior, yet I felt I had wronged the man. As well as that, the junior man was an Indian and in the days of Colonial rule the British did not apologise to Indians.

In spite of this I felt clearly in my conscience that I should apologise and accept the consequences. Rather than losing respect through doing this, I think that probably I gained it.

A few months later a young Indian was posted to join our unit, who had just been made an officer. He came from a somewhat traditional Hindu family where they never drank alcohol. In the Army drinking alcohol was the regular thing. The trouble was that Madhav or Muddy as the young officer was nicknamed, could never stop after his first glass and ended up under the table for us to carry him off to bed! I wondered how I could help him. I thought to myself, why do I drink, because I did not really like either beer or whisky. Being honest with myself I realised that I thought people might laugh at me if I refused drink. So thinking this was a very poor reason, I decided to stick to a soft drink. Of course I got laughed at for a week or two, but then people accepted it. I did not say anything to Muddy, but some weeks later, I noticed that he also was taking a soft drink. It taught me that motives are very important to get right. It also resulted in his achieving high office in the Indian Army and our having a life-long friendship.

Another thing for which I am grateful for my time in the Army was another lesson in understanding people. In 1943 we had a young officer posted to us – I will call him Mick, not his real name – who was one of the most difficult people I have ever come across. In any encounter with others, he always disagreed with them. It did not make us a happy unit and we were all trying to see ways of getting him posted away. We tried to recommend him for doing good work, but that did not work. Then we tried complaining about all the things he did wrong. But that too failed. I got a bit desperate! Talking with a doctor friend one day I said that Mick needed drastic change. The doctor agreed with me but said that I should remember that change was like measles – you could only pass it on if you had it yourself! He suggested that I take an honest look at whether there were places I needed change before I expected Mick to change. At that time I thought that I was pretty

well all right! The doctor suggested I get up a little earlier the next day and give God a chance to tell me if I needed change.

I was desperate enough to try this. I had some thoughts about places I had not been very open with my parents and also someone with whom I was jealous as he was popular. So I was open with my parents and apologised for my jealousy. But then, rather unexpectedly, another thought came into my mind. It went something like this. "You have been saying things behind Mick's back which you are not prepared to say to his face. You should apologise to him for this and suggest we should work together." As you can imagine that was the last thing I wanted to do. It took me three weeks before I got round to doing it. The result was unexpected.

Instead of hitting back at me as I expected, Mick was silent for a long time. Then he said, "I don't think I can work with anyone. I am such a difficult fellow!" And little by little he began talking of his difficult childhood and his parents' separation which left him with two homes and he did not feel at home in either. I began seeing why he was up against everyone, because he felt the world was against him. Things began to improve and not only did we begin to work together, but the men under him and those under me also began to work together. What I realised was that God knew Mick's needs, even if I did not. But he gave me the words which began unlocking his heart. That lesson has stayed with me. God could show me what to do, even when I did not have all the facts.

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After more than two years in India, one and a half years in Burma fighting the Japanese, and a year in Malaysia and Thailand immediately the war ended, I returned to England in July 1946 for demobilisation. I applied to Cambridge University, who had been keeping a place for me while I was in the Army, and was able to start my Mechanical Engineering Degree in October 1946. Before doing so I took the chance to visit the MRA Centre in Caux, Switzerland, which had just opened to offer reconciliation and healing for a Europe still reeling from the after effects of war. This resulted in my being much more fully involved with MRA and being able to participate more.

Being involved in a world assembly in Caux was a marvellous new experience for me. Swiss families from all over Switzerland had collected money to buy one of Switzerland's great hotels, the Caux Palace, which overlooks Lake Geneva with wonderful views all round. During the war when there were no tourists, the Swiss Government used it for housing refugees who flocked there to get away from the fighting. Towards the end of the war a Swiss diplomat and an engineer had led an initiative to create a centre for people of different nations to meet in a neutral place to find unity and reconciliation with their enemies. To hear stories of what people had been through and how God helped them find a way forward was truly inspiring. Since that first visit I have visited many times to help in conferences.

1947 was particularly striking in this respect as that year a number of Germans were given permission to leave their country, still under military administration, to attend. Some were people who had stood up to the Nazis and suffered in concentration camps as a result. Some were people who had put their hope in Hitler and were now disillusioned. But what I particularly recall is being there when a French woman Member of Parliament came. Madame Irene Laure represented Marseilles in the Parliament and during the occupation of France by Germany she and her family had worked with the French resistance and suffered a great deal as a result. When she was invited to Caux she did not realise that there would be any Germans there and on hearing this after her arrival she determined to leave.

As she was leaving she met Frank Buchman in a corridor who asked her, "What sort of a Europe do you want to see now?" Her reply was quite clear – a Socialist Europe. "Can you build a new Europe without Germany?" Frank Buchman asked her. Although she had wanted to see Germany destroyed, she knew it would not be possible to build a new Europe without Germany. So for three days she pondered her hatred and her deep feelings. Then she asked if she could meet some Germans present. Over a meal with a German woman, she poured out all her feelings of what had happened to her. When she came to the end, the woman told her that she well understood all she felt and that she was deeply sorry for all the suffering and trouble Germany had caused through allowing Hitler to gain power. But then she went on. "My husband stood out against Hitler. He was one of those who were part of the plot

against the Fuhrer. The plot to assassinate him failed and my husband was executed and she and her family lost everything. But,” she continued, “I would like to work with you to build the new Europe we all long for.”

The next day in the main meeting of the assembly, Madame Laure asked to speak. Addressing all the Germans present she told them of her hatred for all that had happened in France and added that in Caux she had seen that her hatred was sowing the seeds for the next world war. So she wanted to ask their forgiveness and to work with them in future to build a new peace. There was pin-drop silence in the hall, which was finally broken by a lady getting up and walking towards the platform to thank Madame Laure and to shake her hand. It was the beginning of building a bridge of healing and reconciliation across the Rhine. Later Chancellor Adenauer came to Caux himself and spoke of the contribution which Madame Laure and those in MRA had made to the development of peace in Europe.

For me all this was a realisation that personal change was a starting point, but that it could go on to a much wider and deeper development between people and nations. As Frank Buchman put it, “When man listens, God speaks. When men obey, God acts. When men and women change, nations change.” This was a calling which I decided to take on for the rest of my life.

University became a good training ground for me as there were some ten students at Cambridge at that time committed as I was to applying the ideas of MRA and we tried to put these ideas into practice in our studies, in our college relationships and in action in the town. For all of us as we left to follow our careers, this had laid foundations of faith and action which remained with us for life.

In 1949 I was faced with a major challenge on leaving University. I had in front of me the chance of a good job in a well known engineering company. But I thought I could benefit from spending three months helping at the MRA headquarters in London with different actions going on there at the time. Some of it was concerned with industry, which was also beneficial to my career. Some of it was in the disciplines and the understanding of human nature which was of real help to me. But at the end of the three months I had a deep inner sense that instead of joining the engineering company I could

take on learning to be a human engineer, putting people right rather than machines. How was I sure of this? At first I was not sure, but decided to launch out in faith after talking with some friends I could trust to be straight with me as to their own convictions on this. Sometimes one is not sure until long afterwards, so it can be something of a risk.

And so began my life calling, launching out in faith and prayer with no fixed salary and a readiness to follow whatever God asked of me. It probably sounds a bit crazy, but the remarkable thing is that now 60 years later I have not only survived, but have been marvellously led and looked after.

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At about the same time I faced a second challenge. I was at that time introduced to a young lady called Margot Meekings. For us both it was love at first sight, but neither disclosed this to the other. We were both in London working at the MRA headquarters there, so had the chance to observe each other without doing anything about it. Then something changed all that. Frank Buchman was invited to take an international team to India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for a six month visit to inform people of the meaning and relevance of his work to those nations then newly independent. He decided to make the maximum use of this opportunity and in the end had a team of 200 people from 25 countries, including four stage plays which demonstrated the ideas of Moral Re-Armament in dramatic form. It was a bold move, and in those days, not always an easy logistical move. How to accommodate, feed and arrange travel for such a large group could have been a real headache. But in faith the party set off, including myself being one of them!

Among the party was a young budding writer, who fifty years later wrote an account of the six month's trip. It reads like a reporter recreating the trip for today's news. It is called *Ice in every Carriage*, by Michael Henderson.

For me it was an experience of seeing India from a different angle. No longer under British rule and no longer with the Army, I experienced everyday life in India quite freely. And I began to understand the situation and feelings of ordinary Indians in a way I never had before.

At the end of our six month's trip, the party was returning to their respective countries but before doing so Frank Buchman called us together. He thanked us for sticking with it and told us that he had had some requests from the places we had visited for him to send some people back to follow up in their cities. Would any of us volunteer to respond to this request, he asked, and requested us to think about it and come back the next day with any answers. As I pondered this question, I thought to myself, "Why not? If people want us we should respond." So along with some 15 other people we did so. As a result we were asked to go to a number of different cities. I found myself asked to go to Bombay (now Mumbai) and was able to return to stay with the family with whom I had stayed when we were there for a few days six months earlier at the start of the trip.

Thus began for me a new chapter in my life. Could I trust God to lead me into his plan and really be able to show me what to do? It was the start of another big adventure and I continued for the next 22 years helping to build a team of people across India, along with those who enlisted with me, to try and create a nation governed by God.

In 1956 Devadas Gandhi, one of Mahatma Gandhi's sons, approached some of us to find out whether we could help find a place for his son Rajmohan get training in journalism. Rajmohan had finished his degree in St Stephen's College, where my father had been Vice-Principal, and wanted some work experience. Friends in Britain were able to arrange for him to work for a year with The Scotsman newspaper in Edinburgh and also to stay with an MRA family there. One result of this was that at the end of the year Rajmohan decided to take part in an MRA conference in the United States. And further he stayed on there for a time for further experience at Frank Buchman's suggestion.

It was during this time that his father died rather unexpectedly and he returned to India for the funeral. It was during this time that I first began to get to know Rajmohan and to work closely with him for some years.

In 1958 I had the clear thought that now was the time to propose marriage to Margot. I heard that she was in Caux, so first I visited my parents in Edinburgh and talked with them about my intentions, which pleased them very much. Then I went to Caux where I proposed to Margot. I

was taken aback that she refused my proposal! I reflected on what I might have done wrong or why she did not accept as I was pretty sure that she had been in love with me. Had I waited too long and she had someone else in view or had she just decided that marriage was not for her.

A week after my proposal she came up to me and asked if we could talk, which we did. She said that when I had gone to India she had been very upset and it took a long time to get over. But when I suddenly turned up and proposed she was not ready for it and that was why she turned me down. But on reflection she felt God wanted her to say yes,

even if she did not immediately feel in love with me. So you could say she said yes in faith. And perhaps that was a very good basis to start out partnership, which grew stronger and closer as the years went by.

We were married in London on 18th October 1958 at Christ Church, Down Street in the West End of London by the Bishop of Rangoon, George West, a good friend. Our reception was held in the house where we first met in 1949, arranged by a great many friends, who made it a wonderful occasion. We had a refreshing honeymoon in Scotland, followed by a four-day conference in the Peak District. Within four weeks of our wedding we were on our way to India, having been asked to go to Delhi, which we did. For Margot it was a first long voyage by ship, while for me it was a reminder of my childhood when all our journeys to and from England to India were by ship. And after our being in India for a few weeks, we had an unexpected extra honeymoon as guests of the Dowager Maharani of Kutch in her State (later part of Gujerat State when the Princely States were abolished in India).

In 1959 His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet and became a refugee in India. Prime Minister Nehru arranged for him to be given asylum there and be based in a hill town in the lower Himalayas called Dharamsala, where his headquarters remains until today. At the time the Philippines



Margot in London in 1949

Government had taken up the Dalai Lama's cause in the United Nations and the Ambassador got to know him well as a result. One day the Ambassador, whom we also knew, said to me that we ought to tell the Dalai Lama about MRA. I replied that we would be glad to do so, but did not have any way of approaching him. The Ambassador said he would arrange it all.

On reflection I was not sure whether a British person was necessarily the best first approach to the Dalai Lama, so suggested to the Ambassador that it might be better, if possible, for some Indian friends, including Rajmohan Gandhi to be included. He readily agreed and so it was that the Ambassador, Rajmohan, three of his friends and I went to Dharamsala to meet the Dalai Lama. We were courteously and warmly received and he seated us round a table and asked each of us in turn to tell him about ourselves, our background etc. At that time the Dalai Lama was not very fluent in English so there was a man from the Indian Foreign Ministry with us who was acting as the Dalai Lama's interpreter.

One of Rajmohan's friends, who was in the party with us, was a man called Vaitheswaran. He was a brilliant young man from a poor family in South India who had done exceptionally well in University. Because of the conditions he and his family and friends faced, he had become a communist and as a result had spent more than two years in jail. Understandably he was bitter with the treatment he had received and the unfair world he felt he was in. And it was in these circumstances that he first encountered MRA in 1953 during Frank Buchman's tour of India. He began working with us. So when he told his story to the Dalai Lama, he was immediately closely questioned. Why had he become a communist and how did he come to give it up?

In answer to the second question, Vaitheswaran replied that hearing stories about how capitalists and others whom he hated had changed, he decided that this was a better way of dealing with the problem in the world than eliminating people. This greatly struck the Dalai Lama and one of the results of that meeting was that the Dalai Lama not only attended MRA conferences in India, Switzerland and elsewhere himself, but he began arranging for some of the young Tibetans exiled in India getting training in MRA themselves.

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During 1963/1964 my wife and I were involved in two actions of significance for India. One was a March on Wheels from the tip of South India to the capital in Delhi. The trip took seven weeks and we stopped a night or two in each town and city we visited. There were some 75 people involved in the trip with a bus and some cars. At every stop we had the chance of meeting and talking with a variety of people, often groups like University students, Rotary Club members, Town Councillors, teachers or trade union groups. At every stop the message which Rajmohan and his team proclaimed was to create a Clean, Strong and United India. People responded to this and particularly the students. So at every meeting we announced a follow-up occasion for those who wanted to know more, or a chance for people to give their names so that they could receive information from time to time. It was often very moving, particularly when people wanted to know how the trip was financed and we would suggest that as they left the meeting they could also leave a contribution to help us go on to the next stop.

By the time we reached the capital we were exhausted, but feeling that there was a very real response from people who wanted to take up the challenge of changing their country. And we began to consider a strategy for following up the start which had been made.

It was about that time that I had news of my father's death. He had not been very well so it was not entirely unexpected. My family wrote to me saying that they did not feel that I should come home immediately just for the funeral, but come when I felt it right for long enough. I was grateful not to have the pressure of a decision to make, because sometimes I did not find it easy to distinguish between a duty and what I would like to do. Perhaps all my life this is something I have found difficult to distinguish between the pulls which are an integral part of everyone's life.

One immediate opportunity for this was a short conference in New Delhi to which Rajmohan Gandhi had invited a musical show called Space is So Startling to be present at the start of a four months' visit to India. This show was written by Peter Howard and depicted the clash between the free enterprise West and the socialist East as to who could reach the moon first. This was five years before the first moon landing and a few months before the first circling of the earth by the Russian sputnik. It also showed the



The construction team for the first phase of building work at Asia Plateau in 1968, with Rajmohan Gandhi (fourth from right)

opportunity for both sides to take on answering the needs of the world, rather than competing with each other. It was a brilliant dramatic piece and the Indian audiences really loved it. It was moving and challenging, but showed how each of us can make a start in our own lives.

Again the response was particularly marked from the student population as we revisited some of the places at which we had stopped with the March on Wheels. As a result two things were decided. One was to start a weekly news magazine to provide the positive news of action being taken round the world and to give insights of the way in which changes were taking place. The magazine was called *Himmat Weekly* and was based in Mumbai. Rajmohan Gandhi was Chief Editor and a colleague called Russi Lala gave up his paid job as a journalist and publisher to become the regular Editor. All the staff were volunteers and many commercial firms provided advertising to cover the cost of production and distribution. In this way the cost of the paper was kept to a minimum.

Another decision was to hold three camps for any students who would like to be further involved; one in Western India, one in South India and one in North India. This proved a very fine way of enlisting the enthusiasm and

the convictions of young people in a way which provided basic training in how to enlist in the action of MRA. It also began to create a team of young people right across India which was an important foundation for the future.

The first of these camps was held for more than two hundred students at a small town called Panchgani 250 kms from Mumbai in the hills at an altitude of some 1200 metres. This town was a hill station which provided some relief from the hot weather during the summer months and was also a place chosen for a number of boarding schools. At the end of the two week camp, the students invited the local town people, the school authorities and any people on holiday to come to an evening during which they spoke of what they had learned but also gave performances of songs and skits which they had written to illustrate the ideas of change for the sake of building up their country. An unexpected result was a visit the next morning from some elders of the town, who wanted to tell Rajmohan Gandhi and his colleagues that they had been very struck with the previous evening's performance and the convictions of the young people. They also proposed that Panchgani would be a suitable place for creating a permanent centre for the kind of training given in the camp. Further they promised that, if such a suggestion was agreed to, they would provide all possible assistance necessary to construct such a centre.

Thanking the elders, Rajmohan Gandhi said he was grateful for their suggestion and would seriously think about it. Two years later in 1966, some serious planning began to bring this idea to reality. And so it was that the Centre, known as 'Asia Plateau' was created. As the Mayor of Panchgani said at the time of the inauguration of the first phase of the Centre in January 1968, the setting up of the Centre was putting Panchgani on the world map! That was indeed the case as over the last years people from all over India as well as all over the world have visited for conferences and training programmes.

I was asked to oversee the initial phases of the building work. We were very fortunate in receiving an offer from an architect in Australia to carry out all the architectural work of the Centre free of charge as his contribution. In response a firm of engineer consultants in Mumbai offered to work with Gordon Brown, the architect, in any details required on the spot. And so it was that in January 1967, having obtained the planning permits from the

local authority, the first sod was cut and work began on the first two buildings.

During the years of construction I had some interesting experiences. Among the first was purchasing the land. In 1946 Mahatma Gandhi had



Crowds waiting to get in to Asia Plateau for the inauguration of the first building in 1968

envisaged creating an Ashram at Panchgani. He stayed there for some time after his release from detention when campaigning for India's independence and the peace and climate appealed to him. A number of his followers as a result bought plots of land there in anticipation of this. But with his assassination in 1948, the plans were never fulfilled. And so it was that we painstakingly had to negotiate and buy up several plots of land which together now form the land on which the centre is built. These negotiations gave me a great insight into the way in which these kinds of business deals are done. I recognised how easy it is to try and speed up things with a little inducement here or some advantage there. So one had to be on one's guard at all times.

Another experience was arranging the right contract for the construction of the centre with the available building companies. When we

advertised for the work, three companies put in their bids. I interviewed them and discussed all aspects of the work as well as explaining what was the object in creating the centre in the first place. The director of one company, which in the end was selected for the first two years of work, had an interesting reaction when I explained the purpose of the training envisaged. He said to me, "If you are planning to give training in the ideas of Moral Re-Armament, then I suppose you will be expecting me also to carry out things in a moral way, without bribes or cutting corners?"

As the day of the inauguration drew near, I was approached by the man responsible in the Town Municipality for collecting local taxes. One of his jobs is to ensure that any goods brought into the town area were charged, where appropriate, a local tax. This included building materials. So when he asked to meet Rajmohan Gandhi, I wanted to know whether there was anything special he wanted to speak about. And he said he wanted to know how we had persuaded the building contractor to pay all the local taxes on the items brought in for the buildings, without his having to be chased? Normally, he said, any contractor would come to see him and try and do a deal whereby he would be charged a little less tax if he paid the official some little remuneration. But so far, he had never been approached and all the taxes had been fully paid. Hence his wish to find out from Rajmohan Gandhi more of what the Centre was all about.

While the initial intention of the Centre had been the training of young people to find a purpose and a plan for their lives, as it got going more and more interest was expressed from many different places. One day a letter was received from the chairman of a big textile company in Bombay who asked whether we could undertake the training of his 5,000 employees in Moral Re-Armament. We had never done anything on this scale before and we did not quite see how we could manage it. However as we began to consider the request seriously the thought came in one meeting, "Is this perhaps a door which God is trying to open? If it is you must try undertaking it."

And so indeed we did. We decided to hold three seminars of six days length each for about 75 people at a time. We thought that if this seemed to work well, we could hold more. If it did not there was no shame in having tried and failed. And so it was we made this proposal to the chairman and launched the plan. In doing so we asked the chairman that he select in each

group representatives from all levels of his firm—from senior management to shop floor workers, so they could live together at Asia Plateau, and beyond the actual meetings there would be opportunities for informal understanding and trust being built.

The results were very encouraging. In structuring the six day course we decided that each day should start with an opportunity for a time of quiet for people to listen to their inner voice, as it is often expressed in India. Those who believed in God could consider it finding God's plan. Others might feel it was to open themselves to their consciences. Doing this produced many unexpected results. One senior manager said to me that he never expected his workers to come up with such interesting ideas and convictions from these times of quiet, or to feel as responsible for the company as some did when they expressed their views. This was exceedingly encouraging. Now nearly forty years later, this kind of training is still going on. It has spread to teachers, people in the medical profession, the Army and more recently the Civil Service. So the small start from the student camps has grown into a trend-setting way of providing a model for the country as a whole.

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In 1975 Margot and I decided it was time to leave India and to settle back in Britain. My father had died and my mother was living on her own in Edinburgh and was now over 90. Although still fit and well, we felt that having been away a long time it would be good to be nearer her for the last years of her life. We found, with the help of friends, an old cottage outside Edinburgh which was up for sale. On account of its age and need of some modernising it was not very expensive. So we put in a bid for it, thinking that if God meant us to be there we would be able to buy it. And this began our spending most of the next nine years in Scotland. It was a very different life, and new experiences. The cottage was in an old coal mining area, although one by one the pits were closing down. A good friend of ours was minister of the church a few miles away and he and his wife helped us greatly with introductions and advice.

One thing I would briefly like to interject here. We really appreciated being in Scotland because we were within easy reach of my mother, my sister, who was sharing my mother's flat with her and working in a hospital

on the edge of the city, and my brother, Roger, and his wife, Mary, and their family who also lived in Edinburgh. He was headmaster of George Watson's School. It was the first time since childhood that we had been nearby each other as a family. By this time my brother had four children, two daughters and two sons. As I write this the children are all married and between them they have 14 children. Roger was also for a time appointed Chairman of BBC Scotland, an assignment which he found most interesting as it took him into new fields. Later he was knighted by the Queen for his services to education and broadcasting.

Now to return to our new life in Scotland. Among those we got to know in that area was a miner called Douglas and the manager of the pit in which Douglas worked, called William. It was real education learning about the history and traditions of the area and also how difficult it was for those in the industry as coal mining gradually diminished in Britain. Open cast mining had begun to replace underground mining in Fife where we were situated. And much effort went into retraining miners to take up alternative professions.

Another friend of ours, Henry Macnicol, who was living in Edinburgh, had made a study of the history of mining and he wrote a play about a man who became famous in British politics as one of the founders of the British Labour Party, Keir Hardie. He helped found the Party based on Christian values as he was a practising Christian himself. In other countries it was often the communists who were pioneers of the trade union movement. Henry called the play *The Man they could not Buy*.

We decided to try and produce this play to use in the mining areas of Britain. We started with a play reading in Fife near our new home and then we took it to halls and institutes in many parts of the country. It came at a time when the British Labour Party was also a little uncertain of its roots and priorities.

As well as this we were giving some attention and thought to my mother. It was a shock when a year after our return from India she had a stroke which left her speechless. I had never experienced looking after a person without speech, so it was a steep learning curve for Margot and me. But it was also a privilege and a real benefit to us to do so. For a time my

mother was still able to move around as she had always done, but she could not do simple things like shopping or telephoning friends. And for some of her friends it was not easy as they did not quite know how to handle the new situation. Some found it embarrassing to be able only to converse one way and ran out of topics of conversation. At the same time they found it difficult just to sit with her in silence. I never felt any problem of sitting with her without talking – perhaps just holding her hand.

Meanwhile my sister decided to retire from her nursing work and move in to live with mother so she could be available and that was wonderful for my mother. A couple of years later when mother had another stroke which left her unable to walk or do other things for herself this proved invaluable. And every few months Margot and I would move in to give my sister some respite. It was not until 1983 that she died a few weeks short of her 100th birthday!

After her death Margot and I took a fresh look at what the future held for us. Margot had not been very well and it took a little time to find out how to deal with the trouble and finally we had a sense that we should move south to Sussex, where Margot's early years had been spent. We had friends in Brighton and after exploring with them, we found a house in an area of Brighton which had been a separate village called Patcham. It was here that we settled and soon found ourselves in a very friendly and agreeable community. We were near to shops, on a bus route into the centre of Brighton when needed and also within about an hour of London if we wanted to go further afield or to meet people who did not want to leave London, such as some Indian friends who might happen to be passing through.



Margot at home in Sussex in 2010

By 1984 when we settled in Patcham, Britain had become a very multicultural, multifaith society. Did we have any part in this new situation? At about that time a New Zealand couple who had also worked in India came to Brighton where he was given a contract with an engineering company. Reading in the paper a speech given by the local Imam, he drew my attention to it and suggested that we might try to meet this man, who seemed to have something interesting to say. So I rang him up and not surprisingly he was a bit unsure when answering the phone at being rung up by someone he did not know. So to be on the safe side he said he was very busy and could not see us immediately. So I rang a week later to try again. He again said he was very busy, but not wanting to be impolite, as he admitted to me later, he said that the only time he was free was 7am in the morning. He seemed sure that no Britisher would agree to an appointment at that time of day. So his bluff was called when we said we would come!

This led to a fruitful friendship and a partnership between Muslim and Christian, so important in these days of a multifaith Britain. I discovered that Imam Sajid had played a very constructive role in relations between the Police and the Muslim community. I also found out that he had friends among the Jewish leaders in the city and one result has been a fruitful and positive Interfaith Group working in the city, of which later Margot and I became a part.

We began exploring which church we should attend and decided on the Parish Church which was within easy walking distance of our community and soon we began to get to know the members of the congregation. In due course we were invited to take part in various organisations in the church, like a house group. I was invited to join the Parish Church Council, which gave another opportunity for making a contribution. So quite soon we felt thoroughly at home and were happy with the choice we had made. And it was a joy for us when Margot's twin sister, Mary, joined us in 1987 and we had a happy three years before she sadly died rather unexpectedly. It was also after our move to Brighton that I first began learning about computers and began to use email and a few of the more modern techniques available.

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Since returning to UK in 1975, Margot and I have made several short visits back to India, usually for about a month or so. Sometimes I went on my own. One such visit was in 1986 and while there a delegation came from South Korea for a short visit to Asia Plateau in Panchgani. The delegation was led by a senior Korean called Chung Choon. I had met him earlier at conferences in Caux. The delegation included a remarkable woman called Mother Park Chung Soo, who was at the time head of a Buddhist convent in Seoul. Later I got to know her well, as I shall explain later.

The following year Chung Choon went again to Asia Plateau when my wife and I were at the Centre. He spoke at one meeting about an international conference they were planning to have the following year in South Korea when Seoul was hosting the Olympic Games. He appealed to Rajmohan Gandhi who was present at the meeting to support their venture by sending people to assist them. When Gandhi asked him who would be helpful, he replied that apart from Rajmohan himself, he would like to have me come! What a surprise. I had no experience of Korea and did not see how I could help and I must admit to brushing aside the idea.

However as 1988 dawned, I noticed that the TV was carrying a number of programmes on the Olympic Games and about Korea. I found myself interested in the fact that a country which had suffered a great deal during the Japanese colonial rule in the Peninsular and then through the Korean War, had nevertheless made a remarkable recovery and was now on the way to becoming a substantial economic power. So I thought that I had better take a fresh look at Mr Chung Choon's request.

To cut a long story short, this led to my paying a total of seven visits to Korea in the next 12 years and getting to know a lot about the country, their needs and their strengths. I also made some very real friendships with people there, including Mother Park Chung Soo. When she had first visited Asia Plateau in 1986 she was not ready to talk with some Japanese present there, because of her strong feelings over the way Japan had treated Korea during their 36 years occupation. Later when Mother Park visited Caux I was also there and a Swiss woman had the courage to challenge her over this matter of her feelings against Japan. In effect she said to her, "Mother Park, you are trying to build peace in the world, but you are not talking to the nation nearest you. It does not add up". Mother Park finally faced this criticism and

decided to meet some Japanese. Later she told me, “When I opened my heart to the Japanese, I opened it to the whole world. And I decided to help other countries in need in any way I could.”

Over the next ten years she raised some \$10 million from people in South Korea to send humanitarian aid to other countries, starting with Cambodia, which was just beginning to recover from the disaster of the Pol Pot regime. Many countries have benefitted from her generosity, including more recently North Korea, where she succeeded in getting help to young mothers needing nutrition for their infant children. A truly remarkable story of how the passion and aim of one person enlisted hundreds of others to open their hearts and their wallets.

I learned two important things during my visits to Korea. One was that when working in someone else’s country it is very important to be ready to follow the ideas they want for their country, not the things which I may feel important. This may seem obvious, but often out of politeness people do not tell you what they would like, but rather wait for you to tell them. I was fortunate when I first went to Korea that I was given hospitality by a family in their home. I learned later that it is unusual for foreigners to stay in Korean homes as hosts feel they would not know what their guests like. I got to know this Korean family very well and so I learned a lot by listening to them. On subsequent visits, I stayed with them each time, and Mrs. Moon Soo Bok, the mother of the family, acted as my translator, driver, appointment secretary as well as hostess. And she was honest enough to tell me when I made mistakes and advise me often when I did not know. So this was a great gift and to some extent prevented the temptation of every British person to know best!

Another thing I learned was to be ready to go through the doors which God opened, but not to try and force my way through doors which seemed to be shut. I did not know much about Korea when I first visited, nor did I know the language at all – and at that time very few Koreans spoke English. But I was clear that even by 1988 they had recovered amazingly from being a country overrun by the Korean War facing extreme difficulties to become an industrial nation with a very good economic base. And of course now they are the 11th economic nation in the world. To me they represented an example

that with the will to achieve and the determination to overcome every obstacle, any nation can progress rapidly.

On one visit to Seoul, I found a telephone message awaiting me to phone the secretary of the Prime Minister and arrange a date with him. This was the result of a Japanese lady who had made friends with the Prime Minister when he was a young man and kept in touch. I wondered what I could say. When I got the appointment I told him of my reason for being in Korea and my association with Moral Re-Armament. I also told him of the forthcoming conference which was planned in Caux, Switzerland on the subject of reconciliation. He asked me to visit the Minister of Reconciliation and tell him about it. When I followed his thought, the minister immediately decided to send one of his staff to attend the conference. This resulted not only in a friendship with Mr. Lee Chan Ho, the staff member, but also new ideas reaching the Ministry on the subject of reconciliation.

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Thinking back over an interesting, varied and happy life as I reach 90, I realise that God had given me some very valuable lessons, which I much appreciate and want to pass on to others. These included finding a faith, being given a calling, learning a great deal from those with whom I have worked, as well as living on faith and prayer, trusting God for every need.

One example of the latter was at the time of returning to Britain in 1975 from India. We wanted to be near my mother in her last years and she did not have room in her flat for us to join her. So, as mentioned earlier, we had the thought to purchase an old cottage, and to do it up ourselves. So we used a lot of the savings we then had to buy it, trusting that we would be provided for our needs in future. And in fact when those needs became more acute, we reached pension age and began receiving our state pensions. And when eight years later my mother died and we decided to move to Brighton we were able to sell the cottage for four times the price we had paid for it, because of the work we had put in to do it up and because the price of housing had risen steeply. So this in turn made it possible for us to buy a house in the South with the addition of a small legacy which my mother was able to leave me. So at each step, God gave a plan for what we should do. As Margot sometimes says, "God is the best Estate Agent!"

At a time of high unemployment such as the time when I write this, I recall the truth expressed by Frank Buchman that, "If everyone cares enough and shares enough everyone will have enough. There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. That when we listen, God speaks. When we obey, God acts. When we change, nations can change." It is a truth we have tested over the years, and it has never failed, even if sometimes we felt a bit close to the edge!

One illustration of this last truth: Margot's father was a poultry farmer who had always wanted to be an architect, but during the First World War he was wounded and lost an eye. To avoid straining the other eye he was advised to do something out of doors. So that led him to farming. And he was very successful. In 1934 he met Frank Buchman and during a time of listening to his conscience he felt challenged by two things. One was that he had always been bitter against his father and had left home aged 12 because his father was an alcoholic and got violent due to drink. Meeting MRA determined him to put things right with his father. So he searched for him, located where he was and apologised for his hatred. They were reconciled and not long after that his father died.

John Meekings also faced the fact that he was ambitious and although successful, did not care too much for others while pursuing success. At that time in Britain we faced extreme unemployment and most people were trying to cut back to get through the recession. John had the thought that he should get a bigger farm and employ some unemployed coal miners from the mines of Wales. This he did, even though it seemed very impractical. For some of the miners they had not eaten a square meal for a long time and could not at first digest good food. You can imagine their gratitude. John built a hostel for their accommodation and they adapted to the new life well. With the start of World War II the miners returned to Wales to coal mining, while sadly John developed leukaemia and could no longer manage the farm. He died a year later, so the farm had to be sold. One of the miners came from Wales for his funeral and later came with his wife to our wedding in London in gratitude for what it had meant to him to be taken on by John on his farm.

David Young has known India since his childhood when he spent his first 10 years in Delhi. He returned to India with the Army in 1941 serving with the Royal Engineers in Burma where he won the Military Cross. In 2003 he published a small book (called Initiatives of Change in India) as archive material on the development of Initiatives of Change (Moral Re-Armament) in India since its growth from the Oxford Group in the 1930s. In the book he tries to show how everyone can have a part in making a difference in the world if they are ready to listen and obey.

In 1997 David , together with three Royal Engineer officers who had served with 30 Field Company, wrote a 24 page summary of the history of the company in which they served during World War II. They entitled it A Tribute to 30 Field Company to acknowledge their admiration for the role of the Indian Army at that time and to mark the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence. This booklet was not only valued by the Bombay Engineer Group of the Corps of Indian Engineers but also by the Engineer in Chief and other senior officers at Army Headquarters in New Delhi. The company is still in service in the Corps of Indian Engineers.

