

Workshop on “In Search of Silence” at Asia Plateau-29th Dec 2008 to 2nd Jan 2009

With many years gone by celebrating New Year was more of loud music, dancing and cheering. This year was much different, unique, symbolic, and in many ways an expression from 20 young citizens of how 2008 was for India and the world and at the same time about how it should be in 2009. Around 20 handpicked Initiatives of Change, Youth representatives across India met at Asia Plateau, Panchgani at Initiatives of Change center. For Four days, this Youth Team underwent a journey of deep introspection for several long hours in a day, discovering themselves and building a roadmap for self improvisation and consensus based goal setting. We realized that Silence is so vital for life, but still ignored the most, in this 4 day gathering we made an attempt to remain silent, and dive deep down into our own abyss to find out what we are.



The workshop started in an atmosphere of change in Asia Plateau on 29-Dec, 2008. We started our introspection by asking ourselves- “**What is different behavior between how I am in Asia Plateau and outside?**”. After several hours of Quiet Time we shared our deep inner voice of how there were many qualities, lifestyle and habits that need to be corrected. The sharing by each one made us connect with each other at much higher level than before.

The Workshop gathered greater momentum when we introspected around the questions-“**What I am? What I want to become? What qualities should I inculcate and what steps I must take?**” For several hours, we wandered in our thoughts to understand ourselves better, and what transformation we need to undergo. In this journey of Quiet Time, we emerged in the sharing session, with greater conviction and zeal with clear roadmap of personal change. All shared how they planned to improvise and inspire each other.



We deeply thought about 'how and why it is necessary to walk the talk in our life'. 'During Youth Conferences and other programs we stand as change makers & role models of a better tomorrow, how can we live a life with compromised standards? Do we have authority to say what we don't follow in our life?'

We brainstormed on what should be the qualities that we must have as Youth Team being associated with IofC; following are the Qualities that emerged with consensus:

- Discipline
- Stay calm and focused
- Reading and acquiring knowledge
- Good Health and Exercise
- Regular Quiet Time and PHUL compliance
- Hardworking
- Equanimity
- No Vices
- Wealth Creation and Management

- Effective Communication
- Creativity or Nurturing Hobby
- Pursuit of Excellence
- Cleanliness
- Sustaining Health and preserving one self

The next sessions on Quiet Time was around “**How to bring these qualities within our personal life?**” The focus moved to change within. Many shared innovative ways to bring these qualities and stronger commitment to adhere to disciplined lifestyle.

Planning of Youth Conference 2009

To trigger the brainstorming on the YC 09, the discussion was rolled with a group introspection on “**Why do I want YC to happen?**”. The expectations of every participant were captured. The brainstorming on the content of the Youth Conference was then compared with the expectations, this enabled us to be more focused in our planning for Youth Conference.

The structure of the brainstorming on Youth Conference was on the following areas:

- Discussion on Speakers for Inauguration and Session
- Youth Conference Outreach –
 - Greater Participation from Rural India
 - Participation from Non Resident Indians
 - Requirements and Features expected from a dedicated Website for Youth Initiatives
- Documentation of every detail aspect and Filming video of session and change stories. This will play major role in Outreach activities and Website Content.

Details of this session was captured and shared in the excel sheet (YC_2009_Tracker.xls)

Learning from City-Chapters:

We had representations from Baramati, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Jamshedpur, Pune; where youth activities are going on, on regular basis. We listened from each of them about the activities that are happening along with the local friends of IofC.

We all agreed to have 3-day workshop at Baramati in 2009, since there have been several participants who have benefited out of the last one we did in March 2008 and they all desired to meet IofC once again on such platform.

In Bhubaneswar, our friends have been organizing Health camp for the slum areas near by Silicon Institute of Technology, continuing an on going evening classes "Akshyar Jyoti" for children of construction workers and are preparing for the annual youth conference "Prayas" which is to be held from 22 to 26 - Jan' 09.

The One day IofC workshop organized in Indore attended by over 250 Youth, gave us a tremendous learning on how to organize a program so efficiently. There was unanimous consensus that we must have larger programs in Indore and Jabalpur.

Jamshedpur has been an inspiration to all of us in holding the friends together for such a long time. We heard about the "Savera" camp that was organized in the month of Oct' 2008 and also learned how Lalan Sharma and friends have been conducting very effective IofC workshops with the help of Lions club.

We learnt from Pune about the "No Honking" campaign that was organized. The success of it and the fall outs as well; the difficulties faced in organizing the event and the after effects of it were also expressed before the house.

Fund Generation Programs:

Couple of things on the monetary part was shared:

1. The discussion on how to get greater representation of Real India, resulted in constraints around Funding as the Conference Fee along with travel is beyond the budgets of various middle class and lower middle class families across India. As the average per capita income of Indian Family remains below Rs.3000 per month, equating our Participant Fee for 8 days.
2. We need to generate funds for the maintenance/ sustenance of Asia Plateau (A heritage/ monument for most of us).
3. Economic independence.

This thinking resulted in brainstorming of the following activities and Programs that can be undertaken to raise funds for channelizing into Sponsorship and Outreach activities.

- Youth NRI Conference

Invite NRIs representing NRI forums as Participants and then test the potential for NRI Conference bringing the real India and personal change to each one of them.

- Management Conference on Leadership- Steve Covey

Build a Team of IofC Trainers who can conduct programs in Corporate and network to bring International Corporate Trainers such as Steve Covey. The participants for this conference would be largely senior management of leading corporate, governance, and institutions.

- Adventure Tourism

Give momentum on meeting the untapped potential of Adventure Tourism, catering to world class facilities and natural Indian Paradise.



The New Year was welcomed with deep prayers, each one with their own prayer for a better world in the New Year. Prayers being offered for all suffered from 26/11, Bihar Floods, Economic Recession, Poverty, Hatred and War. The Foyer of Asia Plateau was dark, similar to anarchy and hopelessness felt by today's Youth. Each one lit several candles, filling the room with light, similar to the victory of truth over falsehood, knowledge over ignorance, peace over hatred. With deep prayers in our hearts, we all wished a Happy New Year to ourselves, our families, our society.

In spite of all the loud music across the valley of Panchgani, we did find deep inner silence, where we could hear our own prayers, a silence where we could feel connected with each other and the hope that the new year brings with its own opportunities to make a difference.

New Year – Beacon of Change

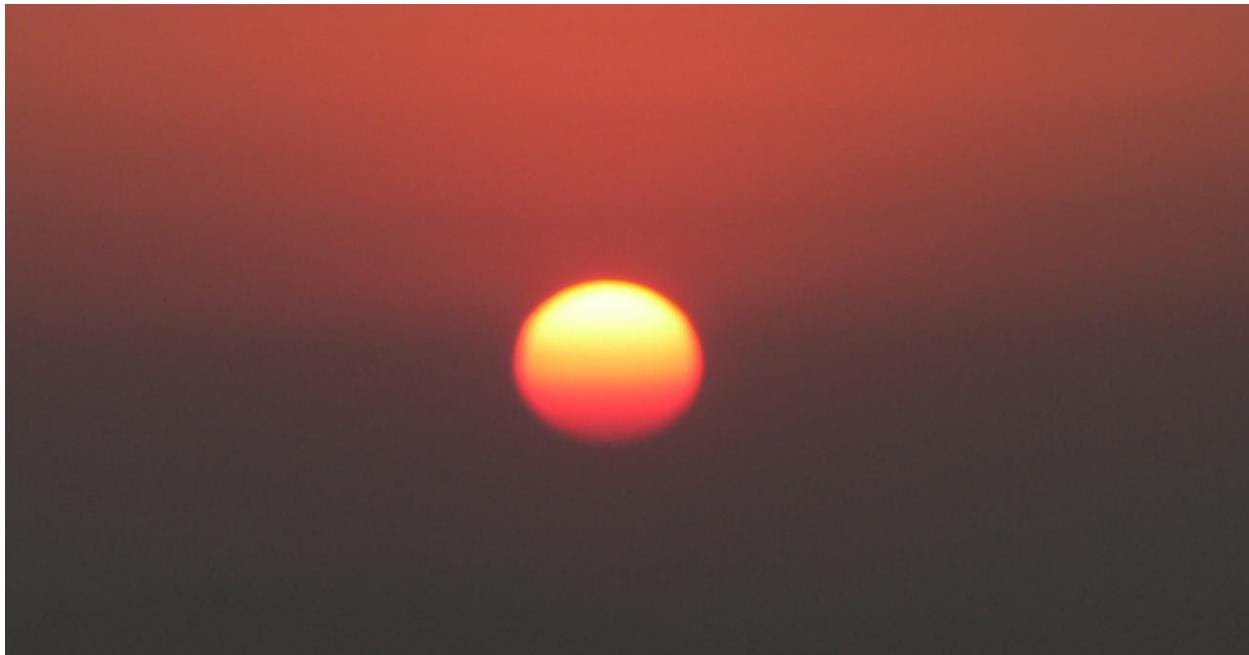
Despite of the late night praying on the eve of the New Year, we woke up on the 1st January morning and trekked to the Table Top Mountain near Asia Plateau. The wait for Sunrise and the Sunrise was

indeed a moment of experience that cannot be expressed. The feel of optimism and greater will to make a difference was in the air.

The thought for Quiet Time on the First Day of the New Year was "**To make One commitment which is tough, challenging, needs hard work but I will fulfill, and present it to this group and myself in May workshop, this commitment would need every day attention and working towards it gradually to achieve it**".

We promised each one that in the May 2009 Workshop, we would present our personal change results and of how each one took steps on daily basis to meet the goal set at the start of the year.

After the long and deep quiet time, we met once again for the sharing. The steps/ commitment each of us expressed were very practical and seemed tangible to each of us. We could feel how the conditioning and peer pressure builds up the vices and not-needed habits of individuals. Some of us went deeper in sharing the dilemma they face in day-to-day life to live the life with absolute standards. We all felt not to give up hope and keep following the inner guidance. This group has decided to care for each other regularly through phone calls, emails, and sharing inspiring material and give support to achieve what each one has written in their quiet time.



Last morning we spent at Asia Plateau also started with a Quiet Time which was focused on all the thoughts we have captured in these days. Going through the write ups of our own thoughts made us fine tune our thoughts with greater focus. Many felt that this workshop was indeed the most successful of all times, each one of us could see a clear goal to achieve and inspire each other. We left the gates of Asia Plateau with greater conviction to be benchmark citizens.

There is choice for you when you get up in the morning; go back to sleep and continue dreaming or wake up and work towards your dream. (- Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam)