

# **Asia Plateau – Panchgani**

*By Arundhati Nanavati*

## ***In Retrospect***

*The first building “Valley View”  
opened in 1968.*

*The second building “Rock View”  
opened in 1971.*

*The Auditorium, Dining Room Complex  
and Australia Room was opened in 1973  
by  
Mr. Fritz Philips.*

*In January 2008,  
Asia Plateau celebrated its 40 Anniversary.*

## **Preface**

*When I heard about the 40th Anniversary of Asia Plateau at Panchgani in January, 2008, I had the thought to ask some friends to give their stories of their time at Asia Plateau in the early years. I thought to print a small booklet about it.*

*It was difficult to contact many friends, hence, I requested a few friends to write about their time. This was a challenging task, but when I completed it, I thought it was worth the trouble.*

*This small effort is dedicated to thousands all over the world who are trying to bring a positive change in their societies and to the world at large.*

## Panchgani before Asia Plateau – Margot Young

As the car climbed the winding ghat road from Wai to Panchgani my husband and I wondered what we would find when we reached the top. It was early summer 1964 and we had just driven from Madras Chennai) to help prepare a summer camp for High School and University students who had been enlisted in the previous months by the ideas of Moral Re-Armament (now Initiatives of Change). Little did we realise at the time that Panchgani would become our adopted home for the next five years. But we did look back on the previous crowded, travel-filled months.



Starting at Kanyakumari on 2nd October 1963, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, we had been part of the March on Wheels - a 4600 mile journey from the Southern tip of India to the Capital, passing through Kerala, Tamilnad, Karnataka, Andhra, Orissa, Bengal, Bihar and UP in the course of a little over 7 weeks. At every stop students and young people, as well as their seniors, responded to Rajmohan Gandhi's call for a Clean, Strong and United India. The young especially wanted to be part of a new move in the country and gave their names and addresses for further training. And now in Panchgani the first of many training programmes was about to be launched.

Thanks to the generosity of the Sanjeevan Vidyalaya in Panchgani we had a base during the summer holidays for a two week programme for some 350 young people. They were not only recruited during the March. They were also the result of another journey. This time it was of the International Musical Revue, 'Space is so Startling', which opened in Delhi in December 1963 and then toured through Mumbai, Pune Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai during the first 10 weeks of 1964. Here also young people gave their names for further enlistment in a big purpose for life.

In April 1964 at the end of the two week camp in Panchgani, the students invited the community leaders and Municipal Councillors of the town to come for an evening to hear the results of their two week training. In two hours of speech and story, skit and song they recounted their experiences of finding fresh life, a change of purpose and new goals for their futures.

One result was a delegation of the leaders of the town coming the next morning to talk with Rajmohan Gandhi and with Russi Lala to say how impressed they had been with what they had seen and heard the previous evening and urging him to consider creating a permanent centre for this kind of training at Panchgani, for which they would give all possible help. The suggestion was warmly received with the reply that it would be seriously considered, but in the immediate future there were other training camps planned which needed their attention.

When 1964 turned to 1965 David, my husband, and I were working in Pune from where many of the young people had come to the Panchgani camp. We received a request from Rajmohan to go back to the Panchgani leaders and say he would like to go forward with their idea of a permanent centre and would they help us to explore possible sites and the next moves to make. Thus the idea of a future Asia Plateau was born.

David and I rented a small bungalow in Panchgani and used it as a base for our explorations. Having visited a number of sites round the town with the community leaders, we picked out an area of some 20 acres at the approach to the town from Wai, which overlooked the Krishna Valley and nestled below the cliffs of the tableland. Little did we realise that not so many weeks later, looking down on the site from the tableland above we should see a tiger bathed in the evening sunshine lying on a rock just above where the present main auditorium building stands!

Although the area was dusty and bare with one sole silver birch tree standing on it and signs of possible serious erosion here and there, it nevertheless had a magnificent view which gave a sense of space and vision. The big question which the community leaders with us were unable to answer was to whom did the land belong?

By this time we had made a number of friends in the town and David asked one man, who was a small-time builder in Panchgani, if he knew the answer. He did not, but he thought he knew how to find out - and indeed he did. The local planning office had the necessary information and this revealed that three different parties owned the plot we had viewed.

One portion was owned by a man we knew, perhaps at that time the oldest man in Panchgani, a Parsi gentleman well over 90 years of age. He was pleased to sell his land for the project we outlined -and at a very reasonable price also. A second portion belonged to a man living at Mahad some 80 miles towards Mumbai at the bottom of the ghats below Mahabaleshwar. Some three visits to him resulted in a successful purchase from him also. The third portion proved the hardest as it was owned by a somewhat timid man living in the north of Mumbai who was very scared of the tax authorities as he felt sure that any sale would result in his being accused of cheating the authorities! Despite our charitable status it took several visits by David and Dara Ghandy to persuade him that he was unlikely to end up in prison!

While these negotiations had been going on, as quietly as possible in order not to draw the attention of any developers who might step in to raise the prices, an offer of help came from Australia from architect Gordon Brown who was ready to design the buildings for the centre free of charge as his contribution. What a magnificent offer it was, resulting in many visits to the site by Gordon himself, many hours of work by him and his staff in Adelaide and numerous drawings from all angles of all the buildings envisaged - two residences, a main complex for auditorium, seminar rooms, a dining room and kitchens as well as two smaller residences for more private guests. A truly magnanimous gift.

There were doomsayers who told us that it would be impossible to build the centre and maintain the standard of absolute honesty which MRA stood for. Why? Because it was not possible, we were told, to get the plans passed by the Town Planning Dept in Pune without paying bribes.

It is true it took 6 months patient pursuit of the plans with regular visits to the Department. But the plans were approved and the next steps of arranging building contracts etc., could begin.

It interested us how having a really constructive idea can draw the best from others. I have already told of Gordon Brown's offer. There was other less spectacular but equally generous offers of help. A retired forest officer who had worked in the Punjab came out for three months to help work out ways of preventing soil erosion through terracing and better drainage, while also planting local trees and bushes to consolidate the soil.

Once we had received planning permission we enlisted young people at smaller training programmes to dig holes ready for planting seedlings when the monsoon came. And with the position of buildings known an English lady, Stephanie Burton, whose school days had been spent in India while her father served in the Army, prepared the outline design for the gardens and then made friends with so many local people that she got plants given to her free of cost! In addition she turned out to be water diviner also, which helped with the water supply for the site, but also for some of the villages situated round Panchgani.

Building work started in January 1967 and the first residence building was opened in January 1968. I worked with some of the Mumbai ladies to do the furnishing of the rooms. Jini Taleyarkhan and Naju Pandole were amazing in their resourcefulness in raising money, finding the material for curtains, cushions etc., and dozens of things needed to make guests welcome. It was a rush but a uniting and team building operation. Among many fascinating adventures we had, was going to auctions in Mumbai where Jini would search out useful items and then enlisted Chris Mayor of Australia's natural ability to hold out against the most hardened bidders in the most nonchalant way.

We learnt also at Panchgani about the concept of Octroi and local taxes. Everything that came to the centre for either building or furnishing purposes had to be declared for these local taxes. As the entrance to the centre was just outside the Octroi post, there was a temptation to sneak in without the authorities noticing and thus avoid tax.

When the first building was opened the head of the Octroi staff came to the centre and asked David if he could meet Rajmohan. David said he would see if he was free and asked what he wanted to see him about. His reply was that normally when someone started a big development like ours, the person in charge would approach him and come to some 'arrangement' about the paying of octroi. But, he said, in our case no one had come to make any 'arrangement' and the taxes had been paid in full! He wanted to find out what lay behind this remarkable happening.

Another person who volunteered to help was a young lady from Pune. Not long after finishing school she felt she had a part with the creation of the Centre. She was one of those trained as a student in one of the training programmes, I have already described. Her particular conviction was for the rural people in India and in order to understand their situation more fully she had gone to the length of asking her parents to move her from a big-city school in Pune to a rural school in a small town in South Maharashtra.

Work was in full swing on the construction of the first residence building at the point when she joined us in Panchgani. There were many workers and their families living on the site and Jayashree had the idea of giving the children of the workers a start in experiencing schooling in a simple school on the site. She did this and provided a very constructive input for them in this way.

Interestingly now, 40 years on, Jayashree's passionate conviction for rural Indian has found a new outlet. Having married and raised a family, as well as successfully marketing machine tool parts for a manufacturer, she is now working with others to develop, as part of the Asia Plateau complex, a rural and ecological centre for training village leadership, starting in the villages around Panchgani and later beyond. This is a bid to reverse the trend of villagers leaving their villages for better paid jobs in towns at a time when India's agriculture needs new incentives and new life.

**Gordon Brown –  
Australian Architect of Asia Plateau  
As narrated by Mike Brown**



Creating buildings for serving people was something my father did all his life – some 60 Hospitals, Schools, Churches, Senior Citizen Retirement Villages, Community Meeting Halls. In many cases he was not just 'Architect' for these structures but a Community Builder as well. He gave hours of his own time on boards of various institutions, helping them raise funds for building work and creating the management infrastructure.

From the late 1950s, at the time when prejudiced "White Australia Policy" was still in operation, my parents turned their minds and energies to building relationships with our Asian neighbours. The Asian-Australian Association, which they helped to found, lobbied successfully for the introduction of Japanese and Indonesian language education into school curriculum, hosted Asian diplomats and supported the personal welfare of Asian students in Australia.

With these Asian interests Dad naturally responded to the invitation of Rajmohan Gandhi to come to India and advise possible site some 240 kms. from Mumbai for a conference – training centre for MRA at Panchgani. Dad arrived at the rough rocky site, 1,300 mtrs up in the western ghats and immediately began sketching out ideas for its design. It was the first of 17 trips to India made at his own expense and often with my mother, during the development of "Asia Plateau". He considered it the pinnacle of his career.

On one of these Indian visits dad had his first heart attack. Indian medical treatment was excellent and he recovered well. Though he cut back on his work load, he resisted all suggestions that he should retire. Then few years later, he suddenly announced – while at Panchgani – that the time had come to quit so that he and mother could be more available to connect with the network of friends across Asia. After many Asian visits, Dad and Mom set off once again to India and Europe, somewhat reluctantly. "I find it hard to contemplate going again, leaving the easy routine, we fitted into", he noted during his morning meditation, having reached the age of 79. "But God can put new strength into me if I ask for it". During that three month visit Respective to the Conference Centre in India, Dad started most days at 7.30 in the workshop with the Indian staff checking the maintenance and construction work fixing 1,700 meters of ceiling battens, building a large underground water tank and helping two of the Indian workers who lived in neighbouring villages to construct their own homes.

Just a few months later those same Indian workers, crowded into one of the conference rooms to honour Dad's memory with prayers and bhajans, having heard of his final heart attack in France where he had gone to visit my brother and his family. "I find that the picture of him that most stays with me is as God's labourer wrote Rajmohan Gandhi. Bent over a desk with a pencil,

on top of a shaky ladder with a hammer, brisk over a plot of land with a easuring tape, that was Gordon. The phrase 'The Dignity of Labour' does not do justice to his spirit as he toiled. Even the 'Joy of Labour' does not convey it. Each exertion of his seemed an act of devotion purer for being unselfconscious. It was as if he was forever constructing a new world designed by the Great Architect to whom he had given his life.

Such a task, of course, is never done, never wholly achieved. Yet when the final whistle blew for Gordon Brown, he was ready for it – the contract was fulfilled, his part of the job done. I knew, for I was at his bedside during those last days of his life in France.

## **Gordon Brown – Australian Architect of Asia Plateau**

### **Arundhati Nanavati**

The buildings at Asia Plateau, Panchgani were designed by Mr. Gordon Brown, a well known Australian Architect.

His firm did the work of designing, outside their office hours, so that office time was not consumed. Mr. Brown realised that there was water shortage in Panchgani, so he designed channels on top of the two residential buildings, which would take the rain water into a storage tank, below the auditorium. This rain water was sufficient for the whole year for the needs of people attending the seminars throughout the year. Water for the garden was used from a tank near the entrance, where all the bath water from the residential rooms was collected and purified.

The first building 'Valley View' was opened in 1968. One evening we were having dinner, when suddenly water gushed into the dining room and filled it up with water. Next morning at 5.30 a.m., I saw Mr. Brown on the roof of Valley View, looking for the defect which created this problem. Up till then I had not seen an architect go on the roof of a building. Mr. Brown and his wife were at Asia Plateau for many months at different times. Asia Plateau was their second home. I had the privilege of staying in his home in Adelaide, South Australia. He and his wife treated me like a member of their family.

## Suresh Vazirani

*Founder Chairman, Trans-Asia Instruments*

I did my engineering studies in Nagpur. After passing, I came to Bombay and was looking for a job. At that time, I saw a MRA Musical "Anything to Declare" in Bombay at the Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium. I liked it very much and met some people who were in it. I met Ken Dodds, Jo Lancaster and others.

ATD friends invited me to Panchgani, I went to Panchgani with five young people.

Valley View and Rock View were under construction. Other Indians, Cedric Daniels and Anil Kumar (Delhi) were also helping there.

I was in the construction team, which had nine other engineers. Blair Cummock (UK), Richard Pierce (New Zealand), Bill Burton (UK), Tom Babcock (Canada), Gele Bonorua (Papua, New Guinea) a Swiss engineer and David Young (England).

I used to look after all the electrical work. Cedric looked after administration. We had breakfast at 7.00 a.m. and meeting from 7.30 a.m. to 8.15 a.m. Work started at 8.15 a.m. We broke for lunch at 12.30 p.m. We finished the day's work at 5.30 p.m.

We had to go to Pune to buy whatever was needed for the construction, every Tuesday. Sunday was rest day.

During monsoon the road was under thick fog and vision was poor. One day, when we were coming back late at night, the van went over the hill. The front half was balanced on the hill. Edmund Rutter was driving the van. We all perched at the back, so that the van did not tumble down. Luckily we were all saved from a disaster.

In 1971, war broke out with Pakistan. So the work was delayed. Some friends had to leave because their visas were not extended. The work was completed in 1973 instead of 1972.

The musical 'Song of Asia' was created in Panchgani. It had its inaugural show at Asia Plateau in 1973. I was working back stage. It was then taken to other parts of India, South India, Calcutta, Assam. It went to Laos in 1974 and Europe in 1975. I worked back stage. Vijay Rege was the Stage Manager.

In 1975, Mike Brown had to leave India, so I joined Himmat Weekly in 1975-76 and worked till 1981.

In 1980 I started Trans-Asia Instruments. It produces machines for Blood Analysis. I run my business without corruption. The quality of the machines produced by Trans-Asia Instruments is known world-wide.





## Asia Plateau - Garden - Stephanie Burton

In 1967 when I arrived at Asia Plateau I had never thought of making a garden. I am a nurse by profession. At that time the foundations of Valley View had started to be laid, and all around was hard dry earth, waist high prickly course grass, scrub bushes and deep ravines caused by erosion of the monsoon rains. There was only one small tree. Around the new building was all the rubble of a building site.



The first most immediate need was to restore the topsoil, and to rebuild the bunds to stop the erosion and channel the excess water away.

We planted a deep wall of cassurina and other trees on the west side of the land as a protection against the strong monsoon winds. We also planted many other trees over the area to give colour and shade, such as an avenue of gulmohor and jacarander up the drive.

A French horticultural engineer, Francoise Chauchat, had offered to help with the landscaping of the ground and to make a garden around the new building, I worked with her. We soon realized that water was the priority need its collection and distribution, and its channelling during the monsoon rains. There was one old and rapidly depleting well, which was being used for the building needs as well as for the people who were coming up to the various events being held even before the buildings were completed. Water had to be carried for the garden by Dev Ram in two kerosene oil tins suspended on a pole. We knew that to make the garden productive we needed another well to be used only for the land, as well as a pump and irrigation system. Francoise promised that when she went home she would raise the money for this, which she did. It was also decided that due to the water shortage all water from the buildings would be recycled and used for the land.

So as to have flowers available for the opening of the first building we made a small nursery bed, and as we did not have the money we went to all our friends in Panchgani town and asked for any seeds, or cuttings or bulbs they could spare, and we came back with the jeep laden. We planted up the nursery patch as well as any tins or pots we could find from the kitchen, even packing cases. In this way we could put all the plants around at the last minute as the builders left the site. So many of the plants have come from the people of Panchgani and the forest officer gave many of the tree saplings.

People came from all over the world for the opening of Valley View and the event was also filmed. However soon after the opening Francoise's visa ran out and she returned home leaving me to do what I could.

The days got hotter and drier – but in addition to creating the garden we wanted to grow fruit and vegetables and by now there was a small farm. When the money Francoise had raised came in we got a local water diviner to show us where was a good place to dig for a well, and he showed us two places where there was water, and digging started after the puja. It was a race against time when the monsoon rains would be too dangerous to continue to dig. We then had to wait until the end of the monsoon when the walls of the well could be built up and the well was ready for use. It has been a tremendous help through the years and is the well by the main entrance gates.

During the monsoon rains I went out in the heaviest storms to see where the water was flowing and how to carry away the excess water so as not to cause damage. We made channels by the road sides, others were incorporated under a foot path, and one where the most water flowed was made into a cascade. Old terracing of fields was repaired and where there were gullies loose walls of stones were built up to cause the water to drop its soil and build up the land.

With all the building work going on, lorries driving up with loads of cement steel or stores there were many hazards and constant vigilance was needed to protect young plants from accidental damage. All the time as the building progressed various functions and conferences took place and volunteers would often help on the land, planting cutting or harvesting.

When making the garden my thought had been that it was meant to be for the use and enjoyment of the people who came up to the centre and it was meant to grow through the gifts of those who came. That they should find rest and refreshment for their bodies, minds and spirit and a hope for the future. People would come up the hill tired, but could go out with a vision. For this reason, I made sure that I never planted a tree that in due course would block the magnificent view across the valley and beyond.

Nature is never static. We can either nurture and develop it or let it go. It is good to see all the growth and outreach since these days 40 years ago and it has been a great privilege and challenge to have had a part in the creating of Asia Plateau from the beginning.

**Memories of Asia Plateau Kitchen –  
40 Long Years Ago  
- Phyllis (Ellett) Bocock**

40 years ago seems like a long time, but for me working and developing Valley View Kitchen and later in the present kitchen, is forever etched in my memory. It was adventuresome, challenging, hard work and a lot of fun!

For a start, we needed to raise the necessary money for the kitchen and facilities---- This meant for me having cooking demonstrations in Panchgani, Pune and Mumbai. These were held in homes of ladies who invited friends and family to learn and pay for a "Taste of the West". I still keep in touch with some of the ladies who are valued friends.

At an opening of one of the AP Buildings. Dozens of school children came, having walked many miles from the Kudal Valley, each carrying kilo bags of rice as their gift to the kitchen. It was a sight forever remembered. One Mumbai business man and his family donated many of the dekchis for the kitchen. I dare say many still are in use now.

The colleagues, I worked with came from all walks of life, we served food early in the morning and late in the evening, in addition to regular meals, to people coming from all over India and abroad. As a team, we ironed out our differences whether it was methods of cooking or ragged relationships. I learned much more in India than I contributed and am forever grateful.

I shall be with you all in January (in spirit and prayer) and hope to return to India sometime - a country, a 'second' home for me!



## Jini Taleyarkhan

- By Ayesha

She had a very privileged childhood. As an adult she led an exciting and high profile life. A marriage and three children later, a content housewife stopped dead in her tracks and then made a U-turn. The reason was a collision with MRA. It was almost like a challenge – and she took it up. Everything hanged from then – for her as well as those around her. Friends were confused, but the family welcomed the changes around them.



That's when the long journey began and someone who was used to the high life and late nights exchanged this lifestyle for the simple joy of putting other people first in her life. Walking the talk was what it was all about. 'Changing the world' (the MRA slogan of the times) was no small matter, but if that was the aim, what better place to start, than with oneself. A lot of soul searching, hard decisions and unpopular stances fortified her to do the job she felt she was called upon to do. She didn't become a sanyasi, but she applied MRA to all aspects of her life. Her world grew and so did she, as she balanced her personal life and her commitment to the work of MRA.

Her friends from all over the world enhanced her perspectives. She had them staying with us in our home whenever they visited India. I was the beneficiary too as I got a chance to know these people who have been my friends since. In the beginning there were musical plays from overseas, there were camps organised for young people, there were fund raisers (which was her forte) as there was always a shortage of funds and then of course the big one – The Panchgani Centre.

She was always involved in the organising and helping to get things going. Even though all this took a lot of her time and effort, we (the children) somehow didn't feel neglected. Actually we found it rather exciting and sometimes got involved ourselves.

One thing that has stood the test of time is the John Storey Room at the Panchgani Centre. She made it her responsibility to make that room a reality. Most of the exquisite furniture for that room was donated by an old friend of her's. I admire her commitment to MRA which she was involved with for over 40 years.

Today I realise that she was an independent thinker not content to go with the flow and because of this she stood out for convictions.

She was my mother, Jini Taleyarkhan.

## Happy memories of Asia Plateau Vijayalakshmi Subramanyan

It was a rare privilege to serve for over thirty years at the centre. It was a great learning time. All I am today, my convictions for the disadvantaged in society, love of languages, culture, music from around the world were all developed during my time at the centre. I learnt some important lessons working with people from different countries. Phyllis Bocoock from Canada was a great role model. It was she who trained me to take on the kitchen at the centre. However tired she may have been when she saw something needing attention she would immediately do that.

Her sense of humour set her apart. There was Stephanie Burton a nurse with green fingers from Great Britain. A true nurse, who cared for plants and trees as passionately as she cared for people. There was an amazing discipline I was keen to emulate from them. Janet Mace a wonderful friend from England wrote poems for every occasion. Whether a farewell, a birthday, a wedding anniversary or just to get us thinking in the right direction, she had the apt lines at the ready. She inspired creativity in us.



A recent letter from a friend in Sweden brought back many memories of my time at Asia Plateau. She and I had worked together in the kitchen at Asia Plateau. We had to organize food to be served to a group of forty people at another venue in the centre. This is always a bit tricky to know how much to send so that there will be enough for the rest of the delegates who were about 50. Obviously we had not sent enough and the lady who was hosting this meal had some embarrassing moments. So she stormed into the kitchen and called us names. I was called mental as I had not calculated the amount properly and my friend was called sentimental. She still remembers this as a hilarious event and always signs off as Sentimental and addresses me as Mental!

Happy memories, precious experiences pregnant with lessons for the rest of my life. I am most grateful to many friends who showed immense patience and understanding towards me.

I really lacked a sense of humour. It seemed beyond my reach. I found out that without a sense of humour life can be so self piteous, self absorbing and self centered. On one occasion a friend had organized a lunch table for 8. Each place had a picture or saying. I can't remember the other pictures or sayings but I can vividly see the picture meant for me. Of course I went round and round the table and couldn't find my place. Finally my friend pointed out to a picture of a Cheshire cat with a broad grin on its face and said that is you. While at that moment and for some years later too I was upset and angry inside. The penny did drop at some point at last. You can imagine how relieved I felt!

Living in a community is not always easy. Yet it has many advantages, if one wanted to make most of such an opportunity that does not easily come one's way.

If today I can talk of the rich traditions and captivating legends and stories of the Native American Indians or of the Ibos and Yorubas of Nigeria, or about the many varieties of food served at special festivities from so many lands – it is entirely due to my time at Asia Plateau. Every minute I spent there has special meaning now.

Finally I want to share about the soul uplifting moments of my life which I cherish. I have a difficult nature and many people have found me a hard nut to crack and a few have even been afraid of me. Dealing with and facing the ugly areas of my nature has been very painful. But they are the growth points like milestones one looks back on and share the joys of it all with people. I call these 'spiritual pains' or 'Divine surgery' that sets you right and keeps the heart healthy for the tasks ahead. How often one finds excuses covering up or just plain want to wriggle out of it all. Through these moments I have felt God's love intimately and can say with faith that He never lets you down. Those involved in adventure sports know the thrill it holds and willingly risk a great deal similarly unless we are ready to risk (of knowing who we really are) we will never know the thrill of getting closer to God. I know that, He loves me as I am with all my shortcomings. These experiences help me to show compassion to the children I work with now. They can be challenging and outright rude at times. Even though I am not at the centre anymore I believe what I am doing is part of God's design simply an extension of the work going on at Asia Plateau.

## A story about Asia Plateau and Northeast India By Niketu Iralu.

### The Unexpected Way That Opens Up When. . . . .

Dr. Roddy Evans, a physician from the Republic of Ireland, was in India with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), now renamed Initiatives of Change, in the '50s and '60s. In New Delhi he got to know Mr. G. G. Swell, the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and later India's ambassador to Norway. When Dr. Evans said he was interested in his own country and other nations being "led by men and women who are governed by God", Swell said the man he should meet was Stanley Nichols-Roy, the General Secretary of All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), the body spearheading the movement. He then explained the political crisis in Assam over the demand of his people to break away from Assam and create a Hill State within the Union of India.



Nichols-Roy came to Delhi for one of the talks with the Central Government on the deteriorating situation. Dr. Evans met Nichols-Roy and invited him to a dinner with Rajmohan Gandhi and others associated with MRA. Nichols-Roy listened to stories of solutions coming to violent conflicts as a result of changes in people. The story of Irene Laure of France caught his attention. A respected voice of the Socialist women of France, she was a formidable member of the Resistance that fought to end German occupation of her country. The Germans were defeated and humiliated but it did not end her hatred of them for what they had done to her, her family and France. **Frank Buchman, MRA initiator, helped her to see that people like her had to shed their hatred if they cared for a new future for the coming generations. As she deeply loved her children she understood. Starting at an international conference in Switzerland she traveled through war-ravaged Germany asking for forgiveness for wanting the destruction of Germany and calling for the building of a better future through healing of the wounds from the past.** Both France and Germany officially recognized her part in the Franco-German reconciliation and cooperation that took place making possible the economic recovery of Western Europe.

**Nichols-Roy saw the relevance of this story in the worsening crisis between the hills people and the Assamese in Northeast India. He readily responded to the invitation to come to the opening of Asia Plateau in Panchgani on January 20, 1968. He brought 34 people to the conference.**

What Nichols-Roy came to find was what God wanted him to do in the political logjam where unless a breakthrough was found, the tribes under APHLC were about to become a part of the kind of all-out violence that had engulfed neighbouring Nagaland. Like an avid student he regularly attended the early morning sessions each day devoted to how to listen to "the still small voice" that speaks in every heart and conscience and make a fresh start by learning to obey it. **Kim Beazley, Labor MP from Australia attending the**

conference, explained to him how his own attempt at listening for direction having **“nothing to prove, nothing to justify and nothing to gain for yourself”** cleaned up his life and gave him the compassion and passion he needed as a politician to play his role adequately for society instead of abusing his position for his own advantage.

In a few years Beazley was to become the path-breaking Minister for Education in Canberra, known specially for policies and measures that opened the way for today's Australians and their government's just treatment of the aboriginal people of the continent.

Accommodation was a problem as the centre had completed only the first residential block. **So I had the privilege of rooming with Nichols-Roy. I had met him 14 years earlier at Union Christian College, Barapani, near Shillong, because he was the driving force behind the founding of the College.** He wanted to know from me also what Beazley had told him about listening and obeying. I shared with him how I dealt with fear and hatred, the realest problems of my life when I first tried the idea of listening. He and I knew we Christians tend to pray so easily that we don't realize the importance of giving God His chance to speak to us. **I told him my first step of obedience was telling my father the inconvenient truth about how I was misusing the money he was sending me every month at immense sacrifice to support me at College, and then apologizing at a meeting in Madras for hating India as a Naga whose family had taken a stand to defend Naga honour and history and paid a price for doing so.** I told him that when my father started to treat my mother differently after I was honest with him, and my hatred was gradually replaced by a perceptible widening of my concern beyond my own people following my apology, I decided to give my whole life to live out the answer I had discovered.

On the third morning, I think, I woke up at about 5 to find Nichols-Roy sitting upright on his bed silhouetted against the early light of dawn coming through the corridor window. As a graduate of Science and Engineering from the University of California at Berkeley, he believed in practical experiments to understand things. This morning I saw him sitting in silence and at intervals writing in a note book. He did not turn on the light in our room. He used torchlight whenever he started to write. **I quietly prayed for him lying comfortably on my bed! I have often recalled that moment as one when I was watching a politician taking the practical steps to become a statesman!**

At the plenary session a few hours later Nichols-Roy spoke. He said he had made the experiment of listening and he had seen clearly where he needed to start if he expected God's intervention in his situation. **His first step was to be fully honest with his wife on his return to Shillong. “I am not surprised her hair has gone grey so early”, he said. The second step was to call on B. P. Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam, and so the main opponent of the APHLC on the ongoing political crisis, which, according to editorials in some leading national dailies, would widen the area of violence and lawlessness if it was**



**not resolved soon. The morning he left he said, "I am returning to my situation with the humble decision that I will obey whatever God will guide me to do from now on".**

On his return to Shillong he acted swiftly and exactly as he had said. After he was completely honest with his wife she thanked him for the courage he had shown making it possible for the family to start afresh together. Speaking to people about the change in her family she said she felt so happy after he was honest with her that she found herself waving good morning even to strangers as she drove downtown for shopping the next morning.

Nichols-Roy then went to see Chaliha and told him what had happened in his family, and then said to Chaliha he was sorry he had cared only for his tribal people and not given thought to the questions that worried Chaliha concerning his people in the Brahmaputra valley, the majority community. He said he had decided to think of what would be right for the plains people also. Chaliha on a number of occasions said Nichols-Roy's honesty and obvious sincere concern for the Assamese people also completely changed his own attitude towards him. **To the surprise of close observers Nichols-Roy and Chaliha jointly invited all the MLAs on both sides of the conflict to a showing of "Freedom", an MRA film from Nigeria. I was present on the occasion when Chaliha introduced Nichols-Roy who introduced the film.** Chaliha said he had been inspired by what Nichols-Roy had brought back from Panchgani and the new element he seemed to be bringing into the crisis faced by both sides. He said no political solution would work if there was no trust, but if there was mutual trust and goodwill he was confident a solution would be worked out.

**Chaliha invited Nichols-Roy to go and meet the Assamese people with him. Nichols-Roy accepted and a tour of some villages and towns in Assam took place. The people sensed that a new unexpected way had opened up at the height of the crisis when these joint initiatives were reported in the media.**

In the following months some bold moves were jointly made to bring leaders from both sides together to evolve a solution that would be acceptable to both sides and therefore would be workable. One such bid was the meeting held in camera at Assam House in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, which was attended by leaders from both sides. It became obvious that real progress was taking place towards a solution. Union Home Minister Y.B Chavan made a 'State-within-a State' proposal to start with. The Congress Party in Delhi had to think of the risks its ruling party faced in Assam. There was strong reaction against the proposal in Shillong. But APHLC passed a resolution "not to reject the proposal out of hand" but to give it "a fair trial", thus revealing a new factor at work.

The leader who could wreck the whole process at this sensitive stage was Hoover Hynniewta, the militant pioneer for the creation of a Hill State and formidable orator whose ability to move the masses was well known. His reservations about the new trend towards a solution which he viewed to be needless concession to the majority were

known. However as the first Lok Sabha MP for the Hill State movement. One day his speech in the Lok Sabha annoyed Pandit Nehru so much that the Prime Minister rose from his seat and angrily rejected what Hoover had said. Hoover said he was happy he had made Delhi to respond.

The informal team of people from different communities in Shillong that had started to think and work together to help the search for an honourable solution acceptable to both sides decided Hoover had to be won for the search. They urged him to go to a conference about to take place at Asia Plateau. Hoover trusted the sincerity and integrity of those who invited him because they had been seeing him and listened to his views on the crisis. He said he was prepared to go. A few days before the date for departure he phoned one of them he would not be able to go because he needed to gather two truckloads of dry cow dung for his potato field, adding that a poor man like him could not risk a bad potato crop.

The man he talked to instantly replied the problem was not insurmountable although he himself had just arrived in Shillong and was not an authority on cow dung availability in the local market. He rang a member of his team and reported the crisis. The man said "I'll ring you tomorrow morning. I am in charge of the TB hospital in Shillong and know exactly where to get what he needs because we buy milk from many cow keepers". Two truck loads of dry cow dung was delivered to Hoover's potato field the next day and Hoover went to the conference at Asia Plateau!

Nichols-Roy and a colleague joined him at Panchgani the next day. As they were no longer the best of friends back home because of their political positions the tension in their conversations was palpable. Hoover enjoyed the conference but remained in the background. But after a young Malaysian medical student spoke at one plenary session about finding the courage to speak honestly to her father to show her deep care for him, he asked for time to speak the next day.

He said he had decided to remain silent but the simple act of obedience by the young lady from Malaysia had helped him to see his own pride and hard-heartedness. He talked movingly about his life and all he had gone through to serve his people. Then he called out to Nichols-Roy in the hall and asked him to forgive him for the things he had said and done to hurt his father's reputation while working his own way up to become a leader himself. Nichols-Roy, like many others in the audience, was too moved to speak as he came up to shake Hoover's hands in response. He knew exactly what Hoover meant. The senior Nichols-Roy was the well-known voice of the tribal people of the Northeast. He was a member of the constituent assembly that hammered out the Indian Constitution.

Hoover, on his way back, stopped at Guwahati and drove to the residence of Bishnuram Medhi, the former Chief Minister of Assam. Medhi was hated by many people in the hills for his policies and actions to contain their awakened sense of themselves and their rising expectations. They resented what they perceived to be racial and caste superiority.

Hoover told Medhi what had happened at Asia Plateau and apologized to him for stirring up communal hatred against him and his people in Assam. Medhi knew what he meant and deeply appreciated the humanity in an old foe who was prepared to go the extra mile to put his side right.

Hoover's role in removing the feared option of public opinion being rallied to block the progress to a settlement was not known to the public. But it was known to him, to God and those who knew him! **The State of Meghalaya was created in 1972 without violence and bloodshed. Opening the budget session of the last sitting of the Assembly, referring to the new State, Governor B.K. Nehru said, "Seldom have such far-reaching constitutional changes been brought about with so much goodwill and understanding".**

Union Home Minister Y.B. Chavan thanked the leaders of the new State who called on him in New Delhi for the leadership they had given in the peaceful settlement that had taken place.

He expressed his happiness that Asia Plateau in Panchgani in his Parliamentary constituency in Satara District of Maharashtra had played a significant role.

### **Niketu Iralu**

*Niketu Iralu comes from Nagaland. His uncle Mr. Phizo fought for Nagaland's independence. Niketu graduated from Madras Christian College.*

*He has been working with MRA – Initiatives of Charge since 51 years.*

*He married Christine Butler of Bombay in 1978. They have a son Vipulie, who at present is working in Australia.*

## Surendra and Tara Patel

Surendra Patel was working in a factory, making porcelain teeth. Tara Patel, his wife, was from the Parle Family. They lived in "Sukhmani" at Andheri.

Tara first went to Asia Plateau, Panchgani with her brother Vijay and son Ajit. They were invited by the International Musical Group "Anything to Declare".

She was there for a few days. Her son Ajit stayed on, while she came back. Later Taraben and Surendrabhai went back to Panchgani. At that time Surendra Patel liked the place and got interested in the workshop at Asia Plateau. Later Surendra and Tara stayed there for a year, while Nivanka and Usha stayed in their home "Sukhmani" at Andheri, Mumbai.



Taraben cooked lovely vegetarian food, which I and other friends enjoyed eating.

In 1990, Surendrabhai saw that the ceiling of the auditorium needed repairs. Friends told him to do it after the monsoon. He had the thought to do it in February, and completed it by April, 1990.

Unfortunately Surendrabhai died of a heart attack in May, 1990.

## Ajit Patel

I was 22 when I was introduced to MRA.

I had just returned from boarding school having spent 9 years there. I had learnt to become independent and had developed certain views of my own.

My dad had a drinking problem and swayed my mother dealing with it and helping dad with a great deal of love, cunning patience and deft. Unfortunately, I could not deal with it the way she did. Frankly, I was embarrassed and my attitude towards him was confrontational and inflexible.



At Asia Plateau, I met people who experienced similar problems and who had learnt to change their mindset by confronting themselves, being honest and reflecting, in quiet, how best to go about dealing and putting the wrongs right. I slowly realised the benefit of what I saw and gradually worked upon myself. Eventually, I had a heart to heart talk with my parents. It was like a load off my back and this helped me gradually to understand my dad and his problems. I slowly became more flexible in my attitude towards him.

I am a father now of a teenaged daughter. I can look back through her eyes and can only imagine how dad felt when I was in confrontation towards him.

I just wish he was still with us.

## Shashi & Kunji Patel

Shashi Patel lived with his wife Kunjlata and their children, Margot, Arun and Smita at White House, Walkeshwar, Mumbai.

An international musical called "Anything to Declare" was coming to India in 1970. Friends requested Kunji and Shashi to have Mr. & Mrs. Harry Almond stay with them for a few days.

Later Shashi and Kunji were invited by "Anything to Declare" friends to visit Panchgani. They came to Panchgani with their children hoping to stay for a couple of days. But they were so impressed with the place and the people that they stayed on for a week.

At that time, Shashi Patel had imported some machinery without proper permission. The Government seized his consignment. He thought, he would give some excuses, but his inner voice told him to tell the truth. Shashi Patel met the custom officials and told them that he was prepared to pay the fine. The officials took time to decide on the penalty but finally charged him the minimum fine. In the meantime, the young engineers at the factory were so impressed with Shashi's honesty, that they made a new machine for their purpose and production did not stop.

Shashi Patel used to come to the Industrial Seminars at Panchgani. He used to say all Gujarati businessmen are MBA's "Mané Badhu Avadé chhé".

Shashi Patel went with a delegation to Ireland. At that time all the banks had closed down. 6,800 workers were without work and salary. Talks between management and workers had broken down. After one month the banks opened. Thanks to Shashi Patel and his friends from India who had convinced the bank workers to end the strike for the sake of their country.

After returning from Panchgani, Shashi Patel gave up smoking. He decided not to serve liquor at the parties he gave at his home. Later Kunji said, "We came to know who our real friends were and who came to parties for the drinks."

Shashi Patel and his brothers owned Film Centre, where films were processed. Through change in Shashi's method of working, he was able to settle disputes with his workers at the Film Centre.

When Industrial Seminars were started at Panchgani, Shashi was the first employer to send his workers as well as management people to the seminars. Kunji gave the money, she was saving to buy a diamond to Panchgani, as she was impressed with the work and the people.

Shashi and Kunji used to go to Lonavala on the weekend. On 8th November, 1996, they were going to Lonavala by car. Unfortunately, their car met with an accident and Shashi died the same day. Kunji had major injuries but survived after months in hospital.

Now, she works with MRA— Initiatives at Change and inspires people.



## **Anasuya Gargate**

It was in 1965 that I read an advertisement in "Sakal" about a MRA camp in Panhala.

When I arrived in Panhala, to my surprise I found there were people from all over India and the world there and the camp was conducted in English of which I could not speak a word! However, the idea "if you want to change the world, start with yourself", interested me.

In our village, I used to see farmers burning each other's crops due to jealousy. Women pulled each other down through gossip. Children were bored and their precious time wasted. Perhaps those were the real problems of India.

How should I start?

I realised I was full of blame too. My own heart was closed due to the death of two of my brothers and I had decided never to open it. But my inner voice seemed to say, "Why don't you care for the children in this world instead of crying like this?" "What could I do?" I wondered. "Write stories" and I began to think of a story. Later children all over the world read them in the form of little books. I found listening to my inner voice was the best way to serve my family and the world.

When the world centre for MRA was opened at "Asia Plateau", in 1968 my parents and family came and my mother who used to say there is no God for if he was there none of children would have died. After staying for a few days here she said "There is God in this world and the way I have seen heaven here every family in India will see it".

Now my mother is no more but when I think of the technological advances made today and hear slogans like "Dunia Meri Mutthi Mein (I hold the world in my fist)" an idea can change your life", I often think of the prayer I was taught as a child "Karagre Vasate Laxmi Karmadhye Saraswati, Karmoole tu Govindam Prabhate Kardarashanam" (The Goddess of wealth resides at my fingertips, the Goddess of learning in palms and the all pervading God at the base of my hands so the first thing to look at in the mornings is one's own hands).

I am grateful for the person who had an idea to give that advertisement in the local newspaper "Sakal" which changed my life.

I believe if we listen to our "inner voice" and following the inspiration that we get we will be able to nurture the roots of modern India.

## When MRA met me - Bharat Dixit

What I have discovered about MRA - Initiatives of change ever since I was by God's Grace exposed to it is that MRA is not merely an IDEA, but a really satisfying and meaningful way of life.

I had the good fortune to meet persons who really lived MRA.

My first such encounter was with dear Mike and his illustrious father Gordon Brown. With a lot of love and patience, they kept on inviting me to see for myself what MRA – Initiatives of change was and how it helps people everywhere. Mr. Rex Dilly, accompanied me from Bombay to Panchgani.



As Asia Plateau was in Panchgani and I like hill stations, I agreed to visit Asia Plateau, over a weekend. I experienced unprecedented, unselfish and loving warmth from all the people I met.

What A welcome I received! No showoff, simply warm, loving and caring Welcome.

People really LIVED what they preached. That is what impressed me most. From then on I began my journey, for a life guided by my own conscience.

It has helped me in every walk of life. I worked as Personnel Manager in one of the big industries. At that time, what I learned at Asia Plateau, helped me and our Industrial Relations. There was not a single day lost due to strike in our factory, although on Thane-Belapur Road most of the other factories had serious industrial relations problems.

Due to my association with Asia Plateau and having seen what we were able to accomplish, I was invited to take charge of Industrial Relations in another industry where strike and violence was almost a daily occurrence. My inner voice told me to leave the present comfortable place and go to where I was invited to join, I did that.

By God's grace and with the help of many others in that industry (who were exposed to MRA) we could help change the situation radically in three years. There has been no recurrence of strikes or violence in that place since last 25 years.

One of the things I learnt at A.P. seminars was "What was said was more important than Who said it!".

I learnt the meaning of the wisdom as illustrated by the following incident. Our entire family had been exposed to MRA. My children had attended youth camps at Panchgani. My son Ashish was a natural MRA person. Once when we were at home, the telephone rang.

Ashish lifted the receiver and I told him, "if it is so and so, then tell I am not at home." Ashish calmly put his palm on mouth piece and told me politely – "Papa, please tell your own lies". I realised that what was said was so much more important than who said it ! Even if it was my very young son.

Many such incidents kept on occurring in my life and I began to realise that adherence to the four absolute standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love, was an absolute necessity, that makes life peaceful and meaningful.

Another thing that happened was that by God's grace, I used my experiences to make a difference in the lives of other people. This is being done with the idea to share the change that is still taking place in my life.

I feel grateful to God for leading me on this path.



## **P. T. Shashtri**

Khatau Mills, Borivli was a new unit, recently started. Focus was on productivity, quality and staff discipline. I was the Manager of Khatau Mills, Borivli. Mr. Dharamsey Khatau told me to take a group of workers to attend an Industrial Seminar arranged by MRA at Asia Plateau, Panchgani.

We proceeded expecting a routine sermonizing. Never did I realise that it was going to touch my life in many ways.

The beautiful gardens laid out of natural surroundings were very welcoming. The warmth with which we were received made us feel at home. The group talks made us drop guard and slowly open up.

Duties like kitchen, table laying, gardening gave us dignity of labour, team spirit and need for perfection even if the work appeared insignificant.

Personal narrations of how MRA brought about changes in their lives made us look within for self introspection. Some of us spoke up and decided to make amends in our lives.

I realised that the human angle was lacking in dealing with workers and decided to make amends. The decision has altered my lifestyle and as a result, Life is Beautiful. Even after more than thirty years, after I have retired, the mill having closed down, like many other textile units, workers having suffered a lot as a result, we greet them with warmth and respect which would be lacking if I had not been affected by the values imparted by MRA—now Initiatives of change.

## **Gajanan Sawant - Khatau Mill Worker**

One of the workers, Gajanan Sawant took these ideas to his village and changed the thinking of the whole village. Many stopped drinking, some saved on smoking and sent a donation to Panchgani. He built a small school for the children in the village. He cleaned a well which was able to give sufficient water to the whole village. The story of Gajanan Sawant was captured in a film, which is being shown to delegates of all Industrial Seminars held at Asia Plateau.

## A Critical Turning Point

- K. Haridas

At the age of seventeen I left Malaysia to undertake under-graduate studies in India. I went to Mumbai and stayed with my maternal aunty for the first year before residing in a College Hostel for a further two years. My parents were of moderate means and as possibilities for University Education in Malaysia were very limited, this was the next best option. I have an elder brother and three younger sisters.



We lived very simply and were brought up within the Hindu tradition. My only knowledge of Hinduism was the ability to chant some hymns, attend Temple prayers with the family as well as participate in religious rituals. Leaving the security of the home and venturing abroad was a challenge. The five day journey by ship from Port Klang to Chennai and the 'ragging' I experienced on board from students opened my eyes to what was ahead.

The realities of India, the rich poor gap, the ideological debates amongst students ranging from Maoist to Marxists, the struggles of studying and adapting left me confused. I began to ask the question as to what the meaning of life was and what I could do in the context of the realities I was confronted with. It was during my third year when some of us residing in the college Hostel were informed by a Rhodesian friend (now Zimbabwe) that a 'Rumanian' delegation was visiting the College and whether we were ready to host them for tea. This interested many of us, we felt that a dialogue with them would inform us about life in Eastern Europe.

After having arranged tea at the roof top of our Hostel many of us were surprised to see a delegation of about a dozen individuals from many different countries presenting us with songs and testimonies. This was the first time that I heard the term 'Moral Re Armament'. We were later informed that one of the team of the musical 'Anything to Declare' was Princess Helen of Rumania. This led to subsequent meetings, invitation to the show and later the opportunity to participate in a Conference at Asia Plateau, Panchgani and the International Conference Centre for Moral Re-Armament.

As College was closed for the Christmas holidays, I decided to go for two days to Panchgani. Here at Asia Plateau. I listened to the ideas presented, was inspired by the testimonies of people who had experienced change and felt that people involved were doing something meaningful. At the end of two days as I was about to leave, I was invited to work at the Farm at Asia Plateau. So, I lent a hand for a further two days. The climate was very cold and I had come ill equipped.

We slept on beds laid on the floors of a neighboring school dormitory. I developed a chest inflection and was advised to see the Doctor. He informed me that I was not in a fit state to travel and could develop Bronchitis. I was placed in the infirmary and given medication. Here again I shared the facilities with other who were similarly admitted.

I was gripped by the story of a young man from Denmark who shared with me his experiences with Drugs and how some of his friends had died in Africa and what he had realized through MRA.

I had a lot to think about. Lying in bed and staring at the ceiling the nurse suggested if I would like to read a book and she handed me a copy of the book. 'Ideas have Legs' by Peter Howard. This book and all that I heard moved me to experiment with the simple ideas I was introduced to in a very definite way I decided to listen to my conscience and undertook a stock taking of my life in the context of the Absolute Moral Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love.

This opened my eyes to the possibilities for change and that this had to start with myself. When I reflected on all that I had written I was deeply challenged. This resulted in my honesty with my parents. When I posted my letter to them with some apprehension I experienced at the same time a sense of relief and freedom. I had to take several steps of restitution of returning books that I had borrowed permanently, paying money for traveling without tickets, settling my debts and reconciling with people with whom I had very serious conflicts.

What resulted was a sense of clarity amidst the confusion that otherwise perplexed me. Over the next six months I made several visits to Asia Plateau and in the summer of 1970 was part of a Youth Team that organized a Conference at Asia Plateau on the theme. "What can students do when nations are in trouble"? At the end of this Conference some of us were invited to work with MRA. As life had become more meaningful with the clarity I had experienced I responded to take a year of my studies to devote time for training and development in this work.

Thus started an exciting period that took me to Europe for a year following which I returned to work at Asia Plateau. I was also part of the musical "Song of Asia" that traveled through India, Laos and Vietnam in the early 70's I spent a glorious fourteen years working full time with Moral Re-Armament and spent nearly five of those years here at Asia Plateau.

So on this 40th anniversary I look back with much gratitude for all that this place has meant to me. This was where I had experienced a major turning point in my life, where much of my formation and training took place and where later I also got married. So, this place holds many memories and it is wonderful that on this occasion I can be there with my eldest daughter and also witness things through her eyes

## The Asia Plateau Auditorium

When Asia Plateau Auditorium was to be built, the thought came to raise money for it in such away that many countries and many people could contribute towards it.

The auditorium had 400 seats, so the total expense was divided by 400. Thus the cost of each seat came to Rs.5,000.

The response was tremendous.

U.K., friends of Japan, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Finland, Switzerland, Australia, France, India, Iran, Scotland, Cambodia, South Africa, Hong Kong, Town of Neufchatel, Kent, Sheffield, Yorkshire, North Wales, Somerset, Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds, City of Poona, Panchgani, Women from Bombay, Hamilton (NZ), County of Fife sent in their contributions.

The Caux Baking Team, consisting of women, not very rich sent money for a seat, French women sent money for a seat, so did nurses of Australia, 'Song of Asia' gave money for a seat, Rajesh Khanna, the bollywood actor, gave money for a seat. Companies like, West Coast Paper, owners of Gold Spot, Shri Ram Foundation, and other Trusts gave money. Many families contributed.

Anasuya's family raised money for a seat.

Thus the money for the auditorium was raised.

It did not come all at once, but over months the money came.

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