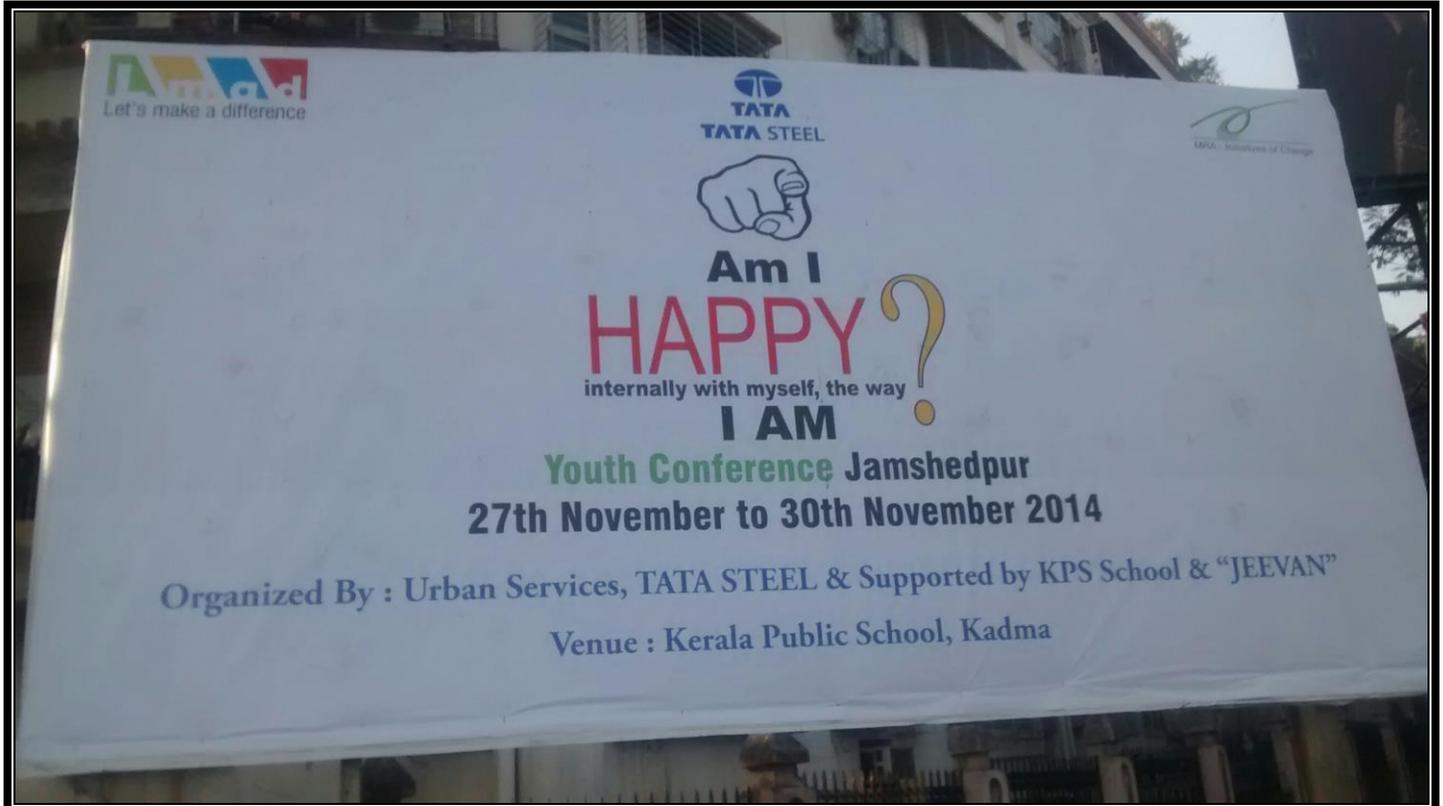


An Observation Report of the IofC
“Let's Make a Difference” Youth Conference
organized at Jamshedpur from
27th-30th November 2014



A hoarding of the conference put up at Bistupur Circle in Jamshedpur.

The Jamshedpur Youth Conference was a different experience this time and the gathering was the largest in all these years. And for the first time Tata Steel (Urban Services) sponsored the entire conference and took the best care possible for each and everything in partnership with Jeevan and supported by Kerala Public Schools Trust . Jeevan is an NGO that is working towards helping those individuals who are experiencing suicidal tendency. The conference was conducted at Kerala Public School, Kadma.

The visibility of the conference was very much prevailing in the entire city, that a life changing message through Initiatives of Change [IofC] - Let's make a difference [Lmad] was going to be presented to the younger people of the city. The entire conference was covered by the local daily (newspaper) and many posters and hoardings were displayed in key areas of the city. The daily activities were reported in the English newspapers as well as in the local newspapers. Interacting with the press through a press conference was a new experience for many of the coordinators and this was a step taken towards making people aware of Lmad and its work. Many senior secondary schools and colleges had taken part in the conference by sending their students as participants. And 292 students attended this program.

Before the start of the conference the coordinating team played an important role in planning every aspect of the conference to its minute detail. Every session and every day was well thought and designed on the sheet to be delivered keeping the needs, aspirations, concerns and enthusiasm of young people. The most important aspect which was discussed was the take away and the Prelude [epilogue] was written before hand on what the team wanted to pass on to the participants.

The Inauguration was hosted by Mrs Shraddha Agarwal who welcomed everyone and the lighting of the lamp took place. The guests for the inauguration were Mrs. Ruchi Narendran , Managing Trustee of JEM Foundation and President of Jamshedpur Eye Hospital, as our Chief Guest, Mr. Ronald D'Costa representing Jeevan, Mr. Sanjay , Head, Tata Urban Services , Mr. Rajiv Agarwal a lawyer from Jamshedpur and a senior coordinator of Lmad and Mr. APR Nair the Chairman, of Kerala Public Schools.

Mr. Ronald D'Costa spoke about Jeevan and how they are working towards a good cause to prevent children from committing suicide. It was shocking to note that Jamshedpur has the record for the highest number of suicides in the country. Aditya a past participant shared his experience after connecting with Lmad. He shared that after the conference of 2013 he has seen a change within himself. He has become more confident and is a better human being and a good listener now. He understood the importance of his parents and he respects them unconditionally.

Mrs. Ruchi Narendran shared that "we feel responsible to help children to become better people. In this digital world we have lots of friends on social sites and we don't speak to each

other very much, we don't listen to each other and we just keep following people and updating our statuses on the social media. But listening to ourselves is more important to move on in life. This conference will teach you to listen to yourself, make use of it and go ahead. "



The inauguration of the conference being hosted by Mrs Shraddha Agarwal (behind the lector) with the dignitaries seated on stage.

The idea of this year's conference was to sensitise the participants that life has lot more to offer than what they think through their limited prism, life is not a burden but a bundle of joy and if one has learnt the art of unwrapping the bundle one will feel empowered to live with a living purpose.

Each day began with morning prayers and short video clippings containing social messages were also shown as they were very much relevant to the sessions that were going to take place during the day.

Quiet time is an integral part of every Lmad journey. It is a personal time for ourselves to contemplate and reflect on ourselves by writing. As we grow older, we tend to stop writing more and resort to "typing" more. Writing has its own attributes and plus points. As we write

more, we improve our handwriting and develop a good command over the language. We also tend to remember what we have written and it stays in our memory forever. Writing also brings clarity of thought as we put things down on paper.

How many of us have lied to your parents? How many of us often lie to others and get away with it? Or the better question to put across is-are we completely honest with ourselves? When we do things which we are not supposed to do then our conscious speaks to us. The conscious knows that we are lying and cheating, but one does not have enough courage to listen to its inner voice.

How many of us are truly happy from inside? Or are we people who put up a fake smile every day and pretend that we are happy in front of others? Looking within without any blockade is very challenging and scary as we always try to show ourselves presentable from the outside but what about within us? In order for us to know ourselves, the very first step is reflecting and writing down our thoughts during our quiet time. The participants were introduced to a diary and they were encouraged to make this diary their friend and write their hearts out.

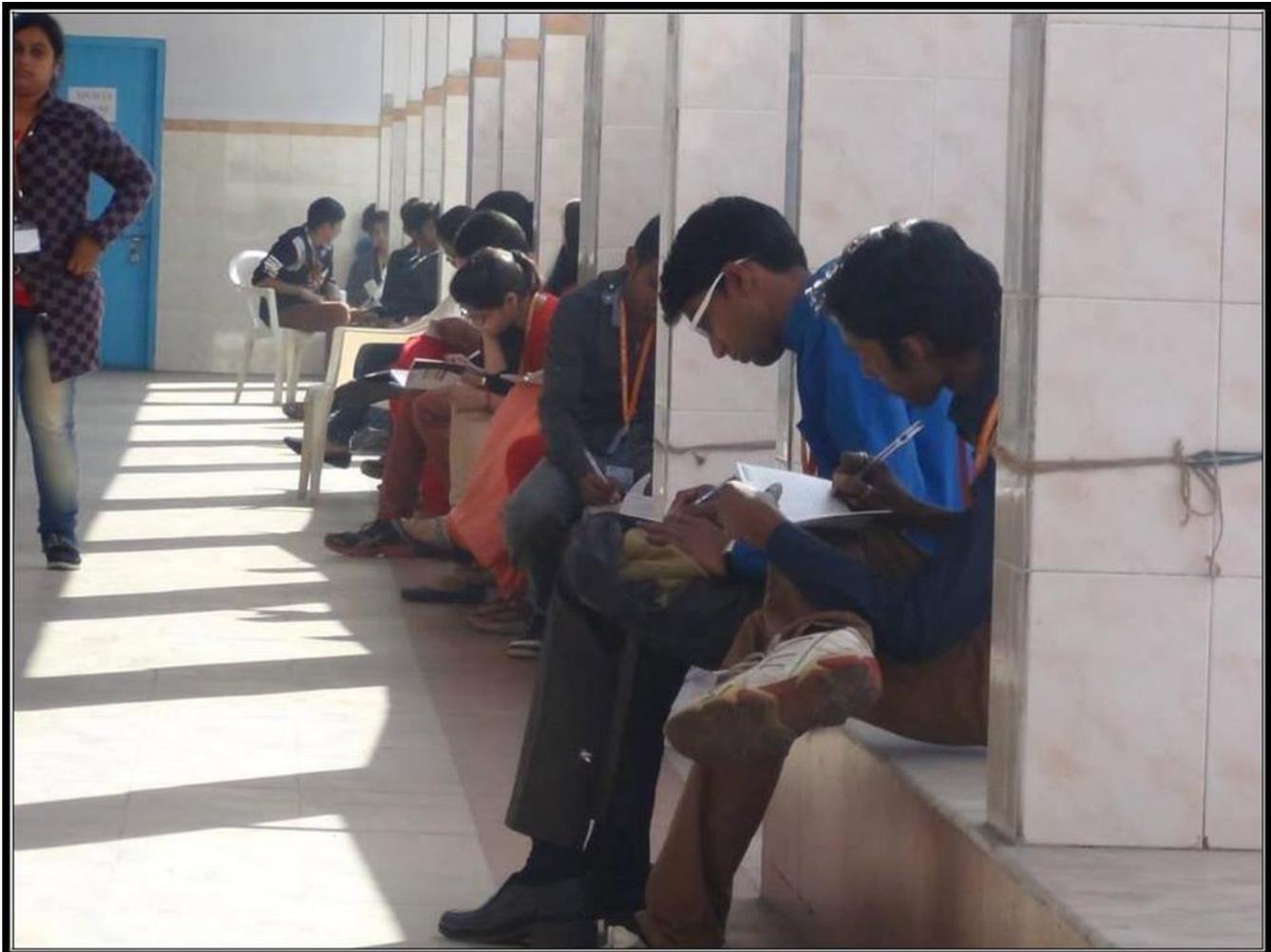
Writing for the first time in our personal diary will be difficult and challenging but to make a new beginning one has to go through this process of internal reflection and honest writing in the diary through introspection. The participants were told that this was not an ordinary diary but it is the diary of their conscious, their soul, their atma or whichever name they wish to call. Deep silence and genuine reflection will definitely connect you within and the shades of grey of your past will show you who you really are as a human. From this point onwards the real journey of walking on the path of consciousness begins and that is why being disciplined is very important.

Disciplined quiet time is must to experience the true natural of inner voice. Change begins from inside and the participants were encouraged to become a flame of hope within their family and society because one candle can light endless candles. In this way one changed individual can inspire many more.

A shining example of change was shown by the New Era High School after they attended the National Lmad conference in Panchgani. These students now don't need teacher in their class room as supervisors while appearing for exams. The students write their exams with integrity and the school has not recorded a single case of copying and cheating in the examination hall since.

Many participants shared their stories after their quiet time- one boy shared that he was like an old dirty flower pot but now on he will start adding fresh water and will begin to make that dirty water dilute; one girl shared that she always use to take her mother for granted and use to take out all her anger on her but from now she will not do it again; another girl came and apologised to her friend for not talking to her since the month of March her friend was present

in the auditorium and she also came up and hugged her friend and they both expressed that they were feeling nice.



Participants writing in their diaries during the quiet time session.

The concept of quiet time is connected with the four absolute standards of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love. Evaluation of one's life against these standards creates a new pathway of realisation and it makes one realise why it is necessary to have them within us not just as words in our vocabulary, but actually understanding its true meaning and its application in our day to day life.

Honesty is something we do not have to talk about, it is an in built quality which should reflect outward without expressing it. Honesty is a voice which cannot be crushed. Build your life's foundation by being honest; your character will speak for itself. Honest people cannot be crushed; it's a strong voice without speaking. One must always speak the truth even if her/his voice shakes.

Unselfishness is an ideal state. Selfishness is connected with jealousy and hatred. There is no short cut to getting rid of such unwanted feelings, which comes regularly and specially with people at a young age. One needs to constantly work upon these feelings by nipping it in the bud; if not then it will keep on growing. We should have courage to go and speak to the person concerned against whom such feelings get generated; most of the time after speaking, the negative feelings will eventually subside. The process of quiet time will also help in reflecting on this negative quality and it will take you to the root cause of it. After the root cause is addressed, the feeling of unselfishness is crushed. After successfully learning the art of handling such emotions at its inception through quiet time, an individual can develop a new personality trait and can she/he can externally show calm and composure in any adverse situation.

Purity is very vast concept and its meaning is very simple. The actual meaning of purity as per the dictionary is freedom from adulteration or contamination. For all those who are involved with the work of IofC for them Asia Plateau stands as pure place in respect of its pristine clean surroundings, fresh clean air, pure water, cleanliness and hygiene in every aspect of its existence. Every home, surrounding regions and our country can aspire to become like Asia Plateau. This is at a macro level.

Individual purity can be looked from the point of view of personal hygiene, thoughts and speeches; the most powerful gift given to mankind by GOD, with simple humble words war can be won and same if twisted, swords will be drawn out. Purity of words has immense power to win over any situation.

We behold the beautiful world in front of us, but the same eyes can vulgarise things which sends wrong signals to the brain thereby creating impure thoughts and images. Once our mind gets corrupted with such thoughts, our behaviour and thought process also changes. Thus, the entire process of purity starts at the micro level. The small particle of consciousness is the life line of our existence and when that gets shaded by the impurity within, that is when the biggest damage is done to the overall existence of an individual at a nano stage. Quiet time very clearly shows the path of inner cleansing which will radiate outwards.

Love is the most powerful expression embedded within each one of us, but many of us sparingly show unconditional love. Loving with condition is visible all over but unconditional love is a feeling of bliss within. One can experience deep satisfaction in unconditional love. Love for self and for the people whom we want to love is perfect, but the questions are "Can I lift myself and include many more? Can I see everyone with unconditional love?" "Have I cared and loved people who work for me unconditionally?"

The explanation towards the four standards was given to the participants and they were asked to remain quiet and reflect where each of them stood in their own life against these standards.



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Many of them shared how they have cheated in exams, one boy shared that he liked a girl and he wanted to be with her but that was his lust and not love, one girl expressed that she feels comfortable sharing with her friends but not with her parents, but from now on she took a decision to spent good time with her parents.

There are many aspects of life where one needs to think and focus on in order to create a path for oneself over a period of years by reflecting in our quiet moments. Everyone is aware of what they want, but the question is how to get what one wants, focused quiet time gives clarity and also creates atmosphere where each one is willing to share and this gives the listeners endless options to think on, which in normal case we get very limited exposure.

Aspects like Health, Habits, Career, Relationship, Wealth Creation, Hobby and Living Purpose are key ingredients in one's life and if one focuses on these aspects from a young age there will be clarity in building an overall foundation towards personal growth. For a student, career is the most important challenge if this is well decorated with excellent grades, life in the years to come will be smooth and one has to work hard for it. Shawn Fernandes, a young boy who had attended Nagpur Youth Conference five years ago, took a decision to join National Defence Academy and now he is a Cadet and is on his way to achieve his dream of becoming an Army Officer. This was his achievement.

All participants were urged to nurture a hobby which will help her/him in older days to keep themselves busy. Having a hobby will refresh the mind and will also help an individual excel at something that is not a part of his everyday work. While it is easy to develop bad habits but it is very difficult to get rid of them and it is more difficult and challenging to build a good new habit. Habits over time contribute to individual performances and also talk about a person's personality. Good habits combined with hard work and proper time management will definitely enable an individual to achieve his goals. Thus, the participants wrote down their goals and also made a roadmap for their future.



Participants listening to a session in progress

Relationship: This is the longest ship of life and beyond. Young people misunderstand this word and the casual approach towards relationships creates negativity and distortion in ones relations with her/his immediate family. There is a saying: "I cannot be one with GOD and divided with others". If I am divided in a relationship then that much distance I have created between GOD and me. Relationship and family is the biggest gift GOD has given to each one of us and many a times it is misunderstood and many of us tend to go away from our family and strain the relations we have with them. And later we struggle to bridge the gap with the ones with whom we have got divided.

One boy shared that once his father asked him to play with him but he refused to play and spoke rudely to him and ignored him, after a few days his father went on a business tour and after few days a phone call came to him and he was told that his father had passed away. The same boy requested everyone to respect their parents and other family members.

Many of them shared that they ignored their mother and took them for granted and they vowed to apologize once they went back home. Vineet Tanna, a coordinator of Lmad, shared his story about how he used to trouble his mother and yet she showered him with unconditional love. When she passed away, he understood how much he missed her and how badly he had treated her.

One girl shared her story that she stays at her uncle's place away from her parents because they wanted her to get married after her studies but her mama helped her to study further. Her uncle met with an accident on the railway station but no one was there to help him and he passed away. If someone would have helped him then he could have been saved. Gauri shared her story about her sister- when she was hospitalised and when she wanted to use wash room Gauri did not help her and her sister died. When Gauri thinks about this she regrets it.

This session on relationships was emotional and sensitive as almost everyone realised their mistakes and were crying profusely. Many of them called their loved ones, family and friends and expressed their feelings and thoughts. Many of them cried on the phone and later felt happy and burden free. Later, everyone contemplated on their relations with their family and friends and also decided what steps they were going to take to bridge that gap after going back home.

All the participants were encouraged to share their deepest feelings with the family and what one experienced listening to others and also through one's self introspection should be shared with the family. Every day begins with the family and by dusk one returns home to the same family, then why should we go away internally when physically we are with them.

A seventeen year old child expressed with tears in her eyes-"I don't want to live there is nothing in life which I am looking forward to. There is a deep hole within and I do not know how to come out of it". Her words shattered us and it made us think. What has she seen in life at such a tender age where she has lost interest in this beautiful world and feels burdened that she wants to go away?. Somewhere there was a disconnect between her with her family members. The concluding morning the parents and teachers could connect why the young soul goes through this ordeal regularly.

The Lmad team arose to the challenge and expressed the anxiety to the parents and teachers what they felt after listening to the participants for the last three days. Thus, the concluding session was attended by the Parents and teachers of all the students.

Teachers are responsible for guiding and shaping the character of young ones. The joint session with the elders was heart soaking and the team felt that parents should be physically present when the child needs them, a child should not think or reach the extreme step of taking her/his life at a tender age. Such things are happening because the basic fundamental of listening and sharing within the family has been chocked. The family fabric is varying out due to lack of good healthy communication. Today in the fast paced world where information is at a press of a button, to know all possible things but internally we are not connecting where we belong.

Many shared similar stories within the family and the entire atmosphere became introspective and emotional and tears were rolling down, and deep within them a deeper sense of realisation was inspired that we should be there to hold the hands of our children's much before the need arises. With those thoughts the entire class joined the participants in the make shift auditorium. Even before the parents or teachers could express themselves, the young ones could not control their emotions and their outburst engulfed the entire gathering into a mood of reflection, every narration shared made each one think and look within and challenging us to rise to the need of every soul.

The power of realisation when it comes from the conscious; ego, mind and its rationalities does not work and the end result is bliss and in other words one experiences commune with God. A young lad could not control himself and his facial expressions showed restlessness on his face for repentance for what he had done, to his good fortune when he was expressing his pain and wrong doings in the class towards one of his teacher; his teacher was present in the gathering and he ran towards his teacher, hugged her, cried and expressed regret for all that he was doing in the class. The teacher forgave him and in a whisker the face had all together a different expression of calm and serenity. We were sure in the remaining years of his schooling he is going to share a special bond with his teacher and beyond.

Mother (maa) is the first word a child learns, the faith of a young man was challenged as he did not see his mother after his birth, she was no more with him and he was raised by another woman who became his mother thinking all the while that she was his real mother. Years passed by and he grew into a teen, one fine day his father came and took him to where he was living and let him know that the lady looking after him was his aunt and not his mother. He took those words as betrayal and from that day till the last day of the conference he had not spoken to her, as they lived in different cities. He confessed, that he realised by listening to others what a mother is. He said "I feel very bad from inside, she is my real mother, and she is the one who has raised me and never letting me know that I was not her real son. From now onwards I will regularly speak to her, which I have not done for years together and apologise her for the distance I have created between us. She is my real mother".

A mother walked up to the dais and stated that she was here because of her daughter, pointing her figure at her and with tears of joy told the audience that last night when she came home, for the first time she apologised to her younger brother. Her ego is too big to bend down to her own brother, and her parents have been telling her for years together but nothing made a difference to her. Last night she apologised and told him sorry endless number to times. "What I could not do, this conference did it in a fraction of a moment." she said. The daughter walked up to her mother, embraced her and cried profusely, and all the while she was crying when her mother was sharing to the larger gathering. Ego is one single factor which plays an important role in taking you away from the same family where one dwells. Though one is staying physically in the home with the family people around but still one has mastered the art of ignoring the fellow blood bond as if it did not exist.

A teacher shared his experience that one boy constantly used to disturb the class and all teachers were unable to handle him. He then called the student and asked him to bring his parents to school. Then the boy started crying and said that he doesn't have a father. From that incident, he realised that he will first study the student and then take action.



Parents and teachers present during the concluding session of the conference.

Simple steps of restitution helps one cover endless distance in shortest possible moment. Life is truly beautiful and if one masters the art of inner listening at a young age like this gathering, each one of us will stand out in the crowd where we will not be called a gathering of mass, but a gathering of class. Take the reins of life in your hand and chisel your future keeping the learning of IofC- Lmad in mind.

At the end of the conference we had a closing ceremony with our guests and they also expressed their thoughts. Mr. Sanjay, Head Urban Services- Tata Steel said that he was very impressed after listening to all participants and shared his experience of childhood. When he was small he saw one line written on a wall that said "Honesty has power" and this has always helped him.

Mr. A P R Nair shared that he has never attended this type of conference in his life and he felt happy that many students got a chance to attend this, he said that he was an angry person in his younger days and that's why he never used to speak to his father, but he still misses him.

Mr. Brigadier Vaidyanathan from Jeevan expressed his gratitude towards the LMAD team and Tata Steel for organising this conference. He asked all participants to come and help Jeevan by helping other children who are trying to commit suicide, he shared few stories regarding why people tend to commit suicide. Reasons for committing suicide include stress, peer pressure, failure, rejection, abuse, etc... He asked everyone to be brave and face problems head on.

Mr. Sharat Chandran, Director Kerala Public Schools asked the participants to come again and again for this conference and allow themselves and others to change and live a successful life.

We would also like to mention Mr. Inderjit Singh who is a soft and gentle person, blessed with energy and enthusiasm at his age. It is a blessing to have him with the team and he inspired the younger lot to expand their horizon by walking an extra mile for others. He is one of the important architects of the Jamshedpur Youth Conference along with the Lmad team.

Vijayam Kartha is a lady of her word and one can totally rely on her. She is single handed capable of moving things in Jamshedpur, not because of her age or position but because she has lived by example and she walks her talk. Her respect in the education field is enviable and across the age spectrum people look up to her. We missed her physical presence this time but she always helped us and assisted us from wherever she was. It only shows her commitment and dedication towards the younger generation to subscribe to live changing message of IofC-Lmad.

The Jamshedpur Conference ended with a vote of thanks given by Rajiv Agarwal, Local Youth Co-ordinator. The impact created in the Jamshedpur Conference continues to live in the minds of the coordinating team and the team felt a sense of accomplishment. The entire coordinating team felt satisfied during the conference but the ending was like a grand finale where the unexpected became reality. Every small step taken in faith towards the participants, unfolded magical moments which showed the presence of higher force. But the journey never ends for the Lmad team.

The journey of the coordinating team of Lmad will always be continuous and after each conference, the team members get back into their normal lives and when time comes, get together to inspire many bright minds of this country through various conferences. The Lmad team will continue on its undying quest to work towards making a difference to as many people as possible.



The coordinating team of the Jamshedpur Youth Conference
