

Let's Make a Difference

Youth Conference – June 1 - 8, 2009

As the sun stretched its rays over the sky, it brought an unimaginable brightness to the face of each co-ordinator at Asia Plateau, the MRA-Initiatives of Change centre, Panchgani. At last the day had arrived to welcome all the participants from different corners of India for the youth camp, 'Let's make a Difference.'

The auditorium was full of excitement and enthusiasm for the inauguration of the conference. Nearly 150 Participants from across the Nation and Tibet were curious to learn more about Initiatives of Change. The presence of the eminent Chief Guests - Raj Mohan Gandhi and Prabhat Kumar added dignity and value to the conference.

Both Prabhatji and Raj Mohanji told the youth to be alert and open to new ideas. They also expressed the thought that every last child man, woman is respected, defended & empowered only when our environment is respected, defended & empowered.

Why is it that, despite noble, fantastic, wonderful ideas, so much indifference exists in our country?

In a nation where rivers, mountains & trees are worshipped, why are they not looked after properly?

How can the time you spend in your home, study space, work space & circle of friends take you to your goal?

They challenged the audience to come up with creative answers to these questions.

"Quiet Time is going to be the essence of this Program", is what every speaker stressed at the inaugural.

The entire conference would have time spent in quiet for nearly 17-18 hrs, and when followed unconditionally, would bring many wonderful discoveries in life. Importance of maintaining the diary and pen given to each was strongly communicated. It was also communicated that incase anyone does not find the conference

of any worth; their money would be refunded at the end of the conference.

“The objective of this conference is to create class out of mass. You have a choice in life, what you want to be.”

Thought provoking Sessions:

- **Time of Silence**

From Day One of the camp, the basics of **Moral Re-armament** were explained. The four values of Absolute Honesty, **Purity, Love and Unselfishness** were introduced to the participants.

One of the participants lost his digital camera during the picnic. He lost all hopes to get it back. However his belief that unselfish and pure people still exist got strengthened when a stranger gave him back his camera which he had forgotten in one of the local shops!

One of the youth who indulged in watching porn movies on his mobile, took a brave step of deleting the same as he realized that he was addicted to dirty material.

Out of 2 sisters who had come, one of the sisters realized her jealousy towards the other sister and this realization made her apologize to her and revived the bond of sisterhood between the two.

One of the participants, who was habituated to smoking, admitted and promised that henceforth he would not smoke.

A participant who never followed any discipline during the conference, apologized to all the co-ordinators for his misbehavior at the end of it.

- **Samarpan Meditation**

A Session on **Samarpan Meditation**, what is Dhyaan and what is the importance of meditation was taken by **Mr. Patel**.

- **Jaago Re, India**

Inspiring youth who have taken up the mission of exhorting Indians to make a difference in society, were invited to this camp. **Jasmine Shah**, who is also the man behind the Jaago re India campaign on television, shared his Journey of taking up a Cause to serve the Nation.

A 28 yr old youth, well qualified, working in a corporate, one fine day realized his contribution towards his country and left his job to accomplish his mission. He joined an NGO Janaagraha, at Bangalore and started his journey to bring difference in the society.

- **Politics and Youth**

A very interactive and participative session was shared between **Neerja Choudhary** and participants. A range of questions asked, brought to notice how youth view politics and elections. It was surprising to find that 50% of the participants were interested in politics. R D Mathur, a founder member of lofC said, "Today's youth is the torch bearer of light of our nation. To take the ship ahead which was brought on shore by people of my generation, is the duty of today's youth." He also said that the governance of India is a bottleneck for growth of our nation and that youth should really take a big responsibility to change the circumstances.

- **India I Care**

Through the 'India I Care' session, awareness was created about what each one can do at individual level to keep self, family and society, healthy, successful and happy.

A pledge was drafted for not wasting electricity, water, food, money or any natural resources. But if still waste resources then what one will do to avoid such things from being repeated was

explained to all. It was given to all to read and whoever believed in it, could sign the pledge. Nearly 30% people gave back the pledge unsigned since they were not sure whether they would be able to live by the pledge.

- **Peer Pressure**

A session on **Peer pressure** taken by co-coordinators was an open forum of discussion.

- **Sharing of life Stories**

The group discussion every afternoon continued to have stories by each participant. The sharing of life scripts was one of the important elements to bring about closeness among the participants.

- **Family Session**

The essence of the Family session is that it gives a platform, an opportunity for participants to come and express their love for their family. A thrill and excitement was felt when many for the first time in their lives experienced writing a post card to their loved ones.

- **Sporting Afternoons**

Participants thoroughly enjoyed their freedom in the sprawling campus by playing football, volleyball, Dutch ball, tennis or playing guitar, walking, talking etc, Each afternoon was the time to relax.

- **Entertaining Evenings**

A soft yet inspiring evening was enjoyed listening to letters exchanged between Mahatma Gandhi and the poetess, Sarojini Naidu. **Mrinalini Sarabhai and Tom Alter** narrated the letters that were exchanged between Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu for nearly 38 years.

A mesmerizing performance by **Vinay Mahajan and Charul Bharwada**, from Loknaad (People's voice) with songs from their heart, moved each and everyone. Some of the issues that they touched upon were communal violence and the horrors of war.

- **Concluding Session**

A letter to self was written by each participant and co-ordinator about their learning's at Asia Plateau, which would be posted a month later to serve as a reminder.

A piece of paper was given wherein participants had to write down one habit that they would like to leave behind.

Feedback was taken about their journey with Initiatives of Change for eight days.

Participants recalled the excellent food served during the camp which added to the enjoyment of this experience. It was for the first time in the history of the youth conference that the bread for burgers and pizza was baked in the Asia Plateau kitchen!

With lots of hope and promises the conference was concluded. The participants carried home all the sweet memories at Asia Plateau along with a determination of initiating change for the better and bringing transformation in others' lives starting with their own.
