

GRAND REUNION – CONCEPT DISCUSSION

(Dr. P R Singh, Dr. L Sunuwar, Dr. A Gurung, and P Shrestha)

This is an article detailing the preparation of a conception for the proposed Grand Reunion Event (GRE). The discussion on basic concept among the alumni has evolved from our initial “Grand Reunion – Concept Paper”. Note that this paper is also included in Souvenir 2021 as Article 1 with all details. This present paper can be termed as Article 2 in the process of development on GRE. The foremost objective of this present article is to provide a history of activities, planning, and discussion meetings that were commenced by number of volunteers to complete the initial phase of discussion sessions and gather support for the GRE among the alumni living in Canada, USA, Europe, Australia, Africa, and Asia.

Background:

A background discussion (timeline history) is presented below on the birth of Grand Reunion- Concept Paper followed by various outcomes of all meetings that paved way to our present status on GRE.

The idea of GRE was first initiated by Dr. Ai Gurung (1983-87 batch) in 2016 among a few of us. However, the seed of this brilliant idea had to wait for COVID-19 restrictions for germination as people started realizing the importance of virtual communication between distant friends. This led to the formation of a six-member UOR-Canada (Task Force) alumni group from Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, and Winnipeg on June 17, 2020 to explore the view of our alumni about GRE firstly in Canada. The first brainstorming virtual meeting of this group took place on June 27, 2020. The meeting came up with important ideas about the concept of GRE with respect to its name and modality, such as - UOR/IITR Nepal Chapter–Grand Reunion, in 2-5 years, possibly at some resort near Kathmandu including a need of an accurate and complete database for communication. As a follow up to this meeting, the group updated our alumni database of Canada and reached out to all the 27 friends, one-on-one, to hear their general view on GRE.

We had to cancel few meeting dates before we settled with our second task force group meeting on October 3, 2020. By this time, the task force committee was able to schedule the upcoming virtual meetings in Zoom platform. Sincere thanks go to the Nepali Language and Cultural Centre (Winnipeg) for sharing the Zoom platform for this task force committee. The six-member Canada task force committee expanded to eight to include alumni from the senior batches. It was a good meeting, where we discussed on short- and long-term plans and formulated strategies to create an atmosphere to get to know our IITR-Nepalese friends beyond our batch mates and at the same time generate a powerful voice from outside Nepal to share with IIT Roorkee Alumni Association of Nepal (IITRAAN) Executive Council to consider planning a much bigger and memorable event in the days ahead. The outcomes of the group meeting were:

- Finalize the Concept document about Grand Reunion to share with alumni,
- Take all necessary action to expedite the alumni database update by engaging more friends from US, Europe, Australia, and Asia (outside Nepal),
- Schedule a virtual meeting on November 28, 2020 between friends in Canada, USA, and Europe, and
- Expand the Task Force Committee beyond Canada.

Summary of Meetings (Information Sessions):

This section first provides a summary of the three virtual meetings took place with alumni living outside Nepal (about 150 in the database) and then the fourth meeting with IITRAAN Executive Council (EC) regarding the Grand Reunion and is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: GRE Discussion Meetings Held in Zoom Platform

Meeting #	Date	No. of Attendees	Alumni Base
#1	Nov 28, 2020	44	Canada, USA, UK
#2	Jan 30/31, 2021	25	Australia, Southeast Asia, USA, and Canada
#3	Feb 13, 2021	19	Europe, South Asia, Africa, USA, and Canada
#4	Feb 21, 2021	13	IITRAAN EC, Alumni friends in Nepal, GRE Task Force Team

Note that numbers of brief planning meetings among a smaller group from within the Task Force Committee (hereinafter referred to as Task Force Planning Team) preceded each of these meetings. Each of these meetings also allowed expanding the Task Force Committee with one or more members from the alumni bases outside Canada. As part of preparation meetings for the first discussion meeting on November 28, 2020, the concept document was reviewed in detail. Other significant tasks completed were 1) preparation of presentation slides to share in the beginning of the meeting and 2) the drafting of Grand Reunion related poll questions to be tossed during the upcoming meetings. Table 2 displays the three poll questions tossed in the meeting.

Table 2: Poll Questions

Question 1	Do you think you will be able to travel to Nepal to attend the reunion program in three to four years?
Question 2	How long do you think the reunion program should be?
Question 3	Will it be a good idea to invite few guests from Roorkee?

A. Introduction and Roorkee Memories

Each of the three meetings was conducted by Purushottam Shrestha (1982-86) using the agenda approved by the task force committee. The agenda items included 1) welcome remarks by a senior member, 2) a presentation by Dr. Ai Gurung about the proposed GRE (refer to another article "Grand Reunion-Concept Paper"), 3) an introduction and Roorkee memories by alumni, 4) a poll, 5) Questions & Answers and a zero hour discussion, and (6) a closing remark by another senior member(s) and a vote of thanks by Dr. Laxman Sunuwar (1984-88) on behalf of the Task Force Planning Team.

Welcome remarks were presented by Dr. Arbind Mainali (1980-84) in the first two meetings and by Dr. Kundan Pandey (1980-84) in the third meeting. Closing remarks for the first meeting were presented by Naresh Koirala (1962-66) and Dr. Vijaya Raj Sharma (1967-71). Similarly, closing remarks for the second and third meetings were presented by Beni M. Lekhak (1980-84) and Chiranjibi Gautam (1981-85) respectively.

Attendees observed a moment of silence in memory of late Niaz Ahmad (1980-84) in the beginning of the second meeting on January 30/31, 2021. Thanks for the database, the Task Force Committee had developed for this Grand Reunion initiative, which was instrumental in a successful fund raising for the treatment of our dear friend Niaz Ahmad. He was later diagnosed with lymphoma before leaving this world on January 27, 2021.

Roorkee memories presented at these meetings can be divided into the following three categories:

Food:

Different favorite dishes (Chhole-Bhature, Kala Jamun, Karela) and melodious songs played in messes, Bhatia's bun-omelet as favorite foods in Roorkee (Bhatia store never closed except at the time of Indira Gandhi's assassination, the store never closed for eight consecutive years), Maggi as favorite snacks in canteens, Nandu's fruits and juices, Buff momo making in various hostels, Tibetan shop for Momo and drinks, Pakora shop was popular in 1960s – no Bhatia's bun-omelet back then, etc.

Hobbies:

Craze in movie (cinema hall/hangar) – up to 4 and even 5 consecutive shows a day including late night shows and stories got mixed up, half time movie goer; prank to select movie goer (provided false review), three movies of Jitendra one after another, Craze in sports (outdoor/indoor), evening walk / cycling in civil lines and by Ganga canal, swimming experience, experience with Rowing Club's swim tests in Ganga canal, trekking experience with Himalaya Explorers' Club, Bike stolen, cricket match experience with Indian friends, 29 card game - even these days played with family, "Sitamgar" rephrased as Sita Magar; Actress "Jeenat Aman" rephrased to Jeena Tamang, body building titles, rivalry between different batches in football among Nepalese players, in particular between 1982 and 1983 batches, back to back inter-class football tournament title for 1983 batch (II year and III year), role played by an African football player (Ombaya) in the title for 1984 batch (III year) etc.;

New Experience:

Never experienced so hot, first year experience in Roorkee exams, Gali competition, Hindi class, Survey Camp at Mal Dewata and a nearby visit of Nalapani fort, Recognition of being a UOR student – helped by a TT to return to Roorkee from Delhi without a ticket, baggage stolen at the All-India Tour and help received from a Professor, considered sick if somebody goes to bed before 1 or 2 am, strict dress code back in 1960s.

B. Poll Results

The zoom host of the event, Dr. Purushottam Raj Singh (1983-87), briefly explained about the three questions included in the poll (refer to Table 2) and it was launched within the zoom to allow vote by all attendees except host and co-hosts of the meeting. The poll results were shared immediately with all the participants in each meeting. Table 3 summarizes the poll results conducted during the three meetings. The result clearly shows that most of the attendees are interested to attend the grand reunion in Nepal. The poll results also showed that majority of attendees supported for the Grand Reunion to

be at least 2 days in duration and an idea of inviting few guests from Roorkee during the event was endorsed too (see Table 3, and refer to Table 2 for poll questions).

Table 3: Summary of Poll at the Three Meetings

Meeting	Attendees Polled	Question #1			Question #2			Question #3	
		Yes	No	May be	1 Day	2 Day	>2Day	Yes	No
#1	35	30	0	5	2	27	6	30	5
		86%	0%	14%	6%	77%	17%	86%	14%
#2	22	17	1	4	0	15	7	21	1
		77%	5%	18%	0%	68%	32%	95%	5%
#3	15	15	0	0	0	13	2	14	1
		100%	0%	0%	0%	87%	13%	93%	7%
Total	72	62	1	9	2	55	15	65	7
		86%	1%	13%	3%	76%	21%	90%	10%

C. Suggestions

This section captures suggestions that pertains to the modality of the proposed GRE. These are valuable suggestions to consider sharing with IITRAAN, Event Organizing Committee and/or the Steering Committee who will lead the next phases of the GRE initiative, i.e., Grand Reunion - Event Planning and Grand Reunion – Event Organization.

Meeting #1:

Many supported the idea of grand reunion at a suitable location near Kathmandu during Dashain-Tihar time. Many advised to include family members or at least spouse at the GRE. Few USA alumni suggested having a reunion in North America among the Roorkee graduates from Nepal either in USA or in Canada. There was a suggestion to have such reunion in a 4-year interval. Some suggested not delaying more for such reunion programs. “Summer is an ideal time for reunion” was also an echo from some attendees since alumni working in Universities cannot attend any reunion events that will take place during Dashain-Tihar time. Professional experience sharing with our alumni and beyond, with professionals and policy makers, in Nepal was also suggested by some attendees.

Meeting #2:

Many supported the idea of GRE. Like in previous meeting, a good number of attendees opined to plan the Grand Reunion at a location not far from Kathmandu. There was a suggestion for Roorkee too. Many advised to include family members or at least spouse. Some attendees suggested organizing the reunion program as soon as possible with possible visit to Roorkee after the event. Contribution to Nepal's education and natural resource (e.g., water) sectors were some of the suggestions. Few alumni proposed for an Emergency Fund also. The task force planning team was advised to complete the third and last meeting with alumni from Europe, Africa, India and Afghanistan in couple of weeks (February 13) such that few alumni, who are in the Task Force Committee, can talk to IITRAAN EC later this month during their Nepal visit.

Meeting #3:

Many took part in Q & A / Zero Hour session and supported the idea of GRE. For future initiatives, many suggested that we could consider helping out the education sector in Nepal. Some mentioned knowledge/experience sharing programs even before Grand Reunion. Some suggested recognizing achievements of some of our alumni in Nepal and abroad. Others suggested inspiring new generation

and providing some valuable inputs to the policy makers through separate forums. A consideration to have an informal social program and a separate formal program too in the GRE. Some even suggested to prepare program details for Day 1 and Day 2 for the event.

All above suggestions would be valuable inputs for the next phase of IITRAAN GRE Planning.

SUMMARY OF MEETING WITH IITRAAN:

As per the outcome of the second and third GRE discussion meetings, few senior alumni in the GRE task force committee took initiative to talk to IITRAAN executives in person during their Nepal visit. This led to a virtual meeting on February 21, 2021 among five (5) alumni representing the GRE task force committee, and eight (8) alumni friends in Nepal and IITRAAN EC. The main objective of this meeting was to share what was heard from the three meetings (refer to Table 1) regarding the concept of a one-time Grand Reunion Event to IITRAAN EC and move this GRE initiative to next phase taking confidence of all alumni base in Nepal and abroad. Following recommendations were made in the meeting:

- The proposed Grand Reunion was supported by all present, and the IITRAAN EC and friends in Nepal will take the lead to organize the Reunion on a date and at the venue to be decided later. An organizing Sub-Committee with members in Nepal and abroad will be formed by the EC.
- The tentative date in-between Dashain and Tihar (October), either in 2022 or 2023, depending on the COVID-19 situation would be suitable as proposed. The idea of a 2-day event is also supported by those present.
- The Venue can be outside Kathmandu, but it might be better to organize it near Kathmandu, like Nagarkot, Dhulikhel.
- It was suggested that the Reunion should be organized with a clear objective and expected outcome. While it is fine to organize it as a social gathering of alumni friends, it will however be more productive if the outcome is a positive contribution to the Nation and the Society. Given the wide experience and expertise of the Alumni worldwide, it could be in the form of some specialized professional activities contributing to one or more sectors and/or to charitable causes.
- It was also suggested that the proposed professional or charitable activities need not wait for the day of the Reunion. It could be planned and started immediately as part of the Reunion planning process. It can then be unveiled during the Reunion. This should be further discussed in the upcoming zoom meetings. It was also suggested to invite members to float their ideas, which can then be reviewed by a Review Committee and taken forward.
- IITRAAN President and General Secretary informed that a Souvenir publication, including articles by members and a "Who is Who" of Roorkee Alumni, is being published soon to mark the Silver Jubilee of IITRAAN. The Souvenir is in its final stage of publication, but members may still submit relevant articles by 26 February 2021. Information on the Reunion could be included too.
- It was also informed that the next AGM of IITRAAN would be held in the next few months. It was suggested that the members outside Nepal should also join the EC to be elected in the AGM.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEP

An overwhelming support for this Grand Reunion Event was received from our alumni friends living outside Nepal. The first phase of GRE initiative to hear views of alumni living outside Nepal and disseminating the general outcome of the discussion meetings to IITRAAN EC was completed in a very positive note. The series of activities carried out so far, regarding the concept of GRE, suggested a transition from Phase I: “Grand Reunion - Concept Discussion” to Phase II: “Grand Reunion – Event Planning” is imminent.

Following next steps were identified:

1. The GRE Task Force Planning Team from Canada (Purushottam Shrestha/Ai Gurung/Purushottam Raj Singh/) is requested to communicate the list of the steering committee formed by the Alumni outside Nepal to IITRAAN EC (General Secretary-Basudev Pokhrel (1984-88)) for further discussion to enter into the next phase of “Grand Reunion - Event Planning”.
2. One or more zoom meetings to be conducted with the Committee, the IITRAAN EC members, and friends in Nepal on or after March 20, 2021. It is anticipated that more than one zoom meeting may be required due to different time zones from Australia/Asia/Europe to North America.
3. The meeting will allow the formation of a GRE Steering Committee and/or the Organizing Committee in virtual presence of alumni friends from Nepal, outside Nepal, and IITRAAN EC representatives.

1. MEETING PHOTOS

Enclosed are four photos each representing the four zoom meetings held between November 28, 2020 and February 21, 2021. Please refer to Table 1 for the particulars about the four meetings.

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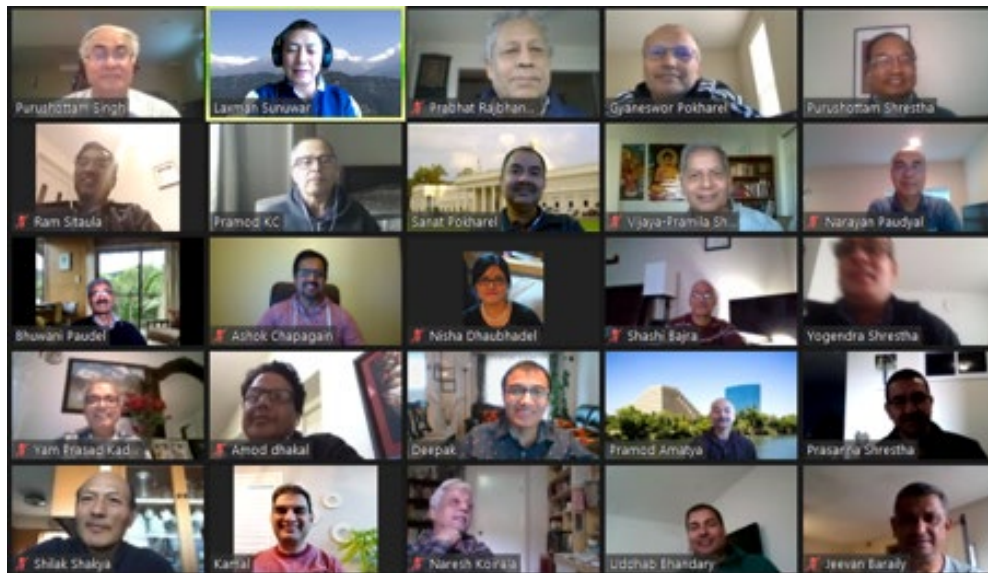


Photo 1: First Meeting of IITR-N Alumni in Canada, USA, and UK (November 28, 2020)



Photo 2: Second Meeting of IITR-N Alumni in Australia, South Asia, Canada, and USA (January 30/31, 2021)

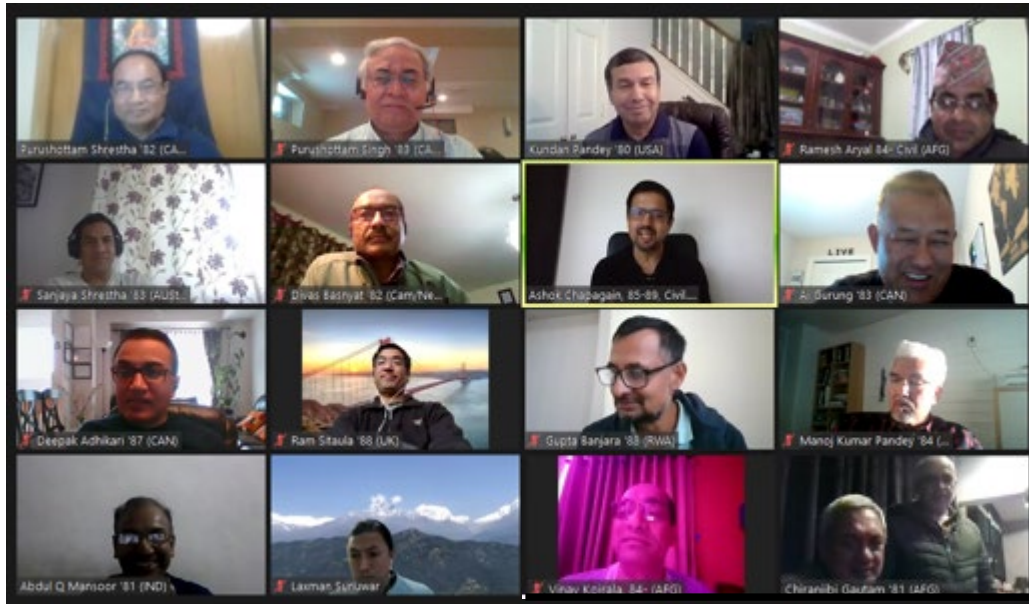


Photo 3: Zoom Meeting of IITR-N Alumni in Europe, Southwest Asia, Africa, USA and Canada (February 13, 2021)



Photo 4: Zoom Meeting among GRE Task Force Planning Team, Alumni Friends in Nepal and IITRAAN EC (February 21, 2021)