

Centre of Psychotherapy and Clinical Research

Vision and Beginnings

The Centre of Psychotherapy and Clinical research at Ambedkar University Delhi, came into formal existence in July 2013. Prior to this, the work which went into its creation was being incubated in the School of Human Studies (SHS). Since 2011, the School of Human Studies has been involved in setting up its psychotherapy clinic, *Ehsaas*. In 2013, the *Ehsaas* clinic became the psychotherapy and counselling wing of CPR. The two units of AUD – SHS and CPR – are intrinsically connected to one another. SHS remains the academic home of all programmes of Psychology from BA (Hons.) in Psychology (jointly offered by SHS and SUS), MA Psychology (Psychosocial Clinical Studies), MPhil Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (offered between 2011-2024) and PhD Psychology. The partnership between CPR and SHS comes most alive in retaining the idea of the patient and one's own patient-hood as being central to teaching. This finds a more specialised equivalent in the teaching, training and supervision of MPhil and MA candidates. While the School of Human Studies provides the intellectual and academic foundation, CPR functions as the space where the real life emotional and psychological challenges of students are held. Working with other human beings, reflecting on lived relational processes, and the work of making the un-liveable more liveable within a model of clinical thinking actively takes place at CPR.

CPCR is founded on a psychoanalytic, psychosocial- clinical orientation of helping those in emotional distress. It is also founded on a thorough ongoing commitment to engage with social realities and social change. This orientation focuses on lived experience, a value for caring relationships, deep-going inner change that comes from reflection on and working through the suffering and inner complexities in one's life. The Centre also focuses on active community engagement and develops the lesser known understanding of the community through its clinical work.

Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy are a way of thinking that connects to processes of dreaming and playing, to imaginative, creative, literary and aesthetic experiences on the one hand and to what is negated, repressed and/or what is lacking in human lives, on the other. Within this tradition, the psychotherapist works along a bio-psycho-social continuum. Healing takes place as the distance between the creative and the negated ends of a life are narrowed down. The issue of how psychoanalysis can be used for depth and qualitative work in a public clinic is a very alive one for CPR.

There is a severe gap in mental health provision as well as in thinking around mental health needs in India. The current prevalence rate of mental disorders suggests that 65 of 1000 persons, at some point in their lives, are in need of psychological care. Yet the provision is nowhere near adequate with 0.02 psychologists per 100,000 people. The burden of mental disorders, especially in urban India, is highest among young adults in the most productive life stage between 15-44 years of age. This implies that students in schools, colleges, universities, young families and those with young children are especially vulnerable to major psychological upheavals.

There continues to be a gap in Indian society and in our healing traditions in thinking about mental health. An engaged thinking in the mental health care system, one that is not only dominated by psychiatric pharmacology, requires the space to relate to symptoms through deep listening and understanding of a person's relationships, life history, socio-cultural and politico- historical location.

While we remain mindful of the above, at CPR we are also concerned with the modern crisis of capitalism which plagues all fields including education and health services, particularly mental health, psychiatry and psychotherapy. Our times threaten us with a dangerous dehumanising situation. All other imaginations of care are quickly being subsumed under a profit oriented, individualistic, give and take model with little regard for social justice or human relationships. Going against the powerful currents of mainstream medicine and health care, we at CPR and AUD work with a free or low-fee ethic. At the same time ours is not a rigid ideological position since we are aware of the multiple ways in which the setting and question of fee impacts the work of therapy. We treat the fee as a living part of the therapeutic relationship, replete with symbolic meaning. However we believe that the question of fee needs careful thought at many stages of the growth of the therapist and this clinic. Our mandate is to reach out with quality care to those who cannot afford mental health services and to also renew the philosophical vision of psychotherapy in ways that would link with social and emotional justice. Through our low cost and free clinics we are also exploring the possible shifts in human subjectivity that can come about when a person feels valued and cared for intrinsically by a devoted therapist. The therapeutic process here is not envisioned as an exchange of fees and professional expertise. In our philosophical vision, the therapeutic process could be re-envisioned as a deeply touching human encounter where care to the "soul of the other" is extended without there always being discernible profitable outcomes for the therapist. How would such a process impact on the subjectivities of the therapeutic dyad? What transformations would be activated in the self of both the patient and the therapist?

This Centre prioritises equity and excellence by providing qualitative Mental Health services to those in urgent need of help. It offers quality services in the area of mental health to all in need, and as stated above, especially those who are unable to access and receive help in private clinics and hospitals due to lack of economic and or social resources. It aims at promoting psychoanalytic research and awareness, and understanding of the human mind and psyche in a culturally rooted and sensitive manner. In the Indian context, a person is intricately linked to one's familial matrix and hence research in the Centre will endeavour to offer relevant reflections on the struggles of the individual-family matrix as represented also in the unconscious, intrapsychic conflicts of those arriving at the Centre for help. The fact that the Centre is situated within a University context presents an opportunity to study the link between struggles of young people in the classroom and those in the clinic. The clinic becomes the site where processes which have often been triggered in the classroom find their more personal and intimate elaborations. A way of rethinking one's social and familial moorings takes place here. Insights from the clinical space are processed and made available in the training programme which nurtures the growth of socially sensitive psychodynamic psychotherapists and researchers

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To develop and provide quality psychological services with a no/low fee ethic as well as rethink psychotherapeutic practice in Indian context.
2. To train psychoanalytic and socially sensitive psychotherapists through an intensive training programme.
3. To pioneer psychoanalytic training curricula for academic institutions in South Asian context.
4. To work in community contexts through inter-subjective and mutually transformative journeys.
5. To research, publish and disseminate knowledge in the area of mental health and psychotherapy.
6. To become a hub for training mental health and allied professionals and to evolve a model of appreciating and receiving subjectivity in humanities and social sciences.
7. To think about the link between higher education, classroom processes and the personal- intimate struggles in the life of students.
8. To form an association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists in India informing policy on mental health care.
9. To affiliate with International Psychoanalytic Associations and scholars

*We would like to add with regret that some of these goals has been paused due to various structural changes and the shortage of human resources that the Centre had to go through over the course of its journey. We were actively involved in the training of socially sensitive psychotherapists, organising a dialogue with various school of thoughts over the world through seminars, conferences, visiting faculty and through an advisory committee becoming a hub to discuss about various mental health concerns and initiatives one could take to form certain programs and associations. We hope to resume all these goals once we have the necessary resources. In a different section on History we have outlined the work that CPRC was doing in the past which has shaped various long lasting structural changes in one's imagination of mental health.

CPCR – ITS WINGS

❖ History & Archive (The Alive Memories of the Centre)

❖ MPhil Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

This three-year-long MPhil programme was offered between 2011-2024 before the revised National Education Policy of 2020 for training psychoanalytic psychotherapist hopes to create reflective and involved professionals who make significant contributions to the field of mental health. While being grounded in the psychoanalytic tradition, the course drew from a strong inter-disciplinary basis. We encourage our students to note the flows and oscillations of the dynamic unconscious as it traverses alongside – sometimes in conjunction and at other times in disjunction – with the currents of cultural and historical streams in the patient's being and articulations. The therapist-in-training was invited to understand psyche as formed through relationships and to appreciate the rhythms of psychic life through communications between the conscious and the unconscious as mediated through dreams, free associations, reveries and symptoms as well as states of mental breakdown. The student was also urged to immerse herself in the cultural mind as enlivened through myths, fables and folktales. A unique feature of the programme was its emphasis that the trainee therapist goes through the same treatment process as one would, in the future, take one's patients through.

❖ Professionalizing Psychoanalytic Therapy

CPCR is committed to professionalizing Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Indian context, a commitment reflected in the training it provides, the research projects initiated and the community work imagined within its rubric. CPCR also hopes to become the ground where young psychotherapists seek professional recognition and membership. Our aim is to become a body that works towards the recognition of the professional identity of the psychotherapists by ensuring rigorous clinical training and reflexivity.

❖ Psychosocial Clinical Research

CPCR aims to promote psychoanalytic research and awareness to understand the psyche in a culturally rooted and sensitive manner. Through research on areas such as trans- generational trauma, individual-family matrix internalised in the conflicts, emotional vulnerabilities caused by political and social displacements, the centre envisions to offer reflection on intersubjective processes at play in complex human conditions. In the present context an Indian corpus of psychoanalytic clinical work emphasizing on cultural nuances and processes is much needed. Our effort is to begin a journal of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and clinical research to facilitate thinking on themes of social and cultural import.

❖ Community Engagement

We at CPR are aware that those availing therapeutic services in *Ehsaas* are only a small subsection of the urban Indian society in transition. CPR has the ambition to reach to the varied sections of the society and formulate relevant research questions. CPR engages with the psychosocial and emotional life of certain marginalised communities within AUD (Safai Karamcharis and Class IV employees) with an aim of providing them a platform to voice their inner experiences and feelings, to document these narratives and cull out relevant themes for research purposes. CPR has also reached out to groups of women with young children, focusing on their emotional needs, identifying women suffering from postnatal depression, build awareness on mental health related issues as well as sustain them by building community networks. CPR also envisions work with students in schools who are not in a position to reach the clinic. The aim is to help the students learn social skills, enhancing self-esteem and communication, to support teaching staff and parents dealing with various mental health issues of the students. CPR also aims to open dialogical possibilities through experiential work with the prison inmates, mental patients in asylums as well as their care takers in institutional setups.

❖ Advisory Committee (2013-2019)

From 2013-2019, CPR operated with the help of an Advisory Committee which consisted of prominent names from the fields of psychotherapy, psychiatry, education, social work and various other experts one requires to form an integrated understanding of mental health within a society. Various concerns of the centre and the field were taken to them and the group would discuss and work through some of the concerns that mental health as a field faces today. Through these conversations and dialogues we have shaped the centre to the best of our ability to highlight the plight of the people and how to bring it into the imagination of the society. The names of the members are as follows:

1. Prof. Sudhir Kakar (Chairperson, Psychoanalyst and Writer),
2. Prof. Ashis Nandy (Senior Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies),
3. Prof. Ashok Nagpal (Member of Advisory Board),
4. Prof. Honey Oberoi Vahali (Member Secretary),
5. Prof. Rajesh Sagar (Prof. of Psychiatry, AIIMS),
6. Prof. Farida A. Khan (Prof. of Education, Department of Educational Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia),
7. Mr. Harsh Mander (Director, Centre for Equity Studies),
8. Dr. Alok Sarin (MBBS, MD. Psychiatry),

9. Dr. Bhargavi Davar (Director, Babu Trust and NAZMI Foundation),

10 Dr. Vikram Gupta (Sir Ratan Tata Trust)

❖ **Adjunct & Visiting Faculty (2013-2019)**

While we were envisioning CPR, we realised that it requires us to associate with various experts who could shape the vision and understanding of mental health of our students. We wanted that their training, both at the MA and the MPhil level, opens their imaginations to various ebbs and flows of culture, society, the politics of it and various other nuances which shapes the experiences of a human. This allowed us to associate with various people over the years which opened space for various nitty-gritty of the imagination of the “Human” in the core of the being of the Centre. Some of these people who continue to remain alive through the imagination of the centre are as follows:

1. Prof Neil Altman (Psychoanalyst)
2. Dr. Madhu Sarin (Psychoanalyst)
3. Dr. Vinita Kshetrapal (Psychoanalyst)
4. Dr. Anurag Mishra (Psychiatrist and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist)
5. Dr. Kusum Dhar (Jungian Analyst).

❖ **Current Facility: *Ehsaas* Psychotherapy and Counselling Clinic –**

Ehsaas is the psychotherapy and counselling clinic of CPR. The aim of the work at *Ehsaas* is to retain a depth approach to clinical work and to keep alive the questions about the place of psychoanalytic psychotherapy in a public funded clinic. It is committed to making psychoanalytic psychotherapy accessible, keeping in mind that there is a need for social as well as emotional justice; that everyone deserves care and concern. Independent of, yet along with other public funded service providers in other parts of the world (eg. Tavistock Institute and Tavistock clinic, UK) CPR has arrived at the need to meaningfully apply the social sciences, with psychoanalysis in particular, to relevant questions of social and emotional justice. Keeping with this philosophy, *Ehsaas* provides a community based, easy to access, low-fee, confidential, high quality mental health service to all age groups of the local population and students of various educational institutions. Also anyone outside of AUD can approach *Ehsaas* for help. It aims to keep alive the continuum from imagination to intervention; from blocks to health to healing and a capacity to play.

With CPR becoming identified as the unit delivering the MPhil psychotherapy and clinical thinking programme at AUD (offered between 2011-2024), it has become essential to see *Ehsaas* as a training site as well as a functioning clinic. The clinicians working at *Ehsaas* are of the view that seeing patients in a public funded, university based context, is qualitatively and administratively different from seeing patients in private practice settings. Therefore, the need for us to draw up policies for clinical work at *Ehsaas* has come about organically but with an intensity that makes it hard to brush aside.

At *Ehsaas* we help people to reach a fuller experience of their self by creating a safe space in which anxiety provoking, conflicting, shame evoking and traumatised parts can be expressed, held and worked through. As the previously un-bearable and un-thinkable parts come under empathic scrutiny, it becomes possible for the patient to reconnect to memories and reach forms of thinking where none may have existed before. This play between past and present allows for working through the blocks in the patient's past, as they are relived and ultimately released in the contemporary space within which the therapeutic dyad relates. At the same time, the real relationship with the therapist also comes to serve as a hope, trust and faith, transforming the patient's inner and relational world.

Ehsaas has a child clinic, an adult clinic and a family clinic. Patients have sought *Ehsaas* with difficulties ranging from anxiety, depression and suicidal feelings, extreme mood states, body image issues, behavioural problems, adjustment difficulties, drug dependence, difficulty in sustaining relationships, loss of a loved one or intractable family issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and broken homes, caring for a family member with psychosis, alcoholism or prolonged illness.

Our team works with a variety of therapeutic models:

- Long-term Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy
- Brief Psychodynamic Psychotherapy
- Crisis Intervention
- Sessions on demand for patients with remote locations in the city of Delhi or neighbouring areas, who cannot access psychotherapy on a weekly basis.
- Walk- In Clinic
- Listening circles

* Some of these facilities are paused due to paucity of human resources. We are currently not in a position to offer therapy to people from Delhi/NCR. However we continue to operate our referral facility. We have a network of our students, colleagues and other professionals from the field who still offer therapy at affordable fees as part of our model.

Process of Contacting Ehsaas

To make an appointment please download the form from the Aud website (aud.ac.in) and email it to Ehsaas@aud.ac.in. One of us will contact you. In case there is a waiting period you shall be informed. You can also contact the SHS office in AUD: 011 23862321, Shefali Singh (clinic coordinator): shefali@aud.ac.in. In case of emergency please contact the coordinator.

CPCR- Director and Team of Psychotherapists

1. Dr. Shubhra Nagalia

Director, CPCR, Associate Professor of Gender Studies, School of Human Studies

shubhra@aud.ac.in

2. Prof. Honey Oberoi Vahali

Psychoanalyst, Professor of Psychology and Clinical Psychologist

Founding Director, CPCR

honey@aud.ac.in

3. Shefali Singh

Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist and Clinical Psychologist

shefali@aud.ac.in

4. Dr. Shifa Haq

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

shifahaq@aud.ac.in

5. Anshumita Pandey

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

anshumita@aud.ac.in

6. Dr. Mamatha Karollil

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

mamatha@aud.ac.in

7. Vinod R.

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

vinod@aud.ac.in

MEMBERS OF CPCR AND FACULTY (PSYCHOLOGY, SHS)

1. Prof. Honey Oberoi Vahali , (Professor, Psychology)
2. Ms. Thokchom Bibinaz Devi (Assistant Professor, Psychology),
3. Dr. Vatsala Saxena (Assistant Professor, Psychology),
4. Dr. Pratima (Associate Professor, Psychology)