

handbook of hope

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**edited by
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Moral Re-Armament

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This book has been compiled from the experience and ideas of scores of people of varying ages and backgrounds. They include:

Rajmohan Gandhi, Neerja Chowdhury, Meher Ghyara, Sanjoy Hazarika, Niketu Iralu, Bhanu Kale, Suresh Mathew, Anasuya Paithankar, Dhananjai Pandya, J. S. Parthiban, A. S. Ravindra Rao, Vijay N. Seth.

A vision for India

DESPITE her blemishes we love India. But we want to work to remove those blemishes.

We want to see an India where every family has a decent house and every house the spirit of a real home. An India of attractive (and clean and sanitary) villages and towns, with nutritious food and drinking water for all.

A land that has roads without holes, administration without corruption, business without greed, industry without stoppages, products without adulteration, hospitals without congestion and examinations without cheating.

A land where men treat one another, without exception, as royal souls, instead of some being treated as gods and others as dogs. Where wealth-worship gives way to the service of man, and indolence to intelligent labour.

Where belief in the timelessness of certain

values is not perverted into a disregard for punctuality; where courtesy replaces harshness in conversation.

And where compassion melts the hardness of heart that has allowed us for so long to live alongside human degradation.

India does not live for Indians alone. The world seems to need India.

Her destiny is to build bridges between Asia and the West, between the Communist and non-Communist worlds and, within the vast Asian continent, between the largely Muslim regions to our west and the Buddhist-influenced lands of the east.

Geography and history and the culture, complexion and aspirations of her population seem to call for an India that does this.

We believe that the ideas expressed in this handbook can create such an India.

The chain of wrong

Over the centuries, the desire to dominate has resulted in oppression and degradation around the world. Many have revolted against this. Sadly this revolt is often undercut by hatred and a desire for revenge.

Revenge-seekers in turn become self-seekers. So to the first wrong is added a second. And then a third. A chain of wrong is forged, binding men and beating them.

The greatest challenge of the twentieth century is whether this chain of wrong can be broken. The heroes of this age will be those who will break it.

How?

By cleansing themselves of hate and self-seeking. And so earning the right to tackle the wrongs and injustices in society.

Can this happen? Is it happening?

To both questions the answer is yes.

This is a handbook of hope. In it are the stories of those who have had the common-sense and courage to start their revolt with themselves; to purge their lives of the evils they detest in society. They are among the thousands in this country and around the world who have done so.

This handbook is a testimony of how society can be affected by men and women who compare their lives with absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, make restitution and apologise to those they have wronged, and are therefore able to influence others to do the same.

These pages reveal a secret of explosive power: there is a voice inside each of us—that can tell us what to do to break the chain of wrong.

Student power—new style

Standard Motors, Madras, was closed for nine months in 1970. The families of 1,700 workers were near starvation. A handful of students and a lecturer resolved to end the stalemate.

They began with little knowledge of industry. They had no ready-made solutions to offer. But they wanted to help solve the strike on the basis of “what is right” not “who is right”.

First they went to see the Tamilnadu Minister of Industries and told him of their desire to help. One of the students took the opportunity to apologise to the Minister for having been rude to him on an earlier occasion.

“Sit down”, said the Minister. Then he told them that everyone, from the Prime Minister down, had tried to solve the dispute and failed. But they were welcome to try.

At first the workers treated the students with hostility and suspicion. But later they said, "Where have you been for the past nine months? We wish you had come earlier."

"I will see you for five minutes", said the Chairman. He kept them for an hour. Finally the management made new proposals.

The employees responded.

Both sides invited the students' presence at the negotiations. The plant re-opened twelve days after the students had begun their initiative.

A new wage structure was set up and in return the workers guaranteed 70 per cent production efficiency.

The Times of India had a front page story headlined, "Student power—new style".

The fuel

What is the fuel for the new student power? The spirit let loose by students who cease

coffee-house criticism and start by a change in their own motives and actions.

Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh has produced all three Prime Ministers of free India.

Vinay Kumar Biala is the General Secretary of a 3,500-strong student union there. Recently he was among those who *gheraoed* the Chief Minister and was thrown in jail.

A fortnight later he was at the Moral Re-Armament centre, Asia Plateau, at Panchgani in Maharashtra. There he found, he said, "a more revolutionary way than agitation to change society. Radical change comes from men's hearts."

He was debating whether or not to dip into the Rs 3,000 union funds that he held. At Asia Plateau he decided to apologise to his union members for thinking of it.

Also at Asia Plateau was Ratanlal Sharma, Vinay Kumar's predecessor as General Secretary. He said, "Driven by ambition I led a strike that landed many of my friends in jail

or with injuries. I must apologise to each one of them.”

Both have decided not to be used by political opportunists of any hue but to stand up for what they honestly believe in.

Factionalism rendered obsolete

Factionalism hits the headlines today. Many use it as a ladder to climb to the top. But it can be tackled. Here is how some students in Assam did it.

On May 11, 1971, students of the Jorhat Agricultural University were beaten and stabbed in Assamese-Bengali clashes. A tremor of fear went through the whole state. Sixty-five were reported injured. A Government enquiry was instituted. Arrests were made and trials commenced.

The following year a group of six, representing both the Assamese and Bengalis, came to Asia Plateau. Chakravarty, a Bengali, was

among them. Datta, an Assamese, was also in the delegation.

During the clashes in Jorhat, Chakravarty had seen Datta direct some angry Assamese to a hostel room occupied by three Bengalis.

“Since that day I began to hate Datta”, said Chakravarty.

One evening at Asia Plateau, Chakravarty apologised to Datta and the other Assamese present for his deep bitterness towards them and their community. For the first time in four and a half years he sang an Assamese song at an occasion to mark the reconciliation.

Datta admitted his part in the incident but disclosed that he had backed out when it had turned violent.

“Though since then I have not had ill-feeling towards the Bengalis,” he said, “I have never apologised to them.” He touched Chakravarty’s feet and asked for forgiveness. He did the same to another student present who had suffered 18 blows in the clash.

Humble teacher

M. L. Bright is the Headmaster of the Kotagiri Public School in the Nilgiris. The drive and spirit that made him a basketball star and captain of his university and state teams are evident in the way he runs his school.

He and his family saw an MRA production, *Song of Asia*. They invited it to their town.

When the cast arrived Bright said to them, "I have wanted you to come and change some people. But the still small voice of God has been showing me that something has to happen in me first."

He and his brothers and sisters had been very young when their father died. They felt that some of their relatives had not cared enough for them. Resentment had grown in Bright.

"We proved", he said, "that we were able to succeed in life without their help. But I

realise that I have become hard-hearted myself, the thing for which I have blamed them.”

He apologised to his uncle. The old man listened in silence and then said, “You don’t need to be saying this. It is I who should have said sorry to you all long ago.”

From his salary Bright sends money to those who work for MRA without salary and do not have resources of their own.

High without drugs

Suresh is the product of a typical middle-class home. But securing a respectable degree and job was not enough for him. He was pressed by his parents into “safe” channels, into a B.Com. course at college he did not want to take.

In frustration he fell in with a fast set. Most

evenings were spent with the group in a small room, thick with the fumes of drugs. Conversation was about their problems and unrealistic plans to be successful.

Something however held Suresh back from becoming a total addict. He wanted his life to be creative and meaningful and he felt that drugs would not make it so.

He was invited to Asia Plateau. On arrival there, his “preservation instincts were at the lowest ebb. I had almost catapulted into the dark world.”

The months of continuous work on the Asia Plateau farm were not easy. He had to re-learn co-ordination and discipline. The simple act of fixing a bolt required a painful mental and physical struggle. But his efforts paid off.

Today Suresh has a role in *Song of Asia* and is helping others with problems similar to his.

He says, “What had previously dried up

has come alive again due to the care of friends who stuck by me.”

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R had everything he wanted: a luxurious home, books, records, cars, club life, the opportunity to shine in a chosen career, but he hankered for more attention from his parents whom he loved. He resented the time they spent away from home.

He too drifted into drugs. Although he started with soft drugs, R was soon on 60 pills of “speed” a day.

When he met the cast of *Song of Asia* he was amazed at the freedom and gaiety on their faces. Suresh was invited to stay with him. Later R joined *Song of Asia*. Today as sound technician, he is a member of the stage crew. And is free of drugs.

Capitalists can change ... and trade unionists

Marwaris are not unknown for their business acumen. Enterprise took them from Rajasthan to different parts of India. Om Prakash's family travelled to Assam where his uncle started a small bicycle repair shop.

Today the family, with the uncle still at its head, owns a concern that manufactures tea machinery. It exports to Africa and Asia.

Om Prakash, being of the second generation, had all the privileges of the "haves". An IIT graduate, he was made Chief Engineer of the company. With his knowledge of modern techniques he helped improve the company's products. But he turned cynical over relations with the workers.

The company was involved in an eight-year-old dispute with the workers. It had

gone to the Supreme Court but nothing had been resolved.

Om Prakash hosted the visit of an MRA team to his city, Tinsukia. During that time, he experimented with the idea of listening for guidance from the inner voice.

His thoughts, while he was in a temple on a rare visit, went to Kedar Mistri, a worker in the company. Mistri had been injured the previous year. He had not recovered. The company had not done all it could have for him.

From the temple Om Prakash went to Mistri's home, his first visit to a worker's house. He gave Mistri Rs 500 and sent him with his wife and child to the best specialist in the area.

He also went to the trade union leader, "without an agenda", to discover what the workers felt about the dispute.

"Normally we go to him; today he has come to us", thought the trade unionist. He was cautious to begin with but responded to the

new initiative from Om Prakash for a settlement. A solution was worked out in three days.

Om Prakash, speaking after the signing of the agreement, said, "Till three days ago I considered that man a *rakshas*; today he is my friend."

One point of dispute was housing for the workers. The company's application for a loan had been pending with the Government for a year. Workers and management approached the Government together. The loan was sanctioned. Within a month construction started.

A co-operative store, which had been shut down, re-opened. It sold essential items and was run by the workers and management on a no-profit, no-loss basis. As a result, the price line was held.

"No matter what the obstacles, there is no turning back for me", says Om Prakash.

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Shashi Patel, a Bombay businessman, had imported some equipment without a proper permit. The Government found out and impounded the machinery.

He was tempted to wriggle out by telling a lie but he decided to come clean.

Patel met the customs authorities and told them the truth and offered to pay any penalty. "For the freedom of our country, people went to jail. Some may have to be ready to go to jail for honesty", he thought.

Customs took some months to figure out what to do. Finally they fined Patel the minimum penalty permissible.

Meanwhile, the spirit in the factory had altered so remarkably that his team of young engineers designed and produced equally good equipment.

Production remained uninterrupted as a result.

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In 1970 many jute mills in West Bengal were closed. A leading figure in the jute industry, I. L. Tripathi, wondered what he could do. He felt that violence often erupted from frustration caused by unemployment.

“If we can open closed factories we will tackle the root of the problem”, he thought. “Start with Alliance Jute Mills”, his inner voice told him.

The workers at Alliance Jute Mills had demanded that the bonus and other allowances due to them be paid in one instalment. The management had refused. As a result work had come to a grinding halt.

Tripathi bought some shares in the company. He found financiers to buy more.

Union leader Bibhas Ghosh, whom Tripathi knew, was able to persuade the workers to accept 50 per cent of the bonus in one instalment and the rest later.

The mill re-opened after 22 months of closure. At that time 2,000 men worked in

the mill. Now it employs 4,300. Before long the number should increase to 6,000.

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Satya Banerjee has been a convinced trade unionist for the last 28 years.

In 1958 he apologised to his union members for having set one group of union men against another to keep the lever of power in his hands.

Banerjee was an employee of the Martin Burn Group of Light Railways and General Secretary of the Martin Light Railway Staff Association of West Bengal.

In 1971 the group of railways was closed down. It was found to be uneconomic. Industrial unrest and instability in the state also influenced the closure.

And so, 2,600 workers found themselves without a job, Banerjee among them.

On the train, as he was returning to Calcutta from the first round of talks with the railway

authorities in Delhi, he had the thought to forget inter-union differences and unitedly seek alternative jobs for all the men.

His second thought was to forget his own financial worries and give himself to the work in hand.

Following protracted negotiations with the Government—they went on for over a year—alternative jobs were found for all the men in zonal railways around the country.

Banerjee was the last to get a job.

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S. V. Gole is the Vice-President of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) of Maharashtra.

A strike had gone on for 44 days in the Harkisondas Hospital, one of the biggest private hospitals in Bombay.

Gole has a union there.

Neither the union nor the management

were prepared to accept any change in their stands or attitudes.

A young doctor, who had just joined the hospital staff, had the thought to tell Gole about MRA. Nervously she obeyed her thought.

Gole began to see things from a new angle. He too had been wrong, not just the management. He put right a bitterness he had towards the management. "I used to walk through the hospital as though it belonged to me", he says.

When negotiations were started again, his changed attitude paved the way for a settlement.

More effective than violence

Can believers in violence be won to a more realistic way of changing things?

Can the fire of angry young men be used to create rather than destroy?

Let Pradip and Kishore, two young men in whom the fire burns, tell their story:

Tears and terror

“We wanted to free the country from corruption and exploitation. At the age of 15 we joined the extremist movement in Bihar.

“We were trained in action and ideology. We created trouble in our city, Jamshedpur. We went to villagers and workers with the message of hate. Frequently arrested, twice we were sent to jail. We caused tears at home and terror at school.

“Our parents often wished we had never been born.

“Then we met someone with a new idea. We had learnt not to trust. For weeks we questioned and watched. ‘Come to our camp’, he said. ‘See how this idea works. If you find it’s better, accept it.’

“We saw rich men and poor men, a cabinet minister and common men, many castes, many races. Their care for one another and for us was hard to believe. Our hearts were touched.

“As a first step we put right our wrongs. We made apologies to our parents, to the principal for cheating in examinations, to teachers for threatening, to friends for bullying. Money we had cheated, stolen and snatched, we returned. Many friends changed. Our numbers increased.

“To be ‘good’ was not our goal. ‘Jamshedpur should be a model city’, was the thought from the inner voice. We set out to tackle the wrongs around us.

“We wrote a play, *Sachi Kranti*, to tell others what we had found. It was shown to over 3,000.

“An unofficial strike broke out in a major industry. Some met the management. Nine of us had two hours with the strike leader at his road-side *paan* shop. As an extremist, he had been in jail with Kishore’s brother, we discovered. When the strike was over we were informed that our efforts had also helped.

“Now we give our whole time for this revolution. Kishore’s father declared, ‘This work needs moral, monetary and manual support. I donate my son’.”

Invitation to Jamshedpur

The “someone with a new idea” Pradip and Kishore refer to is A. S. Ravindra Rao of Bangalore.

What led him to Jamshedpur and the extre-

-mist students? This is his account:

“In 1971 violence had gripped Jamshedpur. A trade union leader, whose colleagues had been killed, pleaded for help. He wanted to give an idea better than violence to the extremists.

“I was in Bombay. The thought came to me to go to Jamshedpur in response to the invitation. I did not know the language and Jamshedpur was the last place I wanted to visit.

“But the thought persisted and so a friend and I boarded the train. We had hardly enough money for the train fare, were not sure where we would stay and knew no one in the steel city.

“A room in the students’ hostel became our home for the next year.

“We bumped into a student who introduced us to friends who believed in violence. All I could do was to tell them of my change and introduce them to the ‘still small voice’.

“Many hates melted, many apologies were made and many bridges with enemies built.

“Four of the hard-core, including Kishore and Pradip, came to a camp to examine MRA. And they changed. The police told me later that these four had given them the worst headaches.

“Soon people began to notice a difference in the city. Trade unionists, management men and parents thanked people like me for this. All I can say is that the ‘Guide’ inside me gave clear instructions at every step.”

Incidentally, how did Rao manage to feed himself and move about?

“Once we had only Rs 5 between us when a third friend joined us. We spent the last of what we had on our dinner and prayed for the next day. At 5-30 a.m. a car came from a friend and took us 85 miles to Ranchi for breakfast. We were well looked after for three days, given a gift of Rs 250 and brought back to Jamshedpur!”

Unexpected weapon

The Nagas of North East India have a long and proud tradition of being fighters.

It was in Kohima, on the tennis court of the Deputy Commissioner, that the advancing Japanese were halted and finally turned back in World War II.

The jungles of Nagaland have known the sounds of bombs and bullets since. An underground movement has been operating for 20 years.

Kolezo Chase is a Naga. For several years he had been in the underground.

His cousin had been shot dead. The cousin's brother suspected that the leader of a rival group in the underground had betrayed his brother and wanted revenge. But the village elders dissuaded him.

One day, he put on his best costume, told his wife and children that he was going to a great festival and walked out of the house.

He went to the grave of his brother, spread out his shawl and shot himself dead.

That day Kolezo vowed to avenge the deaths of his cousins. He carried a revolver, determined to use the first chance he got.

At that time, an MRA musical revue, *Anything to Declare?*, came to Shillong. Kolezo could not sleep for four nights after seeing it. He had seen in it an answer to hate. On the fifth day, he gave up his passion for revenge.

Later he said, "I had a definite plan to kill the people who I thought were responsible for the deaths of my beloved cousins. I realise that I have been too sensitive to how much others have hurt me and forgotten how much I have hurt others."

He sought out the group leader he had planned to kill and was reconciled to him.

Politicians are not exempt!

Many dismiss change of heart as impractical in the rough and tumble of political life. But some politicians can say from experience that it is not. Among them is Stanley D. D. Nichols-Roy, Minister of Industry, Forests, Tourism and Transport in the Cabinet of Meghalaya.

The North East of India is blessed with forests, oil, tea and precious minerals. A narrow corridor of land connects it to the rest of India. It is bordered by China, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burma.

Brown and yellow races meeting there make up the population of 13 million. The tribal people, many of them Christians, live in the hills. Assamese and Bengalis, mainly Hindus and Muslims, live in the plains.

This sensitive area appeared, some years

ago, to be on the verge of disintegration. The hill people had launched an agitation for separation from Assam. This was bitterly opposed by the plains people.

In December 1967, *Weekend Review* wrote, "It is too late for rapprochement—a hill-valley compromise is no longer possible." *The Indian Express* ran an editorial: "Will Assam be a second Vietnam?"

And yet on April 2, 1970, the inauguration of Meghalaya, the hill state, was peacefully and joyously celebrated by all concerned including the people of the plains.

B. K. Nehru, then Governor of Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland, said, "Seldom have such far-reaching constitutional changes been brought about with so much goodwill and understanding." Lalmawia, Mizo leader and onetime President of the Eastern India Tribal Union, said that but for the change in some of the leaders, blood would have been shed in the hills of Assam.

Nichols-Roy is one of the men Lalmawia was referring to. A Khasi, he was one of the active leaders of the hill people.

B. P. Chaliha was Assam's Chief Minister. "I did not want to be seen alive on the same platform as Chaliha", says Nichols-Roy.

But after a visit to Asia Plateau in January 1968, Nichols-Roy decided that "politics can be played in a different way". He put right his personal relationship with Chaliha.

Trust between the different sides grew and this helped in the friendly evolution of Meghalaya.

Nichols-Roy feels that credit should go more to his colleagues than himself. But even his opponents would agree that his own change—which affected his home life as well as his political life—has been a key factor.

As a result of the continuing work of MRA in India's North East, a Centre was set up by local people and opened by Governor Nehru in April 1973.

What the ordinary man can do

The ordinary man is taking the lead.

Gajanan Sawant, a Bombay textile worker, earns Rs 425 per month. He lives in Devipada, an area with about 50 *chawls* and over 4,000 inhabitants.

Drought struck Maharashtra.

He asked himself what he could do for his area. The well near his *chawl* had silted up. The *chawl*-dwellers regretted the fact but expected the landlord to take action.

With his own money, Sawant bought a bucket and a rope, lowered himself into the well and started digging. Others joined him. The well was cleaned and repaired.

Sawant and his friends started a school for the children who were wasting their time. "I want them to learn that other people's sorrows are their sorrows", he says.

A path has been built linking Devipada to the highway. The holes in the ground around it, which in the monsoon create a swamp, have been filled. Part of the flattened area is used as a volley-ball court.

And Sawant's chawl takes pride in its cleanliness.

Man by man, Sawant is helping his friends.

A co-worker was in debt because of heavy drinking. Frustrated with life, he had sent in his resignation to the company. Sawant persuaded him to withdraw it, in spite of the fact that if the friend had resigned Sawant would have been promoted to his job.

Sawant helped him to give up drinking and invited him to live in his home for a while. His friend could then use his salary to pay back what he owed.

The Mayor of Bombay was heartened after meeting Sawant. He said, "Not only have you changed; you have done something practical."

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A group of seven Harijans tackled drunkenness, pickpocketing, thieving and knifing in their colony.

They met the President of India, the late Dr Zakir Husain.

After listening to each one of them, Dr Husain said, "In every man's life moments come which he chooses not forget. For me, meeting you is one such."

Honesty works

Any talk of honesty—absolute honesty—is countered with: "Today it is impossible to be honest and survive." But how many of those who put out this line mean to try honesty anyway?

Mrs I is the municipal chairman of a popular hill resort. In 1973 the municipality put up

a fountain on the lake which is one of the town's principal attractions.

The estimated cost was Rs 50,000. But when the contractor finally presented the bill it amounted to only Rs 36,000. The contractor told Mrs I that Rs 14,000 had been allowed for "cuts" to the municipal staff. But as no one had asked for "cuts" he had presented an honest bill!

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G is a dealer in automobile spare parts. He sold Indian-made goods in "Made in USA" boxes at five times the price.

He made up his mind to try out honesty. Business actually improved!

His biggest customer had long suspected something fishy and felt he could trust the dealer when he was honest.

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Vijitha had to buy paper for a weekly magazine. The paper—60 reams—had been ordered in October 1973. At that time, the market price was Rs 61 per ream.

When it was time to take delivery in December, the paper merchant said he could only supply 28 reams at Rs 106 per ream, Rs 16 of it in black money. The market price in December was about Rs 88 per ream.

Buying paper with black money was not in keeping with the weekly's policy. But paper was short. Other dealers could not provide it. Vijitha explained his point to the merchant but was told that the paper would be sold to other customers if the money was not paid on the following day.

Vijitha decided that whatever happened he would not buy the paper on the black. Four days later, on Christmas day, Vijitha happened to be near the merchant's office and dropped in to offer good wishes.

He was welcomed with: "I am glad you have called. I have decided to let you have the paper at Rs 88. I will not ask you for any black money."

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Osamu Omura, a Japanese, came to study Indian culture and philosophy. He also learned to exchange dollars on the black. The excess rate he sold them for totalled about \$ 100 in profit to him.

In Madras, he ran into the ideas expressed in this book and later visited Asia Plateau. He found a passion to free his own country and India from corruption.

He went to the Foreign Exchange Department of the Reserve Bank of India, Bombay, to pay back his illicit profit.

The first official Omura met could find no precedent to guide him. "Why don't you bring into the country, legally, another

\$100 and give it to some charity?" he suggested.

Omura persisted. So he was directed to the Enforcement Branch of the Union Cabinet Secretariat. "A most interesting case", the Deputy Director said. Omura signed the voluntary statement of his activities in which he apologised for encouraging corruption and added a sentence on his vision for a new India and a new Japan.

He was fined Rs 900 on December 24, 1973, but he emerged a free man.

Families together

Generation gap ?

Changing society is a task that needs every family, every person. No one need feel left out.

Mrs Uma Banerjee is a typical Bengali housewife.

Her day starts at 5 a.m. She performs puja, lights the *chullah* and makes tea and breakfast. Then she puts on the rice to cook and nips over to the bazaar to buy fish and vegetables. By 9 a.m. her husband has been fed, his *tiffin* filled and he is off to work.

Mrs Banerjee also makes clothes for her family, does the laundry, cleaning and everything else herself.

But this quiet lady, wife of trade unionist Satya Banerjee (see page 25), is a revolutionary in her own right. Her husband says that it is her faith that has helped sustain him.

His work calls for courage and risks. When he is tempted to waver she tells him, "Ours is a small family. God will look after us."

The younger of their two daughters, Indira, gives all her time to the work of MRA. She says, "When we were little our mother sheltered us under her wing. She did not want us to experience the hardships she has known. But now she has allowed me to be free to work for what I know is right."

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The Reges, a family of four, come from Poona. Lt Col Rege has just retired.

Vijay Rege, 17, says, "Arguments were a way of life in our family. I often felt at a disadvantage, particularly when, as I thought, my parents 'ganged up' against me.

"In frustration I felt that domestic silence and not domestic science was necessary for a happy family life.

“One day I realised that my country was facing difficulties because of families like ours. I apologised to my parents and sister for my hostility and bitterness. I told them about the parts of my life I had kept secret.

“None of us is perfect; we are all ordinary human beings, but our love for each other has been revived.”

Overseas to serve

Throw an Indian anywhere in the world and he generally manages to bounce up successful. But it is not always that he wins the hearts of his hosts.

Indians go abroad for degrees, for holidays and shopping trips or to settle down. There are some who go to serve.

Anil Kumar, 25, comes from Delhi.

Not long ago he spent 15 months in Australia. There he met a young Aboriginal student. This student was a leader of his tribe.

The Aborigine, with Anil Kumar's help, found freedom from hatred of the white people of Australia. He also decided to end the tribal tradition of "pay-back killing".

In doing this he risked losing his leadership. But his tribe appointed him as their spokesman with the Government on their land rights.

The Aborigine made Anil Kumar a blood-brother of his tribe.

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Some years ago all the banks in the Republic of Ireland had been closed for 5 months. Six-thousand-eight-hundred were out of a job for that period. Negotiations between management and union representatives had broken down.

The Irish Times wrote, "It will be pointless

for a country with a wrecked economy to extract satisfaction from vilifying one side or the other. If the banks are to open again, they must do so soon. . .”

Just over a month later, the banks did open. A group of visiting Indians played a part in this.

In Belfast, Dublin and Cork they met union representatives. In one place a unionist said, “It is such a mess, only the Lord knows. . .” The Indians agreed. They suggested that God be consulted!

After they had been quiet for some time, one trade unionist told her thought: “You have had many convictions you have not expressed to the officials. Take the first chance.”

Then some members of the Indian group went back to Dublin and met the management. Among them was the industrialist Shashi Patel (see page 23).

In Dublin, Patel met a bank director and

said to him, "If you hold out, you could win temporarily. But peace would be short-lived. The men would be seeking vengeance. Why not make a generous move now?"

As they talked a possible solution suggested itself to the bank director.

The offer was placed before the workers. At the decisive union meeting, the union leader the Indians had met earlier spoke up for a settlement. The vice-president of the union said, "After those words we did not look back and were on the road to the settlement."

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P. V. Abraham of Kerala is the Vice-Principal of a school in an East African country.

He did his work well but his only interests were praise and salary. He was not involved in the life of the country.

One day he realised that if he remained so,

he would fail in his task and fail his students. Today he has won the trust of his pupils.

Some are sent to his office in disgrace. Others come of their own accord. Abraham tries to put everyone he meets in touch with his or her inner voice. There are many whose lives he has helped to transform in this way.

Z's is a typical case.

She had been slapped by a prefect for causing a disturbance. Although the prefect later apologised for slapping her, Abraham could not dismiss the incident from his mind. He was worried about the girl.

He called her to his office. At first, Z felt that there was nothing wrong with her, no need for her to change. Abraham told her how he had become free of a 28-year-old smoking habit.

Then Z told of her unhappy home situation. Her father doubted her mother's fidelity. Z hated her father.

She felt she should apologise to her father

for this and tell him the truth about herself.

Her father wept.

He started coming home early. A change came into the atmosphere in their home.

For Abraham it has not been all smooth sailing.

At one time all the secondary schools in the province were on strike. This Abraham helped answer. He proposed no solution of his own. But he did manage to persuade the students to seek from their inner voice where the best interests of the students lay.

In addition to the affection of his pupils, he has won the esteem of many senior men in the country.

One of them, Mesfun Hailu, says, "Nobody can estimate what this injection into the bloodstream can mean in the life of the nation. It is the supreme form of aid which countries should be giving."

Asia Plateau

Everyone thinks his or her problem is the most impossible, solution-defying, in the world. Many long for a chance to view their problems from a distance, others for the hope that things can change. Both are available at Asia Plateau.

Situated in Panchgani in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, Asia Plateau rests against the famous red basalt tableland and overlooks the Krishna Valley.

The first building was opened in January 1968 and the main section, with auditorium, conference rooms, kitchen and dining rooms, was completed in 1973.

Asia Plateau has been built and is being maintained by the sacrificial giving of thousands. The architect who designed it, a number of the engineers who worked on it and those who maintain and run it, give their services

without charge, as do all those who work full-time for MRA.

They are ordinary men and women but with God's help they want to play their part in remaking this country and the world.

Perhaps it is the sacrifice of thousands that creates an atmosphere of peace and inspiration which strikes those who enter it.

Thousands from this country have already experienced the spirit of Asia Plateau. Practically all the stories in this handbook have a direct link with it.

Professors and students, management and labour, politicians and professionals, find at Asia Plateau a new education. It touches the heart as well as the mind and stirs the will to action. Vice-Chancellors, union leaders and employers send delegations.

Conferences and seminars are regularly held. Those interested in applying the ideas of this book would be welcomed there and would, of course, be expected to cover their expenses.

The Sunday Standard called Asia Plateau a "Beacon of Hope".

Representatives of most races have been at Asia Plateau: Polynesians and Melanesians, black, white, brown and yellow.

* * *

One of the distinguished visitors from overseas was Madame Irene Laure of France.

In World War II she was in the Resistance. Her son was tortured by the Gestapo, but she refused to part with Resistance secrets. She hated Germany and prayed for its total destruction.

After the war, she was elected Member of Parliament and Secretary General of three million Socialist women of France.

Madame Laure attended a conference at the MRA centre at Caux in Switzerland. She was horrified to find Germans there and at once wanted to leave. She was confronted

with the question: "How do you hope to rebuild Europe without the Germans?"

For three days and three sleepless nights she struggled with her hatred. Finally she found freedom from it. Although she could not forget she decided to learn to forgive.

She went to Germany, which was then in ruins. Madame Laure addressed ten of its eleven provincial parliaments and spoke to hundreds of thousands in public meetings and on the radio. For her hatred she apologised to the Germans. As a result many Germans went to France and apologised for what had happened during the war. In the following years several hundred German and French leaders met with each other at Caux.

The German Chancellor Adenauer and the French Prime Minister Schuman said that Irene Laure did more than any other individual to reconcile their countries.

From Asia Plateau Madame Laure went to Bangladesh where she met one of the great

leaders of that country. She related to him her experiences.

The leader, who had himself known suffering, asked her, "Madame, I can understand your forgiving the Germans. But why did you have to apologise?" Madame Laure replied, "For the sake of our children—that the heritage of hate is not handed down from one generation to the next."

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After the 1969 racial riots in Malaysia, militant Malay and Chinese leaders came to Asia Plateau. There they found a new perspective on their country's problems. They found also unity amongst themselves and returned to their country with the determination to work towards making it an example of a multi-racial society that worked.

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Today India may not have much to give the rest of the world materially. But the experience of Asia Plateau shows that our country can help the rest of the world. People of all colours, races, classes and creeds find at Asia Plateau new motivations that could usher in a new unselfish society.

Your chance

When man listens God speaks.
When man obeys God acts.
When men change nations change.

This is the explosive secret behind all the stories in this book. You can test this secret for yourself by conducting a simple experiment.

Take a notebook and pencil. If a notebook is not handy use the blank page at the end of this book. Go to a spot where you are not likely to be disturbed.

Compare your life with:

Absolute Honesty

Absolute Purity

Absolute Unselfishness

Absolute Love.

Do not dismiss the smallest, most ridiculous, the most uncomfortable thought that comes. Note it down. Act on it. Apology and restitution are important steps. The most complicated surgical operation starts with the surgeon washing his own hands.

Take time every morning, at least 15 minutes to begin with, to seek guidance from your inner voice. If you are a very busy person it would be advisable to seek guidance for half an hour!

You can start each day by asking yourself: "What needs to be done in my home, school, college, office, community, city?" Creative ideas will come to you. They may seem trivial at first. But faithful obedience to thoughts that come will, over a period of time, release a chain reaction of change to take the place of the chain of wrong.

The way to check whether or not a thought is from the inner voice is to compare it with the four absolute standards given above.

The advantage of conducting the experiment early in the morning is that it will help you to start the day right. It is pointless to tune up the instruments after the concert is over.

It is possible to be freed from the grip of impurity and the endless pursuit of sex. Sex is a natural part of life. But a slavish obsession with it binds, blinds, deadens and deafens a person. When a person decides to rise above it, a flood of creative energy is released.

You can write to anyone whose name is mentioned in this book for more information on MRA. The address is : c/o Moral Re-Armament, Asia Plateau, Panchgani, 412805, Maharashtra.

Films and books are available to help you. You may be able to organise meetings. Music, drama, public speaking, conversing, listening, cooking—any talent you have can prove useful in reaching the hearts of people.

As you are honest about your mistakes you

will interest other people. If you have changed in your attitudes and motives, you will enlist them to work with you.

Do not be a bit worried if not everyone supports you. Opposition is an indication of your effectiveness. Not everyone responds wholeheartedly to a challenge like this one.

If you keep on going, you will influence those who oppose you. Often those who have opposed most bitterly have turned into the staunchest of allies.

You may think that you have pretty exciting plans for your life. You may be dissatisfied with what you have lined up. But God's plan for your life will be the most satisfying of all.

This is your chance; an invitation to the biggest adventure of your life.

Q and A on MRA

What is Moral Re-Armament?

It gives everyone a chance to build a new world. It represents absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, applied personally and nationally. Every person wants to see the other person change. One class wants to see the other class change. Nations are keen to see other nations different. The most practical and revolutionary place to start is with yourself. MRA is a global force of people committed to doing God's will and determined to bring about social, economic, national and international changes—all based on personal change.

When did it start?

In 1938 when nations were re-arming themselves militarily, an American, Dr Frank Buchman, had the conviction that the next great development in the world would be "a movement of moral and spiritual re-armament".

What is its programme?

It has a four-point programme: (1) Change yourself; (2) Change others; (3) Save a crumbling civilisation; (4) Reach the millions.

Isn't it the system that needs to change?

Yes. Unjust and ineffective systems must be changed. But experience shows that unless a change of system is accompanied by a change in men's motives the new system will quickly inherit the defects of the old. Hans Bockler,

when Chairman of the West German trade union congress, said, "When men change the structure of society changes. When the structure of society changes men change. Both go together and both are necessary."

What is MRA doing to answer poverty?

To get rid of poverty in India we need economic plans, but also determined and incorruptible men and women who can make these plans work. MRA is giving men the incentive to be honest and unselfish enough to make economic plans work.

Why do you need absolute moral standards?

A standard that is not absolute is not a standard. One would not like to live in the vicinity of Bhakra Nangal Dam if each engineer had used relative standards in its construction.

Is MRA religious?

It is not a new religion but a new determination to put age-old principles into action. It helps those who have a religion to live it effectively. Mavalankar, first Speaker of the Lok Sabha, said, "Moral Re-Armament is the old, ancient way of the East. It has given our philosophy a new orientation and it has given it wings."

Is it affiliated to a political party?

No. MRA has nothing to do with politics but has everything to do with politicians because it aims to give them a new motive.

How is MRA financed?

MRA is financed by the sacrificial contribution of thousands of ordinary people across the world who believe in these ideas. Many give

regularly a certain percentage of their salary, for example Gajanan Sawant (see page 38) gives Rs 10 every month. If you want to, you, too, can contribute. You can send your contributions to: Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India), 501 Arun Chambers, Tardeo Road, Bombay 400 034. Donations are exempt from tax.

What is your connection with “Himmat”?

HIMMAT is an independent newsweekly published in Bombay. It is founded by men committed to Moral Re-Armament. Its Chief Editor is Rajmohan Gandhi. The annual subscription is Rs 24 with a special student subscription of Rs 12 also available from 501 Arun Chambers, Tardeo Road, Bombay 400 034.

List of publications

“The Art of Remaking Men”

by Dr Paul Campbell, Rs 3.00 (postage .30p)

“We have all wanted, at one time or another, to see somebody else around us different. Dr Campbell has prepared a book that gives ordinary fellows like us tips on how to achieve the desired result”, writes Rajmohan Gandhi in his foreword.

“From India with Hope”

by Michael Henderson, Rs 5.00 (postage .30p)

A British journalist records more stories of how a new factor is at work across India.

“Teenagers in Revolt”

by P. V. Abraham, Rs 2.00 (postage .20p)

An account of P. V. Abraham's experiences with his students in East Africa.

“Playing to Win”

by Conrad Hunte, Rs 6.00 (postage .30p)

The exciting autobiography of the former vice-captain of the West Indies cricket team, which includes details of his work to bring reconciliation between races in Britain after he retired from first-class cricket.

“Peter Howard: Life and Letters”

by Anne Wolrige Gordon,

Rs 5.40 (postage .45p)

The story of one of the most remarkable men of the century—journalist, author, playwright and, till his death in 1965, leader of Moral Re-Armament—told by his daughter.

Available from Himmat Publications Trust,
501 Arun Chambers,
Tardeo Road,
Bombay 400 034

The space below is reserved for your first time of seeking guidance from the inner voice. The thoughts you write here may make history—small or big!

handbook of hope

hand- book of hope

**edited by
Padmini Kirtane**

Moral Re-Armament

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This book has been compiled from the experience and ideas of scores of people of varying ages and backgrounds. They include:

Rajmohan Gandhi, Neerja Chowdhury, Meher Ghyara, Sanjoy Hazarika, Niketu Iralu, Bhanu Kale, Suresh Mathew, Anasuya Paithankar, Dhananjai Pandya, J. S. Parthiban, A. S. Ravindra Rao, Vijay N. Seth.

A vision for India

DESPITE her blemishes we love India. But we want to work to remove those blemishes.

We want to see an India where every family has a decent house and every house the spirit of a real home. An India of attractive (and clean and sanitary) villages and towns, with nutritious food and drinking water for all.

A land that has roads without holes, administration without corruption, business without greed, industry without stoppages, products without adulteration, hospitals without congestion and examinations without cheating.

A land where men treat one another, without exception, as royal souls, instead of some being treated as gods and others as dogs. Where wealth-worship gives way to the service of man, and indolence to intelligent labour.

Where belief in the timelessness of certain

values is not perverted into a disregard for punctuality; where courtesy replaces harshness in conversation.

And where compassion melts the hardness of heart that has allowed us for so long to live alongside human degradation.

India does not live for Indians alone. The world seems to need India.

Her destiny is to build bridges between Asia and the West, between the Communist and non-Communist worlds and, within the vast Asian continent, between the largely Muslim regions to our west and the Buddhist-influenced lands of the east.

Geography and history and the culture, complexion and aspirations of her population seem to call for an India that does this.

We believe that the ideas expressed in this handbook can create such an India.

The chain of wrong

Over the centuries, the desire to dominate has resulted in oppression and degradation around the world. Many have revolted against this. Sadly this revolt is often undercut by hatred and a desire for revenge.

Revenge-seekers in turn become self-seekers. So to the first wrong is added a second. And then a third. A chain of wrong is forged, binding men and beating them.

The greatest challenge of the twentieth century is whether this chain of wrong can be broken. The heroes of this age will be those who will break it.

How?

By cleansing themselves of hate and self-seeking. And so earning the right to tackle the wrongs and injustices in society.

Can this happen? Is it happening?

To both questions the answer is yes.

This is a handbook of hope. In it are the stories of those who have had the common-sense and courage to start their revolt with themselves; to purge their lives of the evils they detest in society. They are among the thousands in this country and around the world who have done so.

This handbook is a testimony of how society can be affected by men and women who compare their lives with absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, make restitution and apologise to those they have wronged, and are therefore able to influence others to do the same.

These pages reveal a secret of explosive power: there is a voice inside each of us—that can tell us what to do to break the chain of wrong.

Student power—new style

Standard Motors, Madras, was closed for nine months in 1970. The families of 1,700 workers were near starvation. A handful of students and a lecturer resolved to end the stalemate.

They began with little knowledge of industry. They had no ready-made solutions to offer. But they wanted to help solve the strike on the basis of “what is right” not “who is right”.

First they went to see the Tamilnadu Minister of Industries and told him of their desire to help. One of the students took the opportunity to apologise to the Minister for having been rude to him on an earlier occasion.

“Sit down”, said the Minister. Then he told them that everyone, from the Prime Minister down, had tried to solve the dispute and failed. But they were welcome to try.

At first the workers treated the students with hostility and suspicion. But later they said, "Where have you been for the past nine months? We wish you had come earlier."

"I will see you for five minutes", said the Chairman. He kept them for an hour. Finally the management made new proposals.

The employees responded.

Both sides invited the students' presence at the negotiations. The plant re-opened twelve days after the students had begun their initiative.

A new wage structure was set up and in return the workers guaranteed 70 per cent production efficiency.

The Times of India had a front page story headlined, "Student power—new style".

The fuel

What is the fuel for the new student power? The spirit let loose by students who cease

coffee-house criticism and start by a change in their own motives and actions.

Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh has produced all three Prime Ministers of free India.

Vinay Kumar Biala is the General Secretary of a 3,500-strong student union there. Recently he was among those who *gheraoed* the Chief Minister and was thrown in jail.

A fortnight later he was at the Moral Re-Armament centre, Asia Plateau, at Panchgani in Maharashtra. There he found, he said, "a more revolutionary way than agitation to change society. Radical change comes from men's hearts."

He was debating whether or not to dip into the Rs 3,000 union funds that he held. At Asia Plateau he decided to apologise to his union members for thinking of it.

Also at Asia Plateau was Ratanlal Sharma, Vinay Kumar's predecessor as General Secretary. He said, "Driven by ambition I led a strike that landed many of my friends in jail

or with injuries. I must apologise to each one of them.”

Both have decided not to be used by political opportunists of any hue but to stand up for what they honestly believe in.

Factionalism rendered obsolete

Factionalism hits the headlines today. Many use it as a ladder to climb to the top. But it can be tackled. Here is how some students in Assam did it.

On May 11, 1971, students of the Jorhat Agricultural University were beaten and stabbed in Assamese-Bengali clashes. A tremor of fear went through the whole state. Sixty-five were reported injured. A Government enquiry was instituted. Arrests were made and trials commenced.

The following year a group of six, representing both the Assamese and Bengalis, came to Asia Plateau. Chakravarty, a Bengali, was

among them. Datta, an Assamese, was also in the delegation.

During the clashes in Jorhat, Chakravarty had seen Datta direct some angry Assamese to a hostel room occupied by three Bengalis.

“Since that day I began to hate Datta”, said Chakravarty.

One evening at Asia Plateau, Chakravarty apologised to Datta and the other Assamese present for his deep bitterness towards them and their community. For the first time in four and a half years he sang an Assamese song at an occasion to mark the reconciliation.

Datta admitted his part in the incident but disclosed that he had backed out when it had turned violent.

“Though since then I have not had ill-feeling towards the Bengalis,” he said, “I have never apologised to them.” He touched Chakravarty’s feet and asked for forgiveness. He did the same to another student present who had suffered 18 blows in the clash.

Humble teacher

M. L. Bright is the Headmaster of the Kotagiri Public School in the Nilgiris. The drive and spirit that made him a basketball star and captain of his university and state teams are evident in the way he runs his school.

He and his family saw an MRA production, *Song of Asia*. They invited it to their town.

When the cast arrived Bright said to them, "I have wanted you to come and change some people. But the still small voice of God has been showing me that something has to happen in me first."

He and his brothers and sisters had been very young when their father died. They felt that some of their relatives had not cared enough for them. Resentment had grown in Bright.

"We proved", he said, "that we were able to succeed in life without their help. But I

realise that I have become hard-hearted myself, the thing for which I have blamed them.”

He apologised to his uncle. The old man listened in silence and then said, “You don’t need to be saying this. It is I who should have said sorry to you all long ago.”

From his salary Bright sends money to those who work for MRA without salary and do not have resources of their own.

High without drugs

Suresh is the product of a typical middle-class home. But securing a respectable degree and job was not enough for him. He was pressed by his parents into “safe” channels, into a B.Com. course at college he did not want to take.

In frustration he fell in with a fast set. Most

evenings were spent with the group in a small room, thick with the fumes of drugs. Conversation was about their problems and unrealistic plans to be successful.

Something however held Suresh back from becoming a total addict. He wanted his life to be creative and meaningful and he felt that drugs would not make it so.

He was invited to Asia Plateau. On arrival there, his “preservation instincts were at the lowest ebb. I had almost catapulted into the dark world.”

The months of continuous work on the Asia Plateau farm were not easy. He had to re-learn co-ordination and discipline. The simple act of fixing a bolt required a painful mental and physical struggle. But his efforts paid off.

Today Suresh has a role in *Song of Asia* and is helping others with problems similar to his.

He says, “What had previously dried up

has come alive again due to the care of friends who stuck by me.”

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R had everything he wanted: a luxurious home, books, records, cars, club life, the opportunity to shine in a chosen career, but he hankered for more attention from his parents whom he loved. He resented the time they spent away from home.

He too drifted into drugs. Although he started with soft drugs, R was soon on 60 pills of “speed” a day.

When he met the cast of *Song of Asia* he was amazed at the freedom and gaiety on their faces. Suresh was invited to stay with him. Later R joined *Song of Asia*. Today as sound technician, he is a member of the stage crew. And is free of drugs.

Capitalists can change ... and trade unionists

Marwaris are not unknown for their business acumen. Enterprise took them from Rajasthan to different parts of India. Om Prakash's family travelled to Assam where his uncle started a small bicycle repair shop.

Today the family, with the uncle still at its head, owns a concern that manufactures tea machinery. It exports to Africa and Asia.

Om Prakash, being of the second generation, had all the privileges of the "haves". An IIT graduate, he was made Chief Engineer of the company. With his knowledge of modern techniques he helped improve the company's products. But he turned cynical over relations with the workers.

The company was involved in an eight-year-old dispute with the workers. It had