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AN OBSERVATION REPORT OF  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup> ‘LET’S MAKE A DIFFERENCE’  
NATIONAL **YOUTH** CONFERENCE.

*Venue :- Asia Plateau, Panchgani.*

*Duration :- June 1, 2015 to June 8, 2015.*

## **PREFACE**

The year 2015 marks a milestone in the history of *IofC*. This year LMAD Youth Conference completed its 21 years of successful and selfless service to a vast spectrum of youth across the country and abroad. This conference was initiated in the year 1994 and since then through national youth conferences held at Panchgani and outreach programs in various part of the country *IofC*- LMAD has touched lives of countless youth of this country.

In the history of mankind we have witnessed that for every culture to last forever, it needs to be set on strong principles. Principles by their basic nature never age. Instead through ages they are perceived in a better manner. But their core meaning remains unaltered and pure. In the similar manner the very foundation of LMAD is on the Principles of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love. These are the building blocks of humanity on which the world stands and thrives. We encourage our fellow youth to adopt them so that they become self-aware and capable enough to shoulder the responsibilities the society will put on them.

Through-out the report you will find a tale of a journey of young participants with which you will easily relate. They walk the path of realization and correction with practice of quiet time and create a way of life for themselves. As we embark upon the journey we also contemplate and compare our life with these principles only to find the joy and bliss in change we go through.



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# Introduction

We cannot always build the future for our youth,  
But we can build the **youth** for the future.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt.  
32<sup>nd</sup> President of USA.

With a working population of 64%, these words ought to be true for India. Through the course of history, the country has witnessed major revolutions which had the youth as the back bone of action. 'He who controls the youth, controls the country'. The mind of a teenager is usually compared to wet concrete, make any impression on the concrete when it is wet and on setting and curing, the impressions are permanent. If the curator makes an impression of discipline, love & compassion the teenager will be set on a path of love and compassion to become a responsible citizen but if impressions of hate, lust, corrupt practices and ignorance are created, the country will witness many inhuman acts.

Even though we are growing to be a super power, things aren't as good as they seem. Change in the very fabrics of the society is necessary, but no change is possible without being a part of it. ***When we talk of change, the change has to begin with ourselves first.*** For many years *IofC* has been instrumental working for the change which has brought various communities and countries together.

Every year in the month of June, a National Youth Conference is organized at Asia Plateau. The tradition of Youth Conferences has been there since 1994. Youth from various walks of life gather at Asia Plateau and begin the journey within. Today the youth is pulled in all directions by parents, media and peers. Here they are introduced to a **way of life** that focuses on answering various complex questions that arise in their minds and also one that shows them a different way of thinking and living a well-balanced and joyful life. It challenges the youth to live by ethics and moral values.

## **Principles of MRA**

The tragedy of life is not death,  
but what we let die inside us while we live

- Norman Cousins

Principles are bullet-proof as they never die. They never get wet by the rain or wither away by the winds, they never rust like the metal or melt like the ice. They are just passed from one generation to the next and their relevance can never be subjected to time.

The strong foundation of Initiatives of Change is based on :-

- Purity
- Honesty
- Unselfishness
- Love

These are bench-marks against which every individual must compare his life. Through constant efforts we begin to understand the changes are necessary in our lives and we should make it happen. We will get a better insight regarding these principles as we go into further details.

### **Purity**

The best richness is the richness of the soul.

- Prophet Muhammad

Purity is a broad concept which is fairly simple to understand. It can be associated with cleanliness. The way in which a man presents himself and his surrounding depicts his own thoughts. Cleanliness is associated with the places of worship which are pure and a place where the Holy Spirit resides. In the same manner it is necessary that we keep our surroundings clean as it has an immediate effect on our thoughts and makes an impression on the minds of other.

Purity of sight is a very important aspect of our life. God has gifted humans with a unique gift of the Power of Imagination. Unlike other creatures on the planet we can make an incident happen in our minds by imagining them. When used for a good cause it leads to unmatched achievement in various walks of life. But through our senses we tend to focus our mind on lust and vulgarize the most beautiful creations of God. We lose our innocence and once the mind loses its purity, the entire course of the system is disturbed resulting into various forms of inhuman incidences. Similarly even our language is a reflection of our thoughts. The words that we use can make relations and can also break them. Hence the words that we use and tone in which we speak needs to be in constant check.

## **Honesty**

He who salutes his duties  
will never have to salute anybody.  
But he who does not salute his duty  
will have to salute everybody.

- Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam.

*Showing integrity when the world is watching is important, but showing the same with nobody watching is priceless.* Honesty regarding ones work has been missing in the country. Dishonesty starts within the family and when not nipped in the bud may become a habit. These habits may grow to become one of the biggest scams faced by the country. Sometimes dishonesty is a form of breach of trust leads to broken relationships. India ranks 85<sup>th</sup> out of 175 countries in the world audit corruption report. That just means that we need a change in the working of the system. Most of the crime in the country start as small act of dishonesty, which later become an addiction as criminals can easily evade the judicial system.

Being honest with our parents, teachers, and bosses might not give any added benefits to us but our shoulders will never have to bear the burden of a lie. We must remember that the softest pillow is the pillow of a clean conscience.

## **Unselfishness**

To live a pure unselfish life,  
one must count nothing as one's own,  
in the midst of abundance.

- Buddha.

Unselfishness is one of the most difficult virtues to imbibe. The desire to serve selflessly without expecting anything in return is unselfishness. It is mostly misunderstood as sacrificing everything and donating instead of satisfying our own needs. Unless I am not satisfied from within I will never find peace in giving. The biggest hurdle in selfless giving is greed. The everlasting desire to accumulate more than my requirements and depriving others of their needs leads to jealousy, hatred and a large socioeconomic gap in the society. The feeling of jealousy is like a blister in our mouth, it is small but far painful and irritating. We keep on pondering on the same feeling of jealousy for years together that ends in a sore relationship with people around us. We hold on to so many things in life that when these things are taken away from us we start losing the essence of living. Jealousy also makes us judgmental about people close to us.

## Love

Love is absence of Judgment

- The Dalai Lama

In our lives we hold our near and dear ones with great respect, love and concern. But the aspect we need to think on is wither I love unconditionally? We love but always expecting the same in return. When these expectations are not fulfilled, love immediately transforms into grudge and ignorance. Love lies in the concern of the soft touch of our mother's hand as she brushes through our hair. It is also in the sternness of our father's voice when he is worried about us. Love resides in the care taken by our partners and friends whenever we are depressed and lost. Love is not always a feeling we need to express, it can also be shown through small acts of kindness. Love is also shown through the sacrifices we make for our loved ones. Just as The Dalai Lama says that to love someone unconditionally we must first learn to accept the person with all his shortcoming and beliefs without being judgmental against them.

Love is also the feeling of unity within a community and also amongst various communities which brings about unity in diversity. Love is about forgiving the past sins and moving towards a better future. Just as it is been written in the holy scripts, ***treat your neighbor as you would treat yourself***. Love is strong bond that holds all the other principles in place. When you love unconditionally with pure intentions, respect the bond of trust and show the courage to forgiving and humility to reflect on your own mistakes then a strong foundation for a long lasting relation is set which reflects unconditional love and joy of giving.

## The Gift of Quiet Time

Talk to yourself as you would to your loved ones.

- Brene Brown

The practice of 'Quiet time' is the heart of the youth conference. The entire conference revolves around quiet time. Youth conference aims at making youngsters know more about themselves. They need to understand and inspect who they are from within. The entire conference circles around introspection and comparing oneself against the four principles. But this process will never be possible if we never take time out of our busy lives to be alone and reflect on our actions.

Quiet time is like an informal meeting we have with our own conscience. Conscience is an inseparable part of our life which connects our thoughts with The Almighty. It is said that each individual has the light of God within him and the conscience is his guide that will take him to the light. This is also the moment when we dive deep within to communicate with our conscience. The words that come out from our conscience are few but they are as profound and pure as those we read in our holy books. In our day to day life we stumble across various questions which cannot be answered by theoretical knowledge or logical reasoning. These are question pertaining to our character, reactions, family relations etc. which require more than logical reasoning, may get clearer through disciplined quiet time.

In Youth conference morning quiet time plays a significant role in shaping up the conference. All the inputs given during the morning quiet time guide the participants into diving deep and getting connected with their inner voice. For all the riddles in life the answer lies within. As said ***Conscience is a man's compass – Vincent Van Gogh***. Our conscience will always show us the right path only if we take the effort to listen to it.

When we are alone contemplating over our life we get profound thoughts from our conscience which come to us at a very crucial time. It is necessary that later when we go back to our daily chores we still are aware of the thoughts we get during our quiet time. So we encourage people to write down their thoughts in a diary during the quiet time so that they can preserve their profound and honest thoughts. These thoughts seem to be relevant even when you refer to them after many years. The content is a reflection of your inner self and is your soul. Thoughts you preserve in your diary constantly remind you of the commitment you had made towards betterment of your inner self during your quiet time. It inspires you over a period of years. The diary is like your companion with whom we can share all our beliefs, thoughts and doubts without being judged.

Quiet time starts with a rectification process in which we write down all the incidences where we had made wrong decisions. We ponder over them and try to seek solutions for the same. We ask for forgiveness and decide to rectify our mistakes. This lightens the burden on our conscience and clears the obstacles between us and our conscience. Disciplined quiet time helps us get more insight on our habits and behavior and makes us even more sensitive and considerate about others. Over a period of time we begin to lift ourselves from this cycle of fault and correction to reflect over even more deeper aspects of life. ***Mind is just like water, when agitated it's difficult to see what lies beneath, when settled the answers surface; the purpose of life is clear.***

## **The Journey begins...**

It's good to have an end to the journey toward,

But it is the journey that matters, in the end.

- Ernest Hemingway

For over 2 decades LMAD has been working on channelizing the minds of young people through the National Youth Conference held at Panchgani and youngsters from different walks of life stay at Asia Plateau and over the course of eight days they try to dive deep and connect with their conscience and reflect over the change that is required from within. They are kept from the disturbances of the city life so that they remain well focused over their path of self-introspection.

Organizing a conference is a complex task that can be further simplified into numerous other activities. Being a large activity, it needs more hands to manage. Having completed 21 years the conference had to be grand and flawless. A team of 25 people was selected to be the helping hand, known as co-ordinators. They were the participants from the previous conferences who had deeper insight regarding the teachings of *IofC* and were experienced in managing people. The co-ordinators need to be completely focused in giving maximum effort and selflessly serve to the participants. It was this collective effort of the team and a desire to strive for excellence that the conference turned out to be a remarkable achievement.

## **The Inauguration**

### **Day 1**

Host of the evening - Bhisham Mansukhani

Artists and Speakers - Team LMAD.

The Conference began on 1<sup>st</sup> June in the evening at 4:30pm wherein the new participants were given a short AP tour while the participants who had previously attended the conference had a brief discussion with two senior co-ordinators Bhisham Mansukhani and Rajiv Agarwal. An online survey was conducted earlier in the afternoon along with registration of the participants. After which everyone was let into the auditorium. The Inauguration began with offering prayers to the Almighty through a prayer dance performed by Aishwarya Deshpande followed by an energy packed dance performance by a group of talented co-ordinators. It also included an extempore dance performed by Neha. Inauguration was hosted by Bhisham in a very elegant manner. A video clip was played to that had past co-ordinators and members of the LMAD family speaking about the change that they experienced due to the conference. They resonated similar feeling of how LMAD had helped each one of them to get clarity on various issues they were facing and the things they learnt at AP had carried them through the thick and thin in their life.

The video clip was followed by a short skit performed by the coordinating team. Shradha concluded the skit with a beautiful message saying, "People from various walks of life who have lost their path come to Asia Plateau in search of answers. They go through the process

of reconciliation with their dear ones and find the true meaning of life. They walk out of AP as changed people”.

Sudarshan, Jasmin, Nirmal, Kapil, Nikkita and Surgeon BC were the co-ordinators who spoke to the participants and shared their story of change briefly. Conference had shaped each one's life in a unique manner. It had changed their perspective of looking at life. They had started rectifying the mistakes they committed in the past. They had shifted their circle of influence from I to We. They took genuine effort in spreading the teachings of *IofC* and also took to the co-ordinators way of life. Having quiet time at AP had helped them follow create a roadmap for their life and they were following it.

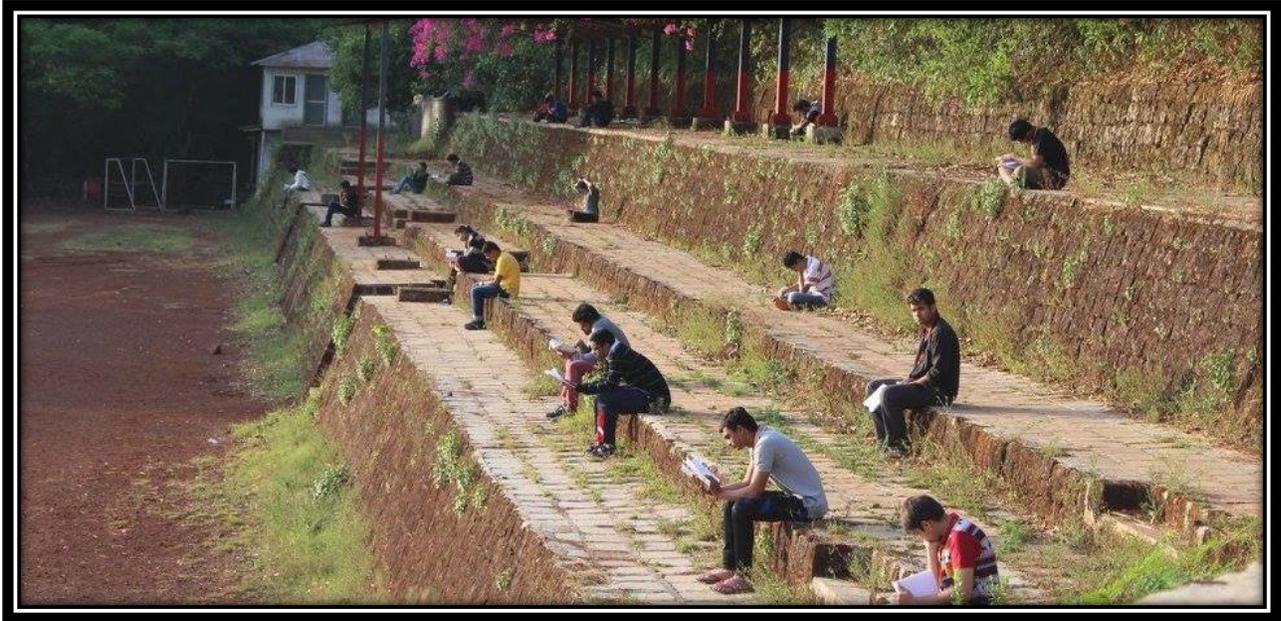
The interns from Initiative of Life forum presented a melody ‘Be the Change’. The interns also briefly spoke about their work with *I of L*. The Inauguration ceremony ended with the Mute National Anthem and later National anthem sung by all. Dinner was served after which all participants gathered in the foyer. Here the co-ordinators introduced themselves and Harshal and Dipti explained the rules to be followed at AP and Do's and Don'ts of LMAD. Participants were been divided into 8 groups and diaries, pens and Batches were handed over to them. We ended the day by 10:15pm.

## **The Conference**

### **Day 2**

At Asia Plateau the day starts very early at 5:30am and after exercising everyone assembled in the Auditorium for inputs of the morning Quiet time. *Sanket started the session with a question, "What is it to be Quiet?" Being quiet is staying calm irrespective of the thoughts that constantly make us restless. We need to dive deeper within and listen to that soft voice that speaks to us whenever we are deeply engrossed with our thoughts. Quiet time is the moments when we connect with our conscience and stay alone. When he had his quiet time during his first time in AP he felt that he was meeting himself after a long time. He asked the participants to dive deep within and never hold back while reflecting on anything during the quiet time.*

Quiet time is an ongoing process of refinement. It's a journey that must start at a young age so that we grow up to have a deeper sense of our inner self. Our mind is like the surface of the ocean, constantly restless and moving. It's full of energy and life. While as we go deeper in to the ocean the water is less restless and calm. As we go deeper we grow to be calm and composed in our thoughts. Just like in ocean floors, great mysteries of our inner self are unveiled only when we dive deeper. Whenever we do a wrong deed, immediately our conscience triggers. But out of peer pressure or greed we suppress that voice and start making our life complicated. Quiet time is the process of untying all the knots and get complete clarity of our thought process to live an ideal governed life. ***A man who conquers himself is greater than one who conquers thousand in a battle – Buddha.***



Participants during quiet time.

Participants were given basic guide lines on how to start with quiet time. For most of them the concept was new and hence giving them direction to start with helps in introducing the idea. We must firstly have the courage and honesty of going within and looking at ourselves as we really are, accepting the fact wither good or bad. Initially we start with accepting our mistakes, bad habits and bad memories. Then we enter the cycle of rectification in which we start making genuine effort of moving towards rectifying our short comings. You become more conscious while you react with people in your day to day life and cleanse your inner self. You then evolve and go beyond the mistake-rectification cycle and start contemplating about topics concerning the society and also start taking action towards contributing to the betterment of the society.

Post breakfast session started with a profound video which focused on the joy of giving. Most at a construction site we observe that the façade of the building is we planned and decorated while the foundation is never decorated. But an architect focuses more on making the foundation strong as rest follows. Similarly our external looks are won't matter as our character would as it is our foundation. IofC has a pure foundation and many people are connected with its values as their foundation is also built out of the same idea.

PHUL is not just principles but also a way of life. This way of life can be followed not by only a few special people but by the entire society. *There are societies in which the virtue of honesty is been deeply rooted. This is a story of a man who was once travelling in Switzerland. While buying a ticket for autobahn from Bein to Zurich he forgot to collect his money back from the ticket counter. All along the journey he was anxious wither he would get back his forgotten money. At the Zurich Station when he narrated the incident to the authorities and asked wither he could get his money back, the officer made a quick phone call to the officer at Bein station and immediately returned the money to the man. The honesty shown by the entire system had touched the heart of the man. Convection of following the path of honesty never lets your feet tremble.*

*Dhananjay shared his understanding regarding purity. Technology has become an inseparable part of our life. But so has the fact that it has its bad side. As youngsters we easily fall prey to the bad face of technology. He shared that at a young age he came under peer pressure and started watching pornography along with his other friends. Pornography spoils the fabric of youth. Purity is not only about our actions but also our vision. We start vulgarizing every other beautiful creation of God. We begin with misusing our imagination and this leads to horrible crimes later. His process started with cleansing his imagination. Through his quiet time he realized that pornography is not only effected his mentality but also his thought regarding feeling of love. He explained how pornography has affected the minds of his friends and how they had taken up wrong perception of love. **“Purity of the soul lies in looking right through the façade of filth and pretence to find something adorable and true”.***

*Aishwarya shared her experience on impure intentions. Peer pressure has tremendous hold on the psyche of youngsters as they have not see the true face of the world yet and are curious of what could be next. She had faced this pressure at a very crucial moment of her life due to which she could not focus on her studies and daily activities with ease. The incident kept surfacing again in her quiet time and finally she summed up courage to face it. **“I confronted the issue and broke my relationship with my mentor but having overcome fear of voicing my opinion has built a new muscle of confidence in me”.** Impure intentions do take root from various negative aspects such as jealousy, hate, grudge etc. But out of pure insensitivity we may go to any extent to harm people.*

Bhisham spoke about few of his personal problems he is facing over several years. He showed the importance of family in everyone’s life. He also narrated an incident where an emotional outburst of a few seconds resulted in a major fight in and things started falling apart. Almost after a year he reconciled and patched the family together. **In relation it’s not about who is right or wrong, it’s about who cares the most.** He said that we must learn to apologize for our mistakes and love our family unconditionally. Unconditional love is the power of change. We must learn to express our unconditional love towards our family and friends through our concern for them. These values of purity, honesty, unselfishness and love can be imbibed through conscious revaluation of self and disciplined quiet time. We must start with practicing these principles in daily life and spread them through our circle of influence. We must build our life on the inner calling and have faith that things will fall in place.

### **Day 3**

We emphasized more on disciplined quiet time. To make quiet time a ritual it is necessary that we do it with consistency over a long period of time. Quiet time preferably needs to be done in the morning because with a fresh mind quiet time is even more productive. *Nirmal shared his quiet time thoughts:- He said in quiet time we get answers to most complex situations in our life. If we listen to the inner voice there is no need to search for answers outside, all the answers lie within us.* Daily practice helps us connect with our soul. Just like reading holy book helps us calm down and reflecting over our actions, quiet time slows down our thoughts and connects us with our inner voice. The results are like roots of a plant, longer they grow more beautiful the plant becomes. **The beauty of our clear conscience is seen through the beauty of our actions.** Most of us came to AP soaked in our ego. Hence we need considerable time to see our true self. Ego blocks our connection with the inner voice. It makes us judgmental towards our relatives and friends.

Post breakfast we had organized a picnic to Mahabaleshwar. We spent time at the market place and then hung out at Mapro. This was a good time for the participants to get introduced and get comfortable in communicating with everyone. We arrived in AP in the afternoon where the participants went back to their rooms to freshen-up. We utilized this time for them to have a formal discussion with their roommates. Bond of friendship that was made at Asia Plateau have lasted for lifetime. A discussion regarding various social aspects was initiated and the inputs from the participants were note for further study.

*Dr Rao, one of the senior members of the AP family interacted with the participants. He shared his experience of working with the Naxalites and how he convinced them to lay-down their arms for the welfare of their own people. He stressed on changing the attitude of people to change their life. He also spoke about his experience on quiet time. The flow of quiet time he said is Connection – Correction – Direction. Initially most of our quiet time is based on awareness of our mistakes and corrective measures. But later we must move ahead and give a direction to our thoughts as later thoughts carve out a way of life.*

Due to extensive use of mobile phones and internet we are steadily losing the art of writing letters to our loved ones. Here at AP we encouraged participants to write post cards to their family. This was a new experience for most of us as due to a fast moving life back in cities we rarely write letters. The day concluded with a talent show late in the evening in which participants showcased their talent such as dancing, singing, mimicry etc. with great enthusiasm.

## Day 4

Participants had already begun unfolding their life during quiet time and it went on becoming more intense. There is always a vivid memory of the first time when we committed a mistake such as when we smoked for the first time, drank alcohol for the first time, watched pornography for the first time etc. That is the point when we begin losing our innocence. These bad habits stick to us and we never make a conscious effort to get rid of them. **Our life is a reflection of our thoughts – Bruce Lee.**

As we grow we face many situations in which we start judging people and creating a jig of thoughts towards them. In the same manner we also start filling our life with impurity and bad habits. We might look beautiful on the outside but are impure and ugly from within. We live our life according to the social dogma. We indulge into smoking and drinking due to peer pressure. We spent a lot of time and money on expensive clothes and accessories only for the social status that comes with it. We ruin our relationship with our family and friends due to the ego that we carry in our mind. In most of these situations our conscience pokes us constantly but we ignore it due to the ego that blindfolds us from our mistakes. During quiet time these habits and mistakes surface. To get rid of these habits we need to cleanse our mind. When we live our life with a feeling of self-worth and purity we feel the joy of clean conscience from within. The change that we long for in the country will begin with each one making a positive change in his behavior. For change we need to make a positive commitment and stick to it.

We also had a flag hoisting ceremony at Asia Plateau to mark the Khadi Day. Khadi has both social and political importance in the history of the country. It is not just a cloth but a symbol of purity and sacrifices our ancestors made for the freedom of our country. The rules and regulations regarding the National flag were told to the participants. *Various interesting stories regarding freedom struggle, importance of khadi as a platform to bring the people together and*

also the dark history of emergency was shared by **Arundhatiben**. Later in the evening Bhisham interacted with the participants and discussed on how would they use their career as a tool to serve the society rather than doing social work as an auxiliary process. He emphasized on the aspect that the success of the society is not dependent on success of few but on the success of the entire population. Our talent, career and social issues are all inter-related and by using our skill and talent will we be able to make a difference in the status quo. **He concluded the discussion by saying - Vision without action is a dream, action without vision is passing of time and action with vision will make the change happen.**



The sacred fabric that binds us together

## Day 5

We were five days into the conference and early morning quiet time was becoming more productive and intense. Quiet time gives us the opportunity to unconditionally pray for the people who have hurt us in the past. When we are hurt by somebody we keep carrying the grudge against that person in our mind. We are reminded of those people time and again which spoils our peace of mind. By forgiving and praying for them we drop the emotional burden we carried for so many years.

*Participants shared their quiet time thoughts which resonated with the same aspect. They thought about their relationship with various members of their family. A participant spoke about his relationship with his father. He was not that close to his father. Another young boy spoke about the issues his family was facing and he had started realizing that solutions for those issues lie within his inner self. Another shared his thoughts of how he carried an emotional burden of spoilt relations and decided that he need to drop the burden by reflecting over the incident and forgive. Another boy also spoke about his habit to ponder over incidents in the past. He had realized that the happiness in the family depends on his behavior towards the family. It is important to listen to the inner voice so that things start falling in place – a young girl from Tibet.*

**People who believe that they can change the world are the once who do – Steve Jobs.** These remind us of people who single handedly stood against the social dogma and brought about a paradigm shift in the status quo. We were introduced to a few amongst them who through their efforts tried to bring about change in the society. **Ms Durga Madela** is a young lady from Jogeshwari, Mumbai. She belongs to a Vaidu community that settled in Mumbai many years ago. Being a closed community they had a Khaap Panchayat administrative system that took care of the various issues pertaining to the community. Child marriage and dowry was rampant in the community. As Durga got introduced to the modern life-style in the college she found that Khaap Panchayat was an illegal administrative system and that government has made provisions for rights of the Vaidu community which the people were little informed about. She stood against the injustice of the panchayat and also won the legal battle in the Indian Judicial System. She now works for rights of the women of her community.



**Ms. Durga Madela**

**Navendu** is another example of what a person could do if he believes that change is possible and it is his responsibility to initiate the change. Navendu was introduced to the idea of *IofC* LMAD in 2004 when he travelled to Panchgani. He found quiet time to be a novel concept and made conscious effort to change himself. He was of the radical Hindu extremist mindset regarding the Gujarat riots. Through LMAD the first seed of change was sown into him and that changed his opinion about life forever. Back home in Goa he initiated an RTI regarding illegal constructions. Single handedly he closed down numerous illegal construction sites in the State. He later went to US and is currently working in a reputed firm. Navendu expressed his thoughts

regarding Indian Politics being the tool for the change of the current situation. He is also connected to a political party in Delhi and has worked towards strengthening its US chapter in 20 cities. Navendu is a perfect example of a life directed by ones inner voice.

**Karan Khalate** is leader of the youth wing of NCP in ZP, Baramati. He is the chairperson of the standing committee. He has been connect with LMAD for several years and also organizes outreach programs in Baramati. Image of a politician in India is seldom clean and it's even difficult to stay clean while working with corrupt people. Listening to his inner voice Karan has not only kept corruption at bay but also managed to change people's perspective regarding politics. He has implemented various welfare programs for schools and also worked for their ISO certification. He brought his Quiet time thoughts regarding development of his ward in practical. Due to the changes that the conference brought about in him, Karan could easily empathies with the issues faced by people and resolves them at the earliest. A large team works under Karan today and he states that if the leader is clean and loyal to his duties the entire system under him changes for good.

People who decided to take up a different course of life and make a difference in lives of others. Though **Dipti** took formal education like most of us, she decided to take up an alternative career of Sign language Interpreter. She has been working with LMAD for over a decade and the teaching of *IofC* has great influence on her life. She also is an active member of Anam Prem, a NGO that works for the deaf and dumb. Dipti had the opportunity of training actress Rani Mukharjee for the award winning film Black. She said that she took up this career out of desire to help the under-privileged part of our society. Most of them cannot raise their voice against injustice done to them as they have no voice of their own. They fall victim to molestation and domestic violence. Dipti has a dream of organizing a similar youth conference for the deaf and dumb so that they may also get a life changing experience from LMAD conference.

**Anurag Maloo** is a software engineer who started working in a program called Teach for India in 2011. Anurag Maloo teaches kids from the slum area. He is also a part of Family of Global volunteers. Along with Sir Robert Swan he became a part of the expedition to Antarctica for study of environment sustainability program. He is now working with Startup beacon, an organization that helps startup companies. Anurag Maloo has always been in touch with LMAD from his earlier days and practiced quiet time for taking all the decisions in his life. It was through quiet time that he realized the things that made him happy. He said that when we have right thoughts in our mind we always meet the right people and make right choices automatically. Irrespective of the world's opinion our inner voice must be the loudest.

Most of the religious gurus preach that man must first fulfill his duties and then work for the betterment of the society. **Rajiv Agarwal** and **Shraddha Agarwal** have followed the same mantra in their life. Rajiv and Shraddha along with their professions also make time for organizing conferences for the rural youth. Jamshedpur Youth Conference sponsored by TATA Steel has been a great success. Through LMAD they touched thousands of young hearts. Both of them have worked towards bringing students, parents and teachers on the same page. They work with a vision of sparking a new generation of young people who will think of the country first. All these people had a desire to serve the society through their professions. They had a long term vision and they believed in their abilities and walked the path led by their conscience. Wonder what changes we all could make if we decide to live a life governed by our inner voice!

Participants were later given a post card that they would address to themselves. Participants wrote about the contribution they would make for the change they want to see in the

future. The postcard will remind them of the commitment in the future. In the evening Participants trekked to Table top, an elevated land adjoining AP. Participants enjoyed the trek and the view of entire Panchgani from the Table top. They returned to the center exhausted and relaxed to the soothing music in the auditorium. At the end of the day they were shown a movie – The Railway Man. The film depicts the life of a war prisoner during the World War 2. The movie sheds light on the importance of Forgiveness in our life.

## Day 6

The basic purpose of quiet time is to evolve from the circumstances that we face. Evolution happens when we change our perspective of looking at the world. An individual's world is his family and people in his immediate contact. His life circles around family and is constantly affected by his relationship with them. All the luxuries of life fall apart if we don't have our loved ones with us. Family is an inseparable part of our social life that directly holds strings of our professional life. Our life depends on our family to such an extent that we usually take them for granted. We fail to respect their emotions and get carried away with by our busy life. They are usually subjected to our emotional outburst with no attempt of reconciliation. Teenagers dislike their family and wish to leave their homes. Minor issues in family lead to grave circumstances.

The platform was open for the participants to share most personal aspects regarding their families. Participant shared that they demand many things from their parents but never respect them for the comfort their parents provide them with. They behave in an arrogant manner when they not given things they asked for. A young girl *shared that due to medical reasons her mom has frequent mood swings but instead of taking care of her mom she disrespects her. Due to such indifference shown by the daughter the mother feels lonely. Another shared an incident in her family. In February along with her friends she had gone for a trek. On returning to her hostel she called home but could not speak to her mother. She repeatedly tried to contact and after few days came to know that her mother had suffered a stroke and was admitted to the hospital. She realized how close she had been to lose her mother forever. They say that we understand the importance of a person only through his absence. Something similar was shared by Vineet. Vineets mother was suffering from arthritis. Even if she was in bad health she used to help him in his studies. Vineet never appreciated all the sacrifice his mother made for him. He took her for granted. During his graduation he had to stay away from home and seldom met his mother. It is too late when due to her sever health issues she passed away. Vineet still remembers sitting by the bed when his mother passed. He regrets not have spent quality time with her and deeply misses her after she is gone. Neha* also had distanced herself from her father and realized it during her quiet time.

The participants made a commitment to go home and reconciliation with people they had differences with. They committed to spend quality time with their family and keep their ego at bay while dealing with any family issues. The lunch was done in silence followed by Shavasana for relaxation from the emotional burden carried by all through the day. **It is necessary that we let go our past for releasing the emotional burden in the present.** Post dinner we got into smaller groups so that all the participants could get a chance for sharing their thoughts. The day ended with group discussion.

## Day 7

The main motive of the conference is to initiate a journey of transformation within all. On this journey, this day proved to be a turning point in most of our lives. *Once, a wise man was travelling in a plane. All along the journey he was constantly writing something on his diary. An old gentleman sitting next to him was curious about what this man was writing. Seeing the man still writing the old gentleman finally asked him what he was writing. The man replied that he was reflecting and writing about the purpose of his life. Listening to this the old man was taken aback and he said that he had spent most of his life earning but had never ever thought what the actual purpose of life was!* Our story is similar to that of the old man. We see the same monotonous life story everywhere. Most of us spend our entire life with no definite purpose, living by the norms set for us by our elders. **Steve Jobs** once said in his speech that the reason for his success was that at an early age he realized his purpose of life and he toiled tirelessly to live by it. *You must always do what you love and love what you do; if you haven't found your passion keep searching, do not settle.*

Initially we are innocent with the light of God within us but over the course of time we make various negative impressions on our mind. Our innocence gets replaced by hate, vices and bitterness towards our family and friends. We take to bad habits such as smoking, drinking etc. Students at a very early age come under peer pressure and lose their track. They start going away from their family. They stop listening to their inner voice. There are people who live an unimaginable life under unbearable stress.

It is important that we too let go all the vices that we have imprinted on our minds. Once we let go of the past and start focusing all our energy on the present, our conscience will sound louder than any other sound in the world. **The change we want in the world begins from within.** Through past 7 days participants made an attempt to dive deep within and discovered various aspects of their lives. *A participant narrated her experience – Over the past week she has come to realize that all the problems she is facing are negligible compared to what she has heard of in the conference. Answers to all her issues are within and she though finding them is difficult and slow process, she is determined to follow her conscience henceforth. Another expressed her grief of not have met her family for past 7 years as she comes from Tibet and due to political instability . She also expressed her gratitude towards India for letting people of Tibet to live in the country. One boy also shared that our parents sacrifice a lot of pleasures of life for the sake of their kids but fail to express their feelings. So we must take the first step of expressing our love for them. A girl expressed how quiet time helped solve her confusion regarding various issues in life. She too decided to follow her conscience and keep looking for inner peace.*

The average age of the participants present at the conference was 19 years. Most of the participants were at the last step of their student life and ready to enter a professional life. At such stage it is necessary to create a roadmap for excelling in whatever field we chose. A successful career depends on many aspects of our life such as education, health, habits etc. And for them we need to formulate a plan so that we have specific and clear goals set before us. Every massive structure stands on a strong foundation. Similarly a successful career depends on our attitude and work habits. It is a great challenge to imbibe good habits and stick to them. For any form of success discipline and obsession of excellence are the most important ingredients. **Discipline weighs in grams while regret weighs in tons.** A strong character will always pave way to a successful career.



Smile is a true reflection of the soul (moment during the conference)

Our social life also plays an important role in our career. Only when we are emotionally stable will we be able to make correct decisions and successfully shoulder responsibilities. A healthy mind dwells in a healthy body. With good health by our side the journey towards a successful career remains constant with no untimely breaks due to chronic illness. Hence it is necessary that we start taking care of our health at an early age. As we enter our professional life we start earning and as years pass by we still keep on gathering wealth. We tend to forget the importance of sharing the wealth earned. So it is necessary that we also plan on contributing to the society and help the under-privileged. It is said that every individual must have three hobbies – one that will earn him money, one that will help him maintain good health and one that will give him peace of mind.

The participants made a road map for their future and also wrote down a negative quality that they wanted to leave behind before leaving AP. They wrote the negative quality on a piece of paper which was later burnt symbolizing that every negative quality must be similarly removed out from our mind to clear our conscience. In the evening DJ music & dance along with formal dinner was hosted in the center where participants were served by all the co-ordinators. Later everyone gathered in the foyer where participants had an informal photo-session. All of us had a great time and the day ended with a positive note.

## Day 8

The day began as usually with Shawn conducting the morning exercises. Later all the participants assembled in the Foyer for Multi-faith prayer. Once we have done everything we could and things go beyond your control, all we can do is have faith that there is a higher spirit watching on us and all prayers irrespective of the language reach the same God.

We have reached the last chapter of our journey. Along the way we have seen changes in ourselves and the world around us. We let go the negative aspects of our life and unburdened ourselves of our troubled past. People come to AP with lots of filth, arrogance, ego, pride and hate filled in their hearts. Through quiet time they meet the true self within them. When we were innocent like a baby we carried true essence of god within us but over the years we filled our minds with vices, bad habits and filth. It results in pain and sorrow. Through quiet time and

regularly writing all the quiet time thoughts in the diary we slowly leave our ego aside and started cleaning our inner self.

Participants were then given a pledge. The pledge read that they would preserve the natural resources by using them consciously without wastage and if they fail to do so they will take necessary actions so that they never repeat the mistake again. Quiet time helps us heal your soul. It helps in searching of inner peace. The thoughts written in the diary make sense to us and we feel light and blissful from within. The diary has now become very important and holy to us. Eventually the things we learn at AP become more profound and useful in the outer world. The participants shared the change that they experienced over the eight days. Shawn concluded the sharing with a beautiful poem –

### **The Divine Intervention**

I am like a leaf which will wither away, like dew drops on green blades that will vanish;

Like a flower which will keep fading each day, And will eventually perish.

Still Lord, you hold me when I fall, you come to my rescue whenever I call, as my shelter and fortress you stand tall.

Why Lord? Why do you do so much for me?

HE said, "Son, you are mine." Forever and to the end of time

No matter how far you have drifted, I will keep calling back.

And wait patiently everyday hoping that you will come back.

- by Shawn Fernandes.

By afternoon the participants left AP, with a clearer vision and most importantly a clear conscience. Transformation is an ongoing process. A new journey was initiated that day. A Journey of self-realization for a better future!



**A moment during the formal night**

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